David: Welcome to Parshat Chayei Sarah. Let's be honest. Compared to some of the exciting stories in these last few weeks, the stories in this week's parsha seem much less exciting. We don't have anything grand like creation or the flood or the Binding of Isaac.

Immanuel: Let's take a look at what actually happens in this week's parsha; bring up the clock, 20 seconds.

Let's go. Sarah dies and Abraham buys a burial plot. There's a long and detailed story about the journey of Abraham's servant to find a wife for Abraham's son, Isaac.

He finds Rebecca who returns with him to Abraham and joins the family. Abraham marries Keturah and has a few more kids and then Abraham dies.

David: Now the bulk of the parsha is really the story of Eliezer trying to find a wife for Isaac and at face value it's not the most gripping story. Here's what happens.

# The

Story of

# Finding a Wife

for

# Isaac – Twice

Retold

Abraham charges Eliezer to find a wife, but not from where they live, not from Canaan, but back from Abraham's homeland.

Instead of just hearing how Eliezer actually finds Rebecca, we hear all about his journey; what he took on his journey, his prayer to God along that journey, a sign that he asked God to make for him so that he knows exactly who the right girl is.

Then when he actually meets Rebecca, we expect the story to be over but then we hear even more details. We hear about the conversation he has with Rebecca, and then about the conversation he has with Rebecca's family. In that conversation he retells the entire story, and we hear it again, for the second time.

Immanuel: So the question is, why do we need to know all of this? It's a nice matchmaking story but who cares about these small details? Not only do we hear all those small details but we hear them twice. Why do we hear it with full detail for a second time?

David: And it's really strange because we know that the Torah can be brief when it wants to be. Here's an example. When Rebecca retells the story to her mother it says, "Vatageid l'beit Ima" – she tells her mother's household – "ka'devarim ha'eileh" – these things.

We don't hear all the details of her retelling of the story. It just says that she retold it. So it's obvious that the Torah is purposely retelling this story for us again. The Torah wants us to know something.

Immanuel: Right, if you look at Eliezer's retelling of the story you will realize that Eliezer's retelling of the story is not identical to the narrator's description of what happened. There are some really important

differences.

I think it's possible that the Torah is trying to actually make you bored so that you notice those differences, that you realize that there are these small discrepancies, because hidden in those discrepancies is the real story. And if we figure out what that is we won't just get a deeper understanding of this story, we might understand why the story is here in the first place.

David: Let's take a look at some of those discrepancies. Now, we won't be able to get through all of them right now. This is a pretty short video, but let's try to highlight some of the larger ones and see what we can make of them.

# The Discrepancies in Isaac and Rebecca's

Love

# Story

Immanuel: The first major discrepancy is in Abraham's instruction to Eliezer not to take a wife from among the Canaanites but instead to go to his homeland. However, in Eliezer's repetition he tells him again not to take a wife from the Canaanites, but he adds something curious. "Im loh el beis avi teilech v'el mishpachti" – take a wife from my father's house and from my family.

Eliezer shifts the focus; Abraham sends him to his homeland but never specifies where he should go, but in Eliezer's retelling, he tells him specifically, go to my father's house, go to my family. That's the place where you're going to find a wife for my son. But that's not true. The Torah doesn't describe it that way the first time around.

David: Here's another difference between the two stories. On Eliezer's journey he prays to God. He wants some kind of guidance to help him find a wife for Isaac. "Hakreih nah lefanai hayom" – God, be with me today – "v'asei chesed im adoni Avraham" – and do chesed, do kindness, for my master Abraham.

But when he retells this, his prayer is different. He turns to God and says, "Im yeshcha nah matzliach darki asher onochi holech aleha" – God, if you will, please make me successful on my journey today.

The first prayer was him asking God to do kindness for Abraham, and in this one he mentions nothing of kindness. It just says, "Make me successful." What are we to make of that?

Immanuel: So immediately after Eliezer makes his deal with God, he finds a girl who fulfills the conditions. What does he do next?

David: Well that depends on which account you're reading. It's almost like a choose-your-own- adventure book.

We have two options. In the actual account, after Eliezer gets water for him and his camels, he gives jewelry to Rebecca, and then he asks who she is. But when he retells the story he flips the order. He first asks who she is and then he gives her jewelry. The obvious question is why in the world is Eliezer

switching the order?

Immanuel: The next difference takes place when Eliezer thanks God for helping find the perfect girl for Isaac. In a prayer to God he says, "Baruch Hashem Elokei adoni Avraham" – blessed is God, L-rd of my master Abraham – "asher loh azav chasdo va'amito mei'im adoni" – who has not abandoned His kindness and truth that He grants to my master.

