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PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Chayei Sarah  Rabbi Zvi Feiner

Jewish Homebuilding

Parshas Chayei Sarah is known as the parsha of shidduchim. The proper hanhagos (practices) of how to look for a spouse as well as what qualities are important in a spouse are derived from the Torah's description of how Avrohom Avinu instructed Eliezer to search for a wife for Yitzchok. In fact, the entire episode of Eliezer's search for Yitzchak's wife is recorded twice in the Torah. Chazal learn from this repetition, in light of the fact that many important areas of halacha are not nearly as explicit, how significant even the "sichas chulin" (the mundane matters) of even the servants of our leaders are. Although Eliezer was ultimately successful, he seems to have taken somewhat of a risk. Chazal tell us that Eliezer was one of three individuals who were "shoel sheloh k'hogen", who made an inappropriate request from Hashem by saying, "Whoever will offer me and my camels a drink will be designated for Yitzchok (24:14)". Was he not taking a chance that he would end up with an unbecoming girl? (Taanis 4a) Additionally, Avrohom seems to have taken a risk when sending Eliezer on this crucial mission. As Chazal inform us, Eliezer desired to have Yitzchok marry his own daughter!

The above issues become more difficult to comprehend in light of Rashi's comment at the end of Parshas Vayerah. Rashi explains the apparent non-sequitur of the birth of Rivka lmeinu following Akeidas Yitzchok by explaining that following the akeida, Avrohom felt all the more compelled to find a zivug for Yitzchak, thus beginning to build Klal Yisroel. Rashi states (22:20), quoting the Medrash, "Hashem informed Avrohom that Rivka, Yitzchak's zivug was born." Why then does Avrohom Avinu send Eliezer on a mission to find a wife? Why does he have to list various criteria that are necessary to look for? Why doesn't Avrohom simply tell

Eliezer, "Go get Rivka"?

Chazal tell us, "Maaseh Avos Siman L'vonim." What transpired to the Avos, throughout sefer Beraishis, serves as examples to us for how we must live our own lives. Although Avrohom knew precisely who Yitzchak's intended zivug was, **we** don't know! Avrohom had to teach us what characteristics are important to look for in a prospective spouse. He had to stress to his "bonim" of all future generations the importance of middos as the dominant factor in our search for a spouse.

The Torah is not a history book. It is literally "Toras Chaim", teaching us how to live every aspect of our lives. By spelling out the details of Yitzchak and Rivka's shidduch, Avrohom Avinu and the Torah Hakedoshah are instructing us in the fundamentals of creating a Jewish marriage. It behooves us to diligently study the obvious and subtle messages this parsha teaches us, thereby continuing to build proper Jewish homes.

Rabbi Feiner, an alumnus of the kollel, gives shiurim at the kollel regularly.

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Next Shabbos-Parshas Toldos

HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Proper Attire for Tefillah

Rabbi Avi Weinrib

The gemara in Brochos [26b] derives from the posuk in this week's parsha, "Vayetzei Yitzchok lasuach basodeh", that Yitzchok instituted the tefillah of Mincha. This tefilla, together with Shacharis instituted by Avrohom and Maariv instituted by Yaakov, gives us the privilege of being able to stand and talk to G-d three times each day. In this week's Halacha Encounter, we will discuss the mode of dress that is appropriate during tefillah.

Minimal Dress

The gemara in Brochos [24b-25a] writes that a man who is only clothed from the waist and down is allowed to recite krias shema, but cannot recite shmoneh esrei. Rashi explains that during shemoneh esrei, one has to stand in fear, and dress as if he is standing before a king. The gemara in Shabbos [10a] points to a source for this from the verse [Amos 4-12] "Hikon Likras Elokecha Yisroel," one must prepare himself before coming to speak to G-d. The Mishna Berura rules [Biur Halacha 91-D.H Yutzu] that if one would find himself in this state it is preferable not to daven at all. [See Aruch Hashulchan 91-4]. Hagaon R' Elyashiv Shlita is quoted in Sefer Avnei Yashpe [1-2] that if one would be wearing a sleeveless undershirt, and he has nothing else to cover himself with, he would be allowed to daven. Obviously if one is able to, he must cover his entire body. [M.B. 91-2]

Jacket

The Shulchan Aruch [91-6] writes that it is the way of chachomim and their students to daven only when they are wearing a jacket. The Kaf Hachayim [91-26] writes that since all people would wear a jacket when meeting with a king, one should do so during tefillah. [See ibid as to why the Shulchan Aruch only mentions chachomim etc.] It would follow that today as well, when one would put on a jacket to meet any dignitary, it would certainly be necessary to wear a jacket for tefillah.

Hat

The Mishna Berura [91-12] writes that one would normally

greet people of stature only while wearing a hat. Therefore, one is required to wear a hat or cover his head with a tallis during shmoneh esrei. There are poskim who maintain [see Tzitz Eliezer 13-13] that nowadays since it is no longer the accepted practice to wear a hat when meeting with important people, one is not required to wear a hat for davening. However many poskim opine that even nowadays one must still wear a hat for davening. (Heard from Harav Dovid Zucker) Hagoan R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Zt"l [Halichos Shlomo 2-16] writes that one who normally davens with a hat and jacket and finds himself without them should not daven unless he will totally lose the opportunity to daven with a minyan even at a later time. Others disagree and maintain that wearing a hat would even override the obligation to daven with a minyan. (Hagoan R' Chaim Kanievsky)

Pajamas

One should not daven in pajamas as this would certainly not be a respectful way to greet anyone. However, if one is unwell, he may daven in pajamas [R' Elyashiv quoted in Tefillah K'hilchisa 7, footnote 78. If one is able to easily put a robe on top of his pajamas, he should do so [Ishei Yisroel 10- footnote 13].

Shoes

The Shulchan Aruch [91-5] writes that one should not daven barefoot if he would not appear that way in front of important people. Being that nowadays it is accepted to be wearing socks and shoes when meeting important people one should do so for tefillah and not suffice with slippers.

Outdoor Clothing

The Mishna Berura [91-13] writes that one should not daven while wearing gloves. The poskim write that any similar garments such as a coat, scarf or rubbers that one would not appear with in front of important people, should be removed for davening as well. There are poskim who permit wearing those garments if it is cold in the shul and it is therefore apparent that he is only wearing them due to the cold inside the shul. [See Shu"t Beer Moshe 4-39, Beis Baruch on Chayei Adam 22-62]

Rabbi Weinrib, Manhig ruchni of Agudas Yisroel of West Rogers Park is a community maggid shiur for the kollel.