

TORAH

חומש

בראשית

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TORAH

CHUMASH BEREISHIT

*The Book of Genesis*

*Parshat Chayei Sarah*

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based on the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
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*With an Interpolated English Translation  
and Commentary Based on the Works of  
The Lubavitcher Rebbe*

**THE TORAH - CHUMASH BEREISHIT**

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION  
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF  
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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# חומש בראשית

# THE TORAH

*With an Interpolated English Translation  
and Commentary Based on the Works of  
The Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson*

CHUMASH BEREISHIT

*The Book of Genesis*

*Parshat Chayei Sarah*



*Kehot Publication Society*

*770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn NY 11213*





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# חַיֵּי שָׂרָה Chayei Sarah

## Overview

As we have noted, the previous two *parashiot*, *Lech Lecha* and *Vayeira*, are entirely devoted to the life and times of Abraham. Although the chronicle of Abraham continues through this *parashah*, *Chayei Sarah*, as well, it seems to be mainly devoted to “closing the curtain” on his life, as we see him burying his wife, preparing the way for his son’s succession, and finally dying.

On the other hand, neither does it really focus on Abraham’s successor, Isaac. Even though the bulk of the *parashah* is concerned with the arrangements for Rebecca’s betrothal to Isaac, hardly any of Isaac’s own actions and not even one word of his are recorded. What then, is the focus of this *parashah*?

As we have seen, the key to understanding the content and central point of a *parashah* is its name. Inasmuch as *Chayei Sarah* means “the life of Sarah,” it follows that it is Sarah who is the subject, the protagonist, the heroine of this *parashah*.

At first glance, this seems baffling, to say the least. Sarah’s life came to an end in the previous *parashah*, and *parashat Chayei Sarah* in its entirety seems to emphasize the finality of her death: Abraham must arrange for her burial, he must find a wife for his son to succeed Sarah as the matriarch of his household, and he marries Hagar in order to have a wife in Sarah’s stead. Finally, the *parashah* closes by recording the genealogy of Ishmael, whom Sarah had expelled from her home.

But in truth, all these constituent episodes of this *parashah* serve to demonstrate how Sarah’s life indeed did not end with her death. Rather, the influence of the values and ideals that she stood for and worked toward throughout her lifetime continued on after her death. This is the most substantial evidence that her life played a pivotal role both in the development of the Jewish people as well as in the progressive dissemination of Divine consciousness to the world.

Abraham was undoubtedly the trailblazer in disseminating the awareness of God in the world, as we have seen. But in order to spread the message of monotheism, morality, and justice to an idolatrous, immoral, and unjust world, he had to focus persistently on humanity’s great potential, deliberately turning a blind eye to its imperfections. Abraham personified *chesed*, the primary attribute defining God’s relationship with the world: giving endlessly and indiscriminately, accepting everyone with unqualified love, seeing them as the best they can be regardless of who they are now.

## OVERVIEW OF CHAYEI SARAH

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Sarah participated in Abraham's great enterprise, helping him spread his message among the world's women with the same indiscriminating eye he used toward the world's men. When Isaac was born, however, and they were entrusted with raising a child who would have the moral strength and vision to carry on their Divine mission, she realized that this universalism would have to be tempered by a discerning particularism if Abraham's lifework was to continue to succeed. Abraham could afford to be unconditionally accepting only as long as it was just he and his wife interacting with their audience. But once the mission of disseminating Divine consciousness was to be passed on to a family, and eventually to a whole people, steps had to be taken to ensure that this message be passed on with uncompromising purity, direction, and force.

Thus, Sarah, the mother entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing Abraham's successor, undertook to insulate the family from deleterious influences. As soon as Ishmael became just such an influence, and Hagar proved unwilling or unable to check his untoward behavior, Sarah insisted that they both be sent away. Abraham was troubled by this, but God settled the matter, instructing Abraham to follow Sarah's advice. Abraham's universalism is appropriate in its place, but out of place, it becomes counterproductive. A family or a people, like any living organism, must have well-defined borders. An organism's membranes can be porous, but it must possess a vigilant and finely honed immune system that determines what is allowed to pass through its membranes; if not, the health and integrity of the entire organism is compromised.

Furthermore, Sarah realized that Abraham's family, because they were to be perennially involved with the world, would have to constantly recall their role and never shy away from their destiny. As bearers of the Divine message charged with executing God's mission, they would have to abandon any well-meaning notions of equivalence vis-à-vis the rest of humanity. Teachers can—and should—always learn from their students, but in order to educate successfully, they must clearly uphold their authority as mentors. Sarah's very name means "sovereignty,"<sup>1</sup> and she endeavored to inculcate her family with the sense of moral nobility crucial to the success of their Divine career.

The events chronicled in *parashat Chayei Sarah* illustrate just how well Sarah's influence was perpetuated after her death:

The Machpelah Cave is the burial site of Adam and Eve, the progenitors of the human race; as such, it originally belonged to all humanity. In purchasing it, Abraham articulated God's intention that the mission originally given to humanity as a whole now be passed on to the nascent Jewish people, and that by accepting this task, the Jewish people were fundamentally separating themselves from the rest of humanity and assuming the role of its mentors. The Hittite owners of the cave responded to Abraham's desire to purchase the cave by acknowledging his preeminence over them, understanding that they, in essence, had no claim on the land God had given him.

Rebecca's betrothal to Isaac, as we shall see, followed a detailed discussion between Abraham and his trustworthy disciple Eliezer, in which Abraham made it clear that he knew that Sarah's discriminating standards had to be applied not only to humanity-at-large but even to those close to Abraham, whether genetically or ideologically. Abraham rules out sending Isaac to live with his close relatives out of fear of negative influences, and rejects Eliezer's offer of his own daughter as a bride for Isaac on the grounds that, notwithstanding his great loyalty and achievements, his crippling psychological heritage

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1. Above, 17:15.

rendered his daughter unworthy. And in the course of negotiating the match, Rebecca's family realizes that it was preordained by God and that they therefore have no right to oppose it or even stipulate conditions.

Later, after Abraham marries Hagar, he banishes all the children she bears him—again, to prevent them from abusing their status as his progeny to corrupt Isaac in any way.

Finally, when Abraham dies, we witness how Ishmael himself has fully absorbed Sarah's message. Now understanding that he is not part of the new national entity being forged out of Abraham's line, he bows to his brother Isaac's preeminence, allowing him to lead the burial procession. And the *parashah* closes by telling us that Ishmael's future success is dependent on his continued acknowledgement of Isaac's preeminence.<sup>2</sup>

**S**arah's particularism was thus the next stage in the process of the creation of the Jewish people. Abraham initiated the process by reviving the world's awareness of God; Sarah ensured the continuation of this process by defining the parameters of the relationship between Abraham's heirs and the world they were charged to mentor.

The lesson of *parashat Chayei Sarah*, then, is that universalism must operate hand-in-hand with particularism. We are all Abrahams, charged with the mission of spreading Divine consciousness to the whole world; as such, we must always strive to view humanity in the best possible light, and each individual as a precious child of God who deserves our unconditional love and the best we can give, both materially and spiritually. But concomitantly, we must also all be Sarahs, cherishing the integrity of the bearers of the Divine message and acutely aware of the fact that God has entrusted His mission to us—that we bear the message and that the world is our audience.

Sarah's legacy also applies on the national level. We must remember that our Divine goals will be not achieved by obsequiously seeking the world's approval, thereby confusing both them and ourselves as to our intended role in God's plan. Rather, we are assured success in our Divine mission only if we respectfully but unabashedly assert our Divine rights, including the right to our God-given land. Only in this way can we faithfully help steer the whole world on its course toward fulfilling its objective in becoming God's true home.<sup>3</sup>

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2. See on 25:18. 3. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 145-154; vol. 5, pp. 338-344; *Sefer HaSichot 5748*, vol. 1, pp. 85-89.

ONKELOS

23:1 ויהיו חיי שרה מאה ועשרים ושבע שנים  
 ושבע שנים שני חיי שרה: 2 ומיתת  
 שרה בקרית ארבע היא חברון  
 בארעא דכנען ואתא אברהם  
 למספדה לשרה ולמבכה:

23:1 ויהיו חיי שרה מאה ועשרים ושבע שנים  
 ושני חיי שרה: 2 ותמת שרה בקרית ארבע הוא חברון  
 בארץ כנען ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולביתה:

RASHI

אחר: על שם ארבע זוגות שנקברו שם איש ואשתו:  
 אדם וחוה, אברהם ושרה, יצחק ורבקה, יעקב ולאה:  
 ויבא אברהם. מבאר שבע: לספד לשרה ולביתה.  
 נסמכה מיתת שרה לעקדת יצחק, לפי שעל ידי בשורת  
 העקדה, שנודמן בנה לשחיטה וכמעט שלא נשחט,  
 פרחה נשמתה ממנה ומתה:

1 ויהיו חיי שרה מאה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים.  
 לכך נכתב "שנה" בכל כולל וכלל, לומר לה שכל אחד  
 נדרש לעצמו: בת מאה כבת עשרים לחטא, מה בת  
 עשרים לא חטאה שהרי אינה בת ענשין, אף בת מאה  
 בלא חטא. ובת עשרים כבת שבע ליופי: שני חיי שרה.  
 בלן שוין לטובה: 2 בקרית ארבע. על שם ארבע  
 ענקים שהיו שם: אחימן, ששי, ותלמי, ואביהם. דבר

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

soul, became timeless. Her beauty thus remained un-  
 marred, immune to life's tribulations and the passage  
 of time. The perfection of her physical beauty was a  
 manifestation of her spiritual perfection.<sup>13</sup>

**2 Hearing about Abraham's attempt to sacrifice her son was too much for her:** How was Abraham capable of nearly sacrificing his son, whereas Sarah could not even bear *hearing* about such a possibility? And how could the very same event catapult Abraham and Isaac

to such spiritual heights while having such negative repercussions for Sarah?

As we have seen,<sup>14</sup> Abraham was somewhat detached from the world and viewed things from their abstract, spiritual perspective. Sarah's focus, in contrast, was on integrating Divine spirituality into the mundane world. So, while Abraham could somehow detach himself from the fact that Isaac's death would spell the end of their Divine mission, Sarah could not. The thought

INNER DIMENSIONS

**[1] Sarah's lifetime was 127 years:** Literally, this phrase reads, "Sarah's lifetime was a hundred years, twenty years, and seven years." The unusual repetition of the word "years" indicates that the three numbers allude to Sarah's perfection in three discrete aspects of her life.

As we have noted,<sup>15</sup> the hierarchy of the soul's powers can be divided into three main categories: emotions, intellect, and supra-intellect. These three categories are so different in nature that allegorically, they are represented by different orders of numerical magnitude: the emotions by the one's, the intellect by the tens, and the supra-intellect by the hundreds. Thus, in this verse, "a hundred" alludes collectively to the supra-rational powers of the soul—delight and will; "twenty" alludes to the two principal components of the intellect—*chochmah* and *binah*; and "seven" alludes to the seven emotions.

The concluding and seemingly redundant phrase of the verse, "the years of Sarah's life," allegorically indicates that all her diverse soul-powers were permeated by the highest aspect of the soul, which is totally included within God, as a part of Him. We are not normally conscious of this aspect of the soul (the *yechidah*), but Sarah succeeded in bringing it

into full consciousness, allowing it to unify the rest of her soul-powers in absolute dedication to God.

Furthermore, since we are finite creatures with finite abilities, we can only perfect our conscious soul-powers (delight, will, intellect, and emotion) to a limited extent. When, however, we lose our selfhood in the transcendent consciousness of the highest level of our Divine soul, we are no longer limited by the boundaries of self and ego. It is this capacity for selflessness that enables us to live all our years on an equal level of goodness.

Nonetheless, before we can begin living on this level, we must first perfect our conscious soul-powers, as is evidenced by the fact that the Torah first refers to the three different periods (or in this context, aspects) of Sarah's life. But the ultimate goal is to live a life of pure Divine consciousness, beyond gradations and distinctions.<sup>16</sup>

**[2] Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hebron, in the Land of Canaan. Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her:** As we have seen, Abraham tended to view things from their abstract, spiritual perspective, whereas Sarah strove to integrate the abstract into the real, the spiritual into the physical. Allegorically, therefore, Abraham

13. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 93, note 7. 14. Above, on 21:12. 15. Preceding 1:1, above. 16. *Sichot Kodesh* 5750, vol. 1, p. 135; *Hitva' aduyot* 5749, vol. 1, pp. 336, 340; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5730, pp. 49, 52.

## The Death of Sarah

**23:1 Sarah's lifetime was 127 years; the years of Sarah's life** were all equally good: she enjoyed the advantages of old age in her youth and the advantages of youth in her old age.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, she retained the youthful beauty that she had miraculously regained before conceiving Isaac until her final days, and she died completely righteous, untainted by sin.<sup>2</sup>

2 Word reached Sarah about the binding of Isaac. The shock of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of her son coupled with the relief of hearing that he was spared was too much for her to bear,<sup>3</sup> and she died. Thus **Sarah died in Kiryat Arba** ["The City of the Four"], **which is Hebron, in Canaan**. Hebron was also called *Kiryat Arba* because of the four giants who lived there: the three brothers Achiman, Sheishai, and Talmai; and their father. The name also refers prophetically to the fact that it was to be the resting place of four eminent couples: Abraham<sup>4</sup> and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca,<sup>5</sup> Jacob<sup>6</sup> and Leah,<sup>7</sup> and Adam and Eve (who were already buried there).

During Sarah's lifetime, three ongoing miracles occurred in her merit: the oil lamp in her tent would remain lit from one Friday to the next, even though it only held enough oil to last one day; even a small amount of the bread she baked would suffice to satisfy hunger; and a cloud, which is a physical manifestation of God's presence, would constantly hover above her tent. When she died, these miracles ceased.<sup>8</sup>

**Abraham** heard of his wife's death and **came** from Beersheba **to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her**. The Hittite inhabitants of Hebron all left work and also came to pay their last respects to Sarah.

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### CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

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1 The years of Sarah's life were all equally good: This can be explained in several ways:

- The years of her *life* were all equally good. Sarah experienced many hardships and challenges, but they were not her *life*, her focus. Her life's purpose was to fulfill her Divine mission, and she remained consistent in her devotion to God throughout her entire lifetime. In this respect, all the years of her life were equally devoted to goodness.<sup>9</sup>
- Every year of Sarah's life was as complete and perfect as it could possibly have been. Although her later achievements made earlier ones pale in comparison, she lived up to her fullest potential at all times.<sup>10</sup>
- The time Sarah spent preparing for her Divine mission was just as valuable as the time she spent fulfilling it. Education and preparation are themselves an integral part of Divine living.<sup>11</sup>
- Although Sarah constantly achieved ever-higher degrees of goodness—and it would therefore seem

that any given period in her life was, in this respect, superior to the period preceding it and inferior to the period following it—all her years can nonetheless be regarded as being *equally* good. Her every achievement built upon and perfected her previous accomplishments and, complementarily, prepared her for the greater heights she would eventually reach. In this way, Sarah succeeded in breaking through the boundaries of time and creating a cohesive oneness out of the different periods of her life. This last interpretation teaches us that what we do today affects not only the present, but the past and future as well.<sup>12</sup>

Sarah's life should serve as an inspiration for us all.

**She retained the youthful beauty that she had regained before conceiving Isaac until her last days, and she died completely righteous, untainted by sin:** Whereas the body is subject to the effects of time and environmental conditions, the soul, being a Godly entity, is immune to them. In Sarah's case, the energy of her soul so totally permeated her body that it, like her

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1. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 325-328. 2. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 93, note 7. 3. *Sichot Kodesh* 5739, vol. 1, pp. 264-265. 4. Below, 25:9, 49:31. 5. Below, 49:31. 6. Below, 49:29, 50:13. 7. Below, 49:31. 8. Rashi on 24:67, below. 9. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 92-93. 10. *Sichot Kodesh* 5725, vol. 1, p. 216. 11. *Hitva'aduyot* 5742, vol. 1, pp. 450-454; cf. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 63-69; cf. Genesis 24:1. 12. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 325-328.

ONKELOS

3 וְקָם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל אִפֵּי מִיתָהּ  
 4 וּמְלִיל עִם בְּנֵי הַחִתִּים לְמִיתָהּ:  
 4 דִּיר וְתוֹתֵב אָנָּא עִמְכוּן הָבוּ לִי  
 אַחְזַת קְבֹרָא עִמְכוּן וְאַקְבְּרָ מִיְתִי  
 מִן קְדָמִי:

3 וְיָקָם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי מֶתוֹ וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי-חֵת  
 4 לֵאמֹר: 4 גְּרֻזוֹתֶינִי אֲנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תְּנוּ לִי אַחְזַת קְבֹרָה  
 עִמָּכֶם וְאַקְבְּרָה מִתִּי מִלְפָּנַי:

RASHI

4 אֶהְיֶה תוֹשֵׁב וְאֶשְׁלָנָה מִן הַדִּין, שְׁאָמַר לִי הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ  
 הוּא: "לְזַרְעֶךָ אֶתְּן אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת": אַחְזַת קְבֹרָה. אַחְזַת  
 קָרָקַע לְבֵית הַקְבֻרוֹת:

4 גַּר וְתוֹשֵׁב אֲנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם. גַּר מֵאָרֶץ אַחֶרֶת וְנִתְיַשְׁבְּתִי  
 עִמָּכֶם, וּמְדַרְשׁ אֲגָדָה: אִם תִּרְצוּ הֲרִינִי גַר, וְאִם לֹא  
 1. בְּרַאשִׁית רַבָּה נח, ו. 2. בְּרַאשִׁית יב, ז.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

Yet, there is a third human need: light. Lighting up a dark room adds nothing per se to the room, yet the entire ambience has been transformed. Confusion, disorientation, and gloom are replaced by clarity, direction, and joy. Similarly, we can perform our Divine mission impeccably but without light, warmth, and vitality. This is the third miracle: our ability to invigorate our work with warmth, enthusiasm, and vitality. We merit this third miracle by studying the inner dimensions of the Torah.<sup>32</sup>

If God wished, He could have kept Sarah’s candles burning uninterruptedly, but instead, they had to be rekindled every Sabbath eve. This teaches us that no matter how perfect and miraculous something may seem, it can always be accomplished again on an even higher and more sublime level. When a Jewish woman or girl lights Sabbath candles, she does so with the power of all her spiritual growth and accomplishments accrued during the preceding week.<sup>33</sup>

**3 Abraham rose from the presence of his dead, and he spoke to the Hittites in these words:** Here we see the great effect Sarah’s life had upon her husband. Abraham’s courage to speak forcefully to the Hittites came from Sarah—as he “rose from her presence.”

Our sages call the Jewish wife “the mainstay of the

home.” Her positive influence is recognizable in the actions and behavior of her husband and children.<sup>34</sup>

**4 If you refuse my request:** Although Abraham spoke with deference to the Hittites, at the same time he was not willing to negotiate: he stated his position firmly and intimated that he would take the property by force of law if they would refuse to sell it to him. As we see from the ensuing dialogue, the Hittites respected Abraham’s seriousness and did not question his right to the property. In fact, they offered to give him not only the burial cave but the entire field.

Similarly, in all cases of fulfilling God’s will, we should not hesitate to articulate our position respectfully yet firmly, and make it clear to any voices of opposition—whether originating within our own minds, within our own ranks, or from without—that we will not hesitate to exercise our full rights if need be. When we do not vacillate, not only is any potential opposition nipped in the bud; the truth of our position even transforms possible enemies into friends and helpers.

This is acutely true with regard to our right to the Land of Israel. If the nations of the world would hear us proclaim unabashedly that the land is ours by Divine right, they would stop opposing our possession of it; furthermore, the truth of our convictions would even win them over as allies.<sup>35</sup>

INNER DIMENSIONS

[continued...] represents the soul and Sarah the body.<sup>36</sup> The *Zohar* thus interprets this verse as a metaphor for the death of the body (Sarah), and the soul’s (Abraham’s) reaction:

*Sarah died:* After death, the body is no longer a living organism. This leads to its eventual disintegration and the dissipation of—

*Kiryat Arba (“the City of the Four”):* its four component elements (fire, air, water, and earth), of which all matter is formed—

*which is Hebron (Chevron):* The four elements of the body, having been unified (*chaber*)<sup>37</sup> while the body was alive—

*in the land of Canaan:* in this physical world. As we have seen,<sup>38</sup> Canaan connotes “commerce” and is thus a metaphor for this world, in which we engage in the “business” of investing in physical existence for the sake of reaping the spiritual “profits.”

*Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her:* The soul, which retains a connection to the body even after their separation upon death, comes to eulogize the body and weeps for the loss of its ability to operate from within it and thereby sanctify the physical world.

*Abraham rose from the presence of his dead:* In the end, the soul transcends death and disintegration, and continues its eternal existence without the body.<sup>39</sup>

32. *Sichot Kodesh* 5720, pp. 102-104. 33. *Hitvo’aduyot* 5745, vol. 1, pp. 357-361. 34. *Sichot Kodesh* 5735, pp. 156-158. 35. *Igrot Kodesh*, vol. 26, pp. 24-25. 36. See above, on 12:11. 37. Above, on 13:18. 38. Above, 9:18; *Sefer HaMa’amarim Yiddish*, p. 91. 39. *Zohar* 1:122b; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, p. 782. *Hitvo’aduyot* 5711, vol. 1, p. 87.

### 3 Abraham rose from the presence of his dead wife, and he spoke to the Hittites in these words:

4 “Your nation presently rules over this part of Canaan. I, being of a different nationality, **am a foreigner**, and only **a sojourner among you**. I therefore ask you, as a private resident, to **allow me** to purchase a piece of property that I can make into a family **burial ground within** the territory you control, **so that I can bury my dead wife from my presence**. I will legally purchase only the *private* rights to this piece of property, while you will still retain *national* rights over it. On the other hand, if you refuse my request, you are thereby violating God’s purpose in having given you temporary control of the land<sup>17</sup> and therefore forfeiting your stewardship of it.<sup>18</sup> I will thus take it as sign that the time has come for God’s well-known promise to grant me this entire land<sup>19</sup> to go into effect; in this event, I will assume *national* ownership over the land as well, and legally appropriate the property in this manner.<sup>20</sup> However, I prefer to buy it, because only then will my ownership be absolute and incontrovertible.”<sup>21</sup>

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✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

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that Isaac was no longer alive opposed everything she lived for, and her soul left her.<sup>22</sup>

On a deeper level, Sarah’s was not a negative reaction. The Midrash<sup>23</sup> describes her death by saying that “her soul flew out” of her body, as if released. This expression describes death that occurs through an intense, lofty experience of the soul. It is therefore used in the Talmud to describe the rapture the Jewish people experienced when they heard God’s voice at Mount Sinai. According to the Talmud, the people died after hearing each of the Ten Commandments and had to be resurrected each time.<sup>24</sup>

Upon hearing that her husband and son had risen to the challenge of this ultimate sacrifice, Sarah’s soul was freed from the bonds of her body and attained an infinitely higher level of connection with God. It was specifically through this lofty experience that her life’s mission was completed and she no longer needed to remain in this world.<sup>25</sup>

**Kiryat Arba, which is Hebron:** As was pointed out above,<sup>26</sup> the name *Hebron* is related to the word for “connect.” The dual name of this city thus teaches us an important lesson: Although our patriarchs and matriarchs each personified very different approaches to serving God, their lives demonstrated how these approaches can be connected together in pursuit of the common goal of transforming the world into God’s home.

It is also for this reason that we are taught that our prayers—which bind us to God—ascend to heaven via the Cave of the Machpelah in Hebron.<sup>27</sup>

**During Sarah’s lifetime, three ongoing miracles occurred in her merit:** These three miracles correspond

to the three commandments that God entrusted specifically to women: lighting the Sabbath lights, separating *challah* from the dough,<sup>28</sup> and observing the laws governing a married couple’s intimate relations.<sup>29</sup> The fact that these three miracles all occurred for Sarah indicates that her life was the quintessential expression of Jewish womanhood.<sup>30</sup>

**M**eriting all three of these miracles required some preparatory effort. Abraham and Sarah pitched their tent; only afterwards did God’s presence manifest itself as the cloud hovering above it. Sarah prepared dough and lit the lamp; only afterward did God’s blessings make her bread miraculously satisfying and keep the lamp lit.

This lesson holds true for all of us. If we invest our fullest effort, we can be assured that God will bless the results, augmenting them miraculously.<sup>31</sup>

**A** person’s essential physical needs can be divided into two categories: internal needs, such as air and food, and external needs, such as clothing and shelter. Our spiritual needs—the Divine consciousness that sustains us spiritually—may also be similarly categorized: the immanent aspects of Divinity, which we can internalize and understand; and the transcendent aspects of Divinity, which we can know about but not truly understand.

When we do our utmost to internalize what we can comprehend and then accept what we cannot comprehend, God blesses our efforts with success beyond measure, just as He blessed Sarah’s dough (the Divinity we “ingest” and assimilate) and her tent (the Divinity above and beyond our understanding).

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17. See above, on 1:1. 18. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 146-147, 150-151. 19. Above, 13:14-17. 20. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, pp. 85-87. 21. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, p. 63. 22. *Hitvo'aduyot* 5748, vol. 1, pp. 475-478. 23. *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* 32. 24. *Shabbat* 88b. 25. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 329-330. 26. Above, on 13:18. 27. *Yalkut Reuveni*, Genesis 23:9, citing *Megaleh Amukot*. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 98. 28. Numbers 15:20. 29. Leviticus 15:19. 30. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 172-3. 31. *Sichot Kodesh* 5720, pp. 99-102.

