



FRANCE AIDING ARAFAT:

What is the Torah view on medically treating a dying enemy? What response is due, to one who does?

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Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

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Weekly Parsha

Chaye Sara

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"Hashem, the G-d of the heavens that took me from the house of my father and from the land of my birth, that spoke to me and that promised me saying, "to your descendants I will give this land" He will send His messenger before you and you will take a wife for my son from there."

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Sanctification of GOD'S NAME

Abraham's Identity II

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

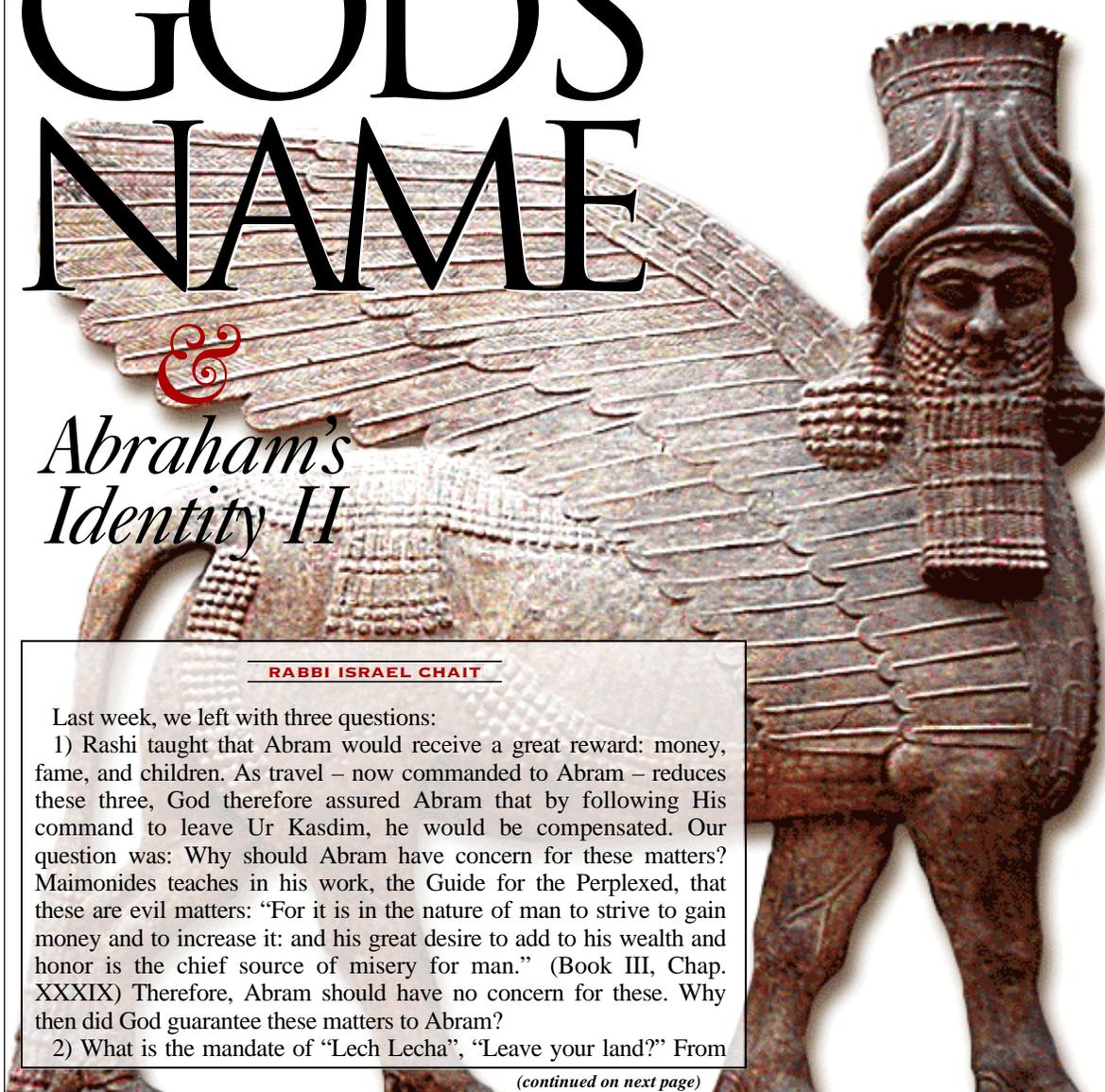
Last week, we left with three questions:

1) Rashi taught that Abram would receive a great reward: money, fame, and children. As travel – now commanded to Abram – reduces these three, God therefore assured Abram that by following His command to leave Ur Kasdim, he would be compensated. Our question was: Why should Abram have concern for these matters? Maimonides teaches in his work, the Guide for the Perplexed, that these are evil matters: "For it is in the nature of man to strive to gain money and to increase it: and his great desire to add to his wealth and honor is the chief source of misery for man." (Book III, Chap. XXXIX) Therefore, Abram should have no concern for these. Why then did God guarantee these matters to Abram?

2) What is the mandate of "Lech Lecha", "Leave your land?" From

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Irathor: Another example of the early Eastern culture's method of securing themselves against the evils of life. Abraham's approach was to educate the world on God's existence, to the exclusion of all other imagined causes. However, Abraham's personal successes are not mentioned in the Torah, to teach that God is the One on whom who we must focus.



Sanctification of GOD'S NAME



Abraham's Identity II

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Nimrod's decision to kill Abram was due to his recognition of Abram as a threat to the state. Nimrod then resorted to force, and had cast Abram to the furnace, but Abram was miraculously saved.

what context did this command emerge? God does not make commands without any relevance. Also, Abram was no longer in Ur Kasdim; he was now residing in Charan. Therefore, why was he commanded at this time to leave further?

3) "Lech Lecha" is where the Torah first introduces us to Abram. But we ask, "If the whole greatness of Abram was his discovery of God over 40 years, how he influenced people teaching monotheism and refuting idolatry and establishing the foundations of Torah, why are these matters, so central to Abram's identity, not mentioned in the Torah? This is astounding, that the Torah should neglect the true greatness of Abram.

The Torah, in its cryptic fashion, does however allow us to reconstruct the origins of Abram, if we read between the lines.

Reviewing the verses in the end of Parshas Noah, we uncover more of a picture. Genesis 11:31 reads:

"And Terach took Abram his son, and Lote son of Haran his grandson, and Sarai his daughter in law, wife of Abram his son, and they exited with him, from Ur Kasdim to travel to the land of Canaan. And they came up to Charan, and they dwelled there."

Let us review. Abram had a strange father: Terach attacked his own son Abram. This is an abnormality. Terach was jealous of Abram, as he established new ideas, denying the religion of the masses. Abram was viewed as a revolutionary, rebelling against the state. Terach, unable to refute his son, turned him in to the authorities. He wished to have his own son killed. This is psychologically abnormal; as a father, Terach was not healthy-minded. Terach informed on Abram to Nimrod. Abram then debated with Nimrod, but to no avail. Nimrod's decision to kill Abram was due to his recognition of Abram as a threat to the state. Nimrod then resorted to force, and had cast Abram to the furnace, but Abram was miraculously saved.

Abram was well known in Ur Kasdim, and people came to him. He had a platform, and

members of that society were curious to hear his views. Terach, instead of losing his son Abram, lost Haran. Terach then took his son Abram, on whom he had previously informed, along with Lote. Apparently, Terach had a change of heart. The verse then states, "and they exited with him." Who went with whom? It is not clear. The Rabbis say this means, "they went with Abram", not referring to Terach. Apparently, Terach only initiated the exodus from Ur, but it was Abram who was the primary reason why others exited Ur Kasdim. Why do we need to know this?

