

Treasures of the Torah.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,⁴⁶ and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Matthew 13:45

‘BEYOND WHAT YOU CAN IMAGINE’



19th November 2022 - Cheshvan 25 5783

Parsha 5: Chai Sarah - Genesis 23:1 -25:18

Key Events.

Sarah Dies aged 127

Abraham purchases a cave for her burial

Abraham’s servant Eliezer, is sent to find a wife for Isaac

Rebecca appears at the well

Rebecca returns to marry Isaac

Abraham marries Keturah.

Abraham dies at 175 and is buried by Ishmael and Isaac
in the cave of Machpelah

Shabbat Shalom talmidim.

This week’s Parsha begins:

Gen 23. Sarah lived a hundred and twenty-seven years; this was the length of the life of Sarah.

2 Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. **3** Then Abraham stood up before his dead [wife’s body], and spoke to the sons of Heth (Hittites), saying, **4** “I am a stranger and a sojourner (resident alien) among you; give (sell) me property for a burial place among you so that I may bury my dead [in the proper manner].” **5** The Hittites replied to Abraham, **6** “Listen to us, my lord; you are a prince of God [a mighty prince] among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave or hinder you from burying your dead [wife].” **7** So Abraham stood up and bowed to the people of the land, the Hittites. **8** And Abraham said to them, “If you are willing to grant my dead a [proper] burial, listen to me, and plead with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, **9** so that he may give (sell) me the cave of Machpelah which he owns—it is at the end of his field; let him give it to me here in your presence for the full price as a burial site [which I may keep forever among you].”

The Parsha tells us nothing about the life of Sarah at all, only that she lived to be 127 years old.

There is no detail about her death except that Abraham mourned over her.

Historically, we stand at the moment of the death of the first patriarch's wife. At this time, it would do us well to understand the situation of Abraham and where he is geographically. Abraham is in the land of the Hittites. Archaeologically there is a great deal of evidence for these people and historically the Hittite nation was one of great power that rivalled that of Egypt and Assyria. They are listed as inhabitants of Canaan. 2 Samuel 11, tells us the story of the of Uriah the Hittite the husband of Bathsheba and the plan of David to kill Uriah so that he could have Bathsheba for himself. It is also said in 1Kings 10:29, that Solomon exported chariots to the kings of the Hittites. So we see that they were an important people group at the time.

In our text we see Abraham speaking to the sons of Heth the Hittite, who clearly regard Abraham with some esteem, exalting him as a prince of God. Abraham, wishing to purchase a field from Ephron, is subsequently offered the land for free. However, Abraham argues that the right thing to do, is for him to purchase it, which he subsequently does for four hundred pieces of silver. The number 400 is significant in its meaning. YHVH told Abraham that his descendants would be in slavery for 400 years. This happened after the death of Joseph, however, though the Israelites prospered in the land of Egypt during Joseph's governance, they were nonetheless inhabitants of a land that was not their own.

Gen 15:13

13 *God* said to Abram, "Know for sure that your descendants will be strangers [living temporarily] in a land (Egypt) that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. AMP

Acts 7:6 6 And this is, in effect, what God spoke [to him]: That his descendants would be aliens (strangers) in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. AMP

400 is a multiple of 40 and is also the number of 8 jubilees. The number 8 in addition, is significant too, because it represents a time of a new beginning, and thus we see that after 400 years of enslavement, YHVH's people are released to begin a new life which will eventually see them ratified, 40 years later into YHVH's covenant and as the people of the covenant.

Having acquired the land, Abraham buries Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. The cave of Machpelah is the cave of the patriarchs. Its name means, 'doubled', which may refer to the fact that the couples, Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob and Leah, are all buried there.

The lengthy discourse of Abraham over the land tells us that Sarah was a woman of high regard in her own right and not just the wife of Abraham. Why was Abraham so particular about owning this portion of real estate? Significantly, we learn that that plot of land, Hebron, was the first piece of land that the Jewish people came to legally own. The Midrash recounts that the calf that Abraham wished to serve his visitors, written about in our previous parsha, 'Lech Lecha' (Gen12;1-17:27), ran away. The subsequent chase causes Abraham to stumble upon the cave. His discovery revealed to him the burial place of Adam and Eve and the fragrance that was present at the site revealed the entrance to the Garden of Eden.

