

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

HAYYE SARAH

Haftarah: Melachim I 1:1-31

NOVEMBER 11, 2017 22 HESHVAN 5778

DEDICATION: LeRefuah Shelemah Elisheva Bat Esther

The entire community joins in mourning the tragic loss of Albert Missry (Abraham ben Yaffa) 'A"H, We extend our condolences to his parents Morris and Linda, to his siblings and the entire extended family

MANHATTAN class 6PM on Wednesday afternoon CANCELLED THIS WEEK

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EDITORS NOTES – From the archive 5776 and 5775

Serving Our Inclination or Our Inclination Serving Us

We read each day in the Shema, "You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart – Levavchem" . The word should read Levchem – your heart. The Talmud asks why the double language of Levavchem and explains to us that loving Hashem with one's whole heart means serving Him with both our yetzer hatov – our good inclination and with our yetzer hara – our evil inclination. The Gaon Rabbenu Eliyahu from Vilna explains that the righteous use even their physical desires only to serve Hashem. Throughout Bereshit we have been discussing overcoming one's evil inclination or the Satan and putting it to work for you.

We begin this perasha with the death of Sarah. We explained previously that Avraham was the tikkun or the repair of Adam and Sarah was the tikkun of Chava. At the moment of Sarah's death her soul went up to heaven and returned with Rivka (although this is why the midrashim say Rivka was three years old when Eliezer came calling. It's possible that instead of being born at that moment, Rebecca was so to say reborn as at that moment taking on the soul of Chava through Sarah.) Rivka's job was to further the refinement of Chava's soul. At the same time there was a feminine aspect of the soul of Isaac which was perfected as he lay on the alter and went up as Abraham brought the knife to Isaac's neck. Isaac was then revived but with a new soul, with his own masculine soul as the Ohr HaChayim explains.

Now that three years have passed allowing Isaac own soul and Rebecca's new soul to take root, it is

time for them to get married and continue the process.

Abraham calls his trusted servant. Who is this servant? We know him as Eliezer. He is the one Abraham referred to as his heir before being blessed with his own children. He is the son of Nimrod who accompanied Abraham after Abraham emerged unharmed from Nimrod's fire at Ur Kasdim also in a sense leaving his land, his father's palace and his birthplace to serve Abraham. Eliezer is the Head of Abraham's Yeshiva. He is the general who assists Abraham at war. He rules Abraham's house, has the combination to the safe, the keys to the lock box and power of attorney to act on behalf of Avraham. Yet as we begin the story he is nameless. Although a man of many possible titles, the Torah refers to him and he refers to himself simply as Abraham's servant.

Abraham makes his servant swear. One must ask, if this is Eliezer, chief of staff with the keys and power of attorney, doesn't Abraham already trust him? The Midrash tells us that Eliezer had hopes that his own daughter would wed Isaac, but Abraham explains that Eliezer as all those of Canaan who descend from Noah's son Ham, are cursed, while Isaac, a descendant of Shem is blessed.

So Eliezer gathers ten camels and again the Midrash jumps in telling us that this 17 day journey from south of Israel all the way up to Syria was shortened to three hours. While we fret over El Al's strike this week, Eliezer had something better than even Aladdin's magic carpet; he had flying camels led by an angel. And we are told the same about the return journey as they leave after breakfast and arrive at lunch time. The Midrash comments that Hashem made the miracle so that Rebecca would not be forced to spend the night in the company of Eliezer. But what are we worried about? He had ten servants with him, she had her nursemaids and he was the Rosh yeshiva?

The story which repeats itself twice tells us how Eliezer prays and suddenly Rebecca appears offering to draw water for him as well as the camels. The

Torah comments, "Now the maiden was of very comely appearance, a virgin, and no man had been intimate with her". Why do we need to know how pretty she was and that she was a virgin with the added note that no man had been intimate with her? Rashi explains that the daughters of the gentiles would preserve their virginity but were promiscuous in unnatural ways. Scripture attests that she was completely innocent.

Eliezer places upon Rebecca a nose ring and bracelets formalizing a proxy marriage between Rivka and Isaac. The story continues with Eliezer meeting the family. Laban seeing the jewelry is hoping for more gold. "And he said, "Come, you who are blessed of the Lord. " Wait, I thought Eliezer was cursed. Then Eliezer explains that he is Abraham's servant – again, no name and no other title, just Abraham's servant. He recounts the events at the well and the proxy marriage and asks for permission to leave with Rebecca.

The verse states: "And Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The matter has emanated from the Lord. We cannot speak to you either Rah oh Tov - bad or good." Strange language! What's the meaning of bad or good?

Eliezer hands Rebecca more jewelry, clothing and then to the family he gives fruits from the Holy Land. Was their significance to the choice of gifts?

Eliezer is in a rush to leave. Rebecca says she will accompany him and along with her own servants mount the camels which take to the air and return in time to see Isaac going out to pray. Rebecca is startled by the visible holiness of Isaac and falls off the camel. Apparently she is injured in the fall. Eliezer explains all that has happened and Isaac brings Rivka to his mother's tent and is comforted from the loss three years earlier of his mother. Again the Midrash jumps in and fills in some blanks. Rashi writes: He brought her to the tent, and behold, she was Sarah his mother (the soul of Sarah his mother?) ; i.e., she became the likeness of Sarah his mother, for as long as Sarah was alive, a candle burned from one Sabbath eve to the next, a blessing was found in the dough, and a cloud was attached to the tent. When she died, these things ceased, and when Rebecca arrived, they resumed.

