

Chayeh Sara

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Lessons in Business; the Torah never misses a beat

This week's parsha recounts that Sarah Imeinu passed away, and that Avraham negotiated with Efron for the purchase of Ma'aras Hamachpeila. Rashi points out that the cave of Machpeilah literally means the cave of doubling- either because it had a double floor, or because couples are buried there. Rashi actually quotes himself from Gemara Eiruvין 53a- "Shekfula B'Zugos" where Rashi says that couples were buried in that location.

To understand Rashi, there is context from the Psukim, Avraham calls it Ma'aras Hamachpeila, when describing the location- which would mean it had a physical descriptor, whereas the doubling of couples came later, and the posuk later on Ber, 23:11 the location is only called the cave. The gemara in Eiruvין 53a, is a discussion between Rav and Shmuel on who disputed the configuration of the cave.

The Gemara (Eiruvין 53a) also elaborates on the meaning of the name Mamre Kiryas Arba. Mamre the city of four (couples); Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yizchak and Rivka, and Yaakov and Lea.

Avraham's negotiation with Efron teaches us something consistent with Avraham's dealings with Sodom. He didn't leave anything to chance or psychological control. Initially Efron would offer the land for free, but that in Avraham's eyes wouldn't be a smart deal. He knew the nature of people that the transaction needed to take place fairly and cleanly, and that title is transferred to the new owner through a cash purchase.

Later in the posuk Ber 23: 19 where it states that Avraham buries Sarah in the fields of

Machpeila, it makes sense that the doubling language is used here, i.e. that there were couples to be buried there. Although according to the Rashbam Machpeila is used to describe any valley.

Avraham knew the value of the land, as he recognized it as the location that Adam and Chava were buried- likely leading to another reason why he wanted to make sure to pay. There is probably a lesson here, that if you know about the value of something, do you have to tell a seller if they are unsure. For example, if someone has an old book for sale for \$5.00 and I know it's worth \$50.00, do I have a halachik, and or Jewish moral obligation to tell the seller. Furthermore, is it Gneivas Da'as if something is selling for cheaper than I was expecting, and it has higher value to me.

The answer it seems that one has to be really careful not deceiving a selling party. Therefore, the Torah's length to discuss the business transaction in exacting details is to highlight that Avraham over paid, and or at the very least paid market for the land in which to bury Sarah. This is so there is no question that Avraham didn't rely on any uncertainty in the transaction.

There are 3 of these transactions that take place in the Torah where a purchase is specifically delineated in order to allay any future concern for future generations to question the transaction or claim the Jews got the place unfairly or it was stolen. 1) The purchase of Ma'aras Hamachpeila, 2) the purchase of the temple mount 3) the Tomb of Yosef in Shechem (Bereishis Rabba 79:7).

Therefore, the Torah goes into quite a detailed recounting of the transaction and continues to repeat in the psukim when referring later to Ma'aras Hamachpeila being the burial place of Avraham it highlights the location, and purchase order. As well, the language of "Over La'socher" which means negotiable currency placed the value of the money even higher. This was free and clear bullion that would

enrich Efron to the highest degree. As mepharshim (Pa'aneach Raza) explain on 400 shekels of silver, which in ancient measurements would have bought Avraham land of 600,000 square amos, (which is added that this is room for the “600,000” souls of Israel). The Rebbe points out that there are 600,000 letters in the Torah (including spaces in the letters, because each Jew possess a part of the Torah in them.) Furthermore, the purchase of this plot of land in Israel represent a piece of every Jew.

If we take an analytical reading of the text, Efron says to Avraham
 אֲדֹנָי שְׁמַעֲנִי אֶרְצִי אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שְׁקָל־כֶּסֶף בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ מֵהָ
 הָיָא וְאֵת־מִתָּךְ קָבֵר
 Literally translated as “My master; Hear me, this land is worth 400 pieces of silver, what is that between you and me? go bury your dead.” The *הָיָא וּבֵינִי וּבֵינֶךָ מֵהָ* is a curious way of saying between you and me. I read it the following way, first read: אֲדֹנָי שְׁמַעֲנִי אֶרְצִי אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שְׁקָל־ hear me out my master, the 400 silver shekels you will pay for this will be for my children; וּבֵינֶךָ מֵהָ הָיָא? וְאֵת־מִתָּךְ קָבֵר and for your children [he confirms] what will be, [with this land] it will be for burying your dead. Which illustrates to me, that Avraham communicated the value this land had for him and his future descendants, and Efron is reflecting that the huge sum of money paid will be fine to take care of him and his descendants and he that the transaction is copacetic. So Avraham did not commit G'neivas Da'as, even though he knew the land was priceless, and furthermore he didn't want to rely on Efron's good will, rather an actual financial transaction needed to have taken place.

