

# Shabbat Chaye Sarah

## October 30, 2010

### 22 Cheshvan 5771

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## News

### BAR AND BATH-MITZVA IN BEER SHEVA



Last week I had the privilege to write about the Bar (boy) and Bath (girl) Mitzva we celebrated in Beer Sheva, but unfortunately I had no pictures about it, today I am happy to publish some pictures of the happy young people with their pastor/rabbi.



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### EFFICIENT WITNESSING

Rabbi Packouz shared in his last e-mail some ideas on how to witness to our Jewish neighbors. He invites us to share what excites and inspires us about the Torah.

- Show them the wisdom that Torah principles bring to relationships.
- Love your neighbor and be a friend. Call, send a gift or go out for a drink!
- Use books, tapes, CD's and more to encourage them to read and discover.
- Invite them to experience Shabbat with your family, or connect them with a family who can.
- Introduce them to inspirational web sites, downloads, films and articles.

### CHANUKAH IS COMING SOON

Every year, when Christians are going to celebrate Christmas, Jews remember the dedication of the temple and celebrate Chanukah. This feast occurs on the 25th of Kislev. This month is always in November-December, but never on a fix date, due to the Jewish lunar month. This year Chanukah will be from December 2 to 9.

The feast of Chanukah is not a major feast. This celebration was not fixed in the Torah by Moses, but much later, in the second century before the current era by the rabbis of Israel. However, Yeshua gave some importance to this celebration and came to Jerusalem with his talmidim (John 10:22).

What are you going to organize in your congregation for this special time?

In Israel we will have a week of prayer, we will invite our Jewish friends and we will light the candles with joy to remember all miracles G-d has performed for his people.



## OVERVIEW

### CHAYE SARAH - חיי שרה GENESIS 23:1-25:18

**S**arah, Mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum.

Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avrahams family.

Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of his thirsty camels. (Some 636 liters or 140 gallons!) This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable Mother of the Jewish People.

Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother Lavan result in her leaving with Eliezer.

Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sarah's tent, marries her and loves her. He is then consoled for the loss of his mother.

Avraham remarries Hagar who is renamed Ketura to indicate her improved ways. Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East.

Avraham passes away at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela.

### SARAH' DEATH

**R**ather than simply stating that Sara our Matriarch died at the age of 127, the Torah says that Sarah lived 100 years and 20 years and 7 years. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik explains further that the greatness of Sarah can be culled from the words of Rashi: "The years of Sarah's lifetime: all were equal for the good." [Rashi 23:1] She was 100, she was 20, she was 7. Most people pass from one stage of their lives to the next, leaving the previous stage behind, perhaps taking with them some fond memories. Each one of these ages — 100, 20, 7 — has something unique about it.

The 7-year-old has innocence; the 20-year-old has strength; the 100-year-old has wisdom. The secret of the greatness of Sarah was that throughout her entire life she was 100 and 20 and 7.

### PUTTING LIFE IN ITS PROPER PERSPECTIVE

**T**he Torah states, "Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hebron in the land of Canaan. And Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and bewail her." (Genesis 23:2)

Rabbi Yitzhak Karo in his work, Toldot Yitzhak, explains that the account of Sarah's death is placed between Rivka's birth and Yitzhak's marriage to remind us that even on such joyous occasions as a birth or a wedding, one must still remember the day of death. It is the day of death which puts life in its proper perspective. Thus we break a glass at a wedding, in part, to temper our joy with a reminder of the fragility of life and our ultimate mortality (see Talmud – Brachot 31a).

### HAGAR'S JEWISH BIOGRAPHY

**R**abbi Simeon ben Yohai said: "Hagar was Pharaoh's daughter. When Pharaoh saw what was done on Sarah's behalf in his own house, he took his daughter and gave her to Sarah, saying, 'Better let my daughter be a handmaid in this house than a mistress in another house'" [Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 45:1]

Rabbi Ari Kahn from the Aish center says, Hagar was royalty. She was an aristocrat. When it became apparent to Sarah that she would be unable to bear children, she saw Hagar as an appropriate partner for Abraham, one with the most illustrious lineage that she could find. A lesser woman than Sarah might have been afraid to bring in such "competition," but Sarah hoped that if Abraham was to have a child, that child must be the greatest child possible. As chapter 16 of the Book of Genesis relates, in an act of complete self-sacrifice, Sarah invites the beautiful Egyptian princess to become a partner with her husband.

