

ALIYA BY ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA Israel Region

CHAYEI SARA

1ST ALIYA (23:1-16)

Sarah dies at age 127 in Kiryat Arba, Chevron. Avraham needs to buy a burial plot. He is treated with nobility and respect. The people want to give him a plot, while he insists on purchasing it. He is successful in buying Maarat Hamachpela.

Avraham is treated as royalty. The entire city has come to comfort him in Sarah's death. The people bow to him and he to them.

Avraham was given 3 promises in Lech Lecha when he was told to journey to the Land of Israel: fame, fortune and family. All have been granted. He clearly is famous. He has great wealth. And Yitzchak has been born.

The conspicuous exception is the 4th promise, repeated numerous times, that he would inherit the Land of Israel. He does not even have a place to bury Sarah. That promise has come up strikingly empty.

This creates a paradigm for the Jew. Promises require patience.

Avraham received promises. Some are granted to him quickly; he becomes wealthy and famous. The promise of family takes an agonizingly long time, 25 years.

But the biggest and most consequential, the promise of the Land of Israel? Well, both Sarah and he die with the promise unfulfilled.

Because some promises just take a long time. G-d's time is not our time. He promises us the Land, but it will take 400 years.

So too with the elegant prophecies in Tanach of our return to the Land, which we privileged ones see in our own time. Gardens will grow. The elderly will fill the streets. Our people will return to our Land. Those promises we see.

Rulers will rule with justice, altruism, the staff of honesty and righteousness. You will be a light unto the nations. Those we have not yet seen in their entirety. Those prophecies require patience. We hope not 400 years.

2ND ALIYA (23:17-24:9)

Sarah is buried. Avraham requests from his chief of staff to swear to not have Yitzchak marry a Canaanite. Rather, "go to my land, my birthplace" to find a wife for Yitzchak. Do not take Yitzchak there. If she refuses to come, you have done all you can.

These are the last words of Avraham in the Torah. Though he will live many more years, we do not hear another word from him.

And as such, it serves as a poetic bookend. The first thing said by G-d to him: go from your land, your birthplace. And the last thing said by Avraham to his servant: go to my land, my birthplace to find a wife for Yitzchak.

The story of succession, of the pursuit of a wife for Yitzchak invites two broad questions.

Why is Avraham insistent that Yitzchak not leave the Land of Israel? And why does the story of finding Rivka occupy a full 67 verses? That is a long story.

Sefer Breishit is built on two radical notions: that the Jewish people are a family and that the Land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people, the place to build our nation.

Religion is classically a system of beliefs, of contact of G-d and man. Yet, and I refer to this as radical, our Torah begins not with introducing the beliefs that our religion is rooted in, but rather the family and the place.

If religion is a system of beliefs, well, declare yourself as a believer in that system and you are one of that religion. We do of course accept converts, people not of our family. I am privileged to run a course of study for those converting.

Yet, our Torah begins with the promises to Avraham of a family. And that his family will settle in and control the Land of Israel. Jews are defined as those who are part of Avraham's family.

Religion should not be passed by blood; it should be an assertion of beliefs, open to all.

These two pillar notions, of our Land and of our family occupy the entirety of our parsha. Yitzchak is not to leave our Land. And the pursuit of his wife, the one who will build the next generation of our family is really important. It is 67 verses important.

These two pillar notions are under attack in our time. And befuddling. How can you read the parsha without concluding that our religion is a family, descendants of Avraham? Now, why does the Torah go to such great lengths to emphasize our familial ties?

Perhaps to teach that we should view our entire Jewish people as our family. You treat your family differently. Family makes demands on us. Demands of concern, care, generosity, bonds. We care for each other, are concerned for each and are generous to each other in the way that we treat family. Being Jewish means we care for each other, as we care for our family.

And the emphasis on the Land of Israel as our place is also under attack in our time. Also befuddling. How can you read our parsha and all of Breishit, in fact, all of the Torah, without concluding that our religion is to be played out in our Land, an aspiration of the entire Torah?

