

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH • 24 CHESHVAN 5782 OCTOBER 30, 2021 • VOL 29 NO. 3

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### The Master of Chaos

*“And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, mature and content...” (25:08)*

**A** butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a tornado in Texas.

Chaos theory is an interdisciplinary theory and branch of mathematics focusing on the study of chaos: dynamical systems whose apparently random states of disorder and irregularities are actually governed by underlying patterns and deterministic laws that are highly sensitive to initial conditions. Chaos theory states that within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems, there are underlying patterns, interconnectedness, constant feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals, and self-organization. The butterfly effect, an underlying principle of chaos, describes how a small change in one state of a deterministic nonlinear system can result in large differences in a later state (meaning that there is sensitive dependence on initial conditions). A metaphor for this behavior is that a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a tornado in Texas.

Small differences in initial conditions, such as those due to errors in measurements or due to rounding errors in numerical computation, can yield widely diverging outcomes for such dynamical systems, rendering long-term prediction of their behavior impossible in general. This can happen even though these systems are deterministic, meaning that their future behavior follows a unique evolution and

is fully determined by their initial conditions with no random elements involved. In other words, the deterministic nature of these systems does not make them predictable. This behavior is known as deterministic chaos, or simply chaos. The theory was summarized by Edward Lorenz as: Chaos: When the present determines the future, but the approximate present does not approximately determine the future.

Chaotic behavior exists in many natural systems, including fluid flow, heartbeat irregularities, weather and climate. It also occurs spontaneously in some systems with artificial components, such as the stock market and road traffic. This behavior can be studied through the analysis of a chaotic mathematical model, or through analytical techniques such as recurrence plots and Poincaré maps. Chaos theory has applications in a variety of disciplines, including meteorology, anthropology, sociology, environmental science, computer science, engineering, economics, ecology, pandemic crisis management.

I've just finished reading a fascinating book called "Chaos: Making a New Science" by James Gleick. It's a tantalizing book that made me regret not having applied myself with more seriousness to learning mathematics at school.

“Chaos” turns much of classical physics on its head:

“The idea that all these classical deterministic systems we’d learned about could generate randomness was intriguing. We were driven to understand what made that tick. You can’t appreciate the kind of revelation that is unless you’ve been brainwashed by six or seven years of a typical physics curriculum. You’re taught that there are classical models where everything is determined by initial conditions, and then there are quantum mechanical models where things are determined but you have to contend with a limit on how much initial information you can gather. Nonlinear was a word that you only encountered in the back of the book. A physics student would take a math course and the last chapter would be on nonlinear equations. You would usually skip that, and, if you didn’t, all they would do is take these nonlinear equations and reduce them to linear equations, so you just get approximate solutions anyway. It was just an exercise in frustration. We had no concept of the real difference that nonlinearity makes in a model. The idea that an equation could bounce around in an apparently random way – that was pretty exciting. You would say, “Where is this random motion coming from?””

And:

“It was a realization that here is a whole realm of physical experience that just doesn’t fit in the current framework. Why wasn’t that part of what we were taught? We had a chance to look around the immediate world—a world so mundane it was wonderful—and understand something. They enchanted themselves and dismayed their professors with leaps to

questions of determinism, the nature of intelligence, the direction of biological evolution. The glue that held us together was a long-range vision... It was striking to us that if you take regular physical systems which have been analyzed to death in classical physics, but you take one little step away in parameter space, you end up with something to which all of this huge body of analysis does not apply. The phenomenon of chaos could have been discovered long, long ago. It wasn’t, in part because this huge body of work on the dynamics of regular motion didn’t lead in that direction. But if you just look, there it is. It brought home the point that one should allow oneself to be guided by the physics, by observations, to see what kind of theoretical picture one could develop. In the long run we saw the investigation of complicated dynamics as an entry point that might lead to an understanding of really, really complicated dynamics.”

People don’t know what they see. They see what they think they know.

“And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, mature and content...”

