

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Vayera
October 23, 2021 * 17 Cheshvan, 5782**

Today's Portions in Etz Chaim

1: 21:1-4.....p. 112	5: 22:1-8.....p. 117
2: 21:5-13.....p. 113	6: 22:9-19.....p. 119
3: 21:14-21.....p. 114	7: 22:20-24.....p. 121
4: 21:22-34.....p. 116	maf: 22:20-24.....p. 121
Haftarah: II Kings 4:1 - 4:37 3: 21:14-21.....p. 124	

Vayerah in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3171/jewish/Vayera-in-a-Nutshell.htm

G-d reveals Himself to Abraham three days after the first Jew's circumcision at age ninety-nine; but Abraham rushes off to prepare a meal for three guests who appear in the desert heat. One of the three—who are angels disguised as men—announces that, in exactly one year, the barren Sarah will give birth to a son. Sarah laughs.

Abraham pleads with G-d to spare the wicked city of Sodom. Two of the three disguised angels arrive in the doomed city, where Abraham's nephew Lot extends his hospitality to them and protects them from the evil intentions of a Sodomite mob. The two guests reveal that they have come to overturn the place, and to save Lot and his family. Lot's wife turns into a pillar of salt when she disobeys the command not to look back at the burning city as they flee.

While taking shelter in a cave, Lot's two daughters (believing that they and their father are the only ones left alive in the world) get their father drunk, lie with him and become pregnant. The two sons born from this incident father the nations of Moab and Ammon.

Abraham moves to Gerar, where the Philistine king Abimelech takes Sarah—who is presented as Abraham's sister—to his palace. In a dream, G-d warns Abimelech that he will die unless he returns the woman to her husband. Abraham explains that he feared he would be killed over the beautiful Sarah.

G-d remembers His promise to Sarah, and gives her and Abraham a son, who is named Isaac (Yitzchak, meaning "will laugh"). Isaac is circumcised at the age of eight days; Abraham is one hundred years old, and Sarah ninety, at their child's birth.

Hagar and Ishmael are banished from Abraham's home and wander in the desert; G-d hears the cry of the dying lad, and saves his life by showing his mother a well. Abimelech makes a treaty with Abraham at Beersheba, where Abraham gives him seven sheep as a sign of their truce.

G-d tests Abraham's devotion by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem. Isaac is bound and placed on the altar, and Abraham raises the knife to slaughter his son. A voice from heaven calls to stop him; a ram, caught in the undergrowth by its horns, is offered in Isaac's place. Abraham receives the news of the birth of a daughter, Rebecca, to his nephew Bethuel.

Haftarah in a Nutshell: Kings II 4:1-37

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/579813/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

In this week's Torah reading, G-d promises a child to Abraham and Sarah, despite childless Sarah's advanced age. This week's haftarah describes a similar incident that occurred many years later — the prophet Elisha assuring an elderly childless woman that she will bear a child. The haftarah discusses two miracles performed by the prophet Elisha. The first miracle involved a widow who was heavily in debt, and her creditors were threatening to take her two sons as slaves to satisfy the debt. When the prophet asked her what she had in her home, the widow responded that she had nothing but a vial of oil. Elisha told her to gather as many empty containers as possible — borrowing from neighbors and friends as well. She should then pour oil from her vial into the empty containers. She did as commanded, and miraculously the oil continued to flow until the last empty jug was filled. The woman sold the oil for a handsome profit, and had enough money to repay her debts and live comfortably.

The second miracle: Elisha would often pass by the city of Shunam, where he would dine and rest at the home of a certain hospitable couple. This couple even made a special addition to their home, a guest room designated for Elisha's use. When the prophet learned that the couple was childless, he blessed the woman that she should give birth to a child in exactly one year's time. And indeed, one year later a son was born to the aged couple.

A few years later the son complained of a headache and died shortly thereafter. The Shunamit woman laid the lifeless body on the bed in Elisha's designated room, and quickly summoned the prophet. Elisha hurried to the woman's home and miraculously brought the boy back to life.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Binding of Isaac (Vayera) by the Office of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l
<https://rabbisacks.org/vayera-covenantconversation/>

“Take your son, your only son, the one you love—Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah. Offer him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” (Gen. 22:2)

Thus begins one of the most famous episodes in the Torah, but also one of the most morally problematic. The conventional reading of this passage is that Abraham was being asked to show that his love for God was supreme. He would show this by being willing to sacrifice the son for whom he had spent a lifetime waiting.