This insistence on a Land is perhaps our role in teaching ethical monotheism to the world. Not in proselytizing, in converting others to be Jewish, asserting that Judaism is the only way to serve G-d. No. Rather, in creating the exemplary society, as an example of ethical monotheism. For others to see and emulate. A light unto the nations by building the exemplary nation. In our Land.



3RD ALIYA (24:10-26)

The servant arrives in Nachor's city. He asks G-d for a sign; the woman who gives me and my camels to drink, she is the one. Rivka appears and does just that. She tells him she is from the family of Nachor. And there is food for the camels and room for him to stay. The man bows to G-d.

Rivka is the rightful heir to Sarah's legacy, exemplary in kindness. In the story of Avraham and Sarah's generosity to the 3

men at the beginning of Vayera, there are 2 "*ratz* – run" and 2 "*maher* – fast"; they served their guests enthusiastically. Rivka has 2 *maher's* and 1 *ratz* here and then another when she runs home. Enthusiastic generosity.

And – Avraham offered his guests "a little water". Here too the servant asks for "a little water". Not sure that drawing water for 10 camels would be called a little – a camel can drink up to 100 liters. And she is drawing the water with the jug that she carries on her shoulder. That is a lot of water drawing.

But nary a peep of objection from Rivka. She is an enthusiastic and magnanimous woman of enormous generosity, just like the family of Avraham.



4TH ALIYA (24:27-52)

Rivka runs to tell her mother. Her brother Lavan greets the man, welcomes him in. But before he eats, the man insists on relating what just happened. He relates that he is Avraham's servant. And that Avraham has been blessed. And is insistent on bringing a wife for Yitzchak from his family. And of his own deal with G-d: that if the woman did as he had said, he would see it as a sign. And his bowing to G-d. He finishes by asking them if Rivka shall join him. They respond yes; he bows to G-d.

This long narrative has many lessons. But one thing does jump out: the G-d talk. There is a lot of G-d talk by this servant. But not just the servant; Lavan and Betuel respond "this has come from G-d", "she will go as G-d spoke".

Perhaps this is another reason for this very long recounting of the story. Rivka is stepping into a story of Divine partnership. She is stepping into the Jewish story. The Jewish story is the story of walking as partners with G-d, guided by Him. She has to know this. And want it.



5TH ALIYA (24:53-67)

The servant is ready to leave. When Rivka's mother and brother ask for a little more time, the servant presses them. They ask Rivka her wish; she will go. They bless her. Upon their arrival in the Negev, Yitzchak is coming from Beer L'chai Roi. He sees the camels; she sees him. Yitzchak is told of all that occurred. Yitzchak and Rivka marry.

With the mission to find a wife for Yitzchak successful, someone is missing from this return: Avraham. They travel right to Yitzchak. Rivka and he marry. And Avraham is not heard from again. A true passing of the baton.

Why is it necessary to tell us Yitzchak was in Beer L'chai Roi? In fact, he returns there and resides there after Avraham's death. Why?

That is the place where Yishmael was saved from near death after being banished by Sarah and the place in which Yishmael settles. Perhaps Yitzchak regrets Yishmael's banishment and seeks to make peace with his brother. We will see that he does the same later with his own sons; he seems to want both Yaakov and Esav to continue his legacy.

Yitzchak is the reconciler, the includer.

The men seem to want reconciliation; the women see the need to exclude when excluding is necessary. Sarah banishes Yishmael. Rivka banishes Esav.

Yet, Avraham is reluctant to send Yishmael away and Yitzchak seeks reconciliation with Yishmael and seeks to bless Esav.

The women prevail. The Torah sides with the women; Yitzchak and not Yishmael, Yaakov and not Esav are the forefathers, the bearers of the legacy of Avraham.



6TH ALIYA (25:1-11)

Avraham marries Keturah; they have 6 sons. All that Avraham has he gives to Yitzchak; these are sent eastward with gifts. Avraham dies at age 175; he is buried by Yitzchak and Yishmael in Maarat Hamachpelah. Yitzchak is blessed by G-d: he lives in Beer L'chai Roi.

The transition from Avraham to Yitzchak is complete. While G-d has been a silent partner in this parsha, here He completes the generational transfer – He blesses Yitzchak. The Divine blessing is given to Yitzchak and not Yishmael; Yitzchak will carry on the Jewish venture.



