

VAYEIRA STATS

4th of the 54 sedras; 4th of 12 sedras in B'reishit

Written on 252 lines in a Sefer Torah, ranks 5th

6 Parshiyot; 4 open, 2 closed

147 p'sukim - ranks 7th (4th in B'reishit)

2085 words - ranks 2nd (first in B'reishit)

7862 letters - ranks 3rd (2nd in B'reishit)

P'sukim above average in length (i.e. number of words and number of letters per pasuk) explain its rise in rankings from p'sukim to words (and letters). Vayeira is actually 2nd largest sedra in the Torah. (Naso, is #1 with no rival - Bamidbar, Pinchas, and R'ei all take up more lines than Vayeira, but those sedras each have many parshiyot, which means a lot of blank space between parshiyot, which adds to the number of lines.)

MITZVOT

None of Taryag are found in Vayeira (one of 17 sedras without entries on the list of 613) - however, there are Midot and values and other lessons.

WORD of the MONTH cont. from p.2

A weekly TT feature to help clarify practical and conceptual aspects of the Jewish Calendar, thereby enhancing our appreciation of G-d's gift to us of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem...

a certain tension as Cheshvan precedes - when will it start raining in earnest. The Mishna says that if it hasn't rained by the 17th of Cheshvan, individuals would accept upon themselves to fast. Ironic - that is the date that the Mabul began. Plenty of rain then. Far too much and not good rain at all. So the 17th of the month triggers the feeling of rain? No rain? Good rain? Bad rain? B"H, we have gotten a significant amount of rain - even before the 17th. And on it too. May it all be LIVRACHA.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya 14 p'sukim - 18:1-14

[P> 18:1 (71)] And G-d appeared to him (Avraham)...

SdT: *The use of the pronoun "him" rather than using the name Avraham is significant. EILAV (to him) refers us back to the previous parsha - Avraham's circumcision at the end of Lech L'cha, indicating that the purpose of G-d's visit with Avraham was Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick. Furthermore, the fact that the Torah does not indicate that G-d said anything to Avraham at this "appearance", tells us that He had another purpose, viz. Bikur Cholim. Commentaries teach us that G-d was visiting the sick, even though the Written Word does not say that at all.*

He is sitting at the entrance of his tent (watching for travelers to welcome) in the heat of the day.

SdT: *It was unnaturally hot; that was G-d's doing, to spare Avraham the bother of visitors, He removed the sun from its envelope... However, Avraham is distressed by the absence of visitors, so G-d sends three angels to him in the guise of wayfarers. We have a lesson-within-a-lesson to learn here. To be careful to do for others - especially the ill and elderly - what THEY (need, of course) and want, not what WE want, and not what we THINK they*

want. Also, to realize that there are exceptions to rules. Some people like being fussed about; others don't. For some, taking things easy is therapeutic. For others, action is their medicine. Avraham did not want to take things easy, even though he was ailing. So G-d, so-to-speak, accommodated him.

Avraham sees the three "men" and runs to greet them, after asking G-d to wait for him (so to speak). (From here we are taught the greatness of the mitzva of Hachnasat Orchim.)

This is one of the ways to interpret the pasuk - that ADO-NAI means G-d, and that Avraham was addressing Him. ADONAI can also mean "my sirs", in which case Avraham could have been speaking to the men/angels. Each possibility causes minor awkwardness in the flow of the p'sukim. The word is considered holy (meaning the first opinion prevails), and Sofrim write it with the Kavana for G-d's name, but some say that one should use a conditional "sanctification" for writing this word. This is a touchy subject for Sofrim, since G-d's names are written with a special declaration of sanctity, and words that are not His names are not supposed to be sanctified. In the few cases where there is a dispute, the T'NAI, conditional statement of kedusha come in handy. However, some authorities rule that it is better to sanctify a Name even if it might not be sacred, rather than not sanctifying it, if it is holy.

SdT: *"Speak little, but do much." This maxim from Pirkei Avot is manifest in Avraham Avinu's behavior. He offers the angels a bit of water and some bread, but*

in fact prepares for them (with the help of Sara and Yishmael) a sumptuous meal. The Mishna states that Avraham's meal for the strangers was proportionally greater than even the feast of Shlomo HaMelech in celebration of the building of the Beit HaMikdash. Avraham and Sara are the ultimate models for hospitality, one of the hallmarks of the Jewish People.

One of the angels informs Avraham of the pending birth of Yitzchak. Sara's reaction is to laugh (a slight doubt in the ability of a 100 year old man to father a child and of a 90 year old woman to give birth). G-d asks Avraham why Sara would doubt His ability to permit an old woman to conceive.

SdT: *Rabbi Yehuda says in the name of Rav (in Bava M'tzi'a): What Avraham did for his guests by himself, G-d did for the People of Israel by Himself; what Avraham did via another, G-d did likewise. Avraham said: YUKACH NA M'AT MAYIM. Rashi explains the strange grammatical form by saying that Avraham did not provide the water to the strangers himself (it does not say K'CHU...) So too, when G-d was to provide water to Avraham's descendants, He commanded Moshe Rabeinu to throw the stick into the water, to strike the rock, to speak to the rock. But Avraham fed the angels himself - "and I will get the bread, etc." When G-d needed to feed the People, He provided us with Manna. Moshe did not bring it about. G-d gave it straight to the People.*

Levi - Second Aliya 19 p'sukim - 18:15-33

Sara would like to deny that she laughed (doubted), but she cannot.

The three angels each had a single task: One to heal Avraham, one to announce the birth of Yitzchak (both missions accomplished), the third to destroy S'dom. That angel is now accompanied by Refa'el, whose new task is to save Lot and family. Avraham escorts the angels on their way to S'dom.

SDT: *Once again, we learn the correct behavior of a proper host from Avraham: part of hospitality is to escort your guests as they leave your home. It is even said that escorting out is greater than ushering in.*

HaShem next tells Avraham of his intention to destroy S'dom. Avraham pleads and bargains on their behalf, but there aren't enough righteous people to save the cities.

The dialog between Avraham and HaShem is an astounding (and unique) example of the close relationship between them.

SDT: *Avraham's expression of humility before G-d is "and I am dust and ash". Says the Gemara, because of Avraham's humility, his children merited two mitzvot - the ash of the Para Aduma and the dust of the Sota. Torah T'mima explains that the Para Aduma ash is the symbol of spiritual purity (which can be thought of as the realm of "between the Jew and G-d" mitzvot). The hopeful outcome of the Sota procedure is Shalom Bayit, being a major example of interpersonal relationships. Thus the reward for Avraham covers the whole range of Jewish life.*

Shlishi - Third Aliya 20 p'sukim - 19:1-20

The two angels arrive in S'dom and are taken in by Lot. [The nephew of Avraham Avinu has learned something from his uncle.] The people of S'dom demonstrate their evil nature. It is clear from the p'sukim as well as Midrashim and commentaries, that Lot was not sufficiently pious or believing in his own right, but he compared favorably with the people among whom he lived, and he had merit as the nephew of Avraham. (And as the progenitor of Ruth!)