The Torah also uses very interesting language to describe Sarah's death, and Avraham's old age. The Rebbe in Likutei Sichos points out a few lessons. 1) the Torah doesn't use “death” to describe the passing of Sarah, (similarly to Yaakov- in Parshas Vayechi- the Parsha is called the “And Yaakov Lived” even though he passed away) But Sarah lived, the Rebbe points out, because her life was full of righteousness

and good deeds. Rashi states based on the medrish that the reason the Torah breaks out the specific decades of Sarah (She was 100, and 20, and 7 years) to say, she was old, and accumulated many days, she was like a 20 year old free of sin (quoting the gemara in Berachos) and she was as beautiful as a 7 year old. Although Sarah passed away early (according to some mepharshim from a negative stance her finding out the news that Yitzchak was being offered on the alter, or the positive stance she was so elated that the sacrifice was to take place she expired) she lived very full years.

This is paralleled with how it describes Avraham's coming of age in the beginning of chapter 24, that Avraham was “Zaken” and “Bah B'Yamim”. The Rebbe points out that he was old in that he accrued wisdom which he actually grew from, and he was full of days in that he had built every day into progress and growth, and accumulated many good deeds along the way (according to the Zohar- he “accumulated his days”). The Rebbe teaches us that according to Chassidus one must work the world around them to be a better place and a dwelling place for Hashem through acts of goodness and kindness. I learn out the following. Avraham and Sarah are not described as “Tzadikim”, rather they are described in their tenable features that are more human. There is a reason why in Tanya the Alter Rebbe tells us to be like a Beinoni or that Raba describes himself as a Beinoni. Yes, the goal is to be a Tzadik, but the Torah tells us by describing Sarah as someone who lived her days, and Avraham as Zakein and Bah B'Yamim, because that is the human experience of achieving the level of Tzadik, it is not out of our reach.

Furthermore, and I always touch upon this critical adage of Chassidus, which is that in Tehilim David tells us “Tzadikim Yirshu Aretz” and in Sanhedrin “Kol Yisrael Yesh Lohem Chelek... V'amech Kulam Tzadikim”. With Chassidus we understand that Hashem set us up by our mere existence to achieve the level of Tzadik in our lives. But, in our day to day

conscious effort to do good, we must do the human act of building on our days, and becoming wise through our experiences, as Avraham was described, and Sarah was described- full says, accrued days.

One final connection (it was asked in my Shiur on Thursday night) I explained from the Medrish Rabba on Esther; that the 127 years of Sarah is connected with the 127 states that Achashverosh ruled over in the time of the Babylonian exile and the Purim Story. Sarah's righteousness merited that Esther her descendent ruled over (alongside Achashverosh) the 127 states in his empire. Ultimately, we know the Jews were saved in those 127 states from the decree of Haman, and it is partially in Sarah's merit that there was salvation there. (This can also connect to the fact that Avraham bought a parcel of land 600,000 square amos large, which "protects" the souls of the Jews.)

When I was researching the connection between Purim and Chayei Sarah it is also connected to the Alter Rebbe. The Alter Rebbe passed away on 24 Teves, which is the same month Esther was coronated queen over 127 states. The Alter Rebbe's second name Zalman, equates to 127. Sarah was the epitome of perfection (as explained by Rashi). Zal Man if split equals 90, and 37 (for a total of 127), because just as Sarah lived her first 90 years

barren and then had a new lease on life (as I wrote about last week) for her last 37 years once Yitzchak was born. 127 is deeply intertwined to the Alter Rebbe, Sarah and Esther¹.

One final point, as brought up by the Misader Kiddushin at Eli and Claudia's wedding, Rabbi Raskin, he pointed out that the first recorded Jewish wedding took place at the end of chapter 24 in this week's parsha. Yitzchak knew Rivka was the right woman for him, as the light of Sarah reignited in her tent, as it was when Sarah was alive, and only then Yitchak it says was consoled over the loss of his mother. It should be the same for Claudia and Eli, the light of Gdliness should shine down in their lives as they embark on their journey through life together. They should be blessed with health, happiness, love, wealth, success, spirituality, and a home built on the foundations of Torah and Chassidus.

Good Shabbos

¹ Other interesting points:

- 1) we learn out from this Parsha that Yitzchak established the Mincha Prayer. Avraham established the Shacharis prayer, (when he got up early in the morning last parsha prior to the Akeida. Ya'akov establish Maariv as we know he prayed before resting on the rock and dreaming about the angels going up and down the latter. Mincha according to the gemara in Berachos is of utmost importance in that it is one of the most difficult prayers for a person to detach themselves from their daily routine to pray to Hashem. But in doing so, and in sacrificing time to acknowledge Hashem you are committing one of the greatest joys for Hashem. Perhaps this is why in Chapter 24 of Bereishis there is so much discussion on the

transaction between Eliezer and Besuel and Lavan for Rivka, and that the Torah specifically recounts that Yitzchak was "talking in the field", because even during mundane or physical transactions prayer is incredibly important to recognizing Hashem's kingship.

- 2) The Parsha ends with Avraham marrying Ketura, who Rashi says was Hagar. After she was sent away from Avraham's house as Yishmael was a bad influence on Yitzchak, she sinned. But ultimately, she recanted, and became righteous and her name was changed to Ketura – because as Rashi says her deeds were as beautiful as incense. Furthermore, she never remarried between being with Avraham and remarrying Avraham which is a mitzvah.