

JewishTimes

VOL. XIII NO. 2 — NOV. 1, 2013



Outdated Rabbis?

Miscarriage prevention: using stones?

LETTERS:

Lot's wife: Salt?

Mysticism

Religion: Devoid of reason?

Powers other than God?

Rejecting views of new "Torah" sites

WEEKLY PARSHA:

Isaac's Blessings

Toldos: A Study in God's Providence

Epic Battle

Understanding Midrash

SIGNS OF WISE MEN

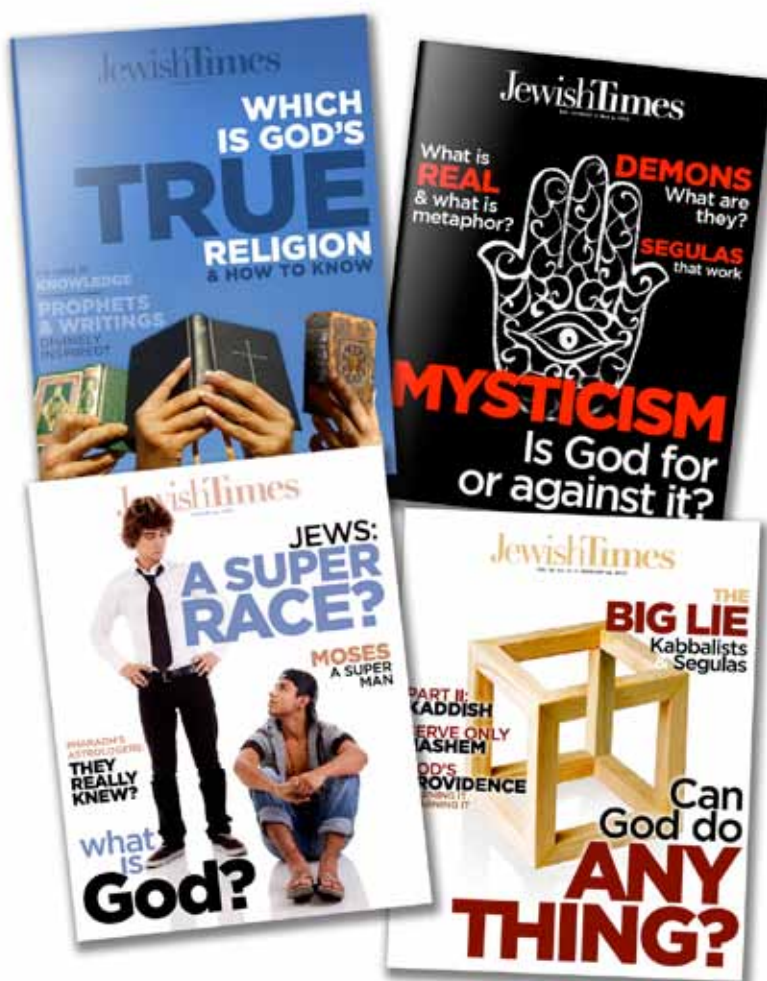
Studies in Pirkei Avos

Why advertise with us? Up to

25,000 VIEWS

Reason #2: Low Rates

www.Mesora.org/Advertise
ad@Mesora.org (516)569-8888



JewishTimes

The weekly journal on Jewish thought

Since 2002, thought-provoking original
articles on Judaism, science, Israel and politics.



JewishTimes
Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought

The JewishTimes is published every Friday and delivered by email. Subscriptions are FREE. To subscribe, send any email message to: subscribe@mesora.org

Subscribers will also receive our advertisers' emails and our regular email announcements.

Contacts

We invite feedback at this address:
office@mesora.org
Ph(516)569-8888

Advertising

<https://www.Mesora.org/Advertising>

Donations

<https://www.Mesora.org/Donate>

Content at Mesora.org

JewishTimes Archives

<http://www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes>

Philosophy Archives

<http://www.Mesora.org/Philosophy>

Weekly Parsha Archives

<http://www.Mesora.org/WeeklyParsha>

Audio Archives

<http://www.Mesora.org/Audio>

Interactive Classes

<http://www.Mesora.org/TalkLive>

Search

<http://www.Mesora.org/Search>

Articles may be reprinted without consent of the JewishTimes or the authors, provided the content is not altered, and credits are given.

CONTENTS



NOV. I

3 Letters

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Questions and answers on the essential need for reason, mysticism and its drawback, Lot's wife and the salt pillar, and rejecting new Torah sites' false views

5 Isaac's Blessings

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

What were Isaac's blessings for his two sons, and what was God's plan?

6 Signs of Wise Men

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

An analysis of Pirkei Avos teaches the unique character of the wise

10 Miscarriage Stones

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Superstition or real phenomenon?

12 Epic Battle

RABBI REUVEN MANN

Rabbi Mann explains the famous midrash of Yaakov and Esav

13 Torah's Clues

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

By detecting and unraveling the clues, we arrive at the Torah's intended lesson of God's providence

20 Migdal HaTorah

EDUCATION SECTION

We highlight a new yeshiva in Israel and Divrei Torah from their Rebbeim

LETTERS

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Religion Requires Reason

Reader: My friend is very much into Christianity and loses her rationality when it comes to religion. She feels rationale cannot be used in matters of God.

Rabbi: Ask her for her basis for her feeling that reason cannot be used in religion, but is acceptable in all other areas.

Wait for her answer.

Then, when she gives a "reason", show her that she is contradicting herself. Elaborate by saying, "You would not leave your job and depend on your faith to provide for your monthly bills." No one actually lives by that popular "belief", that religion is devoid of reason. They say it, but cannot act on

it. Also discuss why there is no justification to abandon reason in areas of religion. Quote Moses where he says to the Jews, "Your eyes saw Sinai." Moses, the chief of all prophets, demands the Jews use their senses, and reason.

Cite all 10 Plagues, where God used visual miracles to prove His rule.

Cite the Splitting of the Red Sea, where God again used a visual, requiring the Jews to use reason and accept His demonstrated supremacy.

(continued on next page)

Or when God destroyed all of Egypt's idols to demonstrate, using reason, that the idols were not powerful at all. Reason is demanded throughout the Bible. The miracles are only the first step for man to "intelligently" arrive at a conclusion – a process requiring reason. Conversely, faith requires no demonstration.

To reject reason, is to reject all of God's lessons. All God's miracles demand we use reason to subsequently abandon beliefs in imagined powers. ■

Mysticism

Jessie Fischbein

I came across three "mystical" ideas this week.

1. "Pray in Hebrew as opposed to your native language because the angels catch your prayers and transmit them to God as they understand them."

2. "You should avoid saying Tehilim at night; night is a dangerous time and you have to be careful when asking for things as each word is extra potent."

3. "The mystical writings teach that acts of kindness act as a shield against the forces of judgment. This means that sometimes we have some unpleasant spiritual debt to pay and it is blocked from coming to fruition by acts of kindness we have done. When our shields are used up though, then all those debts come to collect."

When I was in high school, my best friend was a mystic and I was a rationalist. With the zeal of youth, we spent hours trying to explain our positions to each other. As the years go by, I generally take the "live and let live" approach: If you want to understand the rational approach, I'm delighted to explain. If you prefer mysticism, and it inspires you – I don't understand it, it doesn't make sense to me (but hey, I prefer rationality, so that's understandable), but different people have different paths. However, coming across the three above concepts in one week concretized some of my – I hesitate to use this word, animosity towards mystical ideas.

Reason One: Lack of Distinction between Halacha and Hashkafa

The halacha is clear that it is permissible to pray in a language other than Hebrew (I am aware of the gemara Sotah 33a and

Shabbos 12b). The halacha is clear that saying Tehilim or praying at night is permissible. The halacha is clear that there is no issur (prohibition) of aligning your bed in a certain direction. Although there might be many, many spiritual reasons to do things one way or another, it gets muddled up and presented as what "should" be done or what "has" to be done. But sometimes there are other factors. In the absence of an actual halachic requirement, sometimes there is a psychological, spiritual or shalom bayis reason to stick to straight halacha and forego a mystical act. Yet people hesitate, because they don't realize that it is not actually a halachic issue, but instead a hashkafic issue, and there is a lot more leeway in making a decision that is in your best spiritual interest.

Reason Two: Fearmongering

One of the major notions that strike me about mysticism is that there are many mysterious forces out there, and our every little action and thought has tremendous spiritual repercussions. While this may be inspiring to some, as a whole, I find that it breeds tremendous stress and fear.

When a person wants to daven in her native language, she is fearful her prayer will not be heard. When a person wants to pray at night, he is fearful of the repercussions. When some things go wrong during the day, normal things, a person fears his spiritual debt has left him vulnerable to mysterious and diabolical forces. This is a very stressful way to live and a contrast to the notion of "deracheha darchei noam v'kol nesivoseha shalom; her ways are ways of pleasantness and all of her paths are peace."

Again, if we would distinguish between what is halacha and what is hashkafa, and assume that it is God's will for us to conform to halacha and try to grow spiritually, we could make decisions about our actions with less fear and more clarity and confidence. ■

Lot's Wife

Reader: How is it possible that Lot's wife turned into salt?

Rabbi: God created the universe from nothingness. Certainly He can turn one substance into another; or replace the former (her body) with salt. There is no

contradiction, as is the case regarding a square being a circle simultaneously, which is impossible (Maimonides' "Guide", book III chap. xv).

It seems to me such questions are generated from human conditioning: i.e., we'd never think it possible that the sun become a square.

Radak explains, Lot's wife did not "turn" into salt. Rather, the heavenly phenomena that rained on Sodom contained salt, as Radak quotes in the verse referring to Sodom (Deut. 29:22). Thus, Lot's wife was smitten with phenomena that contained salt, rendering her "location" a salt mound, not "transforming" her into salt, as the verse says (Gen. 19:26) she "was" a salt pillar, not that she transformed into it. Meaning, the salt pillar or mound now occupied the location of her body, which occurs when one is violently consumed by a burning substance containing salt. What remains is no longer a body, but only the destructive elements that contained salt. ■

God is One

Rabbi: Certain Torah websites claiming an orthodox stand, continue to present false views of Torah. Such writings are clear heresy. God's Torah states, "ain ode milvado; there is none other than Him (Deut. 4:35)." It is clear and simple, yet Jews suggest our leaders like Ramban accepted the existence of other Gods. "And on all the gods of Egypt I will judge (Exod. 12:12)" does not mean Egypt's gods were anything other than stone. Egypt's gods were unveiled as inanimate matter by virtue of God's unopposed destruction of Egypt through the 10 Plagues. Thus, God refers to other "gods" despite their inanimate natures.

