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PARSHA INSIGHTS

A SQUARE MEAL

“So Avraham hastened to the tent to Sarah and said, ‘Hurry!’ (13:17).”

Rabbi Leib Chasman once joined the saintly Chafetz Chaim for a Friday night meal in Radin. Rather than starting the meal with singing “*Shalom Aleichem*” as was his custom, the Chafetz Chaim immediately recited Kiddush and commenced the meal forthwith, and only then started “*Shalom Aleichem*”.

Rabbi Chasman could not contain his curiosity, and asked the Chafetz Chaim why he had changed his practice, to which the Chafetz Chaim answered: “You travelled a great distance today. You must certainly be very hungry, and so I wanted to serve you first. The angels — to whom we recite

the *Shalom Aleichem* — aren’t hungry, and can wait a little”.

“So Avraham hastened to the tent to Sarah and said, ‘Hurry!’”

Avraham is the paradigm of hospitality. The Torah is teaching us here that an essential part of hospitality requires us to serve guests immediately. The Talmud (Ta’anit 21) relates that Nachum Ish Gamzu once delayed feeding a pauper while he took off the pack from his donkey’s back, and in the meantime the pauper fainted from hunger.

And even in our days, convenience stores and boiled sweets don’t make up for a square meal.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Three days after performing *brit mila* on himself, Avraham is visited by G-d. When three angels appear in human form, Avraham rushes to show them hospitality by bringing them into his tent, despite this being the most painful time after the operation. Sarah laughs when she hears from them that she will bear a son next year. G-d reveals to Avraham that He will destroy Sodom, and Avraham pleads for Sodom to be spared. G-d agrees that if there are fifty righteous people in Sodom He will not destroy it. Avraham “bargains” G-d down to ten righteous people. However, not even ten can be found. Lot, his wife and two daughters are rescued just before sulfur and fire rain down on Sodom and her sister cities. Lot’s wife looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. Lot’s daughters fear that as a result of the destruction there will be no husbands for them. They decide to get their father drunk and through him to perpetuate the human race. From the elder daughter, Moav is born, and from the younger, Ammon. Avraham moves to Gerar where Avimelech abducts Sarah. After G-d appears to Avimelech in a dream, he releases Sarah and appeases

Avraham. As promised, a son, Yitzchak, is born to Sarah and Avraham. On the eighth day after the birth, Avraham circumcises him as commanded. Avraham makes a feast the day Yitzchak is weaned. Sarah tells Avraham to banish Hagar and Hagar’s son Yishmael because she sees in him signs of degeneracy. Avraham is distressed at the prospect of banishing his son, but G-d tells him to listen to whatever Sarah tells him to do. After nearly dying of thirst in the desert, Yishmael is rescued by an angel and G-d promises that he will be the progenitor of a mighty nation. Avimelech enters into an alliance with Avraham when he sees that G-d is with him. In a tenth and final test, G-d instructs Avraham to take Yitzchak, who is now 37, and to offer him as a sacrifice. Avraham does this in spite of ostensibly aborting Jewish nationhood and contradicting his life-long preaching against human sacrifice. At the last moment, G-d sends an angel to stop Avraham. Because of Avraham’s unquestioning obedience, G-d promises him that even if the Jewish People sin, they will never be completely dominated by their foes. The parsha ends with the genealogy and birth of Rivka.

BAVA METZIA 51 - 57

“The laws of ‘ona’ah’ (unfair pricing in a sale) do not apply to a sale of land.” — Mishna 56a

The Torah states: And when you make a sale to your fellow Jew or make a purchase from the hand of your fellow Jew, you shall not wrong (“*al tonu*”) one another. (Vayikra 25:14)

This verse teaches that there is a prohibition against taking advantage of either a buyer or seller when conducting a business transaction. The words “*al tonu*”, which are translated here as “do not wrong”, more literally mean “do not oppress” or “do not take advantage of”. This is a Torah prohibition against what is known as “price-gouging”.