SDT: *The word "and he lingered" is read with the rare trop-mark, the shalsholet, which musically emphasizes the reluctance of Lot to (believe what he was told by the angels and) leave. The same word is used in contrast to this behavior of Lot, in describing the haste with which the Children of Israel left Egypt at G-d's command, symbolized by the matza which they hastily baked rather than linger for the dough to rise and produce a "proper" bread demonstrating their faith and confidence in G-d. Interesting, is it not, that Lot is described as baking matzot for the visitors. Rashi's comment: It was Pesach. Which gives us a double association for the contrast between Lot and the people of Israel (Pesach/matza and the unusual word L'HIT-MAH-MEI'AH).*

Lot is led out of the city by the angels, his wife and two daughters with him. They are told to flee for their lives, without looking back at the destruction of the cities. Lot pleads for permission to seek refuge closer by.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 40 p'sukim - 19:21-21:4

2nd longest R'vi'i in the Torah

Once Lot and family are safely away, the destruction of S'dom takes place. Lot's wife looks back - forbidden - and turns into a pillar of salt. (Her punishment is specifically with salt as a measure-for-measure for her stinginess with guests.)

From the episode of Lot's wife, we can draw the following point. Lot and family were worthy of being spared the destruction of S'dom, but they were not worthy enough to be able to witness the destruction. This, in contrast to Avraham, who views the destruction.

"And Avraham gets up early in the morning to the place where he STOOD before G-d."

SDT: *Avraham returns to the same spot to speak to G-d. From here is derived the concept of having a MAKOM KAVUA, a fixed place for prayer. The Talmud says: "he who fixes himself a place for davening, the G-d of Avraham will help him". (However, a fixed place in shul should NEVER be the cause of argument or discord. E.g. when a person comes late - or even on time - to shul and someone is sitting in "his seat", how to handle such a situation requires sensitivity - and often, the quality of a VATRAN, one willing to give in for the sake of accord.)*

Of course, more fundamentally, it is this pasuk and another that combine to "support" the Gemara's statement that Avraham instituted T'filat Shacharit. That AMIDA, to stand before G-d, means to pray is learned

from VAYA'AMOD PINCHAS VAIPA-LEIL. And Pinchas stood in prayer (we can say) - T'hilim 106:30. The pasuk here in Vayeira links AMIDA with Avraham Avinu and with early in the morning, hence Shacharit.

The Torah reiterates the point that Lot was saved in the merit of his uncle Avraham Avinu (and Ruth, the "mother of royalty" who was to come from Lot - G-d can work merit either from the past or the future).

Lot's two daughters, having witnessed the total destruction of S'dom and its vicinity, assume that they are the sole survivors of mankind. They plot to get Lot drunk and sleep with him in order to continue humanity. Moav and Amon are the results.

Note that everything that has happened so far in Parshat Vayeira, make up a single long, 71-pasuk parsha. From the arrival of the angels through the completion of the final task of those angels - namely, the destruction of S'dom. Apparently, the different episodes all belong together more than one would initially think. The common thread, of course, is/are the angels. Their tasks are now complete.

[S> 20:1 (18)] Avraham and Sara now travel to G'rar where they again present themselves as brother and sister. Sara is taken to Avimelech, but G-d appears to him and warns him not to touch her. Avimelech confronts Avraham who explains that his fears were based on the lack of "Fear of G-d" in the place.

Avraham then prays on behalf of Avimelech and his people who were stricken with a disease which rendered them temporarily sterile.

From this point (21:1) to the end of Vayeira, is the Torah reading of Rosh HaShana (part on the first day, part on the second.)

[S> 21:1 (21)] G-d fulfills His promise and Sara becomes pregnant. She bears a son to Avraham in his advanced age, and the son is called Yitzchak. Avraham circumcises Yitzchak at eight days of age, as G-d has commanded.

Avraham's having prayed on behalf of Avimelech for children is juxtaposed to Sara Imeinu conceiving. Our Sage teach us that selflessly praying for others can sometimes result in the same prayers being answered for yourself.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya **17 p'sukim - 21:5-21**

Avraham is 100 years old when Yitzchak is born. Avraham makes a great party upon the occasion of Yitzchak's being weaned.

Although the plain understanding of B'YOM HIGAMEIL ET YITZCHAK is "when Yitzchak was weaned" - which Rashi says is at 24 months of age, there is a REMEZ (hint/clue) in the word HIGAMEIL to a possible other explanation of the word. HEI+GIMMEL = 8 (days), MEM-LAMED, MAL, was circumcised. It can mean that the party in question was to celebrate Yitzchak's BRIT.

How many tilapia in the sedra?

As Yitzchak is growing up, Sara notices the potential negative influence of Yishmael and demands of Avraham that he send Yishmael and his mother Hagar, away. Blinded by his great "kind heart", Avraham has to be told by G-d to listen to Sara. Hagar and Yishmael once again are on the verge of death in the wilderness, but Yishmael's prayers are answered and they are saved. Hagar is assured by an angel that they will survive.

And indeed they do, and Hagar subsequently marries Yishmael off to a woman from the land of Egypt.

Both Hagar and Yishmael prayed to G-d when Yishmael was dying. G-d heard "the lad's voice". Rashi says, from here we learn that the strongest prayer offered on behalf of someone who is ill are those of the sick person himself (if he is able to pray on his own behalf). And, of course, others should pray on his behalf as well, regardless of whether the person himself is able to daven. In fact, there are opinions that Bikur Cholim MUST include a prayer for the recovery of the patient (the visatee) in addition to anything else one does, for the mitzva to be considered properly performed. [This can be a touchy issue if the patient is upset by people's praying for him or her. Perhaps in that case, the prayers can be silent and inconspicuous.]

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - **13 p'sukim - 21:22-34**

[P> 21:22 (13)] Avimelech and his commander Pichol enter into a pact with Avraham. The pact has to do with wells that Avraham dug, that the servants of Avimelech stole, the return of those wells and the acknowledgement by Avimelech that the wells do actually belong to Avraham. The city of Be'er Sheva receives its name from the double meaning of the 7 sheep used as tokens of the covenant and the oath sworn between them.

Avraham plants an "Eshel" in Be'er Sheva. In addition to being a type of tree, the word ESHEL is considered an acronym of the Hebrew words for Food, Drink, and Lodgings (or Food, Sleeping, Escort). ESHEL AVRAHAM is the symbol of hospitality for all times.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya **24 p'sukim - 22:1-24**

[P> 22:1 (19)] This is the portion of the Binding of Isaac - Akeidat Yitzchak. The Akeida is one of the few passages from the Torah to be incorporated into our daily davening (there are those who did not include it in their davening, and there are siddurim that don't have it, but most siddurim put the Akeida with an intro and closing prayer, after the morning brachot and before korbanot). It

See what she gave birth to

represents the ultimate manifestation of commitment to and love of G-d. It also belongs to the portion of the davening called KORBANOT for obvious reasons. And then there is the idea of a tribute to the originator of Shacharit.

Although none of Avraham's descendants (we, the Jewish People) can ever be tested in so drastic a way (because we have the experiences of our predecessors to give us support), we do derive tremendous inspiration from this portion of the Torah. It is part of our Heritage and, even more, part of our Essence. Tests of Faith are relative to the individual. Each of us is challenged in different ways throughout our lives. So too, for us as a Nation. May we be always guided by deep commitment to Torah and Jewish values.

MORE. Akeidat Yitzchak is our identity card. It defines who we are... even when our own behavior is contradictory to our Torah standards. We stand before G-d on Judgment Day - Rosh HaShana, and we blow the Shofar made from a ram's horn. We ask G-d to remember Akeidat Yitzchak and have mercy on His (sometimes undeserving) children. We read the Akeida in the Torah and we refer to it repeatedly in our Rosh HaShana davening and Slichot, to inspire us and to identify us.

