

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT CHAYEI SARA

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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

WAS ELIEZER A SERVANT?

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 weeks 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. Eliezers prayer seems to be even greater, as he was answered even before he had finished his prayer.

Upon inspection the Torah goes to great length to tell us about Eliezers 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 it would be better that his son clings to such a man, then to stay a prince in his palace.

Eliezer thus became Abraham'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 (Avrahams)." 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 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 Abraham'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

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teachings to the public, 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.

When the time came to look for a wife for Yitschak, Avraham 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 would marry 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 acted on hearing that?

"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?!"

Eliezer's reaction was far from that. Instead, he kept quiet, and fulfilled his masters 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 bshaat 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 Neeman 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 that is the shaat Ratson.

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

Shabbat shalom



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

WHEN ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN NAMES

Our Sages teach us that the everyday, mundane conversations of the servants of our forefathers are of greater relevance to us than the formal instructions that follow. They are referring to Eliezer, who was sent by Avraham Avinu to find a wife for Yitzchak. This mission is featured in the longest chapter of the entire book of Bereishit, chapter 24. In 67 detailed verses, we are told about Eliezer's thoughts, his plan for the test at the well, and how he carried it out. It is remarkably detailed.

However, later on in the Torah, when we are given specific do's and don'ts of Jewish law, everything is conveyed concisely.

Here we see that from a person who was not even a member of our faith, we learn so much about our own lives. Interestingly, however, consider how often people's names are mentioned in this Parasha. Avraham's name appears no less than 37 times, Yitzchak's 13, Rivka's 12, Sarah's 9, and Ephron's 9. Yet Eliezer's name does not appear at all. Although he is the central character, he is only referred to as "Ha'eved" (the servant) or "Ha'ish" (the man). This presents a profound message

to us: we have internalized his values and absorbed his message. Eliezer is the role model in the Torah's longest chapter, but it's not his name that matters; it's what he taught the world that counts.

Similarly, the great heroes of this world are often those men and women who, behind the scenes, are devoted family members and contributors to their communities. Their names might not be in neon lights, but they are among our most outstanding individuals. They are the "Eliezers" of our world, and his name says it all: Eliezer—"My God is my help." The Almighty certainly helps those who live their lives in service to others.



RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

לְמַנְיַח אֶל-הַנְּחִילוֹת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד - : Chapter 5 Tehillim for Our Times

TWO FACES OF G-D

Part II - Deepen Your Understanding of Hashem

The question of how a kind and gracious G-d can allow tragic events to occur is one which has troubled our greatest leaders for centuries. The first one to struggle with this question was Moses himself as he boldly asked Hashem.

"Please teach me your ways" (Shemot 33:13, Berachot; 7a).

In this chapter King David compares Jewish belief in a One, unified G-d with that of other civilizations who believed that the origin of a particular event depended on its nature; Events in which traits such as arrogance, jealousy or revenge featured had their origin the God of Arrogance, God of Jealousy or the God of Revenge respectively. Furthermore, these deities may compete with one another with the possibility that the "powers of evil" may overpower the "powers of good".

In contrast we believe that all happenings - good and bad - stem from the same One Hashem. Although He is responsible for negative occurrences, such events sit

externally to Him and He could never be described as "bad", heaven forbid.

The other nations will serve their Gods out of fear. They will bow to the God of revenge because it serves their interests to do so. Occasionally they will appeal to the God of love if doing so meets their requirements. However, if given the chance, they would not serve these Gods at all.

Our relationship with Hashem is completely different. We have no goal in mind other than connecting with him. We look at the natural world and we marvel at the genius of its design. We take note of how multiple primary elements combine subtly just so that we can breath, eat and drink. We can feel Hashem's love as we experience the emotion of love ourselves. How completely natural and fulfilling it is to pick up and embrace one's own child or to build a relationship with another person. All these processes are G-d given and show how life has been precisely crafted with our needs in mind.

We can also reflect on how much blessing we have seen in our lives to date; how much we have benefited from parents, teachers and friends who have supported us in addition to countless experiences and interactions which have helped mould our progression through life.