Evidently, there was a plan. They initially intended to travel to Canaan. However, as they settled in Charan, we learn that Canaan was not a destination per se: the goal was in fact to leave Ur Kasdim, not to reach Canaan. This is why they settled in Charan: there was no need to travel further since they were far enough from Ur Kasdim. By the Torah expressing these facts, we are directed to look beneath the surface: the goal was relocation.

Abram had one concern, to spread the ideas of God. This was his life's work: to debate with others, and educate the world about the one, true God. As Maimonides teaches, Abram wrote many books for this purpose.

Although displaying a change of character by removing Abram from the clutches of Nimrod, Terach never "truly" repented. (Rashi's view is that Terach repented.) However, Ramban states that due to the merit of Abram, Terach was viewed as a penitent individual. But why should Abram's acts render Terach as one who repented? How can Abram's perfection "recreate Terach", rendering him as one who repented?

Terach had a psychological problem. Later, when he lost Haran, he had a change of heart, but he didn't embrace the ideas of Abram. However, he was sorry for how he fathered his son. This caused him to reconsider his poor actions, and therefore, took them from Ur Kasdim. This is why the Rabbis state, "Terach was a wicked person his entire days". Remorse alone, without a true attachment to Abram's ideas, to the truth, did not remove Terach's status as a wicked person.

This was the new status of Terach: he revised

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Why didn't the Torah tell us about Abram's great discovery of God? The reason is, because the Torah is not a book to teach of personal successes. Rather, it is an account of God's providence, and how sanctification of God's name takes place in the world.

his emotional life, overhauling his bad emotions. Terach had regret for his animosity towards Abram. This placed Terach closer to reality. Once he overcame this animosity, Abram's ideas kept playing on Terach's mind. When Terach came close to death, he was able to rethink Abram's ideas, and then affirmed Abram's views. Thus, he is referred to as a penitent person.

Ramban's position is that Terach never fully embraced the correct ideas. The nature of a wicked person is so rooted in evil that he cannot improve. But although Terach was not penitent, once he overcame his animosity towards Abram, his soul turned somewhat towards the true ideas. He was in a state of mind, where we do not know his true position. He was not negative, but also, he was not positively inclined towards the truths of his son's teachings. Only God could know Terach's true state. Regarding his relationship with man, Terach never accepted Abram's views, so he is therefore termed a "rasha", a wicked person. But regarding his relationship with God, we do not know his true level. This is Ramban's view.

Later, Abram was bothered about his father's state. Therefore, God informed Abram that his father merited the next world. God gave Abram good tidings about his father Terach.

Abram went with Terach to Charan, intent on fulfilling his obligation to teach his ideas. Under Nimrod's rule in Ur Kasdim, Abram could not further his teachings. But in Charan, Abram was safe to teach the truth. Therefore, Abram decided this was a proper decision, to travel to a place where he was not opposed, now able to teach his life's work. But it was at this point that God told Abram, "This is not the place where you will succeed." God's providence now stepped in, "You might think that on the road you will not be successful. Not so. That is the natural conclusion. However, drop natural law. Forget about how it operates. Travel from Terach and Charan, and despite how travel usually inhibits one's goals, you are now under My providence, and I will bless you. My providence will address all those areas that might be negatively affected by travel, i.e., wealth, children and fame." This was God's promise to Abram, "...I will bless you and make your name great." (Gen. 12:2)

God now set out this course for Abram, commanding him to drop all considerations. But besides these, God also taught Abram that he should break all emotional attachments: to his land, to his birthplace, and to his father's house. He must become

emotionally independent. God's command was, "forget about the practical platform, and engage in My command." This was the command of "Lech Lecha".

The Torah's Concealment of Abram's Discovery

Why didn't the Torah tell us about Abram's great discovery of God? The reason is, because the Torah is not a book to teach of personal successes. Rather, it is an account of God's providence, and how sanctification of God's name takes place in the world. Had Abram remained firm in his own plan, he would not have affected too many people. It was only due to God's plan, that Abram was successful. It was at this point that Abram became the "Israelite nation". Rashi says the land was his from that moment and forward, but occupation would only ensue later. The nationality of Abram was also indicated by his coinage: he created his own currency, thereby distinguishing him and his followers from other cultures. He desired to create a unique identity for the people who embodied and taught the truths of God. A distinct currency assists in this goal. From this point of God's command and Abram's adherence, Abram became a permanent phenomenon.

This explains why the Torah, prior to this point in Abram's life, omits all accounts of Abram. Abram's success at his mission was only via God's intervention, and this commences with "Lech Lecha". Before Lech Lecha, Abram was not the "pillar of the world" as Maimonides termed him. Abram only became the pillar, once God's providence stepped in. Had the Torah recounted Abram's personal greatness, we would have the incorrect view of the Torah's purpose: to sanctify God's name. Obscuring mankind's (Abram's) personal achievements, the Torah focuses us on God.

An interesting side point is that Abram did not offer animals on the altars he created - not a single ox. It would appear that Abram built these altars so as to teach, that to God alone must we sacrifice. Simultaneously, Abram's absence of any offerings - aside from the ram at the Akeida - teaches that we are not truly fit to offer sacrifices to God. Abram built his altars, and also "called out in God's name", teaching, God is the only One to serve, not idols, but we are also unworthy of doing so. Hence, no animals were offered. Parenthetically, Abram's requirement of 40 years before fully comprehending what he could about God, teaches that the study and realization of truth - of God - is no simple matter.

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*“And I will gather
you from the lands in
which you are
scattered, and I will
be sanctified in you
in the eyes of
the nations, and you
will know that I am
God with My making
of you, for the sake of
My Name.”
[Ezekiel 20:41]*

The Jews' Purpose of Sanctifying God's Name: Impossible without God's Providence

Sanctification of God's name cannot take place naturally, as Parshas Haazinu teaches. Ramban says that the purpose of the Jews is to recognize God, to admit His existence and make His name known throughout the world. Had the Jews been destroyed, no one would be left to teach of God's existence. Had God removed His providence from the Jews, all knowledge of God would be lost from the world: "...I will remove your remembrance from mankind." (Deut. 32:26) It is only because of our nature, to be a nation that teaches the world about God, that God's providence saved us from exile:

"...and we would have no salvation from the nations, except on account of His Name, as the matter states in Ezekiel,[20:41] 'And I will gather you from the lands in which you are scattered, and I will be sanctified in you in the eyes of the nations, and you will know that I am God with My making of you, for the sake of My Name.'" (Ramban, Deut. 32:26)

Deuteronomy 32:20 states, "And God said, 'I will hide My face from them, see what their end will be'..." This teaches that once God hides Himself from us, there is no help. Only through God's providence alone, are we set on the course to fulfill our role as the people who sanctify God's name. This is stated clearly (verse 39), "See now, I, it is I, and there are no other gods with Me; I kill and bring to life, I struck down and I will heal, and there is no rescuer from My hand."

Parshas Haazina also states, (Deut. 32:9) "For a portion unto God is His people, Jacob (is) a rope of His inheritance". ["Rope" here implies a third 'link in the chain' or a third cord of the rope, referring to Jacob being the third patriarch after Abraham and Isaac. Jacob was a third, strengthening cord 'tying' the patriarchs to their descendants.] On this verse, Rashi says, "For as God's portion (Israel) was hidden among the nations, and will eventually go out (from them)." What does this mean that "His portion was hidden among them and in the future, would go out"? This means that the Providence for the entire world to recognize God was immersed in the Providence of God's nation. Without this Providence, the world could never recognize the true idea of God and fulfill

the purpose of their existence as human beings. This was done from the beginning through the patriarchs, which constitute "chevel nachalaso", the "rope of His inheritance" as Rashi explains.

