

# TAL TorahActionLife

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## CHAYEI SARA

25<sup>th</sup> Cheshvan 5776  
Shabbat begins: 16:10  
Shabbat ends: 17:13

## COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL  
DIRECTOR, TAL

### PRAYER

Praying isn't as easy as it seems. Sometimes we pray for something for years and never seem to be answered, yet on other occasions we can see immediate success in our prayers.

In this week's parsha we learn of one of the greatest prayers in history; that of Eliezer. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, "Three people were answered while their words were still upon their tongues; Avraham's servant Eliezer, Moshe, and Shlomo."

Regarding Eliezer, the verse states, "He had not yet finished speaking and — look! — Rivkah... came out" (v. 15).

Regarding Moshe, the verse states, "When he finished speaking all these words [after his authority had been challenged by Korach], the ground split open" (Bamidbar 16:31).

Regarding Shlomo, the verse states, "When Shlomo finished speaking to G-d [at the inauguration of the holy temple], the fire descended from heaven" (Bereishis Rabah 60:4).

Three Tsadikim prayed and were answered. Yet there is a difference between Eliezer and the others. Eliezer's prayer seems to be even greater, as he was answered even *before* he had finished his prayer.

Upon inspection the torah goes to great lengths to tell us about Eliezer's mission. Much ink is spilled (so to speak) from the time Avraham sends him away to the time he succeeds in getting Rivka's consent.

Why does the torah elaborate so much on his mission? Who was Eliezer and was he really so great?

The Midrash brings a famous encounter between Avraham and Nimrod. Nimrod was the ruler of a vast empire, and believed himself to be a deity. Avraham had other ideas and knew the truth. He challenged Nimrod and was thrown into the fire. Hashem saved Avraham, and shortly after Avraham left the country.

There is an amazing Targum Yonatan that states that Eliezer was none other than the son of Nimrod.

Nimrod seeing that this man Avraham had succeeded, was so impressed that he said

had complete self-control and mastery over his yetzer hara.

He was Avraham's Talmid, his vehicle for fulfilling his mission in the world of spreading Hashem's life sustaining Torah. He drew from Avraham's Torah and fed others. Not only was he a Talmid Chacham but he was also the most faithful of servants to Avraham. Although he expounded on Avraham's teachings to the public, he managed Avraham's estate and was Avraham's representative to the world, he introduced himself to Betuel and Lavan as 'Eved Avraham anochi' - I am Avraham's slave. He considered himself to be a mere servant and did not take credit for his achievements.



it would be better that his son clings to such a man, then to stay a prince in his palace. Eliezer thus became Avraham's servant. But what kind of servant was he?

Avraham referred to his servant as 'Damesek Eliezer'.

Our Sages teach us that the word Damesek is an acronym of the words "Doleh Umashkeh", meaning the one who draws from the well and gives of it's water. Furthermore, "He (Eliezer) controlled all that was his (Avraham's)." This teaches us that Eliezer had dominion over the Torah of Avraham (Yoma 28b). Eliezer had complete mastery of Avraham's teachings and was authorised to disseminate his lessons to others. The Midrash adds that Eliezer had control over all that was his — himself; he

When the time came to look  
for a wife for Yitschak, Avra-



1. What was the last nisayon of Avraham?
2. Sara lived for 127 years. What merit did this serve the Jews many years later?
3. Why is it called Ma'arat Hamachpela?
4. How long should have Avraham lived?
5. What characteristic was Eliezer looking for in a wife for Yitzchak and why?
6. Did Avraham have any daughters and what was the significance of this?
7. When was Rivka born and how was she related to Yitzchak?

Answers on Page 3

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ham summoned none other than his top confidant Eliezer for the mission. Avraham did not want his son to marry any Canaanite women, and chose to send Eliezer in search of a wife to his family in Aram Naharayim. The Midrash enlightens us as to what occurred before Eliezer set off. Eliezer himself was father to a lovely daughter. In his eyes, it would have been the perfect match. He yearned that his daughter marries Yitschak. He approached Avraham and hinted to him that his daughter would offer the perfect match.

Avraham's response was startling. "My son is Baruch, blessed, and you are Arur, cursed, and one who is Arur cannot cleave to one who is Baruch." Eliezer was a descendent of Canaan the son of Cham who was cursed by Noach, whereas Avraham was descended from Shem, who received Noach's blessings – they could not match.

Wow. If we were Eliezer, I wonder how we would have reacted to hearing that? Something like - I have been your confident, your servant for years. I do all you say, I

teach your torah, I am in charge of your house, you are everything for me, how can you call me cursed?!

However, Eliezer's reaction was far from that. Instead he kept quiet, and fulfilled his master's request to go to Aram Naharayim many miles away to find a wife for Yitschak.

He arrived at the well and makes a supplication to the G-d of his master Avraham, and before he knows it he is answered. We can now understand why his prayer was so potent.

