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A MANIFESTATION of True Greatness

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Chayei Sara

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Satan And The Passing Of Sarah

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The Purchase of a Location of Intrinsic Spiritual Value

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“Four Hundred” as an Expression of an Evil Eye

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The Quest to Fulfill the Specific Requirements of A Future Wife

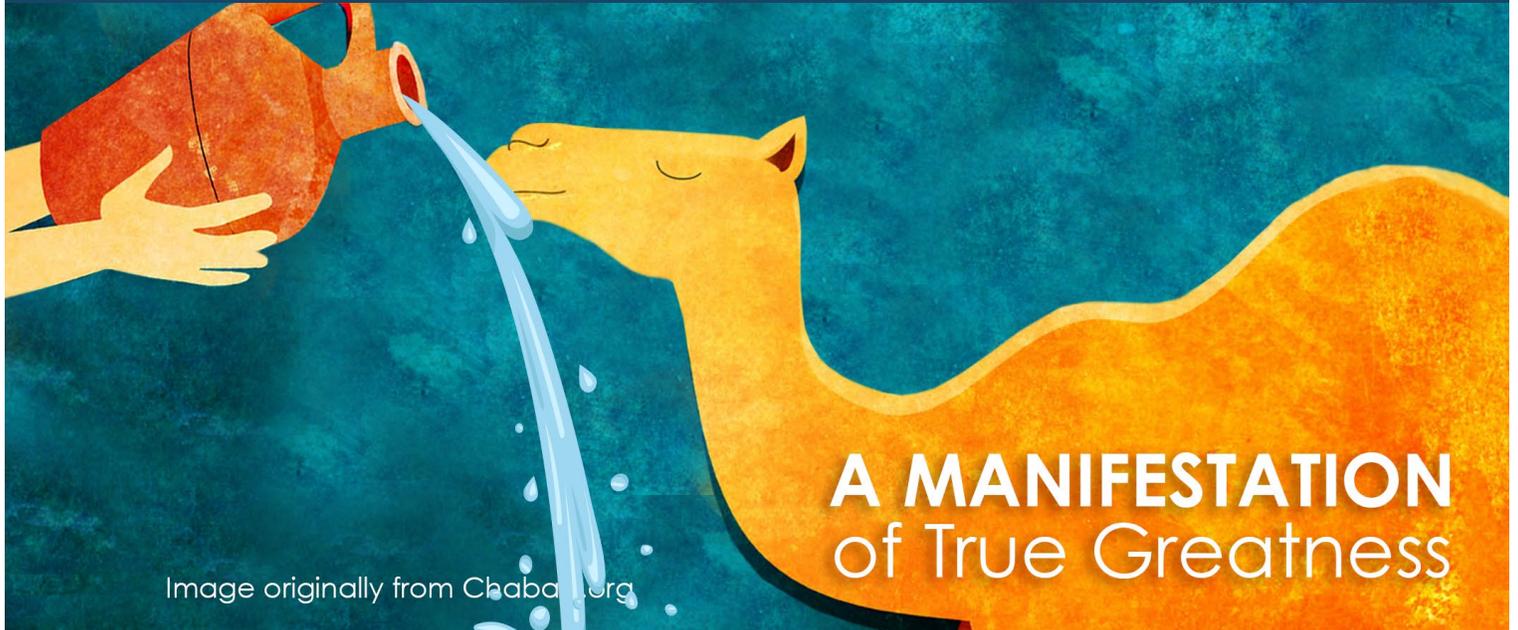
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Brokering An Acquisition to Yield Exponential Value

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

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Chayei Sara



Reflection

Torah: After the *Akeidah* (the binding of Yitzchak), Sarah (Our Matriarch) passed away. "...And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her (*v'livkosa*)."

Rashi citing Chazal: Avraham came from Mt. Moriah after the *Akeidah* to find that his wife had passed away.

Rabbeinu Bachya: "And Avraham came" does not refer to location but rather to Avraham internalizing the reality of his tragedy. In order for a person to achieve a certain state of mind one must reflect upon what has transpired. Avraham had to first "come" to that point within before he was able to eulogize and cry for Sarah.

The Hebrew letter "kof" in the word *v'livkosa* (crying) is written smaller than the other letters. The Commentators offer many interpretations as to why this is so.

