

## **Parasha Chayei Sarah**

### **Sunday—Project Day**

Here are some research projects that you can share with the rest of your family on Shabbat to help them in their understanding of this week's parasha. You can choose just one, or you can do all of them, and you can do all the work today or spread it through the rest of the week.

1. Look up some information regarding Haran (the place Rebecca came from). Use books or the internet, or both. Find out:

...where it is on a modern map

...how far of a journey Eliezer would have had to make

...how long the journey might have taken

...what kind of terrain is in between Haran and where Abraham was

...anything else you can find out about Haran

2. Research the archaeological findings in Hebron. Find out:

...who the sons of Heth were

...where Machpelah and Mamre are in reference to modern Hebron

...what sites have been uncovered at Hebron

...anything else you can find out about archaeology in Hebron

3. Read some commentaries and word studies on the phrase in Gen. 25:18 that says “over against his brothers.”

...What does it mean?

...Is there any generational pattern that can be seen in Ishmael's descendants in later years? If so, what is it?

...Compare Ishmael's life to Abraham's and Isaac's, including length of life. What do you think is the significance of the differences?

## **Parasha Chayei Sarah**

**Monday**—Read Genesis 23

### ***Part 1: What is God Like?***

It is interesting that the story of the death of Sarah is introduced by talking about the life of Sarah. It is also significant that the story of her death is overshadowed by the purchase of the cave of Machpelah—Abraham's first possession in the land of promise and a first installment in the future abundance promised to Abraham's children.

a. What does this mixture of life and death tell you about God's perspective regarding those who know Him? Read Matt. 22:32.

b. What would be true, then, of those who *don't* know God? Read Eph. 2:1, 2.

c. Is the "life," the future and the hope that God gives to His people only referring to the future resurrection from the dead? Or does it include something else too? If so, what else does it include? Read John 10:9, 10.

***Part 2: Mitzvah Focus***

Read Lev. 19:11.

The traditional Jewish view is that this verse is referring to a denial of property rights.

a. In today's story, what property changed hands? What steps did Abraham go through to ensure proper legal procedure?

b. Most sources agree that Abraham paid an exorbitant price for the land. Many years later, when Jacob was buried here, the ownership of Abraham's heirs was still recognised.

Today, this piece of land is in the village of Hebron, in modern Israel. Its Muslim Arab residents, through the years, have made every attempt to erase any Jewish presence in Hebron as well as any trace of Jewish historical claim to Hebron. According to Lev. 19:11, who should own the legal right to Machpelah in Hebron?

c. Think about your own behavior with your friends and the members of your family. Do you respect the property of others and their right to control its use? Write down one thing you can do to improve in this area.

***Part 3: Echoes...in Tradition and the Bible***

a. Jewish teachers from ancient times exalted Sarah as a woman of exceptional godly character. Tradition says that when Sarah died, Abraham composed Prov. 31:10-31 as a eulogy for her. Read Prov. 31:10-31, paying special attention to v. 16.

b. Jewish tradition says that Sarah chose the field of Machpelah before she died. In what way could it be said that she planted a “vineyard” there? Read Is. 5:7 for some ideas.

c. We should never underestimate the far-reaching effects of a life of righteousness. Read 1 Peter 3:3-6. What is the standard for a righteous woman as exemplified by Sarah?

d. It is important to cultivate an appreciation for this kind of woman. If you are a boy, learn to value these qualities in the women and girls you know, and make an effort to encourage them by communicating your appreciation of these qualities in them. If you are a girl, consider how you can follow Sarah’s example. What specific steps can you take today?

## **Parasha Chayei Sarah**

**Tuesday**—Read Genesis 24:1-26

### ***Part 1: What is God Like?***

a. What did God do for Abraham's servant?

b. What does this story tell you about how God deals with people? Read James 1:5.

### ***Part 2: Mitzvah Focus***

Read Deut. 28:9.

To “walk in His ways” means to be like Him—to do things the way that He would do them.

a. Read Philippians 2:3-7. What is one characteristic of God that we are to imitate?

b. How did Rebecca practice this mitzvah in today's reading?

***Part 2: Mitzvah Focus***

Read Deut. 8:10.

Jewish tradition interprets this verse as a commandment to recite the *Birkat Hamazon* (Grace After Meals). While this is a very good practice, the principle of this mitzvah is much broader than that. God wants us to be thankful for all the good He brings to us.

a. What actions are associated with thanksgiving?

Ps. 9:1, 2

Ps. 92:1, 2

b. In today's story, how did Eliezer's behavior reveal the thankfulness of his heart?

c. What actions express the opposite of a thankful spirit?

Eph. 5:4

Rom. 1:21-23

d. When we are thankful, what effect does it have on God's reputation?

Ps. 50: 3

c. Think of one person, among those you associate with frequently, that you tend to view as fairly unimportant. Write down one thing you can do for that person today to demonstrate the same unselfish attitude that God has.

***Part 3: Echoes....in Tradition and the Bible***

The Torah is usually very brief in telling its stories. The detail which is used to describe the errand of Abraham's servant is significant. Throughout the story of Rebecca in this week's portion, the name of Abraham's servant is never mentioned. Tradition associates him with Eliezer.

a. Read the following verses and note what they tell you about Eliezer and what kind of man he was.

