

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### YOUTH AND THE YOUNG

*“Sara’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years” (23:1)*

“YOUTH is wasted on the young” runs the old adage. When a person is young they are blessed with alacrity of mind and body, but they are also beset by the insecurities of youth and its immaturity. When a person grows older, experience brings a perspective to life which can lead to wisdom. However, the strength of our physical frame is not what it was in our youth.

Sara, however, was blessed with total emotional and spiritual maturity as a girl, and even as an old woman she retained her physical strength and agility of mind.

*“Sara’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years.”* The verse seems to use the word “years” in a redundant fashion. More economically, the Torah could have written *“Sara’s lifetime was one hundred and twenty seven years.”* Rashi tells us that the repetition of the word “years” is to convey that each phase in Sara’s life was equal. When she was one hundred, she was as if she was still twenty; meaning, when she was one hundred she still had all the advantages of youth. And even when she was twenty, she had the wisdom of an elderly person.

### WHEN IT’S A WRENCH TO BE A MENTCH

*“And Avraham prostrated himself before the members of the council...” (23:12)*

THE way a person behaves when he’s sitting alone in front of his TV is not the way he behaves

when he’s receiving an Academy Award in front of 200 million people or when he is bowing to royalty or shaking hands with the President. How much of the time do we really visualize that we are in the presence of G-d? How often do we think “G-d is watching me now. He knows exactly what I’m thinking. He sees everything I am doing.” I don’t know how many people do that too often.

Avraham faced ten tests. Most commentators explain that his final and greatest test was the *akeida* —

“...the ultimate test showed that Avraham was fit to be the father of the Jewish People — G-d’s ambassadors.”

G-d’s command to bring Avraham’s son Yitzchak as a sacrifice. However, Rabbeinu Yona (*Avos* 5:3) explains that Avraham’s tenth test was finding a grave for his wife Sara.

Why was this such a test for Avraham? Why was this the pinnacle of G-d’s testing Avraham’s mettle? How did finding a grave for Sara prove that he was worthy to be the progenitor of G-d’s representatives in this earthly realm?

Imagine a used-car salesman. With a smile right out of a toothpaste ad

which can blind at ten paces, he’ll tell you that the jalopy he’s leaning on will run for another 50,000 miles at least. When he moves his arm, the car sags like an exhausted mule.

Avraham thought he was the legitimate heir to *Eretz Yisrael*. He assumed that he could bury his beloved wife wherever he chose. However, he has to enter into a haggling match with Efron which made buying a used car look like dealing with a Rolls-Royce salesman.

Add the emotional upheaval of the *akeida*, followed directly by the news of Sara’s death, and one could forgive Avraham for treating Efron, the world’s prototypical used-car salesman, with the disdain he deserved. But is that how Avraham treated him?

*“And Avraham prostrated himself...”* Avraham treated Efron like the most honorable of people. He didn’t say “I had a bad day! My wife just died! I’m stressed out.”

Avraham remembered that Efron, a human being, deserved to be treated like the Image of G-d that he was. Avraham didn’t react to Efron according to *Efron’s* level. He behaved as a Jew should. If Avraham had a hard day, why should Efron suffer?

Sometimes the little pebbles in life’s path trip us up more easily than its giant boulders. A person who understands that life is no more than a giant test will recognize a large test. But how about someone pushing in line in front of us? Will we react with the knowledge that we are G-d’s ambassadors to the world? Will we feel that He is watching us, expecting us to bring honor to His name and to the people who bear His name? Sometimes the little annoyances of

*continued on page three*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

The life of Sara, mother of the Jewish People, comes to a close at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham buries her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham is prepared to pay its owner Ephron the Hittite the exorbitant sum which he demands for the cave. Avraham places the responsibility for finding a suitable wife for his son Yitzchak on his faithful servant Eliezer, who takes an oath to choose a wife from amongst Avraham's family and not from the Canaanites. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim, to the city of Nachor, and prays to Hashem to show him a sign so he will know whom to choose. At evening time, as he is about to water his camels, Rivka providentially appears and Eliezer asks

her for a drink of water. Not only does she give him to drink, but she draws water for all ten of his thirsty camels. (Some 140 gallons!) This extreme thoughtfulness and kindness is the sign that she is the right wife for Yitzchak, and a suitable mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother Lavan finally result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak brings Rivka into the tent of his mother Sara, marries her and loves her. He is then consoled for the loss of his mother. Avraham remarries Hagar who is renamed *Ketura* to indicate her improved ways. Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East. Avraham passes away at the age of one hundred and seventy-five and is buried next to Sara in the Cave of Machpela.