The Shira commences with God's kindness, teaching thereby that without His kindness, man's purpose would not be realized. This is built into the creation. Ramban says that what happens in the history of the world as a reflection of the days of creation, e.g., man was created on the sixth day. Thus, Messiah, the man of wisdom will come in the sixth millennia. This means that there would be no creation, were it not for God's Providence to His nation. Upon which, the knowledge of God depends.

Summary

There are two "shiras", "songs": Haazinu is referred to as "V'ansa hashira hazose lifanav layde", "and this song will answer before you as witness". (Deut. 31:21) Meaning, this song will attest to the truth that God's providence is essential for creating the nation who will sanctify God's name in the world. Az Yashir is the second song, teaching that God is above any Earthly power or force, "ga-oh, ga-ah", "(He is) greatly supreme".

Lech Lecha embodies this idea, that God's providence is indispensable to our role and success – the nation who sanctifies God's name. Shiras Haazinu culminates in the ultimate revelation of God's name, when the whole world will recognize God's name, by His execution of judgment on the wicked nations.

God engineered His providence, commencing with Abram, through Revelation at Sinai and throughout the generations, until His ultimate judgment is meted out, and His name is finally realized by the entire world. ■



(Chaye Sara continued from page 1)



(Beresheit 24:7)

What is bitachon? Literally, the term means “security.” It is used to refer to a sense of confidence or security in the conviction that Hashem will provide and care for us. But when is it appropriate to have bitachon? A common response is that we can always rely on Hashem. In practice, some individuals believe that they do not need to take the usual measures to assure one’s own well-being. For example according to this interpretation, we do not need to provide our children with the tools they will need to make a reasonable living. Instead, we should focus solely on the Torah and religious education of our children. We should have bitachon that if they are truly devoted to the Torah, Hashem will provide. This interpretation of bitachon has even become somewhat popular. However, is this interpretation derived from the Torah or is it alien to the Torah? This week’s parasha deals

extensively with this issue. What does the Torah have to say?

Avraham assigns a mission to his servant Eliezer. He directs Eliezer to select a wife for Yitzchak – Avraham’s son. However, Avraham instructs Eliezer that he must not select a wife from among the people Canaan. Instead, he is to travel to Avraham’s homeland – Aram Naharayim – and find a wife there. There is one complication. Eliezer’s mission involves a unique restriction. Avraham tells Eliezer that he may not take Yitzchak with him. He must convince the girl and her family to agree to a marriage with a stranger in a far-off land. Eliezer is concerned with this restriction. He cautions Avraham that it may be impossible to fulfill the mission under this restriction. But Avraham assures Eliezer that Hashem will aid him and he will be successful. Avraham had bitachon!

However, it is important to consider Avraham’s

words carefully. He prefaced his assurance by reminding Eliezer that Hashem had taken him from the land of his birth and had promised to give the land of Canaan to his descendants. What was the purpose of this preface? Rashbam and many others discuss this issue and come to a similar conclusion. They explain that Avraham was revealing to Eliezer the basis for his certainty that Hashem will help Eliezer succeed in this mission. Hashem had told Avraham to settle in the land of Canaan and He had promised the land to his descendants. Hashem certainly did not want Yitzchak – Avraham’s son – to abandon the land of Canaan. And surely, for Avraham to have descendants, Yitzchak must marry. Therefore, in order to fulfill His promise to Avraham, Hashem will aid Eliezer in his mission.[1]

So, Avraham’s bitachon was based upon a specific promise of Hashem. Because Hashem

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had promised Avraham that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan, Avraham had bitachon that He would aid Eliezer in this mission – whose success was essential to the fulfillment of the promise.

This is the first insight that our parasha provides on the nature of bitachon. Bitachon is not based on a vague speculation regarding Hashem's plan for us. It is founded upon specific knowledge of this plan. Avraham was not just saying to Eliezer, "Be faithful to Hashem and He will help." He was telling Eliezer that Hashem had revealed His plan and that He is trustworthy and will help fulfill it. But the parasha has an even more important insight regarding bitachon.

“And now, if you intend to act with kindness and truth towards my master Avraham, then tell me. And if not, tell me and I will turn to the right or left.” (Beresheit 24:49)

Eliezer arrives and Aram Naharayim and devises a plan to find the proper wife for Yitzchak. The plan works so quickly and completely that Eliezer recognizes that Hashem's providence is at work. Rivka is the divinely chosen wife for Yitzchak. Eliezer meets with Rivka's family. He explains his mission to them. He describes the test he devised and its wondrous success. He asks the family to allow Rivka to leave them and enter into marriage with Yitzchak. He tells them that if they refuse, he will turn his right or left. What does this phrase mean? Rashi explains that Eliezer was telling Rivka's family that if they refused him, he would seek a wife from the children of Yishmael – Avraham's son or Lote – Avraham's nephew.[2]

According to Rashi's interpretation Eliezer was being less than truthful. Avraham had specifically told him to seek a wife from Aram Naharayim. He had not told Eliezer that if unsuccessful, he should then attempt to find a wife from among the children of Yishmael or Lote. In fact, he told Eliezer that if he did not succeed in his mission, then Avraham would settle for a wife from Canaan. Why did Eliezer misrepresent Avraham's directions?

But this is not the only misrepresentation that Eliezer made. In recounting Avraham's charge to him, Eliezer made a key change. Avraham had commanded Eliezer to seek a wife in Aram Naharayim. Avraham did not specify that the wife should be from his own family. Apparently, Avraham felt that the people of Aram Naharayim were superior to those who lived in Canaan. But he did not insist on a family member. However, when Eliezer spoke with Rivka's family, he told them that Avraham had charged him with finding a wife for Yitzchak from his family. Eliezer made no mention of Avraham's insistence that

Eliezer seek a wife in Aram Naharayim. Avraham stressed the geographical origins of Yitzchak's future wife and Eliezer represented Avraham as being concerned with family origins.

Now, it is clear that Eliezer's two deviations are at least consistent. First, he altered Avraham's directive and represented Avraham's primary concern to be the family origin of the prospective wife. Next, he said that if Rivka's family would not allow her to marry Yitzchak, then there were other options within the family – the children of Yishmael or Lote. Of course, had Eliezer represented Avraham accurately as wanting a wife for Yitzchak from Aram Naharayim, it would have made no sense to contend that he had the option of seeking a wife among the children of Yishmael or Lote. But why did Eliezer misrepresent his master's wishes?

Eliezer and Avraham understood that Eliezer's mission would be difficult. He was to ask a girl and her family to agree to a wedding with a man they did not know and could not meet. Instead, the suitor was represented by his father's servant. Inevitably, this arrangement would arouse suspicion. Why was the potential groom not doing his own bidding? Why was he sending a representative in his place? The obvious suspicion would be that the groom was flawed in some serious and obvious way. In order to conceal this critical flaw, the suitor was sending a representative. How could this suspicion be overcome?

Our Sages explain that before sending Eliezer on his mission Avraham turned over all of his wealth to Yitzchak. Then, he gave Eliezer the document that recorded the transaction.[3] They add that when Eliezer spoke with Rivka's family, he showed them this document.[4] What was the purpose of this transaction? It is obvious from the Sages comments that Avraham felt that the transference of his wealth to Yitzchak would facilitate Yitzchak's marriage. And Avraham wanted Eliezer to provide evidence of this transfer to the chosen girl's family. But why was this necessary? If the objective was to impress the girl and her family with Yitzchak's wealth, it should have been adequate to point out that Yitzchak was Avraham's heir. He would inherit all of Avraham's wealth. Why did Avraham feel it was necessary to transfer his wealth at this time?

