

Parasha Chayei Sarah

- Genesis 23:1-25:18
- 1 Kings 1:1-31
- Matthew 1:1-17

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Abraham's wife Sarah dies at age 127 and is buried in the Machpeilah Cave in Hebron, which Abraham purchases from Ephron the Hittite for 400 shekels of silver.

Abraham's servant, Eliezer, is sent laden with gifts to Charan to find a wife for Isaac. At the village well, Eliezer asks YHWH for a sign: when the maidens come to the well, he will ask for some water to drink; the woman who will offer to give his camels to drink as well, shall be the one destined for his master's son.

Rebecca, the daughter of Abraham's nephew Bethuel, appears at the well and passes the "test". Eliezer is invited to their home, where he repeats the story of the day's events. Rebecca returns with Eliezer to the land of Canaan, where they encounter Isaac praying in the field. Isaac marries Rebecca, loves her, and is comforted over the loss of his mother.

Abraham takes a new wife, Keturah (possibly Hagar) and fathers six additional sons, but Isaac is designated as his only heir. Abraham dies at age 175 and is buried beside Sarah by his two eldest sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

(adapted from chabad.org)

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

It is from Genesis 24-25 that the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony finds its origins. It is also in this passage of Scripture that we can learn about Messiah and His bride – the believing assembly.

For the wedding, Abraham's servant Eliezer played the role of match maker by seeking out a bride for Isaac. Not just any woman would do! The better half of Yitzchak would have to be from the same faith and the same family. Eliezer prays and receives favor from YHWH as Rivkah proves herself to be a bride worthy of marriage. Then, Eliezer offers gifts to Rivkah when he proposes the marriage covenant. He also provides



additional gifts to the family as a type of bride price. Rivkah accepts the proposal and immediately enters into the time of betrothal. She and Eliezer journey home to Isaac as a type of engagement period. When she approaches the homeland, she sees Yitzchak from afar. Rivkah veils her face and then presents herself to him. The marriage is consummated under the chuppah of Sarah's tent and the two begin building their family.

When the caravan approached their destination the Torah states that Isaac was "in the field meditating." The posture and presence of Isaac in prayer show his overall devotion to YHWH and His bride. When Eliezer was on the road working for a bride, Yitzchak was at home praying and believing for a wife. So too, when Y'shua was on the earth, he spent much time meditating in prayer. Luke 4:16 says that Y'shua "often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." Prior to his choosing the disciples and to his offering of his life upon the tree, Y'shua "went out to a mountainside and spent the night praying," Luke 6:12. Moshiach Y'shua would step away from the hustle and bustle of life and reflect upon the world, the Scriptures, and His impending sacrifice. Both the Messiah and Isaac found power in prayer and meditative contemplation. They both also found a bride.

The comparison of Y'shua to Isaac and Isaac to Y'shua must also extend to a discussion of the bride. Rivkah was a willing and determined bride-to-be. She served, loved, and even took time to veil herself. As the bride of Messiah, the worldwide believing assembly of believers must follow this matriarch of Israel. We are to be a people willing to serve like Rivkah served and trust like Rivkah trusted. Hebrews 7:25 states that Y'shua is still making intercession for us in order to prepare his bride for the coming marriage.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Servant hood is a major theme in the Torah portion "Chayei Sarah." We read of Abraham's servant who is sent to find a suitable helpmate for the chosen son Isaac / Yitzchak. This servant is presumably Eliezer of Genesis 15:2, though the Torah never makes this distinction. Eliezer readily accepts his task and long journey to find a bride from among the Hebrew people. While on his way, Eliezer prays for favor. "Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. Then he said, "O YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Now let it be that the

young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'; let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master," Genesis 24:10-14

Eliezer realizes that the perfect spouse for Isaac would be a woman willing to serve. Rivkah answer the prayer and offers water for Eliezer and his ten camels. A parched camel can drink 14 gallons of water. This means that Rivkah brought up 140 gallons of water and served them while running! "So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels," Genesis 24:20. Rivkah is chosen above all the women of the earth because of heart to sacrifice and serve.

In the Hebrew texts, the word most often used for "servant" is "eved." This phrase is used to describe Eliezer as a slave of Abraham and Daniel as a servant of YHWH. In Nehemiah 1:10 an "eved" is seen as a worshipper of YHWH. "Eved" is from the Hebrew root word "abad," which literally means to "labor, work, and serve." Adam was placed in the garden to work or "abad" the Land. Jacob served seven years for Rachel. Men aged thirty to fifty served in the Temple as worship. Today, a true servant of YHWH will follow the pattern set by those in this week's Torah portion and the term "eved."

Eliezer was willing to go as his Master requested. He didn't fuss or fight Abraham. He was glad to play a part in helping the family. Judaism traditionally teaches that Eliezer was a disciple of Abraham and had learned the ways of Torah in the tents of Abraham. We must be willing to follow YHWH and yield to his ways.