## HAFTORAH: MELACHIM I I

The need to secure the succession of the Jewish People, which is the subject of this week's Parsha, is reflected in the Haftorah: King David is coming to the end of his days (like Avraham) and his senior son, the handsome and indulged Adonijah tries to wrest the succession from Shlomo, King David's appointed heir. But King David is alerted to Adonijah's scheme by his

wife Bas-sheva and Nassan the Prophet, and the plot is foiled.

### THE WILL TO DIVIDE

The Chafetz Chaim once wrote to a rich man that he was obliged to make a clear will dividing his property between his sons, for, as we find in this week's Haftorah, if the prophet Nassan admonished King David to leave clear

instructions regarding his succession, certainly this rich man was obliged to do so. We do not find that David was annoyed at Nassan for reminding him of his mortality; rather he took steps to rectify a difficult situation. As the Chafetz Chaim wrote: "Children are known to disobey their parents and quarrel amongst themselves even during their parents' lifetime — how much more after their death!"

• Adapted from *The Midrash Says*

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## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

The first section of this week's Parsha describing the purchase of Sara's burial site contains seven references to "burying a dead person." These refer prophetically to the seven people to be buried there — Avraham & Sara, Yitzchak & Rivka, Yaakov & Leah — and the wicked Esav, whose head is buried there.

• Vilna Gaon

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# PARSHA INSIGHTS

life are more of a test that the cataclysmic events.

A Jew must be a *mentch* even when treated in a most *unmentchlich* way. That's the hallmark of a person who knows that he is standing in the presence of the King.

Because we have a hard day at the office, it doesn't mean that we can take it out on our children or our spouse. This can take enormous self-control. It takes a person who has total mastery over himself to always treat every human being, Jew or non-Jew, with dignity.

Avraham's tenth test was really two tests in one. He was under the greatest stress and he was confronted with a person who was somewhat less than a prince. Nevertheless, he accorded him honor. This, the ultimate test, showed that Avraham was fit to be the father of the Jewish People — G-d's ambassadors.

## THE HUMAN FACE

*"And Avraham rose from before the face of his dead..." (23:3)*

**S**habbos is the face of the world. G-d blessed Shabbos. Our Rabbis teach us that G-d blessed it with the radiance of the human face. This is a rather strange idea. Isn't it limiting to say that the great

purpose and final target of Creation, Shabbos, should be blessed with nothing more than the radiance of the individual human face? Doesn't this imply that G-d blessed something all-encompassing — Shabbos — with something very limited — the human face?

On closer inspection we will find that the Shabbos and the light of the human face are one and the same.

The face is the only part of the body where you can see the intellect dominating the physical. The light of wisdom illuminates the face; according to the inner light and wisdom of a person, so is the radiance of his countenance. This interior radiance shines with such power until it bursts through the flesh and bone of the skull, it breaks the wreaths of sinews of the head, until it shines out through the face like a beacon turning the flesh and blood into radiant light.

In Hebrew, the word for face is *panim*. *Panim* is spelled the same as the word *p'nim* which means "inside." The face is the only part of the human being where you can see the inside of a person. In the face, you can see the domination of the intellect over the body.

The same is true of Shabbos. Shabbos is like the face of the

Creation. When we rest on Shabbos, we reveal that face. We reveal that the purpose of the world is spiritual — we allow the spiritual core to break through the physical world. We accord spirituality its appropriate place at the pinnacle of Creation and we relegate the physical to its subsidiary role as a backdrop to holiness. Thus, the radiance of man's face revealing what is inside the physical is exactly the same as Shabbos revealing the interior of the physical world. The face of the world is Shabbos.