A stranger Midrash explains why it was necessary to test Rivka and see if she truly was virtuous like Sarah who found herself with a snake like person with Pharaoh in Egypt and again with Avimelech in Gaza. We are told in one midrash Abraham cautioned Isaac to suspect Eliezer. We are told in another, that Isaac

suspected Eliezer of sleeping with Rebecca on the way, and Eliezer needed to justify himself to his master. She had somehow lost her betulim (the sign of her virginity).

So now the Rosh Yeshiva, the general, the keeper of the safe and securities, the ruler of Abraham's house is accused both by Abraham and Isaac of sleeping with the young Rebecca sometime during that three hour return trip while accompanied with maids and servants?

The Midrash continues with Rebecca coming to the aid of Eliezer. "Heaven Forbid! Eliezer did not sleep with me, but in falling from the camel I lost the sign of my virginity. Let us travel to that place where I fell, and perhaps Hashem will perform a miracle and we will find there the blood of virginity."

"And so did they do; they went and discovered the blood on the tree such that she was a mukat etz {one who had lost her virginity as a result of impact}. And this blood, {the angel} Gabriel guarded so that no bird or wild animal consumed it."

Finally the midrash closes, "And since he suspected Eliezer where he had done nothing wrong, and he had faithfully performed the task set by Avraham, he merited to enter Gan Eden alive." And we no longer hear of Eliezer.

Eliezer is cursed, the son of Nimrod, the son of Cush, the son of Cham, the spiritual child of Kayin. Within Eliezer is a part of the nachash – the snake of Eden. The snake should have served man and is depicted on a flying camel. The snake who attacked Chava pushing her into the tree and polluting her in the process sought to break up the marriage of Adam and Chava. Now he arranges the marriage. Rebecca is pure as Chava at creation before she sins. Eliezer and with him that part of the snake who was cursed is now, in being faithful to his mission blessed by none other of Laban, who through his words lifts the curse. The snake who found Chava naked in the garden now brings her reincarnated in Rivkah clothing. The snake that prevented us from eating of the other fruits of the garden now brings those fruits from the Holy land to her family. The snake who challenged man succumbs under Abraham and takes the title he should have borne, man or Abraham's (who perfected man, Adam), servant. And in this case it is the tree which bears witness to his innocence.

Adam and Chava were cursed in separating themselves from G-d, in bringing bread through the sweat of the brow and in distancing themselves from the supernal light of creation which was hidden away.

Rivka as the reincarnation of Sarah continues the tikkun of Chavah. She enters the tent where “a candle burned from one Sabbath eve to the next” and hidden within that flame is the supernal light of creation. Instead of bread being cursed, we are told, “a blessing was found in the dough”. And finally where Adam and Chava disconnected from the shechina, she represents the opposite where “a cloud – representing the shechina or Divine presence - was attached to the tent”.

And Eliezer allows even that part of the snake to return to Gan Eden alive.

Lots of stories in this story, but within it we find one huge lesson. Each of us has within us a piece of that snake as Noah's wife Naamah was a descendant of Kayin and we all descend from her. The Talmud says, all of us exaggerate, most of us lie, many of us steal and some of us commit sexual indiscretions. This is the snake in each of us. Our test each and every day is to resist and to eventually subjugate that snake. Abraham did it. Sarah and Rebecca did it. And we will see this again and again as we continue through the book of Bereshit. We need to remember that we also have the DNA of the avot and imahot and where they succeeded, so can we!

May we each be successful and may each of our homes be blessed with the supernal light of creation, with a blessing on our dough, our parnassa, our health and our happiness. And finally with the shechina – the cloud of Shalom and G-d's presence, resting over us.

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

HaMachpelah – Connecting Heaven and Earth

Four times this week, Shabbat afternoon, Monday and Thursday morning and again on Shabbat, we will have read the opening chapter of the portion of Chaye Sarah; seventeen of twenty verses relating to the purchase of the field and cave of Machpelah by Abraham our father from Ephron the Hittite for 400 Large Shekel of Silver.

We read that Sarah died in Kiryat-arba which is Hebron in the land of Canaan". Abraham returns from the binding of Isaac and Sarah has died. Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. His pain must have been enormous and although we said that the binding of Isaac was the last of Abraham's tests, this too must have been an enormous trial. G-d has promised him the entire land from north to south, from east to west, everywhere his feet passed, yet he

does not even have a six foot plot to bury his wife and must go begging.

After a while, he stood up and spoke to the children of Het, requesting a place to bury his dead among them. They acknowledge his request and promise that for Abraham “the lord and prince of G-d”, he may bury Sarah wherever he likes. Abraham rises again to speak, and bows to them requesting to purchase at full value, the cave of Machpelah from Ephron located at the end of his field. Ephron rises – lots of rising - and states that he will give Abraham, not only the cave, but the entire field. The negotiation continues and Abraham again requests to pay. Ephron sets the price at 400 Shekel, for between us, what is the importance of money. I always felt that Abraham was meant to counter offer as is the way of the Middle Eastern market. Instead he confirms and counts out the money in front of everyone and takes possession.