By definition, if many gods exists, limited in their realm of control, there must be something else enforcing this limitation, thereby rendering these suppose gods as mere natural forces. Fire burns and cannot moisten, water moistens and cannot burn. Limited forces owe their limitation to a Higher Power that created them, and governs them. All existences and their limited natures owe their existence and properties to a Creator. Suggesting any powers exist besides God, is heresy of the highest form. ■

The Blessings of Isaac

Rabbi Israel Chait



Upon analyzing the events surrounding the blessings of Isaac to his children it seems that certain inferences can be made. When Isaac discovered that Jacob fooled him, his response is recorded at Genesis Chapter 27 verse 33 “And Isaac trembled very exceedingly...” It would appear that Isaac was truly amazed upon discovering Esau’s true personality. However this reaction raises a very poignant question. When Jacob brought Isaac the venison he requested of Esau, Isaac remarked that his quest for the venison was successful rather quickly. Jacob answered that God facilitated the promptness of the mission. Rashi on this verse 21 states, “Isaac thought in his heart, it is not the custom of Esau that the name of God should be fluent in his mouth...” It would thus seem that Isaac was aware of Esau’s true nature.

We must also understand the significance of the blessings. Chazal, the Rabbis, teach us that the blessings although couched in physical terms are blessings of the spiritual. In this regard, Maimonides in the ninth

chapter of the Laws of Repentance states that the reason for blessings and curses is merely to reflect God’s providence in this world. Therefore, they are written in terms of worldly good and evil, although the true benefit is the world to come.

Why was Esau so interested in spiritual blessings? Furthermore, after Isaac discovered he blessed Jacob, Esau pleads with his father three times, “don’t you have a blessing for me?” At first Isaac responded that the blessings were already given to Jacob, but finally he seems to relent and blesses Esau as well. What was this blessing if in fact Jacob had usurped the blessings beforehand? Furthermore, an analysis of the blessing of Jacob and Esau seems strikingly similar. Both seem to contain the blessing that each shall be fortunate to attain the dew of the heavens and the fat of the earth.

Isaac essentially had two blessings. One blessing was for the physical goodness of this world. This was a blessing for the material benefits of this world, which is not the ultimate good. However, Isaac also bestowed the essential blessing of the truly spiritual, which he obtained from his father Abraham. This was the blessing, which he gave Jacob and is recited at the commencement of Chapter 28. Chapter 28 verses 3 and 4 state, “And God almighty shall bless thee and make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and thou may become a congregation of people. And I give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with you, so thou may inherit the land of thou sojournings which God gave unto Abraham.”

These blessings were inherently

spiritual. This was the blessing of Abraham that the nation of Israel, a nation based upon the laws of the Torah, will come forth from Jacob.

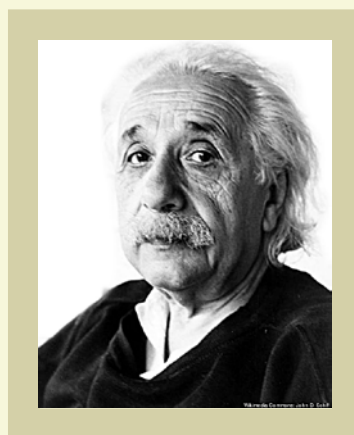
Isaac was not fully ignorant of Esau’s character. He was aware of Esau’s instinctual needs and desires. In the same fashion, he appreciated that Jacob was a simple man, whose nature was more in line with perfection derived from the learning of Torah. Accordingly, the blessings in Chapter 28, which were inherently spiritual, Isaac had always intended to bestow upon Jacob. As the man of Torah, he had to be recognized as the one who would bring forth the will of God. However, because of Esau’s nature, Isaac felt that Esau needed the blessing of the physical as a means for Esau to reach his perfection. He didn’t perceive Esau as a wicked person but rather as an instinctual being who required the physical in order to assist him to elevate himself to a higher level of perfection. He felt that Esau would utilize the blessing of the physical to help Jacob perpetuate the teachings of the Torah. Isaac’s miscalculation of Esau’s true character resulted because of Isaac’s nature. Isaac was the consummate tzaddik. He was unable to leave Israel because of said status. Abraham was compelled to send Eliezer to choose Isaac a wife because Isaac was incapable of judging an individual’s true character. As the purely righteous individual, Isaac was naive and incapable of perceiving evil. He was unable to appreciate the nuances of the average man’s actions. Thus he wrongly perceived Esau’s character. However, it wasn’t a total misconception. He intended to bless Esau with the blessings of the physical as a means for his perfection. He was oblivious to the fact that Esau sought the physical as an end, in and of itself.

(continued on next page)

Thereafter, upon realizing that Jacob had received the blessings of the physical, which he intended to bestow upon Esau, a fear gripped him. He suddenly became aware that God's providence had determined that Jacob receive these blessings. He thus realized that he misjudged Esau and that Esau was truly an instinctual being whose only value was the life of the physical. He thus realized and feared that he had raised a wicked person in his house. Rebecca was aware of her son Esau's true personality and realized that if Esau obtained the blessing of the physical he would utilize it to destroy Jacob. Rebecca was raised in the house of wicked people and was a capable judge of human character.

Thereafter, Isaac informed Esau, that he had no remaining blessings for him. The blessing of the physical, which were originally intended for him, were already bestowed upon Jacob. The truly spiritual blessings, Isaac had always intended to give Jacob, and would still do so. However, Esau persisted and Isaac relented and blessed Esau. The blessing of Esau was not a true blessing. It was a conditional blessing. In verse 40 Isaac states, "And it shall come to pass, when you (Esau) shall break loose and you shall shake his (Jacob) yoke from off thy neck." Rashi comments that when Israel will violate the precepts of the Torah then Esau will achieve the blessings of the physical. Thus Isaac did not bestow upon Esau any new blessings but rather he limited the blessing of the physical, which he had previously given to Jacob. If Jacob uses the physical as a means to achieve intellectual perfection then he will truly merit the blessings of the physical. However, if he violates the Torah and seeks the physical as an end, in and of itself, then Esau will have the upper hand and merit the blessings of the physical.

Upon reflection of the history of our people we can appreciate the authenticity and veracity of the blessings of Isaac as their ramifications have been manifested throughout the experiences of our nation. ■



SIGNS OF WISE MEN

Studies in Pirkei Avos

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers) mishna 5:7 outlines 7 signs of the wise and of the unrefined personality:

"7 [indications] of the golem [unrefined person] and 7 of the wise:

- 1) The wise [man] does not speak prior to someone greater in wisdom or in years*
- 2) He does not interrupt his friend's speech*

3) He is not hasty to respond

4) He inquires in accord with the topic and answers according to balacha

5) He addresses the first matter first and the second matter second

6) And on that which he did not hear he says, "I have not heard anything [on this topic]"

7) And he admits to a truth

And the converse is true of the golem."

Unlike the boor who is completely bereft of intelligence and morality, Maimonides teaches that the golem is a person with partial, yet undeveloped intellect and morality. His mind is therefore inconclusive about both areas. The wise person is the opposite; he or she possesses refined intelligence and morality. He is clear about both realms of knowledge. Let us now define each of the 7.

THE WISE [MAN] DOES NOT SPEAK PRIOR TO SOMEONE GREATER IN WISDOM OR IN YEARS

The wise man respects knowledge over all else. He also recognizes that knowledge is found in people possessing keen intellects, and also with aged people. Years offers man knowledge gained through trial and error, and through witnessing many events and their outcomes.

A keen intellect can think better (thought process), and the aged person more accurately forecasts outcomes (results). Thus, wisdom is attributed to how we think, and also our real knowledge of the workings of the world, what we call experience.

(continued on next page)

HE DOES NOT INTERRUPT HIS FRIEND'S SPEECH

As Moshe Barbanell stated, waiting to hear a complete thought of others is mandatory for our acceptance and responses. For interrupting another person's speech does not allow the listener to grasp the intended words of the speaker, and therefore, any response is futile. Waiting for one to complete his thought, only then might we accurately agree or disagree. But no one can assess an idea unless it was fully expressed.

Why does one interrupt? This is due to one's brazen conviction in his own ideas; his subjectivity. But the wise man is objective, not subjectively tied to his personal views. Therefore the wise man has no urge to push forward his views. He does not interrupt others. He patiently awaits his friend's concluded idea to ensure he has fully grasped his friend's notions. For the wise man does not feel he possesses a monopoly on truth. His friend might offer a new insight, and his love of wisdom compels his patience. He wishes to learn from any person.

HE IS NOT HASTY TO RESPOND

Haste does not allow a person to fully digest, examine and conclude his thoughts.

HE INQUIRES IN ACCORD WITH THE TOPIC AND ANSWERS ACCORDING TO HALACHA

The wise man follows a trend of thinking, not veering at all. This is required to fully exhaust any given topic. And only when a topic is exhausted and all possibilities reviewed, can one possess a truth. If for example one wishes to offer a description of man, he must address his muscles, bones, sinews, and the various systems such as the digestive and respiratory systems. However, if one does not discuss these fully, or omits man's intelligence or other components, his description of man will be inaccurate.

Rashi comments that responding in accord with halacha refers to answering a person in accor-

dance with the core issue. Wise people do not speak of peripheral matters, but they get to the main point, upon which the topic rests. In this manner, he best assists the questioner (which we'll address next). For example, if one asks, "What is wrong with this specific idolatry?", the wise man's does not respond that it is ancient, or that he never saw it work. But he explains that all was created by one being, who also continuously governs all He made. Thus, nothing else is capable of overriding His rule. And it follows from this essential core idea, that all idolatrous expression is futile. By offering a core definition, the questioner is thereby enabled to apply this concept to more cases, than if he was merely told that "this" idol never worked.

HE ADDRESSES THE FIRST MATTER FIRST AND THE SECOND MATTER SECOND

Rabbeinu Yonah teaches that this doesn't mean that he simply goes in order. Here, "first" means "prior in logics." For example, if one asks, "How do you open a door, and what is a key?", the wise man first addresses the more prior issue, which here is the second question. For once he explains how a key works, the questioner also understands how a door opens. Had the wise man

answered in the order of the questions put to him, he could not answer successfully, for he would still require resorting to explaining what a key is. Saying, "You open a door by putting in a key and turning it" cannot answer this questioner, as he is ignorant of what a key is. The wise person anticipates this problem, and answers the questioner in the manner that best addresses all his concerns.

