

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES

Portion of Chayei Sarah

October 28, 2010

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

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About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkafa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
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B"H

Chayei Sarah

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*
Dean

1. The Continuous Onslaught of Satan

The Torah juxtaposes the passing of Sarah our Matriarch to the Akeidah (the binding of Yitzchak). Rashi cites the Midrash, which explains that the juxtaposition of events communicates to us that the Akeidah was the direct cause of Sarah's death. The Midrash tells us that when Avraham bound Yitzchak and was about to slaughter him, satan shared with Sarah what was transpiring at that moment. Sarah believed that her son Yitzchak was being slaughtered as a sacrifice. Due to her overwhelming pain, she passed away at that moment. Sarah's inconsolable grief was not comparable to a mother who had lost her only beloved son, but rather, she believed that the future Patriarch of the Jewish people was killed and thus there will be no future to existence. The Portion begins, "**V'yiheyu chayei Sarah – Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years...**" Baal Haturim explains that the numerical value of "**V'yiheyu**" is 37. Despite the fact that Sarah had lived 127 years, the only years that she valued as the essence of her life were the 37 years that she had experienced with her son Yitzchak (from his birth until her passing at the time of the Akeidah). It was because she was establishing and nurturing the future of the Jewish people and existence. Why did satan chose to inform Sarah about the Akeidah, thus leading to her death?

Chazal tell us that the Akeidah was the most difficult test that G'd had presented to Avraham. If Avraham were to succeed in this test, the future of the Jewish people would be ensured because of its merit. It is through the merit of the Akeidah that satan is silenced when he comes to prosecute the Jewish people. Thus it is the Akeidah that evokes the Attribute of Mercy upon the Jewish people and silences the Attribute of Justice until the end of time. Satan understood the infinite value and far-reaching ramifications if Avraham were to succeed in the Akeidah. He therefore continuously attempted to deter and prevent Avraham from actualizing the Akeidah.

The Midrash tells us that when Avraham was traveling with Yitzchak to the Akeidah, satan had presented himself in the form of a raging river which made it impossible for Avraham to continue. Avraham called out to G'd saying, "I want to do Your Will but You are not allowing me to do so!" He supplicated G'd because he was pained by the fact that he was being prevented from doing His Will, which had infinite value regarding the future of the Jewish people. Immediately after his supplication, the river ceased to exist. After Avraham had bound Yitzchak and was about to slaughter him, the Torah states that an angel came to him and said, "**Do not stretch your hand against the lad nor do anything to him...**" After removing Yitzchak from the altar, Avraham still believed that he needed to actualize and concretize his intent to bring Yitzchak as the intended sacrifice to G'd. He then saw a ram that he would sacrifice in the place of his son, Yitzchak.

The Torah states, , "**...Behold, a ram! – afterwards caught in the thicket by its horns.**" G'd had provided the ram for Avraham to actualize his intent. Chazal tell us that the ram was running towards Avraham for the sake of being brought as a sacrifice. However, satan intercepted it and prevented it from going to Avraham. Thus, it was caught in the thicket. Because satan understood the dimension of value of actualizing the Akeidah, he attempted to prevent it from happening. He understood that its merit would silence him forever. Despite the ram being caught in the thicket, Avraham retrieved it and brought it as an offering in the place of Yitzchak, thus actualizing his intent.

Seemingly at that moment, satan was defeated and the future of the Jewish people was secure. However, satan believed that he still had the ability to undermine and nullify the value of the Akeidah.. Rambam states in the Laws of Repentance that if a person was evil his entire life and repents at the last moment, all of his evil deeds will not be mentioned and his classification would be "devoutly righteous." Conversely, if a person lived his life as a tzaddik and at the last moment he regrets all the good

deeds and spiritual accomplishments that he had performed, his positive record is nullified and there would be no mention of his righteous past at the time of judgment. He would thus be classified as a rasha (evil person).

Satan believed that if the Akeidah would be the direct cause of the death of Sarah our Matriarch, there could be a possibility that Avraham would be so upset and angered upon his return, to the point that he would regret what he had done. If this were to happen, the Akeidah would have been nullified and the eternal defense for the Jewish people against prosecution would not exist.

The Torah tells us that despite Avraham's understanding and linkage of events, he remained unmoved. He had no regret or remorse for what he had done. Thus, the merit of the Akeidah remains intact against the prosecution of satan.

We beseech G'd every day in the conclusion of our prayers in the Uval'Tzion, "May He open our heart...and we may do His Will...so that we do not struggle in vain nor produce futility." Chofetz Chaim explains that when reciting this passage, one should have in mind that whatever effort and investment that one makes on behalf of his children so that they should be Torah Jews and succeed as Torah scholars, should bear fruit. However, one is able to understand it differently. We supplicate G'd that we should never be confronted with a situation that would cause us to have remorse and regret the Torah and mitzvos that we have performed in our lifetime, thus securing our eternity in the world to come.

