



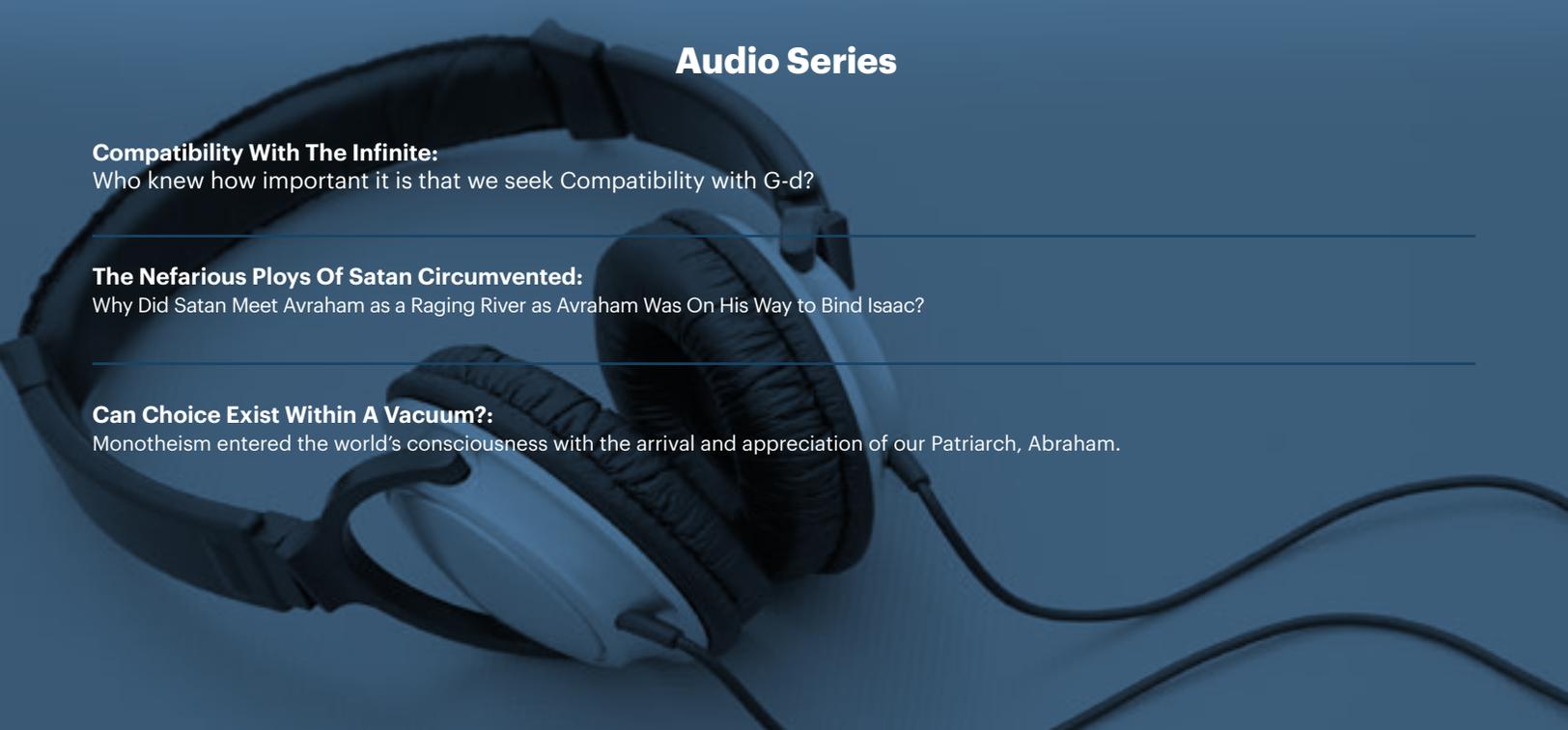
PARSHAS CHAYEI SARAH

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Weekly Torah Audio Series

Torah Bullets™: Brokering An Acquisition to Yield Exponential Value

1. Avraham asks Bnei Cheis to be intermediaries to purchase a burial plot for Sarah.
2. The words "Bnei Cheis" are written 10X regarding the acquisition of the Tomb of Machpela.
3. Midrash: One who facilitates the acquisition for a Torah sage is valued as one who fulfilled The Ten Commandments.
4. The letter "Ches" is mentioned 10X in the 10 Commandments; alludes to the acquisition of the burial location on behalf of Avraham.
5. Why?
6. There is a Positive commandment to revere a Torah sage, no less than one must revere G-d.
7. Maharal of Prague: Only through the Torah teaching of the Torah sage does one come to revere G-d.
8. One who does not eulogize a Torah sage deserves to be buried alive.
9. At Sinai the Jews were given an ultimatum with a mountain over their heads: either accept the Torah or be buried under the mountain.
10. Initially, they accepted the Torah unequivocally.
11. Midrash: That was in regard to the written law; regarding the Oral Law they were resistant.



Audio Series

Compatibility With The Infinite:

Who knew how important it is that we seek Compatibility with G-d?

The Nefarious Ploys Of Satan Circumvented:

Why Did Satan Meet Avraham as a Raging River as Avraham Was On His Way to Bind Isaac?

Can Choice Exist Within A Vacuum?:

Monotheism entered the world's consciousness with the arrival and appreciation of our Patriarch, Abraham.

Weekly Torah Commentaries Series



Satan's Claim Against Avraham

The Torah states regarding the test of the Akeidah (binding of Yitzchak), **“And it happened after these words that G-d attested Avraham...”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain, **“After these words’** is referring to the words of Satan. He came before G-d with a claim against Avraham and said, ‘From all of the meals that Avraham had prepared for his guests, he did not sacrifice from his meal as much as an ox or a ram. Everything that he had done was only for the sake of his son.’ G-d responded to satan saying, ‘If I were to ask Avraham to bring his son as a sacrifice for Me, he would not hesitate.’” Therefore, G-d presented Avraham with the test of the Akeidah.