Kesav Sofer: The *Akeidah* was the most difficult of Avraham's ten tests and the climax of his spiritual

success. In addition, he realized the infinite benefit the *Akeidah* would have for *Klal Yisroel* until the end of time. On *Rosh Hashanah* (The Day of Judgment, it is in the merit of the *Akeidah* that Satan is silenced when he prosecutes the Jewish people. Because of his accomplishment, Avraham experienced a unique joy and ecstasy. Therefore, it is humanly impossible for a person who is at the height of his joy to fall into the depths of sadness because of sudden tragedy. Because of the *Akeidah*, Avraham did not have the capacity to internalize the pain and the loss of his wife to the point of being able to grieve for her, as he would have under other circumstances. This is the reason the "kof" in the word *v'livkosa* is written smaller – to indicate that Avraham was emotionally held back.

We see that even though a person can understand an event, the ability to appreciate and internalize it depends on his emotional capacity and limitations. We are unable to instantaneously process and adapt to one

event after another. For example, *halacha* dictates that when entering a synagogue, one must wait the minimal period of time it takes to walk four cubits before praying. The reason for this is that when going from one situation to another it takes at least that much time to detach oneself from the first before going on to the next.

Halacha states that *tefillah* (prayer) and study of *Torah* should not be in a context of levity and lack of seriousness. One must take some time to understand and contemplate what he is about to do and achieve the proper mindset for that beginning. A person could have experienced a once in a lifetime event, but was not able to appreciate it completely because he was not prepared for that experience.

Therefore, *Avraham* could not fully internalize the pain and grief of *Sarah's* passing because he was coming from the ultimate level of joy. The reason we are not affected by many positive events in our lives is that we do not reflect upon them. Thus, their relevance is only on an intellectual rather than on an experiential level. If we would take time to reflect and meditate on many areas in our lives we would definitely be different people.

Every day at the end of each of the daily services (*Shachris, Mincha, Maariv*), we conclude with the *Aleinu* prayer. We say, "You are to know this day and take to your heart that *Hashem* is the only G-d." Meaning that it is not enough to understand that *Hashem* is the only G-d, but rather, one must reflect on that fact and ponder it in order to fully appreciate and internalize that reality.

What is Emulating G-d?

Torah: *Avraham* purchased a burial location (the *Machpelah*) for his wife *Sarah* from *Ephron*.

Midrash: After the purchase *Hashem* said, "My profession is doing *Chesed* and you have taken hold of my profession. Come and cloak yourself with My Cloak." Meaning, now that *Avraham* had done *Chesed* for his wife *Sarah*, he became worthy of wearing the Cloak of *Hashem*. Since *Avraham* was 137 years old when *Sarah* died and *Avraham* had been involved in *Chesed* at the most advanced level his entire life, the question is why only now (with the burial of his wife) is he considered worthy to wear the Cloak of *Hashem*. How do we understand this?

Every one of the Patriarchs emulated a different facet of *Hashem's* characteristics. *Avraham* is known as the pillar

of *Chesed* because he accommodated other people's needs selflessly – whether they were worthy or not. *Yitzchak* (our Patriarch), emulated the quality of Justice (which is self-perfection on the most advance level). *Yaakov's* outstanding characteristic is Mercy, which is a synthesis of *Chesed* and Justice. We ask - when *Avraham* assumed the posture of *Chesed* to emulate *Hashem*, were these acts done for their own sake or were they only a means to an end. G-d's Kindness is for its own sake – "The world was created as an expression of *Hashem's Chesed*."

G-d's Kindness is not a means, but rather an end unto itself. However, when *Avraham* chose to assume this Attribute, it was used as a vehicle to espouse G-d's existence to the world. Although *Avraham's* hospitality was unequalled because through it he transformed pagans into monotheists, it was only a means to an end. Therefore, *Avraham's* attribute of *Chesed* was not identical to *Hashem's* – which is for its own sake. Because it was only a semblance of G-d's, in this instance he was not worthy of wearing the Cloak of *Hashem*. However, when *Avraham* buried *Sarah*, this act was for its own sake. *Avraham* had no other reason to do it other than for the recipient, which was *Sarah*. Consequently, it is only at this moment that he became worthy to wear the Cloak of *Chesed*.

Shlomo HaMelech in *Mishlei* (Proverbs): "One who despises gifts will live." Why is this the case? The ultimate Perfection and Goodness is *Hashem* Himself – who is only a benefactor and never a beneficiary. Therefore, if one wants to cleave to the source of life, which is *Hashem*, one must emulate *Hashem* in this context – to be a benefactor and not a recipient of another's gift or service.