Apparently, Avraham was well aware of the suspicions that would be invited by Yitzchak's absence. He needed to provide an explanation or at least some response. His transfer of his wealth to Yitzchak served two purposes. First, it provided an assurance that Yitzchak was a capable person. Avraham would not give total control of his wealth to a fool! By transferring his property to Yitzchak, Avraham provided

evidence of Yitzchak's competence. Second, Avraham provided an excuse for Yitzchak's absence. Yitzchak was responsible for the management of a great estate and tremendous wealth. He could not leave his duties and responsibilities. Instead, he sent his father's faithful and wise servant.

But Eliezer knew that although Avraham's plan was brilliant, it was not complete. Avraham's plan provided a compelling explanation for Yitzchak's absence. But it did not completely remove suspicion. Why was Yitzchak seeking a wife in a distant land? What was wrong with the women of Canaan? Could it be that the women of Canaan – who could observe Yitzchak firsthand – would not marry him? How would Eliezer account for being in Aram Naharayim?

Eliezer decided that his best option was to appeal to the conceit of the girl's family and at the same time let them know that he had other alternatives. So, he told Rivka's family that they were special. But there were other alternatives if they were resistant. He was saying, "Sure, Yitzchak can find a wife among the women of Canaan. Those women would fall all over themselves for the opportunity. But they aren't getting the opportunity. Avraham wants someone better for his son. He wants someone from his own family – your family. That can be Rivka. But hey! If you're not interested, that's fine. I'll just go visit Yishmael or Lote." And Eliezer's plan worked!

Now, what is the point of this whole account? Avraham and Eliezer had bitachon. The Torah tells us that nonetheless, they devised an intricate and brilliant plan to find a wife for Yitzchak. They did not assume that they could merely expect Hashem to provide. They accepted upon themselves the obligation to do everything in their power to find a wife. They assumed that if they made every possible effort then Hashem would bring them success. But they must do everything in their power!

What is the Torah's concept of bitachon? Hashem will fulfill His promises. But first, we must do everything in our power to bring about the fulfillment of these promises. Only after we have fulfilled our obligation are we entitled to rely on Hashem. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shmuel ben Meir (Rashbam) Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 24:7.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 24:49.

[3] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 24:10.

[4] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 24:36.

Taken from "Getting It Straight" Practical Ideas for a Life of Clarity

Lying

DOUG TAYLOR & RABBI MORTON MOSKOWITZ

"What????!!!"

I almost shouted it, but the organic Muzak of waves and seagulls at the beach effectively swallowed my volume. I was skipping rocks with my friend, the King of Rational Thought. He tossed the stones, expertly making them dance like miniature ice skaters on the calm water. I tossed the stones, expertly demonstrating why major league baseball would never knock at my door. We had been talking about the importance of truth when he startled me with what appeared to be a totally out-of-character statement.

"I said," he replied patiently, "that sometimes a lie may be better than the truth."

I stared at him, stunned. I chose to hang around this man as often as possible because of his unique insight into the nature of things. Everything he taught me always made sense. But this?

"It bothers you, doesn't it?" he asked.

It sometimes bugs me when he seems to be able to read my mind. But today it didn't matter. I was too blown away.

"After all the discussions we've had about living in accordance with reality and truth, now you tell me it's better to lie?" I said, exasperated.

"Careful," he said gently. "You're exaggerating my statement. I said that sometimes a lie may be better than the truth. Look, I'll give you an example. Suppose someone came and cut you up with a knife. How would you feel about it? Good or bad?" He flipped a gray stone across the Sound, somehow making it leap and jump like a marionette.

"Definitely bad," I replied. "In fact, I'd be pretty mad."

"Okay," he said. "But what if that someone

was a surgeon and he was saving your life?"

That caught me off guard. Unsure how to reply, I stooped to pick up a rock instead.

"You see," he went on, "cutting flesh is a harm. You bleed, you risk infection, then you have to heal. But sometimes you submit to it to get a greater benefit. Now lying is a harm. But what's the harm?" he asked.

"Well, it's trying to remake reality to suit your own desires," I said, as another of my cannonballs unceremoniously nose-dived into the water.

"You're right," he said. "For example, a child may lie to avoid going to the doctor because it's unpleasant. The child is relating to reality like an authority; like he can change it. But he doesn't see the big picture; the larger good. Plus, the more he lies, the more he's not dealing with reality. He's moving toward a fantasy world and away from truth. No one in their right mind would want to do that.

"But," he said, turning to face me, "what if the only way to save a life is to lie? Imagine you're in Nazi Germany during the Second World War. Say you're hiding Jews and the SS comes knocking at your door. Are you going to lie or tell the truth?"

I have found few things in life more disconcerting than to think you've got it all figured out, only to have someone blow the lid off your beliefs.

"Uh, I- uh, well-, I'd- uh-" I closed my



mouth and tried to engage my brain. "I guess I don't know what I'd do," I finally blurted out.

"Trust me," he smiled. "You'd lie. You'd lie because you'd opt for the greater benefit; in this case, saving innocent people's lives. The only reason to lie is if the overall good is better than the harm done by the lie. But you have to carefully, and rationally, evaluate each situation. That requires training. I can almost guarantee your emotions will try to convince you to lie at times when it would be convenient for you, but not appropriate. And remember, if you evaluate wrong, it's like having surgery when you don't need it."

"Well, speaking of training," I said, recovering, "could you let me in on the secret of how you make those rocks skip so magnificently?"

"I can offer a hint," he replied with a straight face.

"What's that?"

"You might try using flat rocks." ▣

Deception in the TORAH

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Dear Mesora,

Why does our Holy Torah contain so many instances of deception? After being a student of the Chumash for many years, I am left with a feeling of misunderstanding. Whenever I conclude a Parsha that illustrates deception performed by our Patriarchs, I cannot arrive at a positive explanation for its inclusion. I feel that all that these illuminations of deception do, is provide the Gentiles with more ammunition to criticize the Jewish people.

While driving from Florida to New York, I was listening to a sermon by a minister on the Parsha about Shechem, where Simeon and Levi deceived the men to undergo circumcision, then killed them in their helpless state out of revenge for their sister Dinah. "Look out for the tricky Jews!" he was preaching. "Even in their own Bible we see how deceitful the Jew is!" Are these the same ministers who proclaim to be supporting Israel? Aren't 'they' the ones being deceptive?

Can you imagine how many listeners he was reaching through this radio broadcast? Can you imagine how much anti-Semitism he was spreading? How much more hate does he vocalize from behind the closed doors of his parish? We Jews must not be blind and naive to the claims of our neighbors, that they are not anti-Semitic. Our Holy Torah contains many examples of deceit, such as the serpent deceiving Eve into eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Abraham asked his wife Sarah

to pretend she was his sister twice. Jacob put on animal skins, at his other Rebecca's behest, to appear to be his brother Esav so as to obtain Isaac's blessings. Jacob deceived Laban out of his flock. Rachael stole an idol from her father Laban. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his daughter Leah. Joseph's brothers tricked their father Jacob, to believe in Joseph's death, by showing him Joseph's blood stained coat. Joseph deceived his brothers in Egypt to make them believe he was the Viceroy of Pharaoh.

What really bothers me is the combined affect of all of the above. Have we been given the Chumash as a "Book of instruction" on how to con our fellow man?