Eliezer prayed for favor. He didn't just get busy doing his Master's whims. The servant prayed and believed that he would be answered. He knew his task was important and that it needed to be covered in prayer. Our acts of kindness and compassion to others must be preceded with prayer. Our willingness to serve should be coupled with prayers of success and blessing. Eliezer took a chance to ask for confirmation from the actions of total strangers. His prayers were answered exactly.

Eliezer, the servant, was served by others. The actions of devotion by Eliezer were reciprocated when Rivkah saw the need and filled the need. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much," Luke 16:10. He was blessed for his servant hood and then Rivkah was blessed for her servant hood. Rivkah served Eliezer without persuasion. The process of service that Eliezer exemplified began again in Rivkah's life. Never in her wildest dreams could she have imagined that her simple act of fetching water would have led to marriage to Isaac. Rivkah became a matriarch of Israel because of her willingness to care for others.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the Hebrew term for servant “eved” is spelled ayin – vet – dalet. There is only a one letter difference between “servant” and the term “Hebrew.” The word “Hebrew” means “an overcomer” and is spelled ayin – vet – reish. The letters reish and dalet look very much alike, so it is possible to see the word play. A true Hebrew is a servant. Abraham was called a Hebrew or “Ivrit” in Genesis 14:13. His family has followed suit in standing out in the world through service to others. A true “ivrit” will serve, or love YHWH and other people.

Portion Points to Ponder

What does the Hebrew name of this Torah portion mean?

The portion recounts the death of Sarah and not her life. Why was it named such?

Read the Haftarah portion of 1 Kings 1:1-31. How does this relate to this week’s Torah portion?

Read the Newer Testament sections of Matthew 1:1-17. Why were these passages chosen to correspond to this week’s reading? What did you learn from these words?

How old was Sarah when she died? What is this number symbolic of? How does this number relate to Queen Esther?

Where was Sarah buried? Where is this today?

Why did Abraham insist on paying for Sarah’s burial ground when he could have received it for free?

Efron charged Abraham 400 shekels for the land and burial cave. Was this a fair price?

What did this high price reveal about Efron?

Abraham sent a servant to find a bride for his son. Genesis 24 states that this servant “placed his hand under Abraham’s thigh” as he took an oath to accomplish his task. What does this strange custom mean?

Gen 15:2 show’s that Abraham’s servant was named “Eliezer of Damascus.” The name “Eliezer” means “mighty, divine helper or El’s helper.” How did this name describe his actions?

Abraham’s servant, Eliezer, had to swear that he would NOT find a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites. Why?

Yitzchak's / Isaac's wife was to come from his father's family. Why?

How many camels did Abraham's servant have? Why is this number important?

Eliezer placed a type of "fleece" before YHWH concerning the bride of Isaac. This was also done by Gideon in Judges 6:36-40. Is such prayer necessary or acceptable today?

Does a prayer fleece take faith or is such used in place of faith?

How does the fleece prayer compare to Ephesians 5:17, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of YHWH."

The woman who draws the water for Eliezer is named "Rivkah" in Hebrew. What does this moniker mean?

Rivkah fed the camels countless gallons of water. What does such an action say about Rivkah's attitude and spirit?

Where Rivkah and Isaac related? How?

Who was Rivkah's brother?

The servant Eliezer refused to eat with his host family until he had recounted the miracle of answered prayer that he experienced. Do you regularly share the testimony of answered prayer with others?

When told of Eliezer's actions and the proposal of Rivkah's marriage, Laban refrained from making his own comments. He said, "This is from YHWH; we can say nothing to you one way or the other." How could using such a response today glorify YHWH? Is this statement repeated throughout the Scriptures in one form or another?

Was Rivkah willing to go with Eliezer immediately or did she want to stay with her family?

As the bridal caravan approaches the homeland, Isaac is out "meditating in the field." He lifted up his eyes and saw the camels approaching. What is Biblical meditation? What does the Scriptures teach about this practice?

Rivkah took a veil and covered herself before meeting Isaac. How is this tradition continued today in Christian and Jewish weddings?

Where did Isaac and Rivkah consummate their marriage?

The Torah says that after Isaac took a wife, that he was comforted from the death of his mother Sarah. How does this relate to Genesis 2:24 which states that "a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife?"

Abraham took another wife after the death of Sarah. This new wife bore Abraham more descendants. Where were these the children of promise?

Genesis 25:1 and 1 Chronicles 1:32 seem contradictory as they speak of Keturah. One text calls her Abraham's "wife," while the other says she was "Abraham's concubine." Which is correct? Are the terms interchangeable? Also consider Jacob's relationship with Bilhah in Genesis 29:29 and 35:22.

How old was Abraham when he died? Where was he buried? Who buried Abraham?

What did you learn from this Torah portion? How can you apply this portion to your life and faith? Who can you share the message of this portion with this week?

The Open Bible is a teaching series written by Daniel Rendelman of Emet Ministries. Find more teachings, audio messages, videos, and music at www.emetministries.com. Daniel Rendelman is the found and leader of Emet Ministries and the author of the book "Finding the Truth." He, his wife, and five children live in Newberry, South Carolina. He can be reached at emetministries@gmail.com.