



# Likkutei Sichos

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## The True Life of Sarah

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## 1.

### THE NAME OF THE *PARSHAH*

We have discussed many times regarding the names of the *sedros*<sup>1</sup> that the name of each *sedrah* conveys its content. The same is true of the name of our *sedrah*, “*Chayei Sarah*” {“the life of Sarah”} — it conveys the content of the entire *sedrah*.

This is perplexing: The **entire** *sedrah* chronicles events that did not take place during “**the life** of Sarah” (during her lifetime). Just the opposite: **All** of the events of the *sedrah* took place after Sarah’s passing.

Not only did they actually take place after her passing, but nature of the events described in the *sedrah* are also **the antithesis** of “the life of Sarah:”

The first section {of the *sedrah*} relates how Avraham purchased the cave of Machpelah for Sarah’s **burial**; the second topic<sup>2</sup> is the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivkah. At the end of the account, the verse says,<sup>3</sup> “Yitzchak was comforted after {the passing of} his mother” {and Rashi comments:} “When she {a person’s mother} dies, he finds comfort in his wife.” The same is true (and to a greater extent) of the third topic {which discusses that}<sup>4</sup> “Avraham took another wife...,” and {later} continues, “these are the descendants of Yishmael...” All of this is the complete antithesis of “the life of Sarah,” since the approach of (the life of) Sarah was to “**banish** this maidservant and her son...”<sup>5</sup>

How then can we say that the title of *sedrah*, “the life of Sarah,” describes the content of the *sedrah* — and of the entire *sedrah*?

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<sup>1</sup> {The weekly Torah portion, commonly referred to as the *parshah* or *parshas hashavua*.}

<sup>2</sup> *Bereishis* 24:1 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Bereishis* 24:67 and *Rashi* on the verse. See *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Bereishis* 25:1 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Bereishis* 21:10.

## 2.

### TRUE LIFE

The explanation is as follows:

The explanation of the *Talmud's* statement,<sup>6</sup> “Yaacov, our forefather didn't die.... Just as his descendants are alive, so, too, he is alive,” is well known:

True life is eternal, everlasting life. Achieving true life is only possible for people who are attached to Hashem, the source of true life and eternity. As the verse says:<sup>7</sup> “But Hashem, the L-rd, is true, He is the living L-rd,” and<sup>8</sup> “You who **cleave** to Hashem your L-rd, are {all} **alive**....”

It is therefore understood that it is apparent that we see that Yaacov lived a true life — an eternal life, a life of holiness — when we see the **eternity** of his life: even after his soul left his body, it continued onward through “his descendants” who are “alive.” Their lives are the same<sup>9</sup> as their forefather Yaacov's life.

The same is true of “the life of Sarah”: Sarah's life became revealed and established {as a real and true life} when the impact of the years of her life were (also) apparent after her physical lifetime — when **her** activities of goodness and holiness endured (also) later {after her passing}. Only then, her 127 years {on this earth} can be called “the life of Sarah,” a life worthy of its name — the true life of Sarah our matriarch.

Accordingly, we can understand {how} the section of the *sedrah* which recounts the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivkah {expresses “the life of Sarah”}: The conduct of Yitzchak, who was the child of Sarah (“her descendents are alive”), was in harmony with (the approach of) the life of

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<sup>6</sup> *Taanis* 5b.

<sup>7</sup> *Yirmiyahu* 10:10.

<sup>8</sup> *Devarim* 4:4.

<sup>9</sup> {When the Jewish people follow in the ways of Yaacov, (living their life with the same values as Yaacov) then this is indeed a continuation of Yaacov's life.}

Sarah. The same is true of the conduct of Rivkah whom he married, as the verse says,<sup>10</sup> “Yitzchak brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah...” {and Rashi comments:} “She was {exactly like} his mother Sarah....” {Meaning,} the {miraculous} incidents in Sarah’s life (her candles continued to burn from Shabbos eve to the following Shabbos eve; there was a blessing in her dough; and a cloud was {continuously} fixed over her tent)<sup>11</sup> persisted {after Sarah’s passing} in Rivkah’s life. This {perpetuation of Sarah’s way of life} specifically illustrates the truth and eternity of “the life of Sarah.”