Mesora: Your question is very important. At the core of Judaism, is our firm attachment and unmatched position held by "honesty". Only with honesty can one learn: if we assume we know something when it is not yet clear to our minds, we deceive ourselves. But if we remain truthful, we can say we don't know, when we don't. This humility and honesty allows us to continue our search for answers until we do in fact arrive at one. This is why honesty is the cornerstone to Torah knowledge, and all knowledge. Without honesty, we cannot learn, and we fail at our objective: to know and love God through His Torah. Honesty is demanded in all areas, and certainly, when the very question posed is precisely

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about that topic.

However, we must distinguish between honesty in intellectual pursuits, and between the honesty we engage in society. The Torah does permit one to lie on rare occasions, such as saving his life. We only subject ourselves to death for the three sins of idolatry, adultery, and murder. In these cases we must suffer death, and not violate. But as for all other prohibitions, only if the intent of our oppressor's ultimatum is our public denial of God's commands, do we violate, instead of dying, as the Torah says, "Live by them" (the commands). The Rabbis clarify, "Live by them and do not die by them." Thus, we are mandated not to sacrifice our lives when given an ultimatum to violate or die, except in the three mentioned. Therefore, lying is allowed to save one's life. This answers why Abraham asked his wife to say she was his sister. Abraham knew if he said Sarah was his wife, the Egyptians would kill him to marry her. However, by lying and claiming she was his sister, their desire for Sarah would cause them to bribe Abraham with wealth and fame. This was Abraham's plan: to obtain a public, respected status, whereby no one would harm him once they learned the truth. (Rabbi Bernard Fox) This case is an example where deceit is permitted for saving a life. But what of cases where a life is not at risk? Is lying permitted?

Regarding the snake that lied to Eve, we read that God punished it. Laban as well had no grounds for switching his promised daughter. So both cases are clearly violations of justice. Neither one was a Torah abiding character.

When the brother's lied to their father about Joseph's death, it was not a simple case of kidnapping. Together, they had discussed the matter of their young, seemingly egomaniacal brother, and concluded that he

was delusional, and could harm matters of establishing the Twelve Tribes. They did not function out of simple animosity. (God would not create a nation from base individuals.) Their sale of Joseph was due to their judgment of a greater good. But in this case, they sinned. They judged him as an adult, when he had not yet been released from the clutches of his infantile emotions. (Rabbi Israel Chait) So the Torah exposes the flaws of deceit quite clearly, but not without informing us of the other good character traits of these Ten Tribes. We learn an important lesson: the Torah does not hide man's flaws, and does not condone deceit of an improper kind, but exposes man's sins so we may learn what is poor character, as well as what is proper character.

What of Joseph's deceiving his brothers, as Egypt's viceroy, feigning he did not know them, and fabricating his elaborate accusations, imprisoning Judah and forcing Jacob to relinquish Benjamin in their care? How was Joseph justified in placing such heartache on his father and brothers? A Rabbi once explained that Joseph's previous two dreams (of the wheat bowing to him, and the stars, sun and moon bowing to him), was prophetic permission. Joseph realized when he saw his brothers bowing to him in Egypt to purchase wheat, that his previous dreams were prophetic. He realized that God had given him those earlier prophetic dreams, indicating, that when one dream comes true, i.e., when his brothers would bow for



wheat, he was Divinely permitted to cause the second dream's truth, (stars, sun and moon bowing): he was permitted by God through these dreams to use the situation of the first dream - the famine (wheat), to arrive at the second dream - metaphysical superiority, i.e., perfecting the through his scheme. Joseph now realized that he was condoned by God via these dreams, to help perfect his brothers and his father, represented in the dream as heavenly spheres bowing to Joseph, or literally, Joseph's spiritual superiority over them. He was allowed to use the occurrence of the first dream (famine/wheat) to help perfect them, thereby realizing dream #2: perfection ("heavenly" matters). Joseph successfully recreated the identical scenario when he was sold, now embodied in the "culprit" Benjamin. He did this to force his brothers to repent for his own sale to the Ishmaelites, placing Benjamin as a stand-in for himself. The brothers were now faced with the exact same decision as when they sold Joseph: "Should we let the

charges stand that Benjamin stole the viceroy's cup and abandon him, or should we defend him?" Only with an exact scenario is "complete repentance" achieved. This was Joseph's plan. Joseph was also successful at breaking his father's attachment to Benjamin in the process. However, without these dreams, Joseph had no right to place others in such straits. So Joseph too was correct in his deceit, as it was demanded by God for the greater good that the brothers and Jacob become more perfected. (Rabbi Israel Chait)

Jacob's success increasing his share while herding Laban's flock through his checkered rods was not a case of deceit, as here too, he did so through prophetic instruction. But without such a Divine directive, it could have been deceit.

Earlier, Jacob rightfully purchased the birthright from his brother Esav. When Isaac was getting old, Rebecca instructed Jacob to deceive his blind father, as she knew an outright exposure of Esav's true, evil nature would threaten Jacob's receipt of his

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Letters

rightfully owned blessings. In order that the patriarchal blessings were successfully bestowed upon the true recipient, Rebecca told Jacob to lie. But we learn that this lie was for the greater good that Isaac blesses the true Torah personality, and not the evil son Esav.

Rachel's theft of her father's idols was intended to remove him from idolatry. Although Rachel went about her goal improperly, (Laban was about to kill Jacob, his daughters and their children), Rachel's desire that her father abandon idolatry was a proper goal.

Now, what about the minister's accusation of the Jews based on the event at Shechem? Were Simon and Levi justified in murdering the inhabitants for kidnapping and seducing their sister Dinah? The Rabbis disagree on their error. One Rabbi suggests that their sin was limited to killing those who were not directly involved in Dinah's seduction: the violators alone were deserving of death, while the others were not. However another view suggests that when one does not reprimand another, although not committing the crime, he is equally guilty. Thus, Simone and Levi were in fact justified in killing all the males. Another view is that Jacob's sons had no right to enforce judgment on Shechem's inhabitants. But regardless of the view, what we learn is that a simple reading of the Written Law, the Bible, as this minister did, does not do justice to a Book which is accompanied by the Oral Law, the essential second half. The minister read verses without understanding their true meaning, and arrived at an erroneous conclusion. Had this minister followed the teachings of the Rabbis and not his own mind, which was lacking the Oral Law, he might have been impressed with the honesty of our Rabbis who accuse Simon and Levi or wrongdoing. However, the misleading information offered to

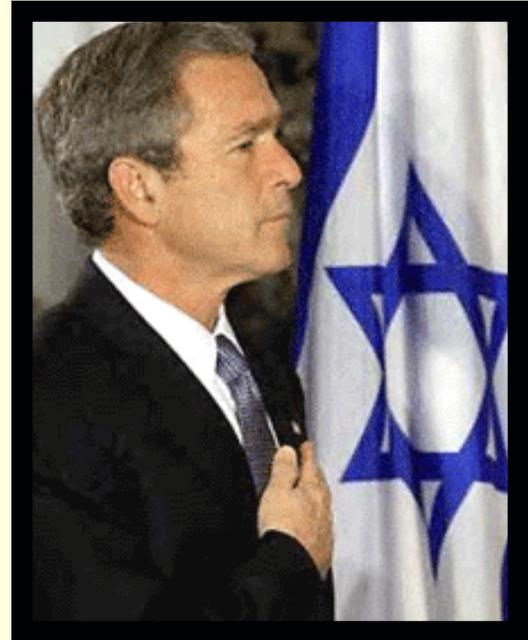
Shechem according to the other Rabbi was justified.

