

ק ה ל ש ע ר י ת ו ר ה
 CONGREGATION SHAAREY TORAH
THE SHTIEBLE
 98 WEST END AVE BROOKLYN NY 11235

SHABBOS VAYEITZE

11 Kislev - November 28

R' Moshe Plutchok - מרא דאתרא שלימ'א
 R' Akiva Eisenstadt - ראש כולל

Dedicated by The Rosenblat Family
 לזכרון ולעלוי נשמת הרה"ח ר' יחיאל ב"ר ארי' הכהן ז"ל
 יום השנה - יאהרצייט - י"ב כסלו
 On The Thirty-Seventh Yahrzeit of R' Yechiel HaCohen Rosenblat ע"ה

Candle Lighting:	4:12 pm
Mincha/Kabalas Shabbos:	4:20 pm
Oneg Shabbos:	7:45 pm
Shacharis:	8:45 am
Shiur Halacha:	3:30 pm
Mincha/Seudah Shilishi:	4:00 pm
Maariv:	5:15 pm
Shabbos Ends:	5:25 pm
Avos U'Banim:	6:15 pm

Weekday Schedule

Shacharis

Sunday 8:00 am

Monday - Friday 7:00 am & 7:45 am

Minch/Maariv - 4:15/4:30 pm

Mishna Brurah Chaburah M-F 6:30 am

Talmud Shiur M-F 7:00 am

Night Kollel Mon & Wed 8:00 pm

Torah Tuesday Schmooze 8:00 pm

A Project By The Manhattan Beach Community Kollel

MITZVOS: BEHIND THE SCENE

BY R'AKIVA EISENSTADT

In this week's Parsha we read about the continuing establishment of Klal Yisroel. Yaakov Avinu is sent by his parents to Lavan's home, thus beginning the first great father-in-law-son-in-law relationship. Yaakov has to work seven long and arduous years for Rachel's hand in marriage, yet the Torah tells us that the passing time seemed short and fleeting to Yaakov. It is somewhat mystifying that such a long wait for someone Yaakov loved so much can seem as but a fleeting moment. It's commonly known that while one waits for that which one desires, the wait can feel like an eternity. The solution to this matter resides in how one comprehends the situation. Rav Ahron Kotler Zt'l, the founding Rosh Hayeshiva in Lakewood N.J, understands this situation in the following manner. A person waits for his life-long dream to come to fruition, yet has to work hard at it and wait patiently because he himself needs to prepare for that time to arrive. Yaakov knew that he wasn't yet spiritually ready to marry Rachel at that point in time and needed to work at it until he eventually became what he needed to be. It is for this reason that Yaakov did not go straight to Lavan's home but stopped over in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever for fourteen years to learn Torah. The seven years that he worked for Lavan was also necessary in order to prepare himself for marrying Rachel. Yaakov was working and gearing himself up towards that moment which would produce the continuance of his nation. Every single day that passed was another stepping stone towards this goal. Yaakov was waiting for the day when he would be able to start building the Jewish nation, perhaps the greatest ambition a person can have. The days, weeks, months and years that he worked for it were more than worth it because he was striving towards an incredible moment in his life, that is, the establishment of the Jewish nation.

A couple of weeks ago we discussed one of the key foundations of Sefer Bereishis; Maaseh Avos Siman L'banim. How the patriarchs and matriarchs approached life is a guide for us on how to live our lives. Every family structure relies on a foundation which allows the family to grow and thrive in a Yiddishe atmosphere. By observing Yaakov Avinu in his firm and unwavering quest to form and develop his family to be the future of Klal Yisroel presents us with a model on which to build our own family structure, with the lifelong goal of being a strong continuous link in the glori-

ous chain that is our Jewish heritage. Every day we are presented with situations that can distract us from focusing on the importance of Shalom Bayis. There are every-day paradigms which alter our vision of what it means to be a Jewish family. Yaakov Avinu taught us that no matter what occurs in our lives we should never lose sight of the one thing which allows us to survive as a nation; to never underestimate the power of a Bayis Ne'eman B'yisroel. (a Jewish home of values and peace).