However, our *mishna* limits this prohibition to the sale of a *movable* object, but that it does not apply to the sale of *land*. The *gemara* explains that this distinction is seen in the word “*m’yad*” — “from the hand” — which implies that only objects that are “acquired from hand to hand” (movables) are included in this prohibition. Stationary land, on the other hand, is not part of the prohibition, as taught in the *mishna*.

Having said this, Rav Nachman states in our *gemara* that whenever there is *ona’ah* involving land, although there is no Torah prohibition, the sale is nevertheless invalid as a “*mekach ta’ut*” since there was excessive cheating involved. Tosefot, however, questions this ruling, since it seemingly contradicts another ruling made by Rav Nachman later in our *masechta*. On *daf* 108a Rav Nachman states that if a person sells land worth 100 for 200, the sale is indeed valid since *ona’ah* does not apply to land. So, it appears that when land is involved, not only is there no prohibition, but that the transaction is valid as well.

Tosefot cites an answer to reconcile these two rulings of Rav Nachman by a principle that Rabbeinu Tam proposes. When the price-gouging in the sale of land is up to double its value, the sale is valid, as in the case on 108a. However, if the cheating is more than double, the sale of the land is invalid. In other words, although there is no prohibition when transacting land for an exorbitant price, the sale is invalid if the price paid is more than double. The Torah appointed our Rabbinical Sages to determine the amount at which point the sale is invalid, and they set this price at anything more than double.

(This is the ruling of other Rishonim as well, and is the halacha according to the Rema in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 227:29. Other Rishonim disagree with the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam, and rule that not only is there never a prohibition of *ona’ah* when dealing with land, the sale is always valid, irrelevant of the extremely high price paid. See Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 227:29 for more details and discussion.)

• Bava Metzia 57a

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

AMUKA — SEARCH FOR A SOUL-MATE

Single people from all over Israel and the world come to pray at the tomb of Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel in Amuka, an unpopulated area north of Tsefat. Tradition has it that those without spouses or children have found their salvation as a result of heartfelt prayers said at the tomb of the great Talmudic Sage.

Although there is no clear connection between this



Sage and the power of these particular prayers, the Talmud tells us a few things about his extraordinary Torah achievement. When this outstanding disciple of Hillel studied Torah, the fiery energy of his Torah singed the wings of a bird flying overhead.

He is possibly best known for his translation of the Torah and Prophets into Aramaic.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why did G-d appear to Avraham after the *brit mila*?
2. Why was Avraham sitting at the entrance to his tent?
3. What were the missions of the three angels?
4. Why did Avraham enjoin the guests to wash the dust off their feet?
5. Why did Avraham ask specifically Yishmael, and not someone else, to prepare food for the guests?
6. Why did the angels ask Avraham where Sarah was?
7. When G-d related Sarah's thoughts to Avraham, He did not relate them precisely. Why?
8. What "cry" from Sodom came before G-d?
9. How many angels went to Sodom?
10. Why was Lot sitting at the gate of Sodom?
11. Lot served the angels *matza*. Why?
12. Why did Lot delay when he left Sodom?
13. Why were Lot and his family not permitted to look back at Sodom?
14. Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Why was she punished in this particular way?
15. In what merit did G-d save Lot?
16. Why did Avraham relocate after the destruction of Sodom?
17. Why did Avimelech give gifts to Avraham?
18. Why was Avraham told to listen to Sarah?
19. Why did G-d listen to the prayer of Yishmael and not to that of Hagar?
20. Who accompanied Avraham and Yitzchak to the *akeidah* (binding)?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 18:1 - Avraham was sick, so G-d came to "visit" him.
2. 18:1 - He was looking for guests.
3. 18:2 - To announce Yitzchak's birth, to heal Avraham and to destroy Sodom.
4. 18:4 - He thought they were among those who worship the dust, and he didn't want any object of idolatry in his home.
5. 18:7 - To train him in the performance of *mitzvot*.
6. 18:9 - To call attention to Sarah's modesty, so as to endear her to her husband.
7. 18:13 - For the sake of peace.
8. 18:21 - The cry of a girl who was executed for giving food to the poor.
9. 19:1 - Two; one to destroy the city and one to save Lot.
10. 19:1 - He was a judge.
11. 19:3 - It was Passover.
12. 19:16 - He wanted to save his property.
13. 19:17 - As they, too, deserved to be punished, it wasn't fitting for them to witness the destruction of Sodom.
14. 19:26 - She was stingy, not wanting to give the guests salt.
15. 19:29 - Lot had protected Avraham by concealing from the Egyptians the fact that Sarah was his wife.
16. 20:1 - Because travel in the region ceased and Avraham could no longer find guests.
17. 20:14 - So that Avraham would pray for him.
18. 21:12 - Because she was greater in prophecy.
19. 21:17 - Because the prayer of a sick person is more readily accepted than the prayer of others on his behalf.
20. 22:3 - Yishmael and Eliezer.