This explanation is insufficient, however, because the majority of the section does not discuss their actual marriage. Rather, it primarily recounts the particular events and conversations that occurred during Eliezer’s mission {to find Yitzchak a wife} (how he met Rivkah, and how he related this to Besuel and Lavan and won their approval for the match, etc.). (This is aside from the fact that the above explanation only addresses the relevancy of one section of the *sedrah*, and not the other two sections mentioned above.)

### 3.

#### FOUR QUESTIONS

We can understand this by prefacing with the following {point that requires} explanation: Why does the first section of the *sedrah* also recount at length the negotiations specifically that Avraham held with the Chitites and Ephron regarding the purchase of the cave of Machpelah?

The following also requires explanation: Regarding the beginning of Avraham’s speech to the Chitites<sup>12</sup> — “I am an immigrant and a resident among you” — our Sages say:<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Bereishis* 24:67 and Rashi’s commentary on the verse.

<sup>11</sup> Rashi’s commentary on *Bereishis* 24:67; *Bereishis Rabbah* 60:16. {These three miraculous occurrences happened as a result of Sarah’s exemplary observance of the three *mitzvos* of lighting Shabbos candles, separating *challah*, and family purity. The fact that they also continued in Rivkah’s life implies that she also observed them scrupulously. (See commentary supra, “*Amar Nekai*” (*Bartenura*) to Rashi loc. cit.)}

<sup>12</sup> *Bereishis* 23:4.

<sup>13</sup> Rashi on the verse, quoting *Bereishis Rabbah* chap. 58: 6.

{Avraham said:} If you wish {to sell me the cave of Machpelah} then I am an immigrant {and I will purchase it from you}. But, if not, I will be a resident and will take it by law, since Hashem said to me, “I will give this land to your descendants.”<sup>14</sup>

We need to clarify:

- a. Since Avraham could have taken the cave of Machpelah “by law,” why did he make every effort to have it sold to him (and “for its full price”),<sup>15</sup> saying, “I am an immigrant”?
- b. Since it hadn’t yet belonged to Avraham (Hashem had only **assured** him about the future: “**I will give** this land to your descendants”), how would he have been able to take it “by law”?

The end of the *sedrah* also requires explanation:

On the verse,<sup>16</sup> “Yitzchak and Yishmael buried him {Avraham}” our Sages say<sup>17</sup> (and Rashi quotes it in his commentary),<sup>18</sup> “From here {the fact that the verse says Yitzchak's name first} we see that Yishmael repented and let Yitzchak proceed before him.”<sup>19</sup> We need to clarify: Why does the Torah only hint at Yishmael’s repentance when Avraham is buried (after his passing)? After all, Yishmael had repented earlier while Avraham was still alive, as implied by the phrase, “good ripe age”<sup>20</sup> that the Torah says regarding Avraham.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Bereishis* 12:7.

<sup>15</sup> {*Ibid.*, 23:9.}

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:9.

<sup>17</sup> *Bava Basra*, 16b. See *Bereishis Rabbah* chap. 62:3.

<sup>18</sup> On the above verse.

<sup>19</sup> {I.e., by letting Yitzchak proceed first although he was younger, Yishmael acknowledged that he was Avraham's rightful heir.}

<sup>20</sup> {*Ibid.*, 15:15; 25:8}

<sup>21</sup> End of Rashi, *Ibid.*

## 4.

### AVRAHAM VS. SARAH

To clarify these issues, we must preface by discussing the difference between Avraham and Sarah regarding their relationship with their descendants:

Literally, Avraham was the father of Yishmael, not only of Yitzchak, {and embraced that relationship} to the extent that, as our Sages say,<sup>22</sup> the description “your only son who you love”<sup>23</sup> could refer equally to both Yitzchak and Yishmael. Moreover, Avraham fathered Yishmael before Yitzchak.

Meaning, other nations descend from Avraham, not only the Jewish people, as epitomized by what Hashem said {to Avraham},<sup>24</sup> “I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.” {Meaning,} Avraham is “the **father** of the entire world.”<sup>25</sup>

Sarah, by contrast, was the mother of Yitzchak alone. She has a connection exclusively with the Jewish people .