After these events, G-d tested Avraham - He told Avraham to take Yitzchak to Har HaMoriya and offer him as an Olah - an all-burnt sacrifice... Avraham enthusiastically set out to do G-d's bidding... On the third day, Avraham saw the

intended place from afar and told the two lads (Eliezer and Yishmael, according to our Tradition) to wait with the donkey... On the way, just Avraham and Yitzchak, hand in hand, Yitzchak asks where the animal for sacrifice is and Yitzchak understood what was to happen from Avraham's answer. Avraham built an altar, bound Yitzchak to it and was about to sacrifice him, when a heavenly angel told him to stop and not harm the boy. Avraham spotted a ram (which our Tradition tells us might have been created specifically for this purpose in the instant before the first Shabbat of B'reishit, as one of the final acts of Creation) caught by its horns in a thicket. G-d acknowledges Avraham's dedication and blesses him again with countless descendants... Avraham and company return to B'er Sheva.

[P> 22:20 (5)] The parsha ends with mention of the birth of Rivka, to link to the next phase of the development of Judaism - viz., the means of its transmission and continuity.

Maftir is the final five p'sukim.

It is this last portion of 5 p'sukim that tell us about Rivka's birth. But we also hear that Nachor (Avraham's brother) had eight sons from his wife Milka and four sons from his concubine R'uma. We are really interested in one son - B'tu'el, father of Rivka (and Lavan). Why tell us the rest? Rabbi Macy Gordon suggests that the Torah is telling us how the "other half" live. Contrast the tough

family life of Avraham with his brother's larger family. Nachor had the proverbial house in the suburbs, two cars, membership in the local country club. Avraham had trouble at home, left to places unknown, underwent many trials and tribulations, was childless for a long time, had domestic difficulties, suffered a famine... Avraham had to wait two generations for his 12 tribes. Nachor's came much sooner.

Ah, but look at the spiritual difference. Look at who Avraham was, and is to us. Now translate the whole comment and apply it to Jewish History vs. the story of many other nations.

Haftara - 37 p'sukim Melachim Bet - 4:1-37

The sedra shows us the sharp contrast between the kindness and hospitality of Avraham & Sara on the one hand, and the cruel "business is business" and "what's in it for me" nature of S'dom. The haftara is about the widow of a prophet who was facing losing her two children because of her poverty and the twisted state of Israel's society that lost sight of the legacy of Avraham and Sara. The prophet Elisha performs a miracle (of olive oil miraculously filling many vessels that the woman had and borrowed and anointed with a few drops of oil she possessed) and the family is spared that plight.

The haftara also tells of the Shunamite woman who prayed so fervently for a son. She had a son

but he died. He is miraculously resuscitated by Elisha. This forms a counterpart to the birth of Yitzchak and the subsequent almost-losing him at the Akeida. (And fits well with Midrashim that say that Yitzchak was actually sacrificed on the Altar and restored to life - we have references to AFARO SHEL YITZCHAK, the ashes of Yitzchak.)

Lead Tidbit cont. from front page

which he will show him, and he did. Took his wife, nephew, and followers and came to the Land of Canaan.


Without taking away from the major step Aliya is for those who come, it is being referred to here as the "easy", elementary part of Aliya.

When Avraham and Sarah arrived in Eretz Yisrael, they did not have a smooth K'LITA, absorption. And this is so for most of their descendants who choose to follow their lead. Do not look at Aliya and K'lita as separate things. Coming to live in Israel and going back from where one came from - whether it is right away or after an amount of time, is not a definition of Successful Aliya. The harder part of the Aliya process - the intermediate and advanced parts of it - include absorption and what a person does with his life when he lives here.

Wouldn't Avraham and Sara have a "heter" to live in Charan (or elsewhere) in light of their success in being M'KAREV people. In spreading the concepts of belief in one G-d to all people?

The simple answer is, not if G-d told them to go to Eretz Yisrael. And not if they will continue their teaching and influencing in their new location. And not if Avraham was commanded a second Lech L'cha to rise to the spiritual heights of belief and commitment to G-d in Eretz Yisrael.

As with the fathers, so with their children. The call for Aliya is not just to come here. It is to succeed here; to help improve one's spiritual level and that of one's fellows, **עד ביאת הגואל**

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DIVREI MENACHEM

The parsha begins by telling us that in the heat of the day (as Avraham was recovering from his Brit Mila), Hashem appeared (Vayeira) to Avraham. It was as if Hashem was paying him a sick call or, perhaps, paying tribute to our forefather for his exceedingly high level of self-sacrifice.

Then Avraham lifted his eyes and saw (Vayar) and, "behold three men were standing over him. And he saw [again] and ran toward them... and said, 'My Lord [Hashem]... please do not pass away from your servant'" (after Tanchuma Yashan).

These various phases of observation teach us something about relationships between Man and Man and Man and G-d. For the passive use of the term that describes G-d's appearance to Avraham suggests that Hashem was, as it were, already hovering over Avraham. But it takes a Tzadik to recognize this.

Perhaps only when this Presence manifested itself was Avraham then able to perceive the "visitors". And, our rabbis tell us, it was not just Avraham's natural desire to help others that stimulated him to rush towards his unexpected guests. For he "saw" that the overriding Divine imperative demanded that the best way to serve Hashem at that moment was, indeed, to do what he always did best: to host the guests and inspire them to follow his holy teachings.

Parsha Points to Ponder VAYEIRA

1) Why does G-D say I WILL SAVE THE ENTIRE PLACE on account of fifty righteous (18:26) people while Avraham asked WILL YOU NOT SAVE THE PLACE ON ACCOUNT OF FIFTY RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE (18:24) without mentioning THE ENTIRE PLACE?

2) Why does the Torah waste the words to tell us that Lot's sons did not believe that G-D was going to destroy S'dom (19:14)? What relevance does this have to our lives?

3) The Torah states AND IT WAS AT THAT TIME that Avimelech decided to make a pact with Avraham (21:22) indicating that something about that time prompted this pact. Considering the fact that the previous story related to Avraham sending Hagar and Yishmael away from his home, what led Avimelech to do this specifically AT THAT TIME?

Parsha Points to Ponder

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Answers are somewhere else in this issue Look for them, but only after a good pondering

From an article in the JPost this past Friday. An object is a CHEIFETZ, but a gadget is a

חפץ

FROM THE VIRTUAL DESK OF THE OU VEBBE REBBE

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and the Israel Center.

Q *I know that one may not talk during Kri'at HaTorah, neither during the actual laying nor in between aliyot (bein gavra l'gavra = bglg). What I have not found in S'farim is when this halacha ends. After the seventh aliya? Maftir? Hagba? Haftara? Putting back the Sefer Torah?*

A We will focus on the limitations on speech only regarding the special factors that relate to Kri'at HaTorah. Many topics and modes of discussion are forbidden at any time of the T'filla and in fact, in a shul at any time.

The Gemara (Sota 39a) says: "Once the Sefer Torah is opened, it is forbidden to speak even in matters of halacha." Two sources from the Nevi'im are cited: one focuses on being quiet and one mentions the need to listen. Bglg is not explicitly discussed, and according to several authorities (apparently the Rambam, T'filla 12:9; Bach, Orach Chayim 146, cited by Magen Avraham 146:3 and others; B'er Sheva, Sota ad loc.) it is permitted to talk then. In fact, in regard to another matter of disgrace to the Torah, walking out in the middle, the Gemara (B'rachot 8a) says that it is permissible to go out bglg. It is Rabbeinu Yona (B'rachot 4a of the Rif's pages) who says that once the Torah is opened, it is forbidden to talk until the

end, including bglg. The Beit Yosef (OC 146:2) explains that the prohibition must be based on our concern that the person will continue talking after the reading resumes.

