



תורת חיים Torat Chayim

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, Eitz Chayim of Dogwood Park

בס"ד

Vayishlach

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This issue of Torat Chayim is dedicated for the safety of the IDF and the return of the hostages

Ramban on Our Parshah: Rivkah's Final Sacrifice

We know about the burial of three of the matriarchs; Avraham buried Sarah in Me'arat haMachpelah, Yaakov buried Rachel on the way to Efrat, and Yaakov buried Leah in Me'arat haMachpelah. But what happened to Rivkah?

A midrash reports that her death and burial took place in our parshah. Yaakov built a mizbeiach in Beit El. Then the Torah informs us that Devorah, Rivkah's nursemaid, passed away, and Yaakov buried her in Beit El and named the site for his tearful grief. Then Hashem appeared to Yaakov and blessed him. (Bereishit 35:1-9) According to Bereishit Rabbah (81:5), Yaakov received word of his mother's passing after he buried Devorah, and he named the site for his tears for Rivkah. The berachah Hashem brought to Yaakov was one of consolation.

But then why didn't the text report Rivkah's death and burial explicitly? Ramban offers two explanations:

- A midrash contends that Rivkah's household concealed her death, to prevent Esav from finding out and coming home for the funeral. With Avraham deceased, Yitzchak homebound because of his vision and Yaakov gone, Esav would be at the head of the procession, and people would condemn Rivkah for producing such a child. (Tanchuma, Ki Tetze 4)
- Ramban himself suggests that the death was not concealed by her household. Esav did not come home for

the funeral; he reviled Rivkah for what she did to him. Instead, Rivkah was buried by the Hittites, and the text hid this from the reader to preserve Rivkah's dignity. [Indeed, every burial in the book of Bereishit lists who performed the burial, and here the Hittites would have been credited.]

Ramban's second answer resonates. Rivkah was chosen to marry Yitzchak, rather than have him marry a Canaanite, and the Hittites were Canaanites. Rivkah told Yitzchak that she didn't want Yaakov to marry a Hittite. Esav married Hittites, and they embittered her. (Bereishit 26:34-35) For Rivkah to be buried by Hittites would be ignominious.

Why did Rivkah suffer this fate? Perhaps because of this: When Yaakov was worried about being caught deceiving his father, Rivkah pledged, "Your curse is upon me." Now the curse came to fruition. Because Rivkah swapped Yaakov for Esav, Esav hated her and Yaakov needed to flee. So when Rivkah passed away, there was no one other than the Hittite neighbors to look after her.

Rivkah's end, as depicted by Ramban, was tragic, but it was also heroic. She paid a price for her success, but she safeguarded the mission of Avraham and Sarah, ensuring it would continue in righteousness.

Parshah Riddles for Kids (answers on the back)

Age 4-8: What is the name of Yaakov's youngest son, who was born in our parshah: a) Ard, b) Yoktan c) Binyamin?

Age 8-12: What new name did Yaakov receive twice in our parshah?

Age 12+: Yaakov was afraid AND upset when he went to meet Esav. According to Rashi, why did Yaakov feel both?

Journey Through Tanach: Yehoshua, Perek 7

After the miraculous victory in Yericho, the Jews crash to earth in Chapter 7, leading to a national growth experience. We move from beneficiaries of Divine largesse and patience to a nation responsible for its mistakes.

In Chapter 6 Yehoshua declared that the spoils of Yericho would be off-limits; at the start of Chapter 7 we learn that a man named Achan, from the tribe of Yehudah, took some of the spoils for himself. (7:1)

Unaware of Achan's act, Yehoshua prepares for war with Ai, sending out spies. The spies anticipate an easy battle, saying we only need 2,000 or 3,000 soldiers. Yehoshua is conservative, sending 3,000, but the Jews are still routed; as soon as they attack the city, they are driven off. (7:2-5)

Yehoshua immediately sees this defeat as signaling Divine abandonment, and he cries out to Hashem. Channeling Moshe's reactions after the Golden Calf and the Spies, Yehoshua asks Hashem to help us for the sake of His reputation, if not for the sake of the Jews. (7:6-9)

Hashem informs Yehoshua that the Jews have taken from the spoils, and that He will not aid them in battle until they punish the guilty. Hashem does not tell Yehoshua who sinned, but He tells Yehoshua to test each family; the wrong one would be "ensnared before Hashem". Radak says that Yehoshua passed each family before the Aron; Sanhedrin 43b refers to the process as a lottery. Either way, Hashem expected Yehoshua to manage the process and not rely solely on Divine aid. (7:10-15)

Yehoshua's test catches Achan, and he demands that Achan confess. A midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 23:6) says that the tribe of Yehudah was preparing for war in his defense; this could have led to a schism, with Yehudah against Yehoshua's tribe of Ephraim. But Achan confesses, and the stolen material is found. (7:16-23)

Achan is executed, and his property burned. His family, who knew of the theft, stands as witnesses. (7:24-26, Rashi) The Jews build a monument there, a reminder of the way the nation suffered for the crime of the individual.

