

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 24 Cheshvan 5786, corresponding to November 15, 2025.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 80 Hz) (p. 118 S) (p. 110 Hi) (p. 106 AS)
CHAYEI SARAH חיי שרה
Genesis 23:1
Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED)

1. "Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry for her." (23:2). The commentators are perplexed as to where did Avraham come from to eulogize her. After the Akeidah in Yerushalayim, he went to Be'er Sheva and he came from there to Chevron where Sarah died. But what was she doing in Chevron? Maybe she went looking for Avraham and Yitzchak. Or the Midrash states that Hashem had brought her there to die because she was to be buried there. The eulogy was about her life. Born in an idolatrous house. Her grandfather (Terach) made and sold idols to the public. Yet she rejected the beliefs of her house. She educated her son in the way she (and her husband) believed. (Oznaim LaTorah). A eulogy is supposed to evoke tears. And Avraham cried a little bit in public. (Baal HaTurim). His loss was great but he kept most of his tears and sadness to himself.

2. Even though Hashem had promised him the Land of Canaan, Avraham felt the need to purchase a portion of the land to help secure recognized rights to the land. Scripture records that Yaakov bought land in the area of Shechem. And King David bought Yerushalayim and specifically the area of the Temple Mount from the Yevusim. The Midrash points out that historically these three cities will become contested hot spots between the Jews and their neighbors. Even in the modern period, this statement has become the reality. [RED's note: Years ago I went to daven Minchah at the Patriarchs' graves, the area which Avraham purchased. A lightbulb went out by Yitzchak's tomb and a fight broke out between Jews and Arabs about who was to change the lightbulb. The Israeli army intervened to keep the peace and decided to allow the Arabs to do it. I asked the Israeli lieutenant what the fuss was about. He explained to me that the one who changed the bulb is a sign that he owned the property. So then, why give it to the Arabs? Because, he said, Arabs would go to war over this question.]

3. In the beginning of chapter 24, when Avraham is going to send his trusted foreman Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak, the Torah says that was old, well on in years. Perhaps that was the reason Avraham could not do it himself. But 40 years ago, when Avraham and Sarah were about to conceive their only son, the Torah also said that "Avraham and Sarah were old, well on in years..." (18:11). And they were physically able to do what was necessary. It seems that aging is a gradual

process. Scientists today tell us that a man hits his physical best at age 27. After that he will begin his decline. I can attest to the gradual but definite decline that defines the body's inability to perform as well as he used to. Avraham is not at his best to be as active as he once was, but he was able to father another six sons in his advanced years.

4. There is a Midrash that I find to be a major exaggeration: that Rivkah was three years old when she married Yitzchak. It is highly unlikely that a three year old could draw water from a well and give camels water to drink. But now comes the challenging part. If I reject the Midrash as the truth, then I need to figure out what message our Sages are telling us with their story. When a little girl is under three years of age, she will not learn and absorb anything from her surroundings. Rivkah was a pure young lady, not at all influenced by the idolatrous family life. She didn't absorb the bad character traits from her brother or father. This is a valuable message that our Sages were telling us about the next matriarch. She is a worthy bride for Yitzchak, for she is honest and a good candidate to absorb Abraham's teaching and way of life.

5. An unbreakable law in Abraham's house was that his sons were not to marry a Canaanite woman. Not just because they were idolatrous. Abraham's family was completely idolatrous. The Chizkuni states that a Canaanite woman has parents living nearby. And her family would claim to own part of the Promised Land, because of their daughter's status in Abraham's family. Being from a country far removed from Canaan would cut her ties with them and render her more willing to accept Avraham's teachings. Avraham's monotheistic beliefs were a true break from the current beliefs in the entire region, if not the entire world, at that time. Radical, to say the least. This life requires a strong belief in something that you cannot touch or see. A unique system of Emunah, faith, that we take for granted.

