

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT CHAYEI SARA · 27 CHESHVAN 5761 · NOV. 28, 2000 · VOL. 8 NO. 5

PARSHA INSIGHTS

JEWISH FASHION

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

Nothing is more ironic than fashion. About six months after you throw out your ultra-wide kipper-tie as being a fashion relic never to return, you see blazoned across the fashion page “The Return of the Kipper-Tie.” A year after you bid farewell to your antique bell-bottom Levi’s, they re-appear in the shops at house-mortgaging prices.

If you hang on to anything long enough, it’s bound to come back into fashion.

That’s really the history of the Jewish People. We’ve hung on to our devotion to Torah even when it was about as fashionable as a kipper-tie or a pair of winkle-pickers. Even when it looked like the Bible critics had it all their own way, suddenly a book like “The Bible as history” by Kathleen Kenyon comes along and demonstrates with cool scientific precision that the Torah’s historical narrative is accurate and that archeology has discovered nothing to contradict it. And Jews start dusting off their copy of the Torah like their old bell-bottoms.

In Germany, a hundred years ago when it was the trendy thing to treat Judaism as no more than a membership to a quaint club, when the Torah was about as fashionable as plus-fours, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch built a community that looked the modern world squarely in the eye and

showed how a Jew could live in it without compromising a single inch of his love and commitment to the G-d of Israel and His Torah.

Yes, if you hang on to something, it always comes back into fashion. But there’s another fashion. A fashion that never changes. Paris may move hem-lines up and down three-or-so feet, Milan may make necklines that soar and plunge, but the Jewish woman has her fashion — and it never goes out of style. It’s called *tzniut*.

Tzniut is usually mistranslated as modesty. It really means “private” and “bearing humility.” The Jewish woman garbs herself in *tzniut* and nothing makes her more beautiful. Not the latest from Dior or Cacharel. Not the sequins or the boas of Givenchy. The “Designer label” that lifts the Jewish woman above being a decorative dolly is *tzniut*.

The Jewish woman’s legacy of *tzniut* comes from our mother, Sarah.

Sarah passed away at the age of 127. The Torah records her age in an unusual manner. It says “*Sarah’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years.*” Why not just write “*Sarah’s lifetime was 127 years?*”

Sarah’s beauty at twenty years was the same as when she was seven. Just as a seven year-old has a beauty which is wholesome and unaffected, so Sarah at age twenty had that same unaffected beauty which neither needs nor employs cosmetics or high-fashion. An un-gilded beauty which radiates because it is concealed. That’s Jewish fashion.

• Chizkuni

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Sara, Mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum. Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avraham’s family. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of his thirsty camels.

(Some 140 gallons!) This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable Mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka’s father and her brother Lavan result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sara’s tent, 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 175 and is buried next to Sara in the Cave of Machpela.

FULL TIME JOB

It is the duty of parents to instill in their child the same Torah values by which they themselves live, and to ensure that their offspring become the next link in the chain of G-d's eternal mission. This job often continues until the parent's very last days.

This message is delivered to us both in the *Parsha* and in its parallel *haftara*. In the *Parsha*, the aging Avraham — having successfully raised Yitzchak to follow

in his ways — faces the challenge of finding a wife suitable for the future father of Israel. Avraham's job as parent wasn't finished just because his son had proved righteous. His task was not complete until he gave Yitzchak everything necessary to carry on Avraham's mission and to fulfill his own personal potential.

In the *haftara*, too, we find the ailing King David with one final task to complete. His son Adoniyahu had proclaimed himself heir to the throne, hoping David's silence would be viewed as

tacit approval. David, however, quickly made it known that his son Shlomo would be the next king. It was Shlomo who was best able to carry on David's work and complete the building of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

Our Sages tell us "The righteous have no rest in this world nor in the world to come." The righteous have no desire to sit and stagnate; rather, every opportunity for growth must be seized. As we learn from Avraham and David, there is no retirement from parenting, nor from the service of G-d.