2. Yitzchak's Dimension of Person

The Torah tells us that Avraham had instructed his servant Eliezer to seek out an appropriate wife for his son Yitzchak. Since Yitzchak's wife would be the future Matriarch of the Jewish people, Avraham provided Eliezer with specific criteria regarding the qualification of the woman that will be chosen. After instructing him in this manner Eliezer said to Avraham, **"Perhaps the woman shall not wish to follow me to this land; shall I take your son back to the land from which you departed?"** Avraham answered him, **'Beware not to return my son to there...G'd will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman will not wish to follow you, you shall then be absolved of this oath of mine. However, do not return my son there.'** So the servant....swore..."

The Torah tells us in the Portion of Toldos that when the Land of Canaan was stricken with a famine, Yitzchak believed that he should descend to Egypt as his father had done during the time of famine. G'd appeared to him saying, **"Do not descend to Egypt; dwell in the land that I will indicate to you. Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you..."** The Midrash explains that the reason G'd prohibited Yitzchak from leaving the land was because he was the equivalent of a consecrated burnt offering. Just as a burnt offering becomes invalidated when it is removed from the confines of the Sanctuary of the Temple, so too would Yitzchak become invalidated if he were to leave the confines of the Holy Land. Yitzchak's consecrated status would be invalidated. This Midrash seems to be difficult to understand. If one consecrates an offering and brings it to the Sanctuary of the Temple and subsequently decides to remove it, before it is slaughtered, the offering does not become invalid. It is only if the ritual of the offering had begun and not been completed that it becomes invalidated if removed from the Sanctuary. However, the ritual of the offering had been completed, it could no longer be invalidated even if it were removed from the Sanctuary without becoming invalidated.

Yitzchak's value and status as an "unblemished offering" began at the Akeidah. It was the most difficult test in which Avraham had succeeded. After G'd considered the Akeidah to be the equivalent of Avraham sacrificing his only son, it brought about a value of eternal dimension. Its value is eternal for the Jewish people because it will protect them from the prosecution of satan until the end of time. In addition, the Attribute of Mercy will be continuously in effect, regarding the Jewish people's ability to bring offerings on the Temple Mount because it was the location of the Akeidah. Yitzchak's dimension as an "unblemished offering" has relevance to his Patriarchal effect upon the Jewish people. Regarding his function as a Patriarch, it is considered as if he is in the midst of the service of the Akeidah. All of Yitzchak's accomplishments until the end of his life were significant and invaluable to the Jewish people until the end of time as a result of his classification as an "unblemished offering." If Yitzchak would have left the Land of Canaan, his value as a Patriarch would have been diminished and limited. Thus, he would not be able to contribute adequately to the future of the Jewish people, as a Patriarch.

Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, did not understand and appreciate the spiritual dimension of Yitzchak, regarding his status as an "unblemished offering." He thus asked his master Avraham if he should locate an appropriate wife for Yitzchak, and she was unwilling to return with him, if he could take Yitzchak to

her. Avraham responded to Eliezer and reiterated that under no circumstance could Yitzchak leave the Land. Avraham, understanding and appreciating Yitzchak's status, believed that it would have been detrimental to the future of the Jewish people if Yitzchak were to become invalidated. G'd's promise would have not come to fruition. Avraham, therefore, believed with certainty that G'd would send His angel to ensure that Eliezer would be successful in his mission to bring back the proper wife for Yitzchak.

3. *Eliezer the Model of Servitude to All Jews*

Chazal tell us that the words of the Torah are concise and specific. Many fundamental laws are extrapolated from a single letter contained within a word of the Torah. Nevertheless, the narrative of Eliezer's mission regarding locating the appropriate wife for Yitzchak is repeated three times. Rashi cites the Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin, "Rav Acha says, 'We learn from the repetition of the narrative of Eliezer that the ordinary speech of the servants of the Patriarchs are more beautiful than the Torah of the children.'" Evidently, there is a profound lesson to be learned and applied from the narrative of Eliezer.

The Torah identifies Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, as "**Damesek Eliezer – Eliezer from Damascus.**" The Gemara in Tractate Yomah explains that the Torah is not informing us of Eliezer's origin, that he came from Damascus, but rather the term "**Damesek**" is an acronym that connotes – "He drew from the wellspring of Torah of his master (Avraham)." Meaning, all the Torah that Avraham had learned was transmitted to his servant Eliezer. As a result of becoming a repository and disseminator of his master's teachings, Eliezer radiated a holiness that had a semblance of his master's. The Midrash tells us that when Eliezer had arrived at the home of Besuel to negotiate for the hand of Rivka, on behalf of Avraham, they had mistakenly believed that he was Avraham. In addition to Eliezer's spiritual dimension, Avraham had fully entrusted Eliezer with all of his wealth and material responsibilities. Eliezer's dimension as a person in the spiritual and material realm was unique.