Rav Moshe Plutchok Shlit'a tells over a powerful example of a woman who kept her family together in times of crisis through wit and wisdom; the mother of Shimshon Hagibor (Samson). Shimshon's parents were barren for many years before they had a chance to conceive a child. The Medrash explains that there were arguments between Manoach and his wife regarding who was at fault in their failure to conceive a child. One day while Shimshon's mother was alone she met an angel of Hashem who was there to give her a message of her imminent pregnancy. The angel of G-d relayed to her the following. The child which would be born to her would be an extremely special child who must remain a Nazirite to Hashem throughout his whole life. He proceeded to explain to her what that would entail. The Medrash tells that the reason the angel appeared to her alone was that she was a righteous woman. However, it is clear from the Gemarah (berachos daf 61a) that Manoach was not a Talmud Chachom but an Am ha'aretz, an unlearned person, (although the Medrashim do say that he was a Tzaddik). Not surprisingly, she runs home to share the good news with her husband, Manoach. From the reading of the verses one may surmise that Manoach was not thrilled that the angel appeared to his wife and not to him. In fact, immediately after she told him everything that happened he does not respond to her but asks Hashem to send the angel back a second time. The angel appears again - to her - not to him. At this point she could've pointed out this fact to Manoach and perhaps put him in his place, yet she didn't do that. She asks the angel to wait for her husband to arrive and hear the instructions about their son and she ran to get him. The important thing to realize is that Shimshon's mother worked with her husband, not against him. She understood that building a Jewish home needs patience, care and concern. It needs nurturing and building one brick at a

time together as a united family. A Jewish family meant more to her than just a moment of triumph. This is the lesson of Yaakov Avinu and this is the lesson we should take with us every day.

Have a great and wonderful Shabbos.

WEEKLY INSIGHTS - PARSHAS VAYEITZE

BY R' RON FINKELSTEIN

Andrew's father was Will Carnegie. He was a third generation weaver, a master artisan of the hand loom trade, and a creator of elaborate patterns of cotton, linen, and silk. Then one day there was change, not in him and his ability but in circumstances and its application. The technological advancements that were brought on by the Industrial Revolution introduced power looms that could mass produce textiles making what was once a luxury product into an inexpensive commodity. The entire community of hand weavers in an instant was put out of business. One day Will Carnegie returned from a business trip to his family and it was there at that moment that he told little Andrew quietly "I cannot get any more work". The family sunk into deep poverty, but at the same time it stoked the coals that would create the force of his future success.

It was that moment of disgrace, seeing his life plummeted into an abyss and his proud father brought to his knees which shaped the determination of Andrew Carnegie's business career. This fueled him to drive his employees to over exhaustion without any regard for them as human beings. It pushed him to step or crush anything or anyone that got in his way and his character became defined only as a means to the wealth he craved. This finally resulted in his rise from nothing to becoming the owner of U.S. Steel and in 1901 when he retired he was worth 937 million (318 billion by today's standards). He became the richest man in the world.

To the secular mind this is a rags to riches story, deserving of accolades and respect. While the accomplishments in the business world are astounding, we should take

a keener look at the story and ask ourselves what exactly was the overall purpose at the end? Was there some great lesson learned from one that went from extreme poverty to extreme wealth in a lifetime? Is there any internal change that was triggered from this story that can help us, as Jews, within our lives?

In order to find answers we first would need to view life through the scope of Judaism. A Jew comes to this world with a spiritual objective of coming close to Hashem and utilizes the tools that surround his life as a vehicle to accomplish them. He must simultaneously be aware of the many dubious paths that present themselves with the possibility of leading him away from his focused task. We find that Shlomo Hamelech states (Mishlei 30:8): "Give me neither poverty nor riches" as a statement testifying to his resolve of commitment to the path of Hashem. The meaning of this comes to teach a lesson that is much bigger than that of the mundane aspects of poverty and wealth alone. It comes to depict how their roles can positively or adversely affect one's mission in life. If one was extremely destitute, his mind would be focused solely on his struggle for survival as priority and in that regard alienate the other aspects of his dedication to Torah. He may come to believe that Hashem does not care for him or that he is insignificant, which are both forms of the evil inclination that is looking to steer him away. On the other hand, with wealth comes the prospect of self fulfillment. This can lead a person to become lax or inebriated in his own success and lose sight of the fact that he is a servant of Hashem purporting as master in His world.

Considering these thoughts for a moment we find within this week's parsha an interesting verse expressing Yaakov's commitment to Hashem. The Torah states: "Then Jacob took a vow, saying, 'If G-d will be with me, and He will guard me on this way that I am going; and he will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear; and I will return in peace to my father's house, and Hashem will be a G-d to me, then this stone which I have set as a pillar shall become a house of G-d...' "(28:20-22).

