

Kol Rina  
*An Independent Minyan*  
Parashat Chayei Sara  
November 19, 2022 \*\*\* 25 Cheshvan, 5783

Chayei Sara in a Nutshell

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/3174/jewish/Chayei-Sarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3174/jewish/Chayei-Sarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

Sarah dies at age 127 and is buried in the Machpelah Cave in Hebron, which Abraham purchases from Ephron the Hittite for four hundred 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 G-d 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 (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.

Haftarah in a Nutshell: I Kings 1:1-31

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/585783/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/585783/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

This week's haftarah describes an aging King David, echoing this week's Torah reading, which mentions that "Abraham was was old, advanced in days."

King David was aging, and he was perpetually cold. A young maiden, Abishag of Shunam, was recruited to serve and provide warmth for the elderly monarch. Seeing his father advancing in age, Adoniah, one of King David's sons, seized the opportunity to prepare the ground for his ascension to his father's throne upon the latter's passing — despite King David's express wishes that his son Solomon succeed him. Adoniah recruited two influential individuals — the High Priest and the commander of David's armies — both of whom had fallen out of David's good graces, to champion his cause. He arranged to be transported in a chariot with fifty people running before him, and invited a number of his sympathizers to a festive party where he publicizing his royal ambitions. The prophet Nathan encouraged Bat Sheva, mother of Solomon, to approach King David and plead with him to reaffirm his choice of Solomon as his successor. This she did, mentioning Adoniah's recent actions of which the king had been unaware. Nathan later joined the Bat Sheva and the king to express support for Bat Sheva's

request. King David acceded to their request: "Indeed," he told Bat Sheva, "as I swore to you by the Lord God of Israel saying, 'Surely Solomon, your son, shall reign after me and he shall sit on my throne in my stead,' surely, so will I swear this day."

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### [A Call from the Future by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l](https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/chayei-sarah/a-call-from-the-future/)

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/chayei-sarah/a-call-from-the-future/>

He was 137 years old. He had been through two traumatic events involving the people most precious to him in the world. The first involved the son for whom he had waited for a lifetime, Isaac. He and Sarah had given up hope, yet God told them both that they would have a son together, and it would be he who would continue the covenant. The years passed. Sarah did not conceive. She had grown old, yet God still insisted they would have a child.

Eventually it came. There was rejoicing. Sarah said: "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." ([Gen. 21:6](#)) Then came the terrifying moment when God said to Abraham: "Take your son, your only one, the one you love... and offer him as a sacrifice." ([Gen. 22:2](#)) Abraham did not dissent, protest or delay. Father and son travelled together, and only at the last moment did the command come from heaven saying, "Stop!" How does a father, let alone a son, survive a trauma like that?

Then came grief. Sarah, Abraham's beloved wife, died. She had been his constant companion, sharing the journey with him as they left behind all they knew; their land, their birthplace, and their families. Twice she saved Abraham's life by pretending to be his sister.

What does a man of 137 do – the Torah calls him "old and advanced in years" ([Gen. 24:1](#)) – after such a trauma and such a bereavement? We would not be surprised to find that he spent the rest of his days in sadness and memory. He had done what God had asked of him. Yet he could hardly say that God's promises had been fulfilled. Seven times he had been promised the land of Canaan, yet when Sarah died he owned not one square inch of it, not even a place in which to bury his wife. God had promised him many children, a great nation, many nations, as many as the grains of sand in the seashore and the stars in the sky. Yet he had only one son of the covenant, Isaac, whom he had almost lost, and who was still unmarried at the age of thirty-seven. Abraham had every reason to sit and grieve.

Yet he did not. In one of the most extraordinary sequences of words in the Torah, his grief is described in a mere five Hebrew words: in English, "Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her." ([Gen. 23:2](#)) Then immediately we read, "And Abraham rose from his grief." From then on, he engaged in a flurry of activity with

two aims in mind: first to buy a plot of land in which to bury Sarah, second to find a wife for his son. Note that these correspond precisely to the two Divine blessings: of land and descendants. Abraham did not wait for God to act. He understood one of the profoundest truths of Judaism: that God is waiting for us to act.

How did Abraham overcome the trauma and the grief? How do you survive almost losing your child and actually losing your life-partner, and still have the energy to keep going? What gave Abraham his resilience, his ability to survive, his spirit intact?

