

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

HAYYE SARAH

OCTOBER 26, 2013

22 HESHVAN 5774

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Eddie Bibi - 27 Heshvan

Candles and Mincha: 5:44 PM – From now til spring, Mincha is at candle lighting

SHABBAT 9:00 AM

KIDDUSH SPONSORS NEEDED

In two weeks we'll be switching to early Mincha as we move the clock back next Saturday night

New Shabbat Morning Children's Program with Morah Avital. For children ages 0 to 5. 10:30 to 11:30 in the playroom. And Shabbat Morning Kids Program with Nina upstairs in the Rabbi's study. Stories, Tefillah, Games, Snacks and more

Shabbat Afternoon Oneg with Rabbi Colish. Games, Parsha, Stories, Snacks and more. 4:00PM

Pirkey Avot with Rav Aharon at 4:30PM

Minha: 5:00 PM –

Seudah Shelishi and a Class 5:30 –

Evening Service (Arbith): 6:30 PM - Shabbat Ends: 6:42 PM

COME BACK FOR MOVIE NIGHT AND PIZZA 8:15PM

Roni and Sam Shetrit will be sponsoring this weeks kids movie night in honor of Yehuda and AJ's birthdays.

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai – 7PM

SAVE THE DATE

Friday night, November 1, KJ in Manhattan will host the Bulow Family Shabbaton in Memory of recently departed Norman Bulow. The Bulow Family Shabbaton features Dr. Daniel Gordis, Senior Vice President of the Shalem Center, who will speak at the conclusion of a catered Friday night Shabbat dinner on the subject "From Ever-Dying People To Never-Dying People: Was Jewish Life Better When It Was Less Secure?" ATTENDING THE POST-DINNER PRESENTATION IN THE GOTTESMAN CENTER ON 85 STREET AT APPROXIMATELY 8:30 P.M. COSTS NOTHING, BUT ADVANCE RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR DINNER. Those interested can visit CKJ.org

**Motzeh Shabbat – Saturday Night, November 9th w/ Lido Synagogue at Lido.
Adult Movie Night**

We are planning a Friday night dinner for Erev Shabbat November 29th – Hanukah/ Thanksgiving weekend. It will be Chinese. RSVP a must to either Patti Tina or email Hindy at hmizny@gmail.com. \$20 for those 10 and up \$ 10 for kids 3-9. Last year we had a Thanksgiving dinner on Friday night and it was a huge success. We would like everyone to prepare a minute or two of what Sandy Taught Me!

Dr. Reeva Simon - Whose Jerusalem? The role of religion and politics in the history of Jerusalem.
Motzeh Shabbat -Saturday night, December 14 at 7:30pm.

Thanks for the Corrections: At Beth Torah - Around 1973 From Left to Right Mr. Esses, Mr. Hannan, Jack Cattan, David Tawil, Albert Shalom, Rabbi Jacob S Kassin, Rabbi Saul Kassin, Haham Ovadia Yosef ,



Haham Baruch Ben Hayim, Abdo Sultan, Izzy Shammah, Harry Tawil with Rabbi Zevulun Leiberman behind him, Isaac Cabasso, Uncle Moe Gindi, Joe Gindi, Mr. Shmalo, Mr. Cohen or Mr Dabah (we have a debate here) ??? and Mr. Abe Groscott.

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**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100
B'H, I will be in Florida this Shabbat**

Editors Notes

Chantelle and I had the pleasure of being in Miami this past Shabbat staying with my sister Ellen and my brother in law Isaac, and we thank them. Even though we were there on business, it's such a pleasure to get away for a few days. I am deeply grateful to Rabbi Hanania Abisoror for his hospitality and for the Torah we shared at the vatikin minyan each morning. Thank You to Danny and Shelley Massry for opening their home and hosting the evening minyan on Friday night and Shabbat. And for all the people down south who make us feel so at home. When you're down next time check out SOHO,

a new restaurant on the eastern end of Loehmann's Plaza in Aventura. Send Joseph my regards, he'll probably give you something tasty on the house.

In our class on Shabbat, I stated my appreciation for being given aliyah shishi. Based on Rabbi Abittan's lessons, I tend to search for some personal message or lesson in the Aliyah I am sent up for. As we sat having breakfast, I wondered why the story of Abraham making a treaty with Avimelech the King of the Pelishtim is so crucial that it gets an entire chapter and is the sixth and most important portion of Shabbat. In reviewing the entire Perasha, this seems the least important part of the week.

