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9 years of Points to Ponder on Parashas Chayeii Sarah

(In memory of Leah Bas Yechiel Alter a”h)

**חַיֵּ֣י שָׂרָ֔ה Chayei Sarah (23:1)** - Why does the Torah repeat this twice? **Rav Gershon Edelstein Shlita** noted that the **Ksav V’Hakabbala** explained that we lead 2 ditinct lives -- Chayei Ruchniyus (spiritual lives) and Chayei Gashmiyus (material lives). The spiritual lives are filled with the Torah and the Mitzvos we do and learn. The material life focuses on the physical needs. Sarah was careful to see to it that even the physical needs were used L’Shem Shomayim. Rav Edelstein added that we often think that a holy person is one who divorces oneself from the physical world totally and does not eat or drink. This is not the case. One who takes care of physical needs L’Shem Shomayim, is duly rewarded.

**וַיִּֽהְיוּ֙ חַיֵּ֣י שָׂרָ֔ה מֵאָ֥ה שָׁנָ֛ה וְעֶשְׂרִ֥ים שָׁנָ֖ה וְשֶׁ֣בַע שָׁנִ֑ים The days of Sarah were 100 years and 20 years and 7 years (23:1) – Rashi** notes that for beauty she was like a seven year old even at 127. Why does the Torah want us to pay attention to how Sarah appeared physically? Why is that important**? Rav Zeidel Epstein ztl.** commented that a seven year old does not focus on her natural beauty. She often covers it in the dirt that comes from child’s play. At that age, pure beauty shines through. Here too, the Torah is stressing to us that even though Sarah was a beautiful woman, she related to that beauty with the interest of a seven year old and chose to focus on things more important to her.

**וַיִּֽהְיוּ֙ חַיֵּ֣י שָׂרָ֔ה מֵאָ֥ה שָׁנָ֛ה וְעֶשְׂרִ֥ים שָׁנָ֖ה וְשֶׁ֣בַע שָׁנִ֑ים  And the life of Sarah was 127 years – the years of Sarah’s life (23:1)** - The Midrash comments that in her life, her years were complete and full. **Rav Chaim Cohen ztl. (HaChalban)** explains that although the limitation of time should define life as devoid of Nitzchiyus, when a Tzaddik lives, s/he lives so completely and fully that it rises above time. The limits of physical life quickly give way to an eternal Nitzchiyus that transcends the boundaries of time. Thus, the life of Sarah was Shnei Chayeii Sarah, in this world and the next she was complete and full.

**וַיִּֽהְיוּ֙ חַיֵּ֣י שָׂרָ֔ה מֵאָ֥ה שָׁנָ֛ה וְעֶשְׂרִ֥ים שָׁנָ֖ה וְשֶׁ֣בַע שָׁנִ֑ים  The days of Sarah were 100 and 20 and 7 years, these were the years of Sarah (23:1)** – **Rashi**cites the Midrash that each segment of Sarah’s life was similar and then he adds that they were all equal in goodness. What does he add? How are years equal? **Rav Amital Ztl**. explained that a person must  adapt his ways to the period in which he lives; he must not ignore what is around him and the processes going on outside. We find that the shekalim used to purchase the Temple sacrifices were raised each year anew; the money from last year could not be used for this year’s sacrifices. Every year is different. Our conduct must be up-to-date and suited to the times.  This is perhaps the intention of the repeat. By noting that Sarah remained consistent we see that while she adapted to the times, she stayed internally consistent in the process.

**וַיִּֽהְיוּ֙ חַיֵּ֣י שָׂרָ֔ה מֵאָ֥ה שָׁנָ֛ה וְעֶשְׂרִ֥ים שָׁנָ֖ה וְשֶׁ֣בַע שָׁנִ֑ים** And Sarah’s days were 127, the years of Sarah’s life (23:1) - The Midrash (58:1) comments that the Possuk in Tehillim (37:18) “Yoeya Hashem Yimei Timimim refers to Sarah Imeinu whose whole life was Tamim – wholesome. **Rav Yehuda Amital ztl**. once noted that Sarah’s life was not unique. Textually we do not find her doing extraordinary things. One need not lead a revolution in order to be deserving of praise in Hashem’s eyes. One needs to act wholesomely in his or her Avodas Hashem with sincerity.

**וַיִּֽהְיוּ֙ חַיֵּ֣י שָׂרָ֔ה מֵאָ֥ה שָׁנָ֛ה וְעֶשְׂרִ֥ים שָׁנָ֖ה וְשֶׁ֣בַע שָׁנִ֑ים  And the days of Sarah were 127 (23:1)** – The Midrash tells the story of Rabbi Akiva who saw his students falling asleep in the Shiur. Intending on waking them up, he asked them to explain the merit of Esther that allowed her to reign over 127 nations. He explained that it was in the merit of Sarah who lived 127 years. What is the connection between Esther and Sarah? And why would this connection wake the students of Rabbi Akiva? **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita quoted the Chidushei HaRim** who explains that Rabbi Akiva was trying to teach them not to sleep when not necessary because each moment left to sleep costs a person an entire city. **Rav Chanoch Henoch of Sasov**adds that he wanted to raise them meaning he wanted even their mundane activities to be utilized for higher, loftier goals.

**שְׁנֵ֖י חַיֵּ֥י שָׂרָֽה The years of Sarah (23:1**) – **Rashi** explains that all her days were equally Tov. Is that really true? How can one compare the time Sarah spent in the company of her husband with the time spent in Avimelech’s palace or Pharaoh’s. **Rav Yitzchok Sorotzkin ztl.** explained that Sarah Imeinu set a purpose in her life—namely to popularize and publicize the name of Hashem in the world. Anything she did or experienced was part of that mission and as such, the days were all equal in goodness.

**שְׁנֵ֖י חַיֵּ֥י שָׂרָֽה These were the years of the life of Sarah (23:1**) - The **Shelah Hakadosh** writes that from the Zohar it is apparent that one who makes himself small in this world will be great in the world to come. However, one who makes himself big in this world will be shrunk in the world to come. He notes a hint to this in that we go from the plural Shanim when we note the small number and the larger number 100 we use the world Shana. **Rav Don Segel Shlita** wondered why it was that we learn this lesson in this Possuk? He answers that when the entire Possuk is completed we repeat the years in total to show that they were all good. How does one achieve all years being good? The answer is that when someone creates an internal locus of control, a internal sense of consistency that is not shifted by outside events, then no test can sway the person.