I learned the answer from the people who became my mentors in moral courage, namely the Holocaust survivors I had the privilege to know. How, I wondered, did they keep going, knowing what they knew, seeing what they saw? We know that the British and American soldiers who liberated the camps never forgot what they witnessed. According to Niall Ferguson's new biography of Henry Kissinger,<sup>[1]</sup> who entered the camps as an American soldier, the sight that met his eyes transformed his life. If this was true of those who merely saw Bergen-Belsen and the other camps, how almost infinitely more so, those who lived there and saw so many die there. Yet the survivors I knew had the most tenacious hold on life. I wanted to understand how they kept going.

Eventually I discovered. Most of them did not talk about the past, even to their marriage partners, even to their children. Instead they set about creating a new life in a new land. They learned its language and customs. They found work. They built careers. They married and had children. Having lost their own families, the survivors became an extended family to one another. They looked forward, not back. First they built a future. Only then – sometimes forty or fifty years later – did they speak about the past. That was when they told their story, first to their families, then to the world. First you have to build a future. Only then can you mourn the past.

Two people in the Torah looked back, one explicitly, the other by implication. Noah, the most righteous man of his generation, ended his life by making wine and becoming drunk. The Torah does not say why, but we can guess. He had lost an entire world. While he and his family were safe on board the ark, everyone else – all his contemporaries – had drowned. It is not hard to imagine this righteous man overwhelmed by grief as he replayed in his mind all that had happened, wondering whether he might have done something to save more lives or avert the catastrophe. Lot's wife, against the instruction of the angels, actually did look back as the cities of the plain disappeared under fire and brimstone and the anger of God.

Immediately she was turned into a pillar of salt, the Torah's graphic description of a woman so overwhelmed by shock and grief as to be unable to move on.

It is the background of these two stories that helps us understand Abraham after the death of Sarah. He set the precedent: first build the future, and only then can you mourn the past. If you reverse the order, you will be held captive by the past. You will be unable to move on. You will become like Lot's wife.

Something of this deep truth drove the work of one of the most remarkable survivors of the Holocaust, the psychotherapist Viktor Frankl. Frankl lived through Auschwitz, dedicating himself to giving other prisoners the will to live. He tells the story in several books, most famously in *Man's Search for Meaning*.<sup>[2]</sup> He did this by finding for each of them a task that was calling to them, something they had not yet done but that only they could do. In effect, he gave them a future. This allowed them to survive the present and turn their minds away from the past.

Frankl lived his teachings. After the liberation of Auschwitz he built a school of psychotherapy called Logotherapy, based on the human search for meaning. It was almost an inversion of the work of Freud. Freudian psychoanalysis had encouraged people to think about their very early past. Frankl taught people to build a future, or more precisely, to hear the future calling to them. Like Abraham, Frankl lived a long and good life, gaining worldwide recognition and dying at the age of ninety-two. Abraham heard the future calling to him. Sarah had died. Isaac was unmarried. Abraham had neither land nor grandchildren. He did not cry out, in anger or anguish, to God. Instead, he heard the still, small voice saying: The next step depends on you. You must create a future that I will fill with My spirit. That is how Abraham survived the shock and grief. God forbid that we experience any of this, but if we do, this is how to survive.

God enters our lives as a call from the future. It is as if we hear him beckoning to us from the far horizon of time, urging us to take a journey and undertake a task that, in ways we cannot fully understand, we were created for. That is the meaning of the word vocation, literally “a calling”, a mission, a task to which we are summoned. We are not here by accident. We are here because God wanted us to be, and because there is a task we were meant to fulfil. Discovering what that is, is not easy, and often takes many years and false starts. But for each of us there is something God is calling on us to do, a future not yet made that awaits our making. It is future-orientation that defines Judaism as a faith, as I explain in the last chapter of my book *Future Tense*.<sup>[3]</sup>

So much of the anger, hatred and resentments of this world are brought about by people obsessed by the past and who, like Lot's wife, are unable to move on. There is no good ending to this kind of story, only more tears and more tragedy. The way of Abraham in Chayei Sarah is different. First build the future. Only then can you mourn the past. <sup>[1]</sup> Niall Fergusson, *Kissinger: 1923–1968: The Idealist* (London: Penguin Books, 2015).<sup>[2]</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, translated by Ilse Lasch (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992). <sup>[3]</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: Jews, Judaism, and Israel in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Schocken Books, 2012).