It is true that terrible happenings do occur

and certainly we cannot claim to know why such things happen. But we do need to see them in context of the innumerable kindness with which the world is enveloped.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the verse in this chapter

וַאֲנִי בָרַב חֶסֶדְךָ אָבוֹא בֵּיתְךָ אֲשַׁתְּחֶנָּה
אֶל-הַיְכָל־קֹדֶשְׁךָ בְּיַד אֲתָנָח:

And I, through Your generous love, enter Your house; I bow down in awe at Your holy sanctuary (5:8).

King David tells us that he visits Hashem's temple due to "רב חסדך" - Hashem's generous love. The word "רב" can also mean "majority". Taking on this interpretation of the word we can understand King David to be declaring that he recognizes that bad things do happen and he may not understand why they do. But he also notes that that the overwhelming "majority" of Hashem's deeds are so kind and it is on these we must focus. This attitude gives King David the motivation he needs to "enter Hashem's house" and "bow done in awe".

May we merit to appreciate all the good we have in our lives and in doing so be inspired to march towards his holy temple - may it be speedily built in our days.

Based on the commentary of the Malbim



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

The Beracha for Mashed Potatoes, Eddge, French Fries, Pringles, and Potato Chips

The practice among Sephardim is to recite the Beracha of "Boreh Peri Ha'adama" on mashed potatoes. Even though mashed potatoes do not resemble a potato, nevertheless, they require the Beracha of "Ha'adama" because they have the same taste as an ordinary potato. This applies as well to "edde" (potato pancakes), which is prepared by frying grated potato, as well as French fries and potato chips, which are fried slices of potato. Although these products do not have the form or appearance of a potato, they nevertheless require the Beracha of "Ha'adama" because they taste like potato.

The more complex question relates to Pringles, which are prepared from potato flour, and not from actual pieces of potato. Some Halachic authorities maintain that even Pringles require the Beracha of "Ha'adama," because they have the taste of potato. However, the Yalkut Yosef (Berachot, vol. 3, p. 42) notes that a Pringles chip is comprised of only 42 percent potato; the rest of the chip is made from other ingredients. And therefore, since only the minority of the product is potato, the proper Beracha is "She'hakol," and not "Ha'adama." A separate question arises with regard to the barbeque flavored Pringles, which contain flour. Foods that contain flour could require the Beracha of "Mezonot," depending on

the function the flour serves in the mixture. As the function of the flour in barbeque flavored Pringles is unclear, the Yalkut Yosef rules that one should eat this product only after reciting both "She'hakol" and "Mezonot" on other foods, in order to avoid this Halachic question.

Summary: According to Sephardic custom, the proper Beracha for mashed potatoes, potato pancakes, French fries and potato chips is "Ha'adama." Over Pringles potato chips, however, one recites "She'hakol." It is uncertain whether the barbeque flavored Pringles chips require "Mezonot" or "She'hakol," and therefore one should eat this product only after reciting both "She'hakol" and "Mezonot" on other foods.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Chayei Sara

Sarah, the mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum.

Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avraham's family. Eliezer travels to

Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of his thirsty camels (some 140 gallons)! This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother, Lavan, result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sarah's tent, marries her

and loves her. He is then consoled for the loss of his mother.

Avraham remarries Hagar, who is renamed Ketura to indicate her improved ways. Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East. Avraham passes away at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. Name the four couples buried in Kiryat Arba.
2. What did Sarah hear that caused her death?
3. What title of honor did the Bnei Chet bestow upon Avraham?
4. Where was Avraham born?
5. How were Avraham's camels distinguished?

A

1. 23:2 - Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Leah.
2. 23:2 - That Yitzchak was almost slaughtered.
3. 23:6 - Prince of G-d.
4. 24:7 - Ur Kasdim.
5. 24:10 - They were muzzled, so they wouldn't graze in the fields of others.



"... and her name was Ketura ..." (Bereishis 25:1) Because her deeds were pleasant like Ketoreth (sweet smelling incense) (Rashi)

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