

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT CHAYEI SARAH

Q-1. (a) Why is this parasha describing Sarah's death and burial called "Chayei Sarah" ("Sarah's Lifetime")? (b) From what did she die (4 views)? (c) How does our *Rosh Hashana shofar* blowing relate to her death? (d) How old was Yitzchak at the *akeida*? (e) Why was her burial site called "Me'orat haMachpeila" (the "double cave") (4 views)? (f) Why is "Efron" in 23:16 spelled with no vav (2 views)? (g) (i) Which 3 places in Canaan did *Bnei Yisrael* buy for high prices, and (ii) who bought them? (*Bereishit* 23:1-2,6, 9,16)

A-1. (a) Life's most important component is the eternal life after the soul leaves the body (*R. Bechaya*). (b) From (1) the shock when Satan told her Avraham went to slaughter Yitzchak (*Targum Yonatan*). (2) Yitzchak's describing the *akeida*, when she realized what would have happened without the angel's intervention (*Vayikra Raba*). (3) being told that Avraham and Yitzchak left Har haMoriah, thinking Avraham had failed the test; (4) being upset that Avraham did not consult her before taking Yitzchak (*Medrash Tanchuma*). (c) When she heard Yitzchak died, she sobbed *terua*-like sounds – *shofar* blowing asks for her cries to give merit to atone for our sins (*Pirkei deRebi Eliezer*). (d) 37 – the *akeida* coincided with Sarah's death – she was 90 at his birth and died at 127 (*Seder Olam*). (e) (1) It has upper and lower stories; (2) couples, starting with Adam and Chava, were to be buried there (*Rashi*). (3) it was a double cave, one inside the other (*ibn Ezra*). (4) Adam was so tall Hashem had to fold his body in half to bury him (*Ramban*). (f) (1) The shortened name indicated his inferiority – Efron said much but did not do even a little, offering the site for free but taking a large sum (*Rashi*). (2) Efron's *gematria* with no vav is 400 – his goal was to get Avraham's 400 *shekelim* (*Ba'al haTurim*). (g) (1) (i) Me'orat haMachpeila – Chevron; (ii) Avraham – 400 *shekalim* (here); (2) (i) Yosef's tomb – Shechem; (ii) Yaakov – 100 *kesitot* (*Bereshit* 33:19); (3) (i) the *Beit haMikdash*'s site – Yerushalayim; (ii) David haMelech – 600 gold *shekalim* (*I Divrei haYamim* 21:25).

Q-2. (a) Since 18:11 says that Avraham was *zakein* (old), why is it repeated here? (b) The Torah says, "Hashem blessed Avraham 'bakol' ('with everything') – to what does "bakol" refer (10 views)? (c) Since the *Charanim*, like the *Cana'anim*, worshipped idols, why did Avraham ban Eliezer from (1) seeking a *Cana'anit* woman as Yitzchak's wife (4 reasons)? (2) bringing Yitzchak to Charan? (*Bereishit* 24:1-8)

A-2. (a) Avraham was aged, but Hashem restored his youth by giving him the ability to procreate – after Sarah's death, the strains of his old age emerged again (*Medrash Tanchuma*). (b) Avraham (1) was blessed with a son – *bakol's gematria* is 52, same as *bein* (son) (*Rashi*). (2) had all a man wants – riches, longevity, honor and children (*Ramban*). (3) had a daughter named "Bakol", fulfilling *mitzvat peru u-revu* by fathering a son and daughter; (4) was blessed by not having a daughter, since there would be no appropriate man for her to marry; (5) had astrological skills which kings far and wide consulted; (6) owned a precious stone that cured sick people; (7) saw Yishmael's *teshuba*; (8) was free of the *yeitzer hara*; (9) was blessed with a lifespan shortened by 5 years, from 180 to 175 years and did see his grandson Eisav sin (*Bava Batra* 16b). (10) had the *Shechina* dwelling within him (*Zohar Chadash*). (c) (1) (i) By marrying a *Charanit*, Yitzchak's wife would be far from her family, who could not influence her (*Kli Yakar*). (ii) The *Cana'anim*, unlike the *Charanim*, were cursed – they were unsuited as mates for Avraham's blessed offspring (*Ohr haChaim*). (iii) The *Cana'anim*, unlike the *Charanim*, were morally corrupt – Hashem gave *Eretz Yisrael* to Avraham's offspring to live with the Torah's morality, without letting *Cana'anim* immorality seep into his family (*Meshech Chochma*). (iv) Avraham wanted it known that his offspring acquired *Eretz Yisrael* through Hashem's promise, not by intermarrying with the *Cana'anim*. (2) As a result of the *akeida*, Yitzchak was an "ola temima" (a perfect offering to Hashem), who could not leave the holy land (*Chizkuni*).