**שְׁנֵ֖י חַיֵּ֥י שָׂרָֽה The years of Sarah’s life (23:1) - Rashi** explains that they were all equal for their goodness. But were they? Sarah went through different trials and tribulations -- Mitzrayim, Gerar, childlessness etc.? How could those be equal to the year of Yitzchak’s birth? **Rav Aharon Levin the Reisher Rav ztl.** explained that in the natural ups and downs in life, Sarah managed to hold them L’Tov -- she displayed an inner peace.

**בְּקִרְיַ֥ת אַרְבַּ֛ע הִ֥וא חֶבְר֖וֹן In Kiryat Arba which is Chevron (23:2)** - Why does Avraham want to buy and bury Sarah in Chevron specifically? **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted the Zohar which notes that it was the entrance into Gan Eden. Rav Schacher asked that if this is the case then paying 400 Shekel should have been Ona’ah? Rav Schachter answered that when some thing is valued by one and not by another it is not Ona’ah. Ona’ah is based on what it would sell for in the market. Rav Schachter added that although Avraham paid good money for the land he did not live there long term because it is hard to be living so close to the opening of Gan Eden.

**יָּ֨קָם֙ אַבְרָהָ֔ם מֵעַ֖ל פְּנֵ֣י מֵת֑וֹ Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry for her (23:2) – Rashi** explains that she passed away when she heard about how Avraham took her son to the Akaida and was almost killed. **Rav Shimson Dovid Pincus ztl**. points out that we need to always be careful to offer the end of the story – positively –before the danger. Sometimes offering the negative first can be so devastating that it can have disasterous effects on the listener.

**יָּ֨קָם֙ אַבְרָהָ֔ם מֵעַ֖ל פְּנֵ֣י מֵת֑וֹ וAvraham got up from his departed (23:3)** - The Midrash comments that the Satan made sure to regularly blame him for Sarah’s death in order to get Avraham to regret participating in the Akaida. **Rav Dovid Povarsky ztl.** points out that we see how the Yetzer HaRa does not give a person a moment’s rest. After passing the test of the Akaida which the Satan tried to thwart, You’d think Avraham would have defeated Satan or at least earned a break from him. Rav Dovid explains that this would not be so...and the Satan keep to his regular regimen.

**וַיָּ֨קָם֙ אַבְרָהָ֔ם מֵעַ֖ל פְּנֵ֣י מֵת֑וֹ And Abraham rose from his grief (23:3)** - It’s interesting to note that Hashem does not come to tell Avraham what to do here. Why? **Rav Lord Jonathan Sacks ztl** suggests that is where Hashem gives us the message that he is waiting for us to act. Avraham makes himself ready to take care of his 2 most important missions -- securing the land and the future -- with a burial plot for Sarah and a wife for Yitzchak. Rabbi Sacks adds that first you have to build a future. Only then can you mourn the past. When Noach looks back, he cannot handle the trauma. When Lot’s wife looks back, she freezes in her tracks. The Torah way is to move onward in completing missions in life in order to rise above grief and trauma.

**גֵּֽר־וְתוֹשָׁ֥ב אָֽנֹכִ֖י עִמָּכֶ֑ם I am a stranger and a resident among you, give me a place to bury my departed (23:4) – Maran Harav Schachter Shlita** once explained the reason Jews insist on designating and maintaining a separate place for burial. He cited **Rav Chaim of Volozhin** who noted the difference between Tashmishei Mitzva (which although must be accorded respect can be discarded respectfully) and Tashmishei Kedusha (which need to be “put into Sheimos” and buried appropriately). Rav Chaim Volozhiner explained that things that contained Torah may NOT be simply discarded and thus need to be buried. Therefore, even a Bayis of Tefillin that merely contains the Shin of Torah, must be treated as Tashmishei Kedusha like Mezuzah and Tefillin as well. The body of a Jew whose life was filled with Torah, must qualify as a Tashmish Kedusha and needs a separate Geniza – hence the Jewish cemetery.

**וַיַּֽעֲנ֧וּ בְנֵי־חֵ֛ת The children of Cheit responded (23:5)**– **The Midrash** notes that this section mentions the children of Cheit 10 times paralleling the 10 commandments. The midrash adds that one learns the need to examine his purchases and acquisitions in the same was that one fulfills the 10 commandments. **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** explains that the cycle of life carries ups and downs. One needs to be able to handle that cycle and everyday life with the same grounding that one finds in the Aseres HaDibbros.

**וַיִּשְׁתַּ֥חוּ לְעַם־הָאָ֖רֶץ לִבְנֵי־חֵֽת: And he bowed down to the nation of the land to the children of Chet” (23:7)-** The **Seforno** notes that Avraham bowed to the heads of state as they represented the people. Thus, Avraham bowed to them out of respect. However, the Midrash (58:6) clearly notes that Avraham was bowing to Hashem in thanks. How does one clear the discrepancy? **Rav Dovid Kviat (Sukkas Dovid) ztl.** notes that there is no contradiction. It looked like he was bowing to them in a display of respect but really it was the Shechinah that he was bowing to. Rav Dovid Kviat compares this to an old story that they tell about Aristotle who was known not to bow before anyone he considered beneath his “station.” One day a student saw him bowing before a wealthy – but boorish – individual. Asking Aristotle why he bowed before the boor, Aristotle responded, “I am not bowing before him. I am trying to talk into his ear. Unfortunately his ear is so low it is on the ground, and so it is there that I must bend to speak.

**וְעֶפְר֥וֹן ישֵׁ֖ב בְּת֣וֹךְ בְּנֵי־חֵ֑ת Efron was sitting among the Bnei Cheit (23:10) – Rashi** explains that he was appointed Dayan over them on that very day. **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl.** asked why Avraham was so insistent on not taking a wife from the daughters of Chet even after they had demonstrated such kindness to him in the beginning of the Parsha? He answered that from Rashi’s comment about Efron we learn a lot about the people of Chet. The people are judged on the basis of what they value and therefore whom they choose to lead them. When Avraham saw that Efron was outwardly a nice person but internally interested in money alone, he saw that this was a staple idea of his people – wholly inconsistent with the Avraham way of living.

