KING DAVID KABBALAH
SICHOS SHABBOS

FROM THE KABBALISTIC TEACHINGS OF RABBI SHEPHERD SHLIT''A



1 MEAL

A little context:

This commentary addresses Bereshit (Genesis 23:2), where the Torah describes the death of Sarah and Abraham's mourning. The verse notes that Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hebron, in the land of Canaan. Abraham comes to mourn and weep for her. The Or HaChaim delves into the deeper significance of Sarah's death, viewing it not simply as the cessation of life but as a transition deeply rooted in spiritual reality.

וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה

The Or HaChaim explains that the Torah carefully avoids attributing "death" in the ordinary sense to the righteous. For tzaddikim, death is not an end but a transformation—a separation of the soul from the physical vessel. He interprets "Kiryat Arba" (literally, "City of Four") to mean a city constructed from the four fundamental elements of creation: fire, water, air, and earth. When Sarah "dies," it signifies the soul's departure from this physical structure.

However, the verse emphasizes "הִיא חֶבְרוֹן" ("it is Hebron"), indicating that even after death, the righteous remain connected to the world. The name Hebron (from chibur, meaning "connection") symbolizes the ongoing spiritual influence of Sarah, as tzaddikim remain spiritually alive through their deeds and legacy. This concept aligns with the teaching that "tzaddikim, even in their death, are called alive" (Talmud, Berachot 18a).

The reason the righteous can transcend physical death lies in their ability to transform their physicality into spirituality. Through Torah study and good deeds, they refine the material elements of their being, aligning them with the purity of their soul. Or HaChaim connects this to the Rambam's teachings in Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah (4:5), which discuss how one element can transform into another. Similarly, the righteous elevate their physical essence to become part of their spiritual nature. Sarah, in her lifetime, achieved this transformation, leaving her body imbued with holiness.

Moral Lesson:

Sarah's death teaches us that the ultimate goal of life is not merely to exist but to transform the physical into the spiritual. By living a life of Torah, mitzvot, and good deeds, one can transcend the limitations of the material world and leave an enduring legacy of holiness. Even after their passing, the righteous continue to illuminate the world, proving that their connection to life is eternal.

Sarah's life challenges us to elevate our actions and ensure that the material aspects of our existence are not merely consumed but sanctified for a higher purpose.

2 MEAL

A little context:

This commentary by the Or HaChaim focuses on Bereshit (Genesis 24:19), where Rivka offers to draw water for Eliezer and his camels. The verse emphasizes her generosity and attentiveness. The Or HaChaim examines the precise language used to highlight her character, moral insight, and sensitivity in this act of kindness, which ultimately confirms her worthiness as a matriarch of the Jewish people.

וַתְּכַל לְהַשְׁקֹתוֹ

The Or HaChaim notes the unusual phrasing. Rather than stating that Eliezer finished drinking ("ויכל לשתות"), the Torah emphasizes that Rivka completed the act of giving him water. This highlights her proactive and thoughtful effort. She didn't merely provide the water passively; she ensured he could drink comfortably without needing to exert himself, likely because she noticed he was weary from his journey.

Second understanding:

Rivka displayed an extraordinary awareness of Eliezer's well-being. She understood that excessive drinking after travel might harm someone fatigued, as thirst can distort a person's judgment about how much water they truly need. With wisdom and compassion, Rivka determined the appropriate amount for Eliezer and limited his intake to avoid harm.

To clarify her motives, she immediately reassured him of her generosity by saying, "Also for your camels, I will draw water until they have finished drinking." This shows her actions stemmed from care and love, not laziness or an attempt to reduce her effort. She prioritized his health while ensuring he wouldn't misinterpret her intention.

Third understanding:

The Or HaChaim connects this act to a teaching from the Sages in *Berakhot 40a* on the verse, *"And I will give grass in your fields for your animals, and you shall eat and be satisfied"* (*Devarim 11:15*). This teaches that one should first feed their animals before themselves. However, Rivka demonstrated that this rule applies only when there is no immediate danger or significant distress.