The burial of Sarah appears to be the first commercial transaction mentioned in the Torah. If it is a study in business and negotiating skills, who seems to win? It appears that Ephron laughed all the way to the bank for selling that worthless cave for such an exorbitant amount. And perhaps Abraham chose not to negotiate so that in the future no one could ever say that the field and the cave were not purchased fairly. Written for all to see is how one of the original Palestinians sold the land to Abraham. Unfortunately what was written didn't leave much of an impression on Moshe Dayan, but more about that later. Yet what perhaps was a dark useless cavern to Ephron, was so much more to Abraham. The Midrash says that when Abraham was ready to slaughter the calf for his guests, the calf ran away. Abraham chased it all the way to the cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

A portal in science fiction is a technological or magical doorway that connects two distant locations separated by space and/or time. It usually consists of two or more gateways, with an object entering one gateway leaving via the other instantaneously. According to the kabbalists, and according to many who follow Sephardic tradition, prior to doing any misvah, we recite a short prayer called the Leshem Yichud in Aramaic. Loosely it translates as follows: “For the sake of the unity of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and His Shekhina, in love and awe, and in awe and love to unite the letters Yod Hey with Vav Hey in a perfect union, in the name of all Yisrael, behold I have come to perform this mitzvah”. In my mind (and as I am not a kabbalist, I may be very wrong) ... we have in mind to draw down that which is above signified by the first two letters of Hashem's name, the Yud and the Heh – perhaps we

can imagine the holiness or the light - to that which is below signified by the last two letters – the vav and the heh. At the same time we who are below seek to raise the lower world, to the higher world – imagining bringing the darkness up to light or the physical up to spiritual and unifying all.

After the purchase of the field by Abraham from Ephron, the verse states that the field rose. How does a field rise? Rashi suggests that the status of the field rose from that of land of a commoner to that of land of a king, but perhaps there is more to it. The International Bible Encyclopedia explains HaMachpelah as - The name of a piece of ground and of a cave purchased by Abraham as a place of sepulcher. The word is supposed to mean "double" and refers to the condition of the cave. It is translated "double cave" (to diploun spelaion) in the Septuagint. Rashi states that the burial place was also known as "Ma'arat Ha'Machpelah," the cave of Machpelah, meaning the double cave, because it consisted of a "bah'yit," a lower floor, with an upper floor on top. An alternative explanation cited by Rashi, explains that the cave was "doubled," with only married couples buried there.

Abraham refers to the cave as HaMachpelah, there is the letter Heh at the beginning and the letter Heh at the end. The Zohar tells us that the concept of the doubling of the letter Heh and the cave of doubles is highly significant in connecting the above with that which is below.

I though kept coming back to this idea of a portal. The 16th century sage, Rav Avrohom Azulai in his sefer Chesed L'Avrohom discusses this portal. He explains that Hashem's wisdom decreed the making of a portal from the Cave of Machpelah to the Garden of Eden in order that the souls of the righteous be able to pass through directly without encountering any harmful creatures.

Adam and Chavah knew this secret and therefore they endeavored to be buried there, and after they were buried there the mouth of the cave was sealed so that no one would know about the specialness of the place. That was until Abraham discovered it. The Zohar Hadash on Ruth explains: Hashem Himself created Adam and He Himself took care of Adam at his death. No one knew of Adam's burial place until Abraham came, entered the cave and saw him. As Abraham entered, the place was filled with the scent of the Garden of Eden and the voice of the ministering angels saying: "Adam is buried here. Abraham and Isaac will be prepared for this place." Abraham saw the lit candle and went out. At that moment he developed a desire for the place.

HaMachpelah is in many ways the symbol of connecting the upper world and the lower world as are those who are buried there with Adam and Eve. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah are all symbolic of drawing the light of the upper worlds down and raising the lower world to the light. What Ephron saw as a dark cave was actually a cave of light.

We have written previously about the miraculous single handed liberation of the area in 1967 by the Chief Rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces, the late Major-General Rabbi Shlomo Goren, who with his driver conquered a city of 80,000 Arabs. He was the first Jew to return to Hebron and enter the Cave of Machpelah in seven hundred years.

Driving into Hebron, Rabbi Goren was greeted by the sight of white sheets, hung from roof-tops and windows, throughout the city. He was astounded, but understood. In the summer of 1929, Arab residents of Hebron had massacred 67 Jews and wounded many others. The 1967 Arabs of Hebron were, very plainly, scared of Jewish retaliation. So, they did not fire one shot. Instead they hung white sheets from windows and roof-tops.

Rabbi Goren quickly made his way to the Cave of Machpela. Finding the huge doors bolted, he tried breaking in by shooting at the lock, firing his Uzi submachine gun. Finally, after getting into Ma'arat HaMachpela he blew the Shofar, as he had done 24 hours earlier at the Western Wall.

Rabbi Goren hung an Israeli flag outside the Ma'ara and brought a Sefer Torah inside. The next day he received a telegram from Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan. It read, "Take down the flag, take out the Sefer Torah, and everyone who enters must take off his shoes, because the building is a Mosque!" Rabbi Goren sent back a telegram saying, "The Sefer Torah is Kodesh (holy) - it stays. The flag means to me what it means to you. If you want to remove it, do so. I will not touch it."

