

# MINCHA

*by Shlomo Katz*

## **Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz**

### **Chaye Sarah**

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#### Today's Learning:

Bava Metzia 8:3-4

Orach Chaim 539:9:11

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Kamma 106

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Demai 34

Most of this week's parashah is devoted to the search for a wife for Yitzchak. At the end of the story we read (Bereishit 24:63-65), "Yitzchak went out la'suach in the field toward evening and he raised his eyes and saw, and behold! camels were coming. And Rivka raised her eyes and saw Yitzchak, and she fell from the camel. She said to the servant, 'Who is that man walking in the field toward us?'" What did Rivka see that impressed her so much that she fell off the camel and inquired as to the man's (Yitzchak's) identity? The midrash explains, "She saw his hands outstretched in prayer, and she said, 'This must certainly be a great man'." Indeed, we find that the word "sichah" means "prayer," as in the verse (Tehilim 102:1, cited by Rashi here), "A prayer of the afflicted, when he pours forth sicho / his supplication."

However, the word la'suach can have another meaning. We read (Bereishit 2:5), "Now all the siach / trees of the field were not yet on the earth." Based on this verse, writes Rashbam z"l (12th century),

the word la'suach can mean "to plant" or to engage in some other agricultural labor. According to this interpretation, Rivka saw Yitzchak working in the field.

Both interpretations may be correct, writes R' Menachem Ben- Zion Zaks z"l (rosh yeshiva in Chicago; son-in-law of R' Zvi Pesach Frank). Rivka saw Yitzchak praying, and she saw him working in the field. She saw that he was a master of both pursuits, and that was what impressed her. (Menachem Zion)

[Ed. note: The Sages say that Yitzchak was davening Minchah, the prayer that he innovated. If Yitzchak had been working in the field immediately prior to this, it would only highlight the greatness of his prayer. Specifically, commentaries observe that Minchah is made special by the fact that it interrupts the workday and thus requires special commitment to recite.]

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*"Now Abraham was old, well on in yamim / days . . ." (24:1)*

The gemara (Yoma 28b) cites this verse as proof that Avraham conducted a yeshiva where he taught Torah. Where is this alluded to in our verse? R' Shlomo Halberstam z"l (the "Bobover Rebbe"; died 2000) explains:

The word "yamim / days" is interesting in that the gematria of its hidden part is equal to the gematria of its revealed part. In other words, if the name of each of the letters in yamim were spelled out [yud = yud (10), vav (6), dalet (4); mem = mem (40), mem (40); etc.], the sum of the first letters would equal the sum of the other letters [10 = 6+4; 40 = 40, etc.]. Why is this significant? It alludes to the fact that Avraham's "revealed days" - his Olam Hazei / This World - was equal to his "hidden days" - his Olam Haba / World-to-Come.

How so? The gemara (Sanhedrin 92a) states that one who teaches Torah in this world will merit to teach Torah in the World-to-Come. Avraham's Olam Hazei and his Olam Haba were equal because he taught Torah. And, this fact is alluded to in our verse. (Kerem Shlomo Vol. III)

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*"She said, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels'." (24:46)*

R' Yehuda Hachassid z"l (Germany; died 1217) writes: When the issue is thirst, one should care for a person before an animal, as it is written [in the above verse]. It also is written (Bamidbar 20:8), "You shall bring forth for them water from the rock and give drink to the assembly and to their animals."

However, when it comes to eating, animals come first, as it is written (Bereishit 24:32-33), "He gave straw and feed for the camels . . . Food was set before him." It also is written (Devarim 11:15), "I shall provide grass in your field for your cattle and you will eat and you will be satisfied." (Sefer Chassidim, Paragraph 531)

R' Meir Dan Plotzki z"l (1866-1928; prominent Polish rabbi) writes: There is an opinion that the phrase,

"and you will be satisfied," in the verse (Devarim 8:10), "You will eat and you will be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem, your God," refers to drinking. According to this opinion, one does not fulfill the mitzvah of birkat hamazon / bentching if he is still thirsty, even if he has eaten to satiation. According to this opinion, should not the phrase, "You will be satisfied," have the same meaning in the last verse quoted by R' Yehuda Hachassid, above, i.e., should it not refer to drinking? Would this not mean, then, that one must feed his animals before he eats or drinks?

R' Plotzki answers: There are two separate laws when it comes to drinking. If one is merely thirsty, he may drink before feeding his animals. However, one may not eat a meal before feeding his animals, and if he does, even the drinks that he takes during the meal constitute a transgression of this law.

This explanation is borne out by our parashah itself. We read (24:17), "The servant ran toward her and said, 'Let me sip, if you please, a little water from your jug'." Only because Eliezer (the servant) indicated that he was thirsty did Rivka give him to drink before watering the camels. However, had Eliezer not been thirsty, she would not have given him water (for example, to wash down his food) before watering the animals. (Kli Chemdah)

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From the Midrash . . .