In what sense was Avraham “mature and content”? He could see the order in the “chaos” after looking into every aspect of Creation – higher and further than anyone before him. As a result, he could recognize his Creator. Avraham was indeed a very special soul who could see that "mother nature" has a Father.

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# Q & A

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## Questions

1. Name the four couples buried in Kiryat Arba.
2. What did Sarah hear that caused her death?
3. What title of honor did the Bnei Chet bestow upon Avraham?
4. Where was Avraham born?
5. How were Avraham's camels distinguished?
6. What is meant by "all the good of his master in his hand"?
7. What special character trait did Eliezer seek when choosing a wife for Yitzchak?
8. Why did Avraham's servant, Eliezer, run toward Rivka?
9. Why did Lavan run to greet Eliezer?
10. When Lavan told Eliezer that the house was cleared out, what did he remove?
11. Who did Eliezer want Yitzchak to marry?
12. Aside from Eliezer, to which other people did Rivka offer to give water?
13. Lavan answered Eliezer before his father, Betuel, had a chance. What does this indicate about Lavan's character?
14. What did Rivka mean when she said "I will go?"
15. What blessing did Rivka's family give her before she departed?
16. Who was Ketura?
17. What gift did Avraham give to Yitzchak?
18. How old was Avraham when he died?
19. For how many years did Yaakov attend the Yeshiva of Ever?
20. How many times is Eliezer's name mentioned in this week's Parsha?

## Answers

1. 23:2 - Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Leah.
2. 23:2 - That Yitzchak was almost slaughtered.
3. 23:6 - Prince of G-d.
4. 24:7 - Ur Kasdim.
5. 24:10 - They were muzzled, so they wouldn't graze in the fields of others.
6. 24:10 - Eliezer carried a document in which Avraham gave all he owned to Yitzchak so that people would want their daughter to marry him.
7. 24:14 - He sought someone who excelled in performing acts of kindness.
8. 24:17 - He saw that the waters of the well rose when she approached.
9. 24:29 - Lavan coveted his money.
10. 24:31 - Idols.
11. 24:39 - His own daughter.
12. 24:44 - To the men who accompanied Eliezer.
13. 24:50 - That he was wicked.
14. 24:58 - I will go even if you don't want me to go.
15. 24:60 - That the blessings given to Avraham would continue through her children.
16. 25:1 - Hagar.
17. 25:5 - The power of blessing.
18. 25:7 - 175 years old.
19. 25:17 - 14 years.
20. None.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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## The City of Four

When the Torah relates that Abraham's wife Sarah died in the City of Hebron, it actually uses an alternate name for the City of the Forefathers: "And Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hebron..." (Gen. 23:2). The Bible repeats this identification of Kiryat Arba with Hebron several times (Gen. 35:27, Joshua 14:5, 15:13, 20:7, 21:11, and Judges 1:10), making sure that we realize that the two names refer to the same place. The Midrash (*Bereishet Rabbah* 58:4) tells us that this city has four names, i.e. the two mentioned above, plus Eshkol and Mamre. In this essay we explore the possible meanings and etymologies of the city's various names, while discovering some interesting points about the history of Hebron.

The city Hebron is seemingly mentioned in the Amarna letters and in Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions, where it appears as one of the important centers of the Land of Canaan. The name *Chevron* seems to be derived from the Hebrew/Semitic root CHET-BET-REISH, which means "connection" or "friend."

When discussing the relationship between G-d and Abraham, the Midrash (*Bereishet Rabbah* 88:13) calls the latter "G-d's *chaver na'ah*" ("nice friend"). Rabbeinu Efrayim (to Num. 13:22) notes that the *gematria* of *Chevron* equals that of *chaver na'ah*; thus the very name of Hebron alludes to its most illustrious citizen – Abraham. Additionally, Rabbeinu Efrayim (to Gen. 37:14) notes that the *gematria* of the name *Chevron* equals that of the phrase "this is Abraham" (=266). These explanations are paralleled in the Arabic name for the city of Hebron – al-Khalil, which literally means "the friend [of G-d]" – another obvious allusion to Abraham.