Dayan sent an officer into Hebron to remove the flag and Torah. Since then, Jews have been struggling to regain their prayer rights at the site, still run by the Muslim Waqf that took control during the Arab conquest. Many restrictions are imposed on Jewish prayers and customs at the Tomb of the Patriarchs despite the site's significance, primacy and sanctity in Jewish heritage and history.

Yet we must endeavor to go to HaMachpela, perhaps second in holiness only to the Temple itself. We

should draw from the power of the Avot buried there as our ancestor Caleb did and all be a part of drawing holiness to earth and raising earth up to holiness.

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha **Chayah Sara- Eliezer finds a wife for Yitshak**

- 1- Sara dies. Abraham buys a burial plot for her in Ma'arat Ha'machpela.
- 2- Abraham sends Eliezer to find Yitshak a wife
- 3- Eliezer sees Rivka by the well
- 4- Eliezer meets Betuel and Laban
- 5- Rivka meets Yitshak and marries her
- 6- Abraham marries Ketura and has 6 children. Abraham dies
- 7- The children of Yishmael. Yishmael dies.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE **"Yitshak went out for a conversation in the field, toward evening" (Beresheet 24:63)**

Rashi explains that the word דַּבָּר usually translate "to speak" is used here as a reference to prayer. When Yitshak went out to the field, it was to pray. It's interesting that this very week that we moved the clock back to end Daylight Savings Time, the perasha mentions minhah, the prayer instituted by Yitshak Abinu.

We start the day with shaharit before we get involved with the day's activities. In the evening we pray again, when the day's work is done. Minhah, this unique conversational prayer, can catch us in the middle of work, now more than ever with the new "winter clock." The minhah of a simple Jew is awesome. He is in the middle of a busy market day, trying to strike a deal, when suddenly he realizes the sun is about to set. He dashes off to the corner to pray minhah. He tries his best to pray with a minyan. It may not be with the greatest kavanah (concentration), but it demonstrates the capacity of a Jew to snap out of being completely involved in his mundane life and within the time it takes to say "Ashre," he steps forward to talk to the Boreh Olam.

A world-renowned cardiologist from St. Louis was introduced to the Torah way of life. As a result, whenever he would visit Israel, he would pay a medical visit to Rav Shach zt"l. Rav Shach told him, "I envy your minhah!" He described the scene in the Cardiology Department of the St. Louis Medical Center. The professor's secretary handles a constant stream of phone calls from patients requesting an appointment to see the professor, from medical staff requiring guidance, and from colleagues from around the world seeking a consultation. At 4:00 in the afternoon, everything is put on hold. "The

professor is saying his afternoon prayers – call back in 15 minutes." Concluded Rav Shach, "that type of Kiddush Hashem I can't achieve with my minhah."

The Kli Yakar writes that Yitshak's prayer was answered immediately. As he finished, "he saw camels coming..." 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 Yitshak. 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 Yitshak, 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? Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Old Dog, New Tricks

Climbing the ladder to success is oftentimes more taxing than struggling to the top of Mount Everest. Daily problems necessitate constant improvement of the systems and procedures needed to remain on the cutting edge. It is really amazing how much you can improve and change as you grow your business – or personality.

You may feel that you can eventually reach the horizon, the furthest spot you can see, the point past which you can go no further. However, just when you think you can grow no more, someone new comes along with a simple suggestion – a slight change – that yields fantastic results.

We must always be open to suggestions and constructive criticism. We must constantly question the status quo. Improvement has no upper limit.

Even an "old dog" can learn "new tricks." These, in turn, can open new vistas of opportunity and doorways to success. In order to succeed, you don't have to find something new – just new ways to do old things better. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Parashat Chayei Sarah tells of the death of our matriarch Sarah, Avraham's wife. Sarah was originally named "Sarai," and only later (Bereishit, chapter 17) did G-d change her name to "Sarah." What does the name "Sarah" signify, and how does it differ from "Sarai"?

The Rabbis explain that the word "Sarai" means "control over the individual," in the singular form, whereas "Sarah" means "control over everyone." G-d called Sarah by this name to indicate that she controlled the entire world, that her control and dominion had no limits. The obvious question arises, over whom exactly did Sarah exert control? She wasn't a queen; she had no monarchical power or authority over other people. How, then, are we to understand the name "Sarah," the reference to her unlimited control?

The answer is that she controlled the world, rather than allowing the world to control her. Life is full of crises, challenges and trials, and most people lack the fortitude to properly confront and deal with these situations. We often buckle under pressure and lose control over our lives. Rather than retaining our composure and seizing control, we become victims of the world, of our own lives. Sarah most certainly had a crisis-ridden life. There is no need to describe the pain and frustration of ninety years of infertility. And yet, throughout the years of anguish and disappointment, she managed to maintain her dignity, the warm hospitality extended to her many visitors, and the aura of peace and serenity in her home. What more, twice Sarah was kidnapped. Both in Egypt and in Gerar, she was abducted by force, brought to the king without her consent. Such an experience – even had it occurred just once – would normally break a person's spirit and send him or her into despair and perhaps even dysfunction. But Sarah was a woman of control and dominion. She controlled her life, and refused to allow these otherwise traumatic experiences to overcome her. She triumphed over hardship and frustration, rather than fall victim to them.