**וַיָּ֨קָם֙ אַבְרָהָ֔ם מֵעַ֖ל פְּנֵ֣י מֵת֑וֹ And all the trees (23:17)** - We never mentioned the trees in the field surrounding Mearas HaMachpela, why mention it now? **Sfas Emes** suggests that when one goes through life, s/he needs to count every blessing specifically and use it to connect to Hashem. **Rabbi Naftali Lavenda Shlita** added that Avraham saw the potential in the tree for food and Mitzva (See **Shaarei Aharon** that he used the trees to make a Sukkah). He added that we often only take stock of someone when s/he has left this world. We would do better not waiting to appreciate the years when the tree is already down.

**וְאַֽחֲרֵי־כֵן֩ קָבַ֨ר אַבְרָהָ֜ם אֶת־שָׂרָ֣ה אִשְׁתּ֗וֹ אֶל־מְעָרַ֞ת שְׂדֵ֧ה הַמַּכְפֵּלָ֛ה  And afterwards Avraham buried Sarah, his wife (23:19) – Rav Chaim Soloveitchik ztl.**pointed out that when we note that Jews and non-Jews need to be buried in separate cemeteries, it follows that if someone were accidentally buried in a non-Jewish cemetery, that would make him a Meis Mitzva. **Rav Schachter Shlita** pointed out that there is a reason for this differentiation. **Tosafos**(Meseches Nazir) notes a difference between Adam and Ha’Adam. We are called Adam and the nations of the world are not. However, they ARE included in Ha’Adam. The reason, noted Rav Schachter in the name of Rav Soloveitchik, is that as a nation, we treat everyone with respect. The nations of the world focus only on Ha’Adam, those who are given significant station in life for whatever perceived reason. That is why when we see someone buried in an inappropriate manner, even the Kohein Gadol on Yom Kippur must go to deal with him – that is what it means to treat everyone as a significant Adam. It is a unique status of Am Yisrael that sets us apart in life, and in death.

**וְאַבְרָהָ֣ם זָקֵ֔ן And Avraham was old (24:1)** – The commentaries note the juxtaposition between the establishment of Avraham’s age and the sending of Eliezer. Why? **Kli Yakar** suggests  that that age is the reason why Avraham didn’t undertake this sacred mission himself. **Rav Shimshon Dovid Pinkus ztl.** adds that Avraham was the one who davened to Hashem to create old age experience in order to distinguish between him and Yitzchak. He was the first “old man”. Thus, the founder of old age was busy with regulating the path of gentrification and could not take the time to find a wife for Yitzchak.

**בַּכֹּֽל Hashem blessed Avaham BaKol “ (24:1)** – Really? The tests, the loss of his wife twice to kings and later to Hashem ? the challenge of childlessness? The sending away of Yishmael? This is Bakol? **Rav Moshe Nechemia Kornitzer ztl.** noted that the Midrash says Bakol means he had a stone around his neck that when he wore it and anyone gazed at him, that person was healed. How? It wasn’t the power of the stone, it was the power of Avraham to see and raise the best in everyone. When one’s outlook is so positive it isn’t hard to see how s/he sees everything as a blessing!

**שִֽׂים־נָ֥א יָֽדְךָ֖ תַּ֥חַת יְרֵכִֽ**י **Place your hand under my thigh (24:3)** – **Rashi** explains that he wanted Eliezer to hold his Bris. However, that explanation seems strange. The thigh is not a Cheftza Shel Kedusha like the Mezuzah, Tefillin or Sefer Torah. (See Shavuos 47b) What does holding it there do? **Rav Mordechai Gifter ztl.** explained that Milah is different because it is like a Sefer – the Sefer HaBris – hence one can perform it despite the fact that it causes pain and it can be done on Shabbos in the proper time – for it is an Os --not simply something that you do. **Rabbi Dr. Sol Roth Shlita** often explained that a Bris is a unique Mitzva for it is the very mark that makes a person into a walking Sefer Torah – by making him Jewish.

**שִֽׂים־נָ֥א יָֽדְךָ֖ תַּ֥חַת יְרֵכִֽי Place your hand under my thigh (24:3)** – The Gemara (Shavuos 38b) notes that for strong oaths that are biblical in nature, an oath has to be taken while holding a Cheifetz of significance. **Rav Shteinman Shlita** asked why the Bris was such a Cheifetz if, after all unlike a Tallis or a pair or Tefillin where it will be reused in Mitzva performance again, once the Bris is done, the place is no longer significant? He answered that  since Mila stays with a person for the rest of his life, it is considered sacred all the time. This is why the Talmud (Menachos) notes that Dovid HaMelech was aware of Hashem’s presence  even in the Mikvah because he was aware of his Bris.

**שִֽׂים־נָ֥א יָֽדְךָ֖ תַּ֥חַת יְרֵכִֽי Place your hand under my thigh (24:3)** - Why does Avraham request Eliezer to do this? I thought taking something holy was unique to a Shuvas Hadayanim? Why the stress here? **Rav Schachter Shlita** suggested that the decision of who was going to be a matriarch of the Jewish people was going to be a serious decision with the ramifications of the level of a Shevuas HaDayanim that is able to be compelled. Rav Soloveitchik ztl. noted that Kohein Gadol’s Shevuah too, was so important, it was able to be compelled like the Shevuas HaDayanim and our Shevuah.

**לֹֽא־תִקַּ֤ח אִשָּׁה֙ לִבְנִ֔י מִבְּנוֹת֙ הַכְּנַֽעֲנִ֔י Don’t take a wife for my son from the daughters of Canaan (24:3)** – Why was Avraham so concerned about this? One might argue that Avraham was worried that the daughter in law would be unduly influenced by the character traits displayed in her in-laws home. What then was gained by finding Rivka in a home where a Besuel (or a Besuel’s wife acc. To Rav Hirsch) and a Lavan served idols? Why would that be better than the poor middos of Canaan? **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita quotes the Kli Yakar** who notes that the sins of Besuel’s home were based on intellectual failings. The sins of the Canaanites were in their characterological makeup. The former can be corrected when living in a home where ideas can be challenged and truth discovered. But changing bad middos is much more difficult as they become more entrenched in the person’s upbringing and makeup.