ONKELOS

5 וְאֵתִיבּוּ בְּנֵי חֲתָאָה יֵת אַבְרָהָם לְמִימֵר לָהּ: 6 קִבֵּל מִנָּא רְבוּנָא רַב קָדָם יְיָ אֲתָּ בִינָא בִשְׁפַר קִבְרָא קִבְר יֵת מִיִּתְךָ אֲנִשׁ מִנָּא יֵת קִבְרָה לֹא יִמְנַע מִנָּךְ מִלְּמַקְבֵּר מִיִּתְךָ: 7 וְקָם אַבְרָהָם וְסָגִיד לְעֵמָּא דְאַרְעָא לְבְנֵי חֲתָאָה: 8 וּמְלִיל עֵמְהוֹן לְמִימֵר אִם אֵית רְעוּא בְּנַפְשְׁכוֹן לְמַקְבֵּר יֵת מִיִּתִּי מִן קִדְמִי קִבְּלוּ מְנִי וּבְעוּ לִי מִן עֵפְרוֹן בַּר צוּחַר: 9 וַיִּתֵּן לִי יֵת מְעַרַת פְּתָלָא דִּי לַה דִּי בִּטְטַר חֲקֵלָה בְּכֶסֶף שְׁלִים יִתְנַנָּה לִי בִינִיכוֹן לְאַחֲסַנְתָּ קִבְרָא: 10 וְעֵפְרוֹן יִתִּיב בְּגוּ בְּנֵי חֲתָאָה וְאֵתִיב עֵפְרוֹן חֲתָאָה יֵת אַבְרָהָם קָדָם בְּנֵי חֲתָאָה לְכָל עָלֵי תְרַע קַרְתָּה לְמִימֵר: 11 לֹא רְבוּנִי קִבֵּל מְנִי חֲקֵלָא יְהִבִּית לָךְ וַיִּמְעַרְתָּא דִּי בַּה לָךְ יְהִבְתָּה לְעֵינֵי בְּנֵי עַמִּי יְהִבְתָּה לָךְ קִבְר מִיִּתְךָ:

5 וַיֵּעָנּוּ בְּנֵי־חַתָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לוֹ: 6 שְׁמַעְנּוּ אֲדֹנָי נְשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה בְּתוֹכֵנוּ בְּמִבְחָר קִבְרֵינוּ קִבֵּר אֶת־מִתְךָ אִישׁ מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת־קִבְרוֹ לֹא־יִכְלֶה מִמֶּךָ מִקִּבְר מִתְךָ: 7 וַיָּקָם אַבְרָהָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְעַם־הָאָרֶץ לְבְנֵי־חַתָּה: 8 וַיְדַבֵּר אִתָּם לֵאמֹר אִם־יֵישׁ אֶת־נַפְשְׁכֶם לְקִבֵּר אֶת־מְתִי מִלְּפָנַי שְׁמַעְוּנִי וּפְגַעוּ־לִי בְּעֵפְרוֹן בֶּן־צוּחַר: 9 וַיִּתֵּן־לִי אֶת־מְעַרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּקִנְיַת שְׁדָהוּ בְּכֶסֶף מְלֵא יִתְנַנֶּה לִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְאַחֲזֵת־קִבְרוֹ: 10 וְעֵפְרוֹן יֹשֵׁב בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי־חַתָּה וַיַּעַן עֵפְרוֹן הַחִתִּי אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בְּאוֹנֵי בְּנֵי־חַתָּה לְכָל בָּאֵי שַׁעֲרֵי־עִירוֹ לֵאמֹר: 11 לֹא־אֲדֹנָי שְׁמַעְנֵי הַשְּׂדֵה נְתַתִּי לָךְ וְהַמְעַרָה אֲשֶׁר־בוֹ לָךְ נְתַתִּיהָ לְעֵינֵי בְּנֵי־עַמִּי נְתַתִּיהָ לָךְ קִבְר מִתְךָ:

RASHI

מלא: "10 ועפרון ישב. כתיב חסר, אותו היום מנוהו שוטר עליהם, מפני חשיבותו של אברהם שהיה צריך לו, עלה לגרלה: לכל באי שער עירו. שכלן בטלו ממלאכתן, ובאו לגמל חסד לשרה: 11 לא אדוני. לא תקנה אותה בדמים: נתתי לך. הרי היא כמו שנתתיה לך:

6 לא יכלה. לא ימנע, כמו: "לא תכלא רחמיק", וכו': "ויכלא הגשם": 8 נפשכם. רצונכם: ופגעו לי. לשון בקשה, כמו: "אל תפגעני ב". 9 המכפלה. בית ועליה על גביו. דבר אחר: שכפולה בזוגות: בכסף מלא. אשלם כל שויה. וכן דוד אמר לארונה: "בכסף

3. תהלים מ, יב. 4. בראשית ח, ב. 5. רות א, טו. 6. דב"ח"א כא, כד.

INNER DIMENSIONS

[9] **The Cave of the Machpelah:** Allegorically, the word "the Machpelah" ("hei machpelah"—literally, "double hei") refers to the two letter hei's appearing in God's Name *Havayah*.<sup>46</sup> The relationship between the Name *Havayah*—the source of life—and our patriarchs and matriarchs' burial place—an image of death—is as follows:

The purpose for which the soul is sent to reside in the body is in order for it to accomplish its unique task in disseminating Divine consciousness in this world. Throughout our lifetimes, we will repeatedly feel the need to return (*teshuvah*) to God and renew our relationship with Him—either in order to reinstate our good standing with Him after a fall or period of estrangement, or in order to improve our already-good relationship with Him.

In the first type of return, we are realigning our behavior (alluded to by the second, or "lower," hei

of the Name *Havayah*) with our *emotional commitment* (alluded to by the letter *vav*); it is therefore termed the "lower" return. In the second type, we are realigning our *mentality* (alluded to by the first, or "higher," hei) with our pristine Divine inspiration and insight (alluded to by the *yud*); it is therefore termed the "higher" return.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, the process of return, which forms the cornerstone of our relationship with God throughout our lives, is alluded to by the two letter hei's in the Name *Havayah*, which, as we have said, are in turn alluded to by the word "the Machpelah."

The final, ultimate return does not occur until the soul finishes its task on earth and leaves the body. Thus, the Machpelah burial cave signifies the consummation of the process of return. This is the connection between the two letter hei's of God's Name and the burial site of the patriarchs.<sup>48</sup>

46. *Zohar* 1:129a. 47. In Hebrew, the allusion to this is the fact that the word for "return" (*teshuvah*) can be read: "return [*tashuv*] the hei." 48. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, pp. 110-111.

**5 The Hittites replied to Abraham, saying to him:**

**6 “Listen to us, my lord. You are a prince of God in our midst;<sup>40</sup> honor us, therefore, and bury your dead in the choicest of *our* burial sites. No one among us will deny you his burial site to bury your dead.”**

**7 Abraham rose, and he bowed down to the people of that region, the Hittites.**

**8 He spoke to them and said: “I appreciate your offer, but I want to purchase my own property and designate it myself as a family burial ground. If it is really your will that I bury my dead from my presence, listen to me, and entreat Ephron son of Tzochar on my behalf.**

**9 Let him grant me the Cave of the Machpelah [“Doubling”], which you all originally owned jointly, but which now belongs to him alone,<sup>41</sup> and is located at the edge of his field.”** The Cave of the Machpelah was so named because (a) there was a two-level house nearby it, and (b) the crypts in it were double and therefore suited for burying couples. Abraham told the Hittites that he wished to buy this cave because it also had a place for him to eventually be buried alongside Sarah, as well as places for future patriarchal couples. He did not mention the fact that Adam and Eve were buried there, however, since the Hittites were probably not aware of this—and had they been aware of it, they probably would not have wanted to sell Abraham the cave.<sup>42</sup> **“Let him sell it to me for its full price,<sup>43</sup> in your presence, so I can make it into a family burial ground.”**

**10 Ephron was then seated among the Hittites** who had gathered to pay their respects to Sarah. Ephron at the time was merely an ordinary citizen, but the Hittites promptly promoted him to a position of honor so that Abraham would not have to negotiate with a person of inferior social status. **Ephron the Hittite replied to Abraham in the presence of the Hittites, so that all who came to the city gate—where they had all gathered—could hear:**

**11 “No, my lord, I will not accept payment for it; I would be honored to *give* it to you. Furthermore, listen to me: You only asked for the cave, but as far as I am concerned, I have already given you the entire field as well. And as for the cave within it, I have already given it, too, to you; and I have given it to you in full view of my compatriots. Bury your dead.”** Once Ephron offered to give Abraham the entire field, Abraham no longer needed to bring up the issue of a family burial ground; once he would own the whole field, he would obviously be able to do whatever he pleased with any part of it.<sup>44</sup>

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∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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**6 You are a prince of God in our midst:** Although Abraham was ostensibly subject to the Hittites’ goodwill, they nonetheless recognized his true standing as a “prince of God” and treated him with the utmost deference. Similarly, when God’s plan calls for us to be

at the mercy of other nations, those nations will invariably recognize our unique mission and even aid us in fulfilling it—providing that we remain steadfast in our own dedication to our goals and demonstrate true Jewish pride.<sup>45</sup>

40. See above, 14:17. 41. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, p. 87. 42. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, pp. 105-110. 43. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 60-62. 44. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 86-87. 45. *Hitvo’aduyot* 5743, vol. 1, pp. 163, 170-172.

ONKELOS

12 וסגיד אברהם קדם עמא דארעא: 13 ומליל עם עפרון קדם עמא דארעא למימר ברם אם את עבר לי טיבו קבל מני אתן בספא דמי חקלא סב מני ואקבר ית מיתתי תמן: 14 ואתיב עפרון ית אברהם למימר לה: 15 רבוני קבל מני ארעא שויא ארבע מאה סלעין דכסף בינא ובינך מא היא וית מיתך קבר: 16 וקבל אברהם מן עפרון ותקל אברהם לעפרון ית בספא די מליל קדם בני חתאה ארבע מאה סלעין דכסף מתקבל סחורה בקל מדינתא:

12 וישתחו אברהם לפני עם הארץ: 13 וידבר אל-עפרון באוני עם הארץ לאמר אך אם אתה לו שמעני נתתי כסף השדה קח ממני ואקברה את-מתי שמה: 14 ויען עפרון את-אברהם לאמר לו: 15 אדני שמעני ארץ ארבע מאת שקל-כסף ביני ובינך מדהוא ואת-מתך קבר: 16 וישמע אברהם אל-עפרון וישקל אברהם לעפרון את-הכסף אשר דבר באוני בני-חת ארבע מאות שקל כסף עבר לסחר:

RASHI

הנח את המכר ואת מתך קבור: 16 וישקל אברהם לעפרון. חסר וי"ו, לפי שאמר הרבה ואפלו מעט לא עשה, שנטל ממנו שקלים גדולים שהן קנטרין, שנקמרה: "עבר לסחר", שמתקבלים בשקל בכל מקום, ויש מקום ששקליהן גדולים שהן קנטרין, צינטיניר"ש בלעז:

13 אך אם אתה לו שמעני. אתה אומר לי לשמע לך ולקח בחנם, אני אי אפשרי בכך, "אך אם אתה לו שמעני", הלואי ותשמעני: נתתי. דונא"י בלעז. מוכן הוא אצלי, והלואי נתתי לך כפר: 15 ביני ובינך. בין שני אוהבים כמונו מה היא חשובה לכלום, אלא 7. נתתי. 8. משקלים של מאה מדות, מטבעות של מאה.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

must push ourselves beyond the boundaries of our natural inclinations. Only in this way can we achieve our purpose in the world.<sup>54</sup>

16 **Four hundred shekels:** We can gain an appreciation of the significance of this sum by examining the mon-

etary value the Torah places on land. When land has been consecrated to the Holy Temple, a person may redeem "an area seeded by a *chomer* of barley for fifty silver shekels,"<sup>55</sup> i.e., at the rate of 50 shekels per every 75,000 square cubits.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, 400 shekels is the

INNER DIMENSIONS

[16] **Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver... 400 full-sized shekels:** The Arizal explains that the name *Ephron* (עפרון) alludes to the souls of those who have passed away and whose bodies are now resting in the earth (עפר); that Abraham alludes to God's attribute of *chesed*; and that the four hundred shekels signify the four hundred levels of Divine consciousness that God will bestow upon those who have passed away when they will be resurrected in the messianic future.<sup>57</sup>

Reaching these levels of Divine consciousness results in experiences of transcendent delight. The fact that those who receive this sublime gift are alluded to by the word for "earth" teaches us that they are worthy of this gift specifically because, during their lifetimes, they evinced the defining characteristic of earth—humility, since the earth allows itself to be tread upon by everyone.<sup>58</sup> In order for finite creatures to apprehend transcendent Divinity, which is inherently beyond human comprehension, they must first relinquish their preconceived notions

about reality. This is an act of self-abnegation, made possible only through humility.

As descendants of Abraham, who epitomized selflessness,<sup>59</sup> we have all inherited the ability to achieve selflessness. This is no simple task: those of us who have spiritually refined ourselves (and are therefore practiced in the art of self-abnegation) may fall prey to the arrogance that, by nature, accompanies spiritual advancement. And those of us who are less spiritually refined may lack the tools to expunge what small measure of arrogance we do possess.

Nonetheless, the spiritually refined can derive inspiration from Abraham: while he was one of the most spiritually advanced people that ever lived, he still retained his humility, declaring himself no more than "dust and ashes."<sup>60</sup> Spiritual neophytes can also draw upon their spiritual inheritance from Abraham, because<sup>61</sup> no qualifications are required to lay claim to an inheritance.<sup>62</sup>

54. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, p. 64. 55. *Hadrat Melech* 152. 56. *Eiruvim* 54a. 57. Above, 18:27. 58. *Ibid.* 59. See *Nidah* 43b. 60. *Hit'va' aduyot* 5719, vol. 1, pp. 211-213. 61. *Leviticus* 27:16. 62. A *chomer* is a measurement of volume equaling 30 *se'ah*. The Tabernacle's courtyard,

**12 Abraham bowed down before the people of that place.**

**13 He spoke to Ephron so that all the local people could hear, in these words: “If only you would listen to *me*! I do not want to accept the field for free. I am giving you the money for the field. It’s here, in my hand; take it from me so that I may bury my dead there.”**

**14 Ephron replied to Abraham, saying to him:**

**15 “My lord, listen to me. What’s four hundred silver shekels’ worth of land between friends like you and me? Forget about the money and bury your dead.”** Although four hundred silver shekels was an exorbitant price to pay for the field, Ephron meant to flaunt his generosity by feigning to refuse payment.

**16 Nonetheless, Abraham understood what Ephron *really* meant. Abraham weighed out for Ephron the amount of silver that he had mentioned in the presence of the Hittites, 400 full-sized shekels, which are universally-negotiable currency.** Despite the fact that Ephron had loudly proclaimed his largesse in being willing to give the property to Abraham for free, he in fact did accept Abraham’s extravagant overpayment. By paying its full price, Abraham entirely severed any legal association of Ephron’s with the field.

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❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

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**13 I am giving you the money for the field:** Holy things cannot be acquired “for free,” that is, without proper effort.<sup>49</sup> This is why Abraham chose to pay to transfer the property into the realm of holiness, even though it was rightfully his in any case.

Similarly, each one of us has been assigned a portion of the world that it is our responsibility to bring into the realm of holiness. We must do this at “full price,” with hard work and effort. Even those of us who find it easy to study the Torah and observe the commandments

❧ A CLOSER LOOK ❧

**[13] I am giving you the money for the field:** Another reason Abraham insisted on not accepting the field gratis, or even at a discount, is because he wanted to sever all ties between it and its former owners. When someone gives a gift, the recipient remains forever indebted to the giver, no matter how selfless the latter’s intentions; thus, the giver forever retains a slight connection to the gift. On the other hand, in a purchase, there remains no one-sided sense of dependency; a mutually satisfactory exchange has taken place, and the seller has severed virtually all connection with the sold object.

Upon closer examination, we see that Abraham took further steps to sever any association between the field and its former owners. As he pointed out to the Hittites, he could easily have assumed ownership of the land without purchasing it, by merely invoking God’s promise to give it to him. His purchase was therefore analogous to a king’s purchase of property from one of his subjects. When a commoner buys property from another, the seller is still remembered as one of the parties to

the transaction—perhaps even as the main party—since the sale could have been concluded only with his consent. But since a king can legally seize his subject’s property without his consent, the subject is not an active party to the transaction even when the king buys the property. Thus, purchase by a king truly severs any connection between the property and the seller. By alluding to his right as the land’s future ruler, Abraham conferred the force of a royal purchase onto his acquisition of the field, thus disassociating Ephron’s name from it altogether.

It was for this same reason that King David insisted on purchasing the land upon which the Temple would later be built, even though he had conquered this land and it had been offered it to him by the owner as a gift.<sup>50</sup>

The sages<sup>51</sup> therefore state that Jewish ownership of the Cave of the Machpelah, the Temple Mount, and Joseph’s tomb in Shechem cannot be contested, since all three were purchased<sup>52</sup> at full value and without protest on the part of the seller.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49.</sup> *Zohar* 2:128a. See above, on 18:1. <sup>50.</sup> 2 Samuel 24:18-24; 1 Chronicles 21:21-26. <sup>51.</sup> *Bereishit Rabbah* 79:7. <sup>52.</sup> Regarding Joseph’s tomb in Shechem, see below, 33:19, and Joshua 24:32. <sup>53.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 60-63; vol. 35, pp. 84-85; *Sichot Kodesh* 5729, vol. 1, pp. 120, 124. See *Tosafot* on *Kidushin* 26a.

ONKELOS

17 וְקָם חָקַל עֶפְרוֹן דִּי בְכַפְלָתָא דִּי קָדָם מִמְרָא חֲקֵלָא וּמְעֵרְתָא דִּי בַהּ וְכַל אֵילָנָא דִּי בְחֲקֵלָא דִּי בְכַל תְּחוּמָּה סְחוּר סְחוּר: 18 לְאַבְרָהָם לְזַבְינְהִי לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי חֲתָנָה בְּכַל עָלֵי תִרְעָה קְרִתָּה: 19 וּבִתְרָן בֶּן קָבֵר אַבְרָהָם יָת שָׂרָה אֲתַתָּה בְּמַעֲרַת חֲקַל כְּפֵלְתָא עַל אִפֵּי מִמְרָא הִיא חֲבָרוֹן בְּאַרְעָא דְכְּנָעַן: 20 וְקָם חֲקֵלָא וּמְעֵרְתָא דִּי בַהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְאַחֲסִנַת קְבוּרָא מִן בְּנֵי חֲתָנָה: 24:1 וְאַבְרָהָם סִיב עַל בְּיוֹמֵי וַיִּי בְרִיךְ יִתְ אַבְרָהָם בְּכֹלֵא:

שני 17 וַיָּקָם | שָׂרָה עֶפְרוֹן אִשָּׁר בְּמִכְפֵּלָה אִשָּׁר לְפָנַי מִמְרָא הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַמְעָרָה אִשְׁרָבוּ וְכָל־הָעֵץ אִשָּׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה אִשָּׁר בְּכָל־גִּבְלוֹ סָבִיב: 18 לְאַבְרָהָם לְמִקְנָה לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי־חַתָּת בְּכָל בָּאֵי שְׂעֵר־עֵירוֹ: 19 וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן קָבֵר אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶל־מְעָרַת שָׂדֶה הַמִּכְפֵּלָה עַל־פְּנֵי מִמְרָא הוּא חֲבָרוֹן בְּאַרְצָן כְּנָעַן: 20 וַיָּקָם הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַמְעָרָה אִשְׁרָבוּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְאַחֲזַת־קְבֹר מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־חַתָּת: ס 24:1 וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַיָּמִים וַיְהִי בְרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל־

RASHI

באי שער עירו. בקרב בלם, ובמעמד בלם, הקנהו לו: 1 ברח את אברהם בכל. "בכל" עולה בגמטריא "בן". ומאחר שהיה לו בן, היה צריך להשיאו או אשה:

17 וַיָּקָם שָׂרָה עֶפְרוֹן. תקומה היתה לו, שיצא מיד הדין ליד מלך. ופשוטו של מקרא: "ויקם השדה והמערה אשר בו וכל העץ לאברהם למקנה" וגו': 18 בכל

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

intention of using an object for spiritual purposes sanctifies and uplifts it, even before we actually use it, just as the Machpelah field was lifted out of its former status even before Abraham buried Sarah there.<sup>72</sup>

We further learn from Abraham that when fulfilling our mandate to elevate the physical world, we should not allow ourselves to be deterred by apparently exorbitant costs, nor should we try to evaluate whether the effort is worthwhile. Thanks to Abraham's willingness to spare no expense or effort, the world has been blessed with access to a holy site, in whose merit and in the merit of those buried there, many of the prayers offered there have been answered. We, too, should never underestimate the potential positive impact of our actions.<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, when we take Abraham's example, we

can elevate our portion of the world permanently and absolutely, just as Abraham severed all connection between the Cave of the Machpelah and its former owners. Abraham took advantage of his noble status to accomplish this total dissociation; we, too, as members of "a kingdom of nobles,"<sup>74</sup> can similarly dissociate our portion of the world forever from its original, non-holy status.<sup>75</sup>

1 Abraham was old...and continued to deeply internalize his experiences: Physical aging (facial wrinkles, etc.) is caused largely by allowing life's events to overly affect us. Normally, as people get older, they develop a certain detachment from the vicissitudes of life, either because they have become more relaxed or because their accumulated experience has left them less impressionable than they were in their younger years.

A CLOSER LOOK

[1] God had blessed Abraham with everything, i.e., a son: The Torah's use of the phrase "with everything" to allude to Isaac intends to teach us something about the quality of Isaac's character, as well as to shed light on Abraham's instructions to Eliezer. Isaac was "everything" to Abraham—he embodied every good quality and value that Abraham stood for.

This is why Abraham took such pains to find the best possible bride for Isaac, whom he knew was only

to be found among his family in Charan. Had Isaac not been the embodiment of his ideals, Abraham would have chosen a local bride; that way, he would have fulfilled his paternal obligation to find his son a bride himself, since it is always better to fulfill an obligation oneself rather than by proxy.<sup>76</sup>

But because Isaac was "everything" he lived for, Abraham wanted to ensure that Isaac's children would emerge from a union with a woman of the highest caliber.<sup>77</sup>

71. Hitva'aduyot 5748, vol. 1, p. 477; Likutei Sichot, vol. 15, pp. 147-148. 72. Hitva'aduyot 5746, vol. 1, pp. 582-583; Likutei Sichot, vol. 35, p. 87. 73. Sichot Kodesh 5733, vol. 1, pp. 128-132. 74. Exodus 19:6. 75. Likutei Sichot, vol. 35, pp. 84-86. See also above, commentary on verse 9: "for full value." 76. Kidushin 41a. 77. Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, p. 347.

◆ **Second Reading 17 Ephron's Field of the Machpelah, which faced Mamre—the field, the cave within it, and every tree within its perimeter—was thus confirmed**

18 as Abraham's purchase publicly, in full view of the Hittites and of all who came to the gate of his city, thereby making the purchase incontrovertible. When Abraham purchased them, the status of the field and the cave rose from that of a commoner's property to that of a noble's.<sup>63</sup>

19 Once Abraham purchased the field and the cave and thereby (a) completely disassociated Ephron's name from them and (b) elevated its status to that of royal property, he buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the Field of the Machpelah facing Mamre, which is Hebron, in Canaan. In order to show proper respect for Sarah, Abraham wanted to bury her in the field of a noble, rather than in that of a commoner.<sup>64</sup>

20 The field and its cave were thus confirmed as Abraham's property by the fact that he designated the cave in accordance with his intention in buying it, as a burial ground, purchased outright and unequivocally from the Hittites through Ephron.<sup>65</sup>

## The Engagement of Rebecca

24:1 Three years later, in 2088, Abraham decided it was time for Isaac to marry Rebecca. By this time, Abraham was 140 years old. Even though he was old, and maturity tends to breed benign nonchalance, Abraham continued to deeply internalize his experiences.<sup>66</sup> God had blessed Abraham with a son in his old age worthy of becoming his successor, and this son was everything to Abraham. So he felt deeply responsible to guarantee the perpetuation of his line in order to ensure that the Divine mission to which he had dedicated his life would continue.

### ∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

worth of exactly 600,000 square cubits, or one square cubit for each of the six-hundred thousand Jews who left Egypt and received the Torah,<sup>67</sup> and who embodied the six-hundred thousand root-souls of the Jewish people of all times.<sup>68</sup>

Abraham's purchase of the cave for 400 shekels thus sowed the seeds for the Jewish people's future inheritance of the entire land.<sup>69</sup> Although Abraham had already taken formal possession of the land by traveling through it,<sup>70</sup> this was his first act of applying his ownership of it.

It is no coincidence that this act was precipitated by Sarah's death. As we have noted, Sarah's whole life was devoted to concretizing Abraham's abstract ideals. Her death signaled the completion of her life's work, meaning that it was now possible for others to follow her

precedent. It was therefore only now, in the merit of Sarah's life work, that Abraham was able to actualize his previous, formal acquisition of the land.