It is interesting to note, that the claim of satan against Avraham was not that Avraham did not bring any sacrifices on His behalf, but rather he had said, “From all of the meals that he had prepared for his guests Avraham did not bring a sacrifice from the meal.” What is the relevance of mentioning the meals that Avraham had prepared for his guests? If satan wanted to bring a claim against Avraham for not bringing a sacrifice as Adam and Noach had done, he could have simply said so. However, satan specifically chose to say, that Avraham did not bring a sacrifice from all the “meals” that he had prepared for his guests. What is the significance of this?

The Torah tells us that on Yom Kippur the High Priest would take two identical goats, one was designated for G-d and the other was designated for Azazel (each of these designations was determined by drawing lots). The goat that was designated for Azazel was taken out into the desert and thrown down a jagged mountainside where it would become dismembered as it fell. Ramban cites Chazal who explain, “It is to silence the prosecution of satan.” The Gemara tells us that there is one in the year that G-d does not allow satan to prosecute the Jewish people,

which is Yom Kippur. This is based upon the numerical value of the reference “HaSatan (the satan)” which is 364. It is to indicate that satan is permitted to prosecute only 364 days a year, excluding Yom Kippur. Ramban explains that it cannot mean that the goat that is brought out into the desert is a “sacrifice” for satan (the desert is a location of the nether forces which is a representation of satan). It cannot be so because it is a Torah violation to bring a sacrifice to any power or angel other than G’d Himself. As it states, “Anyone who brings a sacrifice to a power deserves to be destroyed.” If this is so, what is the significance and value of the goat regarding satan on Yom Kippur? Ramban explains that the bringing of a goat that was designated for Azazel can be understood with an allegory. When a king makes a banquet for his subjects, he will give some of the “crumbs” to the servants so that they should not complain and thus be satisfied. The goat being given to Azazel is part of the service of Yom Kippur so that satan should not feel denied and thus complain. This is similar to the crumbs that are given to the servants. It should not be understood that a sacrifice is being offered to satan but rather he is being acknowledged through the goat which is part of the Yom Kippur service and thus he will be silenced.