An interesting side story, written in the Babylonian Talmud, tells of the death of Esau. It recounts that Esau came to stop the sons of Jacob being buried in the Cave of Machpelah. The ensuing argument saw his decapitation by Hushim, the son of Dan. We gather through this story, that Esau became aware of his brother's death and thus contested the right for him to be buried in the cave of his forefathers. Esau's giving up of his birthright, however, annulled his place among his ancestors. The Talmud thus continues to tell us that the head of Esau rolled into the cave.

The Parsha begins by stating the number of years Sarah lived and the death of Abraham. There is no account of Sarah's life at all. It is however significant that she lived for 127 years and was a mother to Isaac for 37 years, having given birth to him at the age of 90. Sarah and her original name Sarai, means 'princess'. Her name change, exalts her from local to global status. Sarah was the half sister of Abraham. It would seem that the marriage of close kin was acceptable during the

time of Abraham but is forbidden within the book of Leviticus 18:9, which appeared several hundred years later.

The age of Sarah is given and as usual we must reflect upon the why. 127 years is also a number that finds significance in the number of provinces Esther, having once become queen to Ahasuerus ruled (Esther 1). The Persian Medean empire stretched from India to Ethiopia. Esther was a descendent of Sarah and was also considered a righteous woman.

In this parsha which relates to us the search for a bride for Isaac, the remarriage of Abraham and his later death, it is difficult to find anything that tells of Sarah's life. The length of her life somehow demands a better ending. But the opening chapter refrains from dwelling upon this intimate moment.

Sarah was after all an amazing woman who just like Abraham, was called to leave her home and to walk with her husband. She was infertile until the age of 90 and obviously struggled with the inability to conceive a child, especially the one that was promised to her and even more so, seeing her handmaid Hagar present a son to her husband some fourteen years earlier. It must have been difficult for her to make such a choice. Nonetheless, she was a righteous woman of extreme beauty, that did not reflect her age. This is an attribute that is considered to reflect one's sinless character.

Parsha Vayera ends with Abraham returning home after the Lord prevents the sacrifice of Isaac and recounts the birth of Milcah's children to Abraham's brother Nahor. But what is strange is the account of the death of Sarah. Nothing is said about why or from what she died. At this time she was 127 years old. She had enjoyed her motherhood with her son but was there something else that is at play and is it in this that we find the reason for her death? The answer may be found in the Midrash. The account of the death of Isaac is relayed to Sarah, through a visit from Ha'satan, named as Samael.

Midrash Tanhuma: Vayera - (Concerning the binding of Isaac) the prelude to this visit is the account that Ha'satan failed in his task to bring the knife, in Abraham's hand, down upon the neck of Isaac, having the incident halted by the hand of the Lord.

'While all this was transpiring, Satan visited Sarah in the guise of Isaac. When she saw him she asked: "What did your father do to you, my son?" He replied: "My father led me over mountains and through valleys until we finally reached the top of a certain mountain. There he erected an altar, arranged the firewood, bound me upon the altar, and took a knife to slaughter me. If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not called out, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, I would have been slaughtered." He had hardly completed relating what had transpired when she fainted and died, as it is written: And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her (ibid. 23:2). From where did he come? From Moriah.'

However, there is also the suggestion that Sarah died once realizing that her son was still alive. We see in this that life, in all its fabulous nuances is but fragile. Joy and sadness work upon its fragility in peculiar ways. Abraham wept over his wife, and in a way diverted his sorrow and energy in finding a wife for Isaac.

Sarah is the epitome of a virtuous wife. Prov 12:4 A virtuous *and* excellent wife [worthy of honor] is the crown of her husband, But she who shames him [with her foolishness] is like rotteness in his bones.

Despite her temporary lack of faith regarding her subsequent pregnancy with Isaac, and her disregard of Hagar and her son Ishmael, she exuded the faith and determination to make her the wife of the first patriarch. As the first matriarch, she receives the exaltation worthy of her status. We have to remember that Sarah was no ordinary wife. She was an exceptional woman. Her husband after all, had been called to a priestly and kingly duty. In this respect, we see that she was also considered a prophetess and rose beyond her noble name to become a queen alongside her husband. Despite her status, she and her husband's tent was welcoming to strangers, and we can assume that the word of God was a constant in daily conversation. If there is one thing that we

learn from this marriage, it is that the blessings of God remain with those who desire to be with Him and reflect Him in their lives.