It is also significant that this burial site also contained the graves of Adam and Eve. By purchasing their graves, Abraham implied that the Divine mission originally entrusted to humanity as a whole was now being passed on specifically to the nation he was in the process of founding. Once again, it was in Sarah's merit that Abraham was able to particularize the burial site, reminiscent of Sarah's insistence on making Isaac Abraham's sole heir, as opposed to Abraham's desire to include Ishmael in some way, too.<sup>71</sup>

18 **The status of the field and the cave rose:** From Abraham we learn that we can elevate physical objects by acquiring them for a holy purpose. In fact, the mere

which measured 100 x 50 cubits (Exodus 27:18), was suitable to be seeded by 2 *se'ah* of seed (*Erwin* 23b). It therefore follows that the area seeded by 1 *se'ah* of seed is 50 x 50 cubits, or 2,500 square cubits. Thus, the area seeded by a *chomer* is 30 x 2,500, or 75,000 square cubits. 63. Rashi on v. 17. 64. *Hitva'aduyot* 5746, vol. 1, pp. 581-582, 620-621, 627-629; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, p. 82-86. 65. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 86-87. 66. Above, 18:11; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 91-92. 67. Exodus 12:37. 68. *Sefer HaGilgulim* 3 (3c); *Tanya*, ch. 37 (47b); see *Tikunei Zohar* 69 (112a). 69. *Paneiach Raza* 50b; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 44. 70. Above, 13:17.

— ONKELOS —

2 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם לְעַבְדָּהּ סָבֵא  
דְּבִיתָהּ דְּשָׁלִיט בְּכָל דֵּי לָהּ שְׁוִי  
כַּעֲן יָדָךְ תַּחֲזוֹת יָרְכִי:

2 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל-עַבְדּוֹ זְקֵן בֵּיתוֹ הַמְשַׁל בְּכָל-אִשְׁרֵי-  
לוֹ שְׁיִם נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יָרְכִי:

— RASHI —

ראשונה לו, ובאה לו על ידי צער, והיתה חביבה  
עליו, ונטלה:

2 זְקֵן בֵּיתוֹ. לפי שהוא דבוק, נקוד "זקן": תחת ירכי.  
לפי שהנשבע צריך שיטל בידו חפץ של מצוה, כגון  
ספר תורה או מזוזה או תפלין, והמילה היתה מצוה

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

God's commandments."<sup>89</sup>

The pursuit of wisdom is an act of personal growth and self-fulfillment; performing the commandments, on the other hand, refines and elevates the physical world. In many cases, these two facets of fulfilling God's will seem to conflict. Each competes for our time and attention, forcing us to choose one over the other. Abraham, however, was able to synthesize the two seamlessly. He pursued and achieved his inward and outward goals without compromising either, and did so in such a way that each complemented and enhanced the other.

Blending two opposites is no small feat, one that other righteous individuals who lived before the Torah was given were not able to accomplish. They invariably opted for the path of inner personal refinement and eschewed the challenge of elevating the world.

With the giving of the Torah, however, the ability to blend these two approaches was granted to every Jew. As will be explained further on, the Torah reconciles the opposing aspects in spiritual life; as such, now that the Torah has been given to us, we can follow Abraham's example and pursue both the path of self-refinement and that of the rectification of the world, such that both pursuits complement and enhance each other.<sup>90</sup>

**B**ut how can the Torah consider *all* of Abraham's days productive, when we know that he was raised as an idolater and only recognized the existence of God at a certain point in his childhood?<sup>91</sup> Are we to count the years in which Abraham served idols together with the years in which he served God?

The answer is yes, because it was precisely Abraham's idol worship that compelled him to actively seek the truth. As Maimonides writes:<sup>92</sup> "He wondered, 'How can the world run without someone running it?' He continued searching until he found the truth."

As we saw above concerning Sarah,<sup>93</sup> the periods of preparation and education in our lives count as part of our periods of accomplishment. With Abraham, we see how even inadvertent periods of negative activity can be counted together with positive periods if we use them as an impetus for positive action.<sup>94</sup>

**2 I want you to swear to me:** In Jewish law, appointing an emissary does not require administering him an oath.<sup>95</sup> Why, then, did Abraham make Eliezer take an oath? Did Abraham suspect that Eliezer, his trusted servant and outstanding disciple, would not prove faithful to the task entrusted him?

No, Abraham did not doubt Eliezer's reliability or sincerity. But he knew that people make choices based on their own perceptions and interpretations of reality, and that they can therefore sometimes veer from even their best-intentioned and sincerest promises. In order to ensure that this not happen, it is necessary to bind their commitment to something outside of themselves, to some objective reality. When we take an oath, we are expressing this willingness to transcend ourselves, to commit ourselves to remaining true to our original intent, even if we experience a personal change of heart.

So Abraham's desire to make Eliezer take an oath is understandable. But why did he want him to hold some holy object (in this case, his reproductive organ) while taking the oath? According to Jewish law, a person is only required to hold a holy object when taking most types of judicial oaths (not when swearing in general); furthermore, in such cases, the object held by the person must be either a Torah scroll or *tefilin*.<sup>96</sup>

In fact, Abraham did view Eliezer's mission as a judicial case, and in particular, as a classic case of partial admission.<sup>97</sup> When someone admits partial guilt in a monetary claim, he is required to relinquish the money that he admits to owing and to swear that he does not owe the rest that he is being sued for.<sup>98</sup> As we will see,<sup>99</sup> making the world into God's home is, for most of us, an ongoing case of partial admission. God claims that none of our talents, resources, and powers are really ours; rather, He has loaned them to us to enable us to fulfill our Divine mission. Therefore, everything we accomplish is really His, and our duty to sanctify reality applies uniformly to all aspects of our lives. We, however, delude ourselves into thinking that our accomplishments are at least partially due to our own powers and hard work, and that we should therefore be allowed to enjoy the fruits of our labor in any way we see fit. We require an oath to help us realize that we,

89. Zohar 1:224a. 90. Likutei Sichot, vol. 3, pp. 773-779. 91. Above, 11:28, and on 12:4. 92. Mishneh Torah, Avodah Zarah 1:3. 93. Above, on 23:1. 94. Likutei Sichot, vol. 35, pp. 68-69. 95. Mishneh Torah, Mechirah 5:11. 96. Mishneh Torah, Shevuot 11:8-12; Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 87:12-15. 97. See Shevuot 38b. 98. Exodus 22:8, below. 99. ad loc.

**2 He said to his servant Eliezer,<sup>78</sup> the elder member of his household who was in charge of all that he owned:** “I want you to swear to me. In order for this type of oath to take force, the person taking the oath must hold a holy object while swearing.<sup>79</sup> The only physical object so far that has been sanctified—by virtue of it having been the object of an explicit commandment from God—is my reproductive organ, which He commanded me to circumcise. Therefore, **place your hand under my thigh** for this purpose,

— ❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧ —

The aging process thus slows down and levels off. But because Abraham continued to be deeply affected by events, the years took their toll and the effect became visible. In this context, the Torah is telling us that “Abraham was old...because he continued to deeply internalize his experiences.”

Here, we may take Abraham’s attitude as an object lesson in how *not* to behave. Of course, we should strive to emulate his care to deeply internalize his experiences. But at the same time, we should trust in God’s protec-

tion and not take life’s experiences so to heart that they age us physically.<sup>80</sup>

**T**he literal meaning of this phrase is “Abraham was old; he came with days.” The Torah has already informed us that Abraham was old,<sup>81</sup> so the word “old” here must allude to some additional meaning.<sup>82</sup>

According to the sages, the word “old” in certain cases implies “wise,”<sup>83</sup> and the idiom “to come with days” means “to have used all one’s days for performing

❧ INNER DIMENSIONS ❧

**[1] Abraham...continued to deeply internalize his experiences:** The Divine energy we generate by performing God’s commandments spreads around us, encompassing us as a spiritual “garment” that clothes us from head to toe. This garment becomes the interface between our psyches and our surrounding environment, such that all our experiences and interactions are filtered through this Divine aura. This is the mechanism by which we attain, maintain, and enhance our Divine consciousness even while living in the physical world. In the afterlife, these garments take on a new role: they enable the soul to absorb the sublime Godly energies of the Garden of Eden.<sup>84</sup>

However, we perform the commandments not merely for our own sake, but also in order to refine and elevate the world around us. It is therefore imperative to perform commandments daily, for the spiritual makeup of every day is a unique blend of the spiritual energies that define it.

True, time is also divided into hours, months, years, and so on, and each of these units also possesses its own unique spiritual identity; but the basic unit of time is the day, as is clear from the fact that the successive stages in the creation of the world were delineated by this unit. It is therefore important to observe commandments on a daily basis, since if that opportunity is missed, it can never be recovered, i.e., that segment of time will not have been sanctified.

The *Zohar* thus interprets the phrase that Abraham “came with days” to mean that he fulfilled the commandments every day of his life.<sup>85</sup>

**A**s we have already seen, the literal meaning of these words is “Abraham was old; he came with days,” and the word “old” can be interpreted to mean “wise.” Furthermore, the word “day” is often understood as an allegory for Divine light and revelation. The use of the plural, “days,” thus alludes to two distinct types of Divine awareness: that which is revealed by observing the commandments and that which is revealed by performing otherwise mundane activities for a Godly purpose.

In this context, the verse can now be understood to mean: “Abraham acquired insight because he had drawn both types of Divine revelation into the world.”<sup>86</sup>

Alternatively, the name “Abraham” alludes to God’s attribute of kindness (*chesed*).<sup>87</sup> This attribute specifically is termed “old,” i.e., primordial, since it was with this attribute that God created the world. “Days,” in this context, refers to time, which exists only within the context of created reality. In light of this explanation, the verse can now be understood to mean: “God’s primordial *chesed* was drawn into created reality.” Abraham was able to draw this transcendent beneficence into the finite world by himself leading a life of kindness.<sup>88</sup>

78. Above, 14:14 ff, 15:2, 22:3. 79. *Shavuot* 38b. 80. *Hitva’aduyot* 5748, vol. 1, pp. 488–491; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 89–92. 81. Above, 18:11–12. 82. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 346. 83. *Kidushin* 32b; *Sifra*, *Kedoshim* 7; *Midrash Zuta Rut* 4; *Seder Olam Rabbah* 30. 84. *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5670, p. 164; *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5707, p. 198. 85. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, p. 1194. 86. *Or Torah* 456. 87. See above on 22:11. 88. *Or Torah* 30.

— ONKELOS —  
 3 וְאִקְוִים עֲלֶיךָ בְּמִימְרֵי דַי אֱלֹהִים  
 דְּשָׁמַיָא וְאִלְהָא דְאַרְעָא דִּי לֹא  
 תִּסְבֵּי אֲתָתָא לְבְרִי מִבְּנֵי כְּנַעֲנָאָה דִּי  
 אָנָּא יְתִיב בִּינֵיהוֹן: 4 אֱלֹהִין לְאַרְעִי  
 וְלִילְדוּתֵי תִזְוִיל וְתִסְבֵּי אֲתָתָא לְבְרִי  
 לְיִצְחָק: 5 וְאָמַר לָהּ עֲבֹדִי מֵאִים  
 לֹא תִיבֵי אֲתָתָא לְמִיתֵי בְּתָרֵי  
 לְאַרְעָא דְדָא הָאֲתָבָא אֲתִיב יְתִ  
 בְּרַךְ לְאַרְעָא דִּי נִפְקָתָא מִתְמוֹן:  
 6 וְאָמַר לָהּ אֲבָרְהָם אֲסַתְמַר לָךְ  
 דְלָמָּא תְתִיב יְתִ בְרִי לְתִמּוֹן:

3 וְאִשְׁבִּיעֶנְךָ בַּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר  
 לֹא־תִקַּח אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִבְּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב  
 בְּקִרְבּוֹ: 4 כִּי אֶל־אֶרֶצִי וְאֶל־מוֹלְדֹתַי תִּלְלֶנּוּ וְלִקְחֶתָּ אִשָּׁה  
 לְבְנִי לְיִצְחָק: 5 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הֲעֹבֵד אוֹלִי לֹא־תֵאבְדָה  
 הָאִשָּׁה לְלֵכֶת אַחֲרַי אֶל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת הֲהֵשֵׁב אֲשִׁיב  
 אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵאתָ מִשָּׁם: 6 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
 אֲבָרְהָם הַשְּׁמַר לְךָ פֶּן־תֵּשִׁיב אֶת־בְּנִי שָׂמָּה:

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

when taking an oath.

Inasmuch as *tefilin* subordinates the intellect and emotions to the authority of God's will, its effect on us is similar to that of studying the Torah; fulfilling both these commandments empowers us to transcend our natural selves. *Tefilin* can thus also be held when taking an oath. Preference is given to holding a Torah scroll, however, because the effect of studying the Torah is broader, affecting the whole world, while the effect of donning *tefilin* is more limited to the person who wears them.

In Abraham's time, no formal commandment to write a Torah scroll or *tefilin* had yet been given. Therefore, even had Abraham somehow written either of these, they would not have embodied the holiness referred to above, which enables someone to transcend his natural capabilities. The only formal commandment God had given at that point was circumcision. As such, circumcision at that time represented what the Torah in its entirety represents nowadays—the ability to transcend our personal limitations by connecting to God. Therefore, when Abraham wanted to administer an oath to Eliezer, his only choice for a holy object for this purpose was his organ of procreation.<sup>106</sup>

**3 He is now not only the God of heaven but also the God of the earth:** Initially, people are prepared to accept the existence of an abstract, remote "God of heaven"; the idea of an intimate, personal "God of the earth," who may encroach upon their private lives, is much more threatening. Therefore, when Abraham began spreading his message of Divine morality, he had no choice but to base it upon the premise of the existence of a "God of heaven." Nonetheless, he continued

educating his disciples until they were also ready to accept the existence of a "God of the earth," who is present within all aspects of reality and is concerned with our personal lives, as well.<sup>107</sup>

**W**e can divide our pursuits between the "heavenly" and "earthly," i.e., between what we do for spiritual purposes and what we do for physical survival or pleasure. Our challenge is to ensure that God be just as much the "God of the earth" as He is the "God of heaven," i.e., that we be as conscious of Him when we engage in physical pursuits as we are when we engage in spiritual pursuits.<sup>108</sup>

**4 Take a wife:** The prophets often describe the relationship between God and the Jewish people as that of husband and wife.<sup>109</sup> In this sense, we are all entrusted with a mission comparable to the one Abraham gave Eliezer: to go out and find those souls that have drifted away and bring them back to God, their "husband." And just as Abraham assured Eliezer that his mission would be crowned with success, we too are assured that our attempts to bring back the lost souls of Israel will also be blessed with success.

True, God grants each individual free choice, so it would therefore follow that our success is as much up to the individual whom we are trying to influence as it is to our own efforts. But we are also taught that when He wants, God plants good thoughts in people's minds, influencing them to choose good. Therefore, if, like Eliezer, we are totally committed to our mission and pray to God for assistance in its fulfillment,<sup>110</sup> we are indeed assured that God will crown our sincere and tenacious efforts with success.<sup>111</sup>

106. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 38-44; vol. 3, pp. 757-761; vol. 16, p. 213; *Sichot Kodesh* 5721, pp. 14-15; *Sichot Kodesh* 5739, vol. 1, p. 423.

107. *Hitva'aduyot* 5743, vol. 4, p. 1987. 108. *Sichot Kodesh* 5739, vol. 1, pp. 243-250. 109. E.g., Jeremiah 2:2, Isaiah 50:1, Hosea 1-3, and the Song of Songs. 110. See below, verse 12. 111. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 104-105.

**3 and I will bind you by an oath to God.** Ever since coming to this land, I have been working successfully towards making its inhabitants aware of the existence of God and His involvement in human affairs. In their eyes, therefore, He is now not only the **God of heaven** but also the **God of the earth**. Nonetheless, they have not yet sufficiently internalized this awareness for it to have changed them for the better in any profound way; it still remains mere lip service for them.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, I adjure you **not to take a wife for my son from among the daughters of the Canaanites in whose midst I live.**

**4 Instead, you must go to my former land, to Charan, the place where my family still lives, and take a wife from among them for my son, Isaac.** Even though I have been away from my family for sixty-five years and the distance has prevented me from influencing them directly, they are nonetheless scions of the royal, firstborn line of Shem, and have inherited its aristocratic upbringing, noble gentility, and family traditions and teachings.”

**5 The servant said to him, “Perhaps the woman will not wish to follow me to this land. Shall I take your son back to the land from which you departed? After all, if you prefer that I take a wife for Isaac from among your family members rather than from among the people whom you have been influencing and living with for the past sixty-five years, then it should not matter where the couple live afterwards.”**

**6 Abraham said to him, “Be most careful not to take my son back there.**

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❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

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in fact, owe everything to God, and therefore no part of our lives is exempt from being imbued with Divine consciousness.

In fact, we take this oath long before we need to use it. Before we are born, our soul is adjured to be righteous.<sup>101</sup> Although we do not consciously remember taking this oath, it subconsciously impels us to seek goodness and holiness and to recognize Divine providence. Moreover, by administering this oath to us, God not only compels us to act on it, He also grants us the power to do so.

By virtue of this oath, we realize that indeed, everything belongs to God. Once we understand this, however, God allows (and even encourages<sup>102</sup>) us to enjoy the fruits of our labors, for we will then do so not for our own self-gratification, but as an expression of our gratefulness to Him.

Making the world into God’s home is thus the archetypal case of partial admission. Abraham knew this, as well as the fact that the formation of Isaac’s future

family would be a crucial step in the process of making the physical world a home for God.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, when charging Eliezer with the mission of finding Isaac a wife, he knew it was necessary to imbue the entire enterprise with power and commitment beyond normal mortal capacities. He therefore made Eliezer take on oath, even though he entertained no doubts as to his servant’s fidelity to his mission.<sup>104</sup>

The simple reason the Torah requires someone taking a judicial oath to hold a Torah scroll or *tefilin* is so that the holiness inherent in these objects will make him afraid to take a false oath.<sup>105</sup> On a deeper level, however, the reason is that these objects help us internalize the transcendent Divinity we seek to access by taking an oath. Specifically, the Torah is the bridge between God and the world; it is not only our guide in refining, elevating, and consecrating every aspect of reality, thus transforming the world into God’s home—it also enables us to tap the transcendent power to do so. It is thus through the Torah that we access powers beyond our natural capabilities, which is exactly our objective

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100. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, p. 90, note 22. 101. *Nidah* 30b. 102. See on Numbers 30:3. 103. *Sefer HaSichot* 5749, vol. 1, pp. 58-60; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 95 ff. 104. *Sefer HaSichot* 5749, vol. 1, p. 63, note 54. 105. *Chidushim* of Nachmanides, Rabbi Shlomo ibn Aderet (Rashba), Rabbi Yom Tov ibn Asevilla (Ritva), Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel (Rosh), etc., on *Shevuot* 38b.

— ONKELOS —

7 וְיִי אֱלֹהֵא דְשָׂמִינֵא דִּי דְבְרִנֵּי מִבֵּית אבֵּא וּמֵאֲרַע יְלִדוּתֵי וְדִי מִלִּיל לִי וְדִי קַיִם לִי לְמִימֵר לְבָנִיךָ אֲתָן יֵת אֲרַעֵא הָדָא הוּא יִשְׁלַח מִלְּאַבָּה קְדָמָךְ וְתִסַּב אֲתִתָּא לְבְרִי מִתְמוּן: 8 וְאִם לֹא תִיבִי אֲתִתָּא לְמִיתִי בְתַרְךָ וְיִתֵּי זִכְאָה מִמוּמִיתִי דֵּא לְחֹד יֵת בְּרִי לֹא תִיבִי לְתִמּוּן: 9 וְשׁוּי עֲבָדָא יֵת יְדֵה תְחוּת יִרְכָא דְאַבְרָהָם רְבוּנָה וְקַיִם לֵה עַל פְּתַנְגָּא הָדִין: 10 וְדָבֵר עֲבָדָא עֲשָׂרָא גְמִלִין מִגְּמִלֵי רְבוּנָה וְאֹזֶל וְכָל שְׁפָר רְבוּנָה בִּידֵה וְקַם וְאֹזֶל לְאַרְם דִּי עַל פֶּרֶת לְקַרְתָּא דְנַחֲוֹר:

7 יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר לְקַחְנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי וּמֵאֲרָץ מוֹלַדְתִּי וְאֲשֶׁר דְּבִרְתִּי וְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לִי לֵאמֹר לְזָרְעֶךָ אֲתָן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת הוּא יִשְׁלַח מִלְּאָכֹוּ לְפָנֶיךָ וְלִקְחַתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִשָּׁם: 8 וְאִם־לֹא תֵאבְּדָה הָאִשָּׁה לְלֶכֶת אַחֲרָיִךָ וְנִקִּיתָ מִשְׁבַּעְתִּי זֹאת רַק אֶת־בְּנִי לֹא תִשָּׁב שָׂמָּה: 9 וַיִּשָּׂם הָעֶבֶד אֶת־יָדוֹ תַּחַת יַרְךָ אַבְרָהָם אֲדֹנָיו וַיִּשָּׁבַע לוֹ עַל־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה:

שלישי 10 ויקח העבד עשרה גמלים מגמלי אדניו וילך וכל־טוב אדניו בידו ויקם וילך אל־ארם נהרים אל־עיר נחור:

— RASHI —

וְ"לֵהם", אֵלֵא "אֵלִי" "אֵלִיו" "אֵלֵיהֶם", וְתַרְגּוּם שְׁלֵהם: "עֲמִי" "עֲמָה" "עֲמֹהוּן". אֵבֶל אֵצֶל "אֲמִירָה" נוֹפֵל לְשׁוֹן "לִי" וְ"לֹ" וְ"לָהֶם": וְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לִי. בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים: 8 וְנִקִּיתָ מִשְׁבַּעְתִּי וְגו'. וְקַח לוֹ אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת עֵגֶר אֲשָׁכוּל וּמִמָּרָא: רַק אֵת בְּנִי וְגו'. "רַק" מְעוֹט הוּא, בְּנִי אֵינֹו חוּזֵר, אֵבֶל יַעֲקֹב בֶּן בְּנֵי סוֹפוֹ לְחֹזֵר: 10 מִגְּמִלֵי אֲדֹנָיו. נִכְרִין הֵיוּ מִשְׁאָר גְּמִלִים, שְׁהֵיוּ יוֹצְאִין זְמוּמִין מִפְּנֵי הַגּוֹל, שֶׁלֹּא יִרְעוּ בְּשָׂדוֹת אַחֲרֵים: וְכָל טוֹב אֲדֹנָיו בְּיָדוֹ. שֶׁטֶר מִתְּנָה קֵתֵב לְיִצְחָק עַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ, כְּדֵי שְׁיִקְפְּצוּ לְשִׁלַּח לוֹ בָתָם: אֲרָם נְהָרִים. בֵּין שְׁתֵּי נְהָרוֹת יוֹשְׁבֵת:

7 ה' אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר לְקַחְנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי. וְלֹא אָמַר "וְאֵלֵהי הָאָרֶץ", וְלִמְעַלְהֵי הוּא אוֹמֵר: "וְאֲשַׁבְּעֶךָ בְּה' אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵלֵהי הָאָרֶץ"? אָמַר לוֹ: עֲכָשׁוּ הוּא אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵלֵהי הָאָרֶץ, שֶׁהִרְגַּלְתִּיו בְּפִי הַבְּרִיּוֹת, אֵבֶל בְּשִׁלְקַחְנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי הָיָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא אֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ, שֶׁלֹּא הָיוּ בְּאֵי עוֹלָם מַכִּירִים בוֹ, וְשָׂמוּ לֹא הָיָה רְגִיל בְּאָרֶץ: מִבֵּית אָבִי. מִדָּוָר: וּמֵאֲרָץ מוֹלַדְתִּי. מֵאוֹר בְּשָׂדִים: וְאֲשֶׁר דָּבַר לִי. לְצַרְכִּי, כְּמוֹ: "אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר עֲלִי". וְכֵן כָּל "לִי" וְ"לֹ" וְ"לָהֶם" הַסְּמוּכִים אֵצֶל "דְּבוּר", מְפוֹרָשִׁים בְּלִשׁוֹן "עַל", וְתַרְגּוּם שְׁלֵהֶם "עֲלִי" "עֲלוּהוּ" "עֲלִיהוּן". שְׂאִין נוֹפֵל אֵצֶל "דְּבוּר" לְשׁוֹן "לִי" וְ"לֹ":

9. פסוק ג.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

**8 The accursed cannot unite with the blessed:** As we have seen, Eliezer was a righteous man, being Abraham's loyal servant and most prized disciple who helped him disseminate his teachings. Nevertheless, Eliezer was descended from Canaan, whose offspring had been cursed to be slaves. The essence of this curse was that Canaan's descendants would forever lack the mentality of self-determination, always feeling like victims of forces beyond their control, slaves of fate or circumstance.

This attitude is diametrically opposed to the Torah's insistence that humanity is free and unbound by any type of moral predetermination. Someone who does not feel that he is free to act as he pleases—and therefore responsible for his actions—cannot be part of the people whose Divine mission is to bring the Torah's message of hope and moral freedom to humanity.