Hagar, who had been the primary disciple of Sarah, becomes pregnant and bears a child. As a result, she concludes that God has now chosen her over Sarah and that Sarah is an unworthy partner

for Abraham. She begins to conduct herself as the wife. The Midrash paints the picture:

Hagar would tell (other women): “My mistress Sarah is not inwardly what she is outwardly; she appears to be a righteous woman, but she is not. For had she been a righteous woman, (she would have conceived) see how many years have passed without her conceiving, whereas I conceived in one night.” [Midrash Rabbah 45:4] One can understand, and perhaps even sympathize with the position of Hagar. She believed that she was born to lead, but that the search for truth had led her away from her father’s pagan world. Abraham’s genius enraptured her, and she came to believe that it was better for her to serve in that house than to rule Egypt. But now she was given the opportunity to rule in Abraham’s house; she believed that she had received a divine sign that she, who was born to be queen, would indeed be the queen - of Abraham’s nascent movement. Hagar’s mistake was in assuming that Abraham alone led the people, that he alone was a spiritual giant. What she failed to recognize was that it was a partnership, the combination of Abraham and Sarah, which was the basis for the great spiritual movement she herself had become a part of.

### ACT OF CHESED (LOVE)

**T**he story of Eliezer’s search for Isaac’s bride is the longest personal story in the entire Torah. The Midrash comments on this atypical generosity with words: “The conversation of the servants of the patriarchs is more beautiful than the Torah Laws that apply to their children, for the story of Eliezer fills between two and three folios in the Torah scroll, while the laws of Tamey [ritual uncleanness] attached to dead insects are deduced entirely from extra letters.” (Yalkut, Chaye Sarah, 109)

Avraham asked his trustworthy servant, Eliezer, to find a wife for Isaac. Eliezer journeys to Aram Naharayim, taking ten camels with him. Upon approaching the town, he neared a well and prayed to God:

“Let it come to pass that the maiden to whom I shall say: ‘Incline your pitcher that I may drink,’ and she shall say, ‘Drink and I will give your camels to drink also,’ she you have appointed for your servant,

for Isaac; and thereby shall I know that you have shown kindness to my master” (Gen. 24:14).

Eliezer, the devoted servant of Avraham, had learned from his great master to appreciate the profound significance of helping others. *Chesed* is not merely a kind act, but a manifestation of one’s belief in God. Doing *chesed* is an act of emulating Him whose kindness is without bounds.

Eliezer realized that the woman who would be deemed worthy of becoming a mother of the Jewish people must be the paragon of *chesed*. He therefore fashioned an appropriate test for determining the bride of Isaac to find someone who loved to do *chesed*, to help others and try to save them from bother under all circumstances.

And what happened? Rivka ran of her own volition to water the ten thirsty camels - an act which she was not even asked to perform. This act of *chesed* indicated that she was worthy of being Avraham’s daughter-in-law. Remember to look for kindness in choosing a spouse!

### HOLY WEDDING

**T**he Canaanites were idolaters, and the Lord had commanded that His people should not intermarry with them, lest they should be led into idolatry. Abraham was old, and he expected soon to die. Isaac was yet unmarried. Abraham was afraid of the corrupting influence surrounding his son, and was anxious to have a wife selected for him who would not lead him from God

This important matter was not left with Isaac, for him to select [a wife] for himself, independent of his father. Abraham tells his servant that God will send His angel before him to direct him in his choice.

Isaac was highly honored by God in being made inheritor of the promises through which the world was to be blessed; yet when he was forty years of age he submitted to his father’s judgment in appointing his experienced, God-fearing servant to choose a wife for him. And the result of that marriage, as presented in the Scriptures, is a tender and beautiful picture of domestic happiness: “Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.” (PP 175).

## SARAH LIVED A FULL 127 YEARS

When Rabbi Akiva saw his students dozing off during a lecture, he awoke them by asking, "What did Esther contemplate that caused her to rule 127 provinces? He answered that she had reflected on the life of Sarah, who lived 127 years" (Midrash - Berieshit Rabba 58:3). Sarah lived a full 127 years, each moment utilized to the fullest. Her life furnished Esther with the model she needed to reach her full potential. The same consideration, Rabbi Akiva implied to his students, should lead them to remain attentive and not slumber during their learning

## GOOD NEWS

Rabbi Shaul said "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom 8:28), here is an illustration of this principle.

The elderly man sitting in the dentist's chair began to cough uncontrollably and to gasp for breath. The dentist was in shock as he realized that the cause of his patient's agony was a tooth implant that had slipped from his hand into the man's throat.

Without delay the dentist took him into his car and sped to the nearest hospital, fearful for the life of his patient and concerned about the malpractice suit threatened by the man's two sons who had accompanied him on his visit to the dentist.

As the dentist and the sons nervously waited outside the surgery room they noticed that there was an unusual amount of activity, with doctors running in and out. Only when the operation was successfully completed with the removal of the errant tooth did they discover what had taken place.

When the operating doctor made an X-ray of the throat in order to determine the tooth's exact location he noticed a cancerous growth. It was decided to immediately remove it and this caused the flurry of activity. The good news was that the dangerous growth was totally removed in time and could have been life-threatening if not for the search for the tooth.