Similarly, there is also the difference between Avraham’s *avodah*<sup>26</sup> and Sarah’s:

Avraham publicized G-dliness to **all** types of people: “Our forefather Avraham caused the name of Hashem to be called by every passerby,”<sup>27</sup> even Arabs who “bow down to the dust of their feet,”<sup>28</sup> without considering whether they would later remain under his influence or not.

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<sup>22</sup> *Sanhedrin*, 89b.; *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, chap. 31.; *Tanchuma, Bereishis Rabbah*, and Rashi, on *Bereishis* 22:2; et al.

<sup>23</sup> *Bereishis* 22:2.

<sup>24</sup> *Bereishis* 17:5.

<sup>25</sup> Rashi’s commentary on *Bereishis* 17:5, based on *Berachos* 13a. See *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 49:2; end of ch. 51. See *Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Bikurim*,” 1:4; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Bikurim*,” ch. 4, par. 3., et. al.

<sup>26</sup> {Divine service.}

<sup>27</sup> See *Sotah*, 10a, ff.; *Bereishis Rabbah*, end of ch. 54; end of ch. 39; ch. 43, par. 7; chap. 49, par. 4; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 122 ff.

<sup>28</sup> See *Bava Metzia* 86b, quoted by Rashi, *Bereishis* 18:4.

In contrast, the effluence and diffusion of G-dliness that Sarah enabled (from Yitzchak's birth onward) was directed only to a fitting place, to the side of holiness (as is indicated in the story of Rabbi Bena'ah,<sup>29</sup> as explained by Chassidus<sup>30</sup> at length.)

This {difference} also expressed itself in relation to Avraham's son, Yishmael. Sarah told Avraham (and in this she succeeded) to “**banish** this maidservant and her son, because this maidservant's son will not inherit together with my son, with Yitzchak,” although, “this matter {expelling Yishmael} was very bad in the eyes of Avraham, on account of his son.”<sup>31</sup>

Avraham spread G-dliness to everyone; therefore, “the matter was very bad... on account of his son” — “{the fact that} she told him to banish him.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore: Avraham entreated {Hashem} (successfully), “If only Yishmael will live before you”<sup>33</sup> {i.e., Yishmael should repent and behave according to Hashem's will.}”

For Sarah, however, Yishmael was inconsequential when compared to Yitzchak. Therefore, it was necessary to “**banish** this maidservant and her son, because {this maidservant's son} will not inherit together with my son...,” since it was not feasible for Yishmael to take Avraham's bounty together with Yitzchak,<sup>34</sup> {alongside} the Jewish people.

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<sup>29</sup> *Bava Basra*, 58a. {The Talmud relates that Rabbi Bena'ah would mark burial sites so people could avoid them and thereby avoid contracting ritual impurity. When he came to the cave of Machpelah, the burial site of Avraham and Sarah, he saw Eliezer, Avraham's servant, standing outside. Eliezer informed him that inside, Sarah was holding Avraham and examining his head. Chassidus explains that Sarah was combing the strands of Avraham's hair. Hair represents the externality of Avraham's spiritual energy, which can be drawn to unholy places. Since Avraham endeavored to spread G-dliness to all, regardless of their character or level, it was possible that some of the G-dly light ended up in unholy places. Sarah was separating the spiritual energy, ensuring that it would only be expended for holiness.}

<sup>30</sup> See *Or Hatorah*, “*Bereishis*,” 120a ff.; 442b ff.; *Torah Chaim*, *Bereishis* 125d ff. See also *Biurei HaZohar*, by the Mitteler Rebbe, “*Bereishis*,” 13b., discourse entitled “*Ve'atem Hadveikim 1926*,” ch. 2; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 339 ff.

<sup>31</sup> *Bereishis* 21:11.

<sup>32</sup> Rashi on the verse.

<sup>33</sup> *Bereishis* 17:18.