And more importantly, the insidious specter of victimization and predetermination breeds depression; someone who considers himself a helpless and hopeless victim cannot evince the joy in life that must serve as the basis of our relationship to God.<sup>121</sup>

This exchange expresses once again the theme of this

*parashah*: the uniqueness of Sarah's offspring. Not only are her children unique; even an exalted personality such as Eliezer is considered accursed in comparison.<sup>122</sup>

**10 With all his master's bounty in his hand:** Even though Isaac was already forty years old at the time, Abraham nevertheless displayed no hesitation in going to all extremes for his son's benefit, for he knew that his parental role never ends. There is no age limit to the parent-child bond. Of course, there comes a point where our children must take responsibility for their own lives. But even then, as parents, we remain obligated to be involved in their lives, guiding and helping them in whatever ways possible.<sup>123</sup>

Abraham was willing to relinquish his entire fortune to ensure the success of Eliezer's mission of facilitating the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca. So, too, God is willing to give up "all His bounty" to help each and every one of us fulfill our mission of bringing about the "marriage" of the physical and the spiritual dimensions of reality by transforming the world into God's home through our good deeds.<sup>124</sup>

7 True, I would prefer my future daughter-in-law be of my family's lineage. But lineage alone does not suffice. When she and my son marry, they must grow together in a fitting environment, which is not to be found anywhere else but here. Although it is true that the people of this land only pay lip service to God's involvement in human affairs, at least they do that! In contrast, the people where I used to live consider **God** as only **the God of heaven**: although I did convince them of His existence,<sup>112</sup> I did not succeed in convincing them that He is involved with human affairs. This was how they conceived of God when He **took me away from my father's house** in Charan, **and** all the more so when He took me away **from the land of my family**, Ur of the Kasdites, and this how they still conceive of Him. Moreover, God **spoke concerning me—and even swore to me** in the Covenant between the Halves—**saying, "To your offspring will I give this land,"**<sup>113</sup> clearly indicating that my son should remain here. I am therefore confident that **He will send His angel before you** to orchestrate events to your advantage in advance.<sup>114</sup> With His help, **you shall take a wife for my son from there.**

8 **But**, despite all this, **if the woman does not wish to follow you** back here, **then you shall be absolved of this oath of mine**, and may seek a wife for my son from among the daughters of my local confederates, Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre. Although they are not my relatives, they are distinguished leaders and monotheists,<sup>115</sup> and this way the couple can remain under my tutelage. In the final analysis, environment and education are more crucial than pedigree.<sup>116</sup> **In any event, do not return my son to there**, even though I foresee that *his* son will indeed return there for a time."

Eliezer had a daughter of his own, and suggested that Abraham consider her as a wife for Isaac, rather than considering a daughter of Aner, Eshkol, or Mamre. Abraham told him, however: "My son is blessed, and you, being a descendant of Canaan, are cursed.<sup>117</sup> The accursed cannot unite in marriage with the blessed."<sup>118</sup>

9 **So the servant placed his hand under the "thigh" of Abraham, his master, and swore to him regarding this.**

- ◆ *Third Reading* 10 Abraham wrote a document transferring ownership of all his property to Isaac, and gave it to Eliezer to show the prospective bride's family. Besides making Isaac into a very wealthy man, this proved Isaac's worth in Abraham's eyes, since left nothing for any of his other children. For both these reasons, the bride's family would be eager to have her marry Isaac.<sup>119</sup> When Abraham wrote the document, he was faced with a quandary over how to date it. On the one hand, he did not want to use the date he wrote it, for that would transfer his estate to Isaac before it was necessary—since it is a seventeen-day journey from Hebron to Charan—and he knew that the Torah enjoins us to take prudent care of our wealth.<sup>120</sup> On the other hand, he did not want to post-date the

112. See above, 11:31, 12:5. 113. Above, 15:7 (cf. 12:7, 13:15). 114. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 99-102. 115. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 267, note 25. 116. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 155-160. 117. Above, 9:25, 27. 118. Rashi on v. 39, below. 119. *Sichot Kodesh* 5730, vol. 1, pp. 208-209. 120. See *Arachin* 8:4: "A person is obligated to cherish his possessions." 121. *Sichot Kodesh* 5740, vol. 1, pp. 740-741. 122. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 148-149. 123. *Sichot Kodesh* 5730, vol. 1, pp. 209-210. 124. *Sefer HaSichot* 5752, vol. 1, p. 109.

— ONKELOS —

11 וְאִשְׁרֵי גְמִלְיָא מִבְּרָא לְקַרְתָּא עִם בְּרִיא דְמִיָּא לְעֵדוֹן רְמִישָׁא לְעֵדוֹן דְּנִפְקָן מִלִּיתָא: 12 וְאָמַר יי אֱלֹהֵהּ דְּרַבּוּנֵי אַבְרָהָם זְמִין כְּעוֹן קְדָמֵי יוֹמָא דִּין וְעַבְד טִיבוֹ עִם רַבּוּנֵי אַבְרָהָם: 13 הָא אֲנָא קָאָם עַל עֵינָא דְמִיָּא וּבְנַת אֲנָשִׁי קַרְתָּא נִפְקָן לְמַמְלֵי מִיָּא: 14 וַיְהִי עוֹלָמְתָא דִּי אֵימַר לָהּ אֲרַכִּינִי כְעַן קוּלְתִּיךְ וְאֲשִׁיתִי וְתִימַר אֲשֶׁת וְאִף גְּמִלְיָד אֲשִׁקִּי יִתָּה זְמִינְתָּא לְעַבְדִּיךְ לְיִצְחָק וְבֵה אֲדַע אֲרִי עַבְדְּתָ טִיבוֹ עִם רַבּוּנֵי:

11 וַיִּבְרַךְ הַגְּמִלִים מַחוּזִין לְעִיר אֶל־בְּאֵר הַמַּיִם לְעֵת עֹרֵב לְעֵת צֵאת הַשָּׁאֲבֹת: 12 וַיֹּאמֶר | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲדָנִי אַבְרָהָם הִקְרָה־נָּא לְפָנַי הַיּוֹם וַעֲשֵׂה־חֶסֶד עִם אֲדָנִי אַבְרָהָם: 13 הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי נֹצֵב עַל־עֵינַי הַמַּיִם וּבְנֹת אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר יֵצְאוֹת לְשָׂאֵב מַיִם: 14 וְהָיָה הַנְּעַר (הַנְּעָרָה) אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלָיָהּ הִטִּי־נָא כַדָּךְ וְאֲשַׁתָּה וְאָמַרְהָ שְׂתָה וְגַם־גְּמִלְיָד אֲשַׁקֶּה אֶתָּה הַכַּחֲתָ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק וְבֵה אֲדַע כִּי־עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עִם־אֲדָנִי:

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אַבְרָהָם. וְלִשׁוֹן "הוֹכַחְתָּ", בְּרַחֲמֵי, אִפְרוּבִי"ר בְּלַעֲזוֹ: וְבֵה אֲדַע. לִשׁוֹן תַּחֲנוּן, הוֹדַע לִי בָּהּ: כִּי עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד. אֵם תִּהְיֶה מִמְשַׁפְּחָתוֹ וְהוֹגֵגְתָּ לּוֹ, אֲדַע כִּי עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד:

11 וַיִּבְרַךְ הַגְּמִלִים. הִרְבִּיעָם: 14 אוֹתָהּ הִכַּחֲתָ. רְאוּנָה הִיא לּוֹ, שְׂתָהּ אַ גּוּמְלַת חֶסֶדִים, וְכַדָּאי לְכַנֵּס בְּבֵיתוֹ שֶׁל 10. לְהִרְאוֹת בְּבִירוֹ.

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of nature, allowing us to conclude our mission with unexpected speed and disproportionate success.<sup>133</sup> This fact is alluded to further when Eliezer tells his hosts, "God has made my way prosper."<sup>134</sup> The Name of God used here is the Name *Havayah*, which refers to God as He transcends nature.<sup>135</sup>

**A** third, deeper reason why God chose to override the laws of nature in this case is as follows:

A nutshell is not edible, but it performs the valuable service of protecting the edible nut while the latter ripens. Nonetheless, once the nut is ripe, it is pointless to allow the shell to continue to protect it, for this would ultimately cause the nut to rot, negating the shell's very purpose.

Similarly, evil sometimes serves a limited purpose in helping something or someone mature. For example, self-centeredness is necessary during childhood so that children can focus on their own healthy development. Once they mature, however, children must be taught to shed their no-longer necessary self-centeredness in favor of a more mature, selfless attitude toward others.

In this context, the sages liken Rebecca while in her parents' home to a "rose among the thorns."<sup>136</sup> Thorns must be allowed to protect the rose from being picked while it is growing, but once it is ripe for picking, they cannot be allowed to continue to guard and protect it.

Thus, until Rebecca turned three and became of marriageable age, Abraham had no justification to extricate her from her evil family or environment, or even to ini-

tiate such a process. But once that time came, it would have been harmful to leave Rebecca there for even one additional day.

Eliezer's journey, therefore, had to be miraculously quick, for, on the one hand, he could not have left a day earlier, and on the other hand, he could not have arrived even a day later. God therefore miraculously expedited his journey so that Rebecca would not have to be left there for even one unnecessary day.

The "thorns" among whom Rebecca lived knew that they received their Divine sustenance in her merit, just as thorns are sustained by virtue of the protection they give to the rose plant. They would therefore have balked at any attempt to remove her from their protection. Only if they could be convinced that it was God's uncontested will that she leave would they acquiesce. Eliezer therefore proved to them that God had not only caused his mission to be successful, but that its expedience was important enough to suspend the laws of nature.<sup>137</sup>

**As** with all the events that occurred to the patriarchs and matriarchs, this one, too, presaged the future redemption of their descendants. When it came time for the Jews to leave Egypt, God took them out without a moment's delay.<sup>138</sup> So, too, when the long-awaited time arrives for us to be redeemed from our present and final exile, God will certainly not detain us for even one unnecessary moment.<sup>139</sup>

**14 I will also give water to your camels:** It is axiomatic that God is perfect; since He lacks nothing, He has no

133. *Hitvo'aduyot* 5748, vol. 1, p. 479. See also on 7:9 above. 134. V. 56, below. 135. *Hitvo'aduyot* 5744 vol. 1, p. 474. 136. *Shir Hashirim Rabbah* 2:2. 137. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, p. 93. 138. See on Exodus 12:41. 139. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 34-36.

document, since doing so poses some legal problems,<sup>125</sup> and he always took care to do everything in the most meticulous way possible. Abraham therefore opted to date the document with the date Eliezer left.<sup>126</sup>

**The servant then took ten of his master's camels**—which were distinguishable from camels belonging to other people by the fact that Abraham always muzzled them to prevent them from grazing in other people's fields—and a number of men with him, **and set out**, that same day,<sup>127</sup> **with** the document listing **all his master's wealth** and affirming its transfer to Isaac **in his hand. He rose up and made his way to Aram Naharayim** ["Aram of the Two Rivers," i.e., between the Tigris and the Euphrates], **to Charan, the city where Nachor**, Abraham's brother, had settled.<sup>128</sup> Although Nachor had not accompanied Terach and Abraham when they moved to Charan from Ur,<sup>129</sup> he later followed them there.

Because Terach had been only a closet monotheist, he had not succeeded in instilling his beliefs in the members of his household. Most of his family members in Charan continued worshipping idols as in the past, although they were also aware of Abraham's monotheistic beliefs and paid them a certain amount of lip service. Rebecca, however, had precociously recognized the folly of idolatry and dedicated herself to the practice of monotheism and ethical behavior.

11 In consideration of Abraham's earnest desire to live according to the Torah's moral instructions not to part with one's wealth prematurely, God shortened the time required for the journey and Eliezer miraculously arrived in Charan on the same day as he had set out.<sup>130</sup> As he arrived, Eliezer **made the camels kneel outside the city near a well of water at evening time, when women go out to draw water.**

12 He said: "O God, God of my master Abraham, arrange events for me this day such that You grant a favor to my master, Abraham.

13 Here I stand by the spring of water, and the daughters of the townsmen are coming out to draw water.

14 Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Please tilt your pitcher so that I may drink,' and she replies, 'Drink, and I will also give water to your men<sup>131</sup> and camels,' will be the one whom You have designated for Your servant Isaac. She will be a fitting match, because her demonstration of considerateness and generosity will prove that she is worthy of becoming a part of Abraham's household. Let her be from his family and a suitable companion for Isaac; thus **I will know through her that You have acted kindly with my master."**

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∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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11 Eliezer miraculously arrived the same day as he had set out: God performed this miracle for Eliezer in consideration of Abraham's earnest desire to live according to the Torah's moral instructions. From this, we see the extent to which God is willing to bend the laws of nature—not only to enable us to fulfill our Di-

vine mission, but also to enable us to live in accordance with the Torah's outlook on life.<sup>132</sup>

**S**econdly, we learn from this miracle that when God sees that we have resolved to fulfill our Divine mission faithfully, as Eliezer had, He suspends the restrictions

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<sup>125</sup> See *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* 43:13. <sup>126</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 34. <sup>127</sup> *Hitva'aduyot* 5743, p. 516. <sup>128</sup> Rashi on v. 42, below. <sup>129</sup> Above, 11:31. <sup>130</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 34. <sup>131</sup> Rashi on v. 44, below. <sup>132</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 34.

— ONKELOS —  
 15 וְהָיָה הוּא עַד לֹא שִׁיַּי לְמַלְלָא  
 וְהָא רְבִיקָה נִפְקַת דִּי אֲתִילִידַת  
 לְבַתוּאֵל בַּר מִלְכָּה אֲתַת נְחוּר  
 אַחוּיִי דְאַבְרָהָם וְקוּלְתָּה עַל  
 כַּתְפָּה: 16 וְעוּלְמָתָא שְׁפִירַת חוּזוּ  
 לְחָדָא בְּתוּלְתָא וְגַבְרָא לֹא יָדְעָה  
 וְנִחַתַּת לְעֵינָא וּמְלַת קוּלְתָּה  
 וְסִלְיַת:

15 וְהָיָהוּא טָרָם בְּלָה לְדַבְרֵי וְהִנֵּה רְבִיקָה יֵצֵאת אֲשֶׁר  
 יִלְדָה לְבַתוּאֵל בֶּן־מִלְכָּה אִשְׁת נְחוּר אַחֵי אַבְרָהָם  
 וְכֹדֶה עַל־שִׁכְמָה: 16 וְהִנְעֵר {וְהִנְעֵרָה} טַבַּת מְרָאָה  
 מֵאֲדָר בְּתוּלָה וְאִישׁ לֹא יָדְעָה וְתָרַד הָעֵינָה וְתִמְלָא  
 כְּדָה וְתַעַל:

— RASHI —

16 בְּתוּלָה. מִמְקוֹם בְּתוּלִים: וְאִישׁ לֹא יָדְעָה. שְׁלָא  
 כְּדָרְכָה. לְפִי שְׁבָנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִים הָיוּ מְשֻׁמְרוֹת מְקוֹם  
 בְּתוּלֵיהֶן, וּמְפַקִּירוֹת עֲצָמֵן מִמְקוֹם אַחֵר, הַעִיד עַל זוֹ  
 שְׁנֵקֶה מִכָּל: שְׁנֵקֶה מִכָּל: שְׁנֵקֶה מִכָּל: שְׁנֵקֶה מִכָּל:

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into His. The Torah, in contrast, is *a priori* one with God.

Therefore, Solomon’s and Moses’ prayers that God demonstrate how He unites with the world and humanity could at best be answered immediately. In contrast, Eliezer’s prayer that God manifest the power of the Torah—by arranging the match between Isaac and Rebecca—was answered even before it was fully articulated. In fact, the only reason God waited until Eliezer had almost concluded his prayer before answering it was so that he could recognize Rebecca by the criteria he had established in his request.<sup>148</sup>

Furthermore, the Torah expresses the *general* revelation of God in the world, while the His revelation in the Temple and through the prophets express *particulars* of this general revelation. Eliezer’s prayer for the match was therefore answered more quickly than were those of Solomon and Moses.<sup>149</sup>

Additionally, Eliezer’s prayer gave voice to his realization that he could not rely on his own capabilities to perform this mission. As soon as he declared his self-effacement to God, he earned the privilege of witnessing the miracles that God would perform for Abraham.<sup>150</sup>

To the extent that we emulate Eliezer’s realization of his dependence upon God and orient our prayers toward the revelation of God’s unity with the world, God’s answers our prayers can, too, immediately. As God Himself promises,<sup>151</sup> “Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.”<sup>152</sup>

Finally, it was in Abraham’s merit that God answered Eliezer’s prayer before he finished it. We, too, as Abraham’s heirs, can be assured that, no matter how dark the exile, God is prepared to respond to our every need—even before it is fully verbalized.<sup>153</sup>

INNER DIMENSIONS

**[16] She filled her pitcher:** The numerical value of the word for “pitcher” (כד) is twenty-four, alluding to the twenty-four books of the Written Torah. The spring alludes to the source of Divine wisdom. The twenty-four books form the channel through which God’s wisdom flows into the world.<sup>154</sup>

Additionally, the word for “her pitcher” (כדה, the word כד plus the letter *hei*) alludes to the Oral Torah. The Oral Torah is identified with the *sefirah* of expression, *malchut*,<sup>155</sup> which in turn is identified with the final *hei* of God’s Name. The Oral Torah is a pitcher that draws from the twenty-four books of the Written Torah.<sup>156</sup>

Alternatively, while the pitcher symbolizes the Written Torah, the spring into which it was lowered symbolizes the Oral Torah. Dipping the pitcher into

the water thus signifies the synthesis of the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.

Furthermore, Isaac personified the Written Torah and Rebecca the Oral Torah. Thus, the incident of the well is an expression of the unity soon to be accomplished through their marriage.<sup>157</sup>

Despite the vast body of knowledge that constitutes the Oral Torah, it is nonetheless no more than a “pitcher” of water in comparison to the vast “sea” of Divine wisdom hidden within the entire Torah. Only in the messianic era will this infinite body of knowledge be completely revealed, as the prophet declares,<sup>158</sup> “the world will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the seabed.”<sup>159</sup>

148. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 100. 149. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 91-98. 150. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 104. 151. Isaiah 65:24. 152. *Sichot Kodesh* 5732, vol. 1, p. 160. 153. *Hitva' aduyot* 5742, vol. 1, pp. 403-405. 154. *Torat Chaim* 128a. 155. *Tikunei Zohar*, Introduction (17a). 156. *Or HaTorah, Nach*, vol. 2, p. 829. 157. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5732, p. 48. 158. Isaiah 11:9. 159. *Hitva' aduyot* 5750, vol. 1, p. 386.

**15 He had not yet finished speaking when three-year-old<sup>140</sup> Rebecca came out. She had been born to Bethuel, the youngest son of Milkah, the wife of Abraham's brother, Nachor. Her pitcher was on her shoulder.**

**16 The maiden was of beautiful appearance, yet she was still a virgin, whom no man had known carnally in any way.** It was common practice at that time for even very young girls to engage in all types of licentious behavior while still taking care to retain the coveted status of virgin. Rebecca, however, was innocent even of this practice. **She went down to the spring,** and the water level rose as she approached, making it easier for her to fill her pitcher. Eliezer duly noted this miracle and concluded that the girl enjoyed this Divine aid because was righteous. **She filled her pitcher, and came back up.**

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— ❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧ —

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intrinsic need to receive anything from anyone. On the contrary, His intrinsic self-sufficiency makes it natural for Him to bestow His beneficence on His creation. Therefore, generosity is the primary way in which God relates to the world, and generosity is the natural hallmark of people who feel closely connected to God.

In contrast, evil has no intrinsic existence; it therefore has an existential need to receive. No matter how much it possesses, this need to receive remains unsatisfied, making it seek only to take and never to give. Therefore, the hallmark of evil is selfishness.

Eliezer therefore sought a woman for Isaac who would display kindness. When Rebecca went beyond fulfilling his specific request by offering to also water his camels, he saw her expression of kindness as an indication that she was a Godly person and thus a fitting match for the son of Abraham.<sup>141</sup>

**15 He had not yet finished speaking when Rebecca came out:** When we do not receive the answers to our prayers immediately, it is because we have overly “distanced” ourselves from God. God may have in fact already answered our prayers, but because of our self-imposed “distance” from Him, His answer may have to undergo a lengthy process before reaching us. Those who have “distanced” themselves from God less can receive the answers to their prayers more quickly, and those who have so fully attuned their lives to God’s will and presence that they have eliminated all distance between themselves and Him can be answered immediately. When two separate entities join, they can communicate instantaneously, but when they fuse into one, their communication is intrinsic and need not even be articulated.<sup>142</sup>

Likewise, the extent to which our prayers express our desire for unity with God also affects how quickly we can receive God’s answer to them. Thus, the Torah relates three instances in which God answered a prayer

instantaneously:<sup>143</sup> Eliezer’s prayer to find a match for Isaac, Moses’ prayer to be vindicated before Korach’s assembly,<sup>144</sup> and Solomon’s prayer that God rest His presence upon the Temple.<sup>145</sup> The object of each of these prayers was the revelation of God’s unity with creation:

- ♦ The descent of heavenly fire in the Temple would demonstrate how Divinity can unite with the physical world. The Temple would thus be able to inspire us to unite our lives and our portion of the world with God, making them in to His true home.
- ♦ Moses’ vindication against Korach’s accusations would demonstrate how Divinity can unite with a human being, transforming him into a prophet.
- ♦ The marriage of Isaac and Rebecca would be the prelude to the Giving of the Torah, our guidebook and tool for uniting the world with God.<sup>146</sup>

Isaac and Rebecca’s marriage brought together two opposite ends of the spiritual spectrum: Isaac represented the height of spirituality (especially inasmuch as he had been sanctified as an ascent-offering when he was bound on the altar<sup>147</sup>), while Rebecca (although herself totally righteous) came from a family of idolaters and a place of hedonistic materialism. Similarly, the Torah and its commandments enable us to redeem the spiritual potential latent within materiality and to sanctify the physical world.

God’s response to Eliezer came before he had even completed his prayer, while His response to Moses and Solomon only came *after* they had completed their prayers. This is due to the essential difference between the way God is united with the Torah and the way He unites with people or with the world. Both humanity and the world were created as separate entities, conscious of themselves as being distinct from the God who made them. Only with proper effort can they unite with God and can their consciousness dissolve

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<sup>140</sup> Rashi on 25:20, below. <sup>141</sup> *Sidur im Dach* 92b. See also on 36:12 below. <sup>142</sup> *Midrash HaGadol* on this verse; *Mishneh Torah*, *Teshuvah* 7:7. <sup>143</sup> *Bereishit Rabbah* 60:4; *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Chayei Sarah* 108. <sup>144</sup> Numbers 16:31. <sup>145</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:1. <sup>146</sup> *Tanya*, chapter 4, citing *Zohar*. See *Zohar* 1:24a. <sup>147</sup> Above, 22:13.