Why did God need to “test” Abraham, given that He knows the human heart better than we know it ourselves? Maimonides answers that God did not need Abraham to prove his love for Him. Rather the test was meant to establish for all time how far the fear and love of God must go.[1]

On this principle there was little argument. The story is about the awe and love of God. Kierkegaard wrote about it[2] and made the point that ethics is universal. It consists of general rules. But the love of God is particular. It is an I-Thou personal relationship. What Abraham underwent during the trial was, says Kierkegaard, a “teleological suspension of the ethical,” that is, a willingness to let the I-Thou love of God overrule the universal principles that bind humans to one another.

Rav Soloveitchik explained the Binding of Isaac episode in terms of his own well-known characterisation of the religious life as a dialectic between victory and defeat, majesty and humility, man-the-creative-master and man-the-obedient-servant.[3] There are times when “God tells man to withdraw from whatever man desires the most.”[4] We must experience defeat as well as victory. Thus the Binding of Isaac was not a once-only episode but rather a paradigm for the religious life as a whole. Wherever we have passionate desire – eating, drinking, physical relationship – there the Torah places limits on the satisfaction of desire. Precisely because we pride ourselves on the power of reason, the Torah includes chukim, statutes, that are impenetrable to reason.

These are the conventional readings and they represent the mainstream of tradition. However, since there are “seventy faces to the Torah,” I want to argue for a different interpretation. The reason I do so is that one test of the validity of an interpretation is whether it coheres with the rest of the Torah, Tanach, and Judaism as a whole. There are four problems with the conventional reading:

1. We know from Tanach and independent evidence that the willingness to offer up your child as a sacrifice was not rare in the ancient world. It was commonplace. Tanach mentions that Mesha, King of Moab, did so. So did Yiftah, the least admirable leader in the book of Judges. Two of Tanach’s most wicked Kings, Ahaz and Manasse, introduced the practice into Judah, for which they were condemned. There is archeological evidence – the bones of thousands of young children – that child sacrifice was widespread in Carthage and other Phoenician sites. It was a pagan practice.

2. Child sacrifice is regarded with horror throughout Tanach. Micah asks rhetorically, "Shall I give my firstborn for my sin, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Mic. 6:7), and replies, "He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Mic. 6:8) How could Abraham serve as a role model if what he was prepared to do is what his descendants were commanded not to do?

3. Specifically, Abraham was chosen to be a role model as a parent. God says of him, "For I have chosen him so that he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just." How could he serve as a model father if he was willing to sacrifice his child? To the contrary, he should have said to God: "If you want me to prove to You how much I love You, then take me as a sacrifice, not my child."

4. As Jews – indeed as humans – we must reject Kierkegaard's principle of the "teleological suspension of the ethical." This is an idea that gives carte blanche to religious fanatics to commit crimes in the name of God. It is the logic of the Inquisition and the suicide bomber. It is not the logic of Judaism rightly understood.[5] God does not ask us to be unethical. We may not always understand ethics from God's perspective but we believe that "He is the Rock, His works are perfect; all His ways are just" (Deut. 32:4).

To understand the Binding of Isaac we have to realise that much of the Torah, Genesis in particular, is a polemic against worldviews the Torah considers pagan, inhuman and wrong. One institution to which Genesis is opposed is the ancient family as described by Fustel de Coulanges[6] and recently restated by Larry Siedentop in *Inventing the Individual*. [7]

Before the emergence of the first cities and civilisations, the fundamental social and religious unit was the family. As Coulanges puts it, in ancient times there was an intrinsic connection between three things: the domestic religion, the family and the right of property. Each family had its own gods, among them the spirits of dead ancestors, from whom it sought protection and to whom it offered sacrifices. The authority of the head of the family, the paterfamilias, was absolute. He had power of life and death over his wife and children. Authority invariably passed, on the death of the father, to his firstborn son. Meanwhile, as long as the father lived, children had the status of property rather than persons in their own right. This idea persisted even beyond the biblical era in the Roman law principle of *patria potestas*. The Torah is opposed to every element of this worldview. As anthropologist Mary Douglas notes, one of the most striking features of the Torah is that it

includes no sacrifices to dead ancestors.[8] Seeking the spirits of the dead is explicitly forbidden.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that in the early narratives, succession does not pass to the firstborn: not to Ishmael but Isaac, not to Esau but Jacob, not to the tribe of Reuben but to Levi (priesthood) and Judah (kingship), not to Aaron but to Moses.