The Gemara states 'The world subsists only through the merit of he, who in a quarrel restrains himself to nothingness - "bolem azmo beshaat meriva". As it says "He hangs the earth upon nothing" (belima) (Iyov, 26:7). R. Abbahou said: the World rests only upon the merit of the one who thinks of himself as nothing, as it says "Underneath are the arms of the world" (Devarim 33:27).

His prayer was potent because the whole world rested upon his shoulders. The Midrash (Bereishit Rabba 60:7) relates that through Eliezer's dedication and loyalty to Avraham, he changed from Arur to Baruch!

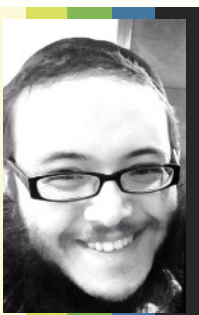
He might have been justified to answer back, to even renegade against his Shelichut, but that wasn't Eliezer. Eliezer was an Eved Ne'eman, a true servant, true to Hashem and true to Avraham. This was a massive merit.

Yet this was not the only thing Eliezer had going for him.

Before he set out, Avraham had prayed that Hashem send before him his Malach to help Eliezer. And once Eliezer reached the well, he prayed in the merit of Avraham. Thus Eliezer had the help of Zechut Avot. He prayed to Hashem in the merit of Avraham. With these two powerful antidotes, his massive merit after an act of Belima, and the merit of Avraham enabled his prayer to reach the highest of heavens and he was answered even before he finished praying.

The best time to pray is after an act of selflessness. When one acts against his will but for the will of Hashem. When we conquer our Yetser hara, that is the sha'at Ratson.

That Et Ratson together with the Zechut Avot will surely lead to success.



**RABBI AMOS AZIZOFF**

**Borehamwood US**

**CHAYEI SARA**

Our Torah is a Book of Commandments, yet Sefer Beraishit, the longest of the Five Books, deals mostly with the history of our Matriarchs and Patriarchs. It is through their lives that we learn proper conduct, morals, and values. It is they who impart to us the road map for our lives. It is they who teach us how to deal with our many challenges and respond with strength to the ups and downs of life.

In this Parashah we encounter the very first funeral mentioned in the Torah, with the death of Sarah Imeinu. The sages tell us that Sarah died of grief upon hearing that Avraham Avinu had actually sacrificed their only son, Itzchak. After sacrificing a ram at the site of the Akeida, Avraham Avinu and Itzchak returned only to discover that their beloved Sarah was no longer alive. Sarah's death was extremely painful to Avraham. In all such situations, so many thoughts could

plague a mourner. Perhaps the death could have been prevented... perhaps something more could have been done... perhaps.... Nevertheless, we find that Avraham never resorted to this type of self-destructive speculation or grief. While he wept for his beloved wife, he did so with limitations. The Torah text testifies to this as the word "V'LIVkoTAH – to bewail her" is written with a small letter Kaf, teaching us that Avraham

matter how trying and how sorrowful our lot may be, we must nevertheless pick ourselves up and continue to fulfil our life mission.

Ultimately, we have to understand that everything that occurs is in G-d's Hands, so to speak. It is He who determines the number of the days of our lives. Even if there had been no Akeida, Sarah would have passed away on that very same day. To reinforce this teaching, the passage opens with "the lifetime of Sarah," and concludes with "(these are) the years of Sara's life," emphasizing that our years are designated by G-d. We should never berate ourselves by second-guessing: "If I had called a different doctor...." "If we had gone to a different hospital....." "If I had been more alert....." "If... if... if..." In fact half of the word life is the word IF! Know that there is a G-d above you. Do what is in your power, trust the One Above, and respond to the challenges of life with strength.

Two passages in the book of Breishit announce death, but, paradoxically, both convey death using the word "life." We are informed of Sarah's demise with the words "Chayei Sarah-the life of Sarah," while the death of Yaacov is prefaced by the words, "Vayechi Yaacov-and Jacob lived," to teach us that if people are truly righteous, even when they pass on, their legacy continues and they remain alive. Let us learn from this powerful message of life, and strengthen our Emuna-belief in Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

**While he wept for his beloved wife, he did so with limitations. The Torah text testifies to this as the word "V'LIVkoTAH"**

did not succumb to depression, but restrained his grief, mourned with dignity, and thus brought honour to the memory of his beloved wife.

Significantly, as soon as the time of mourning passed, Avraham resumed his responsibilities as a father and began the search for a bride for his son, Itzchak. The lesson to be drawn from this is obvious: no

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## Toys & Games On Shabbat (Series)

Shabbat is considered muktzeh; Rav Elyashiv, Rav Ovadia Yosef and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach consider snow not to be muktzeh whereas Rav Moshe Feinstein considers it to be muktzeh. What about snowmen and snowballs? Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ruled that even for those who hold that snow is not muktzeh, one cannot make snowballs or snowmen on Shabbat as it involves bringing together different components to form a single entity; this is not permitted due to its resemblance to boneh. One may however throw snowballs, inside an Eruv, that had been prepared before Shabbat as the dissolution of a snowball on impact is not considered to be soter ("dismantling"). There is a discussion amongst the poskim regarding whether or not one is allowed to shovel snow on Shabbat. Rav Yosef Viener

### Snow

One may walk on snow without concern that he is causing it to melt (Shulchan Aruch 320:13); this remains the case even if the soles of one's shoes have letters which will be imprinted into the snow (Yalkut Yosef 320:25).