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17 וְרַחַט עֲבָדָא לְקַדְמוּתָהּ וְאָמַר אֲטַעֲמֵנִי כַעֲן זְעִיר מִיָּא מְקוּלְתֵיךְ: 18 וְאֶמְרַת אֶשֶׁת רַבּוּנִי וְאוֹחִיזֵאת וְאֶחִיזֵת קוּלְתָהּ עַל יְדָהּ וְאֶשְׁקִיטָהּ: 19 וְשִׁיזֵאת לְאֶשְׁקִיטָהּ וְאֶמְרַת אִף לְגַמְלִיךְ אִמְלִי עַד דִּיסְפָּקוֹן לְמִשְׁתֵּי: 20 וְאוֹחִיזֵאת וּנְפִצַת קוּלְתָהּ לְבֵית שְׁקִיָּא וְרַחַט עוֹד לְבִירָא לְמַמְלִי וּמִלַת לְכָל גַּמְלוּזֵי: 21 וְגַבְרָא שְׁהִי בַּהּ מִסְתַּפֵּל שְׁתִּיק לְמַדְעָה הַאֲצִלַח יִי אֲרַחָה אִם לֹא: 22 וְהָיָה כִּד סְפִיקוֹ גַּמְלִיא לְמִשְׁתֵּי וְנִסִּיב גַּבְרָא קוֹשָׁא דְדַהֲבָא תַקְלָא מִתְקַלָּה וְתַרְזִין שִׁירִין עַל יְדָהּ מִתְקַל עֶשֶׂר סְלַעִין דְדַהֲבָא מִתְקַלְהוֹן:

17 וַיִּרְץ הָעֶבֶד לְקִרְאָתָהּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַגְּמִיאִינִי נָא מֵעַט־מִים מִכַּדָּךְ: 18 וְתֹאמַר שִׁתְּה אֲדֹנָי וְתִמְחֶר וְתִרְדּ בְּדָהּ עַל־יְדָהּ וְתִשְׁקָהּ: 19 וְתִכַּל לְהִשְׁקָתוֹ וְתֹאמַר גַּם לְגַמְלִיךְ אֲשָׂאב עַד אִם־כָּלוּ לְשִׁתּוֹת: 20 וְתִמְחֶר וְתַעַר בְּדָהּ אֶל־הַשְּׁקֵת וְתַרְזִן עוֹד אֶל־הַבְּאֵר לְשָׂאב וְתִשְׂאֵב לְכָל־גַּמְלִיוֹ: 21 וְהָאִישׁ מִשְׁתַּאֲה לָּהּ מִחֲרִישׁ לְדַעַת הַהֲצִלִּיחַ יְהוָה דְּרַכּוֹ אִם־לֹא: 22 וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלוּ הַגַּמְלִים לְשִׁתּוֹת וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ גֵּזֶם זָהָב בְּקַע מִשְׁקָלוֹ וַשְּׁנֵי צַמִּידִים עַל־יְדֵיהָ עֲשָׂרָה זָהָב מִשְׁקָלָם:

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כַּגּוֹן: "מִשְׁתַּאֲה" מִגּוֹרַת "שָׂאָה", "מִשְׁתוֹלֵל" מִגּוֹרַת "שׁוֹלֵל", "וַיִּשְׁתוּמֹם" מִגּוֹרַת "שְׁמַמָּה", "וַיִּשְׁתַּמֵּר חֲקוֹת עֲמִרִי" מִגּוֹרַת "וַיִּשְׁמַר", אִף כָּאֵן "מִשְׁתַּאֲה" מִגּוֹרַת "תִּשְׂאָה". וְכִשֶּׁם שִׁתְּהּ מוֹצֵא לְשׁוֹן "מִשׁוּמֵם" בְּאֶדָם נִבְהַל וְנִאֲלָם וּבַעַל מִחֻשְׁבוֹת, כְּמוֹ: "עַל יוֹמוֹ נִשְׁמוּ אֶחָרָנִים"<sup>166</sup>, "שְׁמוֹ שְׁמִיִּם"<sup>167</sup>, "אֲשִׁתוֹמֵם כְּשֶׁעָה חֲדָה"<sup>168</sup>, כִּף תְּפִרֵשׁ לְשׁוֹן "שָׂאִיה" בְּאֶדָם בְּהוֹל וּבַעַל מִחֻשְׁבוֹת וְאֶנְקִלוֹס תַּרְגָּם לְשׁוֹן שְׁהִיָּה: "וְגַבְרָא שְׁהִי", שְׁהִיָּה וְעוֹמֵד בְּמִקוֹם אֶחָד לְרֵאוֹת "הַהֲצִלִּיחַ ה' דְּרַכּוֹ". וְאֵין לְתַרְגָּם "שְׁתִּי", שְׁהִיָּה אֵינוֹ לְשׁוֹן "שְׁתִּיָּה", שְׁאֵין אֶל־ף נּוֹפֶלֶת בְּלִשׁוֹן "שְׁתִּיָּה": "מִשְׁתַּאֲה לָּהּ". מִשְׁתוֹמֵם עֲלֶיהָ, כְּמוֹ:<sup>169</sup> "אֲמַרִי לִי אֶחָי הוּא", וְכְמוֹ:<sup>170</sup> "וַיִּשְׁאָלוּ אֲנִשֵּׁי הַמִּקְוֹם לְאִשְׁתּוֹ": 22 בְּקַע. רְמוֹ לְשִׁקְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּקַע לְגִלְגָּלַת: וַשְּׁנֵי צַמִּידִים. רְמוֹ לְשִׁנֵּי לוֹחֹת מִצְמִדוֹת: עֲשָׂרָה זָהָב מִשְׁקָלָם. רְמוֹ לְעֶשְׂרֵת הַדְּבָרוֹת שֶׁבָּהֶן:

17 וַיִּרְץ הָעֶבֶד לְקִרְאָתָהּ. לְפִי שְׂרָאָה שְׁעָלוּ הַמִּים לְקִרְאָתָהּ: הַגְּמִיאִינִי נָא. לְשׁוֹן גְּמִיעָה, הוֹמִי"ר בְּלַעֲזוֹ: 18 וְתִרְדּ בְּדָהּ. מַעַל שְׁכֻמָּה: 19 עַד אִם כָּלוּ. הָרִי "אִם" מִשְׁמַשׁ בְּלִשׁוֹן "אֲשֶׁר": אִם כָּלוּ. תַּרְגָּם אֶנְקִלוֹס: "דִּי סְפָקוֹן", שׁוֹז הִיא גְּמֵר שְׁתִּיתָהּ, כְּשִׁשְׁתּוֹ דִּי סְפָקוֹן: 20 וְתַעַר. לְשׁוֹן נְפִיצָה. וְהִרְבָּה יֵשׁ בְּלִשׁוֹן מִשְׁנָה:<sup>171</sup> הַמְעַרָה מִכְּלֵי אֵל כְּלֵי. וּבִמְקָרָא יֵשׁ לוֹ דוּמָה: "אֵל תַּעַר נְפִשִׁי"<sup>172</sup>, "אֲשֶׁר הָעֵרָה לְמֹות נְפִשׁוֹ"<sup>173</sup>: הַשְּׁקֵת. אֶבֶן חֲלוּלָה שְׁשׁוֹתִים בַּהּ הַגַּמְלִים: 21 מִשְׁתַּאֲה. לְשׁוֹן שָׂאִיה, כְּמוֹ: "שָׂאוּ עֲרִים"<sup>174</sup>, "תִּשְׂאָה שְׁמִמָּה"<sup>175</sup>: מִשְׁתַּאֲה. מִשְׁתוֹמֵם וּמִתְבַּהֵל, עַל שְׂרָאָה דְּבָרוֹ קְרוֹב לְהַצִּלִּיחַ. אֶבֶל אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ אִם מִמְשַׁפְּחַת אֶבְרָהָם הִיא אִם לֹא. וְאֵל תִּתְמָה בְּתִי"ו שֶׁל "מִשְׁתַּאֲה", שְׁאֵין לָף תְּבָה שֶׁתְּחַלֵּת יִסּוּדָהּ שִׁי"ן וּמִדְּבַרְת בְּלִשׁוֹן מִתְּפַעַל, שְׁאֵין תִּי"ו מִפְרִידָה בֵּין שְׁתֵּי אוֹתוֹת שֶׁל עֶקֶר הַיִּסּוּד,

11. לְגַמָּא, לְכַלְע מִתּוֹךְ שְׁאִיפָה. 12. עֲבוּדָה זָרָה ת, ז. 13. תְּהִלִּים קִמָּא, ח. 14. יִשְׁעִיה נָג, יב. 15. יִשְׁעִיה ו, יא. 16. שִׁם. 17. יִשְׁעִיה נט, טו. 18. שִׁם, טז. 19. מִיכָה ו, טז. 20. אִיבּוּי יח, כ. 21. יִרְמִיָּה יב, יב. 22. דְּנִיָּאֵל ד, טז. 23. בְּרַאשִׁית כ, יג. 24. בְּרַאשִׁית כו, ז.

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graved in their very being. Furthermore, the Jewish people accepted the Ten Commandments unconditionally, even before having heard them. Similarly, our commitment to the Torah should be unconditional, predicated on the approval of neither our mortal values nor our intellect.<sup>166</sup> **A gold nose-ring weighing a beka:** The Torah here refers to the half-shekel by its weight, a *beka*, without defining it as a half-shekel. In contrast, in its description of the half-shekel that the Jewish people gave for the census, the Torah states, "a *beka* per head, which is a half-shekel."<sup>167</sup> Strangely, rather than defining it here, the first time it is used, the Torah defines the term *beka* only toward the end of the Book of Exodus. The reason for this is that the Torah is contrasting our

relationship with God before and after the Giving of the Torah. Our relationship with God is like a marriage, in that God and the Jewish people are like two halves of a whole—each one is incomplete without the other. Eliezer alluded to this interdependency by betrothing Rebecca to Isaac with an object that weighed a half shekel. Inasmuch as the Torah is what binds us to God, prior to the Giving of the Torah, our union with God was akin to the attachment of two discrete entities. After the Giving of the Torah, however, our union with God became akin to the fusion of two halves into a whole. This verse therefore uses the term *beka* alone, only alluding to the concept of "halfness" (since the word *beka* itself means "a split"), since the unity of God and the

166. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 37. 167. Exodus 38:26.

**17 The servant ran toward her and said, "If you would, let me sip a little water from your pitcher."**

**18 She said, "Drink, sir," and quickly lowered her pitcher onto her hand and gave him a drink.**

**19 When she had finished giving him to drink, she said: "Let me draw water for your men and camels, too, until they have drunk their fill."**

**20 She quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough and ran to the well again to draw water, and she drew water for all his men and camels.**

21 Seeing that Rebecca had performed precisely those acts that he had requested from God that she perform as a sign that she was a suitable wife for Isaac, **the man wondered about her** if she would also prove to be from Abraham's family. He thought **silently** to himself, wanting **to know whether or not God had made his journey successful**.

22 But his doubts were outweighed by the confidence he had in Abraham's merits and his reliance on Abraham's promise that God would prearrange success in advance.<sup>160</sup> **When the camels had drunk their fill, the man took a gold nose-ring weighing a beka** (half a shekel: about 8 grams or 0.28 ounces, alluding to the half-shekel that Rebecca's descendants were to donate toward the building of the Tabernacle<sup>161</sup>) **and two gold bracelets** (alluding to the two tablets that Moses would receive at Mount Sinai) **which weighed ten gold shekels** (about 160 grams or 5.6 ounces, alluding to the Ten Commandments that would be engraved on the tablets) **for her arms**, and gave them to her, thereby engaging her to Isaac.

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**21 The man wondered about her, silently wanting to know:** When we are confronted with a startling new and deep insight, we are initially awe-struck and disoriented; this breaks us out of our previous, limited mindset. Only after our mental complacency has been thus eliminated can we become absorbed and engrossed in the new insight.

These two stages are recognizable in the episode involving Eliezer. Eliezer first "wondered about her." He was startled by the Divinely-orchestrated flow of events and thereby lost his self-awareness. Once this happened, he was able to become fully engrossed in the events and begin "wanting to know" if this was indeed the woman he was seeking for Isaac. Had he not relinquished his ego, allowing himself to be amazed at the display of Divine providence, his personal interests and motives would have interfered with his ability to interpret the events correctly—"to know whether or not God had made his journey successful."<sup>162</sup>

**22 A gold nose-ring...alluding to the half-shekel... and two gold bracelets...alluding to the two tablets:** Eliezer's gifts to Rebecca, the bride in the first marriage explicitly mentioned in the Torah,<sup>163</sup> allude to the two pillars upon which a Jewish home and marriage must be

founded: fulfillment of the commandments and study of the Torah. The half-shekel donation was a form of charity, which is the quintessential commandment;<sup>164</sup> the half-shekel nose-ring thus alludes to all the commandments. The two bracelets allude to the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, which are the foundation of the entire Torah.<sup>165</sup>

**The Ten Commandments that would be inscribed upon the tablets:** The Ten Commandments is the only section of the Torah that was engraved upon a tablet; the rest of the Torah was written with ink on parchment. Letters written on parchment remain discrete from the parchment and can be scraped off or erased. But when they are engraved on a tablet, they become an integral part of the tablet and cannot be separated from it without destroying a portion of the tablet itself.

By giving a gift that alludes to the Ten Commandments, Eliezer was indicating that a Jewish home must be based on a commitment to the Torah as intrinsic as letters engraved in stone. A Jewish family must not merely comply with the Torah's demands while remaining essentially disconnected from it. They must become one with it, its values and perspectives en-

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<sup>160.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 102. <sup>161.</sup> Exodus 38:26. <sup>162.</sup> *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5714, pp. 168-9. <sup>163.</sup> The marriage of Adam and Eve is only hinted to in the Torah (see *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 34), and was arranged by God Himself (see *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, p. 929, note 30). <sup>164.</sup> See *Bava Batra* 9a. <sup>165.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 36.

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23 וְאָמַר בַּת מֵאָן אַתְּ חַוֵּי כַעַן לִי הָאֵיִת בֵּית אַבְרָם אַתְּ כְּשֶׁר לָנָא לְמַבְתּ: 24 וְאָמַרְתּ לַה בַּת בְּתוּאֵל אָנָּא בַר מִלְכָּה דִּילִידַת לְנַחֲוֹר: 25 וְאָמַרְתּ לַה אַף תְּבַנָּא אַף בְּסַתָּא סָגִי עֲמָנָא אַף אַתְּ כְּשֶׁר לְמַבְתּ: 26 וְכַרַע גְּבָרָא וְסָגִיד קָדָם יְיָ: 27 וְאָמַר בְּרִיָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵהּ דְּרַבּוּנֵי אַבְרָהָם דִּי לֹא מִנַע טִיבוּתָהּ וְקוּשְׁטָהּ מִן רַבּוּנֵי אָנָּא בְּאוּרַח תְּקַנָּא דְּבַרְנֵי יְיָ בֵּית אַחֻוּהֵי דְּרַבּוּנֵי: 28 וְרַהֲטַת עוֹלְמָתָא וְחַוֵּיִּאת לְבֵית אִמָּה בְּפִתְגָמֵינָא הָאֵלִין: 29 וְלַרְבֵּקָה אַחָא וְשִׁמְהָ לָבָן וְרַהֲטַת לָבָן לֹת גְּבָרָא לְכָרָא לֹת עֵינָא: 30 וְהָוָה כַּד חָוָּא יַת קִדְשָׁא וְיַת שִׁירָא עַל יְדֵי אַחְתָּהּ וְכַד שְׁמַע יַת פִּתְגָמֵי רַבֵּקָה אַחְתָּהּ לְמִימַר כְּדִין מְלִיל עַמֵּי גְבָרָא וְאִתָּא לֹת גְּבָרָא וְהָא קָאֵם עַלּוּי גְּמִלְיָא עַל עֵינָא: 31 וְאָמַר עוֹל בְּרִיכָא דִּין לְמָא אַתְּ קָאֵם בְּכָרָא וְאָנָּא פְּנִיתִי בֵּיתָא וְאַתְּ כְּשֶׁר לְגַמְלִיָּא: 32 וְעַל גְּבָרָא לְבֵיתָא וְיִשְׂרָא גְּמִלְיָא וְיַהֲב תְּבַנָּא וְכַסְתָּא לְגַמְלִיָּא וּמְיָא לְאַסְתָּאָה רְגִלוּהֵי וְרַגְלֵי גְבָרָא דִּי עֲמָה: 33 וְשׁוּיָאוּ קְדֻמוּהֵי לְמִיכַל וְאָמַר לֹא אֵיכּוֹל עַד דִּי אֲמַלִּיל פִּתְגָמֵי וְאָמַר מְלִיל: 34 וְאָמַר עֲבָדָא דַּאֲבְרָהָם אָנָּא:

23 וַיֹּאמֶר בַּת־מֵי אֶת־הַגִּידִי נָא לִי הַיֵּשׁ בֵּית־אֲבִיךָ מְקוֹם לָנוּ לָלֵיִן: 24 וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בַּת־בְּתוּאֵל אֲנֹכִי בֶן־מִלְכָּה אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְנַחֲוֹר: 25 וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו גַּם־תִּבְנֶן גַּם־מִסְפּוֹא רַב עִמָּנוּ גַם־מְקוֹם לָלוֹן: 26 וַיִּקַּד הָאִישׁ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לַיהוָה: 27 וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנָי אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָוַב חֲסְדּוֹ וְאִמָּתוֹ מִעַם אֲדֹנָי אֲנֹכִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ נַחֲנִי יְהוָה בֵּית אַחֵי אֲדֹנָי: 28 וַתִּרְצֵן הַנַּעֲרָה {הַנַּעֲרָה} וַתִּגַּד לְבֵית אִמָּהּ בַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה: 29 וְלַרְבֵּקָה אַחַ וַיִּשְׁמְוּ לָבָן וַיִּרְצֵן לָבָן אֶל־הָאִישׁ הַחוּצָה אֶל־הָעֵין: 30 וַיְהִי אִ כִּי־רָאִת אֶת־הַנָּזִם וְאֶת־הַעֲמֻדִים עַל־יַדֵּי אַחֲתוֹ וְכִשְׁמַעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי רַבֵּקָה אַחֲתוֹ לֵאמֹר כִּהֲדַבֵּר אֵלַי הָאִישׁ וַיִּבֹא אֶל־הָאִישׁ וַהֲנֶה עֹמֵד עַל־הַגְּמָלִים עַל־הָעֵין: 31 וַיֹּאמֶר בּוֹא בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה לָמָּה תַעֲמֹד בַּחוּץ וְאֲנֹכִי פְּנִיתִי הַבַּיִת וּמְקוֹם לְגַמְלִים: 32 וַיִּבֹא הָאִישׁ הַבַּיִתָּה וַיִּפְתַּח הַגְּמָלִים וַיִּתֵּן תֶּבֶן וּמִסְפּוֹא לְגַמְלִים וּמִים לְרַחֵץ רַגְלָיו וְרַגְלֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ: 33 וַיִּישֶׁם {וַיִּישֶׁם} לְפָנָיו לֵאמֹר לֹא אֲכַל עַד אֶסֶד־דְּבַרְתִּי דְּבָרֵי וַיֹּאמֶר דְּבַר: 34 וַיֹּאמֶר עֲבַד אַבְרָהָם אֲנֹכִי:

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הַנָּשִׁים הַיְתָה לְהִיּוֹת לָהֶן בֵּית לִישֵׁב בּוֹ לְמַלְאכְתָּן, וְאִין הִבַּת מַגְדַּת אֵלָא לְאִמָּהּ: 29 וַיִּרְצֵן. לָמָּה רָץ וְעַל מַה רָץ? "וַיְהִי כִּי־רָאִת אֶת הַנָּזִם", אָמַר: עֲשִׂיר הוּא זֶה, וְנִתְּן עֵינָיו בְּמִמּוֹן: 30 עַל הַגְּמָלִים. לְשִׁמְרוֹן, כְּמוֹ: "וְהוּא עֹמֵד עַל־יָהֶם", לְשִׁמְשָׁם: 31 פְּנִיתִי הַבַּיִת. מַעֲבֹדַת אֲלִילִים: 32 וַיִּפְתַּח. הַתִּיר וּזְמַם שְׁלָהֶם, שְׁהִיָּה סוּתָם אֶת פִּיהֶם שְׁלֹא יִרְעוּ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּשׂוֹדוֹת אַחֵרִים: 33 עַד אִם דְּבַרְתִּי. הֲרִי "אִם" מִשְׁמַשׁ בְּלִשׁוֹן "אֲשֶׁר" וּבְלִשׁוֹן "כִּי", כְּמוֹ: "עַד כִּי יָבֹא שִׁילַח". וְזֶה שְׁאֲמָרוֹ חֲכָמֵינוּ וְזָכְרוּנָם לְכַרְכָּה: "כִּי" מִשְׁמַשׁ בְּאַרְבַּע לְשׁוֹנוֹת, וְהַקֶּחֶד "אִי" וְהוּא "אִם":

23 וַיֹּאמֶר בַּת מֵי אֶת. לְאַחַר שְׁנֵתָן לָהּ שְׁאֵלָה, לְפִי שְׁהִיָּה כְּטוּחַ בְּכּוּחוֹתָ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם שֶׁהֲצִלִּיחַ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא דְרָכּוֹ: לָלוֹן. לִינָה אַחַת, "לֵינִי" שֶׁם דְּבַר, וְהִיא אֲמָרָה "לָלוֹן", כְּמַה לִּינּוֹת אֶתָּה וְכוּל לָלוֹן אֲצֻלָּנוּ: 24 בַת בְּתוּאֵל. הַשִּׁיבְתוֹ עַל רֵאשׁוֹן רֵאשׁוֹן וְעַל אַחֲרוֹן אַחֲרוֹן: 25 מִסְפּוֹא. כָּל מֵאֵכֶל הַגְּמָלִים קְרוּי "מִסְפּוֹא", כְּגוֹן תֶּבֶן וְשִׁעוּרִים: 27 בַּדֶּרֶךְ. דֶּרֶךְ הַמְזֻמָּן, דֶּרֶךְ הַיִּשְׁרָה, בְּאוֹתוֹ דֶּרֶךְ שְׁהִיִּיתִי צָרִיף. וְכֵן כָּל בֵּיִת וְלִמְ"ד וְהִ"א הַמְשֻׁמְשִׁים בְּרֵאשׁ הַתְּבֵה וְנִקְדָּים בְּפִתְחָ, מְדַבְּרִים בַּדֶּבֶר הַפְּשׁוּט שֶׁנֹּכַח כְּבֵר בְּמִקּוֹם אַחֵר, אוֹ שְׁהוּא מְבָרֵךְ וְנִכְבֵּר בְּאִיזוֹ הוּא מְדַבֵּר: 28 לְבֵית אִמָּה. דֶּרֶךְ

25. בראשית יח, ח. 26. בראשית מט, י. 27. ראש השנה ג, א.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

of Abraham, exemplifies the values of selfless commitment and devotion. By elaborating on Eliezer's narrative, the Torah intends to imbue us with this selflessness, making it the foundation of our spiritual lives.

Once we have developed this selflessness, we are better able to grasp the Torah's laws, unencumbered by preconceived notions and biases or the finiteness of our nature.<sup>172</sup>

23 He said: "Whose daughter are you? If you would, tell me if there is room in your father's house for us to spend the night."

24 Answering his questions in the order in which he asked them, she said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milkah, whom she bore to Nachor."

25 She then said, "We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as a place to spend many nights."

26 Hearing this, the man bowed his head and prostrated himself to God.

◆ *Fourth Reading* 27 He said, "Blessed be God, God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld His kindness and truth from my master. God has guided me along the right road, to the house of my master's brothers!"

28 The maiden ran to her mother's quarters and related these events.

29 Now Rebecca had a brother named Laban, who was also in his mother's quarters at the moment she came running in. Laban, who was a greedy fellow, heard Rebecca's description of what had just transpired. Hearing that Abraham's servant had arrived, he quickly removed the idols from the house. He then ran outside to the man, to the spring,

30 having seen the expensive nose-ring, and the costly bracelets on his sister's arms, and having heard the words of his sister Rebecca, saying, "This is how the man spoke to me," and having concluded that he was rich. He approached the man, who was still standing beside the camels and tending them, near the spring.

31 He said, "Come, you who are blessed by God! Why are you standing outside when I have cleared the house of idols and prepared a place for the camels?"

32 The man came into the house—into the men's quarters—and unmuzzled the camels. Laban gave the camels straw and fodder, and provided water for Eliezer and the men who were with him to bathe their feet.

33 Food was served, but Eliezer said, "I will not eat until I have spoken my piece."

Laban said, "Speak."

34 Eliezer began, "I am Abraham's servant.

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∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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Jewish people at that time only *approximated* the relationship of two halves of a whole. In contrast, the verse describing the census clearly defines a *beka* as a half-shekel, for after the Giving of the Torah, we were able to unite with God as two halves of a whole.<sup>168</sup>

34 **Eliezer began:** The Torah is generally sparing in its words. Why, then, is the Torah so verbose in narrating Eliezer's search for Rebecca, first relating the episode and then reporting Eliezer's recounting of the incident to Rebecca's family in great detail?<sup>169</sup>

One answer: The Torah's laws are designed to enable

us to transcend nature, to overcome the world's natural unreceptiveness to Divine consciousness. In essence, then, they transcend all natural boundaries, including that of human intellect.<sup>170</sup> They can therefore only be revealed to us through allusion and exegesis. In contrast, the Torah's narratives (despite the fact that many of them contain open miracles), occur fully within the context of nature—and thus can be related explicitly.<sup>171</sup>

Another answer: the elaborate recounting of Eliezer's narrative itself helps us to grasp the terse laws of the Torah, despite their infinite nature: Eliezer, the servant

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<sup>168.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, p. 929-930 and note 31. <sup>169.</sup> See Rashi on verse 42 below. <sup>170.</sup> See above, on 7:12 (Inner Dimensions). <sup>171.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, pp. 94-95. <sup>172.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 37.

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35 ויני בריוך ית רבוני לחדא ורבא ויהב לה עאן ותורין וכסף ודהב ועבדיו ואמקו וגמלין וחמרי: 36 וילידת שרה אמת רבוני בר לרבוני בטר דסיבת ויהב לה ית כל די לה: 37 וקיס עלי רבוני למימר לא תסב אתמא לברי מבנת פגענאה די אנא יתב בארעה: 38 אלהין לבית אבא תויל ולזרעיתי ותסב אתמא לברי: 39 ואמרית לרבוני מאים לא תיתי אתמא בתרי: 40 ואמר לי יי די פלחית קדמוהי ישלח מלאכה עמך ויצלח ארחה ותסב אתמא לברי מזרעיתי ומבית אבא: 41 בכן תהא זכאי ממומתי ארי תהך לזרעיתי ואם לא יתנון לך ותהי זכאי ממומתי: 42 ואתייתי יומא דין לעינא ואמרית יי אלהה דרבוני אברהם אם אית בען רעוא קדמך לאצלקא ארחי די אנא אול עליה: 43 הא אנא קאם על עינא דמיא ויהי עולמתא דתפוק לממלי ואימר לה אשקיני בען ועיר מיא מקולתך: 44 ותימר לי אף את אשת ואף לגמליך אמלי היא אתמא דומין יי לבר רבוני: 45 אנא עד לא שיעיתי למללא לבלי והא רבקה נפקת וקולתה על כתפה ונחתת לעינא ומלת ואמרית לה אשקיני בען:

35 ויהיה ברחך את-אדני מאד ויגדל ויתן-לו צאן ובקר וכסף וזהב ועבדך ושפחות וגמלים וחמרים: 36 ותלך שרה אשת אדני בן לאדני אחרי וקנתה ויתן-לו את-כל-אשר-לו: 37 וישבעני אדני לאמר לא-תקח אשה לבני מבנות הפגנעני אשר אנכי ישב בארצו: 38 אם-לא אל-בית-אבי תלך ואל-משפחתי ולקחת אשה לבני: 39 ואמר אל-אדני אלי לא-תלך האשה אחרי: 40 ויאמר אלי יהוה אשר-התהלכתי לפניו ישלח מלאכו אתך והצליח ברכך ולקחת אשה לבני משפחתי ומבית אבי: 41 אז תנקה מאלתי כי תבוא אל-משפחתי ואם-לא יתנו לך והיית נקי מאלתי: 42 ואבא היום אל-העין ואמר יהוה אלהי אדני אברהם אם-ישדךנא מצליח ברכי אשר אנכי הלך עליה: 43 הנה אנכי נצב על-עין המים והיה העלמה היצאת לשאב ואמרתי אליה השקינינא מעט-מים מברך: 44 ואמרה אלי גם-אתה שתה וגם לגמליך אשאב הוא האשה אשר-הכית יהוה לבן-אדני: 45 אני טרם אכלה לדבר אל-לבי והנה רבקה יצאת וכדה על-שכמה ותרד העינה ותשאב ואמר אליה השקינינא:

— RASHI —

גופי תורה לא נתנו אלא ברמיוה: 44 גם אתה. "גם" לרבות אנשים שעמו: הכיח. ברר והודיע. וכן כל "הוכחה" שבמקרא, ברור דבר: 45 טרם אכלה. טרם שאני מכלה. וכן כל לשון הוזה פעמים שהוא מדבר בלשון עבר, ויכל לכתוב: "טרם כליתי", ופעמים שמדבר בלשון עתיד, כמו: "כי אמר איוב", הרי לשון עבר, "ככה יעשה איוב", הרי לשון עתיד, ופרוש שניהם לשון הוזה, "כי אמר היה איוב: אולי חטאו בני וגו', והיה עושה כך":

36 שטר מתנה הראה להם: 37 לא תקח אשה לבני מבנות הפגנעני. אם לא תלך תחלה אל בית אבי, ולא תאבה ללכת אחרי: 39 אלי לא תלך האשה. "אלי" כתיב. בת היתה לו לאליעזר, והיה מחזר למצוא עליה שיאמר לו אברהם לפנות אליו להשיאו בתו. אמר לו אברהם: בני ברוך ואתה ארוך, ואין ארוך מדבק ברוך: 42 ואבא היום. היום יצאתי והיום באתי. מכאן, שקפצה לו הארץ. אמר רבי אהא: יפה שיתן של עבדי אבות לפני המקום מתורתן של בנים, שהרי פרשה של אליעזר כפולה בתורה, והרבה

28. איוב א, ה. 29. שם.