When a person passes from this world, this light of the intellect passes with him. Thus you can't really call the face of someone who is dead a "face," because "face" connotes that interior world which now no longer resides in the body. However, even after her passing, Sara's "face" still radiated something of that internal life. For Sara's life was taken from her with a kiss, that most gentle of journeys from this world to the next. Therefore the Torah writes that "Avraham got up from before the face of his dead..."

Sources:

- Youth and the Young* - Mayana shel Torah
- When It's a Wrench to Be a Mentch* - Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Rabbi Yissachar Frand
- The Human Face* - Pachad Yitzchak

# LOVE OF THE LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael*

## HEBRON

*"Sara died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hebron, in the Land of Canaan." (Bereishis 23:2)*

**K**iryat Arba (Town of the Four) is so called because of the four couples buried there: Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Leah." (*Midrash Rabba*)

Ancient Hebron was not only linked to the Patriarchs and Matriarchs but is also mentioned



in regard to the mission of the spies sent by Moshe to scout the land, one of whom — Kalev ben Yefuneh — was awarded this part of the land for his faithful report. It was also the seat of King David's reign for seven and a half years before making Jerusalem his capital

Hebron is today under Palestinian rule, but there is a Jewish settlement in the city and in adjoining Kiryat Arba. The Machpela Cave where the Patriarchs and Matriarchs are buried continues to attract Jewish worshippers and visitors from all over the world.

## WEEKLY DAF

PESACHIM 86 - 92

### DANGEROUS COMPANY

A group of people got together to form a company for the offering and eating of the Pesach sacrifice, and they discovered that one of their members was a fast eater with a big appetite who threatened to eat a greater share than his colleagues. Do they have a right to tell him to take his proportional portion of the sacrificial flesh and eat it apart from them? Can they claim that they originally included him only to ensure that the sacrifice be completely consumed as required by law, but that they had assumed that he would eat a normal amount? Or can he insist that since he was accepted as a paying member of the company, he was thereby given the right to eat as much as he could?

The Sages attempted to resolve this question by referring to the *mishna* which states that if one of the company's members brought in additional subscribers to the Pesach sacrifice without the consent of the other members, they can insist that he take the portion due him and eat it apart from them with the new subscribers. It would seem that the reason they can insist on this separation is that the addition of new subscribers threatens to reduce the amount of meat available to them. If so, then a fast, voracious eater should be eligible for exclusion from the company for the very same reason.

This proof is, however, rejected. Even if there were no economic consideration — for example, if the new subscribers together with the one who invited them would together eat only as much as a single member — the company would still have a right to object to eating together with them because of social reasons. The *mishna* may therefore be sanctioning separation based on people's sensitivity as to whom they share their table with, but may not give such sanction to a company which already accepted someone as a member. Their failure to previously check his eating habits can be interpreted as a consensus that he is entitled to eat as much as he likes.

The conclusion of the *gemara*, based on a *beraisa*, is that the company does have the right to set the big eater aside. This rule applies even to meals throughout the year when there is no claim to be made that they joined together for religious rather than social reasons.

Separation based on economic consideration can, however, sometimes backfire. The *gemara* tells the story of one man who joined with another in a partnership meal. When he discovered that his colleague was consuming four times his share of their common stock, he cited the above ruling and separated. He then made the same arrangement with someone else who ended up eating eight times his share. "A hundred like the first partner," he exclaimed in frustration, "are preferable to one like the present one."

• *Pesachim 89b*

### MOUNTAIN, FIELD AND HOUSE

The *Beis Hamikdash* of the future, says the Prophet Yishayahu (2:3), will be called the "House of the G-d of Yaakov." Why the G-d of Yaakov and not of Avraham and Yitzchak?

Rabbi Elazar explains that Avraham referred to the *Beis Hamikdash* as a "mountain" (*Bereishis 22:14*) and Yitzchak called it a "field" (*ibid. 24:63*). Only Yaakov referred to it as a "house" (*ibid. 28:19*) and this was the designation favored by Hashem for the *Beis Hamikdash* to which all the nations will flock in the future.