But, when he retells the story to Rebecca's family, the prayer changes. "Va'avarech et Hashem Elokei adoni Avraham" – I blessed God, L-rd of my master; "asher hinchani ba'derech emet" – who has guided me in a path of truth. He leaves out an important word; the word is chesed – kindness. And, as we saw above, this is actually the second time he leaves out that word.

David: What's going on here? Eliezer doesn't just add a few things, or take out a few things. He actually changes things. Does he just have a bad memory?

We want to suggest that Eliezer saw something that made him want to change the story. He realized something about Rebecca's family and when we figure out what that thing is, we might find that there's a rhyme and reason to all of the differences.

# The Values that Secured Rebecca to Be Isaac's Wife

Immanuel: We think the thing that Eliezer saw happens in a pasuk that most people might not have even noticed. After Eliezer meets Rebecca and Rebecca runs home to tell her family, Lavan comes out to greet him and he invites him to their home. "Vayomer" – he says – "Boh baruch Hashem" – come, blessed one of God. "Lamah ta'amod ba'chutz" – why are you standing outside? "V'onochi paniti habayit u'makom l'gemalim" – I made room for you in the house and even room for your camels.

Now pay attention. "Vayavoh ha'ish habayta" – the man came to the house – "vayiftach ha'gemalim" – he unties the camels – "vayiten teven u'mispo la'gemalim" – and he gives the camels straw – "u'mayim lirchotz raglav" – and washes their feet – "v'raglei ha'anashim asher ito" – and the feet of the men who were with him.

David: The question is who did all these things? Who un-muzzled the camels? Who gave them food? Who gave them water to wash their feet? When you look at it quickly it seems that it's Lavan. He's the one who just invited Eliezer to come inside, so wouldn't it make sense that he's the one doing these things in order to be a good host?

Immanuel: But if you take a closer look, it's actually not Lavan. The 'ish' that untied the camels and washed the feet, that word ish is used to refer specifically to Eliezer throughout this story. For example, two verses before this, when Rebecca is telling Lavan what just happened to her, it says, "koh diber eilai ha'ish" – this is what the man, seemingly Eliezer, just told her.

Then Lavan runs out to greet Eliezer, and the verse says, "Vayavoh el ha'ish v'hinei omed al ha'gemalim

al ha'ayin – he approached 'the man' who was standing by the well. Lavan obviously didn't approach himself. Who was standing by the well? That's Eliezer.

Which leads to the very strange conclusion that Lavan put on a show for Eliezer. He told him we've got plenty of room in the house, but once Eliezer gets there, Eliezer has to do all the dirty work. He's the one who has to wash the feet of his own men and wash the feet of his camels. And that's what Eliezer saw.

Lavan put on a show for him and pretended that he valued kindness, but the truth is he only cared about how things look on the outside.

He doesn't truly value chesed – kindness – the way Eliezer does. And Eliezer realized that he quickly needs to change his story. He can't just extol the virtues of kindness and talk about what a great fit Rebecca is going to be in Abraham's value-centered family. He needs to speak in their language. He makes just a few differences in the story to make this marriage more appealing to them.

David: Exactly! So look at what he does. Let's go back to those discrepancies and see what they might mean.

# The

Lesson

# from

the Descrepanices in Rebecca and Isaac's

# Story

When Eliezer tells Rebecca's family about the prayer he made to help him find Rebecca for Isaac, he doesn't say, "God please do chesed for me, please do kindness for Abraham." He says, "Please make me successful." He totally takes out the word chesed because that's not the language that they speak. That's not something they value.

And, when he tells them about how he thanked God, he does the same thing. He doesn't say that God didn't withhold "chasdo va'amito" – kindness and truth, like he did in the original version. He just says that God did emet for him – God did truth.

He totally omits the words chesed – kindness. And instead of kindness Eliezer seems to focus on two things, family and wealth, much more so than the original story did, because that seems to be the currency that they really value.

Now take a look before the story begins, before Abraham commands Eliezer, the pasuk says, "V'Hashem beirach et Avraham ba'kol" – God blessed Abraham with everything. But that's all we hear about.

When Eliezer retells the story he adds rich detail. He doesn't just say that God blessed Abraham with everything. He explains what "everything" means. He tells them that God gave Abraham sheep and cattle and silver and gold and servants and maids and camels and donkeys. And it's kind of strange. Why is Eliezer telling them all this?

Then he continues and says that when Sarah eventually had a child, Isaac, who Rebecca is about to

marry, Abraham gave all of his wealth to Isaac.