[Rebecca the Patriarch: Hayei Sarah by Judith Hauptman](https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/rebecca-the-patriarch/)

<https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/rebecca-the-patriarch/>

This week's parashah, Hayei Sarah (Genesis 23:1–25:18), is about continuing the line, producing progeny. The parashah opens with a report of Sarah's death at 120

years old. It closes with a list of Abraham's children from concubines and Ishmael's many offspring (25:1–18). But the central story of the parashah, the entire chapter of Genesis 24, is about finding a wife for Isaac.

Abraham asks his servant to travel back to Aram Naharayim, Abraham's birthplace, to find his son a mate. Abraham stipulates that the bride should be a blood relative. In addition, he makes his servant swear that the wife he finds for Isaac will agree to leave her birthplace and family and move to Canaan, where Abraham and Isaac now live. Abraham understands that for God to fulfill His promise that the Jewish people will become as numerous as the stars in the heaven (Gen. 15:5), future progeny must not be born in Aram Naharayim but in Canaan.

The servant, elsewhere called Eliezer (Gen. 15:2), sets off on the voyage. He prays that God will lead him to the right bride. A well-known scene at the well follows. Rebecca shows up with a water jar on her shoulder. Eliezer comments that she is beautiful. She graciously offers water to him, a stranger, and to his camels. She also offers him lodging overnight. He gives her a gold nose ring and bracelets and follows her back to her family's home.

Bethuel, her father, and Laban, her brother, upon hearing Eliezer's request that Rebecca marry Isaac, accept the proposal (v. 51). Eliezer gives generous gifts to Rebecca, her mother, and her brother (v. 53). The next morning Eliezer wishes to leave with Rebecca but her mother and brother suggest that she instead depart in ten days. They then call her in "and ask her [what she thinks]" (Gen. 24:57). "Will you go with this man," (v. 57) they want to know, and she replies, "I will go" (v. 58). The question for the commentators is, what does Rebecca mean when she answers the question in the affirmative? And do these words suggest that a woman's consent is required for marriage?

According to Rashi, who bases himself on a midrash, she is saying that she consents to go with this man and marry Isaac. Others say that she was agreeing not to delay for ten days but to leave right away.

I think there is a third, more likely interpretation. The point repeated several times over, at the beginning of the chapter, is that the bride Eliezer brings back for Isaac must leave her birthplace and move to Canaan, as did Abraham himself when God called out to him (Gen. 12:1). Only if she does so will her future child be able to continue the line of people to whom God made several promises. When she says "yes," knowing that her father and brother have already accepted a marriage proposal on her behalf, she is saying that she is willing to leave home and family behind, at great personal cost, and go and live with Isaac in Canaan. She understands that that is what God is asking of her.

This decision, most remarkably, places her on par with Abraham, who also heeded the voice of God and left his family and birthplace behind. In fact, Rebecca is more like Abraham—more a courageous person of faith—than her husband Isaac. When she answers "yes, I will go," she is saying that she sees the future unfolding of

Jewish history and the role she is being asked to play in it. Given the reports of her actions in coming chapters, in particular how she secured the firstborn blessing for her second-born son Jacob, I think it is more correct to say that the three patriarchs of Genesis are not Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as generally thought, but Abraham, Rebecca, and Jacob.

Returning to the question posed earlier: can we learn from Rebecca that a woman must consent to marriage? The answer is both yes and no. It is clear that Rebecca was married off by her father and brother without her consent. However, Midrash Bereishit Rabbah (60:12) does derive from v. 57 that a woman must consent to marriage. And the rabbis of the Talmud later institute the rule that a woman has to agree to a marriage for it to be valid (BT Kiddushin 8b). Broadly speaking, if we read v. 57 together with v. 58, they jointly say that Rebecca understood the huge sacrifice she was being asked to make, leaving home and family behind, and, without hesitation, heroically accepted these terms. (*Sarah Hauptman is the E. Billi Ivry Professor Emerita of Talmud and Rabbinic Culture at JTS*)

### [Only Love Can Bring Teshuva by Rabbi Alon Ferency](https://truah.org/resources/alon-c-ferency-chayei-sara-moraltorah/)

<https://truah.org/resources/alon-c-ferency-chayei-sara-moraltorah/>

I've served the sweet, smart, funny congregation of Heska Amuna Synagogue in Knoxville, Tennessee, since I was ordained in 2010; this past Shabbat Noach was the last time I preached to my beloved community. I explained a lesson I'd learned with a colleague: All the work of a rabbi doesn't amount to a hill of beans unless they can love their community and make them feel that love. (All else is commentary.) Honestly, that love alone is no small challenge; most people are given to love a few, maybe two dozen people in a lifetime, whereas even a small congregation like mine is already more than 300 souls.