Based on the concept of the goat sent to Azazel, we can understand satan’s claim against Avraham within the context in which he understands sacrifices. He believes that when one gives to G-d through a sacrifice it is the equivalent of giving part of the meal/banquette to G-d. Therefore, Satan claimed that although Avraham prepared all of his banquets for the sake of his son, he did not bring from them an ox or a ram for the sake of G-d.

There is an argument between Rebbe Eliezer and Rebbe Yehoshua in the Gemara Tractate Pesachim regarding the manner how one must celebrate the festivals. One opinion is that the Jew has a choice to celebrate the festival either in a complete spiritual manner (*kulo l’shem*

– all for G-d). Meaning, he could fully invest the day in the study of Torah and prayer. Or the day could be observed within the context of physical celebration (*kulo la'chem* – all for yourselves). Reb Yehoshua argues that the Jew must divide the days of the festival in a manner that half is for the sake of oneself and half is for G-d. (*chatzei la'chem* and *chatzei l'shem* half for yourself and half for G-d.). We rule as the opinion of Rebbe Yehoshua that half of one's celebration of the festival is dedicated to G-d and half is for oneself. The connotation of "half of the day" indicates that we take half of what we are participating in and give it to G-d. If the festival is observed in this context, there is no basis for the prosecution of satan because we have taken part of what we are celebrating and dedicating it to G-d. G-d prescribes this manner of celebration so that we should not be subject to the prosecution of satan.

Sarah Our Matriarch, Integral to the Jewish People

The Torah tells us that after Avraham returned from the Akeidah he discovered that his wife Sarah had passed away. The Torah states, **"Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her..."** How did Avraham eulogize Sarah? The Midrash states, "Avraham began to wail and cry saying, 'An accomplished woman is the crown of her husband (*Aishes chayil*). An accomplished woman who can find? Far beyond pearls is her value. Her husband's heart relies on her....She discerns between wool and linen (flax).' To what is this discernment referring? She was able to discern between Yitzchak and Yishmael. She said to her husband Avraham, **'Drive out this maidservant along with her son....'**" She understood that Yitzchak, her son, would be able the future Patriarch of the Jewish people and he were to be exposed to the subtle influences of Yishmael and Hagar, he would not develop as he should. She therefore said to Avraham to drive them from their home. Being sensitive to the nuances of Yishmael's innate spiritual deficiencies and understanding what is necessary to address Yitzchak's spiritual potential, Sarah insisted that the two should be separated. It is the equivalent of being able to discern between wool and linen (wool being Yitzchak and linen being Yishmael). Allowing the two to combine creates a forbidden entity (*shatneiz*).

Eitz Yosef in his commentary on the Midrash explains, "What is the relevance of wool to Yitzchak? Evidently, wool represents something that is positive. The Prophet Isaiah states, '...If your sins are like a (crimson) worm, then they will be restored to the whiteness of (washed) wool.' Where do we find that linen has a negative connotation and thus is applied to Yishmael, the evil one?... We find that Cain and Hevel had brought sacrifices to G-d. Although Cain had initiated the bringing of the sacrifice because he understood the need to acknowledge one's Creator, he nevertheless brought it from the dregs of the earth. He brought a flax plant (linen). Hevel on the other hand brought his sacrifice from the choicest of his flock. Cain's offering was rejected and Hevel's was accepted by G-d. It is for this reason that the combination of wool and linen became forbidden (*shatneiz*). As it states, **'You shall not wear shatneiz...'** G-d said, 'It is not proper to intermingle the sacrifice of the sinner (Cain/linen) with the sacrifice one the one who is pure (Hevel/wool).' Sarah was able to discern between what was truly pure and what was not. Therefore, Yitzchak is equated to the wool and Yishmael is equated to linen. Sarah thus demanded of Avraham to drive Hagar and Yishmael from their household.