The Kli Yakar (1550-1619) delves into this verse by first categorizing for us the context of what the verse means when it says "and He will guard me on this way that I am going". The focal point of the words "this way" as opposed to another way is not to specify the specific route of Yaakov at this juncture, but rather to point out the path one travels in life and the susceptibility of transgression that one can come to. In this way Yaakov is asking for Hashem's aid and assistance to help him in the face of sin.

Then our attention is brought to the next part which states "and he will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear" in order to accentuate that the objective of sustaining our lives is to attach ourselves to sanctity.

We learn from this that Yaakov was not asking for food and clothing for pleasure's sake, it was only the mere basics in order to live. He does not want them as an end unto itself and he does not look to indulge in its enjoyment, because for him the materialistic aspects of life are not the purpose of his existence. The purpose rests in his spiritual connection and self growth. Yaakov wanted to relay that having more does not mean being more.

So how does this apply to us? The point we need to assess is this - what is the focus of our lives? We obviously want to pray as Yaakov prayed which is to have at the very least, the basics. We want to ensure that we have food to eat and clothing to wear so that we may have a life that is sustained. Yet at that point we need to ask – what is the life being sustained for? If the point is money and self honor then the spiritual aspects and self growth become negated. We will only find a result of being ensnared by our desires and caught up in self-centeredness. Yaakov is teaching us not to lose sight of the goal. We have one focus and that is

to live for Hashem. It is by following this path that our spiritual mission develops its foundation and our own self growth follows.

Taking this into the framework of Andrew Carnegie we can ask – What was his life celebrating? When all is said and done what was his message?

If we reflect on it we come to discover that there is no inner depths, it is purely a surface oriented meaning to life. The point of focus becomes the money, the swagger, and ultimately Andrew Carnegie himself. It comes to show not a humbleness or appreciation but instead egotism and superiority. This can only lead one away from one's connection to G-d and stifle any inner growth.

This brings to mind an interesting past occurrence of Queen Elizabeth II who was being coronated the Queen of England. The only prerequisite she gave to her handlers was to find a day in modern history that never rained; she wanted the day of her coronation to be perfect and furthermore intended to take no chances. Her handlers had the days researched tediously looking over the calendar and going back year after year until finally they found a day that never rained in modern history. On June 2, 1953, the coronation was set and everything was supposed to go according to plan except it rained continuously ruining her perfectly planned day.

We find here the beauty of man's placement in the world. He can work and persevere, make calculation and decisions, spiral from poverty to riches, but at the end, it is all in Hashem's hands and not in ours. Andrew Carnegie is an example of the celebration of self and no other. It is about investing in who he was and what he accomplished, solely for his own ego alone.

Yaakov Avinu teaches us to be cognizant that our place is under the support of the One that holds dominion over our lives. It is about celebrating the reality that we are in this world with a function that is much greater than ourselves alone. We rejoice in living in order to serve Hashem.

SHMIRAS HALASHON MINUTE (OR TWO)

BY R' SHMUEL FISCHLER

Bezras hashem this column will cover some of the pertaining Halochos and anecdotes of Shmiras Haloshon, guarding our tongues. While many will just skim this standard disclaimer, this column is by no means an alternative to asking your LOR (local orthodox rabbi) any questions involving possible Loshon Hora (evil speech). We welcome all feedback and questions, both good and those who mean well.

Loshon Hora gets a bad rap. The thought of Loshon Hora always conjured in my mind the image of two middle aged Jewish women who share a backyard, white fence, clothesline, or telephone line. They both are wearing housecoats, smell from cooking, and speak with accents. “Did you hear what happened to Mindy’s daughter? Oh aybruch! What a shanda! You didn’t know? Everyone knows she...blah blah...oy it’s sad to even talk about it.”

While the above scenario may very likely happen somewhere, that hardly paints the everyday picture in which Loshon Hora presents itself. It has permeated our society until the point of gaining chameleon-like abilities. It has disguised itself as accepted speech and behavior that only an educated Jew can recognize. I would venture to say that Loshon Hora is probably the easiest sin to transgress. Everyone knows of the obvious cases of evil speech; hurtful, angry, slanderous words are easy to detect. However, with merely a facial expression, nod of approval, one word, or just listening without even speaking one can transgress the aveirah of Loshon Hora.