<sup>34</sup> {In the original Hebrew, “*hashpaah*,” a general term to convey the idea of influence.}

## 5.

### NO COMPARISON

This {above-mentioned} idea is the central theme of the three sections (and narratives) of our *sedrah*:

The cave of *Machpelah* is the burial site of Adam and Chavah,<sup>35</sup> from whom all of mankind descended. It would seem therefore, that the cave of *Machpelah* shouldn't have an exclusive connection to the Jewish people specifically. Nevertheless, we see that Avraham made an effort and purchased this cave for Sarah's burial, and the three patriarchs and the {four} matriarchs are buried there, meaning, it belongs to the Jewish people exclusively. This proves that the Jewish people are the true progeny of Adam and Chavah, and that all the other nations are insignificant in comparison.

Then, the *sedrah* teaches (in the account of Eliezer's mission) a more profound idea: The greatness of the Jewish people is not just in relation to the nations that have no connection to Avraham, but also in relation to those that *do* have some connection:

It is said regarding Eliezer, Avraham's servant, that he would "draw and give others to drink from his master's teachings."<sup>36</sup> Additionally (in the account of his mission {to find a suitable wife of Yitzchak}), the Torah recounts the numerous miracles that Hashem showed Eliezer (as he carried out Avraham's mission). Furthermore, from the lengthy recounting of the narrative, our Sages learn that "the ordinary conversation of the patriarchs' servants is more pleasing {to Hashem} than the Torah of their children...."<sup>37</sup> Despite all of this, Avraham **could not** marry off Yitzchak to Eliezer's

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<sup>35</sup> *Eruvin*, 53a; *Sotah*, 13a; *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, end of ch. 20, quoted in Rashi's commentary on *Bereishis* 23:2.

<sup>36</sup> *Yoma*, 28b; Rashi's commentary on *Bereishis* 15:2.

<sup>37</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah*, chap. 60:8; Rashi, *Bereishis*, 24:42. {In the Torah, many *mitzvos* are communicated by very few and general words. In fact, some laws are deduced from the seemingly superfluous addition of merely one letter or word. In contrast, the narrative of Eliezer's mission to find a suitable wife for Yitzchak is not only elaborated upon, but is actually repeated in the Torah.}



daughter, since “my son is blessed and you are cursed, and the cursed cannot unite with the blessed.”<sup>38</sup>

Meaning, despite all of Eliezer’s {superlative} qualities, he was not only on a lower level than Yitzchak, but in relation to Yitzchak, he was like “someone who is cursed” compared with “someone who is blessed.”

## 6.

### YITZCHAK VS. YISHMAEL

At the end of the *sedrah*, the Torah affords us with additional insight into the great import of this advantage: The Jewish people are outstanding even in relation to the {other} **descendants** of Avraham — to the extent that these descendants have no importance at all.

After the Torah relates that “Avraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah,” and “she bore **him...**,”<sup>39</sup> the verse says, “Avraham gave **all that he had** to Yitzchak; but to the sons of the concubines..., Avraham gave gifts, and **he sent them away from his son Yitzchak...**”<sup>40</sup>

The same is true in relation to the descendants of Yishmael: Although they were “descendants of Yishmael, **the son of Avraham,**”<sup>41</sup> the Torah immediately adds and emphasizes {that he was Yishmael} “who Hagar **the Egyptian, the maidservant of Sarah,** bore...”<sup>42</sup> {Meaning,} Yishmael's existence (together with all future generations of his “descendants”) is as one born to “the maidservant of Sarah”— relative to Yitzchak, the son of Sarah, Yishmael is insignificant .

[On this basis, we can understand why the Torah hints at Yishmael's repentance in connection with the narrative of Avraham’s burial, and {more

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<sup>38</sup> Rashi, *ibid.*, 24:39, quoting from *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 59:9.

<sup>39</sup> {*Bereishis*, 25:1-2.}

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:5-6.

<sup>41</sup>{*Ibid.*, v. 12.}

<sup>42</sup> {*Ibid.*}

particularly} in the fact the Yishmael “let Yitzchak proceed before him”: The (principal) sin of Yishmael for which Avraham was compelled to banish Yishmael together with Hagar was his claim to be the “firstborn,” and therefore {the one who} was entitled to take “a double portion {of the inheritance}.”<sup>43</sup> He didn't recognise the truth that he was only the maidservant's son (and not an heir), and that the legitimate heir was Yitzchak, the matron's son.<sup>44</sup> As Sarah said: “Banish this maidservant and her son, because this maidservant's son **will not inherit** together with my son, with Yitzchak.”