Why was Sarah able to make the discernment between Yitzchak and Yishmael and Avraham was not? The Torah tells us that initially Avraham was taken aback when Sarah had told him, "Drive out this maidservant along with her son..." G-d said to Avraham, "...listen to her voice." Rashi cites the Midrash that explains that this is regarding Sarah's voice of prophecy. She was a greater prophetess than Avraham was a prophet. He thus heeded her request to drive out Hagar and Yishmael.

After Hagar and Yishmael were driven out of the household of Avraham, the Torah tells us that Yishmael was dying of thirst. The Torah states, **"G-d heard the cry of the youth...in his present state."** G-d heeded his cry because at that moment he had not yet become evil, and was considered to be righteous, although there were undercurrents that he was inclined to perpetrate evil. The Torah tells us that Sarah had seen the youth, *"Mitzacheik* (act with levity)." Chazal tell us that this word alludes to subtle indications that he had relevance to idolatry, adultery, and murder. This is what she had seen in her prophecy and was thus able to discern between Yitzchak and Yishmael in a way that Avraham could not. Because of her dimension of prophecy, Sarah was able to understand how Yishmael would develop into an evil person.

When Avraham eulogized Sarah he expressed his understanding of Sarah's level of understanding and ability to discern between Yitzchak and Yishmael. Avraham fully understood how crucial it was for Yitzchak to be separated from Yishmael. This was due to Sarah's level of clarity. The Torah states, **"Now Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything (*ba kol*)."** Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the numerical value of the word *"ba kol* – everything" is the equivalent numerical value of the word *"ben-* son." Meaning, the verse, **"Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything (*ba kol*)"** is referring to Yitzchak his son. Despite the unparalleled spiritual accomplishments of Avraham and his great wealth and renown, everything in his life paled to the ultimate achievement and gift that he was blessed with a son such as Yitzchak.

The Gemara in Tractate Yevamos states, "If there is a conflict between a Positive and a Negative Commandment, which cannot be reconciled, the Positive Commandment supersedes the Negative Commandment." The Torah establishes this principle by juxtaposing the prohibition of wearing the combination of wool and linen to the commandment of wearing fringes (*tzitzis*) on a four cornered garment. The Torah tells us that if one has a four cornered garment (whether it is made of wool or linen) one must put fringes made of wool on its four corners. When one ties the fringes on the corners of the garment, one has created a garment that is considered a combination of wool and linen. If so this is in violation of the prohibition of *shatneiz*. It is evident that the Torah is communicating with this juxtaposition that if there is conflict between a positive and negative commandment the positive commandment supersedes it. If one takes ordinary wool and spins it without the specific intent that it is for the sake of *tzitzis*, if these fringes were to be tied to a linen four cornered garment, one would be in violation of the prohibition of *shatneiz*. It is only when the fringes are made with the specific intent of fulfilling the mitzvah of *tzitzis* that when combined with a linen garment it will supersede the prohibition of *shatneiz*.

Similarly, if Sarah had allowed Yitzchak to be exposed to Yishmael during his youth, he would have never developed and evolved to be the holy Patriarch. The impure subtleties of Yishmael would have undermined Yitzchak's spiritual development. However, once Yitzchak had developed and achieved a spiritual dimension of being, there is no need for being concerned of being exposed to an individual such as Yishmael, despite his level of spiritual deficiency and evil. The spirituality of Yitzchak will supersede the impurity of Yishmael similar to the fringes that were made for the sake of the mitzvah of *tzitzis* superseding the prohibition of wearing a combination of wool and linen. The initial discernment was only due to Sarah, who had the spiritual capacity to be sensitive to the spiritual impurity of Yishmael.