**וְלָֽקַחְתָּ֥ אִשָּׁ֖ה לִבְנִ֥י לְיִצְחָֽק: And take a wife from there for my son for Yitzchak (24:4)** – Why did Avraham insist on the long trip to search a wife? Why not find a girl from the families of Aner, Eshkol and Mamre? Why not from Eliezer who was the primary disciple and Teacher’s assistant to Avraham (Yoma 28b)? What was the great contribution of the bandits Besuel and Lavan? **Rav Shaul Yisraeli Ztl.** explains that when it comes to building a relationship, it is not the externals that make a difference. It is not where you come from that carries the weight in as much as it does not impact you positively. Avraham knew that the best source of a wife for Yitzchak would be one whose educational philosophy was not Arur – that had the basic element of Chesed at the core. This was not going to be found in the land of Canaan.

**אוּלַי֙ לֹֽא־תֹאבֶ֣ה הָֽאִשָּׁ֔ה לָלֶ֥כֶת אַֽחֲרַ֖י אֶל־הָאָ֣רֶץ הַזֹּ֑את Maybe the woman will not agree to follow after me (24:5) – Rashi**explains that Eliezer had a daughter and he tried to make a Shidduch between her and Yitzchak and Avraham told him that his son was a Baruch and Eliezer’s daughter was from an Arur and a Baruch and an Arur do not match. Yet, Avraham sends Eliezer anyway to do the mission he certainly wanted to fail at. How could Avraham trust him? **Rav Elya Svei ztl.** explains that Eliezer was clearly so aware of his role in life that once his Shidduch idea was rejected, he could be trusted to carry out his duties fully. He understood that he was Eved Avrohom and so he begins his story with that caveat when in Besuel’s home. His ability came from an awareness of who he was, an acceptance of what each of the kids needed (both his daughter and his master’s son) and his firm desire to do right by all of them. That type of Anavah is refreshing.

**וְהָיָ֣ה הַנַּֽעֲרָ֗ה (כתיב הנער) אֲשֶׁ֨ר אֹמַ֤ר אֵלֶ֨יהָ֙ הַטִּי־נָ֤א כַדֵּךְ֙ וְאֶשְׁתֶּ֔ה וְאָֽמְרָ֣ה שְׁתֵ֔ה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּ֖יךָ אַשְׁקֶ֑ה אֹתָ֤הּ הֹכַ֨חְתָּ֙ לְעַבְדְּךָ֣ לְיִצְחָ֔ק And it will be that the girl that I ask her to let me drink (24:14)**– Why was the water test enough to prove that Yitzchak was the proper wife for Yitzchak? Shouldn’t Eliezer need more proof? **Rav Chaim Viskor ztl (Rosh Yeshivas Beis Hatalmud)**explained that sometimes, by great people, simple actions are indicative of deeper convictions. This was the case with Rivka and the water test. It is reminiscent of a quip of **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz** who noted that he would rather hear small stories about big people than big stories about small people.

**שְׁתֵ֔ה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּ֖יךָ אַשְׁקֶ֑ה אֹתָ֤הּ  Drink and I will also give your camels to drink (24:14)** - The **Mogen Avraham** notes that although one cannot sit down to a meal before feeding his animals, when it comes to drinking the opposite is true. A person can drink prior to giving to his animals to drink. **Rabbi Abba Wagensberg Shlita** explained that homiletically water represents Torah and thus when it comes to water, the person comes first.

**וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּ֖יךָ אַשְׁקֶ֑ה And she will say drink and also I will give your camels to drink (24:14) – The Mogen Avraham** asks why this is not a violation of the principle that one may not eat until he gives his animal something to eat (Eisev L’Behemteicha V’Achata V’Savata)? He answers that there might be a difference between food and drink. **Rav Schachter  Shlita** would often remind us that **Rav Soloveitchik ztl**. would differentiate between those who were home versus being a guest. A person in his home, must feed his animals first since he is a sinner and his animal is not. However one may not accuse a guest of being lower than an animal and so, cannot feed him on a lower level than the animal.

**שְׁתֵ֔ה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּ֖יךָ אַשְׁקֶ֑ה And she will say drink and I’ll also give your camels to drink (24:14)** - Why did Rivkah think it was ok to give Eliezer water to drink before having him feed his camels. Isn’t one first supposed to give the animals to eat and drink before s/he does? **Rav Schachter Shlita quoted Rav Soloveitchik ztl**. who used to say that the reason why animals go first is that they never sinned. Man sinned, thus he needs to work in order to earn his daily bread – but the animals did not. Therefore when man must choose who comes first, the one who did not sin should precede he who did. However, when one is honoring a guest, one does not have a right to call the guest a sinner. Thus Rivka was correct in choosing to feed Eliezer first and thereafter his camels.

**שְׁתֵ֔ה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּ֖יךָ אַשְׁקֶ֑ה And she will say “drink and I will also give your camels to drink” (24:14)** – What kind of test is this? What does it prove? **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explains that the attribute of Chessed is about giving beyond --without boundaries or limits merely because one wants to give. This is what Eliezer saw in Rivka and saw as essential in a matriarch of the Jewish people.

**אֹתָ֤הּ הֹכַ֨חְתָּ֙ This is the proof that she is the one you selected (24:14)** - Eliezer’s request that Hashem make his job easy is difficult to understand. Is this the proper way to find a Shidduch? **Rav Nosson Wachtfogel ztl** explains that Hashem built the world on Chessed. Chessedis that the other person has all of his needs taken care of, fully. Hence, Adam had it all in Gan Eden (According to the Gemara <Sanhedrin 59b> , he even had Malachim roasting meat and making wine for him). This was Eleiezer’s Tefillah -- That Avraham be Zoche to the same treatment of Chessed that the world was built on.

**אֹתָ֤הּ הֹכַ֨חְתָּ֙ And she will say drink and I will also give your camels to drink she is the one whom you proved is for Yitzchak (24:14)** – Why is this the ultimate distinction of Chessed? **Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** suggested that the ultimate description of Chessed is to do it irrespective of whether someone else helps. Here Eliezer would be sitting with servants, maidservants and himself and she will still rush to feed the animals irrespective of everyone around her. That is the one who deserves to be included among those who are called Merkavei HaShechina – they are blind to everyone else when the Mitzva of Hashem is before them.