Therefore, Yishmael's repentance was expressed:

- a. specifically in the context of Avraham's burial (after Avraham's passing, when in a practical sense, it was clear that he acknowledged that he wasn't a heir);
- b. by Yishmael allowing Yitzchak to proceed first demonstrating that Yishmael recognized the truth and acknowledged that Yitzchak was the **heir** (and as such, obligated to bury Avraham), while Yishmael was the maidservant's son.]<sup>45</sup>

This is the general theme linking the subjects discussed in the *sedrah* with the *sedrah's* name — “*Chayei Sarah*”: These subjects underscore the unique accomplishment of Sarah's life work (which was her true life), emphasizing the incomparable difference and distance between Yishmael and Yitzchak, between Jews and gentiles.

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<sup>43</sup> Rashi's commentary on *Bereishis*, 21:10. See *Bereishis Rabbah*, 53:11; *Tosefta Sotah*, ch. 6, sec. 3.

<sup>44</sup> This was possibly the cause and catalyst of his turn to bad, etc; see Rashi's commentary on *Bereishis* 21:9,11.

<sup>45</sup> See *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 62, sec. 3: “Here the maidservant's son honoured the matron's son.”

## 7.

FOR THE SAKE OF YISRAEL AND TORAH

A deeper explanation of the above:

Heaven and earth and all their hosts (including the nations of the world) exist “for the sake of Yisrael.”<sup>46</sup> The entire purpose of their existence hinges on the Jewish people. Consequently, if non-Jews don’t fulfil their purpose, there is no longer any reason for them to exist.

[On this basis we can (tentatively) explain the meaning and definition of the seven Noahide laws:<sup>47</sup> The seven Noahide laws are not an end and goal **unto themselves** (for their fulfilment alone). Rather, their purpose is for the sake of the Jewish people and the Torah — to facilitate the Jewish people’s fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvos*. In order for the Jewish people to be able to observe Torah and *mitzvos* (to draw {into the world} the G-dly light that is beyond the world), the world must be “inhabitable,”<sup>48</sup> fitting and prepared for it. This is accomplished through the seven Noahide laws, which make the world a **civilized** place.

Therefore, when a gentile transgresses one of these seven laws, **irrespective** of which law, he is liable for death<sup>49</sup> — the abrogation of his existence. The purpose and cause of his existence is (not for his own sake, but rather) “for the sake of Yisrael.” Therefore, when he fails to fulfill his purpose, the basis of his existence in the world is **automatically** forfeited.]

Since this is the basis of their existence {i.e., the purpose for everything’s existence is for the sake of Yisrael}, it was imperative that this dependency be clear immediately, in relation to the first Jew, Avraham.

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<sup>46</sup> Rashi’s commentary on *Bereishis* 1:1; see *Vayikra Rabbah*, ch. 36, sec. 4.

<sup>47</sup> {Seven laws, six of which were given to Adam, and the seventh to Noach, which apply to all humanity.}

<sup>48</sup> {*Yeshayahu* 45:18; see the sources mentioned in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 159, fn 63.}

<sup>49</sup> Either by a human court or by the hand of Heaven; see *Sanhedrin*, 58b; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” end of ch. 9; *Ramban*’s commentary on *Bereishis* 34:13; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 158, fn. 61.

This point is emphasized in all three sections of *parshas Chayei Sarah* as well, as will be explained.

## 8.

### THE LAND OF ISRAEL

In the first section {of the *parshah*}, this idea is underscored by Avraham's words, "*An immigrant and a resident* — if you wish, I am an immigrant {and will purchase the cave of Machpelah from you}, but if not, etc. ”

Hashem created the land of Israel with the intention to give it to the Jewish people. (Originally) “when He willed, He gave it to them” — to the nations of the world — in order that “when He willed, He took it from them and gave it to us.”<sup>50</sup> The procedure was that every piece of the land of Israel had its **time** and its **means**, when and how it would come into the Jewish people's possession: In general, the land of Israel was only able to come into the Jewish people's possession during Yehoshua's time (had it happened earlier, then “the wild beasts will multiply over you”),<sup>51</sup> and it came into their possession through **conquest**.<sup>52</sup> {In contrast,} the cave of Machpelah came into Avraham's possession through his purchase of it (for Sarah's burial) from the Chitites.