The principle to which the entire story of Isaac, from birth to binding, is opposed is the idea that a child is the property of the father. First, Isaac's birth is miraculous. Sarah is already post-menopausal when she conceives. In this respect the Isaac story is parallel to that of the birth of Samuel to Hannah who, like Sarah, also is unable naturally to conceive. That is why, when Samuel is born Hannah says, "I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." (I Sam. 1:27) This passage is the key to understanding the message from heaven telling Abraham to stop: "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son" (the statement appears twice, in Gen. 22:12 and 16). The test was not whether Abraham would sacrifice his son but whether he would give him over to God.

The same principle recurs in the book of Exodus. First, Moses' survival is semi-miraculous since he was born at a time when Pharaoh had decreed that every male Israelite child should be killed. Secondly, during the tenth plague when every firstborn Egyptian child died, the Israelite firstborn were miraculously saved. "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to Me, whether human or animal." The firstborns were originally designated to serve God as Priests, but they lost this role after the sin of the Golden Calf. Nonetheless, a memory of this original role still persists in the ceremony of Pidyon HaBen, redemption of a firstborn son.

What God was doing when He asked Abraham to offer up his son was not requesting a child sacrifice but something quite different. He wanted Abraham to renounce ownership of his son. He wanted to establish as a non-negotiable principle of Jewish law that children are not the property of their parents.

That is why three of the four patriarchs found themselves unable to conceive other than by a miracle. The Torah wants us to know that the children they bore were the children of God rather than the natural outcome of a biological process. Eventually, the entire nation of Israel would be called the children of God. A related idea is conveyed by the fact that God chose as His spokesperson Moses, who was "not a man of words" (Ex. 4:10) He was a stammerer. Moses became God's spokesman

because people knew that the words he spoke were not his own but those placed in his mouth by God.

The clearest evidence for this interpretation is given at the birth of the very first human child. When she first gives birth, Eve says: "With the help of the Lord I have acquired [kaniti] a man." That child, whose name comes from the verb "to acquire," was Cain, who became the first murderer. If you seek to own your children, your children may rebel into violence.

If the analysis of Fustel de Colanges and Larry Siedentop is correct, it follows that something fundamental was at stake. As long as parents believed they owned their children, the concept of the individual could not yet be born. The fundamental unit was the family. The Torah represents the birth of the individual as the central figure in the moral life. Because children – all children – belong to God, parenthood is not ownership but guardianship. As soon as they reach the age of maturity (traditionally, twelve for girls, thirteen for boys) children become independent moral agents with their own dignity and freedom.[9]

Sigmund Freud famously had something to say about this too. He held that a fundamental driver of human identity is the Oedipus Complex, the conflict between fathers and sons as exemplified in Aeschylus' tragedy.[10] By creating moral space between fathers and sons, Judaism offers a non-tragic resolution to this tension. If Freud had taken his psychology from the Torah rather than from Greek myth, he might have arrived at a more hopeful view of the human condition.

Why then did God say to Abraham about Isaac: "Offer him up as a burnt offering"? So as to make clear to all future generations that the reason Jews condemn child sacrifice is not because they lack the courage to do so.

Abraham is the proof that they do not lack the courage. The reason they do not do so is because God is the God of life, not death. In Judaism, as the laws of purity and the rite of the Red Heifer show, death is not sacred. Death defiles.

The Torah is revolutionary not only in relation to society but also in relation to the family. To be sure, the Torah's revolution was not fully completed in the course of the biblical age. Slavery had not yet been abolished. The rights of women had not yet been fully actualised. But the birth of the individual – the integrity of each of us as a moral agent in our own right – was one of the great moral revolutions in history.[1] *Guide for the Perplexed*

111:24 [2] Søren Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling, and The Sickness Unto Death*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954. [3] Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Majesty and Humility", *Tradition*

17:2, Spring. 1978, pp. 25–37. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 36 [5] For more on this subject, see Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, NY: Schocken, 2015. [6] Fustel De Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome*, (1864), Garden City, NY:

Doubleday, 1956. [7] Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*, London: Penguin, 2014. [8] Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. [9] It is perhaps no accident that the figure who most famously taught the idea of “the child’s right to respect” was Janusz Korczak, creator of the famous orphanage in Warsaw who perished together with the orphans in Treblinka. See Tomek Bogacki, *The Champion of Children: The Story of Janusz Korczak* (2009). [10] Freud argued, in *Totem and Taboo*, that the Oedipus complex was central to religion also.