In closing, we remember that Sarah's life was one of beauty and trial and that she was also called of God. Her life was given for others to reflect upon and emulate. Sometimes it hard to figure out why we have to go through the things we do. Life is not always a bed of roses, but life is precious because it comes through trial; something that begins at the moment of conception. YHVH teaches us that if we remain in Him and observe the laws of life, we will live, but if we don't, we are not to be so fortunate. It is a simple rule. YHVH does not want His children to suffer, but the human trial is one that signifies the battle for survival and for the inheritance of what we are and what we will have. Faith in YHVH, will bring forth the promise. It tells us that YHVH's word, is true and faithful. YHVH revealed His prophetic name to Moses in Exodus 3:14. 'I Am' in the Hebrew, translates as 'Eyer Asher Eyer.' It means fundamentally that 'YHVH will be!' For us, as people of the covenant, that must be the truth. Our future hope is in His name. What YHVH says He will do, He will do.

As people of His faith, we add to the glory given to Him throughout the ages, and bring forth the everlasting Kingdom of our God. YHVH showed Himself as GOD of all gods to the Egyptians and to many nations throughout the chronicles of Biblical history. His actions are timely and we have a great part to play in that timing which is soon to arrive. We, as people of the faith, can action YHVH's hand, however, that hand will also bring upon us the rod of discipline if we refuse to live righteously. We must not forget, that YHVH's righteousness must act so, because a loving father does not neglect the disciplining of an unruly child. The good news is that unruly children learn how to act in the right way. That is a journey for us all.

We all will leave an imprint in creation. Some of us might think that we are not that important, but the Lord chooses the humble to teach the proud. In this we see that the humility of both Sarah and Abraham, leave us a pattern on how to live for each other and how to give to others.

So let us read this passage as we conclude our insight into the life of Sarah.

1 Peter 3 reflects the character of Sarah, and admonishes all Godly women to consider her walk of holiness.

3 In the same way, you wives, be [submissive to your own husbands [subordinate, not as inferior, but out of respect for the responsibilities entrusted to husbands and their accountability to God, and so partnering with them] so that even if some do not obey the word [of God], they may be won over [to Christ] without discussion by the godly lives of their wives, 2 when they see your modest and respectful behaviour [together with your devotion and appreciation—love your husband, encourage him, and enjoy him as a blessing from God]. 3 Your adornment must not be merely external—with interweaving and elaborate knotting of the hair, and wearing gold jewellery, or [being superficially preoccupied with] dressing in expensive clothes; 4 but let it be [the inner beauty of] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality and unfading charm of a gentle and peaceful spirit, [one that is calm and self-controlled, not overanxious, but serene and spiritually mature] which is very precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands and adapting themselves to them; 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham [following him and having regard for him as head of their house], calling him lord. And you have become her daughters if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear [that is, being respectful toward your husband but not giving in to intimidation, nor allowing yourself to be led into sin, nor to be harmed]. AMP

Shalom



24 'Y'VAREKH'KHA ADONAI V'YISHMEREKHA.
 [MAY ADONAI BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU.]
 25 YA'ER ADONAI PANAV ELEIKHA VICHUNEKKA.
 [MAY ADONAI MAKE HIS FACE SHINE ON YOU AND SHOW YOU HIS FAVOUR.]
 26 YISSA ADONAI PANAV ELEIKHA V'YASEM L'KHA SHALOM
 [MAY ADONAI LIFT UP HIS FACE TOWARD YOU AND GIVE YOU PEACE.]

Until next time.
 Shabbat Shalom
 Grant Marshall: Co-founder Arrows of Ephrayim Ministries.

Additional readings
1 Kings 1:1-31, John 4:3-14

Glossary.

Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (*Aggadah*) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (*halakha*), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (*Tanakh*)

Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c.35–120 CE)

Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**, otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod.

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically

the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible.

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided.

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.

Rashi, whose real name is Shlomo Yitzchaki was born in France in the 11th century. Rashi wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides became better known by the acronym Rambam. He was born in 1138 in Cordoba, Spain. He was a Sephardic Jew and influential philosopher. He is considered to be among the greatest of Torah Scholars.

Nachmanides- 13th century French Jewish Philosopher, commonly known by the acronym; Rambam.