That's what Rebecca's family values. Eliezer realizes that they don't care about kindness. They care that their daughter is marrying someone who is really wealthy.

And it's the same thing in terms of family. In the first story, Eliezer gives her jewelry as soon as he sees the act of kindness. That's all he needs to see. And then he asks who she is.

But in his retelling of the story, he first asks who she is, and then once he realizes that she is family, that's what compells him to give her all the jewelry. He makes it as clear as possible in his retelling that what he values in Rebecca has nothing to do with chesed – with kindness. It has to do with family. It has to do with wealth.

# What Made Rebecca the Ideal Wife

for

# Isaac?

Immanuel: Before we read about these discrepancies, you read about Rebecca and you think she does kindness. That's a wonderful trait in a wife. But after you read the discrepancies, you realize something a lot deeper about Rebecca; she does kindness in a place where everyone around her does the opposite. She does kindness in a place of anti-kindness.

Rebecca cares deeply even about Eliezer's camels, whereas Lavan, he couldn't care less. Now who does that remind you of? Someone who is able to do kindness when everyone around them values the opposite? Isn't that Abraham?

These past couple of weeks we spoke about how Abraham is the Plan C. He's the one who is going to create the model nation, a nation built on kindness, an example to the rest of the world. But now, as Abraham's story draws to an end and Abraham is about to die, his legacy, God's legacy, needs to continue in the next generation.

# Isaac and Rebecca

Continue

# the Legacy

Rebecca is the perfect woman to carry the torch of Abraham's legacy. She has the internal strength to model kindness in a place where there is none.

She, like Abraham, comes from this land and is able to journey to a place she does not know in order to build kindness, even if the people around her don't share her values.

And this story becomes the perfect blueprint for the nation of Israel, who are meant to value kindness and to model kindness, and together with Isaac, they'll spread kindness to others and continue Abraham's legacy and God's legacy, and bring blessing to the rest of the world.

David: Join us next time on The Parsha Experiment.



**PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH: SARAH, ESTHER, AND RABBI AKIVA’S RIDDLE**

**SABBATH TABLE OUTLINE**

This guide corresponds to the video: [Sarah, Esther, And Rabbi Akiva’s Riddle](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/sarah-bible-story-connections)

#### Rabbi Akiva’s Question About Sarah

1. The opening verse of Chayei Sarah, talks about the amount of years that our matriarch, Sarah, lived. And, as it happens, that verse gets featured in a famous rabbinic riddle.
   1. The immortal sage, Rabbi Akiva, we are told, once saw his students dozing off in class, and he decided to shake them back awake with a challenge; a question he posed, about Sarah’s lifetime.
   2. We are told she was 127 years old, and Rabbi Akiva picked up on that. He challenged his students with a query: *“Why was it exactly that Esther ended up ruling over 127 provinces? It came about because Esther was a descendant of Sarah, Sarah lived to 127; [therefore] let Esther come and rule over 127 provinces!” (Bereishit Rabbah 58:3)*

Guide by Dr. Sarah Levy

1. But what’s the deal with this riddle?
   1. At face value, Rabbi Akiva makes this strange – almost humorous – logical leap. Because, of course, yes, Sarah’s age *happen* to correspond to the number of provinces ruled over by Esther. And that’s sort of a intriguing coincidence, maybe.
   2. But does Queen Esther, this heroine of the Purim saga, have anything *really* to do with Sarah, Abraham’s wife?
2. So… the question really is: Was Rabbi Akiva just joking here – was this really a harmless little stunt to wake his sleepy students? – or did Rabbi Akiva’s little “wake-the-students-joke” conceal a hidden meaning that his students, and we, might eventually glean from it?

#### What Do We Learn From Sarah's Story?

1. To begin to see what Rabbi Akiva might have been getting at, let’s start with this question: Did Sarah and Esther truly have anything fundamental in common with

one another?

* 1. At face value – not so much. They are notable figures of the Bible, they’re both women. But a lot of other women are also notable in the Bible: Miriam, Deborah, Yael, Ruth, to name just a few.
  2. And yet, in Rabbi Akiva’s mind, there was actually something *particular* about Sarah and Esther that seems to have bound them together. Their respective “hundreds-and-twenty-sevens” were somehow aligned with one another. What was that quality that bound these women together?