Gen. 24:2

Gen. 15:2-4

Gen. 14:14, 15

b. The obvious importance and abilities of this man are completely ignored in this week's parasha, to the point of not even mentioning his name. In the prayers that are recorded in this week's story, he doesn't even come to God on the basis of his own merit, but on the merit of his master Abraham (Gen. 24:12), demonstrating his humility.

Based on the example of Eliezer, what should it look like to be a "servant of God"?

## **Parasha Chayei Sarah**

**Wednesday**—Read Genesis 24:27-52

### ***Part 1: What is God Like?***

In v. 27, Eliezer spoke of two aspects of God's dealings with those who know Him: His lovingkindness (*chesed*) and His faithfulness or truth (*emet*).

a. What do God's *chesed* and His *emet* do for those who know Him?

Ps. 40:11

Ps. 57:1-3

Ps. 69:13

b. How do the events of today's story demonstrate God's *chesed* and *emet*?

c. Can you think of an event in your own life where God demonstrated His *chesed* and *emet* to you?



e. If we are doing what is right, does it matter *why* we are doing it? Does God care about our motives? What difference does it make to Him?

Is. 29:13, 14

Matt. 23:25-28

f. Do you do what is right because your heart is right toward God or do you do what is right in order to gain something for yourself, like Laban? Ask God to help you see what the inside of your heart is really like.

## **Parasha Chayei Sarah**

**Thursday**—Read Genesis 24:53-67

### ***Part 1: What is God Like?***

a. This week, we have seen how God specifically chose Rebecca for Isaac, and how He led Eliezer directly to her. What good things came to Isaac as a result of God's choice? (v. 67)

b. The Torah clearly states the effect on Isaac's emotions. Was his response just incidental or did God plan it that way? Do you think God cares about how we feel? What does the Bible say about it?

Is. 51:12, 13

2 Cor. 7:6

c. What should we do when we are in need of comfort?

Ps. 61:1-4

***Part 2: Mitzvah Focus***

Read Deut. 23:21.

In today's reading, Rebecca's mother and brother wanted to delay in fulfilling their promise to give Rebecca to Isaac. Rebecca was willing to go immediately.

When you commit yourself before God to do something, do you put it off, or do you do it as soon as possible? Is there a commitment that you have put off that you should do today?

***Part 3: Echoes...in Tradition and the Bible***

Genesis 24:67 says that Isaac brought Rebecca into his mother's tent. The midrash says that Sarah's tent symbolises Sarah's righteous behaviour and God's subsequent blessings. It relates the story that as long as Sarah lived, the lights in her tent stayed lit from one Shabbat to the next. Her dough was blessed, and a cloud of the glory of God's presence hovered over the tent. When Sarah died, the blessings departed. When Rebecca came, the blessings returned, indicating the exemplary character of Rebecca and the fact that she would continue in Sarah's footsteps.

The symbolism of Sarah's tent is a mini-picture of the Mishkan, where the menorah never went out, where (according to tradition) the bread of the Presence never grew stale, and where the Shekinah of God dwelt. Sarah's tent is a lesson to all those who know God—a reminder that we have both the privilege and the responsibility to turn our own homes into a Tabernacle for God, by bringing light and the presence of God there.

a. What is light, and what does it bring?

Eph. 5:8, 9

1 John 1:7

b. Where does the presence of God rest?

Ps. 86:9

Is. 66:1, 2

c. Think about your life and the way you conduct yourself in your “tent.” Do you bring the light and the presence of God there?

## **Parasha Chayei Sarah**

**Friday**—Read Genesis 25:1-18

### ***Part 1: What is God Like?***

From the time that God called Abraham at age 75 until the events of today's story, one hundred years had passed. It was one hundred years of walking with God. When you spend time with a person, you learn to know him better and better. After one hundred years of relating to him, you would have had lots of experience with his character!

a. During the last one hundred years of Abraham's life, what things do you think Abraham learned about God's character?

b. What did God demonstrate to Abraham even in his death? Compare Gen. 15:15 to Gen. 25:8.

c. What characteristic did God demonstrate toward Abraham even after his death? Compare Gen. 17:19 with Gen. 25:11 and Gen. 26:24.

***Part 2: Mitzvah Focus***

Read Lev. 22:32.

In Hebrew thought, speaking of someone's "name" did not refer to the sounds and syllables of the name, but to what the name represented: his person, his reputation, and his character.

a. With this in mind, what does it mean to "profane" the name of God? Read the following verses to determine what you think it means.

Prov. 30:9

Ezek. 20:39

Ezek. 36:17-21

b. Based on this definition of "profaning the Name," what would the opposite action look like? Read Lev. 22:32 again.

c. What characterised Abraham's life? Based on this, would you say that he kept the mitzvah to not profane the name of God?

Gen. 26:5

d. If you are reading this, then your life is not over yet. What choices can you make now that will lead you toward a lifetime of sanctifying the Name as Abraham did?

***Part 3: Echoes...in Tradition and the Bible***

a. What was Abraham called?

2 Chron. 20:7

Is. 41:8

James 2:23

b. Why do you think he was called that?

John 15:14

c. What stands in the way of someone who wants to become what Abraham was?

James 4:4

1 John 2:15-17

d. What is the power behind this obstacle?

Eph. 6:12

e. In the light of this, how do we become what Abraham was?

Ps. 96:10

f. What can you identify in your own life that stands in opposition to friendship with God? Are there attitudes, actions, beliefs, interests, or habits in your life that get in the way?