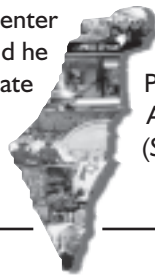
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE DESIRABLE LAND

“Why did Moshe Rabbeinu so desire to enter *Eretz Yisrael*?” asked Rabbi Simloi. “Did he have a need to eat its fruits or to satiate himself from its goodness?”

The answer, he proves, is that Moshe thus



addressed Hashem:

“Many *mitzvot* which were commanded to the People of Israel can only be fulfilled in *Eretz Yisrael*. Allow me to enter *Eretz Yisrael* so that I may fulfill them” (*Sotah 14b*).

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YIDDLE RIDDLE

What Torah mitzvah (*mitzva d'oraita*) is it that, if done one way, one blessing is said, and if done another way a different blessing is said?

Answer next week...

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

	Ramban		Sforno
22:9	The Cave of <i>Machpela</i>	24:14	Prayer or Divination
24:1	Blessed in all Things	24:65	The Awe of Yitzchak
24:64	Rivka's Modesty	25:8	Avraham's Death
25:8	Full of Years		

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THE MISSING NUMBER

A *nazir* is commanded to refrain not only from drinking wine but also from eating grapes. It is therefore possible, says the *beraita*, for him to incur a number of penalties of lashes in just one sitting. If he ate a *kezayit* each of fresh grapes, raisins, grape skins and grape pits, and he drank a *revi'it* of the juice he squeezed from those fresh grapes, he will be punished with lashes for each of these five violations, each of which is separately mentioned in the Torah (*Bamidbar* 6:3-4).

According to the Sage Abaye he will be punished with a sixth set of lashes for violating another prohibition mentioned in the same passages, to refrain "from anything which is made from the grapevine." The Sage Rava disputes this view, because that is an all-inclusive prohibition for which there is no separate lashes.

Rabbi Papa had his doubts as well as to whether Abaye's position was based on something he had learned from his teacher or rather a product of his own logic. He therefore decided on an ingenious way to determine the source. He challenged Abaye from the aforementioned *beraita* but added one word to it. Whereas the *beraita* did not explicitly mention how many sets of lashes will be incurred by the man who does all that eating and drinking, Rabbi Papa inserted the number five. His reasoning was that if Abaye had not built his position on a tradition received from his teacher, only on his own reasoning, he would have easily retracted from this position in the face of a *beraita* and conceded to the position of Rava. It was only when he saw that Abaye was adamant in his position and desperately sought to reconcile it with the language of the *beraita* that Rabbi Papa finally realized that Abaye's position was indeed based on the solid foundation of tradition. He thereupon revealed that there was no need for him to struggle for a reconciliation with the *beraita* because no number actually appeared in it, and it could well be that six sets of lashes were incurred as Abaye held.

• *Nazir* 38b

HOW THE HAIR GROWS

Does hair grow from the bottom or the top? This seemingly theoretical question has an interesting halachic ramification in regard to a *nazir*. The Torah forbade a *nazir* to cut his hair during all the days of his *nezirut* period. What if bandits captured the *nazir* at the end of his *nezirut* period and forcibly cut his hair, reducing it to what is considered the minimal level of hairiness? If we assume that hair grows from the bottom, that the piece of hair which was next to the scalp has now been elevated to a higher level after being displaced by the new growth, then the hair which

was in existence when the vow was made has been cut by the bandits. This would then require the *nazir* to once again let his hair grow before completing his *nezirut*.

But if we assume that hair grows from the top, that the section of hair which was next to the scalp remains in its place and the new growth is merely an extension of it, then the hair present when he made his vow has not been affected by the haircut forced upon him, and he has no need to let his hair grow any farther before completing his *nezirut* period with a complete haircut and sacrifices.

The *gemara* rejects a number of attempts to determine if hair grows from the bottom or top. One tried to solve this riddle from the position of lice, live and dead, found in the hair, and from the position of the hairs in a particular braided masculine hairdo. In the end, two practical proofs are cited that hair grows from the bottom.

