

Parshas Chayei Soroh – Gershon Hepner

כה חשון תשע"ו – 7th November 2015 – שבת פי' חיי שרה

After Eliezer communicated his sales pitch to Rivka's family, he showered them with gifts. Beginning with Rivka, Eliezer gave her items of silver and gold and also some clothing. He then turned his attentions to Rivka's brother Lovon and also to her mother, and presented them with exotic fruits from Eretz Yisroel (24:53).

Eliezer then dined together with the family, stayed overnight, and attempted to close the deal the following morning (24:54).

Lovon and Rivka's mother then made a suggestion that had the potential of scuppering the whole shidduch. They proposed a delay of a year or ten months, so that Rivka could prepare herself adequately for marriage (24:55). Eliezer insisted that time was of the essence, and that any delays would be unacceptable (24:56).

They duly consulted Rivka, she acquiesced, and soon was on her way to meet Yitzchok (24:57-61).

One of the personæ dramatis, who had heretofore played an active role in proceedings, has suddenly become noticeably absent from the narrative. Besuel - Rivka's father - was mentioned earlier as being part of the negotiations with Eliezer, yet now seems to have vanished from the scene.

Why?

Rashi explains that Besuel wanted to stop the shidduch going ahead. To remove this obstacle from the Grand Plan of developing Klal Yisroel as a nation, a Maloch came along and killed him.

The **Sifsei Chachomim** elaborates on Rashi by quoting a Medrash that Besuel intended to murder Eliezer. To this end, Besuel poisoned Eliezer's food, and then invited Eliezer to eat. Eliezer insisted on first discharging his duties towards Avrohom and Yitzchok, before partaking of any food. During the course of the discussions, a Maloch exchanged Eliezer's plate with that of Besuel's, and this led to Besuel's demise.

The **Sifsei Chachomim** adds that the word used to describe the serving of the food, "Vayusom" (24:33), has the identical and unusual spelling as the word "Vayisem" (50:26). This later possuk deals with the burial of Yoseph, and by association, the expression in our Sedra has morbid connotations too.

Rabbeinu Bachye notes that this word "Vayusom" is spelled *vov-yud-yud-sin-mem*. The significance is that *vov-yud-yud* has the Gematria of 26, the same value as the four-letter Name of HaShem. This word can therefore be interpreted as "26 som" – "26 placed". The food was served in accordance with the wishes of HaShem, the One whose Gematria is 26. This alludes to the Medrash that a Maloch engineered Besuel's death.

The **Ibn Ezra** understands that at this stage, only Rivka's mother and brother were fully involved in the transaction. Having been the ones to accept gifts from Eliezer, they were also the ones to suggest that Rivka stay a while before joining Yitzchok. Besuel remained silent, as he had not accepted the gifts, and was more a silent observer than an active participant. The Ibn Ezra does not attempt to explain why Eliezer gave nothing to Besuel.

The **Chizkuni** casts new light on the story. Besuel was delighted with the prospect of marrying off his daughter to Yitzchok. After all, Yitzchok was Besuel's first cousin, and the shidduch seemed eminently suitable to Besuel. Eliezer did not present any gifts to Besuel because Besuel's palm did not need to be greased - he was in any case sold on the idea. Similarly, Besuel had no desire to delay the shidduch; that was the idea of Rivka's mother and brother only, whereas Besuel had no part in it.

**IN GRATITUDE TO HASHEM FOR THE SAFE ARRIVAL OF OUR GRANDDAUGHTER,
CHAYA TZIVIA BAS REB NOSSON MORDECHAI SPREI, BORN LAST WEEK ON 17 CHESHVAN
5776.**