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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Love of the Land, written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zt"l • Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor and Talmud Tips: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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Vayera

In this week's Torah portion, as in the preceding *parsha* of Lech Lecha, Sarah is abducted by the ruler of the country, first in Egypt by Pharaoh, and now in Canaan by Avimelech. Although the two episodes differ in certain respects, they both illustrate Avraham and Sarah's sound moral judgment, as well as providing insight into the social and ethical realities of the ancient Near East.

In Egypt Avraham realized that his wife's beauty was in stark contrast to the unattractive Egyptian women. Assuming that she was his wife, the depraved Egyptians would likely kill him in order to take her. However, by telling them that she was his sister, they would offer him gifts in exchange for her. (In reality, Sarah was actually his niece and at that time a niece was often referred to as a sister. As a brother or uncle, he had the right to accept gifts and marry her off in those days, just as a father did.)

Although Avraham knew that she would almost certainly be violated against her will, telling them the truth would have resulted in his death and her violation anyway. Therefore he elected to stall for time and drag out the negotiations, hoping for Divine deliverance.

In Parshat Vayera they are faced with essentially the same dilemma. He again refers to Sarah as his sister, and again G-d intercedes to prevent her defilement. Avimelech, however, is on a higher moral level than Pharaoh, and merits G-d's appearing to him prophetically to reveal Sarah's actual status. Pharaoh, on the other hand, was

only prevented from defiling her by the miraculous appearance of a debilitating venereal disease. Since the custom in the ancient Near East dictated that a defiled woman could no longer remain with her husband, Pharaoh sent them away immediately, since people assumed, albeit erroneously, that Pharaoh had defiled her. Pharaoh wanted to make sure that they would not be seen together in Egypt as husband and wife.

Avimelech, however, allowed them to stay in order to dramatically demonstrate that he had not defiled her. Avraham recognized that Avimelech was morally superior to Pharaoh when he says that his main concern was not Avimelech's immorality but rather, "Surely there is no fear of G-d in this place and they will slay me because of my wife." Avraham feared that the degeneracy of Sodom and Gemorrah had spread to Avimelech's subjects as well.

Finally, Avimelech gives Avraham a gift of silver and says to Avraham enigmatically, "Let it be for you an eye-covering to all who are with you; and to all you will be vindicated." Avimelech was giving him advice: Use this money to purchase *face-covering* clothing worn by the undefiled modest women of that time. This will clearly indicate that she has been completely vindicated. Additionally, Avimelech is telling him that in order not to arouse suspicion in the eyes of everyone in the future, he should refrain from calling her his sister so that she will not be in need of miraculous intervention.

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אחינו כל בית ישראל

"Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon."

MIRIAM IN THE WILDERNESS

From: Maria

*Dear Rabbi,
Thank you for answering my question about who Miriam was, and the meaning of her name. I found your answer to be fascinating, and if you don't mind I'd like to know more. Could you please tell me about her life and her role in the Torah?*

Dear Maria,

In "Miriam in Egypt" we explored the early period of Miriam's life. In this installment we'll explore the events of her later life in the Wilderness.