We also learn that the wise man is concerned about others. His attachment to wisdom is not for himself alone, but he treasures wisdom so much, that he wishes to share it. And he does so in a manner that best helps others. The wise man has a relationship with wisdom, as stated by King David, "it is a plaything" i.e., a most treasured pursuit. And he appreciates that wisdom is intended for everyone, and he therefore acts on this. Avraham was a prime example, as he taught others wherever he traveled. This was his primary concern in life.

ON THAT WHICH HE DID NOT HEAR, HE SAYS, "I DID NOT HEAR"

The wise man's ego is not involved in his pursuit of wisdom. Wisdom is about exploring that which is external to the self: the

psyche is absent in this pursuit. He cares nothing about being wrong, or saying "I don't know." He has no personal agenda or biases that could cloud his search.

HE ADMITS TO A TRUTH

He actually expresses a truth, even if it contradicts his stated position (Rashi). This is a further development of the previous trait, for here, he must say, "I am wrong", not simply, "I did not hear anything on the topic."

Finally, why is the barometer of wisdom limited to the realm of "dialogue"? Why are we not taught that a wise man is one who turns one cent into one million dollars, or one who invented a telescope, or some other great accomplishment? Perhaps the answer is because the tool of wisdom is speech. Meaning, in one's very process of acquiring wisdom, dialogue, herein lays the phenomena most crucial to attaining wisdom. What man does with this knowledge afterwards – accomplishments – is merely an expression of that acquired wisdom. But to become wise in the first place, this requires a specific set of behaviors in the "attainment" stages, not how he expresses that attained wisdom. ■

Subscribe to the Jewishtimes...it's FREE.



Subscribe by emailing: Subscribe@Mesora.org

You will receive our magazine each Friday morning and special issues throughout the year with original, thought provoking articles on Torah, Israel, politics and readers' letters.

Enjoy all 462 back issues free: www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes



NYDESIGN.COM

Building loyalty and sales
through design strategies



New logo and website



New logo and website for Xchange. Site redesign includes motion graphics, news scroll, drop-down menus, secure email, and a clean professional design. See it here: www.xchangetele.com
Contact NYDesign today. Professional design increases sales.

SERVICED FIRMS

ABN Amro	MoneyLine
A&E Television	NEC
Breyer's Ice Cream	Nova
Burger King	Oscar de la Renta
Chanel	Pepsi
CNBC	Pizza Hut
Conde Nast	Ralph Lauren
Disney Films	Taco Bell
Entenmann's	Trade.com
Gloria Vanderbilt	W Hotels
Kawasaki	Warner Bros.
MasterCard	XChange Tel.



Above: Previous logo and website

DESIGN

- Branding / identity
- Sites / touchscreens
- GUI / flowcharting
- Wire frames
- Package design
- Editorial design
- Illustration, icons

STRATEGY

- Business strategies
- Business plans
- Metrics analysis
- Contract drafting
- Copy writing
- Presentations
- Interactive demos

PROMOTION

- Advertising
- Banners
- Promo materials
- App planning/design
- Social networking
- Email marketing
- Landing pages



NYDESIGN.COM
studio@nydesign.com
516.569.8888

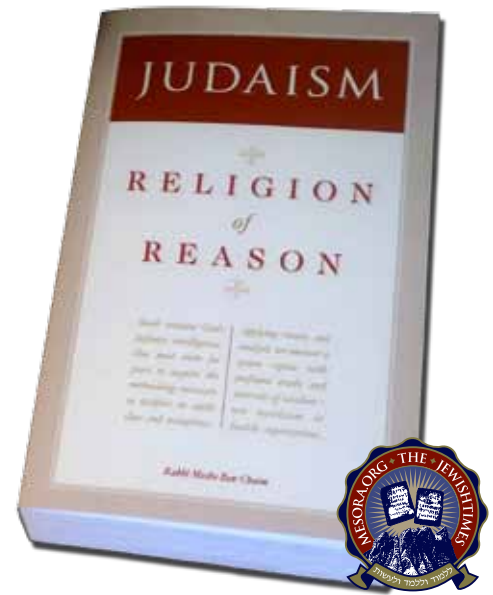
Is Torah mystical... or rational, just like God's natural laws?

It's time a book unveiled the truth.

Is Torah a set of incomprehensible mystical beliefs, as kabbalists suggest...or perfectly reasonable and brilliantly insightful?

Finally learn directly from Torah texts and our greatest Rabbis, precisely why mysticism is false, not Torah, and not God's will.

Religion of Reason unveils widespread "Jewish" mystical beliefs as false, and prohibited. Torah is presented in its rational and provable nature...just like God's natural laws. There are no powers besides God, and He prohibits belief in mysticism. Cryptic Talmudic stories are explained metaphorically as intended, and novel insights into many Parshas are revealed. Finally, Jews can understand the falsehoods they have accepted, and abandon them in place of true Torah.



RELIGION of REASON

by JewishTimes' publisher
Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Reviews are abridged due to ad space constraints. Full reviews at link below.

REVIEWS



RABBI REUVEN MANN — Rabbi, Y. Israel of Phoenix

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim has written extensively on Jewish philosophy for many years. His ideas are rooted in a rational approach. He follows the great philosophers like Rambam and Saadia Gaon. He is opposed to all forms of "mysticism" and seeks to debunk all practices and beliefs which are rooted in superstition and contrary to reason. This work covers a wide variety of topics, of interest to contemporary; insightful analyses of Biblical narratives as well as the significance of many mitzvot. Rabbi Ben-Chaim demonstrates that Judaism can be harmonized with human reason. He is not afraid to ask the most penetrating and challenging questions as he is convinced that Torah is the Word of God and based on the highest form of wisdom. Jews who have a profound desire to make sense out of their religion will benefit greatly from reading this book.



RABBI STEVEN WEIL — Executive Vice President, The Orthodox Union

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim asks critical, crucial and defining questions that any thinking Jew needs to ask. His method enables the reader to explore and engage our theology in a meaningful and serious way. Following the Rishonim, he forces us to define, weigh and analyze each phrase of chazal, showing there is no contradiction between an investigation of Science and an investigation of Judaism. Rabbi Ben-Chaim has written a work that addresses the thinking person of all faiths. This work speaks to the scholar and lay person alike and will help you gain insight into how the great Rishonim define how we view the world. Rabbi Ben-Chaim's website, Mesora.org is a very serious tool and resource for thinking human beings who want to engage and explore the Almighty, the Almighty's universe and do so within the realm of wisdom, rationality and intellectual honesty.



PARTIAL CHAPTER LIST

Astrology	Red Bendels
Reincarnation	Kabbala
Praying to the Dead	Mysticism
Superstition	Miracles
Demons	What is God?
Bashert	"Jewish" Souls
Evil Eye	Talmudic Stories
Rebbe Worship	Metaphors
Segulas	Belief vs. Proof
Satan	Do Rabbis Err?
Angels	Gentile Equality
Western Wall Prayers	Man's Purpose

Free 33-pg Preview:

<https://www.Mesora.org/ReligionofReason>



not only to pregnant women, but also to non-pregnant women, lest they become pregnant and miscarry.

Rabbi Yaymar bar Shalma in Abbaye's name said, "The object of identical weight refers only to an object that is 'naturally' of identical weight, and not that one added or subtracted [to its mass]." (Rashi)

Abbaye asked whether an object that equaled the weight to the second weight may be used, and the question was left unanswered."

We are struck by this Torah law that seemingly contradicts all known medical knowledge: How does a stone carried by pregnant, and even non-pregnant women guard against miscarriages? We can almost hear the defiant Jews and Torah critics blasting our "archaic and outdated sages" for such laws. But not so fast...

What the non-religious Jews, anti-religious Jews, and Torah critics don't appreciate is the sophisticated and deep science behind Talmud and Torah study. How could they know it? They didn't spend the decades required to master these areas. They think one reads the Torah and Talmud like any other book...and it's only as deep as the plain meaning. But there's an immense difference: man didn't originate the ideas in Torah and Talmud: God did.

The Torah critics' minimization of Torah is equal to an infant criticizing Einstein.

The Rabbis teach that one who studies an area 100 times, is incomparable to one who studies it 101 times. Amazing. And yes, there IS that much Divine wisdom waiting for human discovery. The treasure we have as Jews is deep, bountiful and in Kind David's words, "It is perfect and refreshes the soul (Psalms 19:8)." We are fortunate beyond belief. Torah critics should have been humble enough to ask themselves why geniuses like King David, Maimonides and so many others found the deepest profundities in Torah and Talmud. They should have asked this before taking up their positions. I'd like to show you just how intelligent this Talmudic portion truly is.

We understand a mother's concern not to miscarry. This is a tragedy beyond compare. And just so we are clear, Evven Takumah is simply a stone. Nothing more. Women used to carry a stone when pregnant. Normally, a stone cannot be carried on the Sabbath, but it permitted in this case. We understand the apparent oddity of such a practice, but let's line up the questions:

How does carrying a stone (Evven Takumah) guard against miscarriage?

How can it do so, even before a woman is pregnant?

How does the stone's weight play a significant role, that another object of equal weight is also permitted?

And why must that secondary, replacement object "naturally" equal the weight of the primary Evven Takumah?

Finally, what was Abbaye getting at with the Talmud's last question, whether a replacement for the replacement stone was also permitted?

ANCIENT SCIENCE?

Stones that Prevent Miscarriage

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Reader: Talmud Sabbath 66b discusses the Sabbath prohibition for women to carry the "evven takumah" [miscarriage prevention stone]. I wanted to know if there is more info on it.

Thank you,
Bryan

Rabbi: Bryan, let's analyze the source you cited. Bear in mind that stones are not typically permitted for use, transport or carrying on Sabbath:

"The Rabbis learned: a woman may go outside carrying an Evven Takumah on the Shabbos. Rabbi Meir said, "She may go outside even with an object of identical weight of the Evven Takumah."

The permission to carry the stone extends not only to a woman who previously miscarried, but also to women who had not yet miscarried. And the permission extends

(continued on next page)

How do we approach such questions? Sure, one can quickly say, “The Rabbis erred by believing in the science of their times”. And this was in fact the case in certain instances, as is true regarding the geocentric universe theory. We now know the sun is at the center, not the Earth, as was formerly believed based on outdated knowledge. For one cannot be fluent in all areas: he or she must rely on the current-day knowledge, just as we do today. But Rabbinical error must not be quickly accepted without first examining this case and finding justification to claim they erred. Perhaps there are true ideas that explain this phenomenon.