Nonetheless, love is not to be confused with like. Liking a person is often largely a matter of shared interest, belief, humor, and compatibility. But loving another is a way of seeing them as God, their parents, and the tradition knows them. If we all made such a practice of loving-kindness (chesed), the world would be greatly improved.

In the Torah, love is rarely spoken and often ends badly. Even in this week's parshah, intimacy is concealed in deference to modesty and privacy of lovers: "Isaac brought her [Rebecca] into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rebecca as his wife. Isaac loved her, and thus found comfort after his mother's death." (Genesis 24:67) Rebecca and Isaac's love is not based on a liking, but a more resolute and robust soul's knowing. As Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (Belarus, 19th century) says, "He could have not loved her... Yet, love made his spirit joyful (korat ruach)." Literally, Isaac's spirit is cooled and calmed by her presence, guiding him to a more generous awareness, less reactive or liable to judge and then catch fire impulsively.

Judah Loew (Prague, 16th century) says that Rebecca represents chesed, most

often translated as loving-kindness or grace. Loew's perspective originates in the family servant Eliezer's solicitation of God's chesed (24:12, 27), and is further accented in midrash about the matriarchs. Chesed is akin to the love I implored my community to seek: a compassion for, a knowing of and attunement to the sacred in each person. Through such sacred attunement, Rebecca draws in the Divine Presence with her openhandedness. This is perhaps best symbolized in the way she generously responds to Eliezer's request for water: "Drink, and I will also water your camels." (24:14)

Would that public discourse could embody such chesed! As a paradigm, I'd like to focus on the poorly defined, over-broad, and shopworn term "cancellation." This has come to include legitimate termination or legal action, but also the dangerous and performative outrage of internet pile-on, social contagion, McCarthyist public shaming, or Maoist struggle session. If chesed is a measure of intellectual charity (assuming the best in another's thought and action), then cancellation is a sort of anti-chesed (presuming that a person ought to be judged by their worst moments). Cancellation has no Yom Kippur, no legitimate process for teshuvah (amends). Nor does cancellation recognize the Jewish precept of k'vod habriot (human dignity). Each person, regardless of celebrity, contains multitudes, and we can't fully know another person as God does. By reducing an artist (or professor, for that matter) to their basest actions, we have unwittingly objectified another individual, with no tempering of chesed. At our peril, we deny the inherent worth of each person and the possibility of repentance therein.

In my budding practice as a spiritual counselor with stuck artists, I am disappointed by the unjustness of this process and the lack of any corresponding process of redress. I can attest that artists can be canceled for any misstep, without accommodation for the necessity of art to be transgressive, challenging, and by its nature experimental and exploratory. Any unregulated surprise therefore becomes unforgivable. Art has the power to transform a fractured, even crumbling world by bringing forth new modes of expression.

"Eve" was a Twitch streamer I followed in my spare time. In trying to make an avant garde artistic production, she made a serious yet uncharacteristic mistake on air, was fired, and then even publicly shamed. To a degree, the audience could not distinguish art from artist (the Fundamental Attribution Error), thereby penalizing an artist who took a risk in her art.

So I wrote to Eve, and she surprised me by writing back. Our conversations meandered among Kurosawa films, Mongolian heavy metal, and the inescapable tension between making art that's public-facing, and art that's risky, personal, intimate, even spiritual. In less than two years, I've watched her go from desperation to a place of grace, gratitude, and giving, nurturing an immediate and real artistic community in her hometown that has nothing to do with Twitter and Twitch. Over the same time, I found a soul-mate for the lonely work of creating. We

taught each other creative courage. This is a lesson that more of the world needs to learn.