This was what Avraham meant when he said, “If you wish {to sell me the cave of Machpelah} then I am an immigrant {and I will purchase it from you}. But, if not... I will take it by right, since Hashem said to me, ‘I will give this land to your descendants’”: If the Chitites would comply with the intent and purpose for which Hashem had entrusted them with the cave of Machpelah (in order that they sell it to Avraham), then {Avraham would

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<sup>50</sup> Rashi's commentary on *Bereishis* 1:1.

<sup>51</sup> *Devarim* 7:22.

<sup>52</sup> And the lands of *Kani*, *Kenizi*, and *Kadmoni*, are destined to become our **future inheritance**. (Rashi, *Bereishis* 15:19; *Bereishis Rabbah*, end of chap. 44.) {Different portions of lands actually came into the Jewish people's possession at different times and through different means,} although the land of Israel was given to Avraham in its entirety all at once, at the *bris bein habesarim*.

say}, “I am an immigrant” and will **purchase** it from you. [Similarly, the true intent and purpose of the world is for the sake of **Torah**: The {fact that the} cave of Machpelah first belonged to the Chitites and Avraham had to buy it from them, added a section, and a teaching in **Torah** — “{deriving the halachic import of} ‘taking’ {stated with regard to marriage} from ‘taking’ in the context of the field of Ephron.”<sup>53</sup> And additional examples.]

If they do not want to sell it, however, then, “I will take it by law”:

If they would not adhere to the purpose and objective of their possession of the cave of *Machpelah*, their temporary ownership over it would be automatically cancelled, and {Avraham would say,} “I will take it by law.”

[All the above<sup>54</sup> is connected to “the life of Sarah” — the strength and life’s work of Sarah, as the verse prefaces:<sup>55</sup> “Then Avraham rose **from beside his dead, and spoke** to the Chitites, **saying**, I am an immigrant..., as will be explained.]

## 9.

### ELIEZER’S MISSION

This (the existence of the gentile nations, etc., “for the sake of Yisrael”) is also expressed in the second section {of our *parshah*, which recounts} the marriage of Yitzchak (who was the first to be born as a Jew) and Rivkah. The Torah’s lengthy account of the miracles that occurred to Eliezer, that he related to Lavan and Besuel, and thereby succeeded that they too recognised that “the matter came from Hashem”<sup>56</sup> and they agreed

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<sup>53</sup> *Kiddushin* 2a. {Just as the term "taking" used in story of Avraham’s purchase of by the field of Ephron’s field (i.e., the cave of I) entailed the exchange of money, so, too, the consecration of a wife for the purpose of marriage can be done through money.}

<sup>54</sup> {The manner and "strength" with which Avraham addressed the Chitites - was **through** the power and work of sarah who highlighted this approach that the whole entity of the nations of the world is solely for the Jews.}

<sup>55</sup> {*Bereishis* 23:3.}

<sup>56</sup> {*Bereishis* 24:50.}

to the match between Yitzchak and Rivkah — “Here is Rivkah before you, take her and go... just as Hashem spoke”<sup>57</sup> — expresses that the intent and purpose of everything that occurred was for Avraham and Yitzchak (“for the sake of Yisrael”).

Furthermore: When Besuel sought to impede this, his existence was **nullified** {i.e., he died.}<sup>58</sup>

Since Besuel’s *raison d’être* was to father Rivkah<sup>59</sup> — that Rivkah should be born from him and marry Yitzchak — the moment he wanted to interfere, his existence was nullified.

## 10.

### LIVING WITH AVRAHAM

This {idea} is similarly expressed in the third section of our *parshah*: The Torah emphasizes there that not only was Yishmael a “maidservant’s son” (a son of Sarah’s **maidservant**), but moreover, his existence was also specifically dependent on the fact that he **recognised** this:

On the verse at the end of the narrative, “he dwelt {*nafal*, lit. “fell”}<sup>60</sup> alongside their brethren,”<sup>61</sup> our Sages explain:<sup>62</sup> “Before Avraham died, ‘he dwelt.’ After he died, ‘he fell.’”<sup>63</sup>

The inner meaning of this explanation:

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<sup>57</sup> {*Bereishis* 24:51.}

<sup>58</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah* ch. 60, sec. 12; Rashi’s commentary on *Bereishis* 24:55; et. al.