Maharsha explains this *gemara* against the background of a *midrash* about a king who wanted to build a palace and brought three good friends to the intended site. The first said that he remembered when a mountain stood there and the second recalled a field at that spot. When the third said he remembered a palace on that site, the king declared that he would name the palace he was going to build there in honor of the third friend.

The Patriarchs form the blueprint of the history of their descendants. Avraham's reference was to the first *Beis Hamikdash* which enjoyed the full protection of the Divine Presence like the security provided by a sentry on a mountain, a security which is not enduring and which ended in destruction. Yitzchak's reference was to the second *Beis Hamikdash*, which lacked some of the sanctity of its predecessor and was therefore less protected, as is a field. Yaakov, however, referred to the *Beis Hamikdash* which existed before the world was created (*Pesachim 54a*) which was the model for the third *Beis Hamikdash*, the Divine palace of the future, which will enjoy both maximum Divine protection and durability like a house.

• *Pesachim 88a*

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Name the four couples buried in *Kiryat Arba*.
2. What did Sara hear that caused her death?
3. What title of honor did the *B'nei Ches* bestow upon Avraham?
4. Where was Avraham born?
5. How were Avraham's camels distinguished?
6. What is meant by "all the good of his master in his hand?"
7. What special character trait did Eliezer seek when choosing a wife for Yitzchak?
8. Why did Avraham's servant, Eliezer, run toward Rivka?
9. Why did Lavan run to greet Eliezer?
10. When Lavan told Eliezer that the house was cleared out, what did he remove?
11. Who did Eliezer want Yitzchak to marry?
12. Aside from Eliezer, to which other people did Rivka offer to give water?
13. Lavan answered Eliezer before his father, Besuel, had a chance. What does this indicate about Lavan's character?
14. What did Rivka mean when she said "I will go?"
15. What blessing did Rivka's family give her before she departed?
16. Who was *Ketura*?
17. What gift did Avraham give to Yitzchak?
18. How old was Avraham when he died?
19. For how many years did Yaakov attend the Yeshiva of *Ever*?
20. How many times is Eliezer's name mentioned in this week's Parsha?

## SHERLOX

### SHERLOX AND THE JEWELRY MYSTERY

Watstein stood at the door of the mahogany study. "Someone's out here to see you, Mr. Holmes. He says you weren't expecting him but that it's an emergency."

"You mean the wealthy-looking, neatly-dressed man sitting comfortably in the burgundy chair with his right leg crossed over his left and his hands clasped together?" asked world famous detective Sherlock Holmes.

"Why, how in heaven did you know all that?"

"Simple. On the wall behind you I see a reflection whose shape and position indicate beyond a doubt that it originates from a highly polished shoe rest-

ing just at the left knee of someone sitting in the burgundy chair. Above that and to the right is the reflection of a diamond-studded ring, whose position indicates hands clasped about the middle. There's so much information one can gather from a simple little ring."

"Speaking of rings," said Watstein, "can you help me understand this verse: *The man took a gold ring weighing a beka, and two bracelets for her hand, their weight being ten sela.* (Bereishis 24:22)"

"Is it surprising that Eliezer would give Rivka presents, hoping to win her as Yitzchak's bride?" said Sherlock.

"Not at all," said Watstein. "But why does Rashi need to comment? Rashi says that by the *beka* weight, Eliezer hinted to the *beka* that future Jews would donate to the Temple. The two

bracelets hinted to the Two Tablets, and the weight of *ten sela* hinted to the ten commandments contained therein."

"Isn't that poetic!" said Sherlock. "The very inception of the Jewish people, Yitzchak's marriage to Rivka, is suffused with hidden metaphors symbolizing their ultimate goal: Receiving the Two Tablets containing the ten commandments!"

"But Rashi wasn't writing poetry! Rashi himself says: *I come only to explain the plain meaning of the text, or to offer aggadic explanations which answer difficulties in the text.* (Bereishis 3:8) So, I ask you, Mr. Homes: What's bothering Rashi?"

