SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 27 Cheshvan 5787, corresponding to November 7, 2026.

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. The Midrash cites three places in TaNaCh where 3 three Binlical leaders purchased parts of Eretz Yisrael. The first was Avraham who purchased the Cave of Machpeilah in Chevron as a burial plot for him and his relatives. He paid Ephron the Hittites 400 solid shekels, top dollar, no haggling. The second was Yaakov who purchased part of Shechem for 100 pieces of money, top dollar, no haggling. The third case was King David who purchased Mt. Moriah in Yerushalayim from a Jebusite, also top dollar, no haggling. The Midrash was pointing us and challenging us to think about these sales. These three places would become violent hotspots in our long history, necessitating us to fight for our rightful ownership of these places, even in the modern historical period.
[RED's note: Decades ago, I went to the Cave in Chevron to daven Minchah at the place of Yitzchak's burial spot. All went well until a lightbulb burnt out. A fight erupted between the Jews and the Arabs as to who should change the bulb. The Israeli army was summoned to regain order and peace. The Israeli lieutenant allowed the Arabs to do it. I asked the Israeli officer what the skirmish was all about. He explained to me that changing a bulb is usually done by the owner of the house. And that was what the fight was really all about. He said he let the Arabs do it because had he decided otherwise, there definitely would be bloodshed.]

2. When Avraham requested his trusted servant Eliezer to travel to Charan to find a wife for Yitzchak, he made Eliezer take an oath by placing his hand under Avraham's thigh, symbolically to place his hand on something holy. We see this action in the modern period in every American courtroom when a witness places his hand on a Bible and answers the bailiff saying "Do you solemnly swear…". Yosef swore to his father to bury him in the patriarchal burial plot in Israel. Had he not taken an oath, Pharaoh would probably not have given Yosef the permission to fulfill the request. In Halachic reality, your word should be enough, but in ancient times and in the modern period, more is required.

3. And Hashem blessed Avraham BAKOL, with everything. What is everything? Enter the rabbis of the Mishnaic period. R. Meir said it meant that he had a son, and no daughter. R. Yehudah said that he did have a daughter and her name was BaKol. Perplexing is R. Meir. Why is not having a daughter a blessing? In those days, the woman, upon marriage, would move from her father's home to her new husband's home. Considering that in those days, all the other homes were filled with idol worship, having a daughter would mean that you would lose your daughter. Hence R. Meir makes sense. The Ramban felt it meant that Avraham was blessed with wealth, honor, long life, and inner completion. Another interpretation was that Avraham would see that Yishmael repented and that he and Yitzchak became reconciled.

4. Probably a neon sign was placed in Avraham's tent: Do not marry a Canaanite woman! I do jest but this was a concerned rule to that effect in the patriarchal family. The first thought that comes to mind is that all the Canaanites were idol worshippers, and that would defeat all that Avraham and Sarah stood for. But the second thought that comes to mind is that all of Avraham's relatives were idol worshippers as well. So we need a new path to ponder. The Chizkuni (13th century Rabbinic leader) offers the following idea: The local Canaanites were available to see their daughters marry into Avraham's family. Doing so would allow the parents to have a claim in possessing parts of Eretz Yisrael through their future grandchildren, which they would share with Avraham. Such a situation would be unacceptable to the Jewish Patriarchal family.

5. There is a Midrash that is often quoted that states that Rivkah was three years old when she married Yitzchak. I do not believe that for one second. There are two type of Midrashim: Midrash Halachah , which is binding upon all Jews. An example of a Midrash Halachah is the one that states that a sinner who is to receive lashes, gets 39 lashes, even though the Torah explicitly states that he gets 40! And there is also Midrash Aggadah, like Rivkah is three when she married. I am not required to accept that as truth. But then I am faced with the question of what are the rabbis teaching us by saying this. Telling us that she was three is to relate to us that Rivkah never accepted any of the beliefs or teachings of her father or brother who headed the family that she grew up in.