<sup>59</sup> *Bereishis* 22:23.

<sup>60</sup> {Although the word “*nafal*” here means “dwelt,” it usually means “fell.”}

<sup>61</sup> {*Bereishis* 25:18.}

<sup>62</sup> Rashi commentary on *Bereishis* 25:18, from *Bereishis Rabbah*, end of ch. 62.

<sup>63</sup> {The Sages are addressing a seeming contradiction between two verses: In *Bereishis* 16:12, it says “he will **dwelt** alongside his brethren,” whereas in *Bereishis* 25:18, it says, “he dwelt {*nafal*, lit. “fell”} alongside their brethren.”}

Yishmael's repentance [his recognition that he was a "maidservant's son," as explained above] was a result of Avraham's prayer, "If only Yishmael will live before you"<sup>64</sup> — "he will live with **fear of You** {Hashem}."<sup>65</sup> Hashem accepted Avraham's prayer, as the verse says,<sup>66</sup> "As for Yishmael, I have heeded you..."

This is the meaning of, "Before Avraham died, he dwelt"; after Avraham died, he fell": As long as Avraham was "alive" with Yishmael (as exemplified by Yishmael's conduct), i.e., as long as Yishmael held fast to what Avraham had prayed for, "If only Yishmael will live with fear of You," and consequently, sensed that his real identity was being "the maidservant's son," he could  *dwell*  — his existence was justified. However, "after Avraham died," when Yishmael severed himself from {the values and teachings of} Avraham, then Yishmael  *fell*  — he became a non-entity.

## 11.

### FATHER VS RULER

And **this** idea — that the existence of non Jews is "for the sake of Yisrael" — is specifically connected with Sarah's *avodah*. Therefore, it is the essential point of the entire *parshas Chayei Sarah*:

The name "Avraham" was given (according to **Torah**) because "I have made you the father {*av*} of a multitude of nations."<sup>67</sup> This means that {in addition to his connection to the Jewish people,} (because of his accomplishments in the world — "father,") Avraham had a connection,<sup>68</sup> *lehavdil*, to "multitudes of nations" as well. For this reason — because of his influence on the world {at large} — the gentile nations do not perceive that they do not exist for their own sakes (and that their existence is only "for the sake of Yisrael").

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<sup>64</sup> *Bereishis* 17:18.

<sup>65</sup> Rashi's commentary on *Bereishis* 17:18.

<sup>66</sup> {*Bereishis* 17:20.}

<sup>67</sup> *Bereishis* 17:5.

<sup>68</sup> See *Shabbos* 105a.

In contrast, {the name} Sarah comes from the word “*serarah*” {authority or rulership} — she “rules over all.”<sup>69</sup> As a result of Sarah’s approach, the nations of the world do perceive that the Jews are masters over the nations’ existence — they are “servants” to Sarah and her heirs, the Jewish people.

## 12.

### SARAH’S LIFE, REVEALED

Ostensibly, we can still ask: It is true that the events of the *sedrah* are illustrative of the *avodah* and unique accomplishment of Sarah. Nevertheless, since it recounts events that in actual fact occurred after her passing, {it would seem that} these events do not completely align with the meaning of “*Chayei Sarah*” — the 127 years that she lived in **this world** and performed her *avodah*!

The explanation: The essence of everything discussed in *parshas Chayei Sarah* (although they take place after her passing) was brought about by Sarah through her *avodah* (to cause *this world* to recognize that its existence is “for the sake of the Jewish people”) during her 127 years of life in this world.

However, when she was actually performing her *avodah*, its effects were concealed. Only after her passing did they become revealed .

[This is analogous to the well known concept<sup>70</sup> that souls in **Gan Eden** “delight in the radiance of the Divine Presence”: The “radiance of the Divine Presence” is “actually the radiance of their Torah and *avodah*” that they performed **in this world**. It is only that its *revelation* is later, in *Gan Eden*.]