What sets us apart from other creatures in the animal kingdom? The power of speech is the one defining characteristic humans have that other creatures lack (aside from E.T. of course). One would think that such a commodity would be worthy of constant awareness and sensitivity when used. Just as we are careful about what enters our mouth (kosher, healthy, etc.), we should be just as meticulous, if not more, with what comes out.

Watching what we say not only avoids transgression, it brings with it great reward. The Vilna Gaon (citing medrash) writes “For every moment one guards their tongue, he earns reward that is beyond the comprehension

of angels.” You here that? Angels! Who’s not in for that? Furthermore he writes, “watching one’s speech is GREATER than Torah learning and mitzvos because the mouth is the holy of holies” Serious stuff. Aside from all this, avoiding Loshon Hora provides practical purposes. It is a surefire way to improve your relationship with spouses, friends, and even coworkers. People are very astute. While right now you’re thinking ‘I’m not that slandering, wagging - tongue type of person’, from the manner in which you speak people form impressions of who is respectful, trustworthy, honest, and who is not. Watch your step. The mantra ‘nice guys finish last’ doesn’t hold true when it comes to the real important things in life.

Next week we will start with the basic keywords and definitions related to the laws of Loshon Hora. We will also include specific positive (Asey) and negative (Lo Sasey) commandments being transgressed when speaking Loshon Hora.

Transgression #1:

One who accustoms himself to speak badly of his friend i.e. “Aron said your article on Loshon Hora was pathetic (even if it’s true!)” transgresses the Lav of “Lo Seleich Rachil B’amecha, a gossipmonger shall not walk amongst you.” This aveirah brings destruction to the world.

- Sefer Chofetz Chaim

Tip of the week:

- When you hear someone start speaking Loshon Hora pretend like you have ADD (if you truly have it even better!) and change the subject.
“I am so mad! I just tried to approach (insert name) with a business proposition and he...
“Hey! Want to go fishing?”

* *Bzchus Refuah Sheleimah of Refoel Yakov Yitchok ben Rus Nechama*

MIDDLE AVOS SYNDROME

BY SHLOMO GREENWALD

In this week's Parsha, we've fully embarked on the story of Yaakov, Rachel, Leah and their twelve sons. The rest of Sefer Bereishis is ready to move on to the last of the Three Avos, but I guess I'm not. Let's talk about Yitzchok. In last week's parsha the Torah effectively finished its discussion of Yitzchok's life. He returns briefly in next week's parsha, when Yaakov returns to him and they live together during Yitzchok's final 21 years of life. In this week's parsha, Yitzchok does not play a role, but it's as good a place as any to note how passive a life Yitzchok seems to live and how little attention the Torah pays to him compared to his father and his son.

Yitzchok never seems to take matters into his own hands; life seems to happen to him, not with him. Early on, we encounter Yitzchok as the intended korban at the Akeidah. The Torah portrays the episode as entirely Avraham's: Avraham is given the command, Avraham must make the difficult decision, Avraham leads them to the mountain, Avraham ties Yitzchok down, and Avraham lifts the sword ready to slaughter his religious heir. The event is considered Avraham's greatest test, but not a word about Yitzchok—which is all the more remarkable when you consider that Yitzchok was 37 when it took place.

The other main story related about Yitzchok involves not only his being acted upon, but his being deceived by his son—actually by both sons, when you add the midrash that explains that Esav basically tricked his father all his life by pretending to be more righteous than he really was. And then Yaakov and Rivkah are forced to take matters into their own hands and trick Yitzchok because he's about to give the greater blessing to the wrong child. And all this takes place thanks to Yitzchok being blind.

The other few stories we get about Yitzchok feature him following very closely in the footsteps of his father. Avraham went down to Gerar because of a famine; Yitzchok goes to Gerar because of a famine. Avraham said his wife was his sister; Yitzchok does likewise. Avraham dug wells. Yitzchok dug the same wells, and even gave them the same names his father gave them!

Now compare his life with Avraham's and Yaakov's. Our first forefather, Avraham, fought wars, converted multitudes to monotheism, met with kings, etc. Our last forefather, Yaakov, also fought battles, lived in exile for many years, contended with anguish over his brother and children, etc. Yitzchok, relatively, seems to have lived a very quiet, even boring life, at least as depicted by the Torah.

This in itself is not really a question. Why should having lived a quieter life make Yitzchok any less qualified to serve as one of the Avos? But the question lies in the fact that the middah of gevurah is linked to Yitzchok.