One is from the *mishna* (*Mesechta Bechorot* 58b) which describes the method in which a man tithes his animals. As he counts the animals passing singly through a narrow passage, he marks each tenth one with paint to indicate that this animal must be set aside for a sacrifice. The paint causes the animal's wool to bind together and form a firm surface. As the wool grows, the part next to the animal's skin is soft and unaffected by the paint on the exterior. This is a proof of hairs growing from the bottom, taken from a *mitzvah*-practice mentioned in a *mishna*.

The other proof is from the experience of people dyeing their hair or beards in order to achieve a more youthful appearance. As the hair grows, the color is seen only on the exterior part of the hair, not on the portion next to the skin. (This second proof needs examination in light of the ruling of Rambam (*Laws of Idolatry* 12:10) forbidding a man to dye his hair for such a purpose because it is considered a violation of the Torah ban on a man effecting a feminine characteristic.)

• *Nazir* 39a

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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 Chet* 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, Betuel, 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 does the Torah mention by name Avraham's servant Eliezer?

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 - 175 years old.
19. 25:17 - 14 years.
20. 15:2 Once, in *Parshat Lech Lecha*.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"And he gave straw...for the camels...and food was placed before him to eat." (24:32-33)

From here we learn that a person should feed his animals before he himself eats.

• *Midrash Hagadol*

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

How would you answer this question on the Parsha?

By giving the camels water, Rivka demonstrated her sharp intelligence, plus her sensitivity to the feelings of others. How so?

ANSWER

Rivka had a dilemma. She couldn't bring home a jug of water from which Eliezer, a total stranger, had drunk. But if she spilled out the water, Eliezer would be embarrassed. She solved the dilemma by giving the water to the camels.

• *Beit Halevi*

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.org.il with your questions on any Parsha!

GOOD TIMES

From: Steve Horowitz <shorowitz7@yahoo.com>

Dear Rabbi,

I have a question. Judaism teaches us that all that happens is by Hashem and that it is all good. Further, everything that happens to us is for our good although it may be difficult to recognize the goodness at times.

Judaism also teaches us to pray, that prayer is effective. However, when we pray, we are often asking or petitioning Hashem for change. We may be asking for healing, love, and so on. Does this undermine our faith in Hashem that what happens to us is for our good? How is prayer reconciled with the first paragraph above?

Dear Steve Horowitz,

By praying, you change yourself. Thus, G-d's "decision" about what is good for you changes. It now becomes good, for example, for Bob to have a child, or to have health, or money or whatever, whereas before, it was good for him not to have those things.

Why change from one good to another? There are different levels of good. For some people, chemotherapy might be good. But being healthy is a better good.

Bad times can prompt a person to pray and develop a greater awareness of, and relationship to, G-d. Imagine a mother of two teenage daughters. The mother senses that the older daughter will benefit greatly from a close relationship to the mother, while the younger daughter will benefit from more "space." What does she do? To the younger daughter she gives a car, a credit card and a gas card, and to the older daughter she gives none of these. Which daughter do you think she will end up spending more time with?

continued on page six

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

More Answers to our Last Yiddle Riddle (Ohrnet Vayera):

Our Yiddle Riddle for Ohrnet, Parshat Vayera generated many interesting attempted answers, answers other than the answer we had in mind. We've printed a sample below:

Riddle: I was eating a snack when I had a sudden urge for some bread. I asked my Rabbi, "Should I wash my hands in the special ritual way which is usually required before eating bread?" "No," said my Rabbi. "Should I say the 'hamotzi' blessing usually said before eating bread?" "No," he said. After eating, I asked, "Should I say the 'birkat hamazon' — the 'Grace after Meals' — which is normally required after eating bread?" "No," said my Rabbi. Can you explain what's going on in the above story? Why do the "usual" halachot (Jewish Laws) seem not to apply?

I had the urge, but there was no bread to be had. So, no washing, hamotzi, or bentching.

• Gidon Ariel <gidon.ariel@techie.com>

The snack consisted of bread, therefore he does not have to wash because he already did. He does not have to say another hamotzi for the same reason. The reason he does not have to say birkat hamazon is because he threw up and is exempt from bentching.