Because he was very poor, the *Chofetz Chaim* was not able to purchase paper to record some of his works of *Torah*. One day when he was with the *Sfas Emes*, (the leader of the *Chassidic* dynasty of *Ger*), the *Rebbe* noticed this lack and offered him as much writing paper as he needed. The *Chofetz Chaim's* response was that he does not accept gifts.

The *Chofetz Chaim* explained that one may think that the value of a few sheets of paper is no more than that of a penny and not worth much. Nevertheless, if one steals as much as a penny, the consequences are grave. The *Rebbe* insisted that the *Chofetz Chaim* take the paper. Begrudgingly, the *Chofetz Chaim* agreed.

However, the next day when the Rebbe was putting on his boots he realized that there were coins in the bottom – equivalent to the value of the writing paper. The *Chofetz Chaim* was already gone.

If one wants to have a relationship with G-d, he must emulate Him in every way possible. Hashem is THE benefactor. Therefore, one should be on the giving rather than on the receiving end. If one does *Chesed* with ulterior motives (although they may be pure), it is nonetheless not the *Chesed* that is expressed by *Hashem*.

Understanding Innate Character Traits

Torah: “And *Avraham* said to his servant (*Eliezer*), the elder of his household who controlled all that was his: “Place now your hand under my thigh. And I will have you swear by *Hashem*, G-d of heaven and G-d of earth, that you not take a wife for my son from the Canaanites, among who I dwell.” *Avraham* gave specific instructions to his dedicated servant *Eliezer* to find a wife for *Yitzchak*. *Avraham* made *Eliezer* swear not to deviate from the qualifications that he set forth. If *Eliezer* had violated the oath, he would forfeit his share both in the physical and spiritual world.

Avraham trusted his faithful servant *Eliezer* to administer all of his affairs – both financial and spiritual. *Eliezer* disseminated *Torah* as his master had. The *Torah* refers to *Eliezer* as ‘the elder (*zikan*) of his household.’

Midrash: The word “*zikan*” indicates that the facial features of *Eliezer* resembled his master *Avraham*. Similarly, *Yosef* was referred to as “*Ben Zikunim*” because he looked identical to his father *Yaakov*.

Talmud in Tractate *Yomah*: *Avraham* taught *Eliezer* all of the *Torah* that he knew. Although *Eliezer*’s pedigree was Canaanite, he nevertheless became spiritual through the teachings of *Avraham* to such a degree that he radiated the holiness of his master.

Midrash: When *Eliezer* approached the house of *Besuel* to negotiate the hand of *Rivka* – on behalf of *Yitzchak* – they mistakenly believed that *Eliezer* was the master, *Avraham*.

Yalkut: The word “*Mosheil* - dominate” that is stated regarding *Eliezer* means that he controlled his Evil inclination to the same degree as his master. If this is the case, why was *Avraham* so mistrusting of *Eliezer* that he had to subject him to such a serious oath?

Midrash: “The scales of *Canaan* are deceit,” indicates that the Canaanites are innately deceptive people. Therefore, *Avraham* was concerned that because of the inherent characteristics which *Eliezer* possessed, that his wishes may not be carried out as instructed. Although *Eliezer* was the disciple of his master in every sense of the word (in the physical and spiritual realm), *Avraham* nevertheless had a concern and therefore bound him with an oath.

We see that a person can be conditioned to the point that he may be the equivalent of a living angel; however, that behavioral pattern is only “second nature”. The essence and the character of the person do not change. Meaning, despite all the spiritual conditioning that *Eliezer* had undergone with *Avraham*, he still possessed latent and dormant inclinations and characteristics - which were those of *Canaan*. As *Avraham* told *Eliezer*, “You come from a cursed stock and I come from a blessed stock.” The *Torah* tells us that *Noach* cursed *Cham*’s son *Canaan* who was the forefather of the Canaanites.

Despite how one behaves or how far one may advance spiritually, the reality remains that there is an underlying essence, which most often is never changed. One must strive to conduct himself in accordance with *Torah* principles despite one’s inclinations. The latent characteristics of a person can be activated depending on the particular situation. Since *Avraham* understood that the future of the Jewish people was going to be determined through the wife of *Yitzchak* (who would be the Matriarch), he had to guarantee his instructions would be followed exactly by compelling *Eliezer* to take an oath despite his greatness.