Poskim discuss how broadly to extend this concern. Most permit learning quietly by oneself bglg, where it may be easier to stop and he at least does not disturb others (see Ateret Paz I,3, EH 13). If there is an organized break, such as when someone says divrei Torah to the whole congregation at that time, the problem likely does not exist (Yechaveh Da'at V, 17). Distinctions are also raised regarding the length of the bglg break (Magen Avraham ibid.: Aruch Hashulchan OC 146:3).

Interestingly, the Shulchan Aruch (OC 146:2), while accepting Rabbeinu Yona's stringency, adopts Rambam's timeline for the matter. The Gemara and Rabbeinu Yona speak about from the time the Torah is opened; the Shulchan Aruch and Rambam posit that this is only from the time the reading actually begins. (The Ateret Paz tries to explain why it is easier to stop talking before the initial reading than bglg.) One could have explained Rabbeinu Yona's opinion to mean that it is disrespectful to speak during the entire unit of Kri'at HaTorah, including its breaks, but the

Shulchan Aruch explains his ruling on more pragmatic grounds.

This point is important for the following reason. Other than the length of the break for Kaddish (during which one is anyway forbidden to speak) and Hagba, there seems to be no difference regarding the chance of continuing talking from the beginning straight through the haftara (the Shulchan Aruch ibid. :3 forbids talking during the Haftara). On the other hand, regarding the matter of a unit, there is a big difference. The original takana of laying on Shabbat did not include the Haftara or Maftir. Along with the institution of the Haftara, it was instituted that he who gets the Aliya to read from the Navi should read also from the Torah, so as not to equate an Aliya for reading Navi alone to that of reading the Torah (Megilla 23a). We even separate between the two sections of Torah reading with Kaddish. Therefore, it makes sense that after the seven aliyot, it is no longer considered bglg. In fact, Rabbeinu Yona himself says that the prohibition is in place until he “finishes the parasha”, which implies after the seventh aliya. (We did not find Acharonim who discuss the matter.)

As hinted, there is logic to say that the Shulchan Aruch might argue. However, since he is trying to comply with Rabbeinu Yona, it makes sense to not extend the stringency to the less stringent section of Kri'at HaTorah. Considering that we did not find someone who forbids the matter (albeit, we did not find one who permitted it

Iris, Edith, Brina, Sally

either), we do not feel that one can forbid appropriate speaking before the readings of Maftir and the Haftara.

• / ! / ? / ? !

...וְזָכְרָה לְךָ הַשֹּׁפֵט כְּלִי הָאֶרֶץ
כִּי לֹא יֵשֶׁה מִשֹּׁפֵט:

B'reishit 18:25 - It would be sacrilege even to ascribe such an act to You - to kill the innocent with the guilty, letting the righteous and the wicked fare alike; it would be sacrilege to ascribe this to You! Shall the whole world's Judge not act justly?'

That the last phrase of this pasuk ends with a question mark - or more accurately, with a question mark and an exclamation point - is indicated by the word HASHOFEIT. Notice that the HEI is voweled with a CHATAF-PATACH and that the SHIN consequently has no DAGESH in it. This is the characteristic of a HEI HASH'EILA, the questioning HEI - in contrast to the HEI HAYEDI'A, the declarative HE, which would have a PATACH under it and cause a DAGESH CHAZAK in the following letter (most of the time).

Whether the phrase is an actual question or - as in this case - a rhetorical question, an expression of incredulity, the HEI HASH'EILA is used.

Although we aren't too particular about a SHIN with or without a DAGESH, occasionally, even we must be careful of the distinction: e.g. HAVEIN YAKIR LI...

Glimpses into the world of OU kashrut supervision

L'CHAYIM!

Kashrut issues with brandy

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms defines "brandy" as, "an alcoholic distillate from the fermented juice, mash, or wine of fruit or from the residue thereof..." The plain word "brandy" or the words "grape brandy" refer specifically to distillates made from wine. "Fruit brandy" on the other hand, may refer to brandies "from the fermented juice or mash of whole, sound, ripe fruit, or from standard grape, citrus, or other fruit wine..." In all cases, the normative, plain sense of the word "brandy" unless otherwise designated, is distilled liquor from grape or grape wine. Clearly... brandy is subject to the laws of Stam Yeinam - as any grape juice based products which are touched or moved by non-Jews prior to becoming mevushal (cooked) fall into this category. Stam Yayin is assur m'dirabanan - rabbinically forbidden - and one may not drink it. Poskim discuss whether the Mishna's ruling (Avoda Zara, 29b) that it is forbidden to benefit from it also applies today. Rama (see Shulchan Aruch 123:1, 114:10 and 155:3) states that one can get benefit from Stam Yayin b'makom hefseid (in a situation of potential financial loss). The Shulchan Aruch (123:1) holds that Stam Yayin is forbidden even if there is significant loss involved.

The production of kosher grape juice and wine is quite involved. In order to assure that the product does not become stam yayin, religious Jews (sometimes the mashgichim themselves) take over some or all of the aspects of production. As stated above, once the juice is mevushal, non-Jews can handle the product without

it becoming stam yayin. One innovative method employed is called "hot bricking", where the juice is immediately pasteurized after crushing. This greatly simplifies the hashgacha. Of course with wine, there can be several more complications, as pasteurization is commonly delayed until later stages or - in the case of non-mevushal wines is never done at all. Here, great care is taken to make certain that the non-Jewish workers do not jeopardize the kosher status of the wine.

Brandy and cognac have several further steps. As the definitions quoted above state, "brandy" is a distillate. This means that the end product is made much the way scotch or bourbon is made - the primary material is distilled. Distillation is, essentially, the process by which liquid mixtures are separated by heat. Water boils at 100°C; alcohol at 78.3°C. Other fractions have other boiling points... For example, if we heat a liquid containing alcohol to 78.3°C, the alcohol will vaporize and rise as steam. That steam is then captured and condensed. Done enough times, one can achieve a liquid which is 95% pure alcohol - referred to as "neutral spirits" or "everclear"... There are, as you can imagine, several variations on this theme, including systems that use vacuums and other modifications, all of which effect how the machinery is koshered.

Because alcohol distillation involves cooking at high temperatures, the end product is mevushal. In fact, the word "brandy" comes from the Dutch word brandewijn (burnt wine). While the base materials used to make brandy are subject to the laws of stam yayin, the final product is not. Thus, there is no fundamental problem with having non-Jews handle or pour brandy.

One might ask a simple question - isn't the distilled product only alcohol - and therefore divorced from the original liquid? Responsa Rivash 255 rules that distilled *stam yayin* (brandy) remains forbidden because the *zei'ah* (steam) that rises out of the liquid retains the halachic status of the original liquid. The *Mishkenos Yaakov* (Y.D. 34) has a novel approach to be lenient about *zei'ah* in many cases, but seems to agree that we must be *machmir* regarding *stam yayin*. The *Shulchan Aruch* and later *Poskim* all rule strictly.