Avraham, Being Appreciated for Who He Truly Was

The Torah states after the passing of Sarah, our Matriarch, **"Now Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham**

with everything.” The Midrash states, “Why did G-d need to bless Avraham at this time? It is so that the world should not say that all the blessing that had come upon Avraham in the past was only due to the merit of Sarah. Where do we see that the verse is referring to an additional blessing that was subsequent to Sarah’s passing? The verse in Yeshaya states, ‘Although he was alone (because Sarah had passed away) Avraham was blessed.’” The Torah mentions G-d’s blessing after Sarah’s passing for us to understand that Avraham was independently worthy of G-d’s blessing. His blessing was unrelated to Sarah’s merit, despite the fact that she was special. Why is it important for the world to understand and appreciate that the blessing received by Avraham was due to his own spiritual worth?

G-d blessed Avraham with wealth and renown in order for him to be seen by the world as special and unique, so that he should be effective in his espousal of monotheism. If he were not perceived as special or that his success was actually not related to his own merit, it would diminish his effectiveness. The miracles that had occurred in Egypt when Sarah, our Matriarch was taken by Pharaoh were initiated by her. This resulted in Avraham and Sarah being treated as royalty when they left Egypt with their newly acquired wealth. The Midrash tells us that when Pharaoh attempted to approach Sarah to engage with her, she would instruct an angel to smite him. The angel would follow her command. Similarly, when she was taken by Avimelech the Philistine king, he was unable to approach her because she had invoked supernatural forces to incapacitate him and his community. Although Avraham had been a beneficiary of all the miracles had taken place, the world could believe that the basis for these blessings were due to Sarah his wife and not him. It was due to her special dimension of piety that he was able to defeat the Four Mightiest Kings and was thus declared, “the father of all nations.” It was necessary for Avraham to be perceived by the world for his true spiritual worth in order to be esteemed and revered so that he should impact upon the world through his espousal of monotheism. It was thus necessary for G-d to bless him with an additional blessing after Sarah passed away to confirm to the world that he was worthy in his own right.

There is a natural tendency for people to minimize the special attributes of others as a result of seeing them through a deprecating eye. This is even more so when that special individual’s value manifests itself within the context of spirituality. The Torah states, **“And these are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham - Avraham fathered Yitzchak....”** If the Torah identifies Yitzchak as the son of Avraham, then it is obvious that Avraham had fathered Yitzchak. Why then is it necessary for the Torah to state the obvious? Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “It is because the scoffers of the generation had said, ‘It is questionable if Avraham had actually fathered Yitzchak. Sarah had been married to him for many years and remained childless. However, after sequestering herself for only one night with Avimelech, the heathen, it soon became known that she had conceived. This fact would cause one to question Yitzchak’s pedigree.’” Therefore, G-d performed a miracle that Yitzchak should have the identical facial features as his father Avraham, so that all would attest to the fact that Avraham had fathered Yitzchak, thus confirming the purity of his pedigree. Why did G-d allow such a disgraceful question to broached? Why did G-d allow Sarah, our Holy Matriarch to be put in the position that people would say that the heathen Avimelech had impregnated her?

G-d created existence for man to be able to make choices. Every human being is endowed with free will. Because one has the ability to choose between good or evil, one is deserving of reward for taking the positive initiative and liable for his negative choices. In every context of choice, one is in a position to choose correctly or wrongly. This is only because there is a representation of good and evil in existence. If in fact the

representation of good would be overwhelming to the degree that evil would be negated, there is no longer a context of choice.

Avraham, our Patriarch was an overwhelming and impressive spiritual personality who could not be countered because of his renown and ability to refute falsehood. Thus, Yitzchak, being the natural successor of his father Avraham would be successful not only because of his own spiritual dimension, he would be overwhelmingly impactful of the famous Avraham. If Yitzchak’s pedigree would be unquestioned the level of choice in humanity would be reduced. Thus, undermining the value of existence. G-d therefore created a disgraceful setting which would cause people to question the pedigree of Yitzchak. Is he truly the son of Avraham? Or is he the son of the heathen Avimelech? This question being posed was a diminishment of the aura of Yitzchak and consequently undermining his effectiveness as a disseminator of monotheism. Once the question was posed, although the truth was substantiated (by causing him to resemble his father Avraham) Yitzchak’s standing was not going to be the same.