Cultivating chesed is the lesson plan. With creative courage, this chesed must be expressed in really attuning to and attending to the expression of another, artist or not. For example, Eliezer's story of seeking Rebecca to wife for Isaac may be the first redundancy in the Torah; he experiences, tells, and re-tells, all before eating (24:33). As Rashi cites in midrash, "The ordinary talk of the patriarchs' servants is more pleasing to God than even the Torah of their children; Eliezer's story is doubled, yet many important laws are only learned by inference." By listening to human narrative, and even re-visiting what's challenging, chesed recognizes k'vod habriot in each soul and makes an opening for teshuvah.

As I meagerly tried to offer and teach each human in my congregation, art and other forms of communal discourse must be attended to, seen, and heard as God and our tradition might. This requires chesed, a generous awareness of listening and re-listening, attending to and attuning with the message of the performer, the speaker or teacher. It's surely my fervent hope that we have not lost the power to love, listen, and attend, even to those who might challenge us through art or argument. Without the courageous creativity of artists, our society can only become more brittle. So, we as a public are doomed to sacrifice the capacity of art to surprise and change us, and the power of expression to remake and create a new, more open society. We will surely be the poorer for it. *(Rabbi Alon C Ferency is a spiritual counselor to stuck artists worldwide – actors, filmmakers, game designers, novelists, painters, poets, sculptors, and songwriters; of any faith or none at all. You can connect with him at [www.eclecticcleric.com](http://www.eclecticcleric.com) and meditate together on [InsightTimer.com/EclecticCleric](http://InsightTimer.com/EclecticCleric).)*

### [Praying in the Fields: Chayei Sarah by Drew Kaplan](#)

<http://canfeinesharim.org/parshat-chayei-sarah-praying-in-the-fields/>

Since Yitzhak went to the field to pray in this week's Torah portion, the world has not been the same. The Talmud offers two sources for our requirement to pray three daily prayers; one is the prayers themselves of the three forefathers of the Jewish people. Avraham is credited with instituting shaharit, the morning prayer; Yitzhak grants us minhah, the afternoon prayer; and Ya'akov gives us ma'ariv, the evening prayer.

The Talmud cites a verse from the Book of Genesis to establish each prayer. For Yitzhak, on whom we will concentrate, it is written (Brachot 26b):

Yitzhak instituted the afternoon prayer service, as it is said, "And Yitzhak went out to su'ah in the field before evening" (Gen. 24:63); and there is no siyah except prayer, as it is said, "A prayer of the afflicted man when he swoons, and pours forth his supplications (siho) before HaShem" (Ps. 102:1).[1]

The Sages saw these verses as being connected in the linguistic similarity of the word siah, and they saw in them that what Yitzhak was doing was

praying. However, this claim is made on the seemingly ambiguous meaning of su'ah found in the verse related to Yitzhak. From where does this connection come?

One Talmudic commentary, Tosafot, suggests that the reason why this word is used in both places is that while one might have thought that Yitzhak simply went out to speak with someone in the field, he actually went out to pray.[2]

However, the term evokes a striking similarity to a word of the same root found earlier in Genesis: "Now all the trees (siah) of the field were not yet on the earth and all the herb of the field had not yet sprouted, for HaShem G-d had not yet sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to work the soil." (Gen. 2:5)

The usage in our verse relating to Yitzhak may now take on an additional dimension – it seems as there may have been an agricultural element to Yitzhak's outing in the field. Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir (Rashbam) suggests that what Yitzhak was actually doing in the field was planting trees as well as checking up on his agricultural efforts. (Gen. 24:63, "Ve-yetze Yitzhak la-su'ah basadeh").[3]

What was it that the Talmudic sages saw in our verse to understand that Yitzhak was praying? Is it possible that the Torah would make sure to tell us that Yitzhak was engaged in mundane agricultural activities? The answer leads one to see that his action was one from which later generations can learn much.

The connection between these two verses in their use of this same word is deeply meaningful when one considers that on the second verse — "Now all the trees (siach) of the field were not yet on the earth and all the herb of the field had not yet sprouted, for HaShem G-d had not yet sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to work the soil." (Gen. 2:5) Rabbi Solomon Yitzhaki (Rashi), the eleventh century medieval scholar, comments:

For what is the reason that G-d had not yet sent rain, because there was no man to work the land and there was no one to acknowledge the goodness of the rain, and when man came and knew that they (the rain) are a need for the world, he prayed for them and they came down, and the trees and grasses sprouted." (Gen. 2:5, "ki lo himtir").

