

The Light In The Night

(ה"כ:כד) ותאמר אליו גם תבן גם מספוא רב עמנו גם מקום ללון

She said to him, "We have plenty of straw and fodder, and also a place to spend the night." (24:25)

It had been a stormy day, a terrible day for travelling. But Reb Baruch had no choice. The roads had been muddy and the coach had made poor time, reaching Gestinin very late at night. The streets were already dark. It had been a day for huddling around the fire and going to sleep early. There was not a single light in the entire city. What could Reb Baruch do?

He wandered around searching hopefully for a sign of life. He did not want to wake anyone up. Suddenly he spied a single candle lighting up a window. He hurried towards it and reaching the house, knocked hesitantly at the door. It was opened at once by a kindly looking Jew who ushered him in, set him in front of a blazing fire and brought him some warm food and tea. The traveller was grateful.

The solicitous host was R'Yechiel Meir, the rabbi of Gestinin, a scholar who spent his nights, as well as his days in Torah study. Since no one had been up, he himself had prepared both a bed and food for his unexpected guest.

The next morning, the rabbi hushed all the members of his family so that the weary traveller staying with them could sleep his fill. He waited for him to wake up by himself, then took him to the synagogue. Here the stranger learned that he had been lodging by the distinguished rabbi of Gestinin. He felt very embarrassed at having caused this noble person such inconvenience and apologised profusely.

"No, I will not forgive you!" Said the rabbi.

The traveller did not know what to do. He again asked his host to forgive him for the caused trouble. Finally the rabbi agreed.

"But only under one condition..."

"And what is your condition?" The visitor asked, full of curiosity.

"The condition is that each time you pass through Gestinin, you stay with me."

This is the power of sharing ones home.

By Daniel Lefkowitz
(adapted from Tales Of Tzaddikim)

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מס' רצ"ה

Rebbi Akiva was once giving a shiur when he noticed his talmidim were struggling to stay awake (some things never change!). In order to revitalise them, he said the following. Why did Queen Esther merit to rule over 127 kingdoms? Because Soroh Imeinu lived for 127 years. So says the Midrash at the beginning of this week's sedrah.

The Midrash is clearly puzzling. What do Soroh's 127 years have to do with the number of kingdoms Queen Esther ruled over?

The Chiddushei Harim, the talmid muvhak of his brother in law the Kotzker Rebbe and the ancestor of Chasidei Gur, gives a wonderful explanation. Rebbi Akiva was trying to teach his students the importance of time.

Imagine, said Rebbi Akiva, if each year of your life was like a whole country. A month would be like a huge city. A week like a big town. A day like a large village. An hour like a whole street. And a minute like a house. Just like we appreciate the value of property, we should similarly value a more important commodity, the precious gift of time.

Rebbi Akiva therefore used a comparison of material value to convey to his talmidim the tragedy of wasting time. Soroh's 127 years were lived to the full and every moment reaped eternal benefit.

My wife recently bought me the collection of shiurim by the late Rabbi Bernstein ztl and I am happily re-acquainting myself with his magnificent shiurim. After quoting the above medrash, Rabbi Bernstein quoted a beautiful insight of the Maggid of Mezritch. In Sefer Tehillim, Dovid Hamelech says "לא אמות כי אחיה". This does not mean "Let me

not die, for I will live". Everyone has to die at some time.

Rather, it means "Let me not die while I am still alive"! There are some people who are technically alive but spiritually dead. Dovid Hamelech pleaded with Hashem that he should live life to the full and be truly alive while still on this world.

That is why the Ralbag says that in Nach there is an expression "כעת חיה" "As this time lives". Because there is living time and there is dead time.

I once heard a marvellous idea which reiterates this theme regarding the mitzvah of Orlah. For the first 3 years of a tree's life, the farmer cannot reap any benefit from his new tree. To compensate the farmer, the Torah gives a special blessing that he will reap much benefit to make up for the loss of 3 years produce.

But surely there are other instances where the farmer loses out. He has to give truma and ma'aser and many other donations from his yield!

The difference is that with other contributions, the farmer is dealing with a material loss. However, with Orlah, the farmer has to deal with a loss of time. That is more painful as he knows the loss can never be made up.

As the saying goes: "אדם דואג על איבוד דמיו ואינו דואג"; "Man worries about losing his money and does not worry about the loss of his days. His money can return but his days will not come back". That is the lesson of Soroh Imeinu and a life well lived.

By Rabbi. J. Golker

Times for Shabbos - זמני שבת

Hearing The Hidden

(ד"ג:כ) וישמע אברהם אל עפרון וישקל אברהם לעפרן את הכסף אשר דבר באוני בני חת ארבע מאות שקל כסף עבר לסחר
And Avraham heard Efron. And Avroham weighed for Efron the silver which he spoke about before the Beni Chais. Four hundred Shekels of silver that merchants used. (23:16)

On the words, "and Avraham heard," the Rashbam commented, "a hint is sufficient to the wise man".