Gevurah means strength, might. We would most likely associate strength and might with someone active, someone who takes the lead and charges ahead. The last middah one would associate with Yitzchok, you would think, is gevurah.

The answer may lie in a famous mishnah in Pirkei Avos. In the beginning of chapter four, Ben Zoma disabuses us of the common understandings of some universal characteristics: Who is a wise? Who is rich? Not the one you may have thought, says Ben Zoma. So too for the question, who is a gibbur—a strong person? “One who overcomes his evil inclinations.”

For the Avos, no doubt, part of their temptation was to do too much, to act. As many midrashim make clear, the Avos understood their important roles as progenitors of the Jewish people. There may have been a temptation to be as proactive as possible—especially so for Yitzchok following after his very famous and dynamic father who garnered heaps of praise in his lifetime from both man and Hashem. But Yitzchok understood also that what was most important for him was to solidify everything Avraham had worked to accomplish, to walk the same path and make sure that whatever plans Hashem had for the Avos and later for bnei Yisroel would be well preserved and ready to ripen as the Jewish story continued with Yaakov and his sons.

HALACHIC PERSPECTIVES: "Chanukah" (Part I)

BY R' HESHY KAHAN

With the upcoming Chag of Chanukah arriving shortly, some information may be helpful regarding exactly how and where one should set up his Menorah.

Q: Should women light the Menorah on Chanukah?

A: Due to the fact that women were also part of the miracle and it was a woman who was instrumental in the salvation¹, women are as equally obligated to light the Menorah as men are². However, the Minhag is that women do not light if a male of Bar Mitzvah age is present. In a situation where a woman is lighting, she may do so with a bracha (such as in Yerushalayim where the girls under twelve light their own Menorah)³.

Q: Can one fulfill his obligation to light via use of an electric or gas Menorah?

A: One would not fulfill his obligation to light with an electric or gas Menorah⁴ as the majority of the Poskim hold that this does not have the status of a candle or wick⁵.

Q: What would the Halacha be with regards to the lighting of a Menorah with wicks being lit after being soaked in kerosene?

A: Although according to the letter of the law kerosene is permitted it is best to avoid using it. This is because they express a foul odor which would be counterproductive to creating an atmosphere that is conducive to publicizing the miracle, as the smell may actually cause people to leave the room⁶. Secondly, the wicks for these kinds of lights are usually very wide, therefore making it tantamount to a torch which is not Halachically preferable.

Q: Are there any Halachic concerns with using "floating wicks" for the Menorah?

A: Since there are⁷ those who consider the lighting of floating wicks to be tantamount to lighting candles, it is considered as if you're lighting a "wax candle" instead of a wick in olive oil and therefore, not doing the mitzvah the best way possible. According to everybody, in order to fulfill the mitzvah in it's most desirable fashion⁸ one should dip the top of these wicks into oil prior to lighting them.

Q: When one lives on a high floor in an apartment build-

ing, where should he light his Menorah?

A: There are many Poskim who allow one to light by a window when there are neighboring apartment buildings that are parallel to his window. (Chazal⁹ prohibited lighting the Menorah over 20 amos high, and additionally the Sharai Tzion¹⁰ recommends one light by the entrance of his door in such a case where the public will not see the Menorah).

Q: May one re-use the wicks that he had used for the previous night?

A: Although the Mishna Berurah¹¹ states that it is permitted on the basis of the wicks lighting nicer the 2nd time around, the Minhag is to use all new wicks for each night as this reason is not really applicable to contemporary wicks¹². Switching wicks each night is also more of a zecher to the Bais Hamikdash¹³.

Q: Since many living in Yerushalayim light outside should we adopt the same practice here in the states?

A: Although the general population of Yerushalayim lights outside¹⁴ in America the Minhag is to light inside in due to the oppressive weather as well as the fear of the Menorah being stolen¹⁵. In accordance with following the Minhag of one's city one should therefore light inside.

Q: Is there anything that one is prohibited from doing prior to lighting the Menorah?

A: Around a half hour prior to lighting one may not engage in any work or chores that will be difficult to stop in middle¹⁶. One may also not eat bread or cake at this time, however fruits or drinks are permitted¹⁷.

Q: Is there anything that one should refrain from doing while the Neiros are burning?

A: Since women have the Minhag not to work for the first half hour after the Neiros have been lit¹⁸, many refrain from doing laundry or sewing during this time¹⁹. The Minhag for many women in Yerushalayim is to refrain from cooking as well.