Q-3. (a) What did Eliezer take when he took "kol toov adonov be-yado" (all of his master's bounty in his hand) (3 views)? (b) Why did he have the camels kneel down "michutz la-ir" (outside the city)? (c) Why did he set a test to find Yitzchak's bride (5 reasons)? (d) From where do we learn that (1) if a father insists that his son marry a certain woman, the son is not duty-bound to listen? (2) while the Torah bans divination or fortunetelling, one may seek out some kinds of omens? (3) a person with a defect should admit it, not waiting till others accuse him? (4) we must thank Hashem for good happenings? (e) After Rivka gave Eliezer water to drink, why did he not help her water the camels? (*Bereishit* 24:2-54)

A-3. (a) He (1) held a deed by which Avraham gave all his property to Yitzchak, so all would be anxious to marry him (*Rashi*). (2) took many samples of Avraham's wealth (*Ramban*). (3) brought men with him (24:32,54) to attest to his authority to negotiate for Avraham (*Medrash Hagadol*). (b) He thought that one who would let his daughter go outside the city to draw water would not object to letting her go to a foreign country to marry a wealthy husband (*Malbim*). (c) He sought a woman who (1) did *chesed* for a stranger like him, making her worthy in Avraham's home (*Rashi*). (2) would run to do *chesed*, like Avraham ran to the angels (*Sforno*). (3) would address him as "my lord," as Avraham did to the angels (*Rokeach*). (4) was an industrious woman who exerted herself, not using servants (*Malbim*). (5) was out of her parents' sight at the well but would have a good nature (*Chizkuni*). (d) (1) Avraham, making Eliezer swear about a wife for Yitzchak, did not command Yitzchak (*Meshech Chochma*). (2) Eliezer sought evidence he found Yitzchak's *bashert*; (3) Eliezer said, "I am Avraham's slave," instead of claiming to be his agent, friend or relative, when no one could have refuted him; (4) when Eliezer heard that Rivka was Avraham's relative, he bowed, thanking Hashem (*Bereishit Raba*). (e) He had to be sure her actions were Hashem's sign she was Yitzchak's worthy mate (*Sforno*).

Q-4. (a) Since Avraham was wealthy and Hashem's navi, why did Eliezer ask Lavan and Betuel to do Avraham "kindness" by letting Rivka marry his son – was it not a kindness to them for Rivka to marry him? (b) What did Eliezer mean telling Lavan and Betuel that if Rivka did not go with him, "I will turn (i) to the right or (ii) to the left"? (c) How does Lavan's and Betuel's response, "mei-Hashem yatza ha-davar" (the matter stemmed from Hashem) show Lavan was evil? (d) How do we know that a man's marriage to his mate is pre-ordained by Hashem? (e) Since Lavan and Betuel were idolaters, why did they tell Eliezer to take Rivka "ka'asher dibeir Hashem" (as Hashem has spoken)? (*Bereishit* 24:49-51)

A-4. (a) Hashem's decree that Yitzchak's offspring would be enslaved for 400 years was a valid reason to refuse to let her marry him (*Bereishit Raba*). (b) Eliezer would turn (i) south to Yishmael's family or (ii) north to Lot's family to seek Yitzchak's wife – this phrase's initial letters' gematria is the same as "Yishmael" – if Rivka did not come with him, he would turn to Yishmael's family for Yitzchak's mate; also this phrase's gematria is the same as "this is Yishmael or Amon and Moav, meaning that Eliezer would also look among Lot's relatives (*Ba'al haTurim*). (c) Lavan responded before his father (*Rashi*). (d) From Lavan's and Betue's response about the match of Yitzchak and Rivka, "mei-Hashem yatza ha-davar" (*Mo'ed Katan 18b*). (e) They meant, "what you and Avraham believe that Hashem has spoken" (*Torah Sheleima*).