I suggested we discuss the relationship of Abraham and G-d and I put forward that one could look at them as two partners. At the beginning of last week's portion we see that Avraham and Hashem are together outside the tent and when three guests or customers arrive, Avraham tells his partner, "one second, let me take care of our business and I'll be back".

Later on in Sedom, although the angels are sent by Hashem to destroy five cities, we see clearly in the verse that when Lot who has no merit of his own asks the angel to spare one city, the angel complies. One wonders why the angel would break a direct order and accept the request of Lot. "Imagine", I suggested, "that one's employee is given a request from his boss's partner's son. He complies." Lot is seen in many ways as Abraham's son as we see in Lech Lecha and as such the angels take an order from the son of their boss's (G-d's) partner Abraham.

We can see this theme again and again.

I also suggested based on a commentary of Rabbi Aderet that the words that precede the Akeydah – the binding of Isaac, "and it was after these events", may refer to the story that directly precedes the command taking a different view from the generally accepted one.

Although the Gemarah states: "Rabbi Yochanan said in Rabbi Yosi ben Zimra's name, 'after these things' refers to 'after the words of Satan'. As it says, 'the lad grew and was weaned.' Upon which Satan said to G-d, 'Master of the world, this old man (Abraham) you graciously gave a child at 100 years of age. At all his feasts, did he not have one turtledove or one pigeon to offer to you? G-d said, 'Has he done this only for his son? If I would say sacrifice your son before me, he would do so. 'Immediately, G-d tested Abraham saying take 'na' (please) your son.....'

And a second midrash states: Yishmael had a merit that he circumcised himself at 13 years old while Isaac had brit milah done to him at the age of eight days old. He prided himself on this self-inflicted act which was totally missing from Isaac. Who knows says Yishmael to Isaac. If you were my age perhaps you would never have done it. To which Isaac replied on the contrary. You Yishmael sacrificed only one limb to Hashem. If I was requested to surrender my entire body I would gladly do so. Following his words Hashem commanded Avraham with the Akaidat Yishak who was 37 years old at that time.

Both explanations are great, but the question remains why the gap in years. Thirty five from the first story and who knows how many years based on the second story.

Based on a commentary of Rabbi Aderet that the words that precede the Akeydah – the binding of Isaac, “and it was after these events”, may refer to the sixth Aliyah and the story of the treaty between Avimelech and Avraham.

I know that my partners make no outside agreements without us consulting with each other first or knowing that the agreement will be acceptable to all. It seems that there is no reason for Avraham to make a treaty with Avimelech. Avimelech appears to be a liar and a crook. He has some aspect of the Nachash, the snake as the Arizal explains and in essence Abraham making a covenant with this strains the partnership with Hashem. It is only when the trust is strained that the Satan's words although 35 years old can have any weight and thus as a result we have the test of the Akeydah.

We went on to discuss how we in our lives can emulate Abraham our father and continue his partnership with the Almighty and that when one has G-d as a partner, one has no fears.

We ended on a very high note, but then one guy said that may have been 3000 years ago when G-d talked to man, but we haven't heard from him in two millennia. I responded that Rabbi Abittan explained that G-d never stopped talking; it was simply us who stopped tuning in. The Rabbi would tell us to sit in a quiet place each day, preferably a natural setting, in the forest, by the sea, in view of the mountains and talk to Hashem. By doing that, we'll start hearing him talk to us.

I asked those around us to share some of their own personal miracles.

Let's close with one story I heard from Mr. Isaac Schwesky. He told me of a true story that took place many years ago.

A couple had been married for a dozen years and they were unable to have children. This was before the more common medical breakthroughs using assisted reproductive technology and in vitro fertilization to assist in the treatment of infertility. They did what many Jewish couples before them had done. They agreed to divorce and hoped that if they remarried, they both might be blessed with children. And so they met with the rabbis, drew up a get and formalized their separation.

A week later, the woman called her ex-husband and told him that he would never believe it but she just found out that she was 2 months pregnant. As their American divorce was still pending she suggested they go back to the rabbis, remarry religiously and celebrate this amazing miracle. Together and overjoyed they returned to the Rabbi.

He sat them down and explained that at this point they simply could not remarry. The get was delivered and the woman was a divorcee. The man, he explained, as a Kohen, could not marry a divorcee, even his own wife. He hoped that perhaps there might be some error in the “get”, that might help, but there was none. They were in the eyes of G-d divorced and could not remarry.

They were besides themselves. What could be done?

The rabbi had no ideas. He suggested that the husband fly to Israel and go to the Kotel and pray. Perhaps salvation would come.