Q: How should girls in a Seminary be mikayim the Mitzvah of Ner Chanukah?

A: While it is fine for one Menorah to be lit for the entire

seminary if an individual wishes to light for herself she may do so²⁰.

Q: Where is the ideal place for a yeshiva bochur to light the Menorah?

A: While it is an argument amongst the Poskim whether or not bochurim should light in the dining room²¹ or in their own rooms²², it seems to be the general consensus of the Poskim that bochurim should light in their rooms (provided that permission to do this has been granted by the hanhala) and eat a meal there (it does not matter when this meal is eaten) as this will suffice most halachic requirements.

FOOTNOTES

1. M.B. 675:10
2. S.A. 675:3
3. M.B. 675:9
4. Sh"Ut Har Tzion 2:114, Tzitz Eliezer 1:20:12, Be'er Moshe 6:58, 59
5. See Yabia Omer O.C. 3:35 who permits using an electric Menorah in extenuating circumstances without a bracha
6. Aruch Hashulchan
7. Poskim Piskai Teshuvim 673:2
8. Rama 673:1
9. Shabbos 22a, S.A. 671:6
10. 671:42
11. 673:31
12. Leket Yosher pg. 152
13. S.A. 671:5
14. Aruch Hashulchan 671:24, Minchas Yitzchok 6:61
15. M.B. 232:9
16. M.B. 431:6
17. S.A. 670:1, M.B. 670:4
18. Halichos Bas Yisroel 21:34
19. Halichos Bas Yisroel 21:8
20. Teshuvim V'Hanhagos 2:343
21. Igros Moshe O.C. 4:70:3, Minchas Yitzchok 7:48

OMEK HADAVAR: "Life is Hard"

BY R' MOSHE WARSAWSKY

In Parshas Vayetzei we encounter something truly unique. The Torah is generally divided into "parshios" with spaces in between every chapter, or every couple of pesukim. This week we meet a Parsha that has 146 Pesukim with no interruptions or breaks; a perfectly seamless Parsha. The Sfas Emes suggests the idea that throughout all the ordeals that Yaakov was faced with, his faith in HaShem was unwavering. Just like the lack of spacing in the parsha, Yaakov refrained from pausing for even a moment from his high level of Emunah.

The following is actually quite unbelievable until someone points it out to you. Chazal tell us that there are four types of people, who although they are physically alive, are considered dead in their existence in this world. They are; a metzora (leper), a poor person, one who is childless and a blind person. Incredibly, our Parsha contains allusions to all four of these types of people. The Parsha starts off with Yaakov fleeing his hometown and everything so familiar to him. In this vain, Yaakov was similar to the metzora that must take leave of the camp of Klal Yisrael and spend time in isolation away from those he's familiar with. Rashi

(29:11) informs us that on the way to Lavan's house Yaakov was actually robbed by his nephew Elifaz, thus rendering him a poor person with nothing but his walking stick and clothing. Rachel was childless for a long time and Rashi informs us (30:1) of her pain and longing for children. Rashi (28:13) also points out that although Yitzchak was still alive, due to his blindness, even HaShem referred to him as if he was dead. It's quite interesting that such tough predicaments are all found in such a small area of the Torah.

Aside from these cases, we also encounter many of life's challenges in this week's Parsha. Just to mention a few; we see the pain of being fooled by one's in-laws (Yaakov; 31:7), the fear and agony of trying to find the proper shidduch (Leah; 29:17), and the sting of contemplating being divorced because of lack of children (Rochel; 30:22). We additionally are introduced to a wife's fear of being hated (Leah; 29:37), the jealousy and feelings of inadequacy in the eye's of one's sister (Rochel; 30:1) and the unbearable strain of working hard to support one's family (Yaakov; 31:40). This Parsha is literally loaded with hardship and struggle, and there's no reprieve in sight (just stay tuned for next week's Parsha when Yaakov meets up Esav).