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<sup>69</sup> Rashi’s commentary to *Bereishis* 17:15 (based on *Berachos* 13a.); see Rashi’s commentary to *Bereishis* 11:29.

<sup>70</sup> *Tanya* ch.39 (52b).



And since the ultimate completion of *avodah* is that its effects (eventually) become revealed (in the World to Come)

— as we have discussed at length<sup>71</sup> regarding the reward (revelation {of G-dliness}) in the world to come, that it is not a secondary, supplementary thing. Rather, the ultimate purpose of the **fulfillment** of *mitzvos* in this world is realized through the {G-dly light} that is drawn down through the fulfillment of *mitzvos*, becoming revealed in the world to come —

it is understood that the events described in this *sedrah* in which {the effects of} Sarah's *avodah* become revealed are “the life of Sarah” — the complete realization of the purpose of the 127 “years of Sarah's life.”

### 13.

#### A PRACTICAL DIRECTIVE

Everything in Torah serves as a lesson. There is a simple and clear lesson pertaining to these times {that can be derived} from the beginning and end of the *sedrah*:

Should the descendants of Yishmael allege that the cave of Machpelah belongs to them, since they are the children of Avraham, the *parshah* teaches us a clear response: In addition to the fact that the overwhelming majority of Arabs that live in the countries neighbouring *Eretz Yisrael* (and within *Eretz Yisrael*, in Chevron, etc.,) are **widely known not** to be descended from Yishmael,<sup>72</sup> even Yishmael himself had no connection to the cave of Machpelah. Avraham purchased the cave for **Sarah's** burial, and Yishmael was, as mentioned above, not Avraham's heir, and certainly not Sarah's. It is therefore understood that the cave of Machpelah belongs

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<sup>71</sup> *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 5, p. 243 ff.

<sup>72</sup> See *Ibn Ezra's* commentary on *Bereishis* 27:40 (at the end).

solely to Sarah's son, Yitzchak, and to the **offspring**<sup>73</sup> of Yitzchak — not to all of {the descendents of} Yitzchak,<sup>74</sup> but specifically to Yaakov.

An additional point that we learn from the end of the *sedrah*: When a time comes that Yishmael becomes “wild,” coming with “wild” allegations and demands, the Jews must not fear nor become intimidated, Heaven forbid. We only need to remind him of the truth — that his existence is that of one “who Hagar the Egyptian, **the maidservant of Sarah**, bore to Avraham,” and when he starts to consider himself as an existence unto himself (not as a descendent of Sarah's maidservant), then “they *fell* alongside their brethren.”<sup>75</sup>

Gentiles also believe in the Written Torah. Therefore, when this {truth} is internalised properly by the Jews, and they impart it to the gentiles appropriately, albeit with clear and explicit language and content

— certainly without becoming dejected, Heaven forbid, by the nations of the world, and particularly by those who consider themselves descendents of Yishmael —

then the gentiles will desist from pressuring the Jewish people. Because the gentiles, too, will perceive (especially by means of their *mazal*,<sup>76</sup> which sees {the truth}) that it is in their own self-interest for the Jewish people to retain control over the Machpelah cave, along with the entirety of *Eretz Yisrael* “according to its borders”<sup>77</sup>— completely and openly even during exile, “in the presence of all the Chitites.”<sup>78</sup>

— Based on talks delivered on Shabbos *parshas Chayei Sarah*, 5735 (1974) and 5736 (1975)

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<sup>73</sup>See <https://www.sefaria.org/Nedarim.31a.8?lang=bi>

<sup>74</sup> *Nedarim* 31a.

<sup>75</sup> {See *supra*, beg. of sec. 10.}

<sup>76</sup> *Megillah* 3a, et al. {See [Angels and Mazalot - Kabbalah, Chassidism and Jewish Mysticism](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/361901/jewish/Angels-and-Mazalot.htm) [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/361901/jewish/Angels-and-Mazalot.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/361901/jewish/Angels-and-Mazalot.htm)}

<sup>77</sup> {*Bamidbar* 34:2.}

<sup>78</sup> {*Bereishis* 23:18.}