What’s the first step? We must gather all the facts. Referring to its design, human interactivity, and appreciating that it is not of Torah origin (not located in the verses), what can we derive from Evven Takumah?

We note that the central issue here is that women “carried” something. The CARRYING somehow guarded against misCARRIAGE. (Do you see where we’re going?) In fact, the object is not essential, since we learn that a replacement object – of identical weight – was also used, and hence, also permitted. This is significant.

We discover the fundamental issue: carrying an object was associated with carrying the embryo. Carrying prevented miscarriage – the same phenomenon. However, since there is no physical association between carrying a stone, and carrying one’s embryo, the connection can exist in only one other area: the psyche.

What this means is that when a woman would carry a stone – the Evven Takumah – this activity would affect her psychologically. Just as when we are psychologically uptight or tense, we experience a tightening of our muscles in the form of cramps, this rule applies in other cases. But let’s clarify this rule: the body can express our psychological state. When uptight, our muscles tighten. When relaxed, we find relaxing our bowels much easier. And again, when one carries something, the body too will carry what’s inside and not expel the embryo.

Dr. John E. Sarno has published a number of books explaining how many people with chronic back/body pain can learn to eliminate that pain through use of the mind. I know a number of cases first hand...including myself. There are many other mind/body correlations, not only tightness and carrying.

When one is nervous about doing something, many times the body starts trembling. We’ve heard the phrase “trembling in fear.” The person is in great conflict about the matter at hand, and then expresses the inability to move on it in the form of an incapacitating trembling. When people are highly emotionally motivated, they can achieve feats requiring great strength. Meaning, the powerful desire to act actually invigorates the person with additional power to do what he or she could not do prior. Martial artists use their psychological focus in a manner that enables them to manipulate objects others cannot. Placebos are fake pills (no medicinal value) that fool the body into healing itself. And we learned that Joseph died before his older brothers, because he experienced more stress as Egypt’s ruler. The weariness of mind, strained his body.

We now understand how carrying a stone can help a woman carry her child with success. We also understand that since this is a psychological phenomenon, the effects can be protracted and

assist women not currently pregnant. Now let’s answer the other questions.

Perhaps the Rabbis permitted the replacement object, thereby indicating that the effect was not caused by this specific object. Any object will do. And since it is the act of “carrying” that was effective, “weight” was highlighted as the essential factor. Thus, a replacement object must weigh the same as the primary Evven Takumah.

Now, why was it required that this replacement weight equal the Evven’s weight “naturally” without adding to or subtracting from the replacement? Perhaps here, we learn more of the Rabbis’ keen knowledge of psychology. The rabbis understood what psychological principle was at work here: identification. The (expecting) mother psychosomatically carried her embryo successfully because she identified her baby with the other object she carried – the Evven Takumah. But in order that the identification be complete, the carried object could not be a manufactured item, but it must be a “natural” object, just as her embryo is a product of nature, without manipulation. Thus, the Rabbis permitted only a replacement stone that was “naturally” equal in weight to the Evven Takumah. Only then would the mother’s psyche and bodily functions duplicate the carrying of the stone. And this health benefit was permitted on Sabbath.

It is important to note that without any correlation between a practice and a result, the Rabbis would forbid such acts. Torah endorses what nature says is a truth. Rabbeinu Nissim quotes Rabbi Yonah who suspected as a heathen practice (prohibited) any unproven device. For example, it is heathen and prohibited to gauge one’s actions based on unrelated phenomena, like avoiding business deals when black cats cross our paths, or if we break a mirror. In contrast, Evven Takumah is permitted since a natural principle explains the phenomenon.

Finally, Abbaye asked whether a replacement for the replacement stone was also permitted. I feel he was questioning the nature of the Rabbinic ruling: i.e., must the primary Evven Takumah be in one’s mind to be effective, or not? Meaning, when a replacement for the replacement is allowed, is that too far removed from the Evven Takumah to be effective? Or, perhaps any number of replacement stones would be permitted, if we opine otherwise, that the affect is not due to close association to the Evven, but to the weight alone. In that case, any number of replacement stones would be permitted. This was unanswered in the Talmud.

In conclusion, we learn from a careful analysis of the Rabbis that they have great insights to offer us. The Talmudic presentation of Evven Takumah is unlike astronomy, which was based upon a geocentric universe. Evven Takumah is based on accurate psychological principles that have not changed. Thus, the Rabbis’ words are as accurate today as when they wrote them. ■

Having come this far, let’s ask one final question regarding amulets. Talmud Sabbath 61a-61b discusses vegetation and writings that were used to heal. Many cures are medicinal or derivatives of plants; others were psychologically easing – writings that people contemplated and cured them. Both were permitted...provided they worked three times. The question is why the Rabbis required that an amulet or its writer be proven effective three times before it was permitted. We don’t read that this Evven Takumah required three successes in order to be permitted. It was permitted from the outset. Why then do amulets require proof, while Evven Takumah’s do not?



Epic Battle

Rabbi Reuven Mann

This week's Parsha, Toldot, begins with the account of Rivka's pregnancy. Initially she, too, was barren and could not conceive. A major principle of Torah is that G-d hears prayer, and when He sees fit, overturns the "decree" of nature. He performs miracles for those who fear Him and serve Him in truth. One must never rely on prayer alone for no one is ever excused from doing whatever can be done in the natural order. Today, many technologies have been developed that perform wonders for infertile couples. If necessary, one should make use of them, but even so, should also engage in prayer. In the time of Rivka and Yitzchak, these remedies did not exist. Both entreated Hashem and the prayer was accepted.

However, the pregnancy of Rivka was extremely turbulent. In describing her condition, the Torah strangely declares that "the children struggled within her." One gets the sense of a mighty battle taking place between two fetuses, in her womb. The twins within her were engaged in some type of epic battle. Rashi explains, "when she walked by the house of the Torah of Shem and Ever, Yaakov was stirred and sought to come out and when she passed by a house of idolatry, Esav stirred and sought to come out."

This comment poses many problems. Can a fetus know what is going on in the "outside" world or be capable of having a desire for either Torah or idol worship? Does Rashi mean to tell us that Esav was wicked from the womb, while Yaakov was a Tzadik by nature? This cannot be the case as it contradicts the most fundamental doctrine of Judaism, free will. Indeed, Rashi himself, comments on the verse, "And the boys grew up" – that "while they were small they were not distinguishable in their deeds and no one could discern their nature. Once they turned thirteen, this one set out for the house of Torah and the other for the house idol worship." This statement clearly implies that a person's nature is not formed until he reaches maturity and exercises his free will in deciding what path to follow. Only when they were thirteen did Jacob choose Torah and Esav opted for idolatry. This directly contracts the plain sense of Rashi's previous comment that each one's desires were already manifested in the womb. How can we resolve this problem?

One of the greatest challenges in the study of Torah is a proper approach to Midrash.

All the great sages of Israel recognized that many of the Midrashim were not meant to be taken literally. Even those that do make sense on the literal level usually have a deeper and hidden meaning, which can only be arrived at through interpretation. Many Midrashim have no literal meaning and only contain a concealed idea, which requires great wisdom to uncover. A book known as "The Juggler and the King" contains brilliant elucidations by the Vilna Gaon of many Midrashim which seem preposterous if taken in their plain sense. Indiscriminate and literal reading of Midrashim can be very harmful to one's spiritual health and lead to distortion of the true ideas of Torah.

In my opinion, it is obvious that Rashi's comment about the twin's behavior in the womb is not meant to be taken literally. Esav was not predestined to be wicked, nor was Yaakov programed to be righteous. Rashi is referring to the idea of "instinctual disposition." Each person has his own "makeup" and his own particular challenges. No two people are identical. Some have extremely powerful sexual or egotistic drives. Others have less instinctual cravings and are more thoughtful by nature. The Torah maintains that however powerful one's instincts are, they do not determine one's path. G-d created the soul and endowed it with the ability to control the instincts and redirect their energies to worthwhile goals. Esav was gifted with tremendous strength and the ability to be a conqueror. He had the choice to utilize his great talents in the service of Hashem, or to live a life of self-aggrandizement. Yaakov's life was filled with challenges. He had to overcome some of his own emotions and learn how to deal with external adversaries. There is no such thing as a natural Tzadik or Rasha. Only by constantly choosing the good and rejecting the allure of one's fantasies, does one become righteous.

The struggle of Yaakov to be a great Tzadik is depicted in the account of his battle with the "angel." In blessing him, the angel said, "no longer will it be said that your name is Yaakov, but Yisrael, for you have striven with the Divine and with men and you have overcome." Every one of us has his and her own personal conflicts and inner battles that must be waged. No one becomes righteous unless he strives and overcomes.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

TORAH'S CLUES

A Lesson in Divine Providence

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim



Part I

Reading the Parsha each week, at times we gloss over “simple” information, assuming nothing more is intended below the surface. But this cannot be the case. Maimonides teaches, “There is a good reason for every passage; the object of which we cannot see. We must always apply the words of our Sages: ‘It is not a vain thing for you’ (Deut. xxxii. 47), and if it seems vain, it seems your fault.’” (The Guide, book III, chap. L) With this in mind, let’s recap the story of Toldos and then isolate the questions.

Rivkah experienced a troubling pregnancy: the children were moving violently within her. Ibn Ezra says that Rivkah first asked other women if her pregnancy was the norm. When the women told her that her pregnancy was abnormal, she sought counsel from God via a prophet (either Abraham or Shem, Noah’s son). Rivkah was aware of God’s providence; initiated with Abraham and sustained unto Isaac and herself. The nation of the Jews was to be established through her. This pregnancy was unnatural and must be due to God’s will.

Rivkah then sought out a prophet and learned from him that she will give birth to twins (two nations) and that the “greater son will be subservient to the younger”. This was the primary message. When she finally gave birth, Esav exited first, and the Torah describes him as red and covered with hair. Jacob then exited – his hand seizing Esav’s heel. The Torah then says that

Esav became a hunter while Jacob was a dweller in tents. Isaac loved Esav, for he captured food for Isaac, while Rivkah loved Jacob. The Torah hints at an imbalance.