The Special Role of the Matriarch

Torah: When *Eliezer* discovered that *Rivka* was in fact the woman meant to be the wife of *Yitzchak*, he gave her a golden nose ring and placed two golden bracelets on her arms. “...The man took a golden nose ring, its weight was a *beka*, and two bracelets on her arms, ten gold shekels was their weight.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The reason the *Torah* states the weight of the nose ring – (*beka*), is to allude to the *Machtzis HaShekel* that was given during the time of the *Bais HaMikdash* for the purchase of communal offerings. The reason we are told that the weight of the bracelets is “ten gold shekels” is to allude to the two

tablets containing the Ten Commandments, which would be given to *Moshe* at Sinai. What relevance do the bracelets and nose ring given to *Rivka* have to the future of the Jewish people?

Maharal of Prague citing the *Midrash*: The word “*B’Hebarom* – when He (*Hashem*) created them (existence),” used at the time of creation (the Portion of *Bereishis*), refers to *Avraham* because it contains the same letters as his name. The *Maharal* concludes from this that *Avraham* is not a continuation of the previous existence but rather the beginning of a new one. This dimension of person has no precedence in history. Just as *Adam* was the father of mankind, *Avraham* as a spiritual being, is the father of the Jewish people.

Torah: *Rivka* our Matriarch was barren.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: Why had *Hashem* caused *Rivka* to be barren?

Torah: Before *Eliezer* left the house of *Besuel* with *Rivka*, her brother *Lavan* gave her a blessing – “Our sister, may you come to be thousands of myriads, and may your offspring inherit the gate of its foes.”

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: If *Lavan’s* blessing had been effective it would have meant that his essence, which was Evil, would have had a degree of input into the creation of the Jewish people. If *Lavan’s* blessing had any relevance to the evolution of the Jewish people, it would have seriously limited their potential. *Rivka* was chosen to be the Matriarch because she possessed the qualities that were needed to produce a *Yaakov* – who fathered the entire *Klal Yisroel*. Thus, *Hashem* caused *Rivka* to be barren so that she could only conceive through a miracle.

According to the *Ohr HaChaim’s* explanation, the Jewish people came into existence not because of anything that preceded them, but rather, they were the beginning of their own existence. Just as *Avraham* was considered a new creation without any relevance to his antecedents, so too was *Rivka’s* conception of *Yaakov* (the father of the Jewish people) unrelated to her antecedents. The essence of the Jewish people is spiritual and not physical. Therefore, the bracelets and the nose ring that were given to *Rivka* by *Eliezer* were a representation of the future events (Ten Commandments and *Machtzis HaShekel*) which would affect the Jewish people. This is because, like *Avraham*, *Rivka* was an embodiment of holiness – which also had no precedence.

Megillas Esther: In order to seal the fate of the Jewish people, *Haman* had given 10,000 talents of silver to *Achashverosh* (King of Persia) to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child.

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: Before *Hashem* brings punishment upon the Jewish people, He always provides the antidote in advance. The Commandment of giving the *Machtzis HaShekel*, which had preceded the decree of annihilation by 1,500 years, was the antidote that negated the talents of silver that were given by *Haman*. *Avraham*, understanding the significance of the Matriarch of the Jewish people, instructed *Eliezer* to give her a nose ring that weighed a “*beka*” in order to actualize the potential of the *Machtzis HaShekel*. Without the *Machtzis HaShekel*, the Jewish people would not have been able to annul the decree of *Haman*.

Rabbeinu Bachya: The reason *Haman* chose to give the ten thousand talents of silver was that he understood the significance of the nose ring that was given to *Rivka* by *Eliezer*. *Haman* wished to uproot and nullify the effect of the nose ring through the talents of silver. However, since the *Machtzis HaShekel* had been given at the time of the *Bais HaMikdash*, many years before *Haman’s* evil plan, he was not able to negate the special effects of the *Machtzis Ha Shekel* – which was actualized through the nose ring.