[Lessons From Lot's Daughters: Vayera by Abby Eisenberg](https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/lessons-from-lots-daughters/)
<https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/lessons-from-lots-daughters/>

Parashat Vayera is the fourth Torah portion after Simhat Torah, the celebration of our annual Torah reading cycle and the culmination of the fall holidays. As we begin the new year, we also begin anew our exploration of ancestral family dynamics. Arguably one of the most famous parent-child scenes in all of literature can be found in Vayera: that of Abraham bringing Isaac to offer him as sacrifice. The parashah also contains another version of child sacrifice when Lot, Abraham’s nephew, subjects his unnamed daughters to assault and danger. From the tragedy of Jephthah’s daughter to the boldness of the daughters of Zelofehad, relationships between fathers and daughters in Tanakh are both deeply troubling and inspiring. The story of Lot and his daughters is certainly the former, and, perhaps surprisingly, potentially the latter.

The narrative begins with messengers (mentioned earlier as emissaries of God, Gen. 18:1–2) who have just arrived in Sodom, where Lot resides, to inform him of the city’s impending destruction. When the townspeople violently and aggressively demand that Lot send his guests outside so that the townspeople can force themselves upon the visitors, Lot instead offers his young daughters to them (Gen. 19:6–8).

While today we are shocked at Lot’s behavior and find it vile, medieval commentators express differing views on Lot’s decision. Chizkuni (France, d. 1310) makes sense of Lot’s deplorable actions by placing blame on his daughters and writes on Gen. 19:8 that “the daughters of Lot were not chaste and did not shy away from engaging in seducing men, as we know from later when they initiated carnal relations with their own father” (Gen. 19:33). This victim-blaming interpretation is deeply offensive and unacceptable for us today. Alternatively, Ramban (Spain, d. 1270) cites an early midrash on the same verse (Tanhuma Vayera 12, c. 500–800 CE) and in strong terms casts blame on Lot for despicable behavior: “This bespeaks nothing but an evil heart . . . and that in his opinion he would not be doing

such great injustice to his daughters . . . this man hands over his daughters for dishonor” (Ramban on 19:8).

But what if we direct our attention to the reaction of the daughters themselves in our evaluation of Lot’s behavior? Although the biblical authors were certainly very likely to be men, and of course the medieval commentaries express a male perspective, through a close examination of the daughters’ own words and actions, we may be able to expand our perception of this dark episode and its possible meaning for us today. After the destruction of Sodom (19:15–26), including the famous transformation of Lot’s wife into a pillar of salt, we read that Lot did not initially wish to dwell in the hill country or the town of Tzoar, so he and his daughters moved to a cave. The elder of Lot’s daughters suggests to the younger that they intoxicate their father so that they could initiate intercourse: “Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him, that we may maintain life through our father” (19:32; phrase repeated in 19:34). Exploring commentaries on this phrase and imagining the motivation behind the daughters’ actions can yield compelling insights for us.

Rashi (France, d. 1105), following Genesis Rabbah (classical midrash on Genesis, c. 500 CE), explains that the daughters undertook this course of action to ensure the perpetuation of the human race. Indeed, “they thought that the whole world had been destroyed” (19:31). He suggests that following the destruction of Sodom and Gemorrah, the daughters were isolated in the cave and did not realize that there was human life outside it. The daughters were using the seed of their father to achieve this larger goal. Perhaps the older daughter’s motivation arose out of deep anger at her father’s behavior in Sodom. Indeed, some commentators have also discussed the daughters’ behavior as an act of vengeance against their father. Lot initiated a possible assault on his daughters; now the daughters are portrayed as assaulting their father.