**וַיָּ֥רָץ הָעֶ֖בֶד לִקְרָאתָ֑הּ  And the Eved ran up to greet her (24:17) – Rashi** asks what it was that made Eliezer run up to Rivka. Rashi answers that he saw a miracle, that as she approached the well, the waters rose to greet her. **Rav Elazar Shach ztl.** asks that if he saw such a miracle, why did he need to test her Middos? Why was the miracle not sufficient? Rav Shach answers that we learn from here that one can perform miracles and still be a destructive individual based on negative Middos. Good Middos are not necessarily guaranteed just because one performs miracles (or is smart, brilliant etc.) <A similar comment is offered in respect to why Yitzchak still needed to bring her to his mother’s tent even after discussing the Eved’s miraculous trip and return.

**וַיָּ֥רָץ הָעֶ֖בֶד לִקְרָאתָ֑הּ The servant ran to greet her (24:17) - Rashi** notes that Eliezer ran to her because he saw that miraculously the waters toward her. But if he saw a miracle, why did he bother to test her? **Rav Yisroel Reisman Shlita quoted both Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl and Rav Mordechai Druk ztl.** who explained that just because we observe a miracle does not mean that the message carrier is kosher. Rav Moshe notes that Nevuchadnetzer was a Rasha but deserved to have certain miracles happen to him.

**גַּ֤ם לִגְמַלֶּ֨יךָ֙ אֶשְׁאָ֔ב She said drink and I will also give water to your camels (24:19**) - What is the unique Chessed of giving water to a thirsty person? Many would give water to the thirsty man? **Rav Eliyahu Dushnitzer ztl (Menahel of Lomza Yeshiva)** explained that the greatness in her action is that she was willing to give the camels to drink. There were a large number of camels and camels in need of water can drink many, many gallons of water each. Despite the major undertaking of waiting for each one, Rivka told Eliezer that on her own she would give each camel his needs. That is what Chessed is about -- offering to take care of the other’s need, offering to take full responsibility for that need personally and taking care of the other’s need fully -- no matter the time cost.

**וַתְּכַ֖ל לְהַשְׁקֹת֑וֹ וַתֹּ֗אמֶר גַּ֤ם לִגְמַלֶּ֨יךָ֙ אֶשְׁאָ֔ב  Drink and I will also give your camels (24:19)** – Why wasn’t Eliezer concerned that Rivka might have Chessed as a paradigm but not have the proper Hashkafa? **Rav Michel Feinstein ztl.**explained that when Eliezer saw her Chessed he knew that even if her Hashkafa needed tweaking, she would, utilizing her towering Middas HaCessed, learn from Yitzchak and endear herself to him.

**גַּ֤ם לִגְמַלֶּ֨יךָ֙ אֶשְׁאָ֔ב   I will also draw for your camels (24:19)** – Why was she allowed to quench his thirst before that of the camels? **Rav Schachter Shlita** cited the Mogen Avraham who suggested that the rules for eating require feeding animals first while drinking puts man first. He then added in the name of **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.**  that in one’s own home, he knows that he is personally a sinner and must work harder for his bread as opposed to the animal who does not. However, when dealing with one’ guests it is a lack of Derech Eretz to invite the guest and then feed the animal before the respect the guest deserves.

**וַתְּמַהֵ֗ר And she hurried (24:20) –** Why does Rivka hurry so much in the story? Why is it so important to note her time factor? **The Brisker Rav ztl.** answers that Eliezer first came close to Shkiya and davened and requested of Hashem to bring the episode to a close that day. Why did he demand the rush? The Brisker Rav explains that as far as Tzaddikim are concerned Shidduchim should not take so long and so Eliezer wanted to move things forward fast.

**וְהָאִ֥ישׁ מִשְׁתָּאֵ֖ה לָ֑הּ The man was waiting to see if Hashem made his trip successful or not (24:21)** - What was he waiting for? She already passed his test**? Sforno** answers that he wanted to see if she was really the one who did the total Chessed or not. **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon Shlita** explains that if Rivka was willing to trade her Chessed for some trinket or jewelry she would have cheapened her action into something small.

**וַיִּקַּ֤ח הָאִישׁ֙ נֶ֣זֶם זָהָ֔ב בֶּ֖קַע מִשְׁקָל֑וֹ And it was when the camels finished drinking that the man took a nose ring (24:22)** – Why did Eliezer wait until the camels finished drinking before rewarding Rivka for her Chessed? **Rav Shimshon Dovid Pinkus Shlita** quotes the **Sforno** who said Eliezer wanted to see if she was going to charge for her Chessed. Even if she was only fishing for a compliment, it would have been a cause for some pause. However, Rivka merely turned in order to leave. To her, doing chessed was to be expected and didn’t require a compliment

**בּ֖וֹא בְּר֣וּךְ Come blessed one of Hashem (24:31)** - Elsewhere, Rashi (24:39) notes that as a Canaanite, Eliezer’s daughter could not marry Yitzchak since she was Arur and he Baruch. How does Lavan refer to Eliezer as Baruch? **Rav Menachem Genack Shlita** noted that since Eleiezer was doing Shlichus for Avraham, and Avraham is the Mekor haBeracha, Eliezer takes on the status of Baruch for the duration of the mission.

**וַיּוּשָׂ֤ם (כתיב ויישם) לְפָנָיו֙ לֶֽאֱכֹ֔ל וַיֹּ֨אמֶר֙ לֹ֣א אֹכַ֔ל עַ֥ד אִם־דִּבַּ֖רְתִּי דְּבָרָ֑ I will not eat until I have spoken my words (24:33**) – Why did Eliezer rush? Why couldn’t he eat first**? Rav Gedaliah Eisman ztl.** noted that Eliezer saw that this was a moment of opportunity. When moments of great opportunity come up in life, we need to grab them and maximize on them and not let them slide by us.

**עֶ֥בֶד אַבְרָהָ֖ם אָנֹֽכִי I am the servant of Avraham (24:34) – The Tiferes Shlomo of Radomsk ztl.** explains that a person must always be aware of his lowly station in life, lest he become too haughty. This is why the higher levels of the Beis HaMikdash were not sanctified – the high areas lack the Shiflus and as such cannot be holy. **Rav Baruch Simon Shlita**added that the entire uniqueness and greatness of Eliezer does not come from his station or title but rather from his awareness of his goodness of fit –as the servant of Avraham.