Despite his dimension of being, Eliezer's name is not even mentioned once in the Portion. When Eliezer beseeched G'd to locate the appropriate wife for Yitzchak, it was only for the sake of his master of Avraham. He did not want to be accredited to any degree for the success of the achievement. When Eliezer presented himself to Besuel, the brother of Rivka, he identified as "I am the servant of Avraham." He did not identify himself as an

independent person. Despite his level of personal accomplishment and renown, he was fully negated to his master Avraham.

Moshe is never identified and quantified by the Torah or Chazal as "the greatest tzaddik" who ever lived, but rather, as "the most humble man to walk the face of the earth." The basis for Moshe's dimension of spirituality was due to the fact that he was completely nullified to G'd, the Master. He is identified by G'd as "Moshe, My servant, " just as Eliezer had presented himself as "the servant of Avraham." It was because of this level of negation that Moshe merited that G'd should speak to him at a level of face to face. He was completely spiritualized. In order for one to appreciate and revere the Torah for its innate spirituality and fulfill its mitzvos in the most meticulous manner, one must negate himself to G'd. This is the most important prerequisite to succeed in the acquisition of Torah and spiritual ascent. This is the reason the narrative of Eliezer is repeated a number of times in the Torah. It is for us to draw from it how a servant must negate himself to the Master.

4. *Avraham, Reflecting G'd's Kindness*

The Torah tells us that Avraham, our Patriarch purchased the cave of Machpelah to be the burial location for his wife Sarah from Ephron. The Midrash tells us that after Avraham purchased the burial plot, G'd said, "My craft is doing Kindness (Chesed) and you have taken hold of My craft. Now, come and cloak yourself with My Cloak." Meaning, it is only at this time, when Avraham had purchased the burial location for his wife Sarah that he became worthy of wearing the Cloak of Kindness of G'd. Avraham was 137 years old when Sarah his wife passed away. He had selflessly performed acts of kindness and hospitality his entire life. In fact, the Torah details, at length, every aspect of the hospitality that Avraham had performed for the three angels that visited him, in order to reveal that his dimension of kindness was at the most unique and advanced level. The Gemara in Tractate Bava Metzia tells us that because of the hospitality that Avraham had demonstrated to the angels, the Jewish people merited to be sustained and protected during their forty-year trek in the desert. Despite the fact that Avraham had performed exceptional acts of kindness that had such profound ramifications for the Jewish people, it was only the purchase of the burial location for his wife Sarah that was considered by G'd to be a special act of Kindness. Why is this so?

Each of the holy Patriarchs chose to emulate a particular Attribute of G'd and perfect that characteristic

within themselves. By doing so, they established and concretized these characteristics within the Jewish people until the end of time. Avraham our Patriarch chose to emulate G'd's Kindness (Chesed). Yitzchak chose to emulate G'd's Attribute of Justice by being exacting in every aspect of his service. Yaakov our Patriarch, chose to emulate G'd's Attribute of Mercy. Why did Avraham choose to emulate the Attribute of Kindness?

King David writes in Psalms, "He Created the world with Kindness (*Olam chesed yibaneh*)..." Meaning, the cause and basis for the Creation of Existence was Kindness. Before G'd brought existence into being, there was no reason, other than His Infinite Attribute of Kindness, that would cause Him to chose to create the world. Nothing existed to be worthy of Creation. The concept of Creation is *ex nihilo*. G'd wanted to create a setting that would allow man to have the opportunity to make the correct choices and thus advance himself spiritually to be worthy of cleaving to his Maker. He would thus be the beneficiary of the ultimate Good, which is a relationship with G'd. Since Avraham was the first person to introduce G'd to the world, it was the equivalent of the beginning of Creation. Therefore, Avraham chose to emulate the Attribute of Kindness, which was the basis for Creation.

When G'd Created the world with His Attribute of Kindness, He did so purely for the sake of doing Kindness itself. There was no other reason other than Creating a setting for mankind to be a beneficiary of His Kindness. It was not a means, but His Kindness was an end unto itself. Despite the fact that Avraham had engaged in acts of kindness his entire life, in the most exceptional manner, his motive for doing so was for the sake of engaging with humanity to dispel and refute their pagan beliefs. Avraham's hospitality that he presented to the angels was more lavish than the banquets of King Solomon at the height of his reign. It was however only to espouse monotheism. Thus, Avraham's acts of kindness were not purely for the sake of kindness, but rather a vehicle to espouse G'd's existence.