Depressed and discouraged the husband agreed. He boarded a plane that evening and arrived the next day, dropping his bag with the hotel bellman, and heading straight for the wall. He found a minyan and prayed and then pulled up a chair and poured his heart out to G-d. Within moments, he was approached by a man with a long white beard and deep blue eyes, who tapped him on the shoulder.

“My friend, can I help”, the old man asked. But the husband barely looking back and assuming it was a beggar, pleaded to be left alone to pray. Moments later the old man returned and was shooed away. And then a third time and this time the man praying, stopped and their eyes connected. He decided to pour out his story to the old man. The man smiled and said, “All will be taken care of, go home to your mother, speak with her and G-d will answer you.”

"My mother is 93 years old in a nursing home, how can she help".

"Trust me", replied the old man. "But don't delay. Please leave now, go to the airport and take the next flight out. I assure you that you will find yeshuah and salvation. G-d who loves you will help you."

Something about the old man was provoking and although it made no sense at all, and perhaps because the whole situation had still left the husband in shock, he went back to the hotel, took his back from the bellman, and without even spending a night returned to the airport arriving in New York the next morning. He took a taxi straight to the nursing home and went to see his mother.

He sat down beside her bed and told her everything that happened. She turned away from him and he asked if she was OK. She turned back, her eyes streaming with tears.

"I promised your father", she cried. "I promised I would never tell, but now I must". We never told you because in those days there was a terrible stigma associated. It was the depression. We couldn't have children, yet women were giving up their babies. I wanted a child so desperately. It was 1932 and we adopted you at New York Nursery and Child's Hospital on Amsterdam Avenue and 61st Street. You were so beautiful and your dad insisted that you never learn you weren't our real child. I was attempted to tell you when you were married and New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center which took over New York Nursery and Child's Hospital has all of the records. I am so sorry."

"You're sorry?" he asked. "Don't be sorry mom, you and dad were and always will be my parents. You gave me a life, but now you've given me my wife back and a child too. I love you mom and thanks. I've got to tell my wife and the rabbi."

Obtaining the records through the New York City Department of Health was simple and the next day, the couple remarried in the nursing home so that his mother could be there.

The following morning, the mother passed away and seven months later, a baby girl was born and took her grandmothers name.

So we asked, imagine if he never listened to the rabbi, imagine if he never went to Jerusalem. Imagine if he didn't take the strangers advice and return that day. Imagine if his mother would have died with her secret. And who was the old man with the long white beard and piercing blue eyes?

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

My friend Phil Rosen notes: We have a crisis on campuses across the USA.

Attached is a letter from Hen Mazzig, a lieutenant in the IDF who spent the last year on the West Coast educating people in the Pacific Northwest about Israel. He writes about the anti-Israel bigotry and hostility I encountered, especially in the greater Seattle area, Oregon, and Berkeley. He comes from an ultra-liberal background as a member of the left wing Meretz party. Yet he was shocked at the anti-Semitism and hatred he saw and felt. As he writes:

"This year, from January through May, I went to college campuses, high schools, and churches to tell people about the history of modern Israel, about my experience growing up in the Jewish state, and about my family. I also always spoke about my military service as an officer in an IDF COGAT unit that attends to the needs of Palestinian civilians who are not involved in the conflict and promotes Palestinian civil society. Each time I would speak and take questions for an hour or more. I have shared my personal story with over 16,000 people at many, many college campuses and high schools, including UC Berkeley, Stanford, the University of Washington, Seattle University and many others. Many of those to whom I spoke were supportive, friendly, and open to hearing about my Israel. But, sadly, far too many were not.

When I served as a soldier in the West Bank, I got used to having ugly things said to me, but nothing prepared me for the misinformation, demonization of Israel, and the gut-wrenching, anti-Israel, anti-Semitic hostility expressed by many students, professors, church members, and even some high school students right here in the Pacific Northwest.

I was further shocked by how unaware the organized Jewish community is and how little they are actually doing to counter this rising anti-Semitism, which motivated me to write this article."

An Israeli Soldier to American Jews: wake up!