"There's so much information one can gather from a simple little ring," said Sherlock.

answer on page eight

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 23:2 - Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Leah.
2. 23:2 - That Yitzchak was almost slaughtered.
3. 23:6 - Prince of G-d.
4. 24:7 - Ur Kasdim.
5. 24:10 - They were muzzled, so they wouldn't graze in the fields of others.
6. 24:10 - Eliezer carried a document in which Avraham gave all he owned to Yitzchak so that people would want their daughter to marry him.
7. 24:14 - He sought someone who excelled in performing acts of kindness.
8. 24:17 - He saw that the waters of the well rose when she approached.
9. 24:29 - Lavan coveted his money.
10. 24:31 - Idols.
11. 24:39 - His own daughter.
12. 24:44 - To the men who accompanied Eliezer.
13. 24:50 - That he was wicked.
14. 24:58 - I will go even if you don't want me to go.
15. 24:60 - That the blessings given to Avraham would continue through her children.
16. 25:1 - Hagar.
17. 25:5 - The power of blessing.
18. 25:7 - One hundred and seventy five years old.
19. 25:17 - Fourteen years.
20. None!

## A MAN IN THE MAKING

Rina Wolfson from Israel  
<swolfson@netvision.net.il>  
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
My name is Rina and I am five years old. On Parshas Bereishis, my father asked a question at the table: "Why did Hashem say 'Let us make man?' (The Hebrew term is 'na'aseh adam.') Why did Hashem need to use the term 'na'aseh' — 'let us make' (as opposed to 'nivrah' — 'let us create')." I answered that the purpose of the creation is to follow the Torah, and that Hashem was teaching the Jewish Nation to use the term "na'aseh v'nishma" ("we will do and we will hear") when they received the Torah on Mount Sinai. Is this an incorrect answer or is there some basis in the midrash to my idea? (email submitted by Rina's mother)

Dear Rina Wolfson,

Rina, you may only be five years old, but your ideas are thousands of years old! Your 'original' thought appears in the Zohar! The Zohar writes that when creating humans, Hashem used the word *na'aseh* to parallel the *na'aseh v'nishma* that the Jewish People declared at Sinai. The connection is exactly as you explained, the world was created on the condition that the Jewish People would stand at Mount Sinai and receive the Torah.

And don't forget, Rina, the Sages also tell us that the world continues to exist only because of the words of Torah spoken by little children. So keep up the good work, and keep the world working!

Sources:

- Zohar's Intro. to the Torah, pp. 1:1 and 1:2.
- Rashi, Bereishet 1:31.
- Tractate Shabbat 119b

## JEWISH-LITE

Email@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
I am Jewish, but not Orthodox. I do not follow all 613 commandments all the time, I do not say all the prayers, I don't keep completely kosher, and I occasionally speak improper words and think improper thoughts.

As a first born male, I was redeemed from a kohen by my father. I did have a bris and pidyon haben (redemption of the first-born), and I was bar-mitzvah at 13. I try to attend synagogue regularly for Shabbos on Friday nights, and all Jewish holidays. I fast for most of Yom Kippur and the day of erev Pesach. I do not celebrate Xmas or Easter with my non-Jewish friends, and would not ever consider changing to a different religion.

At synagogue, we do not say all the traditional prayers, and we add a few "new" English prayers. I avoid pork, eating meat with milk, and other such kosher rules, but I don't necessarily eat kosher food. I rarely say a blessing over the food I eat, mainly because it's rarely kosher, and I don't know all the appropriate blessings.

My question is this: Am I doing any good at all? Do abbreviated prayers, selective mitzvos, and acknowledged Jewish identity reap any reward at all? Or by being "Jewish Lite" am I no better than someone who is completely non-observant?

I just need to feel that somehow I am contributing the greater good of Judaism by being somewhat observant instead of non-observant. Please let me know if I am making any difference by doing the little I do. Thank you.

Dear Email@Withheld,

You and I have a lot in common. I am also Jewish. I also had a *bris*, (but not a *pidyon haben* — redemption of the first born — my parents only did that for my older brother). I was also bar-mitzvah at age 13.