7TH ALIYA (25:12-18)

The generations of Yishmael are enumerated. Yishmael dies. His progeny dwell from Egypt to Assyria.

Yishmael's story is brief. He has numerous and powerful offspring. But the genealogy here is intriguing. The last aliya last week enumerated Nachor's children: 12. This last aliya this week enumerates Yishmael's children: 12. In a few weeks we will enumerate Yaakov's. 12.

Perhaps, this nags at Yaakov. Why am I following in the footsteps of those excluded from the Jewish people? Nachor had 12 children and was excluded from the Jewish people. Yishmael had 12 children and was excluded from the Jewish people. I have 12. Shall I choose just one, Yosef, and exclude the others, so I won't be amongst the excluded?

HAFTORAH
1 MELACHIM 1: 1-31

The theme of this week's *haftorah* echoes the theme in our parsha which mentions both the death of Sarah and Avraham.

King David was an older man and a woman was assigned to him to serve him and provide warmth.

Adoniyahu, one of King David's sons, began to prepare for ascension to his father's throne. This was despite the fact that King David expressed his wishes that his son Shlomo succeed him.

Adoniyahu convinces two very significant personalities - the High Priest and the commander of King David's armies - to champion his cause.

Adoniyahu arranged to be transported in a chariot with fifty people running before him. He then invited supporters to a festive party to promote his aspirations to attain the royalty.

At this time Natan communicates with Batsheva, mother of Shlomo, and conveys to her the importance of approaching King David and pleading with him that he articulate his choice of Shlomo to be the next king.

King David responds positively to this request. He says the following: "Indeed, as I swore to you by the Lord God of Israel saying, 'Surely Shlomo, your son, shall reign after me and he shall sit on my throne in my stead, surely, so will I swear this day." ■

רפואה שלמה מהרה
לליעם יעקב ניסן בן אורה

STATS

5th of the 54 sedras; 5th of 12 in Bereishit.
Written on 171 lines in a Torah, rank 37.
4 Parshiyot; 3 open, 1 closed.
105 pesukim - ranks 32 (11 in Bereishit).
1402 words - ranks 37th (11 in Bereishit).
5314 letters - ranks 36th (11 in Bereishit).

MITZVOT

None of the 613 mitzvot are in Chayei Sara, however, as we mention often, there are Midot and values and other lessons to be learned. This is one of 17 mitzvah-less sedras, 9 of which are in Sefer B'reishit, 3 in Sh'mot, none in Vayikra, 2 in Bamidbar, and 3 in Devarim.

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A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES
Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

ה' אלקי השמים אשר לקחני מבית אבי (כד:ז)

"The Lord, G-d of **heaven**, who took me from my father's house"

Why is it that Avraham describes G-d, when taken out from his father's home in his youth only as "G-d of **heaven",** while Avraham describes G-d during his later years as "G-d of **heaven and the G-d of the earth"** (24:3)?

Rashi explains that at the time of Avraham's youth, the people of the world did not yet recognize G-d as the Ruler of the world, thereby limiting the scope to being just G-d of heaven.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986, Minsk, Russia- N.Y., U.S.A) questions this explanation, mentioning that the Beit Midrash of Shem and Ever existed according to the Rabbis and therefore there were people on this earth who already acknowledge G-d's reign on the world. Furthermore, even if one claims that there were those with Avraham's family in Charan who recognized G-d as Master of the world, they constituted only a fraction of the world's population so why would their belief change the reference to G-d as the G-d of the earth?

He answers that before Avraham time, any person who had a quest to understand the workings of the world had to seek someone else to educate him in recognizing a higher authority. If he was fortuitous, he would locate Shem and Ever and he would receive the correct response. However, Avraham took it upon himself to teach everyone he met about the uniqueness of G-d. Avraham traveled the length and breadth of the ancient cradle of civilization. At this time, even though Avraham's family was few, yet his teachings about G-d became well known. It is then that reference to G-d becomes known both as G-d of the heavens and G-d of the earth. - Shabbat Shalom