

Torah Bytes

A weekly Dvar Torah on the Parsha by Rabbi Dovid Horwitz
and the Rabbanim of the RCK Chayei Sarah 5786



With prayers of success for our soldiers and for
the return of our fallen martyrs

Shabbat Times
16:21  17:19

Issue: 112

After the death of his beloved wife Sara, Avraham sought to bury her in a piece of property that included the maarat Hamachpeilah, that special burial place in Hebron, where Adam and Chava were laid to rest. The problem was that the property was owned by Efron the Hitite, a power and money hungry person.

Although Hashem had promised the land to Avraham and he should have received the plot for free, Avraham paid above and beyond full price for the privilege of procuring the Maarat Hamachpeilah.

At first, Efron made grandiose gestures, offering to give the burial plot to Avraham for free, but in the end, he reneged on his word and charged Avraham an exorbitant amount. Rashi tells us that as a result of his treachery, the Torah removes the letter "vav" from Efron's name.

Rashi writes that when the Torah records Avraham's passing the money to Efron, the word Efron is spelled without the vav to tell us how although he promised much, he did not fulfill his word even in the slightest!

The question is, how does the absent vav teach us this? The Sifte Chachamim explain that the fact that Efron was spelled with a vav and only now was it spelled without one, is an invitation to expound and to make drashot. The lesson that the medrash derived from this invitation was that Efron was not true to his word.

I believe that the absent vav is telling us something deeper. By removing the vav from Efron's name, the name can now be read Afran, עפרן. The word seems to contain the root "afar", which means dust. The word "afran" implies that his very essence is to engage in dust. Just like we refer to the month of Nissan as nissan and not nissim, to suggest that the month is in essence a month of miracles, the word afran suggests that the person's entire nature is one of dust.

When a person's word cannot be trusted, we dismiss his promises with the phrase, "his word is mud!" In other words, mud or dust suggest that a person's commitments and promises are worthless. The Torah, by changing Efron's name to Afran, is telling us that his

reneging on his promise was not a fluke. It wasn't that Efron was normally a man of integrity, but this one time he faltered. No! The Torah is telling us that making empty promises was Efron's modus operandi. His entire essence was one of unreliability and falsehood. Developing this word play further, perhaps we can "blame" Efron's nature on his full name as well. His name with the "vav" is spelled עפרון which is the Hebrew word for a pencil. Maybe the reason why Efron found it so easy to break his word and his promises was because, true to his name, his commitments were "written" in pencil and not in pen. Words written in pencil are easily erased. A person who views his words as "erasable" will not extend much effort to fulfill his word. When he breaks his promises, that are weak at best, he turns himself into mud and dust.

Hashem, in His kindness, elevated us above the animal kingdom when He gave us the power of speech. Our ability to rise above the animals is commensurate with our success in keeping our words holy. Like animals, we are created from dust and will return to dust. While we are alive, we can elevate our physicality to that of the spiritual through the power of our words. There are so many mitzvot and so many transgressions that are dependant on speech.

So many of the "Al Cheits" that we confess on Yom Kippur, involve improper use of speech.

The medrash magnifies Efron's shortcoming by telling us that not only did he not keep his word, but he spoke a lot of words before breaking them. Breaking one promise is bad enough. But promising something four or five times and then breaking it, is even worse. Efron spoke a lot and failed to perform even a little. Avraham is described as the opposite. He spoke little and did a lot. A person whose words are sacred does not need to speak a lot. One word is enough to ensure that he will do what he pledges to do. Such is the way of holiness, of G-dliness. Let's treat our words with the utmost sacredness and seriousness that they deserve, as they emanate from our very soul, and not act like Efron who behaved like dust so his words were mud!

Point for Growth – From Test to Transformation - Chayei Sarah

We all go through moments when we ask, "Why is this happening to me?" But sometimes, that's exactly where growth begins. Avraham Avinu went through ten tests. Each one challenged his faith — not only in G-d, but also in himself and in his journey. Every time he faced something hard, he didn't run away — he believed more, grew stronger, and kept moving forward.

That's the secret of faith: not to understand everything, but to choose to keep going, even when you can't see the way. Each of us has a unique path that G-d designed with love.

The challenges in life don't come to break us — they come to reveal who we really are. Avraham didn't break — he was built. once heard a beautiful parable from Rabbi Nachum Diamant:

When a person leaves this world, he sees his footprints along the path of his life — and another pair beside him. Those are G-d's footprints. And in the hardest times, when only one pair appears, it's not because G-d left — it's because He was carrying him on His shoulders through it all.

Even when things are hard — you are not alone.

G-d is with you, carrying you forward, leading you toward the place your soul longs to reach.

 **Weekly Challenge:** Don't ask, "Why is this happening to me?" — ask, "What can I learn from this?" A small shift in how you think can be the first step toward big growth.

With love, Ben Goldstein, Manager of RCK.