Now that we understand the far-reaching effects and significance of *Rivka’s* role as “Matriarch,” we can understand why *Eliezer’s* daughter did not qualify to be the wife of *Yitzchak*. Although *Eliezer’s* daughter was devout and righteous, the Matriarch had to be completely detached and unrelated to her origins in order to ensure the purity of the Jewish people. As *Avraham* said to *Eliezer*, “You come from a cursed stock and I come from a blessed stock.” In order to establish *Klal Yisroel* as the *Am Hashem* (People of G-d), the Matriarchs and Patriarchs needed to be on firm spiritual footing. It is only because of the strength of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs that we are able to survive to the end of time.

The Meaning of Thankfulness

Torah after *Eliezer* succeeded in his mission of securing the proper wife (*Rivka*) for *Yitzchak*: “So the man (*Eliezer*) bowed low and prostrated himself to *Hashem*. He said, ‘Blessed is *Hashem* G-d of my master *Avraham*, Who has not withheld His kindness and truth from my master...’”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: We learn from *Eliezer's* behavior that one must give thanks when receiving good tidings. What *Chazal* extrapolate from *Eliezer's* expression of thanks to *Hashem* seems to be that this is proper behavior. However, if a person receives a promotion that he has been working towards for his entire life, does he need a verse in the *Torah* to teach him to give thanks to *Hashem*? It seems obvious that when one is a recipient of anything good he expresses his thankfulness to *Hashem*. How do we understand this?

Torah: *Eliezer* not only thanked *Hashem* verbally, but he also bowed and prostrated himself on the ground. The *Halacha* is that when one recites the *Modim* (prayer of thanks) in the *Amidah* (silent prayer) one must bow to the point of being even with one's midsection.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: One must bow to the point of stretching all of the vertebrae in his back during the *Modim*. When the Jewish people heard the Name of G-d pronounced by the High Priest (*Kohen Gadol*) in the Sanctuary of the *Bais HaMikdash* (Temple) on *Yom Kippur*, they all prostrated themselves on the ground.

The prostration on *Yom Kippur* signified that one was totally negated in the Presence of G-d. Therefore, when the name of *Hashem* was pronounced one prostrated himself. What is the significance of bowing or prostration in the context of thanks? Why should *Eliezer* do this when he gave thanks to *Hashem* for finding *Rivka*? He could have merely said, "Thank You *Hashem* for bringing me this good tiding."

Gemara: Standing upright is the posture of an arrogant person. An arrogant person believes that the world revolves around him and that he is entitled and deserving of all the good that comes to him. The arrogant person does not appreciate what he receives because he believes that he is only receiving what is rightfully his. When a person bows, which is an act of humility and submission, he has the capacity to appreciate the words of thanks that he is saying. Some people say "thank you" in a perfunctory manner without even feeling it. These words are only words of etiquette.

True thankfulness is an expression of feeling beholden because of what one receives. In order for one to truly appreciate and have the capacity to internalize the good that he receives he must humble himself. Bowing and prostration are acts of humility and submission. This is what the *Torah* is teaching us from *Eliezer's* prostrating himself before *Hashem* to show his thankfulness. Bowing while reciting *Modim* is intended to give a person a sense of humility so that he can properly give thanks to *Hashem* in a meaningful manner.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: Covering one's head causes a person to be humbled because of a sense that there is G-d above him. The *Gemara* relates a story of a young man who was born under the sign of the Zodiac, which indicated that he would be a thief. His mother went to the rabbis to ask them what her son could do to control his inclination. The rabbis told her that as long as his head is covered, he will have recognition of G-d above him and will refrain from stealing. The young man heeded the advice of the rabbis and he did not steal. However, one day his head covering accidentally was removed and he immediately had an uncontrollable urge to steal fruit from another's orchard.

Torah: After *Cayin* (Cain) killed his brother *Hevel* (Abel), *Hashem* rebuked him. After being rebuked, the *Torah* tells us that, "Cayin left the Presence of *Hashem*."

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: This verse indicates that *Cayin* left the Presence of *Hashem* in a seemingly subdued and humbled manner; however, in truth, *Cayin's* subdued behavior was only outwardly a posture of humility. In his heart, he believed that he was able to deceive *Hashem*. A truly arrogant person could bow and say "thank you" but in his heart, he has no true understanding of appreciation. Bowing is more than a physical act or a gesture of etiquette. The Nazis (may their name be obliterated) adhered to the principles of cultured behavior and etiquette. However, if they could, they would have destroyed the entire world to further their cause. When one bows in humility before *Hashem*, one will feel in his heart the true sense of thankfulness.



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