Radak (France, d. 1235) points out that Tzoar, the city to which Lot and his daughters initially fled after Sodom’s destruction, was not destroyed (Gen 19:20–25, 30). Thus, despite their seclusion, the daughters must have known that only Sodom and Gemorrah were in ruins, not the full human population. He imagines the daughters saying, “If we will die without having children there will not be a memory of our father at all.” Radak suggests that the daughters were not concerned with perpetuating all of humanity but specifically with their father’s lineage. Their worry about the continuation of their father’s family line exists despite the trauma they have endured. In comparison to what might motivate the daughters to sustain humanity, sustaining a specific bloodline is more personal. Could this

interpretation imply a measure of forgiveness toward their father? The daughters' behavior follows the biblical trope of heroic women within a patriarchal system who have more keen awareness about sustaining a family line than do the men in their lives. These women (Tamar, Gen. 38; Ruth, Ch. 3, Book of Ruth), like Lot's daughters, make extreme and out-of-the-box choices to perpetuate the family line.

Is it possible that we can embrace multiple interpretations of the daughters' behavior and of the behavior of those in our own lives? Relationships—particularly between parent and child—are complex and our interpretation of difficult events may transform over time. Is it also possible that various emotional reactions are appropriate at different times in our lives? Perhaps there are times (though we do hope not many of them) when vengeful behavior is appropriate. Perhaps there are (many more, we hope) circumstances in which forgiveness for those who came before us is helpful to us in our daily lives.

As we continue to wade through the dramatic stories of our foremothers and forefathers, may we reflect on all of our ancestors, and perhaps specifically on one of the most tender and intimate relationships in our own lives—that of the parent-child relationship. When necessary, may we confront the stark realities of the past—perhaps even with anger—in order to heal. At other times, may we approach our stories and those who are part of our lives with abundant compassion and forgiveness. May the stories in Tanakh—with the perspectives of our commentators—inspire us to deepen our own understanding of our roots, and ultimately guide us to a sense of wholeness and peace with our closest loved ones and our lineage. *(Abby Eisenberg KGS '01 is founder and lead Educator at Explore Jewish & Judaics Tutoring NYC.)*

[From Sacrifice to Care: Tending the Fire of the Akeidah by R. Aviva Richman](https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/sacrifice-care)
<https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/sacrifice-care>

How are we meant to respond to God's instruction to sacrifice Yitzhak and Avraham's willingness to obey? We aren't the first to be thrown by this scene. An early midrash relates Sarah's pain, wail, and ultimate death when she heard of what transpired. 1 The message behind her reaction is not totally clear. Was Sarah too weak to embody the bravery of Avraham's obedience? Or do our sages mean to channel their own voice of protest and dismay into the sound of her cry? One version of this tradition explicitly honors Sarah's pain, asserting that Sarah's death brings atonement for our sins. 2 This focus on the religious meaning of Sarah's suffering is especially profound given the dominant view, that atonement comes from the merit

of Avraham's willingness to sacrifice his child, and Yitzhak's willingness to die. But it is a tragic way to uplift Sarah's role. Besides mourning her death, and vicariously getting atonement from her suffering, what can Sarah teach us about this tumultuous scene for our own religious lives?

An eighteenth century Yiddish prayer, written by Sara bas Tovim, looks up to Sarah in this moment as a religious role model. ³ The prayer was written for women to say as they visited ancestors' graves to measure string for wicks and made yahrzeit candles for Yom Kippur. The text turns to biblical patriarchs and matriarchs asking for forgiveness and repair in the year ahead. Studying this prayer offers a window into the religious universe inhabited by early modern Eastern European Jewish women as they prepared for the holiest day of the year. It is also a commentary on Torah in its own right, as we see how the prayer reinterprets the Akeidah. In a fascinating departure from traditional high holiday liturgy, where Avraham's willingness to sacrifice his son is a source of religious merit, ⁴ when Sara bas Tovim turns to Avraham in the prayer she excises any mention of the Akeidah. Instead, she associates the Akeidah with Sarah and uplifts her response:

And through the merit which I gain by preparing the wick for the sake of our mother Sarah, may the Blessed God—praised by He—remember us for the merit of her pain when her beloved son Yitzhak was led to the binding. May she defend us before God—praised be He—that we should not—God forbid—be le widows this year, and that our children should not—God forbid—be taken away from this world in our lifetime. ⁵

Sarah's pain and horror at the Akeidah is most certainly not a sign of her weakness in this interpretation. It is a model of a prayer of protest that we ask Sarah to continue articulating to this very moment. Rather than glorifying the Akeidah itself, the religious message we derive from it is to turn to God and ask that we should never have to endure anything like it, that there be nothing—even (especially?) God's own command—to cause us to lose a beloved child, or partner. In the most concise terms, the religious takeaway from the Akeidah is: "Never Again." ⁶