The Talmudic and Midrashic sources we presented indicate that Miriam was imbued with prophetic inspiration even as a young child. However, it is at the famous "Song of the Sea", sung by the Jews after their miraculous salvation at the Sea of Reeds, that the Torah explicitly refers to her as a prophet: "Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women came out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam called out to them, 'Sing to the L-rd, for very exalted is He; a horse and its rider He cast into the sea.'" (Ex. 15:20-21)

The Talmud (Sota 30b) explains that this entire song of exultation to G-d (Ex. 15:1-19) was sung prophetically by Moses, and repeated in refrain by the men, verse by verse. This is based on the verse, "Then Moses and the Children of Israel sang this song to the L-rd, and they spoke, saying, 'I will sing to the L-rd, for very exalted is He; a horse and its rider He cast into the sea'" (v.1). Rashi (v.2, based on Sota and the Mechilta) comments that Moses sang to the men, and they repeated after him, but adds that Miriam sang to the women. This implies that Miriam prophetically sang the entire Song of the Sea in refrain to the women, as Moses did to the men.

A famous, yet widely misunderstood event involving Miriam was her criticism regarding Moses' "Cushite" wife. The Torah states (Num. 12:1), "Miriam...spoke against Moses regarding the Cushite woman he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman".

Since Cush refers to Ethiopia, an erroneous reading of the text might suggest that Miriam objected to her skin color. But the very next verse (v.2) presents the basis of her and Aaron's objection: "Has the L-rd spoken only to Moses? Hasn't He spoken to us too?"

This claim has nothing to do with complexion.

Furthermore, in any case, Moses' wife Tzipora was not from Cush, she was from Midian (Ex. 2:15-21).

Rather, Rashi explains that it became known to Miriam and Aaron that Moses had separated from intimacy with Tzipora. They disapproved of this separation because they considered her to be outstandingly righteous, much as a dark-skinned person stands out among light-skinned people. This is the meaning of the term "Cushite", which is non-pejorative and often used in Jewish sources (see Mo'ed Katan 16b) as a term for someone unique and outstanding, such as King Saul (Ps. 7:1), and even the Jewish People (Amos 9:7). Their complaint was therefore not about the union between Moses and Tzipora, but about their separation. The only justification they could think of for Moses' behavior was a need for celibacy in order to maintain his prophetic state. This explains their objection that G-d spoke not only to Moses, but also to them, despite the fact that they had *not* separated from their spouses. But G-d rebuked them (vs.6-8) by demonstrating that Moses' level of prophecy was much greater than theirs, thus justifying his separation from Tzipora.

In Miriam's merit, a well of wondrous water miraculously accompanied the Jews during their wanderings to provide for them water in the Wilderness. This well is called "The Well of Miriam". The Talmud (Ta'anit 9a) teaches, "Three great leaders led Israel: Moses, Aaron and Miriam. In their merit they received three great gifts: the Well [Miriam], the Clouds of Glory [Aaron] and the Manna [Moses]. When Miriam died, the well was removed, as is evidenced by the fact that immediately after the verse 'And Miriam died' (Num. 20:1), the Torah states (v.2), 'The People had no water'. This is the significance of the verses following Miriam's death (8-13) of Moses searching for and eventually striking the rock in order to restore its waters which had terminated with Miriam's death.

Rashi (Pesachim 54a) also explains that this well was the same rock from which Moses brought forth water after Miriam's death, but adds that it was round as a sieve, such that it would roll along with the Jews on their journeys through the desert. The Midrash (Tanchuma Chukat 21) states that when they encamped, the leader of each Tribe took his staff to the well and drew it toward his Tribe's encampment. The waters of the well were drawn after the mark, and thus supplied water for each of the Tribes. In this way, Miriam was a source of sustenance for all of Israel.

According to one opinion of our Sages (Yerushalmi,

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WHICH COMES FIRST?