Hebron also appears in the Bible as the proper name of Moses' and Aaron's uncle, as the Bible reports that their grandfather Kohat had a son

named Hebron (Ex. 6:18, Num. 3:19, I Chron. 5:28, 6:3, 23:12). Rabbeinu Efrayim takes this name as an allusion to the role of the Kohanim, who officiated over sacrifices, hence forging the connection (*chibbur*) between the Jews and their Father in Heaven, and who would consume holy foodstuff in "groupings" (*chaburahs*).

The Bible clarifies that *Kiryat Arba* is an *older* name for the city of Hebron (Joshua 14:15, Judges 1:10). The name *Kiryat Arba* literally means "City of Four" or "Tetropolis." But what does the city of Hebron have to do with the number four? The Midrash (*Bereishet Rabbah* 58:4) lists several explanations:

1. *Four* righteous men originally lived in the city and were circumcised there (Aner, Eshkol, Mamre, and Abraham).
2. *Four* patriarchs were buried there (Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).
3. *Four* matriarchs were buried there (Eve, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah).
4. *Four* giants ruled the city (Achimant, Sheshai, Talmai, and their father).
5. Hebron was the base from which Abraham chased the *four* kings.
6. *Four* parties received portions in that city: the tribe of Judah, the Levites, the Kohanim, and the family of Caleb.
7. Hebron is one of only *four* rocky areas in the Holy Land, which highlights the geographic excellence of that land.

Additionally, Rashi (to Gen. 23:2) synthesizes the second and third explanations cited in the Midrash by explaining that Hebron is called *Kiryat Arba* because of the *four* couples buried therein.

Rabbeinu Bachaya Ibn Chalava (1255-1340) and Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Chalava (a son of the famous 13th century scholar Maharam Chalava) offer another explanation: Hebron is related to the

number *four* because it was inherited by the Tribe of Judah, whose patronym was Jacob's *fourth* son.

Elsewhere, Rashi (to Joshua 14:15) takes a totally different approach to understanding the name *Kiryat Arba*. He writes that the word *Arba* should not be understood in the sense of "four," but should be taken as a proper name. Hence, *Kiryat Arba* means "City of Arba." Rashi explains that Arba was the name of the father of the three giants associated with the city. Those three giants were slain when the Jews conquered the Holy Land (Num. 13:22, Joshua 15:14, Judges 1:10). This basic approach is also adopted by *Daat Zekanim* (to Gen. 23:2) and Ibn Ezra (there). Rabbi Abraham Maimuni (1186-1237) similarly writes that Arba was either the founder or first king of the city. By the way, the king of Hebron in Joshua's time was named Hoham (Joshua 10:3).

Rabbi Avraham Menachem Rappaport (1520-1596) points out a problem with explaining *Kiryat Arba* as a reference to a person named Arba. He notes that in Genesis 35:27 the city is referred to as *Kiryat Ha'Arba*, with the definite article *ha* ("the") prefacing the word *arba*. He notes that if Arba was a proper name, the definite article would be inappropriate. Thus, the presence of the letter HEY before the word *Arba* suggests that that word must be read as a common noun ("four"), not a proper noun ("Arba"). Other scholars suggest that the name *Kiryat Arba* is of non-Semitic origin, and originally had nothing to do with the number "four" or a giant named Arba.

Rashi (to Gen. 35:27) partially circumvents this problem by explaining that in two-word names the definite article sometimes appears in the beginning of the second word, even though it applies to the entire two-word compound. Radak (there) also seems to address this issue by explaining that the definite article is appropriate there because Hebron is named *Kiryat Arba* for two reasons: because of Arba, the father of the giants, *and* because altogether four giants ruled the city. Thus, since the word *Arba* in the city's name *also* means "four," it can be preceded with the definite article.