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Ask the Rabbi

Rosh Beit Midrash: Rabbi Shabtai Yogel

Question: Is there a mitzvah to escort guests when they leave? And if so, why don't most people do it today?

Answer: Chazal teach that accompanying guests as they leave is a very important mitzvah — they even said that one who fails to do so is “like one who sheds blood.”

Today, however, many people no longer practice this. Some explain that this is because guests today usually forgive the host for not walking them out. Others quote the Chazon Ish, who said that since today there are so many people out in the streets, everyone is, in a way, “escorting” one another — and the original mitzvah was meant for a person traveling alone.

It's also important to note that the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim* — hosting guests — applies mainly to people who come from outside the city, or those who don't have a place to eat, sleep, or spend time. But when one local family hosts another local family who already has a home and food of their own, that's not considered the full mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim* — and therefore, the mitzvah of escorting the guests doesn't apply in the same way either.

Question: Why do we “bless the new month” on the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh?

Answer: This custom of *Birchas HaChodesh* (Blessing the New Month) isn't mentioned in the Gemara, but it is brought by the early Rishonim — and they give two explanations. Some say it's connected to the original process of sanctifying the new month by *Beis Din* in the time of the Sanhedrin. But most Rishonim and Acharonim reject this, and explain that the reason we do it is practical — to announce when Rosh Chodesh will be, so that everyone will know and prepare accordingly:

Two Queens, One Faith

Rabbi Moshe Ariel Margi



Chazal teach in Bereishis Rabbah (58:3) that there's a special connection between Sarah Imeinu and Queen Esther:

“Let Esther, the granddaughter of Sarah who lived 127 years, come and rule over 127 provinces.”

At first glance, it's not clear — what's the real link between them?

Why was Esther, out of all of Sarah's descendants, chosen to continue her spiritual legacy? Rav Zalman Sorotzkin zt”l explains this beautifully.

We all know that Avraham faced ten tests, the hardest being the *Akeidah*. But Sarah, too, faced her own tests.

Some she shared with Avraham — like *Lech Lecha*, where she gave up comfort and home. Others, like the furnace of *Ur Kasdim*, didn't touch her directly. And some brought blessing in the end — like sending away Hagar and Yishmael. But Rav Sorotzkin asks: what was Sarah's hardest test? Not famine, not travel, but the test of Pharaoh's palace.

Imagine: Sarah, taken to Pharaoh's house — surrounded by wealth, comfort, and honor. She could have stayed there, lived as a queen, and enjoyed a life of ease. But that would mean letting go of her faith, her mission, her truth. Sarah chose differently.

For questions: **0584810910**

changes in prayer, refraining from fasting, and other customs connected to the day.

We make this announcement specifically on Shabbos, because that's when the majority of people are in shul.

In addition to the announcement itself, we also pray for the coming month — that it should be filled with blessing, success, and peace.

Because of these prayers, the custom became known (among Ashkenazim) as *Birchas HaChodesh* — “the Blessing of the Month.” And the Shabbos when it's recited is called *Shabbos Mevarchim* — “the Shabbos of Blessing.”

She gave up material comfort for spiritual truth.

She stayed loyal — to her values, to her husband's path, and to Hashem.

And generations later, Esther faced the same test.

She lived in the royal palace, wrapped in luxury — while her people faced destruction.

Yet inside, she felt emptiness.

When she said, “If I perish, I perish,” it wasn't despair — it was clarity.

She knew that life without faith, without purpose, is no life at all.

Like Sarah, Esther remained faithful — to her people and to Hashem — even in a palace of power and temptation.

That's the deep connection between them:

When Hashem looked for a woman from Sarah's descendants who could face wealth and comfort, yet still choose holiness — He chose Esther.

Both Sarah in Pharaoh's palace and Esther in Achashverosh's court teach us one timeless message:

True greatness is choosing light, truth, and holiness — even when the world offers gold instead.

Torah Bytes

דבר תורה שבועי מפי רבני הכולל הקהילתי ברעננה
פרשת חיי שרה התשפ"ו

זמני השבת

להצלחת צבא ההגנה לישראל וכוחות הביטחון

16:21

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שאל את הרב ראש בית המדרש הרב שבתי יגל שליט"א לשאלות 0584810910

שאלה: מדוע אנו 'מברכים את החודש' בשבת שלפני ראש חודש?
תשובה: מנהג זה של 'ברכת החודש' אינו מוזכר בתלמוד בבלי או בתלמוד ירושלמי, אולם הוא כן מוזכר בדברי הראשונים, ומהם למדנו שני טעמים למנהג זה.

יש מהראשונים שכתב שמנהג זה יש בו מעין השלמה וקידוש החודש שנעשה על ידי הלל, אולם ראשונים ואחרונים דחו את דבריו, וכתבו שהטעם למנהג זה הוא כדי להודיע לעם מתי יחול ראש חודש כדי להיזהר בו ובתלוי בו, כגון: שינויי התפילה, איסור תענית, איסור עשיית מלאכה לנשים וכיו"ב, וקבעו הכרזה זו בשבת שלפני ראש חודש משום שאז רוב העם נמצא בבית הכנסת. עוד נהגו מעבר להכרזה עצמה מתי יחול ראש חודש, לברך את החודש הבא שיתחדש לטובה ולברכה וכו'.