Does it make sense that Yaakov, the “bachir sheb’iavos” (chosen one of the forefathers), should be surrounded with such undue hardship his entire life? Even Avrohom to a certain degree was given fair warning when he was getting tested; his commands came directly from HaShem. Yaakov keeps on finding himself in situations that just present themselves with no fair warning or insinuation that he’s even getting tested. Perhaps we can uncover Yaakov’s puzzling life by asking a question about Yitzchok. Where did Yitzchok go?! Aside from a couple of Pesukim in last week’s Parsha, Yitzchok really gets no time for himself on the pages of the Chumash. Think about it; we go straight from Avrohom and the Akeidah (offering of Yitzchak), straight into the eulogy of Sora, then onto finding a wife for Yitzchak, finally to end up with a couple of short stories of Yitzchok fighting for wells, making some peace treaties, and giving over the fate of mankind via the bracha to Yaakov. That’s just about it, our time is now dedicated to watching Yaakov build his family, watching the family break up and make up, and then the descend to Mitzrayim. So by my tally, Avrohom “stars” in 3 Parshios, Yitzchok in 1 Parsha, and Yaakov in 6 Parshios. So why are we so limiting on Yitzchok’s story? It may be possible to say that a person that has undergone the Akeidah (thus rendering his physical body comparable to that of an actual Korban), already to a major degree, if not entirely, has perfected and rectified himself. The Torah is for us, real live people. “Torah Lo Bashamayim Hi,” the Torah is for those of us that are here working and trying to grow; that’s what life is about. The Madreiga (level) that Yitzchak reached was incredible, but there’s not that much more for us to be involved with him. We need to see people who didn’t necessarily have the easiest lives, and yet, continue to have faith through and through without a single weak point.

We’re presented with many difficult situations in Parshas Vayetzei, and yet we see at the end, the Malachim (angels) themselves go out to greet Yaakov because of his lofty accomplishments. The Zohar Hakadosh says that by the end of our Parsha the Malachim were astounded to see the high level that Yaakov had reached. Now let’s keep in mind Yaakov didn’t soar to his spiritual heights despite the stress in his life; he rose because of the hardships in which he found himself. It’s no coincidence that the Parshios of Yaakov and the Bnai Yisroel’s descent to Egypt occur specifically at the time of year when we have the coldest

and darkest nights. They are being shown to us now to keep us strong and steadfast through the blackest nights by using the strength that we find in our ancestors. It also is worth mentioning that the Tefilah ascribed to Yaakov is the only one which takes place at night, Maariv. Yaakov’s existence was that of a radiating beacon of light shining through all the darkness and deceit. Stay tuned to see how well Yaakov’s scion, Yosef, leads us with glorious fire through the dimness, to the holiday of Chanukah.....

MAZEL TOV

**Aryeh and Shifra Blumstein
on the Bris of their son Moshe**

ברכות השחר

PART III

- **Oter Yisrael Bitifara** – (*Who crowns Israel with splendor*) – The straightforward explanation of this blessing is that we cover our heads upon dressing, which will culminate with our putting on of the tefillin. The idea expressed on a deeper level is with regards to the mindset of a person throughout the day. When one puts on tefillin, wears tzitzit under his garments, and has a mezuzah on his doorpost; it is he who surrounds himself with reminders of spiritual purpose in the world that works as a preemptive measure that protects him from sinning. We make a separation in our minds eye, deferring our entire intellectual make up to fulfilling Hashem's Will. Women recite this blessing with an intent focused on their modesty that will preserve their connection with Hashem throughout the day. In both regards we recite these words knowing that in this mode of conduct of surrounding ourselves with mitzvot, they in turn act as reminders to our soul, elevating us to be crowned with Hashem's splendor.

- **Shelo Asani Goy/Goya** – (*He has not made me a gentile*) – The first question we can ask is why you would express this blessing in the negative. Why could the blessing not thank Hashem for making me a Jew instead of giving thanks for not making me a gentile? Rabbi Shimon Schwab (1908-1995) brings down a beautiful answer based on the Talmud (Eruvin 13b) where a dispute arose as to whether it was better for man to have been created or to not have been created. The Talmud expressed as a conclusion that based on the many sins of man it would have been better if he was not created, but since he is created then he should strive to make it the very best. Based on this final explanation, the rabbis then instituted the blessing in the negative instead of stating the positive form of "having created me". More so we find a question regarding the modesty of stating thanks for not creating me as a gentile - is this not a pompous and arrogant assertion? By focusing on different areas within the Torah we find that clarity for this claim. People like Noach (who was called a tzaddik) or Yitro (who had an entire portion of the Torah named after him) were great people that were not Jewish. The focus of this blessing is not a statement of su-

periority but solely confined to gratitude for the special opportunity that a Jew has to do more mitzvot.