Interestingly, when the Ten Spies reported that they saw "sons of giants" on their scouting trip to the Holy Land, Targum Jonathan (to Deut. 1:28) renders the verse "sons of Ephron the giant." Now,

Ephron was the name of the man from whom Abraham purchased the Cave of Machpela in Hebron (Gen. 23, 25:9, 49:29-30, 50:13). What does Ephron have to do with the giants who lived in Hebron?

Rabbi Dr. Moshe Zidel (d. 1971) speculates that Targum Jonathan understood that Ephron and Arba were the same person. He justifies this from a linguistic perspective by noting that the root of the Hebrew word *arba* ("four") is REISH-BET-AYIN. This is seen in the ordinal form of the word, *revii* ("fourth"), in which the initial ALEPH is dropped. Accordingly, Rabbi Zidel posits that *arba* relates to the root AYIN-PEH-REISH ("dust"), which is at the core of the name Ephron, by way of metathesis (i.e., rearranging the consonants) and the interchangeability of the letters BET and PEH. Moreover, the Akkadian word *turbu'u* means "dust" and its root is equivalent to the Hebrew REISH-AYIN-BET. A possible Hebrew cognate of this word (*rova*) seems to be twinned with the Hebrew word *avak*, which also means "dust" (see Num. 23:10). Based on all this, to Rabbi Zidel it makes sense to say that Ephron and Arba are the same person. (However, *Tosefta d'Targum* and *Peshitta* to Joshua 15:13-14, 21:11 explicitly identify Arba with Tzochar, the father of Ephron, and the three giant brothers as Ephron's sons; see also Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky's *Taama d'Kra* to Gen. 23:8.)

Taking this a step further, Rabbi Zidel theorizes that the very name Hebron is actually derived from the name Ephron, due to the interchangeability of the letters AYIN and CHET, as well as BET and PEH. Accordingly, the names *Kiryat Arba* and *Chevron* are both alternate ways of associating the city with Ephron.

In contemporary times, *Kiryat Arba* refers to a Jewish settlement outside the city of Hebron proper.

As mentioned above, Mamre and Eshkol are both alternate names for Hebron/*Kiryat Arba*, but they are also the names of Abraham's comrades (Gen. 14:13, 14:24). The Bible identifies the place named Mamre with Hebron and *Kiryat Arba* (Gen. 23:19, 35:27). On the one hand, it seems from a literal reading that the Plains of Mamre *are in* Hebron (Gen. 13:18), but not synonymous with it.

Alternatively, Rashi (to Gen. 35:27) explains that Mamre is the name of the plain in which Hebron is located. Rabbi David Zvi Hoffmann (1843-1921) theorizes that the city was originally named *Elonei Mamre* after its warlord Mamre, and it was only later when the giants conquered it that it assumed the name Kiryat Arba.

In describing the Ten Spies' itinerary, the Bible reports that they travelled to Hebron (Num. 13:22), but in the very next verse relates that they arrived at Nachal Eshkol (Num. 13:23). This suggests that Eshkol is an alternate name for Hebron, as intimated by the Midrash cited earlier. The Bible explicitly records that Nachal Eshkol was

called so because the Ten Spies took an *eshkol* ("cluster [of grapes]") from there (Num. 13:24). Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky explains that even though the site was already known as Nachal Eshkol when the spies arrived there, the city's original name was a tribute to Abraham's colleague Eshkol, whose name is spelled without the letter VAV. Because of this, the place-name Nachal Eshkol is initially spelled sans the letter VAV, but in subsequent instances of that name it is spelled with the letter VAV, in allusion to the aforementioned "cluster" of grapes.

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions,  
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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## THE BLESSINGS OF THE SHEMA (PART 5)

“The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched  
- they must be felt with the heart.”  
(Helen Keller)

**T**he second blessing continues: “Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah; attach our hearts to Your commandments...”