Later in the composition, Sara bas Tovim develops a more substantive and positive reading of the Akeidah, where the ultimate religious ask of a parent is not to sacrifice a child but to offer care, in both the physical and spiritual realms. ⁷ She asks that the merit of Akeidat Yitzhak allow us to "provide for our children's needs," not only in terms of food and clothing, but also through ensuring they have guidance in learning and prayer. This shift from an ethics of sacrifice to an ethics of care is no less fiery than the image of offering Yitzhak on an altar. The fire lives on in the mother's candles, "equivalent to the flame which the high priest lit in the sanctuary." Rather

than a fire that consumes, this fire, rekindled in each generation, is a fire of brilliance, made to “illuminate the eyes of our children” in their passion for learning.

The aesthetic style of Sara bas Tovim’s words may seem quaint, but she offers nothing less than a powerful reframing of the religious meaning of one of the most fraught passages in the Torah. In not so subtle terms, she encapsulates a voice of anguish and protest about God’s command and Avraham’s willingness to make a parent bereave of their child. But this is not a reason to turn away from God. She embraces Sarah’s pain as an opening stance to devoutly turn towards God with clarity and purpose.

When we embrace Sarah as a religious role model, Akeidat Yitzhak offers a starkly different set of guiding principles for our relationship with God. The God we pray to is not the God who demands we give up our children, but the God who never wants parents and children separated. We come close to God through a web of deep commitments to loved ones, not by virtue of our willingness to sever these ties. The way we demonstrate our religious devotion most fully is not by sacrificing those most dear to us, but through the day in and day out work of tending to their physical and spiritual needs. The theme of care in Sara bas Tovim’s writing is mirrored in the embodied ritual it accompanies: revisiting loved ones of past generations, and calling upon their merit as a source of blessing for the living. Sara bas Tovim integrates critique and devotion, and pivots from the anguish and alienation of our matriarch Sarah’s cry towards a passionate awareness of our capacity to kindle sparks of love and learning. This is what creates the ongoing fire of the Akeidah. ¹ See Vayikra Rabbah 20:2. ² Sarah Hayyei Aggadah Midrash 23: Why was the death of Sarah placed right after Akedat Yitzhak? To teach that when Avraham came from Mt. Moriah, he found Sarah dead because of the words of Satan. That is why we shout (blow the shofar) on Rosh Hashanah, so that Sarah’s death will be atonement for them, since the teru’ah is a cry and a wail. ³ For more discussion of this prayer see Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Beacon, 1999). I am grateful to Professor Weissler for getting to study this text with her in a class years ago. ⁴ For example in the Aneinu prayer, and in the Musaf Amidah for Rosh Hashanah: / May the binding that Avraham bound Yitzhak his son on the altar and subdued his mercy to do your will with a full heart, be pleasing to you. So may your mercy overcome your anger against us... and remember with mercy the binding of Yitzhak for his descendants today...” ⁵ “Tkhine of the Three Gates” by Sarah bas Tovim (mid 18 th century). Translation based on Tracy Guren Klirs (ed.), *The Merit of Our Mothers: A Bilingual Anthology of Jewish Women’s Prayers* (HUC, 1992). ⁶ I thank my colleague, R. Avi Strausberg, for pointing me towards a similar idea in the writings of the Eish Kodesh on Hayyei Sarah, 1939. ⁷ “You have commanded us to blow the shoyfer on rosheshone using the horn of a ram, a reminder of the binding of yitskhok. Remember this merit so that we

may be able to provide for our children's needs, that we may be able to keep them under the guidance of a teacher, so that they may become accustomed to Your service and respond, "Omeyn. Yehey shmey rabo." May the merit of my mitsve of candles be accepted as equivalent to the flame which the koyen gadol lit in the beys hamikdesh, so that it may illuminate the eyes of our children in the study of the holy toyre."

Yahrtzeits

Roni Bamforth remembers her mother Marjorie Gelfond on Wednesday
October 27 (Cheshvan 21)

Ilisia Kissner remembers her stepfather Frank E. Strassfeld (Ephraim ben
Avraham Ha Levi) on Friday October 29 (Cheshvan 23)