**35 God greatly blessed my master, and he prospered. He granted him flocks, cattle, silver and gold, servants and handmaids, camels and donkeys.**

**36 My master's wife Sarah bore my master a son after she had grown old, and he gave him all that he owned."** At this point, Eliezer showed them the document attesting to this fact. He pointed out to them that the document bore that day's date, but hastened to add that Abraham had not post-dated it; rather, God had miraculously made him arrive the same day he set out in consideration of Abraham's desire not to post-date the document on the one hand, and not to relinquish his wealth before necessary, on the other.<sup>173</sup>

**37 "My master bound me by an oath: 'Do not take a wife for my son from among the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live,**

**38 unless you first go to my father's house, to my family, select a wife for my son from among them, propose the marriage to her, and she refuses to come back with you.'**

**39 "I said to my master, 'In that case, in the end you will certainly approach me and ask me to give my daughter to your son as a wife, for the maiden whom I will choose from among your family members in Charan will certainly not agree to come back with me!'**

**40 But he said to me, 'God, before whom I have always walked, will send His angel with you and make your mission successful, and you will take a wife for my son from among my family members and from my father's house."** Eliezer could not, of course, tell Bethuel and Laban that God had guaranteed him success in advance, so he only said that God promised to send His angel *with* him, rather than *before* him, as Abraham had said. He did, however, note that God had promised to "make his mission successful," hinting that it would be fruitless for Bethuel to attempt to oppose it.<sup>174</sup>

**41 Only thus will you be free of my oath: If you approach my family and they do not give you a maiden, you will be released from my oath.'**

**42 "So I set out on my journey today, and, as I said, I miraculously arrived today at the spring, even though the journey from Hebron to here normally takes much more than one day. I said: 'O God, God of my master Abraham! If You will, crown this mission that I am undertaking with success.**

**43 Here I am, standing by the spring of water. Let it be that the maiden who comes out to draw water and to whom I will say, 'Please give me a little water to drink from your pitcher,'**

**44 and who will answer, 'Not only may you drink, but I will also draw water for your men and camels,' will be the wife destined by God for my master's son.'**

**45 "I had not yet finished speaking to myself, silently in my heart, and there was Rebecca coming out, with her pitcher on her shoulder. She went down to the well and drew water. I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.'**

<sup>173</sup>. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 34. <sup>174</sup>. Above, v. 7. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 99-102.

— ONKELOS —

46 ואוחזיאת ואקחת קולתה מנה ואמרת אשת ואף גמליך אשקי ושתיי ואף גמליא אשקיא: 47 ושאלית יתה ואמרית בת מאן את ואמרת בת בתואל בר נחור דילידת לה מלכה ושוייתי קדשא על אפה ושיריא על ידהא: 48 וכרעית וסגדית קדם יי וברכית ית יי אלהה דרבוני אברהם די דבני באורח קשוט למסב ית בת אחוהי דרבוני לברה: 49 וכען אם איתכון עבדין טיבו וקשוט עם רבוני חווי לי ואם לא חווי לי ואתפני על ימינא או על שמאלא: 50 ואתיב לבן ובתואל ואמרו מן קדם יי נפק פתגמא לית אנחנא יכלין למללא עמך ביש או טב: 51 הא רבקה קדמך דבר ואזיל ותהי אתמא לבר רבונך כמא די מליל יי: 52 והוה כד שמע עבדא דאברהם ית פתגמיהון וסגיד על ארעא קדם יי: 53 ואפיק עבדא מנין דכסף ומנין דדהב ולבושין ויהב לרבקה ומגדנין יהב לאחיהא ולאמה: 54 ואכלו ושתיאו הוא וגבריא די עמה ובתו וקמו בצפרא ואמר שלחוני לות רבוני:

46 ותמהר ותורד כדה מעליה ותאמר שתה וגם גמליך אשקה ואשת וגם הגמלים השקתה: 47 ואשאל אתה ואמר בתמי את ותאמר בתבתואל בןנחור אשר ילדהלו מלכה ואשם הנזם עלאפה והצמידים על ידיה: 48 ואקד ואשתתווה ליהוה ואברך אתיהוה אלהי אדני אברהם אשר הנחיל בדרך אמת לקחת אתבת אחי אדני לבנו: 49 ועתה אםישכם עשים הסד ואמת אתאדני הגידו לי ואםלא הגידו לי ואפנה על ימין או עלשמאל: 50 וען לבן ובתואל ויאמרו מיהוה יצא הדבר לא נוכל דבר אליך רע אושוב: 51 הנהרבקה לפניך קח ולך ותהי אשה לבןאדניך כאשר דבר יהוה: 52 והי כאשר שמע עבד אברהם אתדבריהם וישתחו ארצה ליהוה:

חמישי 53 ויצא העבד בלי כסף וכלי זהב ובגדים ויתן לרבקה ומגדנת נתן לאחיה ולאמה: 54 ויאכלו וישתו הוא והאנשים אשר עמו וילינו ויקומו בפקר ויאמר שלחני לאדני:

— RASHI —

למאן בדבר הנה, לא על ידי תשובת דבר רע, ולא על ידי תשובת דבר הגון, לפי שנבר שמה יצא הדבר, לפי דבריה שזמנה לה: 52 וישתחו ארצה. מכאן שמוידים על בשורה טובה: 53 ומגדנת. לשון מגדים, שהביא עמו מיני פרות של ארץ ישראל: 54 וילינו. כל "לינה" שבמקרא לינת לילה אכה:

47 ואשאל ואשם. שנה הסדר, שהרי הוא תחלה נתן ואחר כך שאל. אלא, שלא יתפשוהו בדבריו, ויאמרו: היאך נתת לה ועדין אינך יודע מי היא?: 49 על ימין. מבנות ישמעאל: על שמאל. מבנות לוט, שהיה יושב לשמאלו של אברהם: 50 וען לבן ובתואל. רשע היה, וקפץ להשיב לפני אביו: לא נוכל דבר אליך.

~ A CLOSER LOOK ~

[52] **The angel accompanying Eliezer killed him:** By having chosen to conform to his idolatrous milieu, Bethuel had aligned himself with the forces opposing Godliness and goodness. There was thus very little about Bethuel's life that could justify its continuance other than the fact that he fathered the righteous Rebecca, who was destined to become the

wife of Isaac. However, instead of facilitating this match, Bethuel chose, for no apparent reason, to oppose it. In so doing, he not only lost his primary justification for existing; he positioned himself as the most serious threat to reality's progress toward its Divine goal. He thus negated the justification for his existence and was removed from the scene.<sup>179</sup>

179. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 151-152.

**46 She immediately lowered her pitcher from her shoulder and said, ‘Drink! I will also give water to your men and camels.’ I took a drink, and she also gave my men and the camels water.**

**47 “I questioned her and said, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She said, ‘I am the daughter of Bethuel, son of Nachor, whom Milkah bore to him.’ I then placed a ring in her nose, and bracelets on her arms.”** Actually, Eliezer had given her the jewelry *before* asking who she was, but he changed the sequence when he related the events to her brother and father so they wouldn’t wonder how he could have given her gifts before he knew her identity.

**48 I bowed low and prostrated myself to God. And I blessed God, God of my master Abraham, who led me on a true path to take the daughter of my master’s brother for his son.**

**49 “Now, if you want to act in kindness and truth towards my master, tell me. If not, say so, and I will turn to the right,** that is, southwest of my master’s home, to seek a wife for my master’s son from among the Ishmaelites, **or to the left,** that is, northeast of my master’s home, to seek a wife from among the descendants of Lot.”<sup>175</sup>

**50 Laban and Bethuel answered,** Laban disrespectfully responding before his father. Even though they were both personally opposed to the match, nevertheless **they said: “This has all clearly come forth from God! We, therefore, cannot say anything to refuse you,** neither in a **bad,** disrespectful manner, **nor** in a **nice,** reasonable, and polite manner.”

**51 Rebecca was not physically present among the men at the time, but they said, figuratively, “Rebecca is here in front of you; take her and go, and let her be a wife for your master’s son, as God has spoken.”** They did not even bother to ask Rebecca if she agreed to marry Isaac; it was clear to them that this marriage was God’s will, and it would come to pass no matter what.<sup>176</sup>

**52 When Abraham’s servant heard these words, he prostrated himself on the ground to God** in thanksgiving for the good turn of events. Bethuel, at this point, had second thoughts about the match and was about to express his opposition to it.<sup>177</sup> In order to prevent him from doing so, the angel accompanying Eliezer killed him.

◆ ***Fifth Reading* 53 The servant took out articles of gold and silver, as well as articles of clothing, and gave them to Rebecca.** Eliezer had planned to give gifts to the whole family, also, but because of Bethuel’s sudden death, **he gave delectable fruits** from the produce of the Land of Israel—a rarity in that region<sup>178</sup>—**only to her brother and mother.**

**54 He and the men who were with him then ate and drank.** Eliezer and his men **spent the night** in their hosts’ house.

**When they rose in the morning, Eliezer said, “Give me leave to go back to my master with Rebecca.”**

<sup>175</sup>. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, p. 85, note 49. <sup>176</sup>. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 65-69. <sup>177</sup>. Rashi on v. 55, below; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 101, note 25. <sup>178</sup>. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, p. 158, note 44.

— ONKELOS —

55 וַיֹּאמֶר אַחִיָּה וְאִמָּהּ תֵּשֵׁב הַנְּעִרָה {הַנְּעִרָה} אֶתְנֶנּוּ יָמִים  
 עוֹלָמְתָא עֲמָנָא עֲדָן בְּעֵדָן או  
 עֲשָׂרָא יְרַחֲזִין בְּתֵר כֵּן תִּזְיִל:  
 56 וַיֹּאמֶר לְהוֹן לֹא תִאֲחָרוּן יְתִי וְיִי  
 אֲצִלָּח אֲרָחִי שְׁלַחֲוֹנִי וְאֶהְיֶה לְוֹת  
 רְבוּנִי: 57 וַאֲמָרוּ נְקָרִי לְעוֹלָמְתָא  
 וְנִשְׁמַע מֵאָה דְהִיא אֲמָרָה: 58 וְקָרוּ  
 לְרַבֵּקָה וְאָמְרוּ לָהּ הַתְּזִילִי עִם גְּבִרָא  
 הַדִּין וְאֲמַרְתִּי אֲזִיל: 59 וְשִׁלְחוּ  
 יְתִי רַבֵּקָה אַחְתְּדוֹן וְיְתִי מִיִּנְקֻמָּה  
 וְיְתִי עֲבָדָא דְאַבְרָהָם וְיְתִי גְבוּרָהּ:  
 60 וּבְרִיכּוּ יְתִי רַבֵּקָה וְאָמְרוּ לָהּ  
 אַחְתְּנָא אַתְּ הוּי לְאַלְפִין וּלְרַבָּן  
 וְיִירְתוּן בְּנֵיכִי יְתִי קָרְוִי סְנְאִיהוֹן:

55 וַיֹּאמֶר אַחִיָּה וְאִמָּהּ תֵּשֵׁב הַנְּעִרָה {הַנְּעִרָה} אֶתְנֶנּוּ יָמִים  
 או עֲשׂוֹר אַחֵר תֵּלְדָּ: 56 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־תִּאֲחָרוּן אֶתִּי  
 וַיְהוּהָ הַצְּלִיחַ דְּרַבִּי שְׁלַחֲוֹנִי וְאֶלְכָה לְאֹדְנִי: 57 וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
 נְקָרָא לְנַעֲרָה {לְנַעֲרָה} וְנִשְׁאַלָה אֶת־פִּיהָ: 58 וַיִּקְרְאוּ  
 לְרַבֵּקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ הַתְּלַכִּי עִם־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה אֲמָר  
 אֵלֶיךָ: 59 וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אֶת־רַבֵּקָה אַחְתָּם וְאֶת־מִנְקֻתָּהּ וְאֶת־  
 עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם וְאֶת־אֲנָשָׁיו: 60 וּבְרִכּוּ אֶת־רַבֵּקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
 לָהּ אַחְתְּנֹנוּ אַתְּ הִי לְאַלְפֵי רַבְּבָה וְיִירֶשׁ זְרַעְךָ אֶת שְׁעַר  
 שְׁנַאֲיוֹ:

— RASHI —

מְרַבָּה מְזִיָּה: 57 וְנִשְׁאַלָה אֶת פִּיהָ. מִכָּאן, שְׂאִין מִשְׂאִין  
 אֶת הָאִשָּׁה אֶלֹא מִדַּעְתָּהּ: 58 וְהִנֵּה אֵלֶיךָ. מִעֲצָמִי,  
 וְאֵף אִם אֵינְכֶם רוֹצִים: 60 אַתְּ הִי לְאַלְפֵי רַבְּבָה.  
 אֶת וְזַרְעָךְ תִּקְבְּלוּ אוֹתָהּ בְּרַבָּה שְׁנֵאֲמַר לְאַבְרָהָם בְּהַר  
 הַמְּזוּרָה׃ "הַרְבָּה אַרְבָּה אֶת זְרַעְךָ" וְגו', יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׂהִיא  
 אוֹתוֹ הַזְּרַע מִמֶּךָ וְלֹא מֵאִשָּׁה אַחֶרֶת:

55 וַיֹּאמֶר אַחִיָּה וְאִמָּהּ. וּבְתוֹאֵל הֵיכָן הָיָה? הוּא הָיָה  
 רוֹצֵה לְעַבְד, וּבֹא מִלֵּאף וְהִמִּיתוּ: יָמִים. שְׁנָה, כְּמוֹ׃  
 "יָמִים תִּהְיֶה גְּאֻלְתּוֹ", שְׂבָךְ נִוְתָנִין לְבְּתוּלָה זְמַן שְׁנַיִם  
 עֲשָׂר חֳדָשׁ, לְפָרֶגֶט אֶת עֲצָמָה בְּתַכְשִׁיטִים: או עֲשׂוֹר.  
 עֲשָׂרָה חֳדָשִׁים. וְאִם תֹּאמַר: יָמִים מִמֶּשׁ, אֵין דְּרַף  
 הַמְּבַקְשִׁים לְבָקֶשׁ דְּבַר מוֹעֵט, וְאִם לֹא תִרְצָה תֵּן לָנוּ

30. ויקרא כה, כט. 31. בראשית כב, יז.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

60 They blessed Rebecca and said to her...may your  
 descendants take possession of the cities of their  
 foes: This verse, too, reflects Eliezer’s unnatural suc-  
 cess: Not only was Rebecca’s family unable to prevent  
 her marriage to Isaac, they even gave it their blessings.  
 Furthermore, they prayed that her descendants should

be victorious over their foes, and this would eventually  
 include Laban himself!

Again we learn that if we wholeheartedly commit our-  
 selves, as Eliezer did, to fulfilling our Divine mission,  
 we, too, will see miraculous success.<sup>183</sup>

~ A CLOSER LOOK ~

[55] We estimate that she only needs another ten  
 months to obtain the rest: There are two possible  
 calculations they may have made to arrive at that  
 number: Possibly, they evaluated the worth of the  
 gifts that he had given her and saw that it equaled  
 one sixth of her total needs. Alternatively, the twelve  
 months allotted may be viewed as sufficient time to  
 acquire twelve different types of ornaments for the  
 different seasons of the year. Because Eliezer had  
 twice given gifts to Rebecca,<sup>184</sup> two of the customary  
 twelve months could thus be deducted.<sup>185</sup>

consent to the proposed marriage seems rash: This  
 was the first she had heard about the match,<sup>186</sup> it  
 involved going off with a man she hardly knew  
 to marry a man she had not yet met, and it went  
 against the wishes and advice of her family.<sup>187</sup>

The only way we can explain her reaction is if we  
 assume that it came directly from Divine inspiration  
 and was, in essence, beyond her control. God willed  
 Rebecca to make this decision, in further fulfillment  
 of Abraham’s promise to Eliezer that the angel of  
 God would “go before” him, to pre-arrange and  
 expedite the entire process without hindrance.<sup>188</sup>

[58] I will go even if you do not give me your  
 consent: Rebecca’s immediate and unequivocal

183. *Hitva' aduyot* 5742, vol. 1, p. 438. 184. Above, verses 22 and 53. 185. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 68-69 and note 23. See also *Maskil L'David*. 186. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 101, note 23. 187. See *Hadrat Zekeinim*. 188. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 101, and note 26.

55 Rebecca's brother and mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us for a year, for it is the custom in our country to give an engaged girl a full year to obtain the jewelry she will need as a married woman. On the other hand, you have already given her some jewelry; if you did this in order to help her prepare herself for marriage, then we estimate that she only needs another **ten** months to obtain the rest. But if the jewelry you gave her was intended merely as a gift, then she still needs the full twelve months. In any case, **she can only go after** she is fully prepared."

56 He said to them, "Do not cause me to tarry now that God has made my way prosper. Let me leave, so that I can go to my master. I have shown you the document attesting to the fact that Abraham bequeathed all of his wealth to Isaac; clearly, there is no need for her to obtain jewelry on her own!"

57 Laban and his mother were shocked by Eliezer's refusal to defer to local custom. When they consented to the match, they had assumed it was self-understood that local custom would be respected and abided by. They concluded that this new demand was of Eliezer's own invention—for there was not even a hint in all the miracles he reported on that implied that this was one of God's demands. (The fact that God had miraculously sped up his journey could simply mean that God wanted the match to be agreed upon as quickly as possible, and not necessarily that the marriage take place immediately.) This conviction led them, in turn, to doubt Eliezer's entire narrative, including the miracles he related and the document attesting to Isaac's inheritance of Abraham's wealth. Since they were no longer convinced that the match was Divinely ordained, there was now room to oppose it. On the other hand, they had no solid *proof* that Eliezer was lying; furthermore, they had seen that Bethuel had died when he was about to oppose the match, so they still thought it *might* be Divinely ordained. Therefore, they did not openly oppose the match. Rather, they said, "Let us summon the girl and ask her opinion, since a girl can not become engaged to someone without her consent."<sup>180</sup> They did not even suggest that she be allowed to remain for the seven days of mourning for her father, since it was clear from Eliezer's insistence and his invocation of God's miraculous help to justify it that he wanted to leave with Rebecca immediately.<sup>181</sup>

58 They summoned Rebecca and said to her, "Do you want to go with this man now and marry his master's son?"

She said, "Yes, and I will go even if you do not give your consent."

59 So they bade farewell to their sister Rebecca, along with her former wet nurse, who now served as her escort, Abraham's servant, and his men.

60 They blessed Rebecca and said to her, "Our sister, God promised Abraham on Mount Moriah that his offspring would be innumerable and that they would take possession of their enemies' cities.<sup>182</sup> Therefore, may *you* grow into thousands of myriads! And may your descendants take possession of the cities of their foes! May God's blessings be fulfilled only through you, and not through any other wife your husband may later take!"

180. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 65-69. 181. *Hitva'aduyot 5743*, vol. 1, pp. 507-508, 515-516. 182. Above, 22:17.

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61 וְקָמַת רִבְקָה וְעוֹלְמָתָהָּ אַחֲרֵי אֵלֶּיךָ וְאָמְרָהּ עַל גְּמִלְיָא וְאָמְרָהּ בְּתוֹרָה גְּבֵרָא וְדַבֵּר עִבְדָּא יְתֵי רִבְקָה וְאָמְרָהּ: 62 וְיִצְחָק אֶתָּא מִמִּיתוּדְהֵי מִבְּרִיא דְמִלְאָךְ קְיָמָא אֶתְחַזֵּי עֲלֵהּ וְהוּא יְתֵב בְּאַרְעֵי דְרוּמָא: 63 וְנִפְקֵי יִצְחָק לְעֵלְאָה בְּחֻקְלָא לְמַפְנֵי רַמְשָׁא וְזָקָף עֵינָוְדֵי וְחִזָּא וְהָא גְמִלְיָא אֶתָּן: 64 וְזָקָפְתָּ רִבְקָה יְתֵי עֵינָהָּ וְחִזָּת יְתֵי יִצְחָק וְאֶתְרַכִּינֵת מֵעַל גְּמִלְיָא: 65 וְאָמְרַת לְעִבְדָּא מֵאֵן גְּבֵרָא דִּיבִי דְמַהֲלֵךְ בְּחֻקְלָא לְקַדְמוּתָנָא וְאָמְרַת עִבְדָּא הוּא רְבוּנֵי וְנִסְיַבְתָּ עֵיפָא וְאֶתְפְּסִיאתָ:

61 וְתַקְּמוּ רִבְקָה וְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ וְתִרְכַּבְנָהּ עַל־הַגְּמִלִים וְתִלְכְּנָה אַחֲרַי הָאִישׁ וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד אֶת־רִבְקָה וַיֵּלֶךְ: 62 וַיִּצְחָק בָּא מִבְּוֵיאַת בְּאֵר לַחֵי רְאִי וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב בְּאַרְצֵי הַנֶּגֶב: 63 וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לְפָנֹת עֶרֶב וַיֵּשֶׂא עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה גְמִלִים בָּאִים: 64 וַתִּשָּׂא רִבְקָה אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ וַתִּרְא אֶת־יִצְחָק וַתִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַגְּמִל: 65 וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָעֶבֶד מִי הָאִישׁ הַלְּזֶה הַהֹלֵךְ בַּשָּׂדֶה לְקִרְאָתִנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הָעֶבֶד הוּא אֲדֹנָי וַתִּקַּח הַצְּעִירָה וַתִּתְּכֶם:

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וְתוֹרָה מִפְּנֵי: וְתִפֹּל. הַשְּׂמִיטָה עֲצֻמָּה לְאָרֶץ, כְּתִרְגוּמוֹ: "וְאֶתְרַכִּינֵת", הַטְּתָה עֲצֻמָּה לְאָרֶץ וְלֹא הִגִּיעָה עַד הַקְּרָקַע, כְּמוֹ: "הֵטִי נָא כֶּדֶף"<sup>35</sup>, "אֶרְכִּינֵי". "וַיֵּט שְׂמִימִם"<sup>36</sup>, "וְאֶרְכִּינֵי", לְשׁוֹן מִטָּה לְאָרֶץ, וְדוּמָה לוֹ:<sup>37</sup> "כִּי יִפֹּל לֹא יוֹטֵל", כְּלוֹמֵר אִם יֵטֵה לְאָרֶץ לֹא יִגִּיעַ עַד הַקְּרָקַע: 65 וְתִתְּכֶם. לְשׁוֹן וְתִתְּפַעֵל, כְּמוֹ: "וְתִשְׁבֵּר":

62 מִבּוֹא בְּאֵר לַחֵי רְאִי. שֶׁהֵלֵךְ לְהִבְיֵא הַגֵּר לְאֶבְרָהָם אָבִיו שִׁישְׂאָנָה: יוֹשֵׁב בְּאַרְצֵי הַנֶּגֶב. קְרוֹב לְאוֹתוֹ בְּאֵר, שְׁנֶאֱמַר:<sup>32</sup> "וַיֵּסַע מִשֵּׁם אֶבְרָהָם אֶרְצָה הַנֶּגֶב, וַיֵּשֶׁב בֵּין קְדֻשׁ וּבֵין שׁוּר", וְשֵׁם הַיָּדָה הַבְּאֵר, שְׁנֶאֱמַר:<sup>33</sup> "הִנֵּה בֵּין קְדֻשׁ וּבֵין בְּרָד": 63 לְשׂוּחַ. לְשׁוֹן תְּפִלָּה, כְּמוֹ:<sup>34</sup> "וַיִּשְׁפָּךְ שִׁיחוֹ": 64 וַתִּרְא אֶת יִצְחָק. רָאָתָה אוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר,

32. בראשית כ, א. 33. בראשית טז, יד. 34. תהלים קב, א. 35. פסוק ד, י. 36. שמואל-ב כב, י. 37. תהלים לו, כד.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

gaged in earning a living and raising our families. It is especially during this period in our lives that we are called upon to raise our eyes upward, just as Isaac did, and focus on our true purpose in life.<sup>198</sup> Isaac went out: On a deeper level, we are taught in the Midrash that during the three years from the binding of Isaac until Rebecca became old enough to marry, Isaac was hidden in the Garden of Eden. Only when the time

came for him to establish a family did he emerge from the Garden to greet her. The Garden of Eden is devoid of evil and cannot tolerate any form of it. Isaac's seclusion in the Garden of Eden until his marriage teaches us that the proper preparation for marriage—for building an everlasting home—is living life in a way that fosters and preserves purity and innocence.<sup>199</sup>

A CLOSER LOOK

[63] He had initiated the practice of praying at the day's end, as well: Nonetheless, Isaac did not wish to offend his father by formally instituting an additional daily prayer, for this might imply that his father's devotional efforts were somehow lacking.<sup>200</sup> Isaac therefore prayed in the field, privately, even though it is normally preferable to pray indoors.<sup>201</sup> However, when Abraham found out about his son's innovation, he adopted it, as well,<sup>202</sup> and thus the afternoon prayer was formally instituted.