The plea to “enlighten our eyes” is actually one of the most beautiful requests that can be found in our prayers. Understanding Torah and creating fresh and new ideas within Torah is not reserved for only the most brilliant to discover. When we ask G-d to “enlighten our eyes,” we are acknowledging that the ability to formulate novel concepts rests with how we delve into the Torah. It is not necessarily a “Mensa-level” IQ that brings forth innovative understanding and thought-provoking insights. Rather, it is purity of spirit and a genuine desire to understand G-d’s Torah that allows new concepts to be revealed.

From where does the enlightenment that we are requesting originate? King David writes in Tehillim (111:10), “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d.” King Solomon, echoing his father’s words (Proverbs 1:7) writes, “The fear of G-d is the beginning of wisdom.” Rashi explains that it is the fear of G-d that serves as the catalyst for engrossing oneself in the study of Torah. Or, as the brilliant French Torah scholar Rabbi Menachem ben Solomon Meiri (1249-1310) describes: fear of G-d is the foundation of a person’s knowledge and spiritual growth. And just as a building must have solid foundations to ensure that the building will not collapse, so too each person in their spiritual being must have foundations that are strong and sturdy to enable them to withstand the vicissitudes of life. In the timeless Ethics of the Fathers (3:9), our Sages teach us that when a scholar gives priority to fearing G-d over the pursuit of wisdom,

his wisdom will endure. The fear of G-d is so intrinsic to a person’s spiritual growth, as the Talmud relates (Shabbat 31b) that Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Elazar were once sitting together when their colleague, Rabbi Yaakov ben Acha, walked past them. One of them turned to the other and suggested they honor Rabbi Yaakov ben Acha by standing up for him because of his pronounced fear of sin. The other one suggested that they stand up because he was an extraordinarily brilliant Torah scholar. On hearing this, his friend wondered with bewilderment why there was any need to mention how great a Torah scholar Rabbi Yaakov ben Acha was. After having made it clear that he was an extremely righteous person, it was obvious that his fear of sin was far more significant than his prodigious Torah knowledge (see Rashi).

Fascinatingly enough, we first ask G-d to enlighten our eyes and only after that do we request that He fill our hearts with love for Him. It seems counterintuitive to request insights into the Torah and only after that to ask that we be filled with love for G-d. However, the Rabbis explain that the Torah is actually the fastest and most direct route to loving G-d. It is through in-depth study of Torah that we are able to experience an overwhelming love for G-d that supersedes everything. The Chazon Ish famously described the various stages of learning Torah uninterrupted for ten hours starting from the sixth hour. According to the Chazon Ish, after seven hours of learning one feels a closeness and love for G-d that has not been felt up until now and the person fills up with a true joy that wells up from inside of them!

After having asked for insights into Torah and love for G-d, we then ask Him to “attach our hearts to Your commandments.” The inference of our request is that being enthusiastic and eager to fulfill the mitzvahs is not always easy. Even when we perform the mitzvahs on a regular and consistent basis, we need Divine assistance to help us feel verve and passion each time anew. Rabbi Shimon Schwab told of the one Shabbat he spent in the presence of the saintly Chofetz Chaim. The Torah portion read that Shabbat was Beshalach (*Shemot* chapters 14-17), which contains the description of the first time the Jewish nation received the manna, the food they would eat for the forty years in the wilderness. The Chofetz Chaim pointed out to the Yeshiva students who were gathered around his Shabbat table that the Midrash (*Shemot Rabbah* 25) relates that, with a few exceptions, the manna would have the taste of

whatever food the person eating thought about. The Chofetz Chaim then asked all those present what taste the manna would have if the person didn’t think about a particular food, just eating the manna as is. The students debated back and forth, offering different possibilities based on different descriptions of the manna found in the Torah. Finally, the Chofetz Chaim told them that the manna was a spiritual food, and, like all spiritual concepts, if a person does not think about it, it is tasteless. Then he added, with great passion, that there is nothing sweeter than delving into a page of Talmud – but that if a person does not think about what they are learning, that same page of Talmud becomes dry and “tasteless.”

*To be continued...*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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**S**arah, the mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum.

Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avraham's family. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of his thirsty camels (some 140 gallons)! This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother, Lavan, result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sarah's tent, marries her and loves her. He is then consoled for the loss of his mother.

Avraham remarries Hagar, who is renamed Ketura to indicate her improved ways. Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East. Avraham passes away at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela.



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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Rosh Hashana 9-15

### A Blessing on Blossoming Fruit Trees

Rav Yehuda said, “A person who goes outside during the days [of the month] of Nissan and sees trees that are blossoming says, ‘Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who did not omit from His world anything, and created in it good creations and good trees to give pleasure to people.’ ”

This special *bracha*, known as “*birkat ha’ilanot*,” is codified with its halachic parameters in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 226. An interesting textual disagreement in the *bracha*’s wording is in the phrase “*sh’lo chiseir ba’olamo klum*.” According to the Gaon of Vilna, the word *davar* (“a thing”) is said in place of *klum* (“nothing” in Modern Hebrew, but apparently carrying the same meaning as “*davar*” in the context of this *bracha*.) Any grammarians who wish to share their thoughts on this?

What is the significance of the “month of Nissan” that is mentioned in the *gemara*? And does the mention of this month exclude all other times, such as *Tu B’Shevat*, the New Year of the Trees? Due to the special significance of the Land of Israel and its fruits, the time for *bracha* was established as being the time of year when the fruit trees blossom *there* – i.e. in Nissan.

However, if one does not live in Eretz Yisrael, many halachic authorities rule to say the *bracha* at the time when the fruit trees begin to blossom in that location – e.g. in the month of Tishrei in the Southern Hemisphere. The Aruch Hashulchan writes that in countries where fruit trees begin to blossom somewhat later than Nissan, those months would be the appropriate time for saying this *bracha*. Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1960), renowned *Dayan* and Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, writes that a person in a country where trees blossom earlier than Nissan may say the *bracha* even earlier than Nissan.

Here are a few sample halachic details. One should say this *bracha* only when the trees bear edible fruit. Ideally,

one should say the *bracha* only when seeing at least two trees since the wording of the *beracha* is “*ilanot*” – in the plural. Some *Poskim* say that one should try to say the *bracha* over *two different types* of fruit trees. Preferably it should be said during the week and not on Shabbat to avoid any concern of using, shaking or breaking a part of the tree on Shabbat. As with any halachic matter, one should learn the relevant halachic texts and consult with a local halachic authority in order to not be in doubt about the correct time, place and manner for saying this *bracha*.

An interesting point is that women are obligated in the mitzvah of saying this *bracha* despite their being exempt from time-dependant mitzvahs as a general rule.

There are numerous fascinating Kabbalistic teachings and practices regarding this *bracha*. For example, Chacham Yosef Chaim of Bagdad, (*Ben Ish Chai*, 1832-1909) relates an important lesson to be learned from this *bracha* and its timing. During the winter, the tree is dry and withered, but in the spring it is in full bloom. A person who sees this revitalization in nature is also internally revitalized in his very being. Upon observing this dramatic transformation in the natural world, a person grows in his own personal inspiration and courage to climb up from any despair. It is a powerful reminder that Hashem has given us the wherewithal for self-renewal and growing closer to Him.

▪ Rosh Hashana 11a

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman*

## Authentic Innocence and Beauty

The Torah leads us to the end of our noble Matriarch's life, and has inscribed upon her monument the following words: *Sarah's life was a hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years: years of Sarah's life.*

Our Sages, noting the atypical way in which her lifespan is recorded, comment that Sarah's life is divided into three distinct periods. She did not live for 127 years, but rather for one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years. Our Sages regard these words as the perfect character sketch of the most worthy life. They draw the following parallel between these distinct phases of childhood, young adulthood and old age: *at one hundred she was as innocent as when she was twenty, and at twenty as beautiful as when she was seven.* Beauty at seven? Innocence at twenty? Should it not be the reverse?

