



DIVREI MENACHEM

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To Whom Does the Legacy Belong?

In our Parsha, the Torah recalls that after Sarah's passing and Yitzchak's marriage to Rivka, Avraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah, who bore him six children.

But who is Keturah? And why did Avraham marry her in his old age at that particular time?

For Rashi, Keturah is Hagar, an Egyptian woman (Bereishit 25:12) and daughter of Pharaoh. She had been Sarah's handmaid and Avraham's concubine who, at Sarah's bidding, consorted with Avraham and gave birth to Yishmael. But also, at Sarah's bidding – and Hashem's instruction to Avraham to listen to his wife – was sent away on account of Yishmael's insolent attitude and her lack of deference to the barren Sarah.

Rashi, however, adds that the handmaid was called Keturah because her deeds were as sweet as incense (*Ketoret*). Furthermore, her name also means "closed," implying that Hagar did not give herself to any other man after her dismissal from Avraham's household.

Why, then, was a concubine who left in disgrace considered as sweet as incense?

The Midrash indicates that when the derisive concubine was abandoned with her son Yishmael in the desert, she was overwhelmed that an angel spoke with her. Moreover, she was led to a well, able to survive. At that point, Keturah did Teshuva and was clearly suitable to return to her former husband.

The timing of Avraham's reunion was interesting. Our rabbis taught that a widower should not remarry if he has grown, unmarried children (Bereshit Rabbah 60:16). But Avraham, it appears, was concerned with diligently observing the original command to humanity to "be fruitful and multiply" (ibid, 61:3). Consequently, he waited until Yitzchak brought Rivka into his mother Sarah's tent. Furthermore, Rashi indicates that it was Yitzchak who sought out Hagar and brought her back to his elderly father (Rashi, Bereishit, 24:62). What beautiful "*Kibbud Av Va 'em!*"

Later, we are told that Avraham gave *all* he had to Yitzchak – material items, blessings, and the legacy of his traditions (Bereishit 25:5-6). But even though the offspring of the union with the (sweet) Keturah were "blessed" to become chieftains of many nations, "*to the sons of his concubines [including Hagar-Keturah], whom Avraham had, Avraham gave gifts and sent them away from Yitzchak, his son*" (ibid. 6:6).

So much for the declarations of "Yishmael" that they, too, have a claim on our land!

Shabbat Shalom. ■ Menachem Persoff