We then learn of the sale of the birthright. Jacob’s alacrity in requesting the birthright in exchange for the lentils appears premeditated. Later, Rivkah “somehow” hears Isaac preparing to give the blessings to Esav. Rivkah dresses Jacob in goat skins and in Esav’s garments to deceive the senses of the now blind Isaac into thinking Jacob is Esav. The ruse works. And not a split second after Jacob leaves Isaac’s presence, Esav enters requesting the blessings. This alarms Isaac greatly, as he realized through a successful blessing of Jacob that he must have been wrong about Esav. The blessings’ success indicated Divine Providence favoring Jacob, while all along Isaac favored Esav.

Now our questions:

What was God’s intent that Rivkah experience an unnatural, tormenting pregnancy?

Why was Rivkah’s response to inquire about God’s providence from a prophet?

And why did she inquire of the prophets Abraham or Shem, but not of her own husband?

Of what significance is Esav’s hairy nature?

Why are we told that Jacob seized Esav’s heel at birth?

Of what significance is it that “Rivkah loved Jacob, while Isaac loved Esav”?

How was Jacob “instantly” prepared to purchase the birthright from Esav when he asked for the lentils?

Why did Rivkah and Jacob agree they must deceive Isaac to obtain the blessings: why not ask Isaac openly?

Why was Isaac shocked when

(continued on next page)

Esav came before him to receive the blessings?

It is clear, God intended Rivkah to obtain information vital to the establishment of the Jewish people. Her difficult pregnancy was intended to direct her to one who would inform her of God's intentions. With that new information obtained via the prophet – “the older would serve the younger” – Rivkah now cherished Jacob over Esav, as she learned through that prophecy that a matter of “nations” depends on the younger Jacob. (She was told that two nations would issue from her.) The prophecy taught her that she was to be instrumental in securing the younger son's success, as a means of establishing the nation of Israel. She also deduced that Isaac was not given this prophetic information for a reason.

The patriarchs and matriarchs did not function in accord with simplistic favoritism as we do today. We must not err and project onto them. Thus, when the Torah teaches that “Isaac loved Esav while Rivkah loved Jacob”, it must teach an important lesson. It appears this lesson is that Isaac was not as well informed as was Rivkah about the natures of their two sons. Thus, the Torah saw fit to teach us the imbalance of their divergent loves, so we might appreciate how God orchestrated His providence. As Isaac was misled by Esav's “capturing his father with his mouth” (Gen. 25:28), Isaac desired to give Esav certain blessings, and not bestow them upon Jacob. Isaac was deluded by Esav's ostensible good nature, as Esav disguised himself as upright with inquiries of proper conduct from Isaac (capturing him) only to earn Isaac's favor. In truth, Esav was evil. In contrast, the Torah teaches that Jacob was a “dweller of tents” (ibid 25:27): he was complete in his perfection and delved into the study of God.

Jacob's proper lifestyle did not present the charade offered by



Esav's veneer. Esav presented himself in the manner he knew his father would cherish. He “captured his father with his mouth”. Thus, the Torah thereby informs us of the need for God's providence to work through the more-aware Rivkah. From the very outset of the lives of Esav and Jacob, Rivkah was taught that the younger Jacob was to rule his older brother and that Jacob was to receive the blessings. This was also substantiated through Jacob's clutching of Esav's heel. This strange phenomenon taught Rivkah that Jacob – right out of the womb – was one who could confront and usurp his twin. Rivkah relied on this knowledge later in her plan to deceive Isaac.

It was also vital that Rivkah receive the prophet's communication ‘before’ giving birth. Now that

she understood the younger was to be favored, she could interpret that act of Jacob clutching Esav's heel as a Divine message. God was showing Rivkah the means He implanted into human nature to ensure success. God also created Esav with a hairy exterior, which would also play a vital role in Rivkah's plan.

The Torah tells us how Esav arrives home exhausted. The Rabbis teach he had murdered, committed adultery and idolatry. A wise Rabbi said he did so, for on that day, Abraham had died: Esav – a man seeking an Earthly, hedonistic existence alone – was frustrated that his grandfather Abraham would actually perish from this Earth. Esav's immortality fantasy was abruptly shattered. He no longer clung to any role model displayed by Abraham: “for what is life, if it ends?” Esav felt. He therefore went astray from Abraham's values and committed these grave acts. Esav, exhausted, requested the lentils Jacob had cooked. Jacob “instantly” countered with his offer to purchase the birthright from Esav, in exchange for the lentils. Thus, Jacob's purchase was premeditated. He had already planned to obtain the birthright prior to this event! We might explain Jacob's readiness to obtain the birthright was due to Rivkah's informing him of her knowledge obtained via that earlier prophecy. Rivkah most probably explained to Jacob what she learned, that the younger Jacob was to rule over the older. This is supported by Jacob's readiness to purchase the birthright.

Later, when Rivkah overhears that Isaac was about to give the birthright blessings to Esav, she urges Jacob to deceive his father and to disguise himself as Esav. The point here is that Rivkah is not first informing Jacob “that” he must obtain the birthright, but rather, “how” he can accomplish this. Thus, we find proof that Jacob already knew he was to

(continued on next page)

obtain the birthright blessings. This is why he purchased them from Esav at the outset, for Rivkah must have instructed him to do so. Otherwise, without a proper purchase, what right would he have to take them later? And without Rivkah informing Jacob that he should have the blessings, why would Jacob even think to purchase them? It must be as we suggest, that Rivkah learned through prophecy that Jacob – although the younger – must obtain the blessings. Therefore, Jacob was prepared at all times for the right moment to purchase them. Then, he must act to obtain them, even through deceit. For a lie is not absolutely prohibited by God. As we see God told Samuel (Sam. I; 16:2) to make believe he was offering a sacrifice, although he was truly en route to anoint David, in Saul's place. Samuel feared that Saul would learn of this and would kill Samuel for attempting to replace him with a new king. Thus, God instructed Samuel in a deception. Jacob too did not argue with Rivkah about the deceit here. He was only concerned that his father would not curse him, but he had no concern about the deceit itself as a sin to God. Jacob knew a lie is necessary at times. And Rivkah – as well as many others – lied for just reasons. Ibn Ezra teaches there is no harm in lying if it is for a proper motive. (Gen. 27:13)

In summary, Rivkah required Divine instruction due to the imbalance between Esav and Jacob, and between her and her husband. She would have to act to bring about the nation of Israel. God orchestrated an abnormal pregnancy precisely to educate Rivkah on matters of this pregnancy: the issuing nations of Jacob and Esav and how they must be guided through her. Compelled to inquire from a prophet, Rivkah became equipped with the Divine knowledge, vital to ensure the blessings

are bestowed upon the proper recipient.

There was a need for Rivkah to learn of the different natures of her two sons. She learned through prophecy that Jacob would be the superior. But she also learned through seeing his hand clutching Esav's heel, one more essential lesson. Through this act, Rivkah learned that Jacob possessed the natural tendency to usurp Esav. It was only through this knowledge gained by seeing his hand grabbing his brother's heel that Rivkah thereby learned that she must harness his nature to ensure the prophecy comes to be. Had she merely received knowledge that Jacob was to be superior, this knowledge alone does not compel her to act through Jacob. Rather, it was the act of Jacob grabbing his brother's heel whereby Rivkah understood she was seeing this for a reason. She deduced that this competitive display was necessary to indicate that her two sons have various natures, through which she must play a role to ensure these natures are acted out. She must make Jacob topple Esav in "status", when the time is right.

Rivkah teaches Jacob this prophecy when he is young, and Jacob is thereby ever-prepared from that point forward to purchase the birthright. And at the right moment, Rivkah and Jacob strategize a plan that succeeds, but again, only through God's providence. For we see that "no sooner that Jacob left, did Esav return." This is to teach that God controlled the timing to the second, ensuring Rivkah and Jacob's success (Gen. 27:30). And finally, Isaac too attests to Jacob's rightful receipt of the blessings, as he tells Esav, "and he is surely blessed (ibid 27:33)". For Isaac realized that since he was able to utter the blessings, then it must have been God's will that Jacob had received them.

Isaac's sudden shock (ibid

27:33) also explains why Rivkah did not inquire from her husband about her abnormal pregnancy, but only from Abraham or Shem. For she understood that Isaac would reject the idea of Esav's unfit character. That is why Jacob too could not openly ask for the blessings, even though he rightfully purchased them. Until Isaac successfully uttered the blessings, he would not accept Esav as unfit. Therefore Rivkah avoided approaching Isaac with her concerns regarding her pregnancy, and also when securing the blessings for Jacob. And Isaac again confirms to Esav that Jacob was correct in taking the blessings, as Isaac says to Esav, "your brother came with wisdom and took your blessings." Why does Isaac say "with wisdom"? Perhaps to teach Esav that Jacob was correct.

The obvious questions and the clues to their answers are the true "codes of the Torah". This is God's method of directing us to unlock the Torah's mysteries, imbuing us with an ever-growing appreciation for His wisdom, the development of our minds and souls, and understanding the perfection of our matriarchs and patriarchs.

Could it be that God prepared Rivkah to be Lavan's sister, so she might learn of his cunning, as a preparation of this necessary deceit of Isaac? And could it be that Rivkah's training of Jacob to use deceit helped to prepare Jacob to deal with Lavan for those 20 years when Lavan tried again and again to deceive Jacob? If so: it ends up that Lavan's cunning came back to haunt him. For he displayed to Rivkah in their childhood home a deceitful nature. Thereby, Rivkah learned to be cunning herself and achieved a good outcome of the blessings. Through Rivkah's deceit, Jacob learned how to deal with Lavan. Lavan's cunning came full circle and ended up ruining him.

(continued on next page)

Part II

Having read this, my friend Shaye asked a fine question: "I understand that 'after' Rivkah witnessed Isaac favoring Esav, that Rivkah had grounds to omit Isaac from her prophecy and her plans. But before she even had the prophecy, prior to giving birth...she avoided asking Isaac for an explanation of her abnormal pregnancy! She asked either Shem or Abraham. How can you explain this avoidance of Isaac 'before' Isaac ever expressed any favoritism towards Esav?"

I recognized the problem Shaye had raised, and immediately went back to the verses.

Reading from the very beginning of the Parsha, I was bothered by the first two verses:

"And these are the generations of Isaac son of Abraham; Abraham bore Isaac. And it was when Isaac was forty that he took Rivkah the daughter of Betuel the Arami from Padan Aram, the sister of Lavan the Arami, for a wife".

Think about this: the first verse already says "Isaac son of Abraham". Why then does it

repeat, "Abraham bore Isaac"? And in verse 2, if we are already told that Betuel, Lavan's father was an "Arami", (ostensibly a nationality), why are we told again that Lavan was also an "Arami"? If Lavan's father was an Arami, then we know Lavan his son is also an Arami!