How does one achieve such control? From where does a person like Sarah draw the strength to overcome the vicissitudes of life and retain his or her control and composure?

The answer, most likely, is that this power stems from the belief that nothing in the world happens by

chance; it all happens by design. G-d never makes a mistake; there is no such thing as an angel misunderstanding instructions, or as something that occurs to the "wrong guy." The Almighty knows what He is doing, even when we cannot see or understand why things happen as they do – and we often don't. If we firmly believe that G-d's hand lies behind all that transpires, we won't break, we won't lose our control. We will instead have the confidence to confront the challenges of life and overcome them, knowing that it is G-d who presented us with these challenges for a particular purpose.

Indeed, this can be seen in Sarah's own life. The Torah tells that G-d punished Avimelech, king of Gerar, for abducting Sarah by afflicting him and his entire household with infertility, and He demanded that Avimelech beseech Avraham to pray on his behalf for this disorder to be cured. And the Gemara says that because Avraham, who himself longed for a child, prayed that Avimelech and his household be cured from infertility, he was himself blessed with a child. Yitzchak was born after – and as a result of – Avraham's prayer on behalf of Avimelech.

It turns out, then, that Sarah was blessed with a son as a result of her abduction by Avimelech. Such a painful and frightening experience ultimately yielded the fulfillment of her wishes and prayers of ninety years.

Not always will we understand why things happen in life as they do, but by firmly believing, as Sarah did, that everything is carefully designed by G-d, and that only He knows what is best, we, too, can take control over life, rather than allowing life take control over us.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
A CENTURY OF BALFOUR**

In November 1917, amidst the then stalemate and endless carnage of the Great War – World War I – the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour sent a letter to Lord Rothschild in London offering official governmental support for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. This letter has become enshrined in Jewish history as the Balfour Declaration.

This was the first time in Western history that any country, let alone one of the then major world

powers, acknowledged the Jewish right to return to and rebuild its ancient homeland. The letter itself was the usual diplomatic triumph of appearance over substance. It provided the British government plenty of wiggle room to negate, if it wished, the implicit promise of helping to create a Jewish state in Palestine.

But the Jewish world was electrified and exhilarated by the publication of the Balfour letter. Chaim Weitzman, then a chemist living in England and one of the main leaders of the Zionist movement, declared it to be the vindication, after only twenty years had passed from Herzl's dream of a Jewish state.

The son of the Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Hacoen, writes in his memoirs that his father donned his Shabbat clothing upon hearing the news and stated that "the matter (of Jewish redemption) has now begun and that we should be careful not to ruin this opportunity." Rav Kook, then the rabbi of the Federated Synagogues in London, said that the letter was the sole positive result of the cataclysm of the Great War. Others were less enthusiastic but all recognized that something of historical note had transpired.

The Balfour Declaration was specifically included in the terms of the mandate that the League of Nations granted to Great Britain, to rule over Palestine after the Versailles Treaty that formally ended World War I. However the violent riots of the Arabs against Jewish immigration and British rule in Palestine forced the British to slowly but inexorably repudiate the commitment they made to the Jews.

By 1936, with the issuance of a Foreign Office "white paper" and the subsequent anti-Zionist recommendations of the Peel Commission, the Balfour Declaration was completely nullified by British policies in Palestine and in the Middle East generally. Neither Britain nor the Arabs were willing to countenance the idea that a Jewish state could successfully exist in Palestine. And thus after World War II Great Britain became openly hostile to Jewish immigration to Palestine and to the existing Jewish population already firmly ensconced in the country.

This resulted in open warfare between Jewish militia groups and the British forces – over one-hundred-thousand strong – with bitterness and casualties constantly rising. Britain detained over thirty thousand Jewish refugees from the Holocaust in prison camps on Cyprus and refused to allow any Jewish immigration into Palestine. The situation was desperate on both sides but England finally cracked,

announcing its withdrawal from Palestine to take place on May 15 1948. And the rest is miraculous history.

In purely rational and logical dimensions, the Balfour Declaration was a con-game tactic, an illusion much more than a reality. It was worded ambiguously, in such a way that the Jewish national home was contingent on not affecting the rights of the Arab population of the area. In effect, this precluded any Jewish national home from ever coming into existence. But the Jewish world generally ignored this inconvenient fact.

The Balfour Declaration served to grant legitimacy - moral, if not exactly legal – to the hopes of the Jewish people to return as a sovereign national entity to its ancient homeland. It was an emotional triumph for the Jewish people. It revitalized the Zionist movement after the horrors of the Great War. It generated immigration from Eastern Europe and, in hindsight, we can certainly conclude that those who left Europe then were saved and most of those who remained were doomed and destined for destruction.

The Balfour Declaration was an emotional impetus to the idea that the exile of Israel could and would diminish and end. There can be no greater weapon for progress than the psychological belief that positive change is about to happen. The Balfour Declaration provided that psychological boost for the Jewish psyche, when the world they were accustomed to living in was collapsing all around.