- **Shelo Asani Aved/Shifcha** (*He has not made a slave*) – The Jewish people were once slaves in Egypt. Hashem freed us from that oppressive state and made us slaves of a different kind – we became servants of Hashem. We are stating in this blessing a recognition of discerning what a diametrically opposed difference there is between being a slave in Egypt that is immersed in mud and dirt to build a structure for Pharaoh and one who is immersed in the holiness and sanctity of Torah, building himself through his service to Hashem.

- **Shelo Asani Isha/Sheasani Kirtzono** (*He has not made me a woman/He has made me according to His will*) - A man makes a blessing by stating "He has not made me a woman" while a woman makes the blessing stating "He has made me according to His will" – lets us look at each separately. Within Judaism there is an assignment which is given to different people. An example that we may look at is the roles given to Kohanim or the Leviim. They have a special mission with regards to their place within the Jewish people and in their service in the Beit Hamikdash. Jewish men are given certain responsibilities that only pertain to them and are expressing gratitude for being given this responsibility. The man is not making a blessing from a literal perspective that he is in some regard better than a woman as this would not make sense when comparing ordinary men to the great Jewish women in our history like Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah. We further see this demonstrated by the way the woman's blessing is recited – "He has me according to His will". This blessing expressed in a positive form demonstrates a unique closeness to Hashem's own Will and depicts the high level of sanctity that women have. Obviously there is also a practical sense which takes into consideration the woman's role as a wife, mother, and caretaker. These tasks require a love, patience, and intuition that is part of her overall essence.

- **Hamavir Chevlei Shena Maienai Utenumah Ma-iaphaphai** – (*Who removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids*) - This blessing is associated with our great sense of appreciation for awakening as a Jew. We may at times be overwhelmed with the responsibilities and phys-

ical properties of ordinary life and it could very well be that we fall into a slumber about our higher mission. These words are an expression of thanks and serve as a reminder that we should remove the mundane slumber from my eyes and be able to see the wakefulness of our spiritual mission.

- *Vihi Ratzon Miliphanecha... She Targileini BiTorahtecha Vidabkenu Bimitzvotacha... Baruch Atah Hashem Gomel Chasadim Tovim Liamo Yisrael - (And may it be Your will...that You accustom us to study Your Torah and attach us to your commandments...Blessed are You Hashem Who bestows beneficent kindness upon His people Israel) - We ask Hashem to help us with our learning of Torah and to attach ourselves to the mitzvot. We continue to express that Hashem should help us not fall into sin and into the hands of temptation. Yet in the times that we may fall, we pray that we should not be disgraced by it, but instead have the strength to overcome it. We recognize the struggle we have with the evil inclination and ask for assistance in not letting it dominate us. There are at times some acquaintances that can come in contact with us that have fallen into the grips of the evil inclination – we ask to be protected from them and if they comes to us disguised as our friends, we want to be aware of it so that we do not become suppressed by their influences. It is to Hashem and to good deeds that we wish to attach ourselves. Hashem has bestowed upon us Torah which is the greatest kindness he has given to the Jewish people, helping us rise to become closer to Him, and to affect all of humanity with its holy radiance.*

**Please join us for an Oneg Shabbos
at the home of
R' Akiva & Avigail Eisenstadt
282 West End Ave at 7:45 pm**

**THERE WILL BE A PRE-CHANUKAH
JEWELRY/TZEDAKAH PARTY FOR WOMEN
HOSTED BY: FRIEDY SINGER 203 CORBIN PLACE
THIS SUNDAY - NOVEMBER 29, 2009 @ 7:30 PM
SHOPPING, FOOD & SOCIALIZING - A FUN NIGHT FOR WOMEN!**

**PLEASE NOTE:
ALL PROCEEDS OF SALES WILL BE GOING
TOWARDS A FAMILY IN NEED

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL THERE
FEEL FREE TO BRING YOUR FRIENDS & FAMILY**

SHUL NEWS

The shul is now taking orders for Yartzeit Memorial Plaques. If you would like to order one for a loved one please speak to Elliot Kurlander or Perry Newman, and provide them with the English and Hebrew names to be engraved and the Hebrew Yartzeit date. If you only remember the English date, give this to us and we will convert it to the proper Hebrew date for you. The cost of the plaque will be determined by the number of plaques we order. We are planning to order the plaques by Chanukah so please place your order ASAP.

**Sponsorships Are Available
Please Call R' Akiva Eisenstadt 917-312-0951
or Email mbkollel@aol.com**