בס״ד

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

NOVERMBER 7, 2026 | *This week's Insights is sponsored in loving memory of Yitzchok Shlomo ben Manis Levi, Yitzchok Shlomo Stein. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"* | VOLUME 17, ISSUE 5

27 CHESHVAN | Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig | PARSHAS CHAYEI SARAH

Effects of Affects

Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, which is Chevron in the land of Canaan; and Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her (23:2).

This week's *parsha* opens with the death of Sarah, the first matriarch of the Jewish people. The Torah relates that following her death her husband Avraham came to eulogize and weep for her. Rashi (ad loc) explains that Sarah's death is juxtaposed next to the story of the binding of Yitzchak because the shock of him being nearly slaughtered caused her soul to leave her body.

Many commentaries question the order of events in the verse: "*Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and weep for her.*" But shouldn't weeping come before the actual eulogy?

The Talmud (*Brachos* 6b) states, "Rav Sheyshis says that the benefit of a eulogy is the wailing" and Rashi (ad loc) explains that when the speaker raises his voice and cries out to express his anguish it causes those listening to cry out as well, which is the ultimate purpose of a eulogy.

There is a fascinating field of study called social psychology. It is the study of how a person's environment can radically influence one's emotional state.

Ever wonder what compels sports fans to pay outrageous sums of money to sit in a frenzied, crowded stadium and suffer through the most severe weather and traffic jams merely to watch "their" team play a game? Viewed superficially it makes absolutely no sense.

Why don't these avid fans watch the game comfortably from their climate controlled home where they don't have to pay $15 for a $2 hotdog and beer? Not to mention the fact that they'll actually have a far better view of the game. Yet week after week, millions of fans suffer through boiling or freezing temperatures (or sit in the pouring rain) to watch "their" team from hard, uncomfortable stadium seats. It's simply illogical. Why do they do this?

The answer is that everyone at their very core wants to be connected to something larger than themselves. Thus, being a part of and in the midst of a frenzied crowd has an incredible and powerful emotional lift that one simply cannot achieve at home watching a game alone. There is a sense of being connected to something bigger and greater than oneself with the excitement of the crowd driving one's own excitement even further. This powerful effect on one's emotions is intoxicating and causes fans to act in this seemingly illogical manner.

Similarly, watching a bereaved mourner cry in pain causes others to cry as well. This in turn has a ripple effect and causes even more observers to break down weeping. It is this crying that allows us to identify and connect, thereby beginning the process of internalizing the loss to the greater whole with whom the mourner is now connected.

The *possuk* here isn't referring to Avraham's personal grieving and crying, which took place earlier and likely in private. Rather, the *possuk* is describing how Avraham made the loss of his wife palpable and relatable to all. His crying at the time of the eulogy allowed others to internalize and feel the loss of the great woman who was now missing from their lives.

ישיבה וכולל בית משה חיים
TALMUDIC UNIVERSITY

Miami Edition

Ben's Best Charcuterie is as authentic as it gets. Using only high-quality meat and methods that have been around for centuries, Ben's Best is able to achieve high quality kosher charcuterie that equals any of the non-kosher charcuterie found worldwide.

WWW.BENSBESTCHARCUTERIE.COM | +1 (917) 589-1266

A Blessed Change

Rather to my land and to my birthplace shall you go, and take a wife for my son Yitzchak (24:4).

In this week's *parsha* we find Avraham charging his faithful servant Eliezer with going and locating a wife for his son Yitzchak. Avraham makes Eliezer swear that he will not seek a suitable wife for Yitzchak from the Canaanite nation amongst whom they were dwelling. Rather, he was charged with going back to Avraham's ancestral lands to locate a mate for Yitzchak.

Eliezer peppers Avraham with questions regarding his mission and at what point is he supposed to pivot and find another possible source for a mate for Yitzchak. Rashi (24:39) explains that Eliezer himself had a daughter that he very much wanted to suggest as a possible match for Yitzchak and he attempted every pretext that might allow his daughter to qualify as a suitable candidate. But Avraham refused and dismissed it out of hand explaining, "My son is blessed and you are cursed, and one who is cursed cannot be attached to one who is blessed."

Avraham's statement is explained in the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 59:9), which says that Eliezer is identified as a descendant of Canaan (the son of Cham) who was cursed by Noach. Why was he cursed?

In a breathtakingly selfish and brutal act, Cham ensured Noach would be unable to father any more children – for more siblings meant that the world would be divided among them and Cham's share would be further diluted. According to Chazal, Cham's son Canaan was the first to come upon Noach and see him in a vulnerable, drunken state and suggested to his father that there was an opportunity to attack Noach (see 9:22-23 and Rashi ad loc).

Noach then curses Canaan and declares that they will be slaves forevermore. Avraham and Yitzchak were descendants of Noach's son Shem who was explicitly blessed by Noach (see 9:25-26). According to the Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel, Eliezer was the son of Nimrod who was the son of Cush who was the son of Canaan. Thus, Eliezer and his family were considered accursed.

How are we to understand this concept of being "cursed" and how is that a fitting retribution for the act that was perpetrated on Noach?

Canaan's perspective is uniquely self-serving and selfish. He was so greedy and narcissistic that he focused solely on making sure that he didn't lose any future assets, by any means necessary. In his mind, the world revolved around him and his needs.

This is why Noach cursed him to be a slave forevermore. A slave has nothing, can own nothing, and every minute of every day is about serving someone else's needs. He remains a slave because, at the end of the day, his selfishness remains – he just wants to be taken care of without any real responsibility for himself.

The reason that a cursed person cannot attach to a blessed one is because there is no relationship; the cursed one is totally selfish and the blessed one is forced into a black hole of giving. It becomes a one-way street and that is not a healthy attachment. This is why Eliezer instinctively understands that Yitzchak's future wife must be a person who is totally giving, even without being asked to do so.

Remarkably, when Lavan first sees Eliezer he says to him *(24:31) "Come, O blessed of Hashem!"* Chazal comment on this *possuk* that at this time Eliezer finally loses the classification of being "cursed." Why?

Imagine for a moment a couple that has been married for many, many years but have never been able to conceive a child. Every time any young couple gives birth, they must be wistfully wondering why they haven't been as fortunate. Similarly, parents of a daughter who is desperate to get married but has no prospects watch with a broken heart every time a younger girl seems to effortlessly find her matrimonial match, while they wonder when will it be their daughter's turn. In fact, in either case, no matter how hard they try it is hard to see how they could be completely happy for someone else's joy in such situations.

This was the case by Eliezer as well. As Rashi explained he was desperately trying to suggest his daughter for Yitzchak, but Avraham would not hear of it. This must have been very emotionally painful for Eliezer as it was a rejection at the most personal level and his heart cried out for his daughter as well.

Yet, even with all that baggage, he throws himself completely into finding a proper mate for Yitzchak. He beseeches Hashem to bring his quest to a successful conclusion and devises a test to find the appropriate match for Yitzchak. He negotiates with people who want to kill him and steal the goods he brought and he refuses to accept anything but the immediate return of Rifkah to his master Yitzchak. He could have made every excuse with good cause for being unsuccessful.

However, he set aside his personal feelings and interest in the matter and selflessly brought his quest to a successful conclusion. Eliezer broke the mold of his family's selfishness. This is why Lavan called him "blessed."

ROHR TALMUDIC UNIVERSITY CAMPUS
4000 Alton Road
Miami Beach, FL 33140

To dedicate an issue of Insights please email:
info@talmudicu.edu
or contact us at: (305) 534-7050

Scan to subscribe and
receive Insights via email