6. Stating that Keturah was Hagar was to bring home the fact that Avraham would not marry a Canaanite. He did have an additional six sons with his new (old) wife. But he made sure that these sons were married and gone from the house before he died. Just as their brother Yishmael was expelled from Avraham's house, these new sons were expected to leave and be independent as they grew older. None of them would inherit any part of Eretz Yisrael. None of them would present themselves as heirs to Avraham. None of them would threaten Yitzchak's position of receiving all that Avraham had physically and spiritually. Their departure was so thorough that none of them was present for Avraham's funeral.

7. Yishmael did come back. When Avraham died, the Torah tells us that he was buried by Yitzchak and Yishmael. Midrashically we see it even earlier. When Avraham and Yitzchak travelled to the Akeidah, they were accompanied by two lads. Rashi identified them as Eliezer and Yishmael. After the expulsion with his mother, the Torah states that he settled in the desert of Paran, a place that was not too far

from Abraham's location. The Midrash also stated that Avraham travelled at least twice to visit Yishmael. So the expulsion did not divide the family permanently. Obviously Yishmael still felt part of the family.

8. Midrash. The Midrash clearly stated that all was good in Sarah's life. Really? The decades of being childless. Being taken away from her husband by both Pharaoh and Avimelech. Having a difficult relationship with Hagar, her maidservant and then co-wife. Her stepson Yishmael. To live a nomadic life with her husband. What was so good about her life? What the Midrash must be saying is that throughout her life, she always possessed a positive attitude. She accepted all the difficulties in her life with a good frame of mind and soul.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH 5787

I. From the Text
1. How much did Avraham pay for the burial place for his wife? (23:16)
2. Whom did Avraham request to find a suitable wife for his son Yitzchak? (24:2)
3. When Eliezer asked for a drink of water, Rivkah quickly gave it to him. What did she then offer to do? (24:19)
4. When Abraham's family agreed to Eliezer's proposal of marriage for Rivkah, what was Eliezer's response? (24:52)
5. Who buried Avraham? (25:9)

II. From Rashi
6. Why was the city of Chevron known as Kiryat Arba, the City of Four? (23:2)
7. Why did Yitzchak go to Be'er-Lachai—Roi? (24:62)
8. Yitzchak went out to the field. (24:63). What did he do there?
9. Keturah, Avraham's "new" wife was actually known to us. Who was she? (25:1)
10. How did Hashem bless Yitzchak after Avraham's death? (25:11)

III. From the Rabbis
11. Which one of the Patriarchal family was not buried in the family plot in Chevron? Where was that person buried?
12. Why did Avraham not want Yitzchak to marry a Canaanite woman? (It could not be because they worshipped idols because his relatives elsewhere worshipped idols.)
13. Lavan blessed his sister before she left with Eliezer. (24:60). When do we recite this blessing?

IV. Midrash
14. Why didn't Avraham send Yitzchak to Charan to find a wife?

V. Haftorah
15. Who told King David that his son Adoniyahu was attempting to seize the throne even before the king died?

VI. Relationships
16.
a) Avraham - Milkah (2 answers)
b) Yishmael - Nevayot
c) Midian - Yitzchak
d) Ephron - Tzochar
e) Adah - Tzeelah

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH 5787

1. 400 silver shekels
2. Eliezer, his trusted servant.
3. Rivkah offered to give water to all the camels.
4. He prostrated himself to the ground unto Hashem.
5. Yitzchak and Yishmael.
6. Either because of the 4 giants buried there OR because that in the future 4 illustrious couples would be buried there.
7. To get Hagar to return and marry Yitzchak's father.
8. To pray (Minchah).
9. Hagar
10. He comforted him in his mourning, and He gave Yitzchak the blessings He gave Avraham.
11. Rachel was buried in Beit Lechem, Bethlehem.
12. Because this would give her parents an excuse to owning part of the Promised Land.
13. At the Bedaken at the wedding: to the bride.
14. Avraham didn't want Yitzchak to lose the special sanctity he gained by being offered as a sacrifice at the Akeidah.
15. Batsheva and later Nattan the prophet.

16.
a) Uncle Avraham and Brother-in-Law Avraham.
b) Father Yishmael
c) Half Brothers
d) Father Tzochar
e) Co-Wives (of Lemech)