Because brandy has a distinct flavor from the original wine, the *bracha* is *shehakol* rather than *hagafen* (see *Noda B'Yehuda*, Y.D. 26). Nevertheless, there is no question that the original wine is intrinsic to the unique flavor of each brandy. This is, in the end, perhaps the most fundamental reason to be stringent - the brandy may be distinct from the wine, but the flavor and character of the wine are still very much present. Rather than seeking to divorce the flavors of the wine from the brandy, brandy distillation is done at the lowest possible temperatures ensuring that the vapors contain as high a proportion as possible of the congeners, the hundreds of organic chemical compounds in the wine that define its flavor profile. In the end, brandy is approximately 40% alcohol - obviously, much of the substance of the original wine remains - albeit in a concentrated form.

This effective concentration of the wine again affects the *Halacha*. In their "straight" normal drinking strength forms, *stam yayin* wine and grape juice have a special halachic status. Unlike other *issurim*, they are *batel b'shisha* rather than *shishim* - one only needs six times the volume of the original to nullify their taste rather than the normative sixty times. When concen-

trated, it is necessary to nullify the full reconstituted volume of the wine! Clearly, as we have pulled the essence of the wine from the liquid, this is many times the volume of the remaining brandy and so, practically, we require the normative sixty times for *koshering*.

Like its other distilled cousins, bourbon, scotch and whiskey, brandy is aged in casks to mature its flavor. Here we get into the much discussed issue of wine casks and distilled spirits. When making cognac, for example, the pre-aged "raw" product first mellows in new oak casks. It is then further aged in mellowed or previously used casks from wine production. Clearly, those casks have to be kosher. Interestingly, the fact that brandy is not *batel b'shisha* (discussed above), leads to a stringency *vis-à-vis* scotch and whiskey. While many follow the *Iggeros Moshe's* leniencies regarding spirits aged in sherry and other wine casks - one of which is that any wine would be *batel b'shisha* in the second liquor - in the case of brandy casks, it would be necessary to nullify significantly more than sixty times the original volume.

Today, thankfully, there are many reliably kosher certified brandies, cognacs and liquors on the market. As with many questions in food, it is necessary to understand where a food comes from and how it is made. Only then can the kosher issues be grasped and dealt with.

Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column: for Parshat Vayeira

Avraham the Teacher

I love to teach teachers. I've had a number of opportunities in my career to lead workshops designed to enhance the skills of classroom teachers. Some of the most powerful learning experiences that I've had have occurred during such workshops.

One of the techniques that I use is to ask the participants, all teachers themselves, to close their eyes and visualize their own favorite teacher. After they have "locked in" that image, I ask them to recall the most important lesson they learned from that teacher.

Invariably, a teacher of long ago surfaces in the mind's eye of the workshop members, and the lesson that they remember is often surprising to them. When we discuss what this experiment in imagery provokes, most of the participants express the gratitude they have now for lessons they learned long ago.

For, you see, a lesson that lasts for many years is a valuable lesson indeed, and one to cherish and for which to be thankful.

In this week's and last week's Torah portion, we read about a most remarkable man, Avraham. This man had many accomplishments. He rescued his captive nephew, brought to the world the concept of monotheism, introduced the practice of hospitality, and stood up to God

Himself in defense of the cause of justice.

Yet, of all these accomplishments, we are told that his most outstanding quality, the one for which he found favor in the eyes of God, was his capacity to teach others, and to teach others the lessons that would last them a lifetime.

"For I have regarded him and chosen him so that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may do righteousness and justice." (*B'reishit* 18:19, following Rashi's interpretation)

Of all the reasons to regard and choose Avraham, the Almighty selects his ability to leave a lasting lesson as the greatest of Avraham's many virtues.

The text stresses "*acharav*", a lasting lesson. The lessons we learn for a lifetime are the true essence of education.

The Hebrew word "*chinuch*" is found in last week's Torah portion for the first time. Rashi, the greatest of the rabbinical commentaries, defines the term as setting in motion a process which will last a long time. And that is what education is all about from a Jewish point of view. It is the initiation of a lifelong process.

Plato, in his masterwork, *The Republic*, which is arguably the earliest treatise on the subject of education, writes, "The direction in which education starts a man, will determine his future life." How well these words capture the concept of education that is expressed in Jewish sources!

Unlike Plato, however, who thought

that only the elite could be teachers, Judaism teaches that every person is a teacher. Every one of us can leave a lasting impact upon another, and most of us, for better or worse, do.

I encourage you, dear reader, to reflect upon some of the important lessons you have learned in your life. I wager that you will find that these lessons go back a long way, and that they were taught to you not only by formal classroom teachers, but by men and women from all walks of life.

Personally, I remember lessons of appreciating authenticity taught to me by my father, of blessed memory. And I remember lessons about the importance of time management from a supervisor in the school system where I once served as a psychologist. I remember learning to enjoy reading from my seventh grade teacher, and I learned to take myself seriously from my Talmud teacher in my early college years.

There is nothing more rewarding to a teacher, rabbi, or parent than encountering a student or child now grown, to be told how they remember something said long ago, perhaps in passing. Discovering that we have influenced another in a positive manner is one of the most pleasing of life's experiences.

A man who was one of the most perceptive of American educators, John Dewey, once said, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." Dewey was on to something, but he too was preceded in this insight by the Jewish sages who taught that Torah study is the essence of life, and that, as Rambam put it, "For the wise, a life without

learning is no life at all."

Avraham and Sarah were the first Jews not just because they happened to be born earlier than the rest of us. They were the first Jews because teaching others was their life's mission. They modeled lives of kindness, empathy, justice and humility. The faithful Jew follows in their footsteps.

Rabbi Joseph Hertz, the late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire whose commentary on the Bible I commend to each of you, looks upon the verse quoted above as follows:

"It is a sacred duty of the Jew to transmit his heritage to his children after him... so that they walk in the way of the Lord and live lives of probity and goodness." All Jewish parents, indeed every Jew, must primarily be a teacher. The eternal values of our faith are the lessons he or she must teach.

Thank you, HaShem, for the rain we've received so far - especially its coming before 17 Cheshvan; please keep it coming - but only GISHMEI B'BRACHA, beneficial, blessed rain.

Spiritual and Ethical Issues in the Bamidbar Stories **I pray you, curse this people for me"** (Bamidbar 22:6){2} by **Dr. Meir Tamari**

"Moshe wrote the Torah and Sefer Bil'am and the book of Iyov" (Bava Batra 14b). There are many varied commentaries and perspectives on this statement but all of them reflect the anomalies of the whole story in which the name of Moshe is not even mentioned and that concerns the actions and philosophies of gentiles. A story that highlights the role in religion and spirituality played by concepts like magic, sheidim and spirits, the validity of blessings and curses through human endeavors, and the existence and powers of dark super-natural forces.

The question as to whether there do in fact exist super-natural forces outside of G-d that have a control or influence the affairs of man, has always played a role in human religious thinking - Jewish and other. Bil'am's ability to foretell blessings or curses is a parallel to the ability of the magicians of Par'o to act similarly to Moshe and Aharon. Was this scientific knowledge or actual spiritual power or pure charlatantry?

"The serpents made by the magicians of Par'o through their secret arts had no real movement although they appeared to be serpents. Sorcery cannot produce any authentic creatures; 'By G-d they cannot create a camel or any other creature' (Sanhedrin 67b). While the acts of sorcery last only for a limited time or are limited in the changes they can make, G-d commands nature to cease altogether, change or function in a time period that He sets and it will never disobey His

word. This is the great difference between the acts of magic compared to an act of G-d. The snake that the sorcerers made was only an illusion so they did not flee, whereas Moshe fled from his rod that was turned into a snake since it was real" (S'forno).