There are no redundancies in God's Torah. I thought about the first question. I realized "Abraham bore Isaac" must indicate something new.

Abraham sought a wife for Isaac. We thereby learn that Isaac was incapable of selecting one for himself. We may suggest, "Abraham bore Isaac," means that Abraham "raised" Isaac. In other words, Isaac – more than any other – was in need of paternal dedication and guidance. He was not as others, who approached marriage independently. His self-sacrifice on the altar had a profound affect on his nature. He was not even allowed to leave the land, as God told him to remain in Gerar and not descend to Egypt. Therefore, this first verse seeks to emphasize Isaac's nature as greatly dependent upon Abraham.

The second verse teaches an

apparent redundancy as well. We know Betuel is an Arami, so it is unnecessary to teach that his son Lavan was also an Arami...if that means a nationality. Or Hachaim teaches that Arami in fact is not indicating a nationality, but a character trait. Switching two letters (in Hebrew) "Arami" becomes "Ramai", meaning a swindler. A liar. In this verse, we are being taught that Isaac married a woman whose father and brother were liars. So even though we are taught that Betuel was a liar, we must also be taught that Lavan too chose this lifestyle, as it is not inherited, as seen from Rivkah's upright stature. Now the questions.

Why must we learn of Isaac's dependency on Abraham? Why must we learn that Rivkah's father and brother were liars? I feel these two verses answer my friend Shaye's question.

We are taught that Rivkah – one who observed a cunning personality in her father and brother – was able to detect Isaac's shortcomings in terms of interpersonal issues. This prompted Rivkah to avoid approaching her husband Isaac with matters of her

(continued on next page)



**THE BIGGEST KILLER OF
CHILDREN IN ISRAEL IS...
CANCER!**

**Help Wage The War Against Childhood
Cancer By Helping Us To Help Them.**

IOCF
Israel Children's
Cancer Foundation
THE SUN IS ONLY A DAY AWAY

141 WASHINGTON AVENUE
SUITE 205
LAWRENCE, NY 11559-1669
(516) 791-1180/FAX: (516) 791-1184
E-MAIL: info@israelcancer.org
WEBSITE: www.israelcancer.org
EIN: 11-3418416

pregnancy. The Torah cleverly hints to the reason why Rivkah avoided Isaac: he was not fit, and she was cunning enough to know this from experiencing shrewd human nature in her home. We now understand why she went to Abraham or Shem – and not Isaac – when she was in need of understanding the nature of her pregnancy, and how it might affect the establishment of B'nei Yisrael.

These two verses appear at the very start of our Parsha, as they explain the succeeding verses, and Rivkah's actions.

No question in Torah is without an answer. This time, we were fortunate enough to discover it. Thank you Shaye.

It is amazing how subtle redundancies can shed light: one of the true codes of Torah.

God's Providence

Esav born unnaturally covered with hair conveys Divine intent. The only other mention of Esav's exterior is the means through which Jacob deceived his father. This teaches that God's providence was in play at the very birth of these twins. God ensured

a means existed through which the blessings would be successfully transmitted to Jacob.

First, God provides the impetus (a troubling pregnancy) to direct the righteous Rivkah towards obtaining greater knowledge. He gave Rivkah prophetic insight into the future of the Jewish nation, emanating from Jacob. It is clear that God wishes men and women to engage their intellects – we are not to sit back while God runs the world. The opposite is the case: God desires the path and progress of mankind to be steered by mankind. We are to use all in our power to achieve the best for all others and ourselves. God says this in Genesis 1:28, "Fill the Earth and conquer it". But since man cannot know most variables or control even a few of them, God assists man when necessary. Therefore God imparted to Rivkah His plan and the necessary tools with which to attain success. These "tools" include Rivkah's own cunning personality adopted from her brother and father, Esav's physical hairy nature, Jacob's personality as capable of usurping Esav, and the knowledge of events such as Rivkah hearing Isaac's wish to bless Esav and Esav's wish to kill Jacob. And

besides reacting to God's clues, Rivkah devised her own methods, such as dressing Jacob in Esav's clothing in her anticipation of Isaac's smelling the fragrance of the field, thereby assuming this was Esav before him.

Why were the blessings necessary at all? God can certainly achieve His plan without man! I believe Isaac's words of blessing were required as a means of silencing those descendants of Esav claiming shared rights to his legacy, along with Jacob. Talmud Sanhedrin 91a teaches how Ben Pasisa responded to Alexander when the Ishmaelites sought claim on Abraham's legacy. Ben Pasisa responded, "If a father sends away all his sons and gives them gifts while yet alive, do these sons have any future claim on the father's legacy?" (Referring to Abraham's casting of all sons except Isaac, [Gen. 25]) This silenced the Ishmaelites. And I believe Isaac's words too were necessary – not as causative of blessings, but as his exclusive selection of Jacob. Future generations of Esav can no longer justly claim an inheritance from Isaac, now that Isaac declared Jacob his sole inheritor. ■

XCHANGE TELECOM

SERVING BROOKLYN, NY HOMES AND BUSINESSES

GREAT RATES ON SKYWIRE PHONE AND HIGH-SPEED INTERNET

Scan this for Low Rates High Quality Skywire

A FULL SUITE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND DATACOM SOLUTIONS

XCHANGETELE.COM 677.853.3443



Need home improvements, but not high costs?

BBG Services provides affordable, quality home improvements.

Powerwashing of decks, vinyl siding, concrete and brick pavers, sealing & concrete staining (algae mildew & mold treatment)

Stucco – patching & crack repairs

Tile work (ceramic, marble, vinyl) bathrooms, backsplashes, foyers

Painting & Staining – interior rooms, wood, cabinets, texture painting

Minor Plumbing – faucets, sinks, toilets, new shower heads

Minor Electrical – new light fixtures, ceiling fans, new switches, light timers, dimmers

Drywall Repairs – holes repaired, spackled, and painted

Shelving – for closets, bedrooms, laundry rooms, playrooms

Molding – door trim, window trim, base/cove molding, chair rail molding

Recaulking/Regrouting – tubs, showers, tiles, windows, doors

Serving Metro NY

BBG@NYDesign.com

(347)489-2048

BBG Services
All your home improvement needs

Licensed & Insured – LIC# 2010-03250

EDUCATION



Migdal HaTorah

Top Rabbis Open Unique Yeshiva in Israel

*Rav Chaim Ozer Chait
leads Migdal HaTorah
as Rosh HaYeshiva,
a close talmid of
Rav Moshe Feinstein z"tl*

In August 2013, Yeshivat Migdal HaTorah opened its doors in Modiin, Israel as a new and unique gap year yeshiva program. Led by Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Ozer Chait, Migdal's ideals focus upon the preparation of their students continuing to live their lives as Orthodox Jews in today's modern world, while maintaining a fulfilling and rewarding professional career. This includes an emphasis on analytical gemara skills, rational Jewish philosophy, and a focus on contemporary halacha. Many of Migdal's faculty members are both educators and maintain jobs in the professional world, reflecting the ideal role models for the Jewish youth of today.

Over the past twenty-five years, there has been a huge increase in graduates of Jewish day schools and yeshivas choosing to spend a year studying Torah in Israel prior to entering college. Without question, this year spent in Israel continues to have a tremendous impact on the increased interest in Torah learning among today's Jewish youth.

While there are many reasons that help explain this result, one of the

primary ones surrounds the unique environment Israel provides. Each student is immersed into a world like nothing he has ever experienced before, surrounded by rabbis and educators, all working to imbue a love of Torah into each student. However, the results sometimes lead to unwanted consequences. Many of these students, due to the relationships they build with their various teachers, come to erroneous conclusions as to their ability to succeed in the long-term pursuit of Torah knowledge. A common idea that emerges is that in order to achieve true success one must choose either a job in the secular world or commit to an open ended full time learning environment; it is impossible to succeed in both.

The genesis of the yeshiva began in 2009, when Rabbi Dr. Darrell Ginsberg, who was a magid shiur in various institutions, was approached by many parents to discuss their concerns regarding their children's year in Israel experience. They were looking for an alternative, one which would ideally fit within the value systems they spent years inculcating into their sons. Rabbi Ginsberg was (and still is) an educator and a practicing dentist, and this type of model was one that seemed to fit the desired mold. He saw this idea as the beginning of a shift in the normal year in Israel experience, one where a new generation of inspired young Orthodox Jews could achieve tremendous success. In the summer of 2010, he made Aliyah with his family to Modiin, to bring the idea to fruition.

Around the same time, Rabbi Ginsberg touched base with Rabbi Chaim Ozer Chait, who was then Rosh Yeshiva at the Yeshiva of Richmond. Rabbi Chait, a close talmid of Rav Moshe Feinstein and a beloved leader, has tremendous experience in appreciating the importance of success in both

worlds. Rabbi Chait, who had left Israel to take the position in Richmond, had longed to return to Israel for many years.

Thus, Rabbi Chait decided to join Migdal as Rosh Yeshiva. Throughout 2011 and 2012, much work was done to assemble an ideal set of rebbeim, who all reflected the ideals set forth. A significant amount of time was put into recruiting efforts, and by the end of the 2012-2013 school year, 12 students committed to attending Yeshivat Migdal Hatorah.

The format of each day offers challenging and rewarding shiurim. The shiurim in the morning focus on developing analytical skills in learning gemara, all in a very interactive format. This derech promotes a tremendous love of learning gemara, bringing to life what to many is an obscure tome. Much time is spent as well on Jewish philosophy. Most high school students have little to no exposure to Jewish philosophy, leading to numerous questions, questions that require answers.

At Migdal, the students are challenged intellectually, working to understand how Judaism "makes sense". There are various shiurim on contemporary halacha, focusing on the natural interaction between the system of halacha and the surrounding world. Students are taught a myriad of halachic, philosophical and ethical issues they should understand prior to entering the working world. Every Sunday evening (Israel time), Migdal presents a well-known guest lecturer, streamed live to the world on their website. Migdal also offers shiurim in many different areas as well, including Parsha, Navi, and Bekiyus, among others.

Looking ahead, Migdal is entering its second year of recruiting and the message is resonating. Many students across America are aware of their ideals, and are eager to be a part of a new approach to Torah scholarship. ■

Migdal HaTorah

Succos in Review: Where is the Pitom?



