

Torah Talk—מאמרי תורה



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**Parashat Chayei Sarah
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**פרשת חיי שרה
כ"ה במרחשון תשע"ז**

Torah Reading: *Bereshit* [Genesis] 23:1-25:18

In this *parasha*, following the death of Sarah, Avraham purchases a burial plot and sends his servant, Eliezer, to find a wife for Yitzchak. He finds Rivka and brings her to Yitzchak to become his wife.

At the beginning of chapter 24, we read that “וְהָיָה בְרֵךְ; וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-אַבְרָהָם וְאֶת-יִצְחָק, בָּא בְיָמָיו; וְהָיָה בְרֵךְ.” – Avraham was old, advanced in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham *bakol* (in all things).” This verse is the bridge between the story of Avraham burying his wife, Sarah, and the story of his sending his servant to find a wife for his son, Yitzchak. It is logical that as Avraham nears death, he should be concerned with finding an appropriate wife for his son, the heir to his physical and spiritual fortune, so that the couple can propagate and carry on the family name and traditions.

The word “*bakol*” has been the topic of many commentaries and sheds light on what the Torah considers important. According to *pshat* (the original intention of the literal meaning of the text), *bakol* means “with riches, possessions, and honor.”

But the term *bakol* means much more than physical riches. The Rabbis discuss this term in the Babylonian Talmud, *Masechet* (Tractate) *Baba Batra* 16b:

[It is written,] Hashem had blessed Avraham in all things [*bakol*]. What is meant by 'in all things'? R. Meir said: In the fact that he had no daughter [he later explains that this was a blessing for Avraham for he could not have married her except to the cursed sons of Canaan. If he were to send her to his country, she would also have begun to worship idols]; R. Judah said: In fact he had a daughter. Others say that Avraham had a daughter whose name was *ba-kol*. R. Eliezer the Modi'ite said that Avraham possessed a power of reading the stars for which he was much sought after by the potentates of

East and West. R. Shimon b. Yochai said: Avraham had a precious stone hung round his neck which brought immediate healing to any sick person who looked on it, and when Avraham our father departed from this world, the Holy One suspended it from the orb of the sun.

Ramban (Nachmanides, 13th century Spain/Palestine) elaborates on the idea that *bakol* means that Avraham was blessed with a daughter. Says Ramban,

Avraham did have a daughter since the Merciful One did not even cause him to lack a daughter, and that was the blessing implied by the expression, *bakol*, in all things, for he had everything that people desire, completely without exception... *Acheirim* [other unnamed Talmudic Rabbis] established a new interpretation on this verse, a very profound matter, and they explained with it one of the secrets of the Torah. Thus they said that the word *bakol* hints at a great matter, namely, that Hashem has an attribute called *Kol* (All), so called because it is the foundation of everything... The profit of the earth and the abundant goodness that is bestowed upon all that come into the world is on account of this attribute *kol*. It is the eighth attribute [of the thirteen attributes of God; that is, *emet* – truth].

This one word *bakol* indicates that Hashem blessed Avraham with physical riches, with a son, perhaps with a daughter, and with the attribute of truth. Whichever of these things Avraham was blessed with before his death – or perhaps he was blessed with all of these things – Avraham turned his attention to the propagation of the nascent Jewish people by sending his servant, Eliezer, to find an appropriate wife for Yitzchak. We learn a number of positive behaviors from the patriarch Avraham. In this portion, we learn that we should focus our attention not on that which we have accumulated in the past, but on the spiritual legacy we leave for our children as they build their future.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- If someone said that Hashem had blessed you with "everything," what do you think would be included in that?
- What moral lessons can we learn from the stories of Avraham and Sarah?
- How is truth the foundation of everything?