• Judah <JDnRI44@aol.com>

He craved bread not made from one of the five grains — rice bread, for example — then it wouldn't halachically be treated as "bread."

• Yehudit Massouda <pizzapias@yahoo.com>

He's an *onein*. (An *onein* is a mourner before the burial, who is exempt from saying blessings, etc.)

• Chaim Kasdan <chaim@kasdan.com>

Years of Access:

I've enjoyed accessing your site, OHR.EDU, for years. Thank you and all your people for the wonderful job you do so faithfully, year after year. You have no idea how much your readers look forward to your weekly publications. Shalom.

• Tom Goodman, Baltimore, MD <Tom.Goodman@ssa.gov>

Indian Readers:

Shalom to you from Mumbai, India. This year I plan to give your Jewish IQ questions in our ORT Religious Issue magazine to the community of India. For this I request your permission. I would also like to include few paragraphs from your "Kinder Torah" portions of each week's Parsha. You are helping us do the *mitzvah* of *Kiruv* (Jewish education and outreach). With your help, our last years' issues were very educational for our community members, and I thank you for having given me permission to use your "Seasons of the Moon" articles. Thanks and Shalom.

• Levi Jacob, Bombay, India <ortindia@vsnl.com>

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FOOT CARE

From: Lucille G. Maloney
<MaloneyInc@aol.com>

Dear Rabbi,
Prior to the dedication of the holocaust museum, there was an exhibition in Washington of items confiscated by the Nazis. Among them were a number of implements used for foot care of the sick or elderly. Apparently there was some custom of taking care of the feet of those unable to care for themselves. Could you give me more information about this practice? Thank you.

Dear Lucille G. Maloney,
Caring for the sick is certainly a *mitzva*. Regarding foot

care for the sick, I'm not aware of any particular Jewish customs, and I'm not familiar with the items you mention.

We Jews do make a special daily blessing that thanks God "for giving me all my needs," and our commentaries explain that this especially refers to one's shoes! Why are the shoes called "all our needs?" The shoes allow a person to go out and thus interface with the world at large, and thereby achieve all his other physical and social needs.

More than one holocaust survivor has reported that breaking a shoelace in the concentration camps was like a death sentence, because the shoes would not stay on. A person could survive barefoot during forced marches and slave labor for only a few weeks, at most.

So, feet are certainly something to take care of, and to be thankful for.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving People the Benefit of the Doubt

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ENVELOPE

This happened to me last year: I was writing a letter to a very good friend of mine. Now, I don't usually write her letters, I usually talk to her on the phone, but I had so much to tell her about that I decided to write her a letter. It took me about two hours to write this letter, it came out to 20 pages (written on both sides). I put it in an envelope and put it on my desk so that when I go to the mail box later that afternoon I would bring it with to the post office. That afternoon I came into my room and the letter is gone!! And I was sure it was my sister who touched it 'cause she always touched all of my stuff without asking and she did it 'cause she knows it always gets on my nerves. So I stormed in to her room and yelled at her for touching my stuff again (and boy do I know how to yell at her!!) and then she goes like this innocent little girl (she's 10) "I didn't touch it" and after I scream at her some more she still doesn't tell me where

she hid it — and she doesn't even admit she took it!! That was it; I was "brogez" with her for the whole week. The week after that my friend calls me she says, "B., it took me two hours to read your letter!! I'm telling you I learned so much about you just from that letter than I have ever known about you in my whole life!!" I was SHOCKED!! I couldn't understand how she got my letter. I knew what I had to do; I went to my sister and begged her for forgiveness. B"H (thank G-d) my sister is smart (sometimes...) and she told me that she didn't blame me for being mad at her even though she didn't do a thing, and she said: "Maybe I should try and practice not touching your things and then you won't blame me for everything." Even though the mystery wasn't solved (I still don't know who sent that letter — maybe Eliyahu Hanavi?) but B"H everything turned out all right (even though I still didn't have anyone to blame when something of mine is missing — but hey!! You can't win 'um all!).

• B. from Israel <withheld@barak-online.net>

שאלו שלום ירושלים
"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem..."

Psalms 122