When Avraham purchased the burial location for Sarah, our Matriarch, it was an act of kindness that was done purely for Sarah, his wife. This was a replication of G'd's Kindness for the sake of mankind. Therefore, it was at this moment that Avraham was worthy of wearing G'd's Cloak of Kindness.

5. What is to be Learned from the Ten Tests of Avraham *(From Vayeira)*

The Torah states regarding the Akeidah (the binding of Yitzchak), which was the most difficult test presented to Avraham, **"And it happened after these things (words) G'd tested Avraham and said to him...Please take your son, your only one, whom you love – Yitzchak..."** The Midrash states, "G'd requested of Avraham to bring his son as an offering in a beseeching manner – as the verse states, '*Please* take your son...' It is similar to a mortal king who had a general who had been victorious in all his battles. Subsequently, the king was confronted with an even greater battle. The king summoned his general and pleaded saying, 'We must be victorious in this more difficult battle so that my soldiers should not say that the reason we had succeeded in our earlier conflicts was because they were only skirmishes.' So too did G'd say to Avraham, 'I have presented you with nine previous tests and you had succeeded in all of them. I am pleading with you to withstand this final test so that people should not say that the reason you succeeded in previous tests was because they were not truly challenges. Therefore, please take your son...'"

The only reason the Jewish people have been able to silence the prosecution of satan, which is most intense on Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgment, is because of the merit of the Akeidah. It is only the blast of the ram's horn (shofar) that can silence the prosecution of satan. Had it not been for the Akeidah the Attribute of Justice would have destroyed the Jewish people. G'd created existence for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of the Jewish people who would fulfill it. As the verse states, **"Bereishis bara Elokeem ais hashemayim v'ais haaretz – In the beginning of G'd created the heaven and the earth..."** The Midrash explains, that the world was created only for the sake of the Jewish people (who are referred to as "*Reishis* – the first/chosen") and for the sake of the Torah, which is also referred to as "*Reishis*." If this is so, then G'd should have pleaded with Avraham to be successful in the test of the Akeidah so that it should ensure the survival of the Jewish people, who were created to meet the objective of existence. But, this is not the reason G'd had pleaded with Avraham. Chazal tell us it was "so that people should not say that the only reason Avraham succeeded in the previous tests was because they were truly not tests ..." How do we understand this?

Avraham was tested by G'd not to see if he would succeed or fail when confronted with in the challenge, but rather it was to demonstrate to the world that when one is confronted with a challenge, one has the ability to choose between right and wrong. The one who demonstrates to the world that a human being has free choice brings about a sanctification of G'd's Name. It is not something that is

attributed to instinct or inclination as the animal who has no choice to be something other than what it was created to be. In contrast a human being has the ability to choose.

A test of one's ability is only considered valid if one is able to overcome that particular challenge. If one is confronted with a test, then one definitely has the capacity to succeed, regardless of its difficulty. If Avraham were to fail in the test of the Akeidah, it would be an indication that all the previous tests were not in fact true challenges. People would say, "If he truly had the capacity to succeed, then why did he fail with the Akeidah? It must be that G'd presents challenges that cannot be overcome. Therefore, there can be no culpability for man's choice of evil." G'd, therefore, pleaded with Avraham to succeed in the Akeidah, despite its difficulty, so that mankind would understand that all of the previous challenges were in fact tests. Thus, this would give mankind meaning and purpose.

In the merit of giving this valuable lesson to the world that one has control over his inclinations, even when confronted with the most difficult challenge, the Jewish people merited to come into being and ultimately became G'd's Chosen through the receiving of the Torah at Sinai. As Rambam writes in the Laws of Repentance, "Every individual has the ability to choose to be devoutly righteous or evil. It is not as those fools who claim that one's status is predetermined by G'd."

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Through Friday

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Sanhedrin
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

- 11:30 – 12:30pm **Talmud: Chagigah**
 Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
 Enter on 54th Street
- 1:00-2:00 pm **Ramchal: Derech Hashem**
 Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza (45th FL.)

Tuesday

- 12:10 - 1:10pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
 Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

- 11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Chagigah**
 Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
 Enter on 54th Street
- 1:00—2:00 pm **Rambam Hilchos Talmud Torah**
 Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

- 11:00 –12:00pm **Duties of The Heart**
 Location: Yad Avraham
- 12:30 – 1:30 pm **Talmud: Chagigah** Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL)
- 4 :00 - 5:00 pm **Rambam Hilchos Talmud Torah**
 Location: Armstrong Capital 360 Madison Ave 20th fl