**אֻלַ֛י לֹֽא־תֵלֵ֥ךְ הָֽאִשָּׁ֖ה אַֽחֲרָֽי: And I said to my master perhaps the woman will not follow me (24:39) – Rashi**notes that the lack of the letter Vav implies that Eliezer hoped that Avraham would allow Yitzchak to marry HIS daughter. **The Kotzker Rebbe** notes that in the original story the word Ulai is written WITH a Vav. He answers that the Torah is letting us know that in his own mind, Eliezer thought he was doing his master’s bidding with a full heart. It is only the Torah that get into the depths of a person’s heart to note if he is fooling himself. **Rav Dovid Povarsky ztl.** added that we see from here that even when one does something positive, he needs to check out his intentions to see if his motivations are indeed complete and pure.

**וָֽאָבֹ֥א הַיּ֖וֹם אֶל־הָעָ֑יִן And I came today (24:42) – Rashi** cites Rav Acha who notes that Hashem prefers the chatter of the servants of the Avos even more than the Torah of the children. Hence, the entire story of Eliezer is repeated. But why repeat? What is in it for us? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky ztl.** suggested that when the Rambam offers his commentary on the Mishna he is generally brief. However when it comes to the matters of the faith at the beginning of the last chapter of Sanhedrin, he is exceptionally verbose. The reason, suggests Rav Yaakov, is that the fundamentals of the faith are spelled out there and thus, it needs to be complete. Similarly, the fundamentals of Judaism are in these stories and they need to be spelled out. Two crucial lessons here include the fact that the evil idol worshipper Lavan admitted that the story was clearly proof of Hashem and the fact that Eliezer was consistent in his fulfillment of his masters wishes and really checked Rivka out well – and prayed to find her.

**The words of the Servants of the forefathers (Rashi 24:42)** – The Torah elongates the story of Rivkah’s finding, first telling the story and then retelling it through the eyes of Eliezer. Why? **HaRav Yisroel Belsky ztl.** once noted that in fact, the story is repeated 4 times – twice relating the Tefilla (at the well and again in Besuel’s home) and then the unfolding of the result of the Tefilla (at the well and again in the house). Rav Belsky explains that marriage requires a 4 step process of analysis –to see if both the potential bride and potential groom accurately understand themselves and the roles that the others play in their lives. In the end, it is the couple that needs to decide if they are headed in the same direction and if they can make the Shidduch “go.”

**אַחַ֖ר תֵּלֵֽךְ Afterward you will go (24:55)** - The Gemara (Nedarim 37b) calls these words part of a group known as Ittur Sofrim which are Halacha L’Moshe M’Sinai. The only question is, what is the intention of this classification**? Rav Yonasan Sacks Shlita** noted that this is really a Machlokes -- The Ran notes that when the wording in the possuk is extended and unnecessary, written in order to beautify the concept, this is Ittur Sofrim. The Rosh argues that Ittur Sofrim is actually the opposite -- when you CUT the language down to make it shorter. Meiri notes that both cannot be true because we cannot imagine the Torah being extended or cut for mere beauty. Thus, he assumes Ittur Sofrim has to do with the Trup. Radvaz cannot figure out what the role of the Sofrim versus that of Halacha L’Moshe M’Sinai really is. He explains that it is a major problem to think that the Rabbis made any change to the Torah. The writings of the Torah are L’Moshe M’Sinai and the slightly “different” style of language has been checked by the Sofrim and is indeed as the way that the original was received.

**אַל־תְּאַֽחֲר֣וּ אֹתִ֔י Do not delay me, Hashem sped my path (24:56)** - Why does the fact that Eliezer completed his mission quickly affect the rest of the story? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explains that Eliezer had completed Erusin on Yitzchak’s behalf. Normally there used to be a year long gap between Erusin and Nesuin. Eliezer was explaining that if his search was quick, it must be because Hashem does not want him to delay the Nesuin.

**וַיְשַׁלְּח֛וּ אֶת־רִבְקָ֥ה אֲחֹתָ֖ם וְאֶת־מֵֽנִקְתָּ֑הּ And they send Rivka and her Nursemaid (24:59)** – Why point out that they sent her nursemaid? Why was she so important to the trip? **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl.** explains that Devorah was no ordinary nursemaid. Her job was to be the pedagogue who would teach & guide Rivka in spiritual matters. She was the one who possessed the stories and the traditions that guide life and it was she who was to be entrusted with the ability to transmit them. It is for that reason that Rivka later sent her to Yaakov as well.

**וְיִצְחָק֙ בָּ֣א מִבּ֔וֹא בְּאֵ֥ר לַחַ֖י רֹאִ֑י  Yitzchak returned from the Beer L’Chai Roee (24:62) – Rashi** explains that he had gone there to bring Keturah to his father. Why was Yitzchak involved in a Shidduch for his father while his father was busy with a Shidduch for him? **Rav Moshe Wolfson Shlita** explained that Avraham was a man of Chessed and Yitzchak’s primary strength was Gevurah. Beis Hillel’s strength is Chessed and Beis Shammai’s – Gevurah. Avraham held like Beis Hillel that Pru U’Revu is fulfilled when one has a boy and a girl. Avraham had Yitzchak and BaKol. He felt he was done and therefore needed to take care of Yitzchak’s Chiyuv first. Yitzchak held like Beis Shammai that Pru u’Revu is fulfilled with 2 sons. Therefore since Yishmael was born before Bris Milah (and was a Ger), Avraham had not fulfilled the Mitzva in his opinion and so he set out to take care of his father first.

**וְיִצְחָק֙ בָּ֣א מִבּ֔וֹא בְּאֵ֥ר לַחַ֖י רֹאִ֑י And Yitzchak came from the Be’er L’Chai Roee in the south (24:62) - Rashi** explains that he was coming to bring Hagar back to Avraham so he could remarry her. However, prior to this, **Rashi** had explained that Hagar had returned to her father’s idols. If that were the case, how did Avraham dare remarry her? **Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl.** answers that she never actually returned to Avodah Zara. After all she was known as Keturah since her activities were as blessed as Ketores. Rather, the Torah castigates Hagar’s immediate thought that she might return to her father. That thought alone gets her the castigation even though she overcame it. Rav Wolbe adds that there is danger in learning Chumash to assume that the great ones were small minded and simple. The simple text does not suffice in the examination of Hagar’s supposed idol worship.

