

INSIGHTS from the SEDRA

Insights from the Sedra is a project of the Scholar's Kollel of Great Neck. It aims to provide several questions and answers about the Sedra, culled from various commentaries, including the following: Baal Haturim, Darash Moshe, Vedebartha Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky, Torah Treasures by Dov Furer, Wellsprings of Torah by Alexander Friedman, and Kol Dodi by Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, Great Torah Lights by Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Goodman, Something To Say by Dov Wasserman, The Vilna Gaon, and Growth Through Torah by Zelig Pliskin.

לאברהם למקנה לעיני בני חת

“To Avraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Ches...” (23:18)

Why the particular stress on the words *“in the presence of the sons of Ches”*? The *Meshech Chochmah* offers the following enlightening explanation: The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Choshen Mishpat* 190) rules that land can be acquired by means of either payment (*keseif*), a deed (*shtar*), or a physical act of possession (*chazakah*). However, according to *Rav Hai Gaon*, a Jew can acquire land from a non-Jew only by transfer of a deed or a physical act of possession (as cited in the commentary of the Vilna Gaon, note 194); he cannot establish ownership by payment only. Because of this, our Sages decreed that if a Jew buys a house from a non-Jew in Eretz Yisrael, a deed must be written (by the non-Jew), even on *Shabbos*, since such an acquisition cannot be affected by payment.

Now it becomes clear why the emphasis is on *“in the presence of the sons of Ches”*. These words, literally translated, mean in the eyes of the sons of *Ches*. In other words, by paying 400 silver shekels he acquired the field only *“in the eyes of the sons of Ches”*, according to their view, but according to Jewish law, he would acquire ownership to the field and the cave only through the physical act of possession of burying his wife Sarah there. Accordingly, we read in verse 20 that after the burial *“the field and the cave were established to Avraham as an ancestral burial site by the sons of Ches.”* Only then was the legal acquisition accomplished.

(Meshech Chochmah)

ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל

“And Avraham was old, advanced in age, and Hashem blessed Avraham in all things.” (24:1)

Surely the *Torah* is not apprising us of *Avraham's* success in amassing material wealth. The *Torah* intends to teach us the true meaning of wealth. Success is not measured by quantity, but rather by quality. Everything *Avraham Avinu* possessed was worthy of blessing. To possess a fortune means nothing if that fortune is not blessed. Everything that *Avraham* has was a source of blessing to him. Why?

Harav Moshe Swift z.l. suggests that the answer lies in the fact that *Avraham* controlled his possessions, rather than the possessions dominating him. He had his business dealings with various people; he was even compelled to bargain for a small plot of land to be used as a burial site. Yet, he never employed any form of unethical behavior. He was never submissive to whims and passions. On the contrary, he always ruled over them. This was the greatest tribute to the Patriarch.

This is a remarkable difference between the man who permits oneself to be driven by his material ambitions and the man who holds the reins controlling his moral integrity. To reach the end of one's life-span, able to look back with pride at a life of self-discipline and honor, is truly a significant achievement and a most notable epitaph.

QUESTION: Why does the Torah add the words, "*ba bayamim*" – "advanced in age" [literally "days"]?

ANSWER: A Jew comes in to this world with a mission to study Torah and do good deeds. Often, days and years go by and in retrospect, he realizes that he has accomplished very little and wasted precious time. The Torah attests that *Avraham* was able to account for what he accomplished each and every day of his life. Not only did he age in years, but "*ba bayamim*" – he was able to recall each day and say what he had achieved in it. (Zohar)

QUESTION: The word "*bakol*" (בכל) has the numerical value of 52, which is also the same value as the word "*ben*" (בן) – "son" – thus alluding that *Avraham* had a son (*Rashi*). What is the connection between *Avraham's* becoming old and his having everything – a son?

ANSWER: There is an old adage, "A father or mother can manage their ten children, but ten children cannot take care of one father or mother." Often as parents grow older, their children consider them a burden and find caring for them difficult.

As a dutiful son, *Yitzchak*, however, was profoundly grateful for the love and concern provided by *Avraham* and *Sarah*. The Torah tells us that *Avraham* was blessed with "everything" to say that though he remained alone and was advanced in age, his son *Yitzchak* stood at his side and was totally dedicated to his welfare. He took care of *everything* *Avraham* needed to make his old age pleasant and comfortable. Such a child is indeed a blessing to a parent.

(Vedebarta Bam)