That by itself was and is of inestimable value to us and that is why this 100 Anniversary commemoration is of justified importance.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The World's Oldest Man

On 11 August 2017, the world's oldest man passed away, just a month short of his 114th birthday – making him one of the ten longest-lived men since modern record-keeping began. If you knew nothing else about him than this, you would be justified in thinking that he had led a peaceful life, spared of fear, grief and danger.

The actual truth is the opposite. The man in question was Yisrael Kristal, Holocaust survivor. Born in Poland in 1903, he survived four years in the Lodz ghetto, and was then transported to Auschwitz. In the ghetto, his two children died. In Auschwitz, his wife was killed. When Auschwitz was liberated, he was a walking skeleton weighing a mere 37 kilos. He was

the only member of his family to survive.

He was raised as a religious Jew and stayed so all his life. When the war was over and his entire world destroyed, he married again, this time to another Holocaust survivor. They had children. They made aliyah to Haifa. There he began again in the confectionery business, as he had done in Poland before the war. He made sweets and chocolate. He became an innovator. If you have ever had Israeli orange peel covered in chocolate, or liqueur chocolates shaped like little bottles and covered with silver foil, you are enjoying one of the products he originated. Those who knew him said he was a man with no bitterness in his soul. He wanted people to taste sweetness.

In 2016, at the age of 113, he finally celebrated his bar mitzvah. A hundred years earlier, this had proved impossible. By then, his mother was dead and his father was fighting in the First World War. With an almost poetic sense of fittingness, Yisrael died on erev Shabbat Ekev, the parsha that includes the second paragraph of the Shema with its commands to wear tefillin and teach Torah to your children, "so that you and your children may live long in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors."

Yisrael Kristal faithfully did both. On his bar mitzvah he joked that he was the world's oldest tefillin-wearer. He gathered his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren under his tallit and said, "Here's one person, and look how many people he brought to life. As we're all standing here under my tallit, I'm thinking: six million people. Imagine the world they could have built." This was an extraordinary man.

His life sheds light on one of the most tantalising verses in the Torah. Describing the death of Abraham, our parsha says that he "breathed his last and died in good old age, old and satisfied" (Gen. 25:8). His is the most serene death in the Torah. Yet consider his life, fraught as it was with trial after trial.

To pursue the call of God, he had to say goodbye to his land, his birthplace and his father's house and travel to an unknown destination. Twice, famine forced him into exile, where his life was in danger. Promised countless children – as many as the dust of the earth and the stars of the sky – he remained childless until old age. Then God told him to send away his son by Sarah's handmaid Hagar. And if that trial were not heartbreaking enough, God then told him to sacrifice his only son with Sarah, Isaac, the one whom God had told him would be his spiritual heir and bearer of the covenant into the future.

Seven times promised a land, when Sarah died, he owned not a single square inch of territory in which to bury her, and had to entreat the Hittites to let him buy a field and burial cave. This was a life of disappointed hopes and delayed fulfillments. What kind of man was this that the Torah can say that he died "in good old age, old and satisfied"?

I learned the answer to this question through a series of life-changing encounters with Holocaust survivors. They were among the strongest, most life-affirming people I have ever met. For years I wondered how they were able to survive at all, having seen what they saw and known what they knew. They had lived through the deepest darkness ever to have descended on a civilisation.

Eventually I realised what they had done. Almost without exception, when the war was over, they focused with single-minded intensity on the future. Strangers in a strange land, they built homes and careers, married and had children and brought new life into the world.

Often they did not talk about their experiences during the Shoah, even to their spouses, their children and their closest friends. This silence lasted, in many cases, for as long as fifty years. Only then, when the future they had built was secure, did they allow themselves to look back and bear witness to what they had suffered and seen. Some of them wrote books. Many of them went around schools, telling their story so that the Holocaust could not be denied.[1] First they built a future. Only then did they allow themselves to remember the past.

That is what Abraham did in this week's parsha. He had received three promises from God: children, a land, and the assurance that he would be the father, not of one nation but of many nations (Gen. 17:4-5). At the age of 137, he had one unmarried son, no land, and had fathered no nations. He uttered not a single word of complaint. It seems that he realised that God wanted him to act, not to wait for God to do the work for him.

So, when Sarah died, he bought the first plot in what would become the Holy Land, the field and cave of Machpelah. Then he instructed his servant to find a wife for Isaac, his son, so that he might live to see the first Jewish grandchildren. Lastly, in his old age, he married again and had six sons, who would eventually become progenitors of many nations. He did not, except briefly, sit and mourn the past. Instead he took the first steps toward building the future.

That, in his own way, is what Yisrael Kristal did – and

that is how a survivor of Auschwitz lived to become the world's oldest man. He too died "in good old age, old and satisfied."

That is what the Jewish people did collectively when, a mere three years after standing eyeball-to-eyeball with the angel of death at Auschwitz, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the Jewish State in our people's ancient homeland, the land of Israel. Had world Jewry sat passively and wept from then till now for the murdered generations of European Jewry, it would have been an understandable reaction. But it did not. It was as if the Jewish people had said collectively, in the words of King David, "I will not die but live" (Ps. 118:17), thereby giving testimony to the God of life. That is why the West's oldest nation is still young, a world leader in life-saving medicine, disaster relief, and life-enhancing technology.