**ו**יּ**ֵצֵ֥א יִצְחָ֛ק לָשׂ֥וּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶ֖ה Yitzchak went out to speak in the field (24:63)** – The Talmud tells us that in the Beis HaMikdash, each day they waited until the sunlight was visible over Chevron before offering the Korban HaTamid. The Chassidishe commentaries explain that was the case because we want to utilize the merits of the Yesheinei Chevron. **Rav Soloveitchik** ztl. pointed out that the Talmud explained Tefillos were established by the Avos. That is the Heter we have to daven in the first place. It is more than just utilizing a symbol – they are the basis of the practice. **Rav Schachter Shlita** added that Yitzchak had a different experience than Avraham. Avraham was an optimistic person and lived a life like his Tefillah time – at the morning when optimism reigns. Yitzchak lived in more constrained times and had his Tefillah of Mincha whose time is reminiscent of the Tefillah itself as well. It comes at a point of realizing reality, like the way Yitzchak lived. Our Tefillah merely follows their model.

**יְבִאֶ֣הָ יִצְחָ֗ק הָאֹ֨הֱלָה֙ שָׂרָ֣ה אִמּ֔וֹ And Yitzchak brought her to the tent of Sara, his mother" (24:67).- Rashi** explains that the same miracles concerning the candle, the Challah and the cloud that were present when his mother was alive, returned when Rivka joined him. The Midrash (60:15) describes the order differently – placing the cloud before the dough and finally about the candle. Why are these symbols important? Why does Rashi ignore the Midrash’s addition of a 4th idea – that the doors were always open wide? And why is the order of the miracles reversed? **Rav Amital ztl.** noted that each miracle was significant. The candle symbolized the idea that if there is real holiness in the home on Shabbat, then Shabbat influences the whole week. If no holiness can be felt during the week, this indicates that Shabbat is not being imbued with the proper celebration and sanctity. The dough symbolized the idea that having dough to spread around is not dependent on wealth but rather on good will. (therefore that and the doors are really one and of the same). The cloud symbolized the idea that each household needs to have a spiritual purpose, something beyond the basic maintenance of the household, some spiritual goal to which it can aspire. Rashi lists the miracles from the smallest to the greatest. First, one has to observe the basic mitzvot such as Shabbat. Then one also must address the mitzvot pertaining to interpersonal relationships and kindness. Finally, it is important that there should be some lofty spiritual goal – a cloud attached to the tent. The Midrash, on the other hand, simply lists the miracles in the order of their actual realization in the case of Rivka: since she had a superior spiritual purpose, the other phenomena followed naturally.

**וַיְבִאֶ֣הָ יִצְחָ֗ק הָאֹ֨הֱלָה֙ שָׂרָ֣ה אִמּ֔וֹ וַיִּקַּ֧ח אֶת־רִבְקָ֛ה וַתְּהִי־ל֥וֹ לְאִשָּׁ֖ה וַיֶּֽאֱהָבֶ֑הָ And Yitzchak brought her to his mother’s tent and he married Rivka and he loved her (24:67)** – After all the miracles, why did Yitzchak need to bring Rivka into the tent before deciding to marry her? **The Brisker Rav ztl.** explains that even after seeing miracles, one needs to know whether a person is a good person before deciding to marry him/her.

Avraham died at a ripe old age (25:8) – The Gemara (Bava Basra 91a) notes that on the day that Avraham died, the world leaders declared, “Woe onto the world that has lost its leader and the ship that has lost its captain.” What was to be added in their declaration comparing Avraham to a ship’s captain? Rav Avraham Yaakov Neimeric (Eishel Avraham Bava Basra) explains that when a world loses a leader, another is destined to come quickly – V’zarach HaShemesh U’Ba HaShemesh. However, when a ship loses its captain at sea, a new captain doesn’t arrive as fast and who then rises to the top in the moments of freight and transition?

**וַיֵּצֵ֥א יִצְחָ֛ק לָשׂ֥וּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶ֖ה Yitzchak went out to speak in the field (24:69) - Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** explains that one cannot compare 12 years of learning followed by a gap followed by 12 years of learning with 24 years of straight learning. **Rav Yisroel Kamenetzky Shlita** said the same regarding 6 hours of work with a gap followed by 3 more hours to 9 straight. The gap with time for Mincha, is essential for keeping one’s ruchniyus as a stop-gap during the day. Too often, we need that break to set our minds in the right place  and recalibrate what is important in our lives.

**וַיֹּ֧סֶף אַבְרָהָ֛ם Avraham added and took a wife (25:1)** - To what did he add? And why does he marry again at 140? **Rav Dovid Feinstein ztl** explained that although Avraham had tasted Olam Haba, he realized that he still needed to experience Olam HaZeh by grabbing all of the Mitzvos and Maasim Tovim he could. To do so, he used the chance  to add to his Mitzvos by engaging in Pru U’Revu also. That engagement required a wife so he added to his mitzvos by taking a wife.

**אֵ֗לֶּה שְׁנֵי֙ חַיֵּ֣י יִשְׁמָעֵ֔אל**  **And these are the days of the life of Yishmael (25:17)**-  **Rashi** explains that the only reason we mention these dates is in order to help us understand the days of Yaakov’s life. The **Turei Even** (Megillah 17a) asks  why do we not assume that Yishmael deserves mention simply because he did Teshuva? He answers that the years of the life of the majority of the Shevatim do not get mentioned unless there is a definite need (as in the case of Yosef or Levi). The **Maharsha**opines that when one does Teshuva, it does not justify the years of sin and therefore we need an additional reason for the reference to his longevity. **Rav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita** suggests that although he did Teshuvah, Yishmael never became a Tzaddik and remained a Hediyot. That is not a reason to give him mention in the Torah.