Hen Mazzig Hen Mazzig is the shaliach (Israeli representative/emissary) for Stand With Us Pacific Northwest chapter. Hen was in the IDF for almost five ... [More] years. As a lieutenant in the COGAT unit, he worked as an intermediary between the Israeli Defense Forces (the IDF) and the Palestinian Authority (the PA), the UN, and the many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work in the West Bank. Hen's unit was responsible for overseeing the construction of medical facilities, schools, environmental projects, roads, water-related

infrastructure, and for security coordination with the Palestinian Security Forces, part of the Palestinian Authority. [Less]

As a young Israeli who had just completed five years of service in the IDF, I looked forward to my new job educating people in the Pacific Northwest about Israel. I was shocked, however, by the anti-Israel bigotry and hostility I encountered, especially in the greater Seattle area, Oregon, and Berkeley. I had been very liberal, a member of the leftist Zionist party, Meretz, but the anti-Semitism and hatred for Israel that I have seen in the U.S. has changed my outlook personally and politically. This year, from January through May, I went to college campuses, high schools, and churches to tell people about the history of modern Israel, about my experience growing up in the Jewish state, and about my family. I also always spoke about my military service as an officer in an IDF COGAT unit that attends to the needs of Palestinian civilians who are not involved in the conflict and promotes Palestinian civil society. Each time I would speak and take questions for an hour or more. I have shared my personal story with over 16,000 people at many, many college campuses and high schools, including UC Berkeley, Stanford, the University of Washington, Seattle University and many others. Many of those to whom I spoke were supportive, friendly, and open to hearing about my Israel. But, sadly, far too many were not.

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This new form of bigotry against Israel has been called the "new anti-Semitism," with "Israel" replacing "Jew" in traditional anti-Semitic imagery and canards, singling out and discriminating against the Jewish state, and denying the Jewish people alone the right to self-determination. The new anti-Semitism is packaged in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign (BDS), which claims to champion Palestinian rights though its real goal is to erode American support for Israel, discredit Jews who support Israel, and pave the way for eliminating the Jewish state. One of BDS' central demands is the "complete right of return" for all the descendants of the original Palestinian refugees, subtle language that means the end of Israel as the Jewish homeland because it would turn Israel into a Palestinian-Arab majority state.

It is surprising that an extremist group like BDS is ever taken seriously, but BDS advocates have found receptive audiences in some circles. Their campaigns are well organized and in many cases, well financed. They have lobbied universities, corporations, food co-ops, churches, performing artists, labor unions, and other organizations to boycott Israel and companies that do business with Israel. But even if these groups don't agree to treat Israel as a pariah state, the BDS activists manage to spread their anti-Israel misinformation, lies and prejudice simply by forcing a debate based on their false claims about Israel.

To give you a taste of the viciousness of the BDS attacks, let me cite just a few of the many shocking experiences I have had. At a BDS event in Portland, a professor from a Seattle university told the assembled crowd that the Jews of Israel have no national rights and should be forced out of the country. When I asked, "Where do you want them to go?" she calmly answered, "I don't care. I don't care if they don't have any place else to go. They should not be there." When I responded that she was calling for ethnic cleansing, both she and her supporters denied it. And during a presentation in Seattle, I spoke about my longing for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. When I was done, a woman in her 60's stood up and yelled at me, "You are worse than the Nazis. You are just like the Nazi youth!" A number of times I was repeatedly accused of being a killer, though I have never hurt anyone in my life. On other occasions, anti-Israel activists called me a rapist. The claims go beyond being absurd – in one case, a professor asked me if I knew how many Palestinians have been raped by IDF forces. I answered that as far as I knew, none. She triumphantly responded that I was right, because, she said, "You IDF soldiers don't rape Palestinians because Israelis are so racist and disgusted by them that you won't touch them." Such irrational accusations are symptomatic of dangerous anti-Semitism. Yet, alarmingly, most mainstream American Jews are completely oblivious to this ugly movement and the threat it poses. They seem to be asleep, unaware that this anti-Jewish bigotry is peddled on campuses, by speakers in high schools, churches, and communities, and is often deceptively camouflaged in the rhetoric of human rights.

The American Jewish community and its leaders are not providing a united front to combat this latest threat. Unfortunately, this repeats a pattern of Jewish communal groups failing to unite in a timely way to counter threats against us individually and as a community.

Shockingly, a small but very vocal number of Jews actively support BDS. They often belong to organizations that prominently include "Jewish" in their names, like Jewish Voice for Peace, to give

cover to BDS and the anti-Semitism that animates it. A question that we, as a Jewish community must ask ourselves, is whether it is ever appropriate to include and accept Jews who support BDS and directly or indirectly advocate the ultimate elimination of the Jewish State of Israel.

I think it is not.