"And the wise men and the sorcerers, and the magicians of Egypt, with their secret arts, did likewise" (Sh'mot 7:11); "And the magicians did in like manner with their secret arts and brought up frogs" (Sh'mot 8:3). "There are guardian angels that guide the stars and the constellations, mazalot and sheidim. They were given certain powers that can be called up by such people" (Ramban).

"All acts of divination, magic, sooth-saying, sorcery are falsehoods and lies, used by idolators to mislead the nations. It is not fitting that Israel, who are clever and knowledgeable people should take notice of such acts of vanity and falsehood, and believe that there is any reality or substance to them. Anyone believing these acts is among the stupid and lacking in intelligence. In contrast, the Torah commanded us that we should be whole hearted, tamim, with HaShem our G-d (D'varim 18:13)" (Hilkhot Avodat Kochavim 12:16).

Perhaps the whole purpose of writing the story of Bil'am by Moshe was to educate against this form of idolatry and to purify the Jewish People of any traces of its persuasive effects, as

enjoined repetitively throughout the Torah.

"You shall not practice divination nor soothsaying" (Vayikra 19:26); "All these things are matters of utter lunacy and folly. Moreover, they thrust a man from faith in G-d and from His Torah, to set him on complete heresy. Therefore He commanded us to set firmly in our heart that all good and evil issue by the word of G-d according to a man's deeds, good or bad: omens neither hinder nor help" (Sefer HaChinuch, mitzva 249,250).

"Turn not to the ghosts or to the familiar spirits. There shall not be found among you one that uses divination, a soothsayer, a sorcerer, an enchanter or one who consults a ghost or a spirit or a necromancer" (Devarim 18:10).

You shall not allow a sorceress to live (Sh'mot 22:17). "This is to prevent idolatry and to keep Israel pure monotheists, since one who deals with them or believes in any or all of these, places his trust in them instead of in G-d" (S. D. Luzzatto, Shadal). "At the root of this precept lies the reason that all manners and matters of sorcery and witchcraft are bad and causes people great misfortunes. Anyone who works at them goes against the wishes of G-d who desires that the world should be settled and civilized in the natural way that was set for it at the Creation" (Sefer HaChinuch, mitzva 62).

The Torah views blessings and curses as the result of man's actions.

To Avraham G-d said, "Be a blessing... and in you shall be blessed all the nations of the earth" (B'reishit 12:2-3).

Yitschak gave Ya'akov the blessing that he should inherit the Land that G-d

gave to Avraham.

Ya'akov blesses his sons (Bereishi 49:1-27): "Gather yourselves and hear what will befall you in the end of days".

"See I have put before you this day the blessings and curses that will come on you, as to whether you keep My commandments or not" (D'varim 11:26-28). "See how the blessings of Israel should be through the Jew-hater Bil'am while the description of the troubles that would come on them would be through Moshe, the Lover of Israel" (Abarbanel). "B'RACHA, the condition of unhindered progressive development and progressive prosperity: ARUR, the condition of lack and of progress - K'LALA, becoming empty, devoid of self substance and becoming shallow or worthless. The alternative between these two conditions is placed before us with G-d's Torah, it depends on us to create the one or other for ourselves" (S. R. Hirsch, D'varim 11:26).

CHIZUK IDUD

(for Olim & not-yet-Olim)

In reading about the trials and tribulations of Judaism's "first family", it seems clear that their lives were no laughing matter. Famine, kidnapping, war, infertility, the near-sacrifice of their child - it all adds up to a continual struggle for survival. Avraham and Sarah - and Yitzchak, too, for that matter - seem to live from one crisis to another. And yet, inexplicably, they laughed! When hearing that they will have a child in their old age, both Avraham and Sarah laugh! In fact, the very name of that child -Yitzchak - means "laughter!"

Chazal struggle with the nature and

meaning of this rather unexpected show of emotion. Some want to say that Avraham's laughter is a kind of incredulous wonder at the realization of G-d's power to perform amazing miracles - as in, "Wow, can you believe what an unbelievable gift I'm about to receive?!" - while the response of Sarah (who, according to the Gemara, did not even have a womb!) is more of a self-deprecating, even challenging laugh, as in, "Hah! Imagine that! At my age, a child?"

But it seems to me that the essence of the message is summed up in Yitzchak's name: "He WILL laugh!" That is, despite all the hardships and challenges we encounter, no matter what obstacles we face along the road of life, ultimately we will come out of this smiling, even laughing. There is a sense of optimism implied in the name, which serves both as hakarat hatov in good times, and abiding faith in Hashem during hard times.

It is particularly appropriate that the sentiment, "He WILL laugh" belongs to Yitzchak, the only one of the Avot who never left the Land of Israel. The implication is clear: Life in Israel can be extremely challenging, and often is accompanied by large doses of self-sacrifice. At times, the ultimate sacrifice - greater even than that of Yitzchak, whose life, after all, was spared - will be called for. Yet, at the end of the day, those "who reap in sorrow shall harvest in joy". It is only in Israel that a Jew can find his fullest expression, experience the Mitzvot in their purest form and come closest to Hashem; and it is only in Israel that the destiny of the Jewish People will be realized. History will show that those who connect their lives to Israel will

have the last laugh.

Rabbi Stewart Weiss, Raanana

TORAH THOUGHTS as contributed by Aloh Naaleh members for publication in the Orthodox Union's 'Torah Insights', a weekly Torah publication on Parshat HaShavu'a

Parsha Points to Ponder

Suggested answers

1) The Netziv explains that Avraham was not sure if G-D would save the entire city on account of the righteous people so he left it open-ended allowing for it to mean the entire city or just the place where the righteous were located. G-D responded that He would save the entire city and not just the immediate location around the righteous people.

2) Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky answers that the Torah is teaching us here that belief in G-D and His involvement in the world or rejection of this reality does not depend on the mind and the intellect but rather on controlling one's desires. The Torah does so by relating that Lot, who was not completely steeped in the pleasures of S'dom was able to accept this reality, while his sons-in-law, who were consumed by the pleasure of S'dom would not let themselves accept G-D and His involvement in the world.

3) The Meshech Chochma teaches that people always saw Avraham as the beacon of chesed and no one ever feared him. However, once Avimelech saw that Avraham had a harsh and cruel side, the only traits which could lead him to dismiss a son in Avimelech's mind, then he feared Avraham and possible retribution for what he did to Avraham and Sarah. Thus, AT THAT TIME, he decided to approach Avraham about a pact.

THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE OF JEWISH LAW

Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean

Lesson # 497

Conditions cont.

In previous lessons we have been discussing betrothal on condition and how conditions are treated in other areas. Continuing with examples from the Shulhan Aruch:

A man says to a woman “you are betrothed unto me on condition that I am literate”. There is an opinion that if he can read three verse and knows how to translate them with the Targum Onkeles, it is sufficient and the betrothal is valid.

If he said to her “on condition that I am a well versed”, he must know how to read Torah, Prophets and the Writings properly with correct pronunciation.

If he said to her “on condition that I am a reader”, he must know how to read and explain Mishna. There is an opinion that if he knows the Aggadic parts of the Talmud, it is sufficient for the betrothal to be effective.

If he said “on condition that I am learned”, he must know how to read and explain Mishna, Sifra, Sifri and Tosefta [Talmudic commentaries on different books of the Bible].

If he said “on condition that I am a learned scholar of traditional lore, he must know how to answer general questions that are posed to him. Even if he can only answer simple questions such as those that deal with holy days which he heard from various lectures that are given prior to he holy days.