From a deeper perspective, when Abraham instituted the morning daily prayer, he also adopted the practice of praying the afternoon prayer—since, as we know, he kept the entire Torah, even rabbinic

ordinances—but he did not encourage the rest of his family to pray the afternoon prayer until he saw that Isaac had undertaken to do so on his own. He then formalized it.<sup>203</sup>

[64] When Rebecca raised her eyes and saw Isaac: This was one last manifestation of Abraham's promise that God would ensure the success of Eliezer's entire mission. Even with his mission completed, supernatural orchestration of events continued to ensure that there would be no unnecessary delays. The very moment Rebecca and Eliezer arrived, they "chanced" upon Isaac in the field.<sup>204</sup>

198. *Igrot Kodesh (Rayatz)*, vol. 4, p. 3. 199. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 49, 52-53. 200. See *Berachot* 31b. See also *Eiruvin* 63a; *Chavot Yair* 121; *Pitchei Teshuvah*, *Yoreh Deah*, 242:5; *Or HaChaim* on *Leviticus* 10:19. 201. *Berachot* 34b; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 90:5. 202. *Tosefot Yesheininim* on *Yoma* 28b, citing *Rabbeinu Tam*. 203. *Tosefot Yesheininim*, *loc. cit.*; *Sichot Kodesh* 5725, vol. 1, p. 242; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 374, note 19. 204. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 101; *Hitva'aduyot* 5742, vol. 1, p. 438.

**61 Rebecca rose up with her maidens, and they rode on the camels, following the man. The servant thus took Rebecca and set out on his journey.**

**62 Isaac had just come from Be'er LaChai Ro'i, where he had gone to bring Hagar to his newly-widowed father, so he could remarry her. Until then, he had been living in the southern region, i.e., in or around Beersheba, but he now moved to Hebron.**

**63 Isaac went out to pray in the field towards evening, for in addition to following his father's custom of praying at the beginning of the day,<sup>189</sup> he had initiated the practice of praying at the day's end, as well.<sup>190</sup> He looked up, and he saw camels approaching.**

**64 When Rebecca looked up and saw Isaac, she was overwhelmed by his aura of holiness, and slid partway off the camel.**

**65 She said to the servant, "Who is this man walking towards us in the field?" The servant said, "That is my master." She then took her veil and covered herself.**

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✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

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**63 He had instituted the practice of praying at the day's end:** We recite the morning prayer before beginning our workday and the evening prayer after completing our day's activities. In contrast, the afternoon prayer requires us to stop in the midst of our mundane affairs and focus on God.

Our daily, mundane affairs are symbolized by "the field," the area outside the city limits, which is untamed and uncultivated. Through instituting the afternoon prayer, Isaac transformed "the field" into a place of prayer to God.

The morning prayer undeniably serves as our principal daily renewal of Divine consciousness. Nonetheless, afterwards, it remains to be seen how we will fare when we go out into "the field." Will the secular and material

influences of "the field" cause us to lose the spiritual awareness and closeness to God that we achieved during the morning prayer? By stopping in the middle of our mundane affairs in order to recite the afternoon prayer, we demonstrate that our involvement in material affairs does not separate us from God.<sup>191</sup>

Our lives are metaphorically divided into the stages of morning, afternoon, and evening, i.e., childhood, adulthood, and retirement. During childhood, we are sheltered from the responsibilities of "real" life and can remain focused on God without too many distractions. Upon reaching retirement age, we can once again disengage from worldly affairs and focus on what is truly meaningful. The true challenge occurs in our middle years, when we go out to "the field" and are fully en-

✧ INNER DIMENSIONS ✧

**[63] He saw camels approaching:** Isaac knew that whereas in the morning, God's attribute of kindness is dominant,<sup>192</sup> as nighttime approaches, the forces of darkness—God's attribute of judgment—are gathering strength.<sup>193</sup> He perceived, however, that praying in the afternoon, when people are normally preoccupied with pursuing their livelihood, can transform God's attribute of judgment into kindness, and he therefore instituted the practice of praying in the afternoon. The appropriate response to increasing darkness is a corresponding increase in our connection to God.<sup>194</sup>

This transformation is alluded to by the fact that Isaac saw "camels" immediately after reciting the

afternoon prayer, for the sages state<sup>195</sup> that seeing a camel in a dream signifies that the dreamer was destined to die but his death sentence was commuted to one of life.

In addition, the word for "camel" (*gamal*) is related to the word for "bestowing" (*gomel*). Isaac's vision of approaching camels can thus be allegorically interpreted to mean<sup>196</sup> that, as a result of the commutation of God's verdict of judgment to one of kindness, he envisioned an imminent bestowal of God's kindness upon him and his descendants, the Jewish people, who would emerge from his marriage to Rebecca.<sup>197</sup>

189. Above, 19:27. 190. *Berachot* 26b. 191. *Sichot Kodesh* 5715, p. 260. *HaYom Yom*, 22 Adar I; *Igrot Kodesh*, vol. 4, pp. 182-183. 192. *Avodah Zarah* 3b. 193. *Zohar* 2:156a. 194. *Igrot Kodesh*, vol. 6, p. 185. 195. *Berachot* 56b. 196. *Kedushat Levi* on this verse. 197. *Igrot Kodesh*, vol. 4, pp. 182-183, vol. 6, p. 185.

ONKELOS

66 ואשתעי עבדא ליצחק ית כל פתגמא די עבד: 67 ואעלה יצחק למשכנא וחזא והא תקנין עובדהא בעובדי שרה אמה ונסיב ית רבקה וחות לה לאנתו ורחימיה ית אתנחם יצחק בתר דמיתת אמה: 25:1 ואוסיף אברהם ונסיב אתתא

66 וַיְסַפֵּר הָעֶבֶד לְיִצְחָק אֵת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

67 וַיְבַאֶהָ יִצְחָק הָאֵהֱלָהּ שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־רַבְקָה

וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיְאַהֲבֶהָ וַיִּנָּחֵם יִצְחָק אֶת־רֵי אִמּוֹ: פ

שׁוֹי 25:1 וַיֹּסֶף אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה וַשְׁמָה קַטּוּרָה:

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קורו. בראשית רבה: 38: אַחֲרֵי אִמּוֹ. דָּרַךְ אַרְצָ, כֵּל זִמְן שָׂאמוּ שֶׁל אָדָם קִיָּמַת כְּרוּךְ הוּא אֲצִלָּה, וּמִשְׁמַתָּה הוּא מִתְנַחֵם בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ: 1 קַטּוּרָה. זו הָגַר, וְנִקְרָאת "קַטּוּרָה" עַל שֵׁם שְׂנָאִים מִעֲשִׂיָּהּ בְּקַטְרֵת, וְשִׁקְשָׁרָה פְתָחָה שְׁלֵא נִדְוָגָה לְאָדָם מִיּוֹם שִׁפְרָשָׁה מֵאַבְרָהָם:

66 וַיְסַפֵּר הָעֶבֶד. גִּלָּה לּוֹ נִסִּים שְׁנַעֲשׂוּ לוֹ, שִׁקְפָצָה לוֹ הָאֶרֶץ, וְשִׁנְדָּמְנָה לוֹ רַבְקָה בְּתַפְלָתוֹ: 67 הָאֵהֱלָהּ שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ. וַיְבַאֶהָ "הָאֵהֱלָהּ", וְהִרִי הִיא "שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ". כְּלוּמַר, וְנַעֲשִׂית דְּגִמַת שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ, שֶׁכֵּל זִמְן שִׁשְׂרָה קִיָּמַת, הִיָּה גַר דְּלוּק מִעֶרֶב שֶׁבֶת לְעֶרֶב שֶׁבֶת, וּבְרַבָּה מִצּוּיָה בְּעֵשָׂה, וְעַנְן קָשׁוּר עַל הָאֵהֱלָהּ, וּמִשְׁמַתָּה פִּסְקוֹ, וּכְשִׁבָאת רַבְקָה

ס. טו. 38.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

66 Eliezer cited the miracles God performed for him as proof that he had fulfilled his mission devotedly, without any personal motives.

Similarly, when we approach our Divine mission with this underlying selflessness, we can indeed be assured of complete success, even if many miracles are needed along the way.<sup>214</sup>

**67 The lamp she lit on Friday again remained lit until the following Friday:** Jewish law dictates that if the woman of the home cannot light the Sabbath candles for whatever reason, her husband must do so in her stead.<sup>215</sup> Since, as we know, Abraham observed all the commandments (even the rabbinic ordinances),<sup>216</sup> he lit the Sabbath candles after Sarah's passing. Yet, despite his great righteousness, his candles did not remain lit throughout the week, as Sarah's had. Rebecca, who was only three years old at the time, understood that it was not enough for Abraham to light Sabbath candles, and made sure to kindle them herself, too. Her intuition was clearly confirmed when her candles continued to burn miraculously the whole week (as had Sarah's before her)—something that Abraham's candles never did.

This demonstrates the unique ability of Jewish women and girls—who are all "daughters" of Sarah and Rebecca—to influence the spiritual character of the home, illuminating it with the holiness of the Sabbath throughout the ensuing mundane week. Although the illumination provided by their candles might be physically visible for only a limited time, their spiritual illumination remains the entire week.

By nature, the male is the gatherer: he brings the provisions, the raw materials, into the home. But it is the woman who refines them and prepares them for human consumption, transforming all the man gathers into a viable, livable home. This is true both materially

and spiritually: only the woman possesses the spiritual power to make the home fit to be a home for God, as well. Therefore, Abraham's candles could produce no more than a natural, limited light; he was not truly able to spiritualize the house.

It is instructive to note that this and the other miracles returned even before Rebecca married Isaac.<sup>217</sup> Thus, we can view three-year-old Rebecca's lighting of the Sabbath candles as a precedent for the custom to have young *unmarried* girls, from the age of three, light Sabbath candles each Friday, in addition to those lit by their mother.<sup>218</sup>

Considering the extent of today's spiritual darkness, it would seem wise for all Jewish communities (even those who, in the past, did not follow this custom) to encourage all girls from the age of three, who can understand the concept of Sabbath candles, to adopt this custom. This will bring much-needed spiritual light, both to their own home and ultimately to the entire world.<sup>219</sup>

**1 Abraham again:** Literally, these words mean "Abraham enhanced," alluding to the fact that it was only after Abraham enhanced the quality of his own Divine service that he was able to spiritually elevate Hagar. We must first elevate ourselves in order to elevate someone else.<sup>220</sup>

**Her deeds were now as pleasing as incense:** One of the ingredients of the incense offered up in the Holy Temple was derived from the blood of a non-kosher animal.<sup>221</sup> This fact demonstrates the incense's unique capability to elevate even entities on the lowest rung of spirituality to the heights of holiness. Hagar is therefore compared to the incense, because her return to Abraham and the path of truth after having lapsed into idolatry mirrors this unique characteristic of the Temple's incense.<sup>222</sup>

214. *Hitva'aduyot* 5746, vol. 1, p. 627. 215. *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Orach Chaim*, 263:5, 9, and 11. 216. Above, 11:31, etc. 217. *Levush* on this verse. Cf. *Chizkuni* on verse 10, above. 218. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 168-172. 219. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, pp. 283-284, vol. 15, p. 173. 220. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 179. 221. See on Exodus 30:34. 222. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 174-179.

66 **The servant told Isaac all that he had done**—stressing that he had fulfilled Abraham’s mission devotedly and selflessly, in order to remove any doubt from Isaac’s mind that the girl he brought him was indeed the one Abraham intended for him. As proof, he described all the miracles God had performed for him, including how he had miraculously arrived on the same day on which he had set out, and how Rebecca was already at the well<sup>205</sup> before he finished his prayer.<sup>206</sup>

67 Nonetheless, all this did not suffice to convince Isaac that Rebecca was worthy to be his mother Sarah’s successor.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, **Isaac brought Rebecca into the tent**, placing his household’s domestic affairs under her control. From the moment she assumed this role, it became clear that Rebecca was exactly like **his mother Sarah**, for the ongoing miracles that had occurred in Sarah’s merit when she was alive<sup>208</sup> once again resumed: the oil lamp Rebecca lit on Friday remained lit until the following Friday, even though it only held enough oil for one day; even a small amount of the bread she baked sufficed to satisfy hunger; and a cloud hovered above the tent. Seeing how she was blessed in these ways, Isaac became fully convinced that Rebecca was indeed worthy of being his mother Sarah’s successor, and **married Rebecca. She became his wife, and he loved her. Isaac was then consoled for the loss of his mother** (see Figure 25).

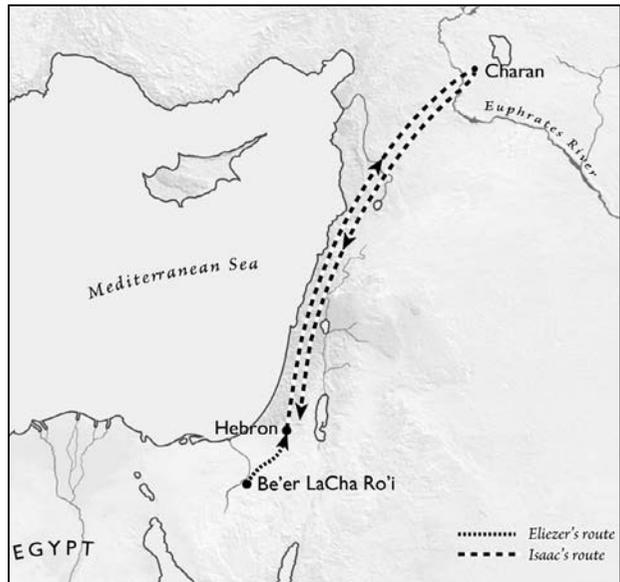


Figure 25: Eliezer Brings Rebecca

### Abraham Remarries Hagar

- ◆ **Sixth Reading 25:1 Abraham married Hagar again** after Sarah died. When he had married her the first time, her legal status had been that of a handmaid, but because he had granted her her freedom when he banished her,<sup>209</sup> he was now remarrying her as a **freewoman**. Nonetheless, in deference to Sarah, he did not remarry Hagar as a full wife, but rather as a concubine, i.e., without the conditions of a marital contract. Hagar’s **nickname now was Keturah**, alluding to the fact that, although she had at one point lapsed back into the idolatry of her Egyptian family,<sup>210</sup> she had since repented,<sup>211</sup> and her deeds were now as pleasing to God as the fragrance of incense (*ketoret*). This nickname also alluded to the fact that she had bound (*katar*) her reproductive organs ever since Abraham sent her away to ensure that no other man ever have relations with her.<sup>212</sup> For both these reasons, Abraham did not hesitate now to remarry her.<sup>213</sup>

205. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 100, note 16. 206. *Hitva'aduyot 5746*, vol. 1, pp. 622, 626-627. 207. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 165. 208. Above, 23:2. 209. Above, 21:14. 210. Above, 21:14. 211. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 175. 212. Rashi, as explained in *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 174-176. 213. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 176.

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ושמה קטורה: 2 וילדת לה ית זמרו וית יקשו וית מדן וית מדן וית ישבק וית שוח: 3 ויקשו אולי ית שבא וית דין ובני דין היו למשרין ולשכונין ולנגון: 4 ובני מדן עיפה ועפר וחנף ואבידע ואלדעה כל אלין בני קטורה: 5 ויהב אברהם ית כל די לה ליצחק: 6 ולבני לחינתא די לאברהם יחב אברהם מתנו ושלחנן מעל יצחק ברה עד דהוא קים לקדומא לארע מדינתא: 7 ואלין יומי שני חיי אברהם דתיא מאה ושבעין וחמש שני: 8 ואתנגיד ומית אברהם בסיבו טבא סיב ושבע יומין ואתכבש לעמה: 9 וקברו יתה יצחק וישמעאל בנודי במערת כפלתא בחקל עפרון בר צוחר כתאה די על אפי ממרא:

2 וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ אֶת־זְמַרְן וְאֶת־מְדֹן וְאֶת־מְדֹן וְאֶת־יִשְׂבָּק וְאֶת־שׁוּחַ: 3 וַיִּקְשׁוּ אוֹלֵי יַת שְׁבָא וַיַּת דִּין וּבְנֵי דִין הָיוּ לְמִשְׁרִין וְלִשְׁכֻנִין וְלַנְּגֹן: 4 וּבְנֵי מֵדָן עִיפָה וְעֶפְר וְחִנְפָּה וְאֲבִידַע וְאֶלְדֵּעָה כָּל אֲלִין בְּנֵי קֵטוּרָה: 5 וַיְהִיב אַבְרָהָם יַת כָּל דֵּי לָהּ לְיִצְחָק: 6 וְלִבְנֵי לַחֲיִנְתָּא דֵּי לְאַבְרָהָם יַחֲבֵב אַבְרָהָם מִתְנֹן וְשִׁלְחָנָן מֵעַל יִצְחָק בְּרָה עַד דְּהוּא קִים לְקַדּוּמָא לְאַרְעַ מְדִינְתָּא: 7 וְאֲלִין יוּמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי אַבְרָהָם דְּתֵיא מֵאָה וְשִׁבְעִין וְחֲמִשׁ שָׁנִין: 8 וְאֶתְנַגִּיד וּמִית אַבְרָהָם בְּסִיבוֹ טְבָא סִיב וְשִׁבְעֵי יוּמִין וְאֶתְכַבֵּשׁ לְעֵמָה: 9 וְקִבְרוּ יִתְהָ יִצְחָק וְיִשְׁמַעְאֵל בְּנוֹדֵי בְּמַעְרַת כַּפְלֵתָא בְּחַקְל עֶפְרוֹן בְּרֵי צוּחַר כְּתֵיא דֵּי עַל אֲפֵי מִמְרָא:

RASHI

מסורות בדרך לברך את מי שתרצה, ואברהם מסרן ליצחק: 6 הפילגשים. חסר כתיב, שלא היתה אלא פילגש אחת, היא הגר היא קטורה. נשים — בכתיבה, פילגשים — בלא כתיבה. כדאמרין בסנהדרין<sup>45</sup> בנשים ופילגשים דרוד: נתן אברהם מתנות. פרושו רבותינו<sup>46</sup>: שם טמאה מסר להם. דבר אחר: מה שנתן לו על אודות שרה, ושאר מתנות שנתנו לו, הכל נתן להם, שלא רצה להנות מהם: 7 מאת שנה ושבעים שנה וחמש שנים. בן מאה כבן שבעים, וכן שבעים כבן חמש, בלא חטא: 9 יצחק וישמעאל. מכאן שעשה ישמעאל תשובה, והוליק את יצחק לפניו, והיא "שיבה טובה" שנאמרה באברהם<sup>47</sup>:

3 אשורים ולטושם. שם ראשי אמות. ותרגום של אנקלוס אין לי לישבו על לשון המקרא. שפרש: "למשרין", לשון מנהג. ואם תאמר שאינו כן מפני האל"ף שאינה יסודית, הרי לנו תבות שאין בראשם אל"ף ונתוספה אל"ף בראשם, כמו<sup>48</sup>: "חומת אנף", שהוא מן<sup>49</sup>: "נכה רגלים", וכמו<sup>50</sup>: "אסוף שמן", שהוא מן<sup>51</sup>: "ורחצת וסבת", ולטושם. הם בעלי אהלים המתפורים אנה ונאנה, ונוסעים איש באהלי אפרנו. וכן הוא אומר<sup>52</sup>: "והנה נטשים על פני כל הארץ", שכן למ"ד ונו"ן מתחלפות זו בזו: 5 ויתן אברהם וגו'. אמר רבי נחמיה: ברכת דייתיקי נתן לו, שאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא לאברהם<sup>53</sup>: "והיה ברכה", הברכות

39. עמוס ז, ו. 40. שמואל ב, ד, ד. 41. מלכים ב, ד, ב. 42. רות, ג. 43. שמואל א, ל, טו. 44. בראשית יב, ב. 45. כא, א. 46. סנהדרין צא, א. 47. פסוק ח.

### A CLOSER LOOK

[continued...] all of his other children and then sent them away from Isaac, clearly signaling that his other children did not have any claims to the Land of Israel.<sup>233</sup>

[9] Ishmael respectfully allowed Isaac to lead: Although Ishmael had repented before Abraham's funeral,<sup>234</sup> the Torah makes no mention of this fact before this. This is because Ishmael's primary sin was his assertion that since he was the firstborn, he should receive a double portion of the inheritance;<sup>235</sup> thus, the proof that he had truly repented came only

after Abraham died, when he could have claimed the double inheritance due the firstborn. By allowing Isaac to walk ahead of him, he was demonstrating that he had truly repented, since he was conceding that Isaac was Abraham's legitimate heir.

It is appropriate that Ishmael's repentance is mentioned specifically in *parashat Chayei Sarah*, for Sarah deserves the credit for Ishmael's reformation. Her insistence on disciplining Ishmael eventually led him to repent and recognize the truth.<sup>236</sup>

**2 She bore him<sup>223</sup> Zimran, Yakshan, Medan, Midian, Yishbak, and Shuach.**

**3 Yakshan was the father of Sheva and Dedan. The sons of Dedan became the leaders of the Ashurim, tent-dwellers who lived in tent-camps; Letushim, nomadic tent-dwellers who spread out in all directions; and Leumim, other nations.**

**4 The sons of Midian were Eifah, Efer, Chanoch, Avida, and Elda'ah. All these were Keturah's descendants.**

**5 Even though he had in the meantime fathered all these additional sons, Abraham gave all that he owned to Isaac, as related in detail above.<sup>224</sup> In addition, he bestowed on him the gift of being able to bless others (which God had given Abraham<sup>225</sup>).**

**6 Abraham gave other, spiritual gifts to the sons of Hagar, the concubine<sup>226</sup> whom Abraham had taken.** He taught them how to manipulate the forces of impure spirituality. He also gave them all the material gifts he had received over time from various people and had not earned himself, including what he received from Pharaoh<sup>227</sup> and Avimelech<sup>228</sup> on account of the incidents with Sarah; since he did not receive these gifts directly from God, he did not wish to benefit from them. **While he was still alive, he sent them eastward, to the east, away from his son Isaac.** These progeny disseminated at least a diluted form of Abraham's spiritual legacy in their new homelands. Thus, Abraham's miraculously-restored virility enabled the non-Jewish populace to benefit from Isaac's birth just as Sarah's miraculous lactation did when she nursed their babies.<sup>229</sup> Abraham also sent away Ishmael together with Hagar's other sons, but he returned some time before Abraham's death.<sup>230</sup>

## Abraham's Death

**7 These, then, are the days of the years of Abraham's lifetime. He lived 175 years.** He retained the youthful virility that he had regained before conceiving Isaac until his final days, and he died completely righteous and untainted by sin.<sup>231</sup>

**8 Abraham breathed his last and died in the year 2123, in good old age (seeing all his descendants remain loyal to his ideals, as he was promised<sup>232</sup>), mellow and content, and he was gathered to his people in the afterlife.**

**9 His sons—Isaac followed by Ishmael—buried him in the Cave of the Machpelah, in the field of Ephron son of Tzochar the Hittite, facing Mamre.** Ishmael, in deference to Isaac's preeminent status in the family, respectfully allowed him to lead the burial procession.

### ✧ A CLOSER LOOK ✧

[5-6] Abraham gave all that he owned to Isaac.	bequeathed the birthright of the Jewish people to
Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubine....	Isaac, as well as the rights to the Land of Israel that
He sent them...away from his son Isaac: Abraham	had been promised to him by God. He gave gifts to

223. See 21:6, above. 224. Above, 24:10. 225. Above, 12:2. 226. Although referring to one-and-the-same woman, this word appears in the plural in order to allude to the fact that Hagar was married to Abraham on two occasions, each time as a different type of concubine: first as a handmaid, and now as a free woman (*Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 231, note 26, p. 232, note 32). 227. Above, 12:16. 228. Above, 20:14. 229. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, p. 95. 230. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 119. 231. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, p. 80, vol. 35, p. 95. 232. Above, 15:15. 233. *Hitva'aduyot* 5748, vol. 1, p. 479. 234. See 22:1, above. 235. See 21:9, above. 236. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 149-150.

— ONKELOS —

10 חקלא די זבן אברהם מן בני  
המאה תמן אתקבר אברהם ושרה  
אתתה: 11 והיה בטר דמית אברהם  
ובריך יי ית יצחק ברה ויתבי יצחק  
עם בירא דמלאך קימא אתחזי  
עלה: 12 ואלין תולדת ישמעאל  
בר אברהם די ילדת הגר מצריהא  
אמתא דשרה לאברהם: 13 ואלין  
שמהת בני ישמעאל בשמהתהון  
לתולדתהון בכרא דישמעאל  
נביות וקדר ואדבאל ומבשם:  
14 ומשמע ודומה ומשא: 15 חדר  
ותימא יטור נפיש וקדמה:

10 הַשָּׂרָה אֲשֶׁר־קָנָה אַבְרָהָם מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־חַת שָׂמָה  
קָבַר אַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: 11 וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם  
וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנֹו וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק עִם־בְּאֵר לַחִי  
רְאִי: פ

◆ שביעי 12 ואלה תולדת ישמעאל בן־אברהם אשר  
ילדה הגר המצרית שפחת שרה לאברהם: 13 ואלה  
שמות בני ישמעאל בשמותם לתולדתם בכר ישמעאל  
נביות וקדר ואדבאל ומבשם: 14 ומשמע ודומה ומשא:  
15 חדר ותימא יטור נפיש וקדמה:

— RASHI —

ויברך את אשר יטיב בעיניו. ובא הקדוש ברוך הוא  
ויברכו: 13 בשמותם לתולדתם. סדר לידתן זה  
אחר זה:

11 ויהי אחרי מות אברהם ויברך וגו'. נחמו תנחומי  
אבלים. דבר אחר: אף על פי שמסר הקדוש ברוך הוא  
את הברכות לאברהם, נתיירא לברך את יצחק, מפני  
שצפה את עשו יוצא ממנו, אמר: יבא בעל הברכות

handmaid, bore to Abraham.