Although it is true that each of the three daily prayers — Shacharit, Mincha and Ma'ariv — have a set time during which they must be said, if one accidentally misses any of these prayers he can make up for it.

We can derive a valuable lesson from this fact. We must not look at our shortcomings with an attitude of despair, but instead with an attitude of, “I can fix it; I can do better next time.”

We should remember that G-d does not expect each person to be absolutely perfect. We are not “Administering Angels”. He only expects us to try to do our best. One can only make up a missed prayer that was missed unintentionally (“*shogeg*”), or missed due to something beyond his control (“*onus*”) such as when he is too ill. Therefore, if one mistakenly missed Shacharit he prays Mincha twice. The first Shemoneh Esrei is for Mincha (which is the prayer for the present), and the second prayer is said for the missed Shacharit. Similarly, if one forgot Mincha, in the evening he prays twice. The first prayer is for Ma'ariv, and the second is for the missed Mincha. The same procedure applies for one that is making up Shacharit (Shulchan Aruch Orech Chaim 108:1-2).

When praying twice in the morning, according to the

Mishneh Berurah, one should first say the Shemoneh Esrei for Shacharit, then *tachanun* and *ashrei*, and then Shemoneh Esrei for the missed Ma'ariv of the night before. However, the Kaf HaChaim maintains that one should only say *ashrei*, and then the second Shemoneh Esrei, followed by *tachanun* afterwards. The Kaf Hachaim explains that one should also repeat *ashrei* again, together with *uva'letzion*, while the Mishneh Berurah writes that one does not need to repeat it again.

When making up a missed prayer in the evening the Rema writes that one should say *ashrei* in-between the two Shemoneh Esrei prayers. However, the Mishneh Berurah writes that other rabbis maintain, based on the Rikanati, that according to Kabbalah one should not say *ashrei* at night. Instead, one should just wait the time it takes to walk four *amot* between prayers. He concludes with the words of the Derech Chaim that each of the two options is reliable. In connection to the above, the Kaf Hachaim concludes, based on the Zohar and Kabbalah, that one should not say *ashrei* between the two Shemoneh Esrei prayers, both in Mincha and in Ma'ariv. For Mincha the Mishneh Berurah writes in the name of the later authorities to say *ashrei* between the two Shemoneh Esrei prayers.

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Ketuvot 67a; Lev. Rabba 22:4), Miriam's Well is in the Sea of Galilee (the Kinneret). Based on verses suggesting the travelling and coming to rest of the well (Num. 21:18-20), they note: “One who ascends to the top of Mount Yeshimon [on the Golan Heights which overlooks wastelands (*yeshimon*) to the east] will see [looking west] a kind of small sieve in the Sea of Tiberias.”

This is the well of Miriam. According to another opinion of the Sages (Shabbat 35a), the Well of Miriam came to rest in the Mediterranean and can be seen from the heights of Mount Carmel on the coast of Haifa.

Regarding the death of Miriam, the Torah states (Num. 20:1), “The entire congregation of the Children of Israel arrived at the desert of Tzin in the first month, and the people settled in Kadesh. Miriam died there and was buried there”. By identifying Miriam's death in the “first month” the Torah reveals that she died in the Hebrew month of Nisan, and Talmudic sources (Megillat Ta'anit, fast days; T.Y, Y.Sh. 1:763) indicate that the day of her passing (*yahrtzeit*) was the tenth of that month. The Torah's description of her burial

place as Kadesh in the Wilderness of Tzin would locate it somewhere in the desert region southeast of the Dead Sea. This is in the general area of the burial place of her brother Aaron, which is identified by Josephus (Antiq. 4.4.6) as being near Petra. There seems to be some record of pilgrimages to the burial place of Miriam in the area of Petra until the 4th century CE, but since then the tradition and location have been forgotten and lost.