Efron spoke as if he was a generous man. He spoke to Avraham with the greatest of respect. He ostensibly offered him the burial site free of charge. He mentioned, however, in passing, "the four hundred shekels that one might pay for this is nothing between friends. Your friendship is more precious than money. Take it without payment". (See Rashi and Rashbam verse 15) but Avraham took the hint. He was perceptive and realised that Efron did not really want to give the land for free.

It might seem to a naive bystander that Efron only mentioned the sum of money as a side point that it was just a passing remark of no significance. But Avraham "heard," and with his well-developed intuition understood Efron's real intentions. He responded to Efron's inner wishes and not to his superficial words.

This ability to differentiate between what someone says and what he really means is an attribute that we must develop. For many areas of spiritual growth it is essential.

A person might be very busy now. You would like to take up some of their time about a matter that is really not so important to you or him. When you ask him if you are disturbing him, he replies, "not too much. I can always stay up late tonight to finish what needs to be done". Perhaps he has really got time. However, on the other hand he might be fervently wishing that you won't impose on him now. Learn to "hear" what someone is really saying.

By gaining this sensitivity and perceptiveness, you will be able to reach new heights in the Mitzvah of "loving your fellow man".

The Steipler Go'an said in the name of the Chazon Ish that when someone came to speak to him about a number of topics, he knew that as a rule, the last one mentioned was the most important and the real reason they had come to consult him. Everything else was just said to conceal this fact. (Peninai Rabainu Hakehilos Yaacov p.119)

By Shlomo Katz

מלאכה of the week

Makeh B'Patish - "The Final Hammer Blow" Striking the final blow (Finishing an object)

This *Melacha* has its roots in the building of the *Kerashim*, the beams of the *Mishkan*. These beams were made of wood covered with gold. The gold sheathing was kept in place with golden nails that were hammered into the wood. The final hit on those nails to complete the beam was *Makeh B'Patish*.

Although the *Melacha* stemmed from work done with a hammer, the prohibition applies to any act of completion. For example, putting shoelaces into a shoe for the first time may be prohibited on *Shabbat* because of this

Full Years

(ב"ג:ב) ותמת שרה בקרית ארבע הוא חברון בארץ כנען ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולבכתה
Sarah died in Kiryas Arba, which is in Chevron, in the land of Canaan. Avraham came to eulogise Sarah and weep for her. (23:2)

Our sages associate the verse: "And Sarah's life was 127 years...", with the quote: "G-d knows the days of the righteous, and explain: "Just as they are perfect, so to their years are perfect." The medrash continues, explaining that this concept is exemplified by Sarah, whose years were complete; there was nothing lacking to the time with which she was endowed.

The question arises: before and after Sarah's life, there were many righteous men and women whose "years were perfect." Why is Sarah chosen as a paradigm?

The explanation is that the continuous Divine service of other righteous men and women was rewarded with the fulfilment of G-d's promise: "I will fill the span of your days," i.e., they were given a long life. When the years were taken from the lifetime of a righteous man, it indicates that that person's divine service was lacking. Sarah, by contrast passed away before her time because of an external factor- her soul expired when she was told of the binding of Yitzchak.- and yet "her years were perfect."

since this is a unique phenomenon, her example is cited to illustrate the concept.

A further problem with posuk two is why Avraham came, "to eulogise Sarah and to weep over her." The Talmud states that, "weeping is carried out for three days and eulogies for seven days", so why does the Torah mention eulogy before weeping?

If Sarah passed away after her full allotted time in this world, then there would have been even less weeping (compared to the scenario of a premature passing). This would explain why the Torah mentions the eulogy first for the long and impressive eulogy which Sarah deserved would have vastly overshadowed the weeping, which in this case, was relatively minimal. Thus the Torah mentions weeping as a secondary detail (and the word "*v'libchota*", "To weep over her" was written with a small letter *Kaf* to indicate that only a small amount of weeping took place.

By Daniel Lefkowitz

Riddle of the Week

When mixing two edible items, their status of Kashrus reverses; where one becomes permissible to eat and the other becomes forbidden to eat. What are the items?
(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer to Last Week's Riddle

*I'm too young to be Parev. Who am I?
 Answer: An undeveloped egg inside a chicken is considered part of the chicken and is therefore meaty.*

Prizes have been sponsored by various local Jewish shops to be raffled off to those who successfully answer the weekly general knowledge question!!! Everyone is welcome to submit an answer by emailing us at LIVINGTORAH@HASMONEAN.CO.UK