The usage of the term in this verse may be about agriculture, but the verse is telling us that human beings are needed in order to pray!

But that is not all. The verse preceding the above one states: "These are the products of the heaven and the earth when they were created on the day that HaShem G-d made earth and heaven." (Gen. 2:4) There is a direct connection between G-d's creating of the si'ah and to the tending of the si'ah done by man. In other words, G-d created it in order for man to tend to it. Being involved with the earth is an act whereby one connects with G-d's handiwork.

In line with this, Rabbi Yohanan, the late third century Talmudic sage, said that one may not pray in a house without windows (Brahot 34b). Rashi commented that Rabbi Yohanan said this because looking outside causes one to focus towards

heaven and one's heart will be humbled (Brahot 34b, s.v.halonot). More than just simply focusing towards heaven, however, one will be able to see the natural landscape – G-d's handiwork. By praying in a house without windows, one would be surrounded by man's handiwork, which does not strike one with as much awe and appreciation for G-d.

Rebbe Nahman of Breslov instructed his followers to engage in hitbodedut, or to speak with G-d in the field for an hour every day. In explaining Rebbe Nahman's teachings, Rabbi Natan Greenberg stated that real prayer involves conversation with the natural world around a person. Indeed, the strength of prayer comes from the Divine, spiritual energy flowing from nature.

A person needs all the spiritual energy of the earth to give strength to one's prayer. Yitzhak first manifests this type of prayer through his connection to nature. He comes to it because he finds it difficult to relate to the world around him. He wants to be in a simple world, G-d's world, so he walks and prays in the field.[4]

For Yitzhak, praying to G-d in nature was a central part of his Divine service, and it can be for us as well. As Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig wrote:

“It is interesting that in this week's parashah, when it is reported that Yitzhak davens (prays) Minhah, it says, ‘Vayetze Yitzhak lasu'ah bashadeh’ – Yitzhak went out to supplicate in the field. He left behind all of his worries, and put everything aside so that he could focus on Hashem. And we must do the same – not only every day, to daven Minchah – but throughout our busy, busy lives. We must find the time to leave our worldly cares behind, and venture out into the fields where we will encounter Hashem.”[5]

The natural world is an excellent setting for praying to G-d. While the Sages call for daily prayer within the walls of the synagogue, Rebbe Nahman calls for daily conversations with G-d in nature, while also leaving open the possibility of occasional prayers to G-d beyond the walls of the prayer hall. By both our going out and working with G-d's creation and by praying within this creation – we seize the opportunity to grow closer to G-d.

Our ability to connect to our Creator in the world He created is an indicator of our ability to live in balance with that natural world. A primarily urban, post-industrial Jewish people that is alienated from G-d's Oneness as manifested in the natural world will certainly misuse that which G-d has given us.

The litany of ecological problems we face — from air and water pollution to species extinction and urban sprawl — testify to the Jewish people's disconnect from the natural environment which G-d gave them. Re-connecting to the inspired outdoor prayers of our forefathers can help us regain a sense of the grandeur of G-d's world and of our responsibility to live in balance with it. *(Rabbi Drew Kaplan is an experienced Jewish educator who especially enjoys sharing the richness of the Jewish tradition. Presently, he serves as the Director of Pastoral Care at a senior living facility in the greater Cincinnati area.)* [1] In another Talmudic statement, these two verses are switched around to derive an imperative for prayer (Avodah Zarah 7b): Rabbi Eliezer says, “One should request one's needs

and, after that, one should pray, as it is said, 'A prayer of the afflicted man when he swoons, and ours forth his supplications (siho) before HaShem' (Ps. 102:1) – there is no sihah except for prayer, as it is said, 'And Yitzhak went out to siah in the field' (Gen. 24:63)." [2] See Avodah Zarah. 7b, Tosafot, s.v. ve-ayn sihah. [3] By contrast, Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra suggested that what Yitzhak did in this verse was merely to walk between the shrubs (Gen. 24.63, s.v. la-su'ah) – simply enjoying them. [4] Shiur on Likutei Moharan, part 2, teaching 11. Rabbi Greenberg is the Rosh Yeshiva of the Bat Ayin Yeshiva. This shiur is available in audio form at bat-ayin.org. [5] Rabbi of Congregation B'nai Shalom in Williamsville, New York.