The Sages taught (Mo'ed Katan 28a) that the Torah's account of Miriam's death follows immediately after the laws of purification through the red heifer in order to teach that just as sacrifices bring atonement, so too the death of the righteous secures atonement. Miriam's great level of purity and righteousness is indicated by the fact that G-d chose her as the holy person through which to express this teaching. The Talmud (*ibid.*) also notes that as did Aaron (Num. 33:38) and Moses (Deut. 34:5), Miriam also died through the painless “kiss of death”, whereby the Divine Presence is revealed to the departing soul as G-d lovingly draws it back within Himself.

FOWL LANGUAGE AND POULTRY

Biblical Hebrew has three different words for birds: *of* (with a long vowel “o”), *tzipor*, and *kanaf*. As we have explained in other cases of apparent synonyms, these words do not all mean the exact same thing. There are slight differences between the connotations of each word.

The word *kanaf* is used colloquially by the Torah to mean “bird”, but it literally means “wing” or “winged creature”. In essence, when using the word *kanaf* for birds, the focus is on the fact that a bird has wings. When G-d commands Noah to bring all the animals to his ark, He tells Noah to bring “[from] every of according to their species, every *tzipor*, every *kanaf*” (Genesis 7:14). Rashi explains that the latter clause serves to include all winged creatures, such as grasshoppers — a detail not included in the phrase “every *tzipor*”.

Radak, in his commentary to Genesis, expands on Rashi’s explanation of G-d’s directive to Noah. He writes that *of* is a general term for any flying creature (as the word “*of*” also means “flies”), whereas *tzipor* and *kanaf* refer to specific classes of flying creatures. *Tzipor* refers to any type of bird, while *kanaf* refers specifically to winged insects like grasshoppers, wasps and flies. In his book called *Sefer ha-Shorashim* (about root-words in the Hebrew language), Radak remains consistent with his view that the word *tzipor* is a general term for all types of birds. This is an idea with some Talmudic precedent (see Chullin 139b).

Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller in his commentary *Tosafot Yom Tov* to the Mishna notes that there is a disagreement amongst rabbinical sources as to the implications of the word *tzipor*. While the Talmud seems to suggest that the word *tzipor* is a general term for all types of birds, the Sifri (a halachic Midrash) maintains that *tzipor* refers to a kosher bird, while the word *of* refers to all birds. This is an approach also adopted by Maimonides. The Bible commands that one must send away the mother bird before taking her eggs or hatchlings (Deuteronomy 22:6–7). The Mishna in Chullin (12:2) rules that this commandment applies only if taking the eggs or hatchlings of a kosher bird, but one taking those of a non-kosher bird need not send off the mother. Citing Sifri, Maimonides (in his commentary to the Mishna) explains the source for this ruling by noting that in the context of this commandment the Bible uses the word *tzipor* to mean bird, and that word specifically refers to kosher birds. Therefore, non-kosher birds are excluded.

Nachmanides (to Leviticus 14:4) also rejects Radak’s view that *tzipor* refers to every type of bird, but he restricts its meaning in a different way. As opposed to those who understood that *tzipor* means only a kosher bird, Nachmanides maintains that *tzipor* refers specifically to small birds which wake up in the morning and chirp. According to this approach, the meaning of *tzipor* is derived from the Aramaic word for “morning”, *tzafra*.

Rabbi Chanoch Zundel of Bialastok bridges the disparate views on the nature of the word *tzipor* as opposed to *of*, throwing in a moral lesson for good measure. Just as the Talmud often differentiates between “thick animals” (*behama gasa*) and “thin animals” (*behama daka*), there is similarly a difference between stronger and weaker types of birds. The word *of* denotes a bird with strong wings (even if it physically a smaller bird), and such birds usually serve as predators in plundering other creatures and eating them. The word *tzipor*, on the other hand, denotes flimsy and weak types of birds. These birds are generally not predatory, but rather suffice with accepting whatever foods man or nature grants them. With this in mind, Rabbi Chanoch Zundel reconciles Maimonides’ explanation with Nachmanides’: a *tzipor* which trusts in others to provide for its food is able to sleep at night, awakening in the morning and begins to chirp. An *of*, however, does not sleep at night to waken in the morning, because as a predator it always seeks its next victim upon which it will feast. It relies on nobody else but itself — so it is always restless and cannot relax. This fundamental difference between these two sorts of birds is reflected in the criterion for determining a non-kosher bird. While the Torah simply lists all the non-kosher birds (Leviticus 11:13-19), the Mishna (Chullin 3:6) reveals that any predatory bird is non-kosher. Accordingly, the very characteristics of a *tzipor* according to Nachmanides are congruent with Maimonides’ understanding that a *tzipor* by definition means only a kosher bird.