1. To get a clue, I want to take you back to what Rashi actually tells us was Abraham’s eulogy, as it were, for Sarah. Now, to be sure, although the text of the Torah tells us that Abraham did eulogize Sarah, it doesn’t tell us what he said. Rashi surmises, though, that the way the Torah counts Sarah’s 127 years alludes to the essence of Abraham’s eulogy.
   1. So Rashi, when he interprets the breakup of these years into groups, he suggested

there *were* three groups of years, each connected to the other. When Sarah was a hundred, Rashi says, she was as guiltless, as free from sin as when she was just twenty. And when she was twenty, she was as beautiful, as innocent-looking, as when she was seven. And that, Rashi says, was the essence of Abraham’s eulogy.

* 1. Rabbi Soloveitchik says something about this Rashi. Rabbi Soloveitchik saw in Rashi*,* a kind of path through time that Sarah charted. 7. 20. 100. Three stages...
     1. As we go through life, Rabbi Soloveitchik said, we all go through stages. Earliest youth is filled with innocence, exuberance and curiosity. We’re discovering ourselves.
     2. And when we become adolescents, we start prizing independence.
     3. As we get older we find ourselves responsible for others and focused on the future.
     4. And eventually, adulthood gives way to middle age, and middle age gives way to our sunset years. Each of these stages comes with new priorities, new vistas, new ways of looking at our lives and new ways of looking at the world.
  2. Now, most of us go through life living each stage, and then leaving it behind, as we are experiencing the next one. But there’s another way to go through

life, an extraordinary way. It’s the way Sarah did it, Rabbi Soloveitchik says — and it is what Rashi was getting at with his cryptic comment.

* + 1. You see, the way Sarah did it, you don’t just passively travel through life’s stages, discarding the past for the more immediate stage of the present.
    2. No, you build as you go: you take each stage with you as you encounter the next one.

1. So, y’know, you’re seven, you’re wide-eyed and curious. But as the years

pass and you approach twenty, you don't *exchange* that curiosity of youth for independence and self-discovery of your new adolescent self.

* 1. No. You take it with you that curiosity, you merge it somehow into your new, teenage self. And as you progress further, towards adulthood, and you start attaining a little bit of wisdom, you merge that wisdom with the curiosity and independence of your earlier stages.
  2. And that kind of synthesis, it continues – through adulthood, through middle age, through your later years. And that, Rabbi Soloveitchik says, is what marked Sarah, in Abraham’s eyes, as so extraordinary.
  3. She was able to bring all of her earlier selves with her, as she aged. It made her years more powerful, more potent.

1. Okay, so with this in mind, let’s come back to Rabbi Akiva and his sleepy students.

#### What Characteristics of Sarah Connect to Esther?

1. Rabbi Akiva connected Sarah’s 127 years with Esther’s 127 provinces. And I had asked you: What quality seems to unite Sarah and Esther. I think we are now in a position to answer that question. The quality was: Queenship. Let me explain.

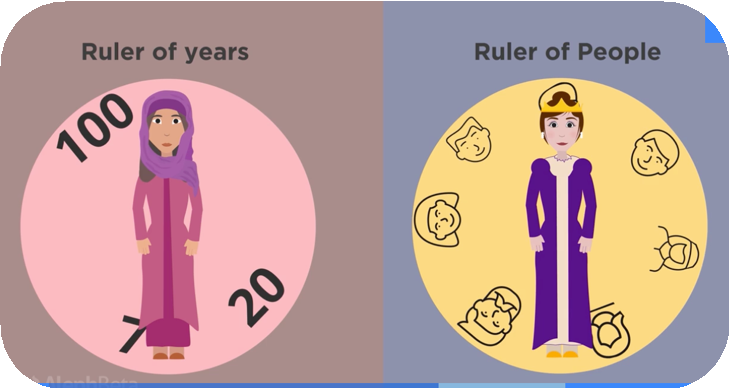


* 1. You see, a queen, when successful, is a uniter. She is not merely someone who makes the rules for a certain territory, or decides the fate of her subjects in that territory.
  2. A queen *does* do all that, but if she is really successful, she also unites her subjects in some way, she transforms a mere territory into

a *nation*. The people that comprise a nation are not just individuals, milling around, living in proximity to one another.

* 1. They have some sort of common cause that binds

them together and the monarch is a living symbol of that cause, hopefully, she works proactively to advance it.