My experiences in America have changed me. I never expected to encounter such hatred and lies. I never believed that such anti-Semitism still existed, especially in the U.S. I never knew that the battlefield was not just Gaza, the West Bank, and hostile Middle Eastern countries wanting to destroy Israel and kill our citizens and soldiers. It is also here in America, where a battle must be waged against prejudice and lies.

I implore American Jews: do more.

Israel cannot fight this big battle alone. If you are affiliated with a Jewish organization, let it know you want it to actively, openly and unequivocally oppose the BDS campaign and those who support it. Inform yourself, your friends and families, by visiting websites of organizations like StandWithUs, Jewish Virtual Library, AIPAC, AJC and others that will update you and provide information about BDS and anti-Semitism.

I urge the organized Jewish community and its members to wake up and stand up for the Jewish state of Israel, and for all it represents, and for all it works to achieve.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Avraham negotiates with Ephron the Hitite to purchase the Cave of Machpelah as a burial place for Sarah. Tradition says that this is also the burial place of Adam and Chava.

2nd Aliya: Avraham sends Eliezar, his trusted servant, to Aram Naharayim, (between the Tigris and the Euphrates) to find Yitzchak a shiduch - a bride.

3rd Aliya: Leading a caravan of supplies and riches, Eliezar arrives in Nachor. While resting by "the well", he devises a test to ascertain the worthiness of a potential mate for Yitzchak. Rivkah (Yitzchak's 1st cousin once removed) meets all the criteria and Eliezar presents her with the appropriate gifts.

4th Aliya: Eliezar is invited into Bisuel's home (Rivkah's father) and he relates the entire story of his mission and his encounter with Rivkah. Eliezar asks for her hand in marriage to Yitzchak. Bisuel and Lavan (Rivka's brother) agree.

5th Aliya: Rivkah express her desire to depart immediately. Her family blesses her, and Eliezar brings her to Canaan. Yitzchak marries Rivka in the year 2108.

6th & 7th Aliyot: Avraham marries Keturah (some say she was Hagar) and has 6 more sons. Avraham dies in 2123 - 1638 b.c.e. at the age of 175. His two sons Yitzchak and Yishmael bury him in the Cave of Machpelah. Yishmael's 12 sons are listed and Yishmael dies at 137.

This week's Haftorah is from the first chapter of Kings 1. Dovid Hamelech (the King) is old and must confront the inevitable succession of the throne. His 40 year reign as King of Israel had been blessed with great success, and he had secured the security and sovereignty of the nation. Yet, in his personal life he had suffered great tragedies and hardships. Having already survived the rebellion of his son Avsholom, he must now confront the rebellion of his son Adoniyahu, and his trusted General, Yoav.

The Haftorah relates the foresight and courage of Batsheva, the mother of Shlomo, and the help of Nasan the Navi, in guaranteeing the succession of Shlomo to become the next King.

The relationship of this story to our Parsha is the planned succession of the throne. Just as Dovid must plan for the next stage of Israel's leadership; so too must Avraham accept the inevitable end and look to Yitzchak's future. Just as Dovid oversees the succession while still living, and steps aside to guarantee a proper and secure change; so too does Avraham take the necessary steps of securing Jewish national development while he is still alive and in a position to continue teaching and directing

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"Then the servant took ten camels of his master's camels." (Bereshheet 24:10)

When Eliezer, the devoted servant of Abraham Abinu, set out on his mission to seek a wife for Yitzhak Abinu, he took "ten camels of his master's camels." Rashi reveals to us what the Torah is teaching with the words "his master's camels." They were distinguishable from other camels by the fact that they would go out muzzled to prevent robbery so that they should not graze in strangers' fields.

The Midrash wonders about this description of Abraham's camels, because of a story involving Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair's donkey. One night, robbers

stole this donkey and took it to their hideout. After three days they finally released the donkey, and the donkey came home on its own. The donkey had not been fed for three days and was obviously starving. However, all efforts to feed the donkey failed, until the Rabbi was informed that the barley that the donkey was being fed was possibly demai. Demai is grain that there is a possibility that the ma'aser was not taken from it. Demai is permitted to give to an animal, but this animal was strict and didn't want to be lenient.

How is it possible that Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair's donkey is on a greater spiritual level than the camels of Abraham Abinu? If his starving donkey after three days of eating anything was so strict on himself that she refused to eat demai, why was it necessary for Abraham Abinu's camels to wear a muzzle to make sure they wouldn't steal from strangers' fields?

The Nahalat Ya'akov answers that there was no reason to be concerned that camels belonging to Abraham would graze in others' fields. The reason they were muzzled was so that others would see and learn from this righteous appearance, and muzzle their own animals as well.