*"Sarah's lifetime was . . ."* - thus it is written (Tehilim 37:18), "Hashem knows the days of the temimim / wholesome; their inheritance will be forever." Just as they are wholesome, so their years are wholesome. . .

Rabbi Akiva was sitting and lecturing and the congregation was dozing off. He wanted to awaken them, so he said, "Why did Esther merit to rule over 127 nations? It is fitting that the descendant of Sarah, who lived 127 years, should rule over 127 nations." (Bereishit Rabbah ch. 68)

R' Moshe Teitelbaum shlita (the "Satmar Rebbe") offers 14 explanations of the above story about Rabbi Akiva. One of these is as follows:

Another midrash states: "The sacrifice brought by Aharon [i.e., the twice daily minchah / meal offering of the Kohen Gadol] is as beloved as the sacrifice of the Princes [i.e., the gifts they brought at the dedication of the Mishkan]." The Princes' sacrifices undoubtedly were brought with great fervor as one would expect in connection with any once-in-a-lifetime mitzvah. Aharon's mitzvah, bringing exactly the same sacrifice twice every single day, was a harder one to do with real feeling. Nevertheless, Aharon rose to the task, and, therefore, his sacrifices were as beloved to Hashem as the sacrifices of the Princes.

Says R' Teitelbaum: This is the way of all spiritually elevated people. Their mitzvot never feel "old." Rather, such people serve Hashem with the same fervor every day. (R' Teitelbaum adds in the names of both his father and his uncle: This is the meaning of Rashi's comment (to Bemidbar 8:3) that the Torah praises Aharon for not deviating from G-d's command. Of course, Aharon would not

deviate from Hashem's command! Rather, Rashi means that Aharon's fervor did not decrease from day to day.)

Rashi in our parashah comments that all of Sarah's days were equally good. He means, writes R' Teitelbaum, that Sarah, too, served Hashem with the same feeling every day. This is what the midrash is teaching as well: Just as tzaddikim are wholesome, so each of their days is equally wholesome. Not a single day is lost because of a loss of spiritual fervor.

This will explain, as well, the story about Rabbi Akiva. The congregation was used to hearing Rabbi Akiva lecture on a regular basis, and it began to take him for granted. The congregants began to doze. Therefore, Rabbi Akiva wanted to teach them the importance of serving Hashem every day with equal excitement and fervor, and he told them that Sarah served Hashem thus. How do we know that she did? Because she was rewarded equally for every year of her life, the proof being that her descendant ruled over 127 nations, one for each year. (Beirach Moshe)

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## **R' Yitzchak Chayes z"l**

R' Yitzchak ben Avraham Chayes served successively in the rabbinate of Prossnitz (Prostejov) and Prague, attracting numerous disciples with his erudition and saintliness. The 16th century historian, R' David Ganz, writes of him in his Tzemach David, "The great rabbi whose fame has spread throughout the Diaspora. He cultivated many disciples and furthered the knowledge of Torah."

R' Yitzchak was an adherent to the pilpul method of study that was popular in his time but has been widely rejected since then. He is best known for his work Pnei Yitzchak which was published in 1591. The work has two parts: Apei Ravrevei, which sets the Yoreh Deah section of the Shulchan Aruch to rhyme, and Apei Zuta, a commentary on the first part. R' Yitzchak's son, R' Monish, added two elegies to this work, one on the destruction of the city of Posen by fire in 1590, and the other on the death of his own 18-year-old son. (R' Monish was rabbi of Vilna.)

R' Yitzchak also wrote Siach Yitzchak, which sets the laws of Pesach to rhyme, Pachad Yitzchak, a commentary on the passage in Tractate Gittin which deals with the destruction of the Temple, and other, as yet unpublished, works.

R' Yitzchak died on the 11th of Tammuz in approximately 1616. (Several sources state that he died in 1585. This is clearly wrong, for Tzemach David states: "He came here, to Prague, in the year [5]344 [i.e., 1584], and he was the rabbi and rosh yeshiva here for three-and-a-half years, may Hashem lengthen his days with pleasantness and may his throne become greater and loftier, higher and higher." Tzemach David was written in approximately 1592.)

Among R' Yitzchak's many prominent descendants were: R' Yitzchak Chayes, author of the Mishnah commentary, Zera Yitzchak; the 19th century Talmud commentator R' Zvi Hirsch Chayes (the "Maharitz Chayes"); and R' David Hillel Altshuler, author of the popular Tanach commentary,

Metzudat David.

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Correction: We stated in last week's biography of R' Ahron Soloveitchik z"l that he spend most of his adult life in Chicago. Several readers have pointed out that he did not move to Chicago until the mid-1960s. Prior to that time, R' Soloveitchik taught at Mesivta Tifereth Yerushalyim in Manhattan, at Yeshiva Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn and at Yeshiva University.

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