Hillel and Shammai disputed whether lying about the beauty of one's bride is permissible. The very dispute indicates that one favored lying. Why? This is because there exists a greater goal than honesty - in an individual case. To lie to the groom, has "peace" as its goal. This is in order to create the peaceful backdrop for a life of Torah, where a life pursuing truth may exist. Truth in an individual case must be sacrificed, if truth for the person's greater life is to be secured. As a Rabbi once said, shall we tell the truth to a child who did something poorly and regretted his actions, if such a truth will devastate him at this early age? Of course not. A lie is not an inherently evil thing. Similarly, if a killer demands from us the location of his target, we must lie, saying we do not know.

We must also know that we cannot make determinations about our own lying as the forefathers had done. Unlike the patriarchs and matriarchs, we now have a Torah system, which outlines precise laws for when and where to act, in every matter. Additionally, we are nowhere near their level of perfection. We cannot equate ourselves to such perfected individuals, with whom God spoke, and designated as our nation's leaders.

In summary, the Torah demands honesty in all areas of life. However, reason dictates a few cases wherein a lie must exist, so as to achieve a greater good. Therefore, provided a lie is for the ultimate goal of a Torah life, a lie is permitted. A lie is not equivalent to that which is inherently evil, such as idolatry, adultery or murder, which is never permitted under any circumstance.

By reviewing these many cases, we learn that the Torah does in fact expose when a lie is evil, but it also teaches when it is correct. ■



We congratulate President Bush and Vice President Cheney on their reelection to a second term. The President has been a staunch warrior in the fight against terrorism and a steadfast supporter of Israel in her battle against the Palestinian Intifada. May God bless him with health, strength and wisdom to enable him to meet the challenges of these difficult times. We express our appreciation for his understanding of and devotion to the well being of the state of Israel. God bless America. God bless Israel.

*Rabbi Reuven Mann: Rabbi
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READERS RESPOND:

BOYCOTTING FRANCE FOR AIDING TERRORISTS

THE PERSPECTIVE OF TORAH ON AIDING OUR ENEMIES

Reader I: You would deny a dying man medical care? This is one of the reasons why so many people are “against the Jews.” Everybody knows that long after Arafat is gone, the suicide bombings will continue as usual. He will remain just as ineffective a leader in death than he was in life. The problems in Israel go way, way beyond Arafat. As a fellow Jew, I am starting to get turned off to the Jewish cause, especially seeing how many Jews support Bush, and the meaningless killing of innocent Iraqi people. Enough is enough already. Are we not taught to have compassion? We need to stand up and be leaders. Denying a dying man medical care is hardly an admirable trait.

-Adam

Reader II: Dear Sir, I am shocked and appalled by your call for a boycott of France. Denying a person to die in a hospital in my view is immoral. One may call for his arrest and prosecution, not for denying treatment. This is against any belief and morality of the civilized world. Not because of the morals of the enemy, but because of our own morals. I am convinced that most Jews do not share your view. I do respect your right to

fully disagree with the late PM Rabin and today’s Israeli government, that ‘gave way’ for this ‘solution’, yet, your call for a boycott could serve no other purpose than to further divide the world. It certainly will not bring peace and security for Israel any closer. I hope that our wisdom will be stronger than our outrage.

-Yours sincerely, Ytzen

Reader III: Although there is no person in the world that I would love to see dead more than Arafat, I don’t think that this is a wise campaign. Injured people are pitied and given aid irrespective of who they are and what they represent. Your protest would be viewed as a very extremist perspective. This would only discredit any protests that you would undertake in the future. You should be protesting the fact that France does not protect the Jewish Community from violence and makes no effort to apprehend the perpetrators of the violence. As a result, France is seen as a complacent corroborator with those involved in Terrorism and Anti-Semitism which fuels additional Anti Semitic activities. -David Skurnik

Reader IV: I am sorry but I disagree with your position in this matter. It is no secret that France is

not a friend to Jews, but we as Jews are suppose to be a light onto the nations, as Israel volunteered to help Iranian during a disastrous earthquake. We must reach outto our enemy, and at least show the world that indeed we are different. We are caring humans. If we were to take the stand that you are suggesting, then why not ask, “With all the chances that Israel has had to kill this man, why did it not do so?” He is a terrorist just like Yassin was. I say, let God take his course with Arafat and with France. It does not bode well for Jews to be condemning doctors for doing their job. The famous question, “If a terrorist is wounded, does an Israeli take him to a hospital for help from a Jewish doctor, or does he kill him?” I think we all know what the answer is: otherwise we would all be terrorists.

-Charly Hazan

Response by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: Then I suppose if Arafat were to be healed and then his continued bombings killed your wife or child, that this would be an acceptable outcome of healing this murderer? If you would study our Torah, you would learn of God’s code of morality, and abandon your own, self-destructive notions. God

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instructed Saul to kill the wicked king Agag. When he violated God's command, he was dethroned, replaced by King David who slaughtered many enemies of the Jews. God condoned King David's actions. There is a time when we not only wish for another to die, but we must kill him with our own hands. These are God's words. To be a true Jew, one must adhere to God's commands, not to his own sympathies and fabricated morality. We need no approval of people whose ideas contradict God.

Reader V: Although I am far from a believer in the ideas of Arafat, I believe that to condemn those who would give medical care is wrong. We as Jews cannot be so high minded that we would deny treatment that is offered when someone is ill. We can argue the ideas and condemn the man and his movement. However, to want to bring actions against those who would provide medical care is not good thinking. I think that this message should be rethought. -Tom

Response by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: "Caring human beings" refers to those who act to save lives of the innocent. So care shown to a murderer is foolish. We are only a "light unto the nations", when we display God's will, not our own. Part of educating the world on God's Torah is to teach when it is proper that a man be killed. As I mentioned above, I am certain you would opt to kill Arafat, rather than to see him murder your child. Well, other parents have children too, and those children must not be lighter in your eyes than your own. Treating Arafat would have enabled him to kill your children.

God's Torah demands the death penalty for those like Arafat. "Reaching out to our enemy" as you suggest, is foolish, and not God's idea of how man will survive. And to answer your question, if I chanced upon a terrorist, requiring medical attention or not, I would most certainly kill him, to save others, like your own child. If you feel that killing a terrorist makes one a terrorist himself, you have a corrupt idea of God's will to be enforced against our enemies.

There are a few responses to be applied to the evil of our enemies. At times, we offer them the chance to live via a Torah ultimatum. But at times, with those who have committed atrocities as Arafat has done, there is but one response: death. These are God's words in His Torah.

As Jews, the "light unto nations", we must be ever so careful not to fall prey to a society's emotions and cultural views, attempting to gain their favor. The sentiments voiced by the readers above display just how distorted the Jewish view has become. This is primarily an outgrowth of the Jewish nation abandoning Torah study, and mimicking other peoples who live by their

emotions. God created life, and only He may decide who earns continued life, or death. Study His word if you wish to know the truth.

You must also get your argument straight: if Jews are a light unto the nations, then they cannot seek approval from them. This would mean we follow "their" morality, as opposed to teaching God's truths.

In fact, Judaism asks Jews to celebrate when a wicked person like Arafat dies. Why is this? Doesn't God desire the repentance of the wicked? Of course He does. But if one did not repent, he died as an evil person. There is no changing him post mortem. But the command to celebrate may have a deeper meaning than simply rejoicing when evil is vanquished. It may be that the Torah knows very well that man has the emotion of pity. This emotion is most dangerous when applied to one like Arafat. In order to correct man from allowing his pity to keep alive those who would kill others, the Torah demands that we make an outward expression of celebration. Thereby, we accustom our emotions in action, to realign them with truth.