Like you, I also don't think of myself as "Orthodox" (although most people would call me that); rather, I think of myself as a Jew who tries to observe the Torah which G-d gave us. But, like you, I often succumb to the inexorable onslaught of human failings — laziness, desire, convenience, etc.

You wrote that you occasionally speak improper words. Did you know that more than one-third of the Yom Kippur penitential prayers are devoted to asking G-d to forgive us for sins committed through speech? Regarding proper thoughts, King David prayed: "Create within me a pure heart, G-d."

The bottom line: Everyone fails. Nobody is perfect.

So, I think my answer to your question should be evident by now. Any *mitzvot* which you perform are certainly praiseworthy and should be encouraged. (Obviously, a *mitzvah* shouldn't be done at the expense of a transgression. Examples: Friday night after sunset, lighting Shabbat candles is no longer a *mitzvah* but rather a transgression. The same goes for driving to synagogue. In such a case, the way to express your Jewish identity is to stay home!) Furthermore, your deeds can influence others, without you even knowing it; for example a Jewish friend may stop eating pork because of your example. Or, he may simply tell another person "I have a friend who doesn't eat pork," and that third party, who you may never even meet, may decide to re-think his own level of observance.

There is a danger of being "Jewish Lite," however: It could furnish you with a feeling of being "comfortable" with your observance level. That should never happen to anyone. We

all need to continually strive to grow, study and learn more and more about the Torah. Therefore, you should feel happy about the Jewish things that you do, but you shouldn't think of yourself as being at a *fixed* level of observance. Realize that you can add, if even just one mitzvah a year. Example: Get a *tzeddaka* (charity) box in your house and put in a coin (even a small one) every day (except Shabbat and Holidays). Perhaps the most important thing for you now is to study Torah on a daily, or at least weekly, basis. If you tell me where you live I can try to suggest some possible study partners for you.

## WHAT AM I, CHOPPED LIVER?

**Tom Birchmire from Needham, MA**  
<cogito@world.std.com> wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,  
Perhaps you can settle a discussion (argument) between my mother-in-law and me. She has used the expression "What am I, chopped liver?" sprinkled here and there in conversation. When I asked her what was the beginning of the joke, she replied that there isn't any — the phrase stands alone. Are you aware of the origins of the phrase? Any help will be appreciated.*

Dear Tom Birchmire,

As far as I know, the origins of the phrase are not Yiddish; I believe the phrase was originally coined in America. Being that chopped liver was always considered a side dish and not a main course, the phrase is used to express hurt and amazement when a person feels he has been overlooked and treated just like a "side dish."

## HUMAN HAPPINESS

**Peter from Slovak Republic, Bratislava**  
<luciak@ganga.gjh.schools.sk> wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,  
What is the ultimate human happiness?*

Dear Peter,

The ultimate human happiness is closeness to G-d. This is achieved by being similar to, and compatible with, G-d.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch points out that the Hebrew words *simcha* (happiness) and *tsmicha* (growth) are related. Thus, happiness comes as a result of a person growing towards his spiritual potential.

The Baal Shem Tov points out that the letters of the Hebrew word *b'simcha* (happy) can be rearranged to spell *machshava* (thought), emphasizing that happiness depends not on your situation, but upon your view of it.

**PUBLIC DOMAIN**  
*Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features*

### Re: Kosher Hospitals (Ohrnet Noach):

Bikur Cholim Hospital is also run according to Jewish Law.

- Chavivah van der Plaat <plaatjer@netvision.net.il>

### Re: "Using Step-Father's Name" (Ohrnet Shoftim):

In Ask the Rabbi, you indicated that the Yaavitz says that a child may be called to the Torah using his step-father's name if there is "absolutely no contact

between the child and his father."

This is understandable when the father has abandoned the family, but there are circumstances where the lack of contact is not what the father wanted.

To allow the father to be erased from a child's life, particularly at critical life-moments such as a bar mitzvah or wedding, is, I believe, unhealthy. And it is unfortunate, because the mere mention of the father's name serves as a reminder of an immutable reality and may create a spark that results in a re-establishment of relations.