The lesson is obvious. The Torah teaches that our animals must not steal. How much more careful do human beings have to be not to steal. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

Abraham asked Eliezer to get a wife for his son, Isaac, and made him swear on the holiest object (Berit Milah) that he would adhere to Abraham's command about what kind of girl to take for Yitzhak. And yet the Torah describes Eliezer as the one in charge of Abraham's household who runs all his finances. The impression is that Abraham trusted Eliezer with his whole fortune but when it came to getting a wife for Yitzhak, an oath was necessary.

We see from here what Abraham's priorities were. As far as money matters, Eliezer is trustworthy, but when it comes to misvot which can impact the future of the Jewish people, more guarantees are needed. We tend to trust people for some things but not for others. Do we have the same priorities as Abraham? The story is told that a newcomer came into town and began telling people about kosher products and everyone ate on his say so. When he asked someone for a small loan, the fellow replied, "I don't even know you and you want me to lend you money?" The newcomer then said, "You know me enough to eat based on my words but for this small loan I am not trustworthy?" This was not Abraham's priority; is it ours? Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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It Doesn't Stop

Parashat Hayeh Sara begins by telling of the death of Sara Imenu at the age of 127. Our Rabbis explain that there is a direct, causal link between this event and the preceding section, which tells of Akedat Yishak (the binding of Yishak upon the altar). When Sara heard that Abraham had placed her son upon the altar as a sacrifice, she was so startled and horror-stricken that she died.

This consequence of Akedat Yishak was orchestrated by Satan for the purpose of posing yet another religious challenge to Abraham Abinu. Even after passing the test of Akedat Yishak by showing his preparedness to sacrifice his beloved son to obey G-d, he was tested again to see if he would regret this act when faced with its adverse consequences. Even after a person performs a difficult Misva, he can forfeit its rewards and benefits if he regrets it afterward. If a person struggles to wake up early to attend the Minyan, but attending the Minyan causes him to miss a lucrative business opportunity, if he then regrets going to the synagogue he forfeits all the benefits of that Misva. The challenge of Misvot continues even after we perform a Misva. We are challenged to feel gratified over having fulfilled a Misva knowing that it is inherently and inestimably valuable regardless of any minor negative consequences that we might then have to endure. And thus Satan, after his unsuccessful attempts to prevent Abraham Abinu from going through with the Akeda, made another attempt to bring Abraham down by making it seem like a mistake, as though it caused his beloved wife's death. But Abraham passed this test, as well, never questioning G-d or his decision to obey the command of the Akeda. He recognized that Hashem's decree that Sara should die had nothing at all to do with his compliance with G-d's command, and did not regret his decision for a moment.

This series of events demonstrates how challenges are a part of life, and once we successfully overcome one hurdle, we will, invariably, encounter another. As our Sages comment, "The Sadikim have no rest – neither in this world nor in the next." The Sadikim want to consistently grow, and people grow by overcoming challenges. Therefore, they are always presented challenges, through which they are able to continuously grow in spirituality from one level to the next.

The process of education and spiritual growth must never stop. If we put a pot of water on the stove and turn off the fire every time it is about to boil, it will never boil. The same is true about spirituality. If we keep taking “breaks” and allow ourselves to decline once in a while, we will never reach our full potential. This process must be continuous and constant.

Our Rabbis noted that Yishak seems to “disappear” after the incident of the Akeda. He is not mentioned at all in the account of Sara’s death and burial, and the impression is that he was not at home. The Rabbis explained that after the Akeda, Abraham right away sent Yishak to learn in the yeshiva of Shem and Eber. After rising to great heights at the Akeda, Abraham wanted to keep the momentum going, and so he sent Yishak to learn. He didn’t give him a break, some “time off,” as we often do today. When it comes to religious growth, there cannot be any “time off.” There has to be consistency and ongoing momentum. And thus even when we take vacations from work and school, there cannot be a vacation from Torah and Mitzvot. We must keep on working and growing, recognizing that religious growth cannot ever stop.

Rabbi Wein

In truth, our mother Sarah, like many other mothers past and present in Jewish life, has not quite received her due. Rashi, quoting Midrash in describing Sarah’s life, states that all the years of Sarah’s life were “for good.” He must mean “for good” in a spiritual and holy sense, for in her physical worldly life there was little good that she experienced. Wandering over the Middle East by following her visionary husband to a strange and unknown destination; being forced into Pharaoh’s harem; being unable to conceive children; having her maidservant Hagar marry Avraham and attempt to usurp her position in the household; kidnapped by Avimelech, the king of the Philistines; seeing her precious son’s life threatened by an aggressive and violent step-brother, Yishmael; and passing away almost fifty years before her husband – this does not make for a happy resume of a life that was “all good.” In fact, it raises the eternal question of why do bad things happen to good people.