This is a transformative idea. To survive tragedy and trauma, first build the future. Only then, remember the past.

[1] For two fascinating portraits of how encounters with the Holocaust and its survivors were transformative for young Americans, see the films Paper Clips (2004) and Freedom Writers (2007).

Rav Kook on the Perasha Burial in the Double Cave

According to tradition, Sarah was not the first person to be buried in the Machpelah cave in Hebron. Already buried there were Adam and Eve. Subsequently three more couples joined them: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah.

Why was this burial cave called Machpelah? Machpelah means 'doubled.' The Sages in Eiruvim 53a explained that it is a double cave, containing two rooms or two floors. The Talmud tells of one scholar who risked entering the cave. He found the Avot (the Patriarchs and Matriarchs) in one room, and Adam and Eve in the second.

What is the significance of the Machpelah cave having two rooms? In general, what is the function of burial?

Two Paths: There are two paths of spiritual growth and enlightenment, each with its own advantages. The first path utilizes our natural faculties of reasoning and analysis. When functioning properly, our powers of intellect can achieve wonderful results. They enable us to acquire precious character traits, and serve God through an inner awareness.

However, the mind is bound and influenced by the body. When the body is swept away by cravings for physical pleasures, the mind also loses its direction. These physical desires can distort our perceptions and warp our reasoning, and we are left without guidance to enlightened living.

Therefore, God created a second means for spiritual progress: the Torah. The Torah is independent of the physical body, unaffected by its proclivities and desires. It is an immutable guide to the path of integrity and holiness. Certainly the powers of the human mind can never provide for the same level of sanctity as that attained through the God-given instructions of the Torah and its mitzvot.

Yet, the path of the human intellect retains a special advantage. The observance of mitzvot, while very lofty, has no direct influence on the body itself. The body is still attracted to physical desires, and remains at odds with the Torah's spiritual goals.

Optimally, the two methods should be combined. If our performance of mitzvot can awaken our hearts and inspire our minds, a harmony is established between our physical actions and our inner awareness. Since our mental faculties are part of our basic nature, when the mind connects with the Torah, the physical side also becomes integrated with the precepts of the Torah. This refinement of the body could not have occurred without combining together the Torah with our natural powers of intellect and reason.

Death and Burial: After the sin of Adam, death was decreed upon humanity. This was not an arbitrary punishment. The purpose of death is to separate body and soul, enabling both to be repaired and refined. The soul, unburdened with the body's physical desires, is mended and refined in the World of Souls.

The body also requires spiritual correction. It too was formed in God's image, and has tremendous spiritual power when it complements the holiness of the soul. While the soul is corrected in the World of Souls, the body is repaired through burial, as it returns to its original elements.

Refining the Body: What does this have to do with the Machpelah cave? Burial in the double cave is a metaphor for the two methods by which the body is refined and elevated.

The first method, utilizing human intelligence and reason, is exemplified by Adam and Eve. The first

man and woman were created with the highest level of pristine talents and powers. With their robust mental faculties, they embodied the use of native intellect and reasoning for spiritual advance.

The Patriarchs and Matriarchs, on the other hand, were the origin of the Jewish people, paving the way for the Torah's revelation at Sinai. They represent the second spiritual guide, that of the Torah.

The double burial cave of Machpelah combined together these two paths. One room contained Adam and Eve, the pinnacle of natural intellectual capability. The second room hosted the Avot, the progenitors of the Torah. The name of the city, Hebron, comes from the word *hibur* ('connection'), hinting at the combination of both paths of elevating the body. (Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 53-55. Adapted from Midbar Shur pp. 259-262)

Rabbi Meyer Laniado Abraham Abinu and Business Ethics

When making a transaction, do we make sure we are absolutely clear as to the terms of the agreement or do we say "don't worry about it, we can figure out the price later?" Are we careful to define the price before the transaction? Do we discuss all stipulations and what is included in the deal? One of the lessons we learn from Abraham is to clarify all details of a transaction to ensure all expectations are clear and there are no disputes later. Abraham refuses to finalize a deal that did not specify the terms. He ensures that the details of his purchase of a burial plot for Sara are unambiguous and transparent.

After Abraham eulogizes Sara, Abraham turns his attention to purchasing a burial plot. The following details of his negotiations should be noted. We learn lessons from our parents, grandparents and forefathers not solely based on what they say, but on how they behave. We learn about Abraham's value of *sedaqa umishpat*, justice and righteousness, from Abraham's response to the destruction of Sedom, and similarly, we learn about proper business etiquette from Abraham's dealings with Ephron.

Abraham's first step is to go to the public square, at the gates of the city, and addresses the crowd. He asks them to give him a burial plot, but his intention is to purchase[1]. Properly understood, Abraham was clarifying that he was not looking for temporary property usage, but full ownership rights. As a foreigner he did not have rights to acquire property. This is why he starts his dialogue with the term *tenu*, give, recognizing that, the right to purchase from the townspeople would be giving him favor to allow him

to purchase land[2].

The people of Het, the Hittites, respond to Abraham and express that he is not only as a citizen with full rights but a dignitary. They grant Abraham rights to bury anywhere, including land allotted to kings and noblemen. They tell him that the land is his for the taking, seemingly without payment[3].