- Name@Withheld

### Re: Hurray for Ohrnet:

I'm a graduate of Ohr Somayach's *Ohr Lagolah* program now living in a suburb of Chicago. I loved getting Ohrnet while in *Eretz Yisrael*, and would really appreciate it here, especially now that I give classes throughout the week to Jews of all backgrounds. Thank you so much. Much *hatzlachah* in your wonderful work.

- Sruly Koval, Buffalo Grove, Illinois  
<kovalhome@juno.com>

## GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Dear Ohrnet Editor,

I am hereby submitting an article for your consideration. If you do decide to publish it, please do not include my name or the city I live in. The people involved are very close to me; my name and location would immediately identify everyone despite the changes in their names. Since the incident described is an important lesson in *Shmirat Halashon*, I believe it worthwhile for your readers to learn what can happen when words are not measured before they are spoken.

Sincerely, A reader of Ohrnet

Anger is very powerful. It sometimes causes us to say and do things we later regret. Sticks and stones may break our bones but...

### WORDS WILL SOMETIMES HURT US

Malka and Shaindle are sisters. Although they live an hour's drive from each other and don't see each other often, they are in constant phone contact. Malka, *bli*

*ayin hara*, has a large family. Shaindle, however, has had difficulty having children.

Malka had just given birth to another son. Shaindle, married three years and still childless, was receiving fertility treatments. Involved with work, doctor's visits, and medical tests, she was unable to make the trip to visit her sister after she had given birth.

Malka knew her sister's problem and was quite understanding. Shaindle and her husband Feivel would be at the *brit*, of course.

On the day of the *brit*, Shaindle and Feivel arrived early, earlier than Malka and her family. Malka's mother-in-law, Yehudit, was already at the hall. "Mazal Tov," said Shaindle cheerfully, never anticipating what was about to happen.

Yehudit turned to her angrily and said, "What a selfish sister you are! Never once did you see fit to visit Malka this entire week! No wonder you have no children! Perhaps if you

were more considerate of others, Hashem would reward you!"

Shaindle went into shock at this tirade. She turned away, her eyes brimming with tears. The accusation had cut Shaindle like a knife. She was psychologically bleeding. Poor Shaindle couldn't calm down. It took a while before she could regain her composure. She couldn't look at Yehudit, it was just too painful for her to do so.

The minute the words had escaped Yehudit's mouth, she knew she had crossed a red line. She had stepped on very raw toes and felt remorse for her words — but it was too late. Her feeble attempts to apologize were ineffective. The *simcha* celebration had suddenly turned sour in just a matter of seconds.

After all these years, the memory of that encounter lingers on...

• Concept based on  
"The Other Side of the Story"  
by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

Twin brothers are born from the same mother on the very same morning. Both are perfectly healthy. Yet, the proper day for one's *brit mila* is 8 days later, while the proper day for the other one's *brit mila* is not until the 9th day. Why? [Answer next week...](#)

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## SHERLOX ANSWER!

"The *beka* and ten *sela* weights are completely ordinary for a ring and bracelets. There's nothing unusual about them at all," said Sherlock.

"So," said Watstein.

"So, why does the verse bother mentioning them?"

"I see," said Watstein. "The verse could simply have said that Eliezer gave Rivka a gold ring and gold bracelets. These are common enough objects, such that we don't need to be told their exact weight — unless it's unusually big or small. But, as you pointed out, Mr. Holmes,

there's nothing outstanding about a *beka* ring or two bracelets of ten *sela*. Hence, Rashi cites a midrash to explain why these seemingly ordinary weights are *extra ordinary*."

"Extraordinary, Dr. Watstein. Now, please show that man in..."

• Based on *Sifsei Chachamim*  
Sherlox by Reuven Subar

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### RAMBAN

22:9 The Cave of *Machpela*  
24:1 Blessed in all Things  
24:64 Rivka's Modesty  
25:8 Full of Years

### SFORNO

24:14 Prayer or Divination  
24:65 The Awe of Yitzchak  
25:8 Avraham's Death