***Haftarah:***

**- וַיְכַסֻּ֙הוּ֙ בַּבְּגָדִ֔ים וְלֹ֥א יִחַ֖ם לֽוֹ And he was covered in clothing and he could not wam himself (Melachim Alef 1:1) - Chasam Sofer** notes that there is a Segulah that when one is angry s/he should grab the corners of his/her Begged. (Kanaf =Kaas in Gematria) We are told that Dovid’s inability to remove the chill from him was a result of his cutting off the corner of Shaul’s clothes since Shaul was filled with anger toward Dovid for no reason. Chasam Sofer said that Dovid was noting that if Shaul doesn’t want to hold his corner of his clothing, why does he need it? This was possibly the second time Shaul’s corner was cut off. According to Chasam Sofer the first was when Shmuel cut off Shaul’s corner after the episode with Amalek. There (and this is a dispute in the Rishonim) Shmuel cut off the corner of Shaul’s begged to hint to him that if you show mercy to those you are not supposed to, in the end you will show anger to those you are supposed to show Rachmanus for.

**וַיְכַסֻּ֙הוּ֙ בַּבְּגָדִ֔ים וְלֹ֥א יִחַ֖ם לֽוֹ: And they would not warm him (I Kings 1:1)** – Why would the clothes not warm him in his old age? The gemara (Berachos 62b) explains that when someone is callous with clothing it does not protect him. Dovid cut off the corner of the clothing of Shaul’s clothes and thus was punished wherein his clothes did not protect. **Rav Aharon Kotler ztl**. added that if it could happen in regards to clothing, it is certainly true in regards to Mitzvos. When we learn issues and see it as not relevant to our lives, this too, is Baz L’Chol Davar. Therefore, we need to double down and re-commit to find and make the connections to relevance in our Torah study.

**וְהַמֶּ֚לֶךְ דָּוִד֙ זָקֵ֔ן**  **And King David was getting old (Kings I, 1:1)** – The description of the trial and challenge of the Haftorah sharply contrast the description of the same period of time in Divrei Hayamim. How do we explain the calm there in contrast to the description here? **Rav Yigal Ariel** suggests that the 2 works examine the world in two different ways. The description in Divrei HaYamim is from a nationalistic perspective. From that angle Dovid appointed Shlomo and that was the end of the story. However, Sefer Melachim highlights the involvement of Hashgacha in even the individual sections of life. Dovid made a choice – he could have left the throne to be determined naturally but like Avraham and Yitzchak who when they were Ba Bayamim – prepared for the future to make sure that there were no challenges to Hashem’s will, Dovid chose the same ensuring that his Melucha remain strong forever.

**Avishag Hashunamis**– Why is the look of the girl so important? And why are all of the Jewish nation involved? **Rav Ezra Schwartz Shlita** suggests that the entirety of the process was controlled by the Avdei HaMelech who seem predisposed to Adoniyahu and their desire to discredit Dovid so that Adoniyahu could ascend the throne. Why then would Dovid go along with their plan? It seems that Dovid had a different intention here – he wished to prove that he had done Teshuvah for the Batsheva episode and indeed Shlomo was legitimately entitled to the throne.

**וַאֲדֹנִיָּ֧ה בֶן־חַגִּ֛ית מִתְנַשֵּׂ֥א** **And Adoniah the son of Chagit raised himself up saying he will rule (Melachim I: 1:5)** – Why did Adoniahu think he could take over while Dovid was still alive? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** explains that the process of succession in royalty is not determined merely by Yirusha rules. For if it were, the Bechor would automatically take over. Rather, rulership requires a sound mind. Adoniahu thought Dovid was no longer capable of ruling the people and thus prepared to fill the ruling seat until Dovid’s death when Shlomo would take over. Avraham too, passed the kingship of the Jewish nation over to Yitzchak even though he lived another 35 years. Once Yitzchak married, Rivka moved into the tent of Sarah – the White House – and assumed the leadership mantel.

**וַאֲדֹנִיָּ֧ה בֶן־חַגִּ֛ית  Adoniyah (Melachim I 1:5)** - Why is he sometimes known as Adoniya and others as Adoniyahu? Chasam Sofer explains that when you have an extra letter it refers to a time when the person had an extra connection to Hashem and Siyat D’Shmaya. We know the same of Yonasan who was known as Yehonasan when after the episode of Machar Chodesh when he went a Madreiga and the Heh is added.

**וְגַם־ה֚וּא טֽוֹב־תֹּ֙אַר֙ מְאֹ֔ד He was good looking and was next in line after Avshalom (Melachim Alef: 1:6) -** Adoniyahu identifies 2 reasons why he should be the next king -- that he was chronologically appropriate and that he was good looking. Why are these important? **Rav Zvi Schvigger Shlita (Ram Bnei Akiva Netanya)** notes that good looks are an expression of externalities. If someone looks the part it might lead him and followers to believe that he IS the part. Nothing could be further from the truth. To be a Melech Yisrael one needs to have the internal criteria to properly fit the bill. Indeed Shmuel thought Yishai’s oldest -- Eliav --- was worthy of being king but Hashem was not interested. This habit continued even until Adoniyahu and it caused much of the drama of the Haftara.

**וְלֹֽא־עֲצָב֨וֹ אָבִ֚יו מִיָּמָיו֙  And his father never admonished him saying why did you do this (Melachim I: 1:6**) – The **Ralbag and Metzudos Dovid** both explain that Adoniahu thought he should be king because his father never admonished him EVER. That is, that he never heard his father tell him that he did anything wrong. Thus, he assumed that whatever he was doing was consistent with Yiras Shomayim always, and as such was worthy of the Meluchah. **Rav C.Y. Goldvicht ztl.** pointed out often that a Melech has to be able to understand the people well, including their imperfections and thus cannot ever be totally perfect.

**יְחִ֗י אֲדֹנִ֛י הַמֶּ֥לֶךְ דָּוִ֖ד לְעֹלָֽם My master the king, Dovid should live forever” (Melachim I: 1:31)** – It seems strange that after the whole succession process is clarified and Shlomo cleared and appointed to replace Dovid HaMelech, that Batsheva should give a Beracha that in effect undid the rest of the Haftorah. Why state that Dovid should live forever, if it was clear he would not? **Rav Shlomo Kluger (Sheima Shlomo)** explains her intention based on a Gemara in Bava Basra (116a) which notes that when one leaves a child who follows in his footsteps it is as if the senior did not die. The proof is from Dovid. Rav Shlomo Kluger explains that when the process was finally clarified, it was evident that Dovid would not die. His ideals and lessons would live on, long after he departed the world.