Chayei Sarah: An Arresting Image of Rebekah and Isaac's Initial Meeting by Dr. Shula Lederman

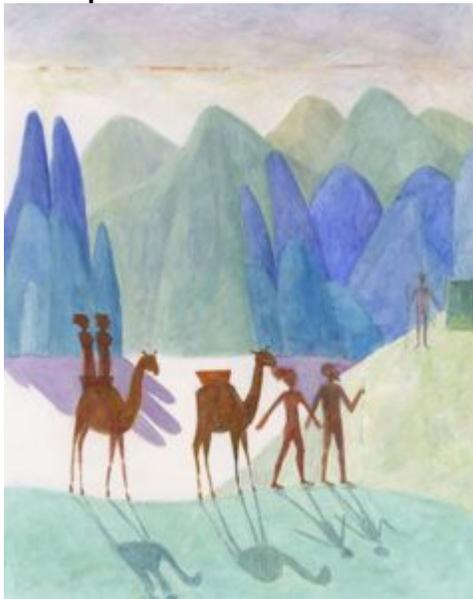
<https://schechter.edu/parashat-chayei-sarah-an-arresting-image-of-rebekah-and-isaacs-initial-meeting/>

Last week, we read the dramatic Akedah story and we heard God's promise to Abraham – "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven" (Gen. 22:17). In our Parasha Chai Sarah, Abraham just lost his wife Sarah and now he must take charge to fulfill this promise – he must find a wife for Isaac.

Not wanting Isaac to wed from among, "the daughters of the Canaanites" (Gen. 24:3), he asks his trusted servant to go to his family in Aram-Naharaim to choose a bride.

Why is Abraham sending his servant and not Isaac himself? What can we learn about Isaac and Rebekah from the biblical description of their meeting? How is the description of this meeting significant for continuing Abraham's mission?

Avner Moriah's portrayal for Chayei Sarah offers an interesting visual artistic interpretation to all these queries.



In the picture we see two camels against a background of green and light- and dark-blue barren mountains that shed a purple shadow under the late afternoon sun. The small figure of Isaac with a staff in his hand is seen in the far distance, standing in front of Sarah's tent. Isaac himself seems to be a self-effacing figure, a sort of a passive bridge between his father, Abraham, and his son Jacob, a puzzling

and not clearly defined personality.

We are told that Isaac came from the way of Beer-lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the land of the South. “(Gen. 24:62), the hills in the picture resemble the hills of Edom in the south. Describing the meeting the text notes that Isaac “went out walking in the field toward evening” (Gen. 24:63), and he “lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, there were camels coming” (Gen. 24:63). He sees the camels but perhaps does not realize that one of them carries Rebekah.

She, on the other hand, having left her family and her home, is very anxious to meet her future husband. Seeing the distant figure seems to her to be a sign of welcome and, “she alighted from the camel” (Gen 24:64). As excited and anxious as Rebekah, her two maids are standing (rather than sitting) on the back of a second camel to get a better look at the distant figure.

Standing near the camel and next to the servant (perhaps even touching his arm), Rebekah asks: “Who is that man walking in the field toward us?” and the servant answers: “That is my master” (Gen. 24:65). She knows then that she has arrived in Canaan, as the servant told her family that Abraham determined that Isaac should never be taken outside of the land of Caanan, which is why she had to be brought to him (Gen. 24:8).

Rebekah, the servant, the maids, and the camels all cast shadows on the ground in front of them, which creates a realistic picture of the time of day, “toward evening,” but the figure of Isaac in the distance has no shadow. Knowing that Isaac is meditating in the field and seeing him in the distance without a shadow suggests that he is somewhat disconnected from their reality.

What the artist has visualized here is Rebekah staging her own “Lekh Lekha” (“Get thee out of thy country”) journey in order to continue Abraham’s divine task and mission. In her active engagement Rebekah stands in contrast to a passive contemplative Isaac, who takes notice of her and brings her into his mother’s tent only after “the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done” (Gen. 24:66).

Even so, it is clear that in his own way Isaac understands his destined role in the furtherance of his father’s mission.

The conclusion of the parashah notes three successive steps regarding the meeting between Isaac and Rebekah. He brings her to his mother’s tent and marries her, he loves her and only then he is comforted in the loss of his mother.

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### Yahrtzeits

Larry Ozarow remembers his mother Mollie Ozarow on Mon. Nov. 21 Cheshvan 27.