ומשום ברכות ותפילות אלו הנאמרות בסמוך להכרזת החודש, נקרא מנהג זה (אצל האשכנזים) 'ברכת החודש' ועל שם מנהג זה, נקראת השבת כולה – 'שבת מברכים'.

פרעה – אל חיי פאר, עושר, כבוד ומעמד. היא יכולה להפוך למלכה, לחיות חיי נוחות שאין כדוגמתם. רק לוותר – על דרך האמונה, על השליחות, על הערכים. אבל שרה לא נכנעת. היא בוחרת לוותר על עושר חומרי לטובת אמת רוחנית. שרה נשאת נאמנה לערכי בעלה – אמונה, חסד, צדקה ומשפט. ובדיק באותו מבחן עמדה אסתר.

היא חיה בארמון אחשוורוש, עטופה בעושר אינסופי, בזמן שעמה שרוי באיום כליו. ובכל זאת, היא חווה את חיי הארמון כ"אבדון".

כשניגשה למלך במסירות נפש אמרה: "כאשר אבדתי – אבדתי" – לא מתוך ייאוש, אלא כהכרה שהחיים ללא זהות, ללא אמונה, הם חיי אובדן.

היא מלכת העולם – אך בתוך לבה יש מעיין של אמונה בה'.

"כאשר הייתה באמנה איתו" – נאמנה לעמה ולאלוקיה גם במציאות של פיתוי ושלטון.

וכך מתבררת ההקבלה המדרשית במלואה:

כאשר הקב"ה חיפש מי מבנותיה של שרה תוכל לשוב ולחיות את אותו ניסיון, לעמוד מול עושר וחומר ולבחור בקדושה – הוא בחר באסתר.

שרה בבית פרעה ואסתר בארמון אחשוורוש – שתיהן מלמדות את אותו שיעור נצחי: לבחור באור, באמת ובקדושה – גם כשהעולם מציע זהב במקומם.

שאלה: האם יש מצווה ללוות את האורחים ביציאתם? אם כן, מדוע אנו לא מקפידים על זה היום?

תשובה: חז"ל אכן הפליגו מאוד בגודל חיוב ומעלת ליווי האורח לאחר האירוח, ואף כתבו שמי שאינו מלווה את האורח הרי הוא כשופך דמים. בזמננו אכן לא רבים נוהגים בכך, ויש שכתבו שזה משום שהאורחים מוחלים על כבודם, ובשם החזון איש מביאים כי בזמן הזה שיש אנשים רבים בדרכים כל אחד נעשה ליווי לחברו, ולא נאמרה מצווה זו אלא בהולך יחידי.

ועוד יש לדעת שאורחים הכוונה לאנשים הבאים מחוץ לעיר או אף מתוך העיר אבל חסר להם מקום אכילה או לינה, או שבודדים הם וחסר להם האווירה והפגת הבדידות, אבל משפחה פלונית שמארכת משפחה אלמונית מתוך העיר ואותה משפחה יש לה ב"ה היכן לאכול ולשתות וללון, אין זה נחשב 'הכנסת אורחים' וממילא גם מצוות ליווי אורחים השייכת למצווה זו – אינה קיימת.



הניסיון של שרה

הרב משה אריאל מרגי שליט"א

חז"ל במדרש (בראשית רבה נח, ג) עורכים הקבלה בין שרה אמנו לאסתר המלכה: "תבוא אסתר, שהייתה בת בתה של שרה שחייתה קכ"ז שנה, ותמלוך על קכ"ז מדינות".

על פניו, קשה להבין מהו הקשר המהותי בין השתיים – הרי לשרה היו צאצאים רבים, ולמה נבחרה דווקא אסתר להיות ההמשך הרוחני שלה? השנה נתקלתי בפירושו של הרב זלמן סורצקין זצ"ל, שמבאר זאת בעומק. כולנו יודעים שאברהם אבינו התנסה בעשרה ניסיונות, והקשה שבהם היה עקידת יצחק. אך גם שרה אמנו, בדרכה, עברה ניסיונות לא פשוטים. בחלקם – שותפה מלאה: "לך לך" היה גם עבודה ויתור על נוחות, מולדת ובית. באחרים – לא נוגע אליה, כמו "אור כשדים".

ואף היו ניסיונות שבסופם זכתה לרווח, כמו גירוש הגר וישמעאל. אך שואל הרב סורצקין: מה היה הניסיון הקשה ביותר של שרה? לא ברעב, ולא ב"לך לך", אלא – האם תחזור מבית פרעה.

דמיינו את הרגע: אברהם נדד בארץ זרה, עני ונרדף, ושרה נלקחת אל בית