But powerless as we are to really answer that question cogently and logically, we should, in retrospect, view our mother Sarah with a renewed sense of awe and appreciation. Lesser people would have been crushed by such a cascade of events in one’s lifetime. The Mishna speaks of the ten tests in life that befell Avraham - and that he rose above all of

them. We should also make mention of the tests in life that our mother Sarah endured in her existence and that she too rose above them.

“The wisdom of women builds their home,” said King Solomon. That certainly must be said of the house of Avraham, the founding home of the Jewish people. It was Sarah’s wisdom and fortitude that was the foundation of that home.

In everyone’s life there are moments of danger, frustration, disappointment and even tragedy. Who amongst us can say in truth that all the years of our life were “all good?” This being the case we must revert to the understanding that since the “all good” in the life of our mother Sarah must perforce be interpreted in a spiritual sense – in a sense of continual service to God and man and a commitment to a higher level of living than mere physical existence and an optimistic frame of mind – so too must we search for such an “all good” interpretation in our individual lives as well.

The striving for finding such an “all good” approach to life is the essence of Torah and Jewish ritual. I once had to attend a rabbinical court here in Israel in order to register as being married. As often happens in government offices here the wait to be serviced was long and the ambience was not very pleasant. The clerk handling the matter was rather surly and disinterested in my problem.

Finally a wonderful rabbi came out of his inner office and took care of me and my need expeditiously and warmly. When I was foolish enough to begin to complain to him about the long wait and the less than forthcoming clerk, the rabbi gently shushed me and said: “Here in the Land of Israel all is good!” And when one is on that level of spirituality that is certainly true.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

A while back, a British newspaper, The Times, interviewed a prominent member of the Jewish community – let’s call him Lord X – on his 92nd birthday. The interviewer said, “Most people, when they reach their 92nd birthday, start thinking about slowing down. You seem to be speeding up. Why is that?”

Lord X’s reply was this: “When you get to 92, you start seeing the door begin to close, and I have so much to do before the door closes that the older I get, the harder I have to work.”

Something like that is the impression we get of Avraham in this week’s parsha. Sarah, his constant

companion throughout their journeys, has died. He is 137 years old. We see him mourn Sarah's death, and then he moves into action.

He engages in an elaborate negotiation to buy a plot of land in which to bury her. As the narrative makes clear, this is not a simple task. He confesses to the local people, Hittites, that he is "an immigrant and a resident among you," meaning that he knows he has no right to buy land. It will take a special concession on their part for him to do so. The Hittites politely but firmly try to discourage him. He has no need to buy a burial plot. "No one among us will deny you his burial site to bury your dead." He can bury Sarah in someone else's graveyard. Equally politely but no less insistently, Abraham makes it clear that he is determined to buy land. In the event, he pays a highly inflated price (400 silver shekels) to do so.

The purchase of the cave of Machpelah is evidently a highly significant event, because it is recorded in great detail and highly legal terminology, not just here, but three times subsequently in Genesis (23: 17, 25: 9, 49: 30, 50: 13), each time with the same formality. Here for instance is Jacob on his deathbed, speaking to his sons:

"Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites." (Gen. 49: 29-32)

Something significant is being hinted at here, otherwise why mention, each time, exactly where the field is and who Abraham bought it from?

Immediately after the story of land purchase, we read, "Abraham was old, well advanced in years, and God had blessed Abraham with everything." Again this sounds like the end of a life, not a preface to a new course of action, and again our expectation is confounded. Abraham launches into a new initiative, this time to find a suitable wife for his son Isaac, who by now is at least 37 years old. Abraham leaves nothing to chance. He does not speak to Isaac himself but to his most trusted servant, whom he instructs to go "to my native land, to my birthplace," and find the appropriate woman. He wants Isaac to have a wife who will share his faith and way of life. Abraham does not specify that she should come from his own family, but this seems to be an assumption hovering in the background.

As with the purchase of the field, so here, the course of events is described in more detail than almost anywhere else in the Torah. Every conversational exchange is recorded. The contrast with the story of the binding of Isaac could not be greater. There, almost everything – Abraham's thoughts, Isaac's feelings – is left unsaid. Here, everything is said. Again, the literary style calls our attention to the significance of what is happening, without telling us precisely what it is.