6. At the end of the Parshah, Avraham's new wife and new life are a great deal different from the one with Sarah. None of his new sons are disciples of his way of life. The Patriarchal home has disappeared. Avraham is well and healthy. He lives to see the birth and early life of his grandsons, Yaakov and Esav. But we don't see him as a player in Yitzchak's home. When Yaakov is cooking lentil soup, we are told that it was for the family of mourners returning from Avraham's funeral. Leadership of the family had been successfully transmitted to Yitzchak. All the converts and followers of Avraham and Sarah have gone in different directions. The house of Avraham has collapsed, leaving the small family isolated and separate from the world around them, just as when Avraham started out, years ago.

7. When Avraham died, Yishmael had resurfaced and accompanied his younger brother Yitzchak at the funeral. Rashi commented that Yishmael had repented from his bad traits. In the Midrash, when Yishmael left with his mother, he began his own family. Years later, Avraham travelled to visit Yishmael, with Sarah's permission. Twice. Neither time was Avraham successful in seeing Yishmael, but Yishmael was aware of his father's visit. So the ties between father and son were not completely severed. They continued and set the stage for Yishmael to return. Although the Torah narrative does not include this story, the Torah itself leaves the door open, just by the fact recorded in the Torah that Yishmael was there at the funeral.

8. MIDRASH. Satan appeared to Sarah as her son Yitzchak. She said to him: My son, what has your father done to you? Satan, as Yitzchak, responded: He built an altar ...bound me...and took the knife to slaughter me. Before Satan could finish, her soul left her. End of Midrash. Why did Satan treat her that way. If it was her time to die, do it. Why make her miserable? Perhaps to distract her...

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH 5786

I. From the Text

1. Name the three people who died in this Parshah and the age in which they died? (23:1, 25:7, 25:17)
2. As Avraham got older, what special mission did he ask Eliezer to undertake? (24:3,4)
3. What character trait was Eliezer looking for when he searched for a wife for Yitzchak? (24:14)
4. What was Yitzchak doing when Rivkah met him? (24:63)
5. Who buried Avraham? (25:9)

II. From Rashi

6. From where does Kiryat Arba derive its name? (23:2)
7. Why is the death of Sarah written right after the Akeidat Yitzchak ? (23:2)
8. In the event Eliezer could not find a wife for Yitzchak from the house of Betuel, where else could he go? (24:8)
9. Who else did Eliezer want Yitzchak to marry? (24:39)
10. What three miracles reappeared after Yitzchak brought Rivkah into his tent? (24:67)

III. From the Rabbis

11. Why did Avraham not want Yitzchak to leave Eretz Yisrael (even to obtain a wife)? (Chizkuni)
12. In what language did Eliezer speak to the family in Aram? (Chizkuni)
13. Why did Avraham not consider marrying Yitzchak to one of the converts he created? (Oznaim LaTorah)

IV. Midrash

14. Why were Avraham's camels muzzled?

V. Haftorah

15. Which of King David's sons rebelled and had himself crowned king while King David was still alive?

VI. Relationships

- 16.
- a) Adah - Amalek
- b) Bilhah - Naphtali
- c) Amram - Uziel
- d) Eliav - Danan
- e) Moshe - Elazar

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH 5786

1. Sarah (127), Avraham (175), Yishmael (137).
2. To seek a wife for Yitzchak.
3. Kindness
4. Strolling in the field. (Rashi: he was praying.)
5. Yitzchak and Yishmael
6. 1) Four giants who lived there. 2) Four Jewish couples who were buried there.
7. Since she died as a result upon hearing the news of the Akeidah.
8. To the family of Aner, Eshkol, or Mamrei.
9. Eliezer's daughter
10. A cloud hovering over the tent, an abundance in the dough, a lit candle from Friday to Friday.
11. Since Yitzchak was offered as a sacrifice to Hashem, he should not leave Eretz Yisrael. He is holy.
12. In Hebrew
13. Because their faith was not strong.
14. So that they could not graze in other people's fields.
15. Adoniyahu
- 16.
- a) Grandmother Adah
- b) Mother Bilhah
- c) Brothers
- d) Father Eliav
- e) Uncle Moshe