Q-5. (a) Why did Rivka "va-takam" (arise [to go with Eliezer]) (2 views)? (b) (1) Why was Yitzchak in Be'er laChai Ro'i (3 reasons)? (2) Why did it have that name? (c) In which field did Yitzchak pray (2 views)? (d) From where do we learn that (1) a widower's children should not stop him from remarrying? (2) before marrying, one should pray for a successful marriage, (3) and correct any wrongs that he caused? (e) Which 3 miracles did Rivka return to Sarah's tent? (*Bereishit 24:61-67*)

A-5. (a) She arose (1) to summon her maidens to go with her (*Ramban*). (2) to leave her discredited house to enter a home of sanctity (*Medrash Lekach Tov*). (b) (1) It was where Hagar lived – Yitzchak brought her back to remarry his father (*Rashi*). (ii) He was overseeing his cattle that grazed there (*Radak*). (iii) This is where Hagar's prayers had been answered – Yitzchak went to the same place to pray for a wife for himself (*Sforno*). (2) Hagar sat at the well (be'er) and said to Hashem, the Living One (*laChai*), "see (re'eh) my shame"; (c) (1) Har haMoriah (*Tosafot – Berachot 34b*). (2) Me'orat ha-Machpeila (*Zohar Chadash*). (d) (1) Yitzchak helped Avraham remarry; (2) he went to the field to pray when he expected Eliezer's return; (3) Since Yitzchak's birth caused Hagar's expulsion, he brought her back before going to pray (*Bereishit Raba*). (e) (1) Her candles remained lit from Shabbat to Shabbat; (2) her dough was blessed; (3) the Shechina's cloud hung over the tent (*Rashi*).

Q-6. (a) (1) Why did Hashem want Avraham to remarry after Sarah died (3 reasons)? (2) Why was his wife named Ketura (2 reasons)? (b) (1) How do we know that Yishmael did teshuva for his life of sin (4 explanations)? (2) How did Yishmael die? (*Bereishit 25:1, 9,12-18*)

A-6. (a) (1) To teach that a man with children should remarry since he can never know which will be virtuous; (ii) to publicize Hashem's greatness in changing nature's course – Avraham could not have children when he was young but had 6 after age 140; (iii) Hashem wanted 30 nations to descend from Avraham (12 through Yishmael; 2 through Yitzchak; 16 through Ketura) to replace the 30 families that perished at *Migdal Bavel* (*Bereishit Raba*). (2) She was Hagar, who (i) repented, and her deeds were pleasant like ketoret (incense); (ii) was chaste (*kashra pitcha*) after leaving Avraham until he re-married her (*Rashi*). (b) (1) (i) Yishmael gave Yitzchak precedence at Avraham's burial, showing that he recognized that Hashem's Will was for Yitzchak to be Avraham's heir (*Rashi*). (ii) The same phraseology (100 years, 30 years and 7 years), which is used for Yishmael's age, is used for Avraham's and Sarah's ages, showing that Yishmael's sins were wiped out, since he had become a *tzadik* (*Da'at Zekeinim*). (iii) When Yishmael died, the Torah says "va-yigva" (and he expired) and "va-yayaseif el amov" (and he was gathered to his people), terms describing only a *tzadik*'s death (*Rashi*). (iv) Avraham was blessed "ba-kof", including Yishmael's teshuva (*Bava Batra 16b*). (2) From an intestinal ailment – the suffering cleansed him of sin (*Medrash Sechel Tov*).

Q-7. In the haftara, how do we know that Avishag, who was brought to David for her beauty, was not as beautiful as Sarah? (*I Melachim 1:4*)

A-7. Avishag is described as "yafa 'ad me'od" ("beautiful 'until', but not including, *me'od*" – a high degree of beauty), but Sarah is described in *Bereishit 12:14* as "yafa 'hi me'od" (her beauty included "*me'od*" – the highest degree) (*Sanhedrin 39b*).