In order for Avraham to be effective as G-d’s representation in this world, to impact upon existence through his dialogue of monotheism, it was essential for his renown not to be questioned. He had to be perceived and appreciated for his own self-worth. If this issue would come into question, regarding his relationship with G-d, he would cease to be that overwhelmingly effective person. Therefore, G-d saw it as an imperative to bless him after Sarah’s passing so that the world should truly understand that the all the blessings that he had received were due to his own worth.

Eliezer, the Model of Negation and Servitude to One’s Master

The Torah tells us that Avraham, our Patriarch summoned his trusted servant Eliezer and instructed him to seek out a wife for his son Yitzchak, who would be the future Matriarch of the Jewish people. Avraham gave Eliezer specific instructions and criteria regarding the selection of the wife for Yitzchak. Although many fundamental laws of the Torah are drawn from a single letter of a word or an allusion in a verse, the narrative of Eliezer’s mission regarding locating the appropriate wife for Yitzchak is repeated three times. The Midrash comments, “How much ink was spilled on this story!” Since there is nothing that is superfluous in the Torah, it is evident that there is a profound lesson to be learned and applied from the narrative of Eliezer. What is the value of the repetition of this narrative? Rashi cites the Midrash, “Rav Acha says, ‘We learn from the repetition of the narrative of Eliezer that the ordinary speech of the slaves of the Patriarchs is more beautiful (to G-d) than the Torah of the children.’”

The Torah identifies Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, as **“Damesek Eliezer – Eliezer from Damascus.”** It is clear that the Torah is not informing us of Eliezer’s origin, that he came from the city of Damascus, but rather the Gemara in Tractate Yomah explains that the term **“Damesek”** is an acronym that connotes – “He drew and disseminates 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 Eliezer being mentored by Avraham, he became the qualified disseminator his master’s teachings. In addition to Eliezer’s spiritual capability and uniqueness, he was also responsible to manage all of his master Avraham’s material assets. Avraham was world-renowned and wealthy. He was declared to be “the father of all nations.” Meaning, Eliezer’s scope of responsibility was something exceptional.

The Midrash tells us that when Eliezer had come to the home of Besuel to negotiate for the hand of Rivka, on behalf of Yitzchak, because of his degree of radiance of holiness, they had mistakenly believed that he was Avraham. Despite his dimension of being and capacity, Eliezer's name is omitted within the context of locating a wife for Yitzchak. When Eliezer supplicated G-d to succeed in his mission of finding the appropriate wife for Yitzchak, it was only for the sake of doing kindness with his master of Avraham. As it states, **"Do a kindness for my master Avraham."** Although he was acting as Avraham's agent, his only interest was the good of his master and not that it should reflect well upon himself to succeed as an agent. When he presented himself to Besuel, the father of Rivka, he identified himself as **"I am the servant of Avraham."** He did not identify himself in any way that would have revealed his capability and dimension. Despite his level of accomplishment and renown, he was fully negated to his master Avraham. It is because of Eliezer's level of reverence for Avraham and negation to his master that Chazal are able to extrapolate from the repetition of the story of Eliezer, "...the ordinary speech of the servants of the Patriarchs is more beautiful (to G-d) than the Torah of the children."

If Eliezer had such a level of reverence, negation, and subservience for his mortal master, despite his dimension of person, how much more so must a Jew have reverence and subservience to G-d, who endows man with every aspect of his being. Eliezer was overwhelmed with the holiness of his master and thus appreciated him to a point that he was fully negated to him. The Gemara in Tractate Niddah tells us that at the time of conception, an angel brings the droplet of semen before G-d, who pronounces upon it, its destiny, "Wise or foolish, strong or weak, wealthy or poor..." The only pronouncement that G-d does not make on the droplet is "tzaddik (righteous) or rasha (evil)." The Gemara concludes from this, that all is predestined except for one's fear of heaven. Meaning, everything that one receives is predestined and determined by G-d. One's degree of initiative and ability is not relevant to his level of success because it is only determined by G-d. One thus has no reason to be haughty because in essence, he has done nothing and accomplished nothing. It is only his degree of fear of heaven that can be ascribed to him. Therefore, one must learn from the narrative of Eliezer the degree to which one must negate himself to G-d, the True Master.