Snow that fell before Shabbat is not considered to be muktzeh. There is a machloket amongst the poskim as to whether or not snow that fell on

(Contemporary Questions in Halachah and Hashkafah, p. 137) writes that one should seek out a non-Jew to shovel the snow but if one was not to be found and the conditions were hazardous, as a last resort, one may be lenient and clear a small path. Rav Osher Weiss holds that even a Jew can shovel snow to clear a path that needs to be used and that one can certainly ask a non-Jew to do it for him. It is also permitted to spread salt and grit on icy paths and stairs on Shabbat to prevent people from slipping (Yalkut Yosef Shabbat Vol. 3, 320:24 and 39 Melachos Vol. 2, p. 368).



1. Most commentaries hold that the last of the ten trials of Avraham was the Akeida. However, Rabbeinu Yona (Pirkei Avos, 5:3) says that the last one is found at the beginning of Parashat Chayei Sara where Avraham needs to sort out the burial arrangements for Sara and pay an exorbitant amount without questioning Hashem.
2. The Midrash brings that Queen Esther merited to rule over 127 provinces in the merit of Sara who lived 127 years.
3. It literally means a double cave. The Gemara (Eruvin 53a) brings two opinions of how it looked. Either one cave inside another or one cave in front of another.
4. All the three Avot should have lived to the age of 180. Avraham died at 175, five years earlier, so that he should not see Esav go astray (Rashi, 25:30). Yitzchak died at 180 (35:28). Yaakov died at 147, 33 years were taken away from him (See Daas Zekeinim to 47:8).
5. The middah of kindness. Perhaps because Yitzchak was the middah of gevura; strict justice, therefore he required a wife of kindness to balance it.
6. The Ramban (24:1) brings different opinions. Some say he had a daughter and this was a blessing and others say it was a blessing not to have a daughter. Why? Since a woman is under her husband's authority and she would have to marry someone from the other nations.
7. See the end of Parashat Vayeira. She was born soon after the Akeida (see Rashi, 22:20). Avraham had a brother, Nachor, who married his niece (Charan's daughter) Milka (Sara's sister). She had a son Betuel who had Rivka.

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## Dear Rabbi,



Why does each tractate in the Talmud begin with the page number of two (beit) and not one? Thank you

The real reason is because the front page of the volume is considered page one. Look at printed books today, Jewish and secular, which usually begin with page nine because of all the pages before the beginning of the actual book.

I once heard a "cute" explanation of why they began with page two: When a person sits down to study, even though he has not yet begun to study, yet he has overcome his evil inclination by merely opening the book of Talmud. This is considered as if he has begun already, and that is the "first page."

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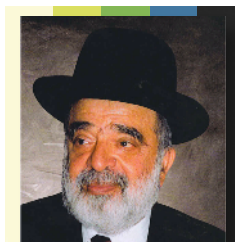
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## STORIES OF OUR CHACHAMIM

### Rav Ben Zion Abba Shaul



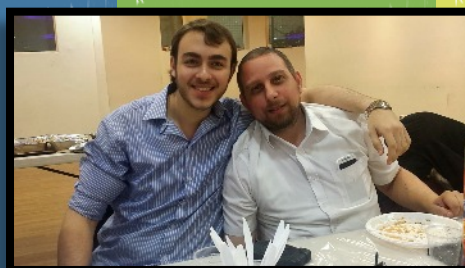
Rav Ben Tziyon Abba Shaul served Hashem with a joy and enthusiasm that was infectious, and that penetrated his halachic rulings and his advice to others. He once explained the halacha that states that it is forbidden to ask a non-Jew to put out a fire, even if all of one's possessions are likely to be burned. A student

was so enthused by the discussion that he actually envisioned himself in such a situation.

"Kevod Harav," he called out. "I don't understand. Am I supposed to sit back and watch while everything I own goes up in smoke?"

"That's not what I said," Reb Ben Tziyon replied. "I meant that one should dance, sing and rejoice at having merited to fulfil the verse, 'You should love Hashem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might (me'odecha)'. According to our sages 'me'odecha' means one's possessions."

A newcomer to Torah once feared that the mitzvot would be too burdensome for him. Reb Ben Tziyon encouraged him, saying: "There's no reason to feel pressured. Every morning, volunteer to serve Hashem. Don't obligate yourself, but volunteer. Volunteer to put on tefillin. It's not so hard. Here, let me show you how. Volunteer to pray, adding on more and more prayers each day. It's a privilege to serve as a volunteer in Hashem's corps."



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