Abraham is not comfortable with these unclear terms. Abraham bows with gratitude, but is possibly also lowering himself, making the point that he does not want to be granted land as a dignitary. He is not comfortable burying Sarah in land that he does not own, or that is given to him without clear delineated terms. To concretize the deal, Abraham tries to move the conversation towards a purchase and requests a meeting with the owner of the property, Ephron. In his request Abraham states explicitly, publicly, *betokhekhem*, that he wants to pay full price, *keseef male*. He does not want to be 'gifted' the land.

Ephron responds directly to Abraham from amongst the crowd. He throws in the entire surrounding field, and says: 'the field I have given to you and the cave that you want for burial, it is yours. Everyone standing here today is witness that I have given it to you, bury your deceased.' What exactly is the offer of Ephron? He says that he is giving the field to Abraham, but the stipulations are not articulated. Is there a term or use of restrictions? Could the land be taken back by Ephron later? Who would be responsible for damage or appreciation of the property? Without clear terms, Ephron could then say that he meant the gift was temporary and that Abraham is responsible for any damages. A 'loose transaction' like this causes more distress since expectations are not clear, and terms may not be what one had in mind. How difficult of a situation would it be if Sara's bones had to be moved to make way for a construction project by Ephron and Sons Real Estate Firm?

Abraham's answer is that he will not bury Sara until a clear deal for the property is made. Abraham tells Ephron that he has already set aside money for Ephron to take, and only upon the acceptance of these funds will he bury Sara. Ephron responds, 'no worries my brother, what is a small price of \$100,000 dollars between friends?' Ephron is either setting the price or making the point to Abraham that he should not worry about the price since they can figure that out later after he buries Sara. Ephron may also be trying to gain leverage on Abraham through increasing the value of Abraham's land. If Abraham buries Sara, and years later Ephron asks for payment, Ephron could ask for a larger sum, since the land now has more worth with Sara buried there.

An unspecified amount amongst friends only leads to more strife. True friends clarify the details and communicate the terms, avoiding future conflicts. Contract writing is often seen as a sign of mistrust, but in fact, the process of writing a contract clarifies the goals and expectations of both parties and thus prevents future disputes that may hurt the relationship.

Abraham has his coins checked by a money changer to ensure they are entirely silver, to prevent potential dispute later from Ephron claiming that Abraham did not pay the full sum. Furthermore, this transaction takes place at the court of the city, making it a legal contract with municipal approval. Abraham weighs the silver in front of Ephron and pays him immediately in front of everyone. Abraham specifies that he wants this deal to be an *ahuza*, an estate that can be passed on as an inheritance, explicitly specifying the terms of the agreement. The *periq* ends with the deed of sale, duly recorded with the specific borders, noted by the trees in the field. The property rights are fully transferred to Abraham as an estate *ahuzat qeber* that can be transferred to future generations, with the ability to sell the land if he would choose to do so *lemiqne*. All of this is to ensure that no one could claim the land from his inheritors.

Rambam states that it is forbidden to loan money trusting that the person is reliable and will pay one back.

It is forbidden for one to lend money - even to a Torah scholar - without having witnesses observe the transaction unless the lender receives an article as collateral. It is even more commendable to have the loan supported by a promissory note.

Whenever a person gives a loan without having witnesses observe the transaction, he transgresses the prohibition (Leviticus 19:14): "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind" and brings a curse upon himself[4].

Without the terms made clear, in a verifiable way, either through witnesses or a document, misunderstandings will occur. Regardless of how close we are or how much we trust the other person, we need to specify our expectations clearly in our business dealings and establish an objective witness to refer to in case of dispute. This is one of the major lessons of Abraham our forefather.

[1] The Hebrew term Abraham uses is *tenu*, to give. He uses this word to express that he views himself as

an outsider, a *ger*, even though he has lived there for many years, *vetoshab*. Therefore, he does not have rights as a citizen to purchase an estate for generations

[2] See footnote 1

[3] They tell him that no one will withhold their property from him for burying his dead, implying a purchase is not necessary or that he is due a burial spot amongst the leadership of the land, *bemibhar qebarenu*

[4] Rambam *Hilkhos Malve* 2:15 also see *Gemara Baba Mesia* 75b

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z"TL

Eliezer the servant of Abraham occupies a great space in the Torah and his words are quoted at great length, more than the words of many great personalities that are mentioned before or after. The reason for this distinction is because Eliezer gained enormous excellence by his loyalty to his holy master Abraham.

Eliezer had his own daughter that he desired to give to Yitzchak in marriage. Yet when his great master commanded him to go to Padan Aram to seek a wife for Yitzchak, Eliezer repressed his own wishes and he loyally set out to do his teacher's bidding.

During the journey, Eliezer could have found numerous excuses to turn back and to fail his mission. Yet he persisted with the utmost resolve and he finally succeeded. He thereby gained the distinction of being named "the blessed of Hashem" (*Beresheet* 24:31) and Hashem inscribed his words and deeds in the eternal record.

This is the very great importance of the loyalty to our Torah-teachers. And for this we become "Blessed of Hashem". Quoted from a Bar Mitzvah speech written by R' Miller