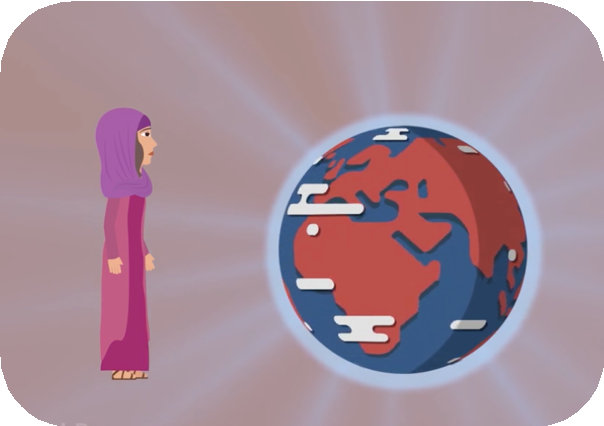
1. How does a king or a queen advance that cause? At their best, monarchs finds ways to join individual talents to create a larger whole.
   1. Bob is a blacksmith, Phil is a farmer, Carol is a shepherdess, Beryl is a tailor—and the monarch?
   2. The monarch finds a way to incorporate the energies of Bob, Phil, Carol, and Beryl, towards common goals.
   3. A king or queen unites unique individuals and inflects their talents towards the service of the nation’s cause.
2. Esther played such a role on the grandest of stages, on the world stage, uniting peoples across far- flung provinces. She was a ruler of territory, of *space*.
   1. But, Rabbi Akiva argues, she was actually living out a vision first formulated by her ancestor Sarah. A person who we might call, an empress of *time*.
   2. You see, what Rabbi Akiva was really saying is that Esther had a teacher, as it were. What Esther did on a grand scale, when she united individual *people*, Sarah, long before her, did on a much more private, personal level, when she united individual *moments* – moments of her own life.
   3. In doing that, Sarah was a ruler of years. She bound years together so that they were not lost as time marched on; she allowed the

whole of her moments to become more than the sum of their parts.

#### Another Clue: The Meaning of Sarah's Name

1. And here’s the kicker. Think for a minute about Sarah’s name, how she got her name.
   1. *Her name, actually expresses royalty.* Her name was originally Sarai, which can be translated as “my princess,” almost as if it were a term of endearment that Abraham, her husband, have used for her.
   2. But then one day, God came out of the clouds and changed her name. He told Abraham that from here on out, Sarai was to be known as Sarah.
   3. Sarah. Not *“my* princess,” just “princess.” It was as if God was saying to Abraham: *She is not merely* ***your*** *princess. She is more universal than that. Rulers of nations will come from her. She is to be a princess of the world. She belongs to humanity itself.*



1. Listen carefully to those words of the verse: “Rulers of nations shall come from her.” Note the plural there. *Nations*. Many of them. So let me ask you: Historically, when did that prophecy come true? When *did* a descendant of Sarah live to become not just queen over a particular nation, but a ruler of *many* nations—an empress, as it were?

#### The Lessons From Sarah's Story

1. It happened at the dawn of the age of empires, in the days of Achashveirosh, when Esther became queen over Persia’s 127 provinces. The largest empire the world had ever seen.
2. You see, the woman who ruled over 127 territories was the descendant of the woman, who in her own life, had lived to 127 years, had *ruled* over 127 years. Two queens. But of different realms. Years and territories. Time and space.
3. Not all of us can be emperors over space. We don’t have to be. But we can be emperors of time in our own lives. Indeed, Esther is not the only one who can learn from Sarah; Sarah’s example can help us, her descendants, also find ways to become masters of our moments, just like she was.





Hi everybody, this is Rabbi David Fohrman. Welcome to Parshat Chayei Sarah.

# Sarah's Age and Rabbi Akiva’s Question

The opening verse of Chayei Sarah talks about the amount of years that our matriarch, Sarah, lived. And as it happens, that verse gets featured in a famous rabbinic riddle. Let me tell you about it.

The immortal sage, Rabbi Akiva, we are told, once saw his students dozing off in class, and he decided to shake them back awake with a challenge, a question he posed about Sarah’s lifetime.

We are told she was 127 years old, and Rabbi Akiva picked up on that. He challenged his students with this query:

תָּב אֶסְתֵּר שֶׁהָי ְתָה בַּת בִּתָּהּ שֶׁל שָׂ ָרה שֶׁחָי ְתָה מֵאָה וְעֶשׂרים וָשֶׁבַע וְתִמְלֹךְ עַל מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרים וְשֶׁבַע מְדינות. מָה

ראֲתָה אֶסְתֵּר שֶׁתִּמְלֹ עַל שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂ ִרים ו ּמֵאָה מְדינ ָה, אֶלָּא וא

'Why was it exactly that Esther ended up ruling over 127 provinces?

It came about because Esther was a descendant of Sarah, Sarah lived to 127; [therefore] let Esther come and rule over 127 provinces!' (Bereishit Rabbah 58:3)

But what’s the deal with this riddle? At face value, Rabbi Akiva makes this strange – almost humorous – logical leap. Because, of course, yes, Sarah’