Rav Chaim Ozer Chait
Rosh HaYeshiva,

When one chooses his etrog, he will most probably be struck by a very common type of etrog – the etrog that lacks a pitom. In fact, it would seem a great majority of etrogim sold today lack a pitom. It is interesting to note that there is no mention of a problematic etrog missing a pitom in the Mishnayot, the Gemara, and most of the Rishonim. In fact, it seems quite clear from the Mishna that if the pitom breaks off the etrog, it is considered pasul. No discussion was raised about an etrog that grew without a pitom, leading one to conclude that the norm was an etrog with a pitom. Rabeinu Asher (the Rosh), who lived in the 1300's, is one of the first to mention this issue (Sukkah 3:16), and concludes that since it is grown that way, it is kosher. How or what caused the change in our etrogim?

There are two phenomenon that might explain these etrogim – mutations or pollination. As mutations are part of the natural world, one could understand that a mutation occurred of an etrog minus a pitom. Pollination could as

well have played a significant role. It is possible that in certain areas with different types of fruit, the ideal conditions for cross-pollination were evident, leading to the etrog lacking a pitom. These type of etrogim hit critical mass at the time of the Rav Moshe Isserliss (Rema, noted in OC 758:7). It is possible the climate was ideal for the growth of these mutated forms.

This may explain the very existence of these types of etrogim. But why are they found in such abundance? Is this the way etrogim will always be? A relevant phenomenon is the introduction of a hashgacha to etrogim. Most people today erroneously conclude that a hashgacha on an etrog is a halachic necessity. In fact, halacha requires a chazaka. Rav Henkin zt"l wrote, when discussing the arba minim in his yearly calendar, that if an etrog appears to be an etrog, it has the chazaka of being an etrog. I remember that my rebbe, Reb Moshe Feinstein zt"l, used to purchase an etrog in America from a farmer in Israel, and that farmer had absolutely no hashgacha. In explaining this, Reb Dovid Feinstein shlita relayed in a conversation that buying an etrog with a hashgacha is not a qualification found in the Shulcan Aruch. What is clear is that if there is a chazaka, meaning if it looks like an etrog then it has that shem of an etrog. And without question, chazaka is a sufficient halachic standard. Interestingly enough, the above referenced farmer told me personally that in order to increase his sales, he had to obtain the hashgacha of Bedatz. The etrogim would then have to have originated in the pardais of the Chazon Ish. What is this pardais? On my first trip to Israel in 1964, I was told by various people that their etrog came from the pardais used by the Chazon Ish.

These etrogim from this pardais became the standard for all etrogim. How did the Chazon Ish pick that pardais? How did he figure out that this was the pardais that had the perfect etrog? Most probably he found a pardeis that had etrogim that looked like etrogim, therefore had the chazaka of an etrog, and he used them. And apparently that etrog tree was the mutated form of the etrog, as there were some etrogim on that tree that did not have a pitom. Since the Chazon Ish took from that pardais, a new standard of kashrus emerged for all etrogim. Being that Bedatz is the most coveted hashgacha, and they are using mutated forms of the etrog, we are in fact breeding this different type of etrog, making it the most prevalent present form of etrogim.

Based on the ruling of the Rema (748:7), one could make use of an etrog lacking a pitom; however, the question is whether this is considered mehudar. The Gemara indicates that breaking the pitom is a psul in hidur; does this mean that if it grows without a pitom it is still mehudar? It is clear that the Vilna Gaon maintained one should only make use of such an etrog in a pressing situation. Rav Sherkin (Harerei Kedem 1:120) brings a chiddush from Rav Soloveitchik zt"l that, according to the Vilna Gaon, an etrog without a pitom is sufficient, but not ideal.

This leads to a very odd state of affairs. We are relying on a system of hashgacha that is replacing the system of chazaka, thereby reducing the chance of re-obtaining the original form of etrog. It behooves us during our selection of arba minim to understand how complex parameters have entered into the process of our cultivating and distributing of etrogim. ■

Migdal HaTorah

Electricity: Shabbos Candles & Havdala



Rabbi Ari Enkin
Ram, Director,
Halacha Program

Common consensus among the halachic authorities is to consider electricity as fire for the purpose of Shabbat observance. Just as lighting a fire is a Biblical violation of Shabbat, so too is the flipping of a switch which turns on a light.[1] As such, many families are particular to place a covering over the light switches in the home in order to ensure that they are not switched on or off accidentally over the course of Shabbat.[2]

This concept has broad halachic ramifications and applications. For example, in the unfortunate event that a woman is without candles on a Friday afternoon, she may be permitted to simply turn on the common electric lighting that normally lights up the home and even recite the usual blessing over this "lighting".[3] This is because the light bulbs essentially accomplish the role[4] that the traditional Shabbat candles are intended to serve.[5] The electric lights actually become the Shabbat candles and one will discharge one's Shabbat candle lighting obligations with them. While such an approach should never be

relied upon in normal circumstances, it is permissible in extenuating ones. Some authorities suggest that when making use of electric lights for one's Shabbat candles the accompanying blessing should be omitted.[6]

If one is forced to use the electric lights in one's home as the Shabbat candles they should be shut off momentarily and then turned back on in order for them to now be designated as the Shabbat "candles".[7] Indeed, every week before the lady of the house lights her Shabbat candles, she should momentarily turn off the household lights and then turn on them back on. When she makes her blessing over the candles she should have in mind that her blessing include the electric lights as well which will also be providing light over the course of Shabbat.[8] Those who are forced to use the electric lights instead of candles should endeavor to turn on even those lights which are not normally used in order for there to be some distinction that the electric lights are in honor of Shabbat.[9] Even a desktop light could be used for this purpose.

The issues are essentially the same with regards to Havdala and one may use an electric light in place of a Havdala candle in a time of need.[10] In fact, it is reported that Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky would always use an electric bulb for Havdala in order to demonstrate how strongly he felt that electricity is to be treated exactly like fire from the perspective of halacha.[11]

Nevertheless, there are those authorities who discourage the use of an electric light for Havdala. Among

their opposition is the fact that the blessing recited upon the Havdala candle includes the word "fire" which seems to imply the need for actual fire, not merely light. As such a light bulb would not be acceptable according to this view.[12] Even among the authorities who permit the use of electric lighting when needed many would disqualify the use of fluorescent bulbs as they work differently than standard light bulbs.[13] ■

[1] Beit Yitzchak Y.D. 1:120, Achiezer 3:60, Melamed L'Hoil O.C. 49, Tzitz Eliezer 3:17, Chelkat Yaakov 1:52

[2] Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 13:32

[3] Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 43:N22

[4] Tosfot; Shabbat 25b

[5] There are two reasons why we light Shabbat candles. The first is for "Oneg Shabbat" which requires that the home be illuminated Friday night in order that people not stumble in the dark. The second reason is for "Kavod Shabbat" which calls for plentiful lighting in honor of Shabbat, as was the custom upon receiving a distinguished guest.

[6] Shruga Hameir 5:11

[7] Teshuvot V'hanhagot 2:157

[8] Az Nidberu 1:79, Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 43:N171

[9] Tzitz Eliezer 1:20

[10] Shaarim Metzuyanim Behalachah 96:6, Az Nidberu 8:2, Rivevot Ephraim 3:599

[11] Shaarim Metzuyanim Behalachah 96:6

[12] Har Tzvi 2:114

[13] Hachashmal L'or Hahalacha 3:88

Migdal HaTorah

Lech Licha in Review: The Hagar Plan

One of the great challenges when studying Chumash is how to deal with criticisms by Chazal of the avos and imahos, the founders of Judaism. On the one hand, they personify perfection of character traits, a high level of intellect, and an overall dedication to being ovdei Hashem. Yet there are times when a critical reading of the Torah reveals actions and behaviors seemingly “not worthy” of people on such a high level. And prior to even attempting to coming to the defense of these great people, Chazal emphasize that indeed they acted incorrectly. Through the balance of the greatness of the avos and imahos and their humanity that brought them to err, we are capable of deriving crucial insights into both who they indeed were, and how we can overcome similar challenges in our own lives.

One well-known example of this type of study lies in the story of Sarah’s plan involving Hagar, one familiar to all of us. After God promises Avraham that he would be responsible for the future of the Jewish people through some type of progeny, a message delivered through the bris bein habesarim, the Torah shifts to what we will soon see is a revelation of the mindset of both Avraham and Sarah after this great promise. The Torah tells us (Bereishis 16:1-3):

“Now Sarai Abram’s wife bore him no children; and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram: ‘Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall be builded up through her.’ And Abram hearkened

to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram’s wife took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife”

Sarah is the instigator of this plan, setting up what would certainly seem to be a surrogate mother situation. What was she seeking to accomplish? And why Hagar per se? Was she some random woman who happened to be employed by Avraham and Sarah? Rashi points out:

“She was Pharaoh’s daughter. When he (Pharaoh) saw the miracles that were wrought for Sarah, he said, ‘It is better that my daughter be a handmaid in this household, than a mistress in another household’.”

We now see how she was more than a maidservant. Her father, being impressed by the miracles associated with Sarah during her time in Egypt, pushes his daughter to enter into this household, even if it meant assuming a subservient role. The nature of this relationship will become extremely important as the story unravels.

We also see a glimpse into the drive of Sarah in conceiving this plan. Her desire is to be “built” through Hagar’s child. How would this occur?

Finally, we see Avraham consenting to Sarah’s request. Rashi points out that Avraham saw the Divine spirit (ruach hakodesh) within her. Does this mean that Avraham may not have agreed to her plan had this not been the case? How does the additional factor of ruach hakodesh play a role in his decision making?

Whatever the case may be, something goes awry (ibid 4):

“And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes”

What happened? Rashi explains that Hagar offered Sarah a harsh critique:

“She said, ‘This Sarai, her conduct in secret is not like her conduct in public. She shows herself as if she is a righteous woman, but she is not a

righteous woman, for she did not merit to conceive all these years, whereas I have conceived from the first union’.”

Hagar comes to a very troubling conclusion based on how events played out up to this point. She assumed Sarah was a special woman. The fact that she became pregnant quickly, while Sarah was still barren after numerous attempts, could only mean one thing: Sarah was not the righteous woman she claimed to be.