It is both alarming and understandable, that without the study of Torah - God's words - man's reasoning is inherently flawed, and quite dangerous to himself and others.

Reader VI: WE HAVE NOT BOUGHT ANYTHING FRENCH FOR TWO OR MORE YEARS AND WE ASK ALL OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO DO SO TOO. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

Reader VII: Rabbi Ben Chaim, Your position is a sound one and I wholly support your effort. The French give us yet another reason to boycott their nation unilaterally. To the readers who may object to this boycott, I wonder if they also object to the assassinations of Palestinian terror leaders over the last year, which has yielded a downturn in homicide attacks. Of those objecting living in the USA, should we also show such compassion for Bin Laden when he is found? What's the difference between the two? "Bleeding Hearts" and liberals are usually rife with double standards in their illogical, emotion based, yammerings.

The Torah does indeed justify the preemptive killing of one who would (and has) risen up against you. At least the largely Secular mainstream government has gotten that one right.

Why did Arafat choose to go to France rather than remain in Israel? In spite of the fact that he would not be allowed back into the country should he survive, as well as the advanced level of medical care available in Israel, he chose to get treatment in country who's Anti-Israel, Anti-Semitic positions are well known! I suppose he felt safer there. I don't believe any Israeli medical

personnel would be held accountable for allowing him to die, or even more proactively, carrying out what the Leftist, Secular Israeli government has been afraid to carry out against Arafat and have had the chance to do for a considerable amount of time. For the record, allowing

Arafat to simply die on his own may be more humane treatment than he deserves and may even be antithetical to the Torah, which commands us to take an active, not a passive role in shaping the world. Obviously, given the choice between exile and being "allowed" to die in an Israeli hospital, he chose not to be a fortuitous addition to the growing list of Palestinian terror leaders justifiably killed.

It is entirely appropriate to boycott a nation, which has historically been an enemy of Jews worldwide and has not demonstrated any semblance of backbone in other recent trials. Are they truly weak or do they have another more sinister agenda? Regardless, what do we have to gain in any alliance with a country, which does not learn that appeasement of tyrants has never been to their benefit, economically, politically, or otherwise? Imagine if the Allied Forces had found Hitler wounded during the closing days of WWII. Would there be anyone insisting that he be nursed back to health other than to enjoy a well deserved execution? Make no mistake - Arafat is no better, but then the French simply laid down to Hitler without a fight. Perhaps they harbored many of the Reich's beliefs and wished to be a part of Hitler's "thousand year plan". Old habits die hard, and so should Arafat. As far as the French are concerned, we must boycott those who harbor such ideologies, and indeed terrorists.

-Nolan M. Gisser

Response by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: Thank you for your words and efforts.

In summary, as we watch Arafat's health decay and die, if he hasn't yet as you read this, I urge all of you who sense any feelings of pity, or any reluctance to rejoice I Arafat's death, to rethink your motives and values. You must weigh with clear objectivity, both sides of the scale: consider the deaths and torment he has single-handedly delivered to thousands of Jewish families; think of the kindergarten children who died at his hands; the mothers with their daughters gunned down at point blank range; the numerous, crippled Israelis who will never walk again due to limb loss; those blinded by nail-laden bombs. Imagine their pain. Imagine the father's and mothers who still mourn over their children years later, and the orphans who desperately miss their murdered parents. Now, imagine a life without Arafat. May he and all like him perish, and cursed are those who offer any aid whatsoever to ruthless killers, starting with the French. ■

HOW WAS KILLING ISAAC JUSTIFIED?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Dear Rabbi Ben Chaim:

This is the first time I write regarding an article of the magazine, which I enjoy very much.

I read your comments about Akedat Yitzhak in response to some of the readers' questions. While they were interesting, I have not found anywhere, an explanation to the following:

Children sacrifices were common on the time of Avraham. He left Ur Kasdim to really start a new religion and not perpetuate the old and wrong ways. In addition, and this is the most puzzling, God had already given the 7 laws for the Bnei Noach that forbid killing another human being. Nowhere, in the whole Torah, we have God asking someone to do something against a law that had already been given. We even say that the patriarchs/prophets fulfilled the 613 mitzvot! (Even if they didn't, such as Yaakov marrying 2 sisters and Moshe being the son of a Torah-forbidden marriage – but for these we say that the Torah had not been given yet!)

In addition, we see the shocking contrast between Abraham's attitude on the destruction of Sodom and the Akedah. In the first, Abraham pleads vehemently with God, to spare the cities. On the second request, (having in mind that it was against a law set forth by God) he does not say anything?! How could he be sure that it was God ordering him to sacrifice his son and not Satan? Didn't he think that receiving such a request at least warranted some checking on his part? Wasn't he a

little suspicious that God had given him an order explicitly against a mitzvah that He had imposed for the whole humanity?

I would appreciate an answer if you have one.

Thanks, Deborah Srour-Politis

Mesora: You asked how God could give a law not to kill, and then instruct Abraham to kill Isaac. You suggest this is a contradiction. However, it is not. God's given laws are "for mankind", not obliging God to adhere: God is not governed by His laws. These social laws are for our perfection. God knows what man requires to reach the best, societal state, and individual perfection. However, this is on a societal level. But do these laws demand that an aberration would be unjust?

Even in the Torah's framework, in which God is not subject, there is an institution of "Ais laasos", "a time for action". This institution enabled Elijah on Mount Carmel to offer sacrifices when they were prohibited. Through this institution, we learn that the Torah recognizes and condones the need for temporal suspension of laws, provided, that such suspensions conform to the 'entire' injunction: "A time to do for God, His Torah may be profaned." This means that when the goal of such suspensions of laws is targeted at the overall support for God's Torah, "A time to do for God", only then may a law be temporarily suspended, "His Torah may be profaned." This was Elijah's goal: to

expose the Baal worshippers as liars, and display God as the One, true God. Therefore, Elijah was perfectly in line with this Torah institution, and with the most central of all Torah ideas: God's existence and exclusive reign over all. Similarly, when the Rabbis committed the Oral Law to writing, for fear that it would be lost, their suspension of the prohibition to write the Oral Law was again, for God's system, and a praiseworthy act.

But this institution, of course, cannot apply to God. So was God just in demanding Abraham to kill, when killing was already prohibited? The answer is of course, "yes". God suspended the law not to kill, and Abraham was now bound to follow God's new directive to slaughter Isaac, given to Abraham alone. God was not uprooting the prohibition for mankind, but for Abraham alone. We learn this: the Torah institution of "Ais laasos"- a principle that God commands man - is employed in character by God as well.

The philosophy behind this principle is that the Torah makes requirements that can only address most cases, but not all cases. There is also the need to address individual circumstances with the temporary suspension of fixed laws. In Abraham's case too, God demanded that circumstances be treated differently, for an eternally important Torah concern: mankind must learn just how far an individual can and must go in his devotion to his Creator.

Regarding Jacob marrying two sisters, and Moses' father marrying his aunt, Ramban (Gen 26:5) explains how these were not Torah violations, as he holds that Abraham knew the Torah through prophecy, and thus, his descendants would not violate its laws.

Finally, you asked why Abraham inquired of the destruction of Sodom, but did not question the command to kill Isaac. A Rabbi once explained that Abraham knew he could learn God's justice regarding Sodom, so he inquired. "Justice" is an area that, by definition, must comply with man's

understanding. Man must be just, and to do so, he must understand the theories behind true justice. God's very words admit of this need for man to understand justice: "For I know, in order that he (Abraham) commands his sons and his household after him, and he will guard the path of God, to do charity and justice..." (Gen. 18:19) With this verse, God teaches that justice is something, which must be made available to the human mind, for the purposes of "doing", and "commanding others". Abraham also knew this, and therefore inquired.