The 613 Mitzvot: #9, 11 - Eliminating Chametz, Part 1

The Torah presents two separate mitzvot regarding removal of chametz for Pesach. One mitzvah is to eliminate chametz we find before Pesach (Shemot 12:15 as explained in Pesachim 5a), and the other is to make sure we do not own any chametz throughout Pesach (Shemot 12:19 and Pesachim ibid.). Both of these mitzvot remind us of the miracles Hashem performed for us in removing us from Egypt.

We fulfill the mitzvah of eliminating chametz when we burn it before the deadline on the 14th of Nisan, and this deadline is consistent with the biblical text as well, which says to destroy it that day. However, some contend that the mitzvah of destroying chametz continues **after** the deadline. Rabbi Zerachyah haLevi (Baal haMaor to Pesachim 3a, supported in Sdei Chemed *mem* 77:26) argued that one who keeps chametz until after the deadline, and then eats it before Pesach, fulfills the mitzvah of eliminating chametz by eating it, even though he has kept chametz illegally. Rabbi Aryeh Leib Ginsburg (Shaagat Aryeh 82) even argued that the mitzvah of eliminating chametz continues all through Pesach.

To be continued...

Israel's Chief Rabbis: Parents & Aliyah, Rav Ovadia Yosef

Rav Ovadia Yosef was born in Baghdad in 1920; four years later, his family moved to Israel. He worked in a store and studied under Syrian sage Rav Ezra Atiyeh. At age 20 he was ordained by Rav Ben Zion Uziel. Beginning in 1945, he served on rabbinic courts. In 1947, at Rav Uziel's request, Rav Yosef became Chief Rabbi of Cairo. He returned to Israel in 1950, becoming a judge in Petah Tikvah, and then Jerusalem; in 1965 he joined Israel's Supreme Rabbinical Court. In 1954 Rav Yosef won the Rav Kook Prize for Torah literature, and in 1970 he received the Israel Prize. He became Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv in 1968, and then Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel in 1973. Rav Yosef passed away in 2013.

Rav Ovadia was asked about one whose non-Israeli parents demand that he leave Israel. Must he move? Here is part of his response (Yechaveh Daat 4:49). [**Note: I am not bringing this as practical psak**]:

Indeed, honoring one's parents is a great mitzvah, to the point that the Torah equates it with the mitzvah of honoring G-d. (Bava Metzia 32a, Yerushalmi Peah 1:1) However, the mitzvah of settling Israel overrides the mitzvah of

honoring parents... According to Ramban (Sefer haMitzvot and Bamidbar 33:53), the mitzvah of settling Israel is a biblical commandment, applicable today; Rashbatz and Rashbash agreed. Even per Rambam that the mitzvah is rabbinic [per Keneset haGedolah], it is still great enough to override rabbinic prohibitions, as seen in Gittin 8b...

The sages have already said, "If one's father would tell him to violate Shabbat or not to return a lost object, could he listen? The Torah says, 'You shall revere your mother and father, and guard My Shabbatot; I am G-d.' All of you are obligated to honor Me." Here, too, if his father would tell him to erase the mitzvah of living in Israel, he could not listen, for he and his father are obligated in the mitzvah of settling Israel...

In sum: Nothing compares to the mitzvah of living in Israel... and especially when one intends to live there for the sake of the mitzvah, and to fulfill all of the land-related mitzvot. Therefore, one should not listen to a parent who tells him not to ascend to the land. Certainly, then, one who already merits to live in the land, and whose parent then instructs him to leave, may not listen to him.

Upcoming Learning!

All classes are open to men and women and free of charge, unless otherwise noted

4:25 PM Shabbat December 2

Reflections on my week in Israel, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim

8:30 AM to 9:15 AM Sunday December 3

Fourteen Centuries: Giants of Halachah - The Reish Galuta and the Gaon

With Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, in the lobby at Eitz Chayim

7:30-9:00 PM Monday December 4

Medical Halachah: The Halachic Dimensions of Dementia

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mtorcz>

Please register at <https://torontotorah.com/cme> Accredited for CME, non-medical professionals welcome

7:30-8:30 PM Monday December 11

Halachah in Healthcare Settings, based on Nishmat Avraham

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim and on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/medhal>

8:30 PM Wednesday December 13, a Chanukah Program for Women

The Judith Story

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Shana Schoenfeld's Home

~~Age 12+ Yaakov was afraid that he might kill someone, and upset that he might be killed.~~

Age 4-8 C: Binyamin
Age 8-12 Yisrael

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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