## LIFE HAS A DESTINATION

A beachcomber once went down to the shore at the break of dawn, carrying an empty sack over his shoulder. For hours, he picked through the flotsam and jetsam that had washed up onto the beach, filling his sack with pretty seashells and anything else of value he could find. The sun beat down on him mercilessly, but he continued to work. By early afternoon, his sack was full. He was thoroughly exhausted but satisfied.

As he set off for home, he met a newly-arrived beachcomber carrying an empty sack. The newcomer looked at the first beachcomber and sneered.

"Look at you!" he said. "Your face is red. Your hair is matted. Your clothes are soaked with sweat. You are bent over like an old man. And look at me! I am fresh as a cucumber. Would not you love to exchange places with me?"

"Are you kidding?" The first beachcomber replied. "Didn't you notice the full sack on my shoulder? If I changed places with you, I would have to start all over again filling that empty sack of yours. How would I be better off?"

This is the Torah's perspective. Life has a destination and goals, things to be accomplished, growth to be achieved.

## HAFTARAH 1Kings 1: 1-31

**O**verview 1:1-3 King David is now very old and always cold, it is difficult for him to warm himself. That is why the Haftarah of this week begins with the story of King David being warmed by a beautiful young woman named Avishag. Avishag was employed

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just to keep him warm and did not become his wife. This young woman is presented as being a Shunammite, that means from the city of Shunem, the very same origin of the widow Elisha will minister and resurrect her son later (cf. Haftara of last week or 2 Kings 4). A tradition says that they are the same lady, young and old, but this could be difficult since the death of David was approximately on 965-967BC and Elisha ministry was on 847BC.

**1:4-9** One of King David's sons Adoniyahu proclaims himself king.

**1:10** However Solomon, Adoniyahu's younger brother was to become the next king of Israel.

**1:11** One of the wives of King David, Queen Bathsheva, mother of Solomon, and the Prophet Nathan, talk together regarding Adoniyahu's will to become king. They decide to report this matter to King David's attention.

**1:12-16** Nathan confirms to David the news that Bathsheva has told King David about his son Adoniyahu having seized the throne from David.

**1:17-21** Bathsheva pleads with David to fulfill his promise of her son Solomon becoming the next king of Israel.

**1:22-27** The prophet Nathan confirms again her words.

**1:28-31** King David promises Bathsheva to rectify the situation. He takes action by instating Solomon as the next King of Israel.

**PARASHA:** Abraham is getting old, he prepare his succession as "Patriarch and Chief of the Hebrew Clan" by getting a wife, Rivka, for his son Itzhak.

**HAFTARAH:** David is getting old. He prepare his succession on the throne of Israel and stop Adonijah's plan to become king. To avoid any difficulty he decide to put his son Solomon on the throne of Israel before his death..

## BRIT HACHADASHA

### Gal 4:22-31

**T**his Text, written by Rabbi Shaul to the believers living in ancient Galatia, the "Galatians", in the highlands of central Anatolia (in modern Turkey), is a text which is not easy for the Jewish people. Indeed, in this text Hagar is compared to Israel and Sarah to the new believers in Yeshua. Difficult text although because Jews have always considered Sarah as their mother, and Hagar the mother of Arabs tribes. We don't have too much space to explain this text in depth but the key to understanding this text is in the quotation Shaul gives from the Tanach (Gal 4:27). His quotation

is from Isaiah 54:1 "Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband, says the LORD". This metaphor is drawn from the story of Abraham and his two wives Sarah and Hagar. Hagar is the "desolate" women (divorced) and Sarah the one who "has a husband". The desolate woman has been sent away by Abraham, However he continues to love her, Abraham did not send away Hagar because of any dislike, but really because Sarah asked him to send her away. And in the text of Isaiah the relationships between Abraham, Sarah and Hagar became a metaphor to illustrate the relationships between God and his peoples Israel and the Church. Israel is the married wife who is now divorced (Hagar). The Church is the wife who "has a husband" (Sarah). However according to Isaiah, God continues to love his desolated wife "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back." (Is 54:7) Exactly like in the real story, Abraham continued to love his wife Hagar and according to the Jewish tradition after the death of Sarah he called her and remarried her and gave her a new name, Keturah. According to the text of our Parasha she had more children than the married woman (Gen 25:1, 4; Is 54:1). Then if we come back to Shaul's interpretation we agree that Hagar is the desolate women and represent Israel, but according to the text of Isaiah, God continues to love the desolate woman (Israel) and want to take her back. The text of Galatians 4 and the text of Isaiah are in fact very encouraging for the Jewish people who have been desolated but are still loved by God. He wants to take them back. The encouraging promise God gives to Israel, His people is "So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,' says the LORD, who has compassion on you." (Is 54:9b-10)