In Eliezer's case, his thirst and fatigue made it clear that he was in urgent need. Rivka prioritized alleviating his suffering before attending to the camels, acting in accordance with the principle that in situations of danger or discomfort, human needs come first.

Once she finished attending to Eliezer and ensured he was no longer distressed, she turned her attention to the camels. The Torah emphasizes her diligence: *"until they had finished drinking,"* indicating she went beyond what was necessary, not estimating their needs but allowing them to drink to their full satisfaction.

Moral Lesson:

Rivka's actions model an ideal combination of kindness, wisdom, and sensitivity. Her thoughtfulness reflects a profound understanding of both human and animal needs, and her generosity extends beyond the minimum requirement. This balance between compassion and intelligence is what made Rivka worthy of becoming a matriarch.

For us, Rivka's behavior teaches that true kindness involves not only the act itself but also careful consideration of the recipient's condition and needs.

Whether helping people or animals, we must act with empathy and attentiveness, ensuring our actions bring genuine benefit.

3 MEAL

A little context:

The verse (Bereishit 24:29) introduces Rivka's brother, Lavan, who hears of her encounter with Eliezer. While Lavan is later characterized as deceitful and self-serving, the Torah here describes him using language typically reserved for righteous individuals, saying, ולבן אח ושמו לבן (Lavan had a brother, and his name was Lavan)—placing his name after his title, as with righteous individuals. The Or HaChaim grapples with why Lavan, known for his wickedness, is presented in such an honorable manner.

ולרבקה אח ושמו לבן

The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 10) teaches that the Torah typically places the name of a righteous person after their title, as in ושמו בועז ("and his name was Boaz"), whereas with wicked individuals, their name precedes their description, as in *נבל"ושמו"* ("his name was Nabal"). Why, then, does the Torah describe Lavan—a known rasha (wicked person)—in the same format used for tzaddikim (righteous people)?

The Or HaChaim offers a profound explanation, noting that while Lavan was indeed wicked, his actions in this specific instance reflected those of a righteous person. When he heard that a stranger had approached his sister, Rivka, he was filled with concern for her well-being and ran to confront the man. This protective instinct for his sister was an act of tzidkut (righteousness), and the Torah acknowledges this by adopting the language reserved for tzaddikim.

Why did Lavan run?

The Torah emphasizes, וירץ אל האיש החוצה אל העין ("he ran to the man, to the spring"). The Or HaChaim explores the underlying motivation for Lavan's haste. The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Chayei Sarah 109) explains that Lavan ran because he saw the gold jewelry Eliezer had given to Rivka and was greedy for wealth.

However, if greed were his only motive, the verse's order seems strange. It should have first mentioned that Lavan saw the jewelry and then described his running. Instead, the Torah narrates Lavan's running first, implying that his initial motivation was unrelated to greed.

A different perspective:

The Or HaChaim proposes that Lavan's initial reaction was not greed but protectiveness. Seeing his sister return after interacting with a stranger, Lavan became suspicious of the man's intentions, especially since Eliezer was a foreigner. His concern for Rivka's dignity and safety led him to run toward the man with the intent of confronting him. This act of loyalty and family defense, in the moment, aligned with the behavior of a tzaddik.

Later, the Torah explains that when Lavan saw the jewelry and heard Rivka recount Eliezer's words, his initial suspicion subsided. Realizing that Eliezer's intentions were honorable, Lavan shifted his focus to extending hospitality, though his greedy tendencies still influenced his actions.

Moral Lesson:

The Torah's description of Lavan in this instance serves to highlight a key principle: even those known for their wickedness are capable of moments of righteousness, and Hashem does not withhold reward for good deeds, however fleeting. Lavan's protective concern for his sister, though overshadowed by his greed, was still acknowledged and recorded by the Torah.

This teaches us to appreciate the complexity of human behavior. Even those we might dismiss as entirely wicked may have redeeming moments that reflect goodness. Moreover, we should strive to act with righteousness in all circumstances, knowing that every action is judged independently and recognized accordingly.