The explanation is simple and unexpected. Throughout the story of Abraham and Sarah, God had promised them two things: children and a land. The promise of the land ("Rise, walk in the land throughout its length and breadth, for I will give it to you") is repeated no less than seven times. The promise of children occurs four times. Abraham's descendants will be "a great nation," as many as "the dust of the earth," and "the stars in the sky"; he will be the father not of one nation but of many.

Despite this, when Sarah dies, Abraham has not a single inch of the land that he can call his own, and has only one child who will continue the covenant, Isaac, currently unmarried. Neither promise has been fulfilled. Hence the extraordinary detail of the two main stories in Chayei Sarah: the purchase of land and the finding of a wife for Isaac. There is a moral here, and the Torah slows down the speed of the narrative, so that we will not miss the point.

God promises, but we have to act. God promised Abraham the land, but he had to buy the first field. God promised Abraham many descendants, but Abraham had to ensure that his son was married, and to a woman who would share the life of the covenant, so that Abraham would have, as we say today, "Jewish grandchildren."

Despite all the promises, God does not and will not do it alone. By the very act of self-limitation (tzimtzum) through which He creates the space for human freedom, He gives us responsibility, and only by exercising it do we reach our full stature as human beings. God saved Noah from the flood, but Noah had to make the ark. He gave the land of Israel to the people of Israel, but they had to fight the battles. God gives us the strength to act, but we have to do the deed. What changes the world, what fulfils our destiny, is not what God does for us but what we do for God.

That is what leaders understand, and it is what made Abraham the first Jewish leader. Leaders take responsibility for creating the conditions through which God's purposes can be fulfilled. They are not

passive but active – even in old age, like Abraham in this week's parsha. Indeed in the next chapter, to our surprise, we read that after Sarah's death, Abraham takes another wife and has eight more children. Whatever else this tells us, and there are many interpretations (the most likely is that it explains how Abraham became "the father of many nations"), it certainly conveys the point that Abraham stayed young the way Moses stayed young, "His eye undimmed and his natural energy unabated." Though action takes energy, it gives us energy. The contrast between Noah in old age and Abraham in old age could not be greater.

Perhaps though the most important point is that large promises – a land, countless children – become real through small beginnings. Leaders begin with an envisioned future, but they also know that there is a long journey between here and there and we can only reach it one act at a time, one day at a time. There is no miraculous shortcut, and if there were, it would not help. It would make achievement like Jonah's gourd, that grew overnight, then died overnight. Abraham acquired only a single field, and had just one son who would continue the covenant. Yet he did not complain, and he died serene and satisfied. Because he had begun. Because he had left future generations something on which to build. All great change is the work of more than one generation, and none of us will live to see the full fruit of our endeavours.

Leaders see the destination, begin the journey, and leave behind them those who will continue it. That is enough to endow a life with immortality.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"And Sarah died" (23:2)

This was the destruction of the first and greatest Bet Hamikdash. "The wise woman builds her house" (Mishle 14:1), and "the heart of her husband safely trusted in her" (ibid. 31:2), "she stretched out her hand to the poor" (ibid. 31:20), "she opened her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of (G-d's) kindness was on her tongue" (ibid. 31:26); "she looked well to the ways of her household" (ibid. 31:27); "her husband (arose) and praised her" (ibid. 31:28); "many daughters have done valiantly, but you excelled them all" (ibid. 31:29).

Such a house never reappeared. Abraham continued in all his personal excellence, but with the passing of Sarah there came an end to the unsurpassed achievement of the first and greatest house of Israel. The destruction of the Mishkan of

Shiloh was a sad day for our nation, and we forever mourn the loss of the first and second Sanctuaries of Jerusalem. But the end of Sarah's house was an event of far greater import. The era that blessed the world with the combined idealism of Abraham and Sarah was never repeated. Although their tent serves forever as a model, yet it was in itself an eternal achievement. Rabbi Yochanan declared: "G-d shall restore the habitations of the righteous" (Berachot 58B).

Whatever is inscribed in the Torah is forever. Although Hashem wishes that men continue to make every effort to uphold and to disseminate His ways in the land of the living, yet the achievements of the righteous live on forever. Just as the holy tent of Sarah lives on in our Torah, so does it continue to exist in an indestructible manner until Hashem shall restore it to a more glorious physical existence. This is one of the purposes of inscribing these matters in the Torah, to point out that they are permanent.

We must note that also Sarah is indicated as a model for those that pursue righteousness & seek Hashem.

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