Regarding how the death of Isaac would be a good, Abraham admitted through his silence that he couldn't approach the methods of God's perfection, although they carry many benefits. This area is the matter of "perfection", not justice. "How" God's commands perfect us, and the fact that we must obey Him, are not areas in which the human mind may contend. As creatures, we must follow our Creator's commands. Questioning is not applicable. And, as commands designed by God's wisdom, we cannot say, "I will follow them, only once I understand them." Our understanding will not affect the benefit and obligation of these laws. Regarding Abraham's circumcision, Ibn Ezra commented on God's words, "Walk before Me and be perfect" (Gen. 17:1): "That you should not ask, 'why do circumcision?'" What does Ibn Ezra mean that "being perfect" requires Abraham not to ask, "why circumcise?" I believe Ibn Ezra teaches this very idea, that man may not make his understanding the determining factor for Torah adherence. Man must adhere to what his Maker commands, even though he may lack understanding. This was Abraham's situation as well. He may not have known how slaughtering Isaac was a perfecting act, but he knew that God is just, and that somehow, this act was proper. He soon learned how his devotion was a necessary teaching for future generations, instructing all others in the Love of God. ■



The Patriarchs vs Their Children

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Rashi's commentary on Gen, 24:42:

"Rabbi Acha said, 'More pleasant is the speech of the servants of the Patriarchs before God, than the Torah (commands) of their children, as we find Eliezer's account (describing his

encounter with Rebecca) doubled in the Torah, while many of the central commands of the Torah are only given by way of hints."

This is a truly perplexing statement, as we are all of the opinion that that which is most central in the Torah are God's words. How then can a servant's words, even a servant of Abraham, be more precious to God? Was not the Torah given for the sake of the commands?

How do we approach such a question?

The first step is to note what is being compared, as the quote of Rabbi Acha is one of comparison. We find that "speech" is compared to "Torah", and "servant" is compared to "Patriarchs' offspring". In both comparisons, what generates our questions is that the latter appears obviously more important: Speech does not outweigh Torah, and servants do not outweigh Israelites, (in the capacity that Israelites must keep the Torah as the world's teachers.)

I would suggest a central lesson is being taught by Rabbi Acha. He intends to draw our attention to God's estimation of personal character. He first teaches, that which the Torah repeats is done so for emphasis of its importance. Based on this rule, Eliezer's words must be more important than the Torah's commands. But how so?!

I believe the one difference between the Patriarchs and ourselves, is that they followed God out of an internal realization of God's truth, with no externally imposed system. Even the speech of the Patriarchs is replete with wisdom, and their attachment to God included no coercion. The Midrash says, "At Sinai, God held that mountain over our heads commanding us in the Torah's observance, and if we refused this obligation, He would drop the mountain on us, and there would be our graves." This Midrash is of course metaphoric. But it teaches that the event of Sinai carried such clear proof of God's existence, that His commands were undeniably emanating from the Creator, one Who we would be foolish to ignore. Our acceptance of the yoke of Torah was in a manner, coerced.

Not so the Patriarchs. They all came to a knowledge and service of God on their own. This is much more precious to God. The Megilla reads, "They arose and accepted that which they already accepted." This is referring to the Jews' re-acceptance of the Torah out of love, as opposed to their Sinai acceptance out of fear. Again, we are pointed to the concept that adherence has levels. Greater than one who is commanded, is one who arrives at the

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(Patriarchs continued from previous page)



truth using his own mind. True, there is a statement of the Rabbis, "One commanded is greater than one who is not." But this does not mean 'greater' in every way. This latter Rabbinical statement, once elucidated by a Rabbi, means that when one is commanded, he has more to conquer and is greater. He must fight the additional desire to rebel against "obligations". One with no obligations, but who observes Torah, is great. But such a person has not conquered his rebellious instincts. But here we discuss only the sphere of "conquering his instinct". A totally different question than our topic, "adherence to God".

"More pleasant is the speech of the servants of the Patriarchs before God, than the Torah of their children." This teaches that love supersedes fear. Our ultimate goal in life is not "fear" of God, but rather the "love" of God: the attachment to His knowledge through a true appreciation for the Source of all reality, an attachment to Him. This is love of God. ■

Eliezer Testing Rebecca

Eliezer was sent by his master Abraham to find a wife for Isaac, Abraham's son. His sworn to find a wife from Abraham's family. Eliezer reached Aram Naharayim and stopped at the well, one location where people meet. He prayed to God that He should send him a woman who would not only respond to his request for his own water, but a woman who would initiate hospitality in the form of watering his camels as well, without request.

"And it is that he had even finished speaking (to God) behold Rebecca came out, born to Besuale, the son of Milka, wife of Nachor, the brother of Abraham and her with her pitcher on her shoulder". (Gen. 24:15)

Of course Eliezer had no knowledge of her lineage, but the Torah teaches how God prepares most efficiently for the righteous. The prayer was not even complete, yet the response was already at hand.

What happens next catches one's eye, "...she went down to the well, she filled her pitcher, and then ascended. And the servant (Eliezer) ran to greet her and said, 'let me sip please, a little water from your pitcher. And she said, 'drink my master', and she rushed and took down the pitcher from her shoulder and gave him to drink. And when he finished drinking, she said 'I will also draw for your camels until they finish drinking'. And she rushed and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and she ran yet again to the well to draw, and she drew for

all his camels."

Allow me to focus your attention on a problem, "...she went down to the well, she filled her pitcher, and then ascended. And the servant (Eliezer) ran to greet her..." Pause here for a moment. What strikes you?

What strikes me as I read this is one question, "Why the delay?" There must have been at least ten minutes which passed as "she went down to the well, she filled her pitcher, and then ascended." It is clear that time passed; yet Eliezer did not budge. His latter sentiment not to delay bringing Rebecca back to Isaac teaches that he was not wasting time. So if he saw her appear as he finished his prayer, why did he not approach her at that very moment? Why did he wait until "she went down to the well, she filled her pitcher, and then ascended?"

Let us better formulate the question: What was there to gain by waiting until Rebecca filled her pitcher? We can refine this question further, "In searching for a woman with the best qualities, what did Eliezer feel he would learn by waiting for Rebecca to fill her pitcher?" The answer is now apparent. Eliezer desired to learn how far Rebecca would go in her kindness. As Eliezer waits until Rebecca draws her own water, her offer is all the more gracious than if she would draw the water knowingly for another. When one works for herself, there is a connection with the object of their labor. To part with water drawn for herself, Rebecca would display a higher level of kindness. For this reason, Eliezer waited until she drew the water - for herself - and only then, asked for it. He intended to see if she would part with water she drew for herself. We see that not only did Eliezer respond to Abraham's request, but he thought into the best manner of responding to his master. Ironically, Eliezer's own perfection mirrors Rebecca's, as they both responded to requests as best they could. Simply responding to a request in kind is not reflective of a high caliber individual. The righteous are perfected. They see a need, and think into the best way to respond. This may very well explain why Eliezer formulated his approach to Rebecca as he did. He too partook of the very kindness he sought in a mate for Isaac.

Notice, Eliezer's request was "let me sip please, a little water from your pitcher". He asked for a little, and received much. Not only did Rebecca give of her own, but she gave more than requested of her, and she gave all he needed, even though it meant watering all his camels, and did so with speed, again, to accommodate as best she could. ■