13 These are the names of Ishmael's sons in order of their birth: Nevayot (Ishmael's first-born), Kedar, Adbe'el, Mivsam,

14 Mishma, Duma, Masa,

15 Chadad, Tema, Yetur, Nafish, and Kedmah (see Figure 26).

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

**11 Abraham himself was afraid to bless his son Isaac:**  
But Isaac himself later did attempt to bless his son Esau.<sup>242</sup> As we will explain in more detail later on, he did so in the hope that this extra influx of Divine energy would inspire Esau and enable him to repent. Why, then, was Abraham afraid to even bless Isaac, rather than making the same calculation?

The answer lies in the intrinsic difference between Abraham and Isaac. Abraham embodied loving-kindness, while Isaac embodied strength and severity. Abraham therefore sought to reveal the good within other people by focusing on their positive behavior. With Esau, this was clearly impossible, for whatever good he possessed was too buried beneath the effects

of years of sinful living. Only the overwhelming power of Isaac's approach could possibly connect Esau with the limitless energy of repentance.<sup>243</sup>

**12 Ishmael son of Abraham, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham:** Before describing Ishmael's greatness and enumerating his many descendants, the Torah reiterates his lesser status for two reasons: (a) in order that his descendants remember that their forefather was merely the son of Sarah's maidservant, meaning that they therefore had no claim to the birthright of Abraham and Isaac; and (b) so that the descendants of Isaac not be intimidated by Ishmael's descendants.

This, too, is part of Sarah's legacy.<sup>244</sup>

242. 243. Below, 27:1-42. 244. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 84-85. 245. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 149, 152-154; *Sichot Kodesh 5735*, vol. 1, pp. 160-161.

**10 The field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites is thus where Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried.**

**11 After Abraham died, God blessed Isaac, his son,** in order to console him in his mourning over his father. Although God had granted Abraham the power to bless other people, Abraham himself was afraid to bless his son Isaac because he foresaw that Esau would come forth from him. Therefore, **God Himself blessed Isaac, Abraham’s son,** with good health and longevity.<sup>237</sup>

**Isaac lived in the vicinity of Be’er LaChai Ro’i.** Ishmael, in the meantime, moved back to the Paran desert.<sup>238</sup> After Abraham died, he was no longer protected by Abraham’s merit and was harassed by his enemies.<sup>239</sup>

### The Line of Ishmael

◆ *Seventh Reading* **12** Having recorded Abraham’s death, the Torah now describes how God fulfilled His promise of making Abraham’s two principal sons into great nations.<sup>240</sup>

Abraham’s offspring can be categorized into two distinct classes: the “highborn” sons—Isaac (from his wife Sarah) and Ishmael (from Hagar when she was Sarah’s handmaid), and the “lowborn” sons—the sons he fathered with Hagar in her status of concubine. Both of Abraham’s two “highborn” sons were righteous enough to remain part of his household (Isaac throughout his whole lifetime and Ishmael after he repented and was reinstated), whereas his “lowborn” sons had to be sent away.

In a similar fashion, Abraham’s “highborn” progeny subdivided into two classes: the sons of Isaac followed in the footsteps of their grandfather Abraham’s “highborn” sons, one choosing to remain in the fold and one founding a line that opted to sever itself from Abraham’s spiritual heritage, whereas the descendants of his son Ishmael imitated the behavior of Abraham’s “lowborn” sons by severing themselves from Abraham’s spiritual heritage.

The Torah therefore now contrasts the family histories of Abraham’s two “highborn” sons, beginning with that of Ishmael.<sup>241</sup>

**The following are the descendants of Ishmael son of Abraham, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s**

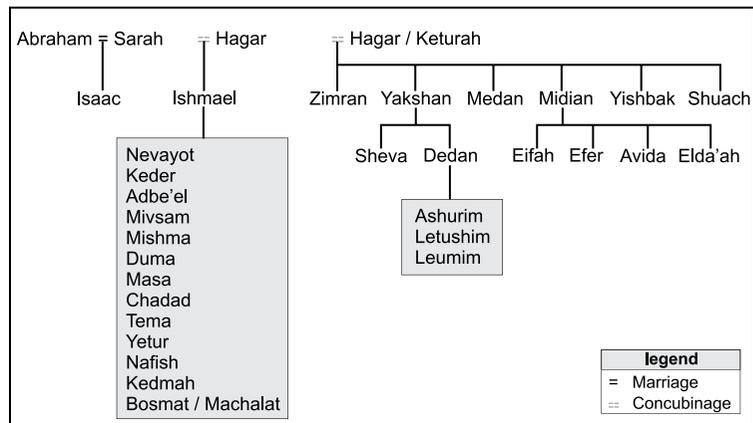


Figure 26: Abraham’s Descendants

237. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 217. 238. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 236, note 55. 239. Rashi on v. 18, below. 240. *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, vol. 1, pp. 152-154. 241. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, pp. 118-119.

— ONKELOS —  
 16 אלין אנון בני ישמעאל ואלין  
 שמהתהון בפצחיהון ובכרביהון  
 תרי עשר רברבין לאמיהון:  
 17 ואלין שני חיי ישמעאל מאה  
 ותלתין ושבע שנין ואתנגיד ומית  
 ואתכנש לעמה: 18 ושרו מחוילה  
 עד חגרא די על אפי מצרים מטי  
 לאתור על אפי כל אחוהי שרא:

◆ מפטיר 16 אַלָּה הֵם בְּנֵי יִשְׁמָעֵאל וְאֵלָה שְׁמוֹתָם  
 בְּחֻצְרֵיהֶם וּבְטִירְתָּם שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר נְשִׂאִים לְאִמֹתָם:  
 17 וְאֵלָה שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל מֵאֵת שָׁנָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה  
 וְיָשַׁב שָׁנַיִם וַיָּנֹעַ וַיָּמָת וַיֵּאֶסֶף אֶל-עַמּוּיוֹ: 18 וַיִּשְׁכְּנוּ  
 מִחוּלָּה עַד-שׁוּר אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּאָבָה אֲשׁוּרָה  
 עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-אֲחָיו נֶפֶל: פ פ פ

ק"ה פסוקים. יהודי"ע סימן.

— RASHI —

וגו', כמו שפירש בסוף "מגלה נקראת"<sup>50</sup>: ויגוע. לא  
 נאמרה "גויעה" אלא בצדיקים: 18 נפל. שכן, כמו<sup>51</sup>:  
 "ומדון ועמלק וכל בני קדם נפלים בעמק". כאן הוא  
 אומר לשון "נפילה", ולהלן<sup>52</sup> הוא אומר: "על פני כל  
 אחיו ישכון", עד שלא מת אברהם "ישכון", משמת  
 אברהם "נפל":

חסלת פרשת חיי שרה

16 בחצריהם. כרבים שאין להם חומה. ותרגומו:  
 "בפצחיהון", שהם מפצחים לשון פתיחה, כמו<sup>48</sup>: "פצחו  
 ורגנו": 17 ואלה שני חיי ישמעאל וגו'. אמר רבי חיא  
 בר אבא: למה נמנו שנותיו של ישמעאל? כדי ליחס  
 בהם שנותיו של יעקב. מן שנותיו של ישמעאל, למדנו  
 ששמש יעקב בבית עבר ארבע עשרה שנה כשפרש  
 מאביו קדם שבא אצל לבן, שהרי כשפרש יעקב מאביו  
 מת ישמעאל, שנאמר<sup>49</sup>: "וילך עשו אל ישמעאל"

48. תהלים צח, ד. 49. בראשית כח, ט. 50. מגילה יז, א. עין ברש"י סוף פרשת תולדות. 51. שופטים ז, יב. 52. טז, יב.

◆ **Maftir 16** These were the names of Ishmael's sons, and these names were given as well to their open towns and their strongholds. There were twelve chieftains for their nations, in fulfillment of God's prophecy to Abraham that He would grant Ishmael greatness.<sup>245</sup>

**17** These are the years of Ishmael's life: One hundred and thirty-seven years, when he breathed his last and died, in the year 2171, and was gathered to his people. The fact that Ishmael repented of his earlier wickedness did not suffice to bring his descendants up to par with those of his brother Isaac, neither in spiritual excellence nor in physical prowess. Isaac's son Jacob never suffered a lapse in righteousness during his entire lifetime, he retained his youthful physical strength well into adulthood,<sup>246</sup> and he enjoyed all the advantages of pedigree (which Ishmael did not, because of his mother's servant-status). Ishmael therefore did not inherit the spiritual leadership from Abraham.<sup>247</sup>

**18** Ishmael's descendants dwelled in the area between Chavilah and Shur, which borders on Egypt, all the way to Assyria. He dwelt throughout the area of all his brethren.

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Chayei Sarah* may be found on p. 344.



∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

**18 He dwelt throughout the area of all his brethren:** This is similar to God's earlier promise to Abraham that Ishmael would "dwell near all his brothers,"<sup>248</sup> but with one significant difference. The literal translation of the word for "he dwelt" used here (*nafal*) is "he fell." The Torah thus informs us that as long as Abraham was alive, Ishmael would continue to "dwell" securely in his father's merit; once Abraham would die, Ishmael would "fall" and be harassed by his enemies.<sup>249</sup>

On a deeper level, however, this statement—made now, after the Torah has enumerated Ishmael's descendants—reinforces the lesson inherent in the Torah's reiteration of Ishmael's inferior lineage before it detailed his descendants.<sup>250</sup> Ishmael's well-being depends upon his cognizance of his status as Abraham's son through

Sarah's maidservant. As long as the spirit of Abraham lives within him and he recognizes Isaac's superiority, he is capable of "dwelling." As soon as Abraham perishes in his mind and he ignores his identity, "he falls."<sup>251</sup>

**He dwelt throughout the area of all his brethren:** Or, literally, "He fell throughout the area...." Ishmael was the "fallen" version of Abraham. Abraham personified holy love—love for God and kindness to others. Ishmael personified love in its "fallen" version, an obsessive desire for physicality and sensuality.

In our own lives, it is our task to transform our love for material things—the fallen love of Ishmael—into a holy love for God.<sup>252</sup>

246. Above, 17:20. *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, vol. 1, pp. 152-154. 247. See 29:10, below. 248. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 84-85. 249. Above, 16:12. 250. Above, v. 11. 251. Above, on v. 12. 252. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 152-154. 253. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5648, p. 196.





*Chayei Sarah*

הפטרות  
*Haftarot*



# Haftarah for Chayei Sarah

## 1 Kings 1:1-31

In *parashat Chayei Sarah*, we are told how Abraham “was old, yet continued to deeply internalize his experiences,”<sup>8</sup> and this is how this *haftarah* opens—with regard to David—as well. Just as Abraham, in his old age, sought to perpetuate his heritage and his Divine mission by arranging a proper match for his son Isaac, David here takes pains to ensure that his designated heir, Solomon, will indeed inherit his crown after his death.

1:1 King David had torn the edge of King Saul’s robe;<sup>9</sup> in order to atone for this display of disrespect for clothing, God caused King David not be we warmed by clothing in his old age. **King David was old, yet continued to deeply internalize his experiences.** He perceived the angel of death standing in Jerusalem, ready to take his life, and became cold with fright.<sup>10</sup> **Though they covered him with garments he did not become warm.** 2 His servants said to him, “Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin, for a virgin’s skin is warmer than that of a non-virgin. She will stand before the king to serve him and be his warmer; she will lie in your bosom and my lord, the king, will be warmed.” 3 They sought a beautiful girl throughout the borders of Israel and found Avishag the Shunamite, and brought her to the king. 4 The girl was most beautiful; she became the king’s attendant and served him, but the king was not intimate with her, in order that she remain a virgin, and because he already had eighteen wives, which is the maximum a king may have.<sup>11</sup>

5 In the meantime, King David’s son Adoniyahu son of Chagit exalted himself, saying, “I shall reign after my father David!” He maintained chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. He had their spleens removed to enable them to run faster, and the soles of their feet scraped to the bone so sharp objects would not hurt them, slowing them down.<sup>12</sup> 6 His father had never angered him by saying, “Why have you done this?” although he should have. He was also very handsome, like his brother Avshalom.<sup>13</sup> Because they were good-looking, Avshalom and Adoniyahu became conceited. He was David’s first son born after Avshalom, who was David’s firstborn. Both their mothers spoiled them. Because Avshalom had died, Adoniyahu was King David’s oldest living son.

7 His confidants were Yoav son of Tzeruya and Evyatar the priest. Yoav knew that since he had killed Avner son of Ner,<sup>14</sup> Amasa son of Yeter,<sup>15</sup> and David’s son Avshalom,<sup>16</sup> King David would eventually charge Solomon to exact retribution from him. He therefore

1:1 וְהַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד זָקֵן בָּא בַיָּמִים וַיִּכְסְהוּ  
בַבְּגָדִים וְלֹא יָחַם לוֹ: 2 וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ עַבְדָּיו  
וַיִּבְקְשׂוּ לְאֹדְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ נְעָרָה בְּתוּלָה וְעַמְדָּה  
לְפָנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְתַהֲיִלּוּ סִכְנֵת וְשִׁכְבָּה בְּחִיקוֹ  
וְחַם לְאֹדְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: 3 וַיִּבְקְשׂוּ נְעָרָה יָפָה בְּכָל  
גְּבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּמְצְאוּ אֶת אֲבִישָׁג הַשְּׁנַמִּית  
וַיָּבֵאוּ אֹתָהּ לְמֶלֶךְ: 4 וְהִנְעֶרָה יָפָה עַד־מָאֵד  
וְתַהֲיִ לְמֶלֶךְ סִכְנֵת וְתִשְׁרָתְהוּ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא  
יִדְעָה: 5 וַאֲדֹנִיָּה בֶן־חַגִּית מִתְנַשֵּׂא לֵאמֹר אֲנִי  
אֶמְלֹךְ וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ רֶכֶב וּפָרָשִׁים וְחַמְשִׁים אִישׁ  
רָצִים לְפָנָיו: 6 וְלֹא־עֲצָבוּ אָבִיו מִיָּמָיו לֵאמֹר  
מִדּוּעַ בָּכָה עֲשִׂיתָ וְנִסְתְּהוּא טוֹב־תֵּתֵאֶר מְאֹד  
וְאֹתוֹ יִלְדָה אַחֲרָי אֲבִשְׁלֹם: 7 וַיְהִי דְבָרָיו עִם  
יֹאָב בֶן־צְרוּיָה וְעִם אֲבִיתֵר הַכֹּהֵן וַיַּעֲזְרוּ אַחֲרָיו

8. Genesis 24:1. 9. 1 Samuel 24:5. 10. 1 Chronicles 21:30. 11. Deuteronomy 17:17. 12. *Sanhedrin* 21b. 13. 2 Samuel 14:25. 14. *Ibid.* 2:12-38. 15. *Ibid.* 20:4-13. 16. *Ibid.* 18:9-15.

thought that if he would help Adoniyahu become king, Adoniyahu would treat him well. Evyatar had retired from the high priesthood when David was fleeing from Avshalom.<sup>17</sup> He knew that he would not be reinstated were Solomon to reign after David, so he thought that if he would help Adoniyahu become king, he would reinstate him. Thus, **they supported and followed Adoniyahu.** 8 But Tzadok the priest; Binayahu son of Yehoyada, who was in charge of David's archers and slingers;<sup>18</sup> Nathan the prophet, who had prophesied that Solomon would be king after David;<sup>19</sup> Saul's relative Shimi;<sup>20</sup> Rei'i, i.e., David's friend Chushi the Arkite;<sup>21</sup> and David's warriors did not side with Adoniyahu. 9 Once Adoniyahu slaughtered sheep, cattle, and sheep and cattle that had been fattened by being force-fed at the lookout Stone of Zochelet ("Dragging," so named because young men would test their strength by trying to drag it) that was near Ein Rogel ("Well of the Foot," so named because people would wash their woolen clothes there by stamping on them). He invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants, 10 but he did not invite Nathan the Prophet, Binayahu son of Yehoyada, King David's warriors, or his brother Solomon, for he knew that Nathan had prophesied that Solomon would reign after David.

11 Nathan spoke to Batsheva, Solomon's mother, as follows: "Have you not heard that Adoniyahu son of Chagit has assumed the kingship? Yet our lord David does not know. 12 So come now and let me give you counsel, so that you will save your life and the life of your son Solomon from the rivalry that will occur after King David's death, when Solomon tries to become king. 13 Go and approach King David and say to him: 'My lord the king, did you not swear to your bondwoman, saying, "your son Solomon will reign after me and he will sit on my throne?" Why, then, has Adoniyahu assumed the kingship?' 14 While you are still speaking there with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words."

15 So Batsheva went in to the king in his chamber; the king was very old, and Avishag the Shunamite was serving the king. 16 Batsheva bowed and prostrated herself before the king, and the king said, "What is disturbing you?" 17 She said to him: "My lord, you swore to your bondwoman by God, your God: 'Solomon, your son, shall reign after me, and he will sit on my throne.'

אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ: 8 וְצָדוֹק הַכֹּהֵן וּבְנֵיהוּ בְּיְהוֹיָדָע וְנָתָן הַנָּבִיא וְשִׁמְעִי וְרֵעִי וְהַגְּבוּרִים אֲשֶׁר לְדָוִד לֹא הָיוּ עִם-אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ: 9 וַיִּזְבַּח אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ צֹאן וּבָקָר וּמְרִיא עִם אֶנָּן הַזֹּהֶלֶת אֲשֶׁר-אֵצֶל עֵין רֹגֵל וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-כָּל-אֶחָיו בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלִכְלֵ-אֲנָשָׁי יְהוּדָה עִבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: 10 וְאֶת-נָתָן הַנָּבִיא וּבְנֵיהוּ וְאֶת-הַגְּבוּרִים וְאֶת-שְׁלֹמֹה אֶחָיו לֹא קָרָא: 11 וַיֹּאמֶר נָתָן אֶל-בַּת-שֶׁבַע אִם-שְׁלֹמֹה לֹא-אָמַר הֲלוֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ כִּי מֶלֶךְ אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ בְּיָחִיָּית וְאֲדֹנִיָּנוּ דָוִד לֹא יָדַע: 12 וְעַתָּה לְכִי אִיעָנֶיךָ נָא עֲצֵה וּמְלִטִי אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ וְאֶת-נַפְשׁ בְּנֶךָ שְׁלֹמֹה: 13 לְכִי וּבְאִי אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד וְאָמַרְתְּ אֵלָיו הֲלוֹא-אָמַרְתָּ אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאִמְתְּךָ לֵאמֹר כִּי-שְׁלֹמֹה בְנֶךָ יִמְלֹךְ אַחֲרָי וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב עַל-כִּסְאִי וּמִדּוּעַ מֶלֶךְ אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ: 14 הֲנִיָּה עוֹרֵךְ מַדְבַּרְת שָׁם עִם-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֵנִי אָבוֹא אַחֲרָיִךְ וּמְלֹאֲתִי אֶת-דְּבָרֶיךָ: 15 וְתָבֵא בַת-שֶׁבַע אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחַדְרָה וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִקְוֶה מֵאֵד וְאֲבִישָׁג הַשְּׁנַמִּית מִשְׁרַת אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ: 16 וְתִקַּד בַּת-שֶׁבַע וְתִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה-לָּךְ: 17 וְתֹאמַר לוֹ אֲדֹנָי אֲתָה נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ בַּיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְאִמְתְּךָ כִּי-שְׁלֹמֹה בְנֶךָ יִמְלֹךְ אַחֲרָי וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב עַל-כִּסְאִי:

17. Ibid. 15:24; Yoma 73b; Sotah 48b. 18. Ibid. 8:18. 19. See 1 Chronicles 22:9. 20. 2 Samuel 19:17-24. 21. 2 Samuel 15:32, 37, 16:16-18, 17:6-16; Metzudat David.

18 But now, behold, Adoniyahu has assumed the kingship—and now, my lord the king does not know about it. 19 He has slaughtered oxen, fatted animals, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king’s sons, together with Evyatar the priest and Yoav the commander of the army—but he has not invited your servant Solomon. 20 As for you, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon you, to tell them who will sit upon the throne of my lord the king, after him. 21 Otherwise, when my lord the king is laid to rest with his forefathers, I and my son Solomon will be lacking the greatness that you desire we inherit.”

22 She was still speaking with the king when Nathan the Prophet arrived. 23 They told the king, “Here is Nathan the Prophet!” He came before the king, and prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. 24 Nathan said: “My lord the king, have you said, ‘Adoniyahu shall reign after me and shall sit on my throne?’ For he has gone down today from the city to the Stone of Zochelet and has slaughtered oxen, fatted animals, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king’s sons, the commanders of the army, and Evyatar the priest, and behold they are eating and drinking in his presence and proclaiming, ‘Long live King Adoniyahu!’ 26 But they did not invite me, your servant, or Tzadok the priest, Binayahu son of Yehoyada, or your servant Solomon. 27 If this decision was authorized by my lord, the king, would you not have informed your servant as to who should sit on the throne of my lord, the king, after him?”

28 King David answered by saying, “Summon Batsheva to me.” She entered the king’s presence and stood before the king. 29 The king swore, saying, “By the life of God, who redeemed my soul from every adversity: 30 Just as I have sworn to you by the God, God of Israel, that Solomon your son shall reign after me and will succeed to my throne, so, too, do I confirm this day.”

31 Batsheva thereupon bowed down with her face to the ground and prostrated herself before the king, and said, “May my lord, King David, live forever!”

18 וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה אֲדֹנִיָּה מֶלֶךְ וְעַתָּה אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 לֹא יָדָעָתָּ: 19 וַיִּזְבַּח שׁוֹר וּמְרִיא־זֵבָאן לָרֶבֶךְ  
 וַיִּקְרָא לְכָל־בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלְאַבְיָתָר הַכֹּהֵן וְלִיֹּאָב  
 שֵׁר הַצִּבָּא וְלִשְׁלֹמֹה עַבְדֶּךָ לֹא קָרָא: 20 וְאַתָּה  
 אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ עֵינֵי כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלֶיךָ לְהַגִּיד לָהֶם  
 מִי יֵשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא אֲדֹנִי־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲרָיו: 21 וְהִיא  
 כְּשֹׁכֵב אֲדֹנִי־הַמֶּלֶךְ עִם־אֲבֹתָיו וְהִיְתִי אֲנִי  
 וּבְנֵי שְׁלֹמֹה הַטָּאִים: 22 וְהִנֵּה עֹדְנָה מִדְּבַרְתָּ  
 עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנָתַן הַנְּבִיא בָּא: 23 וַיִּגִּידוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ  
 לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה הֵנָּה נָתַן הַנְּבִיא וַיִּבֹא לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־אָפְיוֹ אֲרָצָה: 24 וַיֹּאמֶר  
 נָתַן אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַתָּה אֲמַרְתָּ אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ יִמְלֹךְ  
 אַחֲרָי וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב עַל־כִּסְאִי: 25 כִּי יָרַד  
 הַיּוֹם וַיִּזְבַּח שׁוֹר וּמְרִיא־זֵבָאן לָרֶבֶךְ וַיִּקְרָא  
 לְכָל־בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלַשָּׂרֵי הַצִּבָּא וְלְאַבְיָתָר  
 הַכֹּהֵן וְהַנֶּהֱם אֲכָלִים וְשָׂתִים לִפְנֵי וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
 יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ: 26 וְלִי אֲנִי־עַבְדֶּךָ וְלַצֹּדֵק  
 הַכֹּהֵן וּלְבְנֵיהוּ בְּדִיהוּדָע וְלִשְׁלֹמֹה עַבְדֶּךָ לֹא  
 קָרָא: 27 אִם מֵאֵת אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ נִהְיָה הַדְּבַר  
 הַזֶּה וְלֹא הוֹדַעְתָּ אֶת־עַבְדֶּךָ (עַבְדֶּךָ) מִי יֵשֵׁב  
 עַל־כִּסֵּא אֲדֹנִי־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲרָיו: 28 וַיַּעַן הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 דָּוִד וַיֹּאמֶר קְרָאוּ־לִי לְבַת־שִׁבְעָה וְתָבֵא לִפְנֵי  
 הַמֶּלֶךְ וְתַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: 29 וַיִּשְׁבַּע הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 וַיֹּאמֶר חַי־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־פָּדָה אֶת־נַפְשִׁי מִכָּל־  
 צָרָה: 30 כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לָךְ בַּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר כִּי־שְׁלֹמֹה בְנִךְ יִמְלֹךְ אַחֲרָי  
 וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב עַל־כִּסְאִי תַחְתָּי כִּי כֵן אֲעִשֶׂה הַיּוֹם  
 הַזֶּה: 31 וְתִקַּד בַּת־שִׁבְעָה אַפָּיִם אֲרָץ וְהִשְׁתַּחוּ  
 לַמֶּלֶךְ וְהֹאמְרוּ יְחִי אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד לְעֹלָם:





*Dedicated in honor of our children*

**Nathan, Yitzchok,  
Moshe Lev,  
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways  
of our holy Torah*

**Yuri and Deana Pikover**