This critique leveled at Sarah by Hagar leads to an incredulous result. Sarah turns to Avraham (note she does not address Hagar) and says:

“And Sarai said unto Abram: ‘My wrong be upon thee: I gave my handmaid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.’ But Abram said unto Sarai: ‘Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her that which is good in thine eyes.’ And Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her face”

Rashi offers an explanation of Sarah’s thinking that is extremely troubling:

“[For] the injustice that has been done to me, I lay the punishment upon you. When you prayed to God, ‘What will You give me, since I am going childless?’ you prayed only for yourself, whereas you should have prayed for both of us, and I would have been remembered with you.”

It would seem Sarah is doing more here than laying the blame on Avraham. She is telling Avraham that the implosion of this plan was his fault. Avraham has the chance to ask God at the time of the bris bein habesarim for a child to be brought about through both Sarah and himself. Instead, Avraham acted selfishly. Therefore, he is deserving of this “punishment”, ostensibly the negation of the strategy.

How is it possible that Sarah was blaming Avraham? Did he really do something wrong? What makes this Rashi so compelling is the obvious indication of a miscalculation. Some-



Rabbi Dr.
Darrell Ginsberg
Menabel

(continued on next page)

one erred, either Sarah or Avraham, when it came to how to deal with this plan and its aftermath. Furthermore, it appears as if Sarah's reaction is one seething with anger and frustration.

When faced with this apparent wrath, Avraham backs off, allowing Sarah complete control over the situation. Hagar is hers, to do as she pleases. Was this the right decision? The Ramban notes that Avraham's yielding to Sarah's request was an error. As a result of this decision, the descendants of Yishmael would end up oppressing the Jewish people (why this was an appropriate punishment is not the subject of this piece). Clearly, Avraham is being criticized for his acceptance of Sarah's request. What was Avraham's mindset? Why did he make this error?

The ideal starting place would be one of the main points of contention expressed by Sarah. She asks Avraham why he did not include her in his tefilah when not mispallel when being told of a future heir. Indeed, why didn't Avraham ask God to assist in Sarah's potential conceiving of a child? The answer is clear – Sarah was too old to conceive naturally. Avraham would need to ask of God to breach the laws of nature to ensure Sarah have a child. Avraham considered all the possibilities and recognized that God's plan could be achieved through some other pathway. As long as another possibility existed, Avraham had no right to ask of God to produce a miracle. This was not a situation of peril or danger – therefore, the framework to ask for a miracle was not present.

This leads us directly to Sarah's mindset following the bris bein habesanim. Knowing full well that Avraham was told he would be responsible for the future of the Jewish people, Sarah was faced with a theoretically painful reality – she did not have a natural place in this plan. She was barren, and had no reasonable hope of conceiving. How then could she be a part of this incredible promise made to Avraham? How could she be a participant in the path of perfection

given to Avraham? There was another way, another possible avenue she could take to become an integral part of God's plan. She may not be able to give birth to a child, but the possibility of being the primary influence in the raising of a child could accomplish her desired objective. She could impart the correct ideas to that future child, a dominant influence in the child's life. Her motivations were of the purest degree, guided by a sincere desire to participate in God's plan.

Sarah turns to Hagar as the partner in this plan. Hagar would seem to be the ideal candidate. Her father's decision to instruct her to join Sarah's household as a maidservant implied a relationship rooted in subservience. At this stage, it appeared that Hagar valued the greatness of Sarah, and she saw the couple as being reflective of true ideas. The elements of the plan were thus in place. Hagar would be the biological mother. She would work in conjunction with Sarah in raising the child, aware of her secondary role to Sarah. This explains the notion of being "built" through her. Sarah saw Hagar as an avenue to bringing to fruition her desire to be a part of God's plan.

We see Avraham accepting Sarah's plan, Rashi adding that he saw she had ruach hakodesh. This could mean that Avraham agreed with Sarah's logic. He saw this an appropriate avenue, fitting into God's plan. As well, he saw clearly that her initial motivations were completely selfless. The existence of the ruach hakodesh implied a proper driving force.

The plan starts off on the right foot, as Hagar becomes pregnant. Her reaction to her pregnancy, though, is quite unexpected. She sees her immediate success in becoming pregnant as a revelation of the true nature of Sarah. Sarah was not the righteous woman she claimed to be; after all, if she was, how could God withhold from her a child. What drove Hagar to this misguided concept of God's system of reward and punishment? Rashi notes that Pharaoh was attracted to the

miracles associated with Sarah, and it was due to these miracles that he encouraged Hagar to join the household as a maidservant. Without question, Hagar recognized that Sarah was a great person, brilliant and perfected. However, part of her attraction to Sarah was a distorted type of hero worship. As Sarah was the recipient of miracles, she must have been some type of superhuman, a person occupying a realm no ordinary human could. Sarah was an outsized superego to Hagar. When Hagar saw how she became pregnant so quickly, in contrast to the years of trying by Sarah to no avail, her image of Sarah was shattered. Sarah was not the person she assumed she was, and this led Hagar to assert herself.

The plan now began to unravel. Hagar was no longer willing to be the secondary role model for her child. Her criticism of Sarah meant she would now occupy the dominant role in the raising of her child. Sarah was to be locked out of this child's future. It is possible that when this reality unfolded in front of Sarah, the final potential avenue to joining Avraham in God's plan was closed off for good. Sarah now found herself with no real consequential role in the future of the Jewish people. Such a reality may have produced a certain level of frustration. It is with this outlook that she turns to Avraham. She returns to the beginning, God's initial promise to Avraham. There were two pathways to achieving her wish to be part of this plan, and both were now closed off. She reviews the tefilah of Avraham, and her frustration in not being able to accomplish her noble objective led her to distort what Avraham requested. Yes, he did not ask for Sarah to conceive a child, and correctly so. Sarah, though, was unable to see at that moment the problem in her thought process. All she saw was that she was excluded, and that Avraham may have had the ability to change the outcome.

Avraham now is faced with a tremendous dilemma. On the one hand, he theoretically could have achieved the outcome set out by God

through the child born to Hagar. This child would be the continuation of him, as per God's decree. True, Hagar would be the one raising him, but Avraham would have influence as well. At the same time, he understood Sarah's frustration, and it is possible his identification with her frustration ever so slightly clouded his judgment. It is interesting that Rashi never mentions that Avraham listened to Sarah in this second back and forth due to ruach hakodesh. When Sarah asks Avraham to decide what to do with Hagar, his response is not effected by any perception of the Divine influence within Sarah. On one level, this clearly demonstrates he was not relating to her decision in the same way as he was with the original plan. Yet one could take this idea even further. It could be the original idea of seeing ruach hakodesh in Sarah was a realization that her plan fit into God's desired outcome. It fit into the overall plan, and therefore it made sense to endorse it. Now, with the plan in disarray, Avraham consents to Sarah – without the mention of ruach hakodesh. Thus, we can see the basis for the Ramban's critique of both Avraham and Sarah. Avraham empathized with Sarah's perceived exclusion from the great promise offered by God, the unique path to perfection. In negating the possibility that God's plan could still be achieved through Hagar's child, he acted inappropriately.

As was mentioned previously, dealing with Chazal's criticism of people like Avraham and Sarah can be a challenge. However, the fact that Chazal relay to us this information means we should inquire and investigate, trying to extract the ideas these various missteps bring out. It behooves us to always understand that these great people lived a life where their minds were always searching how best to serve the Creator. As such, a mistake that occurs becomes more magnified, yet cannot take away from their enormity. It is a critical idea to keep in mind when studying the avos and imahos. ■

VIDEO SECURITY FOR YOUR BUSINESS or HOME

WATCH LIVE or PLAYBACK RECORDINGS... ANYTIME... FROM VIRTUALLY ANYWHERE!

Your Ultimate Solution for Loss Prevention, Management, Safety & Security!



Remote Access via PC, Laptop or Smartphone



Indoor / Outdoor
High-Resolution
Color by Day
B/W by Night
Infrared Eyeball
650 TVL Cameras

H.264

Video / Audio
Compression
Technology

- Watch Live, Playback, Back Up Files or Access Settings - At the DVR or Remotely
- Real-Time Live Display at 30 FPS
- Record up to 30 FPS per Camera
- Each Camera Can Be Set to Record by Schedule, Continuous, Alarm or On-Motion
- Dual Stream, E-mail Alerts and Much More!

What our customers say...

"...WOW! You have my highest recommendation"

"...We could not be more satisfied... thanks for your ongoing support"

"...Gordon is a top caliber professional that you can trust and count on to get the job done right"

"...Mr. Gisser's assistance has earned him much respect from the Albany Police Department"

"...If you are considering a video security system, I highly recommend Mr. Gisser and the product he offers"

**Superior Quality
User-Friendly
Very Affordable**



Complete System Package Deals:

- DVR w / 1 TB HDD for Extended Recording Time
- Hi-Resolution 19" Flat Panel Monitor
- Indoor / Outdoor High-Resolution Color Infrared Cameras
- Master Camera Power Supply
- Remote Viewing Software, Internet Explorer and Smartphone Access
- Video / Power Wire, BNC Compression Connectors and Power Connectors
- Professional Installation and Networking
- Training and Owner's Manual
- Technical Support w/ Virtual Remote Assist
- One Year Parts & Labor Warranty

**Includes
Installation**

Lease-to-Own

**Four (4)
Camera
System**

HD1080P DVR

\$129
per month

FAPS H.264 PC-DVR

\$ 99
per month

H.264 Linux DVR

\$ 79
per month

**Eight (8)
Camera
System**

\$219
per month

\$179
per month

\$149
per month

**Sixteen (16)
Camera
System**

\$349
per month

\$299
per month

\$249
per month

**FIRST ALLIANCE
Protection Systems**



Gordon G. Gisser
President

**Don't Wait Until It's Too Late...
Order Your System Today!**

CALL NOW (800)258-8028

www.faps.com

Purchase price = monthly payment X 40. All prices are plus applicable sales tax. HD1080P DVR System includes HD-SDI 1080P Cameras. Installation in our local service area includes up to 100 feet of standard wiring per camera. Additional charges for longer wire runs, multiple buildings, conduit and installations requiring a lift. Pricing is based on a 60 month lease-to-own with \$1.00 buyout. Subject to approval. Lease requires \$125 doc / app fee plus two months payments with lease documents completed prior to install. Custom configurations, additional hard drive, specialty cameras, microphones, public viewing monitors and other system components are available. Remote viewing requires router access and Static IP service or we can provide dynamic forwarding service for \$19/month. Recording times vary. NYS Installer License #12000295968. Other terms may be available. Limited Time Offer. © First Alliance Protection Systems, Inc.

COMMERCIAL - INDUSTRIAL - CORPORATE - RESIDENTIAL