If he says to her “on condition that I am wise” he must be able to answer matters which depend upon proper reasoning from known laws to the question that is being asked of him.

If he says “conditioned upon the fact that I am a strong person”, then the condition is complied with if people are afraid of him because of his strength.

If he said “on condition that I am wealthy”, then we look to see if he is honored by the people of the community because of his wealth.

If he made the betrothal conditioned upon the fact that he is a righteous person, the betrothal is valid even if he is known as a wicked person because we say that perhaps he had thoughts of repentance in his heart.

Conversely, if he made he betrothal conditioned upon his being a wicked person, the betrothal is effective since we say that he perhaps had wicked thoughts in his heart.

If he made the condition "that I am a city dweller" and it turns out that he lives in both the city and the countryside; on condition that I am a perfumer” and he is really a perfumer and a tanner, in these situations the betrothal is valid.

On condition that my name is Yosef and it is found that he is called both Yosef and Shimon, in these situations the betrothal is valid. If, however, he stated on condition that my name is only Yosef and he is called both Yosef and Shimon, the betrothal is not valid.

Although the codes speak of these laws being part of betrothal on condition, there are other laws that appear in the codes which do not actually turn upon conditions.

A man betroths a woman and then a moment later either he or the woman says I do not want this betrothal. Their change of heart is of no avail, they are betrothed.

A man betrothed a woman on condition, which has not yet been fulfilled, so that they are not yet betrothed. If thereafter he canceled the condition even solely in her presence, without any witnesses, the condition is cancelled and they are betrothed as if the condition never existed. The same holds true if the condition of their betrothal was made by the woman, she can cancel the condition in his presence without any other witnesses and the condition is deemed canceled and she is betrothed to him without any conditions. Therefore, if a man betroths a woman and then weds her or has intercourse with her without any conditions, she requires a get even if the condition has not been fulfilled since he may have cancelled the condition when he wed her or had intercourse with her. If during the period when the condition to betrothal was still in effect so that they are nor yet betrothed and she accepted betrothal from a second man, she requires a Get from both of them.

A man betrothed a woman with a small coin and added the condition that the betrothal is conditioned upon my giving to you \$1000 and thereafter he says he does not want ever to comply with the condition, Beit Din does not compel him to comply with the condition, the betrothal is null and void and she does not require a Get to be free of him.

Nevertheless the Shulhan Aruch advises that she receive a Get from the man who betrothed her because her next husband may insist that he will not marry he unless she has a Get from the first man. The second man may fear that the first man cancelled the condition and she is now betrothed to the first man who is doing this out of spite to the woman and the second man.

If the man died before the condition of betrothal was complied with, she may get married without any Chalitzta to free her up to get married to another man.

If the condition that the betrothal was based on is for her benefit, she may waive the condition and she is betrothed without any conditions.

Thus if a man betroths a woman conditionally, and then weds her or has intercourse with her without any conditions, she requires a Get even if the condition has not been fulfilled, since he may have cancelled the condition when he wed her or had intercourse with her.

A man was about to go overseas and he betrothed the woman on condition that if he returns within 12 months the betrothal shall be valid as of now, and if not the betrothal is not effective. Before he left, both the man and the woman agreed to prolong the time of the condition to 18 months and he was away more than 12 months and returned before the 18 months were completed. She is betrothed to him. The latter condition has been complied with.

All conditions of betrothal the party who stands to benefit from the condition may waive the condition and say the betrothal is effective without the condition. Thus if they are for the benefit of the party for

example “you are betrothed to me on condition that within 30 days I give to you \$1,000” she may waive the condition and she is betrothed without having received the \$1,000. Or conversely he says you are betrothed unto me on condition that you are a good baker, and she does know how to bake, he may waive the condition and she is now betrothed although she does not know how to bake. In the next lesson we shall IYH discuss that the man says to the woman you are betrothed unto me on condition that you have no vows or defects.

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WISDOM & WIT
 by Shmuel Himelstein

R' Aharon Roke'ach, son of R' Yissachar-Dov Roke'ach, the Belzer Rebbe, noted: ‘My father was a very wise man. As we are told that Hashem gives wisdom to the wise, it implies that the person was already wise before Hashem gave him wisdom. That being the case, I asked my father, ‘where does the person’s original wisdom come from?’

“My father answered: ‘The beginning of wisdom is fear of Hashem.’”

Gimatriya Match

This is one of the Gimatriya-Match finds that cause a WOW.

In this week's sedra we read of the birth of Yitzchak. B'reishit 21:3 says...

וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שְׁמוֹ בְּנֵוֹ הַזֶּה יִצְחָק לְוֵאלֹדֹתָיו
 אֲשֶׁר־יֵלְדָהּ לּוֹ שְׂרָה יִצְחָק׃

And Avraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sara bore to him, Yitzchak.

According to Tradition, Yitzchak Avinu was born on Pesach.

In Parshat Pinchas - Bamidbar 28:18 to be specific, we read...

בַּיּוֹם הַרְּאִשׁוֹן מִקְרַא קֹדֶשׁ
 כָּל־מִלְאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ׃

This refers to the first day of Pesach, Yitzchak's birthday.

These two p'sukim have the same gimatriya (2794).

And look at the next pasuk in Parshat Pinchas:

וַהֲקַרְבָּתֶם אֵשָׁה עֲלֶיהָ לְה'... וְאִלֵּי אֲנֹכִי

Reminds one of Akeidat Yitzchak.

(What takes away a little from this gimatriya match is the fact that the exact same pasuk as the one from Pinchas, can be found in Parshat Emor, where it is referring to the first day of Sukkot. Still, it's not a bad GM. Just don't attribute too much to these Gimatriya Matches; they are "nice", sometimes "very nice", but they don't prove anything.)

TRIDDLES

Prizes for best solution sets (when awarded) are furnished by Noam Productions and/or Big Deal.

Last issue's (Lech L'cha) TTriddles:

[1] Y'rachm'eil and Chetzron

At the end of Megilat Ruth, we read of the lineage of David HaMelech (4:18-22). Now these are the generations of Perez (son of Yehuda / grandson of Yaakov Avinu); Perez fathered Chetzron, And Chetzron fathered Ram, and Ram fathered Aminadav, And Aminadav fathered Nachshon, and Nachshon fathered Salmon, And Salmon fathered Boaz, and Boaz fathered Oved, And Oved fathered Yishai, and Yishai fathered David. We are interested in this TTriddle in Chetzron, the father of Ram - or AVRAM (as in the former name of Avraham Avinu). This RAM, son of CHETZRON, had a brother named Y'RACHM'EIL (not Yerachmiel). Y'rachm'eil was Chetzron's firstborn and - according to Divrei HaYamim Alef 2:25, Y'rachm'eil's firstborn was another RAM. (I.e. uncle and nephew had the same name.) This makes Y'RACHM'EIL also an AVRAM.

[2] Let him decide: BaOmer or LaOmer

On second thought, perhaps he is not objective enough to decide. For S'firat HaOmer, the BaOmer / LaOmer issue is something like po-tei-to /po-tah-to issue, meaning that there seems to be no clear argument for one over the other. Similarly, MASHIV HARU'ACH UMORID HAGASHEM or HAGESHEM. It's just about take your pick. As to this TTriddle - do you sense that we've been stalling because of a corny answer? - we are talking about K'DAR-LA'OMER, king of EILAM, and according to the Midrash, he was EILAM, son of SHEIM, grandson of NO'ACH.

[3] Where did the G"G promise come to fruition?