The Expression of the Patriarchs

There is positive commandments, **"You shall distance yourself from falsehood."** Therefore, when one speaks, it should be truthful. This positive commandment is not related to the negative commandment of bearing false testimony, but rather it is a separate commandment for a Jew to distance himself from anything that is false. Why is speaking the truth so important?

The Gemara tells us that there are a number of classifications of individuals who are not worthy to receive the Divine Presence in the world to come. One of these classifications is those who speak falsehood (liars). These are individuals who continuously do not speak the truth and thus assume the classification of "liar." They cannot have

any relevance to G-d because the "signet of G-d is truth." Since G-d is truth in the most absolute sense, one can only cleave to Him if one demonstrates His characteristic of truth.

The Torah tells us that when Avraham our Patriarch came to the Philistine community of Gerar he presented Sarah as his sister rather than as his wife. He did so because he was concerned that if he would present her as his wife, they would have killed him and taken Sarah. However, despite this she was taken by the king. G-d revealed himself to the Philistine king and said to him that Sarah was the wife of Avraham. The Torah states, **"Avimelech said to Avraham, 'What is this thing that you have done!...'"** Because Avimelech had taken Sarah, G-d appeared to him and said that if he would not return her to Avraham, he and his entire community would be destroyed. The Torah states, "Avraham replied to Avimelech, **"I had seen that there is no fear of G-d in this place and they will slay me because of my wife. Moreover, she is indeed my sister, my father's daughter, though not my mother's daughter, and she became my wife..."** Sarah was Avraham's brother's daughter and not his father's child. She was not his sister in the literal sense; however, based on the principle of Chazal that "A grandchild is the equivalent of one's child" Sarah could thus be regarded as the daughter of his father Terach in an accepted figurative sense. Therefore, Avraham explained that she was in fact his sister. When he had said that Sarah was his sister, he was not saying a falsehood. There is a principle in the Torah that in order to preserve one's life, one is permitted to go to any length to do so, even if it mean to transgress one of the commandment in the Torah (pikuach nefesh). If Avraham was permitted to lie about Sarah's status in order to save his life, why did he need to explain to Avimelech that he in fact was telling the truth in a certain context? If Avraham had a choice to express himself in a manner that was not a lie he chose to do so. Why?

We find something similar regarding Yaakov, our Patriarch. When Yaakov presented himself to his father to receive the blessing, Yitzchak asked him, **"Are you my first born Esav?"** Yaakov responded, **"I am Esav your first born."** Rashi cites Chazal who explain that what Yaakov had said was, "I am (meaning I am who I am) and Esav is your first born." In actuality, the words which were expressed by Yaakov, if understood correctly, were not a lie. It was only because of Yitzchak's understanding of what Yaakov had said that he believed that it was Esav- as it was intended by Yaakov. The Prophet states, "Give truth to Yaakov...(Teetain Emes l'Yaakov)" Yaakov was the embodiment of truth, which is the Torah itself. As King Solomon states in Proverbs regarding the Torah, "Acquire Truth (Torah) and do not sell it." Although it was imperative for the future of the Jewish people for Yaakov to receive the blessing from his father Yitzchak, he nevertheless chose to express himself in a truthful context so that he could distance himself from falsehood.

Since G-d is infinite, how is it possible for a finite being to cleave to Him? It is only when one assumes His characteristic of Truth by distancing oneself from falsehood could one cleave to G-d. This is the reason Avraham and Yaakov chose to express themselves in a truthful manner, although they were permitted to lie under the circumstances.