But if we were to contemplate beauty... we would notice that there are many more beautiful children than young men and women. Hardly any child is born ugly – all newborns are beautiful. A child's face is beautiful because passions and wrongdoing have not yet etched their lines on its face. The face of one who has not yet known rage or resent, avarice or arrogance, vanity or vulgarity, will reflect none of those ills in its countenance. Those destructive paintbrushes stroke the self-portrait of man only beyond his childhood years – his face becomes a reflection of his true face. And so, as Sarah's life was one uninterrupted song of goodness and virtue, her true face retained the beauty of childhood. Had Sarah mounted her own picture of Dorian Grey in her tent, it never would have grown distorted. At young adulthood, the prime of unchecked passion, her face remained as it was at seven. Decades could have passed, and not a single wrinkle or blemish would have appeared on that portrait. For there were no blotches or mistrokes in her character. Beauty, in fact, is more than skin deep.

And if we were to contemplate innocence... our Sages teach here that the peak of innocence is not reached in infancy. Those who are genuinely sinless must have first developed clarity of mind to have chosen that path. A child's innocence is mostly a product of his unsuspecting nature. He is still too simple-minded to sin. In our notion of outgrowing this innocence, as man grows in his worldly wisdom, he is bound to do evil. But consider how the view of our Sages ennoble man! Age twenty: mind and body are mature, and judgment is sharpened, but the heart is still wide and warm, eager to embrace things good and noble. Idealism is the child of this "innocence." Sarah never outgrew this innocence – at one hundred her heart still swelled with the loving-kindness, hope, and energy it did at twenty.

These years together are called *chayei Sarah*. She lived in all of them. She took the crowning quality of each stage of life into the next stage. A phrase describing the final days of the noble and righteous is *ba bayamim*, literally "he comes through the days." (*Bereishet 24:1 - Avraham; Melachim I 1:1 - David*) He does not sink in his days. He passes through them. He retains the spiritual and moral attainments of his past and takes them with him into the future. The threads of purity in childhood are not dropped or worn out – they continue their stitch into adulthood, where new colors and shades are added. And that spool of idealism is not replaced by those of economy, pride, and pragmatism. Instead, all of his days are stitched, through and through, with the color of its virtue.

- Sources: *Bereishet, 23:1; Collected Writings, Vol. 8, "Beauty and Long Life," pp. 137-144*

# Perek Shira: The Song of Existence

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

## THE SONG OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The Garden of Eden says:

*[Hashem says,] "Awaken, north wind, and come, south wind, blow through My garden, causing its fragrances to flow out."*

*[The Jewish nation responds,] "Let my Beloved come to His garden and eat His delectable fruits."*

*(Shir HaShirim 4:16)*

**T**he Garden of Eden sings about the true, unending pleasure experienced after this world.

It describes how Hashem invites the north and south winds to circulate their divine fragrances for the pleasure of the righteous within it. North is the direction which symbolizes the physical aspects of creation, and thus its wind delights the soul for righteous usage of the physical world, such as the giving of money for charity. The south wind brings pleasure due for spiritual accomplishments, such as Torah study. The Garden sings how all will be justly rewarded for their unique role in Hashem's world. Then, Hashem and His nation will be united in mutual love. Hashem will call for His people to delight in His garden, and His people will call for Him to delight in them.

It is possible to make the song of the Garden of Eden heard in this world as well. We should channel all of our faculties and all elements of the world towards the service of Hashem. There is nothing created by the Holy G-d that is too unholy to be sanctified. The Jewish People are pleasure-seekers who seek true pleasure – delights of the spirit, not the illusion of transitory physical lust. True pleasure can be found in Hashem's Torah and mitzvahs, and in every waking moment. The more we reveal it, the more we can experience the delight of Garden of Eden, even in this world, and echo its song to the Creator.

- Sources: Yalkut Shimoni; Pesachim 53b; Shir HaChaim; Perek B'Shir; Li Lishua; Rabbi Noach Weinberg

*\*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*

This issue of the Ohrnet is sponsored by the  
Harry H. Beren Foundation