G"G is GIMEL-GIMEL, which is GOI GADOL, a great nation. G-d promised Avraham Avinu that He would

make (from) him a great nation. In Parshat Ki Tavo (the Bikurim Recitation, as quoted in the Hagada), we are told that Yaakov went down into Egypt... VAYHI SHAM L'GOI GADOL atzum varav. We became (there) a great (and mighty) nation.

[4] The father bumped into the coffee table hard. What got hurt?

You can't work with MP so long without his pun-ishing pun ability rubbing off a little. Groan quietly so as not to disturb or alarm others, and give a little smile for this one. Having used one of the four kings for TTriddle [1], we felt it only fair to use one of the five kings for a TTriddle, this one. What gets hurt when you bump into a coffee table? Usually, your shin. And in the case of your father it would be SHIN-AV (king of ADMA).

[5] Adam, Mahalaleil, Avraham, Yaakov

This was a regular TTriddle in TT 879 - Shabbat B'reishit. Rather than divulge the solution in TT 880 (No'ach), we upgraded it into a special challenge. Still no correct solutions were submitted. So we tried one more time in TT 881 (Lech L'cha), this time making it significantly easier by going down one generation with each name. Adam to Kayin, Mahalaleil to Yered, Avraham to Midyan [someone we'll meet in Chayei Sara when Avraham takes Ketura (possibly Hagar) as a wife (a PILEGESH, really) and has children to whom he gives gifts, but not his heritage.] And Yaakov to Reuven. As it turns out, we are now dealing with a set of fathers rather than grandfathers. Kayin had a son named CHANOCH, and he built a city and named it with the same name, CHANOCH. Yered, a great-great-great-grandson of Adam HaRishon via Sheit, was the father of CHANOCH (the father of Metushelach). One of Avraham's "sons", Midyan, had a son named CHANOCH. And one of Reuven's sons was also named CHANOCH. Looking just at the 5 books of the Chumash, there is no name that is attached to more different people than CHANOCH. (In the rest of Tanach, there are many more names that are used for several different people.) CDs are due three people who submitted the solution - EB, GR, GM.

[6] Parshat No'ach and Seuda HaMafseket

In the solution to last week's TT [1], we posed a No'ach-related question that might have been a TTriddle for Parshat No'ach, but wasn't. The question was, what is the connection between Parshat No'ach and the pre-fast meal? The answer is that the Haftara of Parshat No'ach immediately precedes the Haftara of a Fast Day, from the book of Yeshayahu. Both the Haftara of No'ach and the meal referred to are right before the fast.

[7] ParshaPix for Lech L'cha

In the past, we have always tried to include the ParshaPix explanations in the same issue as the ParshaPix, so that it can serve as a guide to using the PP to quiz your family and guests. Of late, we have not had room for everything that we wanted to include in Torah Tidbits, and the ParshaPix explanations have been one of the casualties. Here's a quick rundown on Lech L'cha's PP (we hope to resume putting the explanations in for the current ParshaPix). Arrow from the birthday stuff into Eretz Yisrael is Lech L'cha... MiMoladt'cha... Arrows from Eretz Yisrael to the south-west and back again is the round trip to & from Egypt. Compass on the outline of the map is G-d's instructions to Avraham to walk the Land, its length and breadth, and in all directions. Arrows branching in opposite directions was Avraham's offered choice to Lot when they separated. Avraham's oath before the king of S'dom, that he would not even take a thread or a shoelace. Telescope and stars stand for G-d's taking Avraham outside to see the stars and to promise that his descendants will be as countless as the stars. Crowns represent the war of the five kings against the four. Father with his little son represents Brit Mila. Tent that Avraham pitched a few times in the sedra. Brit Bein HaB'tarim, with each split animal accompanied by a triangle, standing for the adjective M'SHULASH or M'SHULESHET. The bird at the top was NOT cut. Liver, as in KAVEID (in Hebrew), a word meaning "heavy" and applied in Lech L'cha to the famine as well as to Avraham's wealth when he left Egypt.

Anvil, hammer, nails are from the haftara. CBS logo, an EYE as in the city AI, mentioned many times in the book of Yehoshua, but once in LECH LECHA as well. Hagar the Horrible, at least spelled in English like Hagar. Superman, played by the late actor Christopher Reeve, as in the RIV between the shepherds of Avraham and those of Lot. The leaves are from the Lote tree. The digital alarm clock with the time 3:18, for the number of people Avraham took with him to fight to save Lot. Or just Eliezer, gimatriya 318. Seder plate reminds us of the prophecy of going down to Egypt. CDs are for EIMEK HA-SIDIM. ESHKOL (cluster of grapes), A NEIR (a candle) and a MEM-RAY for Avraham's allies.

Biblical to modern: he's his own grandpa

George Bernard's son,
Leonard Edward

first successful modern typewriter and an angelic meal

United Road Towing and who in Vayeira?

Bargaining starts at 14 more than the whole world

Four are the mothers and three are the fathers... Sara, Rivka, Avraham, Rachel, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Leah. What kind of order is that?! And this? Avraham, Yaakov, Yitzchak, Leah, Rivka, Rachel, Sara.

PUAH INSTITUTE Who is his Mother? part 2

In our continuing review of the case of Sean and Carolyn Savage and the child that she carried to term, we are discussing issues regarding halachic maternity. In the theoretical case that such a baby would be born to a Jewish couple, who would be considered his halachic mother?

Last week we discussed the reasoning of those who believe that the genetic mother is also the halachic mother, regardless of who actually carries and delivers the baby. In the case of the Savage family, she was accidentally impregnated with another couple's embryos during an IVF cycle. According to this reasoning, the genetic mother would be the actual mother of the child that Carolyn Savage recently delivered.

However, there are dissenting halachic opinions that posit that the birth mother is the halachic mother; they bring a number of proofs for this position.

One source is the Mishna regarding the case of a young Orla tree that is grafted to an older non Orla tree (we have previously discussed this mishna in our review of fertility preservation and ovarian grafting). Even though the young tree was less than three years old (pre-grafting), the fruit grown post-grafting is not considered to be orla, since it is considered to be part of the host tree. Specifically, the fruit has grown and been nourished solely by the host tree.

Similarly, once the woman receives the egg and becomes its sole source of nourishment and growth, the egg loses its independent identity and becomes

part of her. Therefore, she should be considered the halachic mother.

Another fascinating source is the case of Rachel and Yosef. The Gemara (in B'rachot 60b) discusses whether one can pray that the gender of their unborn child be changed. The Gemara notes a precedent in the case of Dina, Leah's daughter. Dina's name means "to be judged". The Gemara explains that Leah understood that Yaakov would have only 12 sons. She herself had already had 6 of them and each maidservant had 2 sons. She also knew through Ru'ach HaKodesh that her unborn child would be a boy.

Were Leah to give birth to another son, Rachel would be left with the opportunity to have only one son, less than either of the maidservants. Leah "judged herself" and determined that she would pray for the baby's gender to be changed in order to spare her sister from embarrassment. So she prayed and the fetus was switched from male to female; Dina was born.

The Maharasha, adds that what actually happened was that both Rachel and Leah were pregnant at the same time. Leah with a boy and Rachel with a girl. Leah's prayers resulted in the exchange of the unborn children. Leah gave birth to Rachel's genetic child and Rachel gave birth to Leah's.

It is clear from the Torah that Yosef was Rachel's son, even though he was the genetic child of Leah. According to this opinion, it is clear that the determining factor in motherhood is giving birth.

Next week we shall see one other opinion.