This idea serves as a moral lesson to man: one who trusts in G-d to provide can rest assured, relying on his Creator to supply his needs. However, one who believes only in his own handiwork will constantly be on edge, trying to make sure that he can produce for himself all the provisions necessary for survival.

BY RABBI SHLOMO SIMON

CHAIM LICHTENSTEIN

**Age: 52 • BS NYU Stern School of Business; Accounting Major • Riverdale, New York
President and CEO of Andrew Lichtenstein, Inc.
Commercial Real Estate Investments Sales and Mortgage Financing**

Biblical names adorn many cities and towns throughout the United States. This is due, no doubt, to the early influence of the Pilgrims and other religious groups who were predominant in settling early America. Chaim grew up in one — Jericho, New York, a NYC suburb in Nassau County on Long Island.

Chaim's father, Gedalia, whom we wrote about in a recent @Ohr article in Ohrnet Magazine, was a successful businessman. Born and raised in Brooklyn with its run-down and crowded city streets, Gedalia moved the family to the green, suburban, tree-lined suburbs of Jericho, Long Island after Chaim was born.

Chaim was an athletic youth and while at Jericho High School was a varsity baseball and soccer player. He went to college at NYU where he was a student delegate, a member of the Water Polo Club and a competitive swimmer — making it to the New York State championships. Encouraged by his father, he even earned a tryout with a professional baseball team, the Baltimore Orioles. He graduated from NYU in 1986.

Chaim also co-founded the Real Estate Investment Society at NYU. Among other accomplishments, he organized a symposium with two of New York's billionaire real estate landlords: Seymour Durst and Larry Silverstein (who later bought the World Trade Center). Chaim was very motivated and eager to start his real estate career. While he was a senior in college, although he had no starting capital, he bought, flipped and sold an apartment building in Brooklyn. Chaim went on to buy and sell 25 apartment buildings in New York City, after which he made enough money to

buy and hold his own real estate investment portfolio.

His career was launched and success followed success, however, something was missing.

At about this time, his father, Gedalia, *ob'm*, an ardent Zionist, had made *aliyah*. Always a truth seeker, he had found his way to Ohr Somayach. Not wanting to keep the secret of his spiritual enlightenment to himself, he shared it with Chaim, and strongly suggested that his son take a break and look into *Yiddishkeit* for himself.

Convinced that money and material success wasn't everything, Chaim dropped his deal-making and decided to try Yeshiva for a few weeks. He came to Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, and those few weeks turned into months. He studied with Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz, Rabbi Dr. Dovid Gottlieb, Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair and other Rabbis in the Yeshiva. Realizing that "It's not good for man to be alone" he started his search for his *ezer knegdo*, and found her in Tatiana, from Santiago, Chile, a student at a seminary for Spanish speakers in Jerusalem. Tatiana's sister Devorah had also become a *ba'alat teshuva*. Chaim and Tatiana got married in



Jerusalem (this writer was their *mesader kiddushin*) and lived there for a while. They eventually returned to New York, and to the real estate business, and now live in a beautiful house on the Palisades, overlooking the Hudson River in Riverdale, New York — a vibrant Jewish Community. They have four children, who are all excelling in Jewish Day Schools in New York. Chaim has regular *sedarim* and *chavrutot* (Torah study sessions and study partners). He finished *Shas* a few years ago and is now doing *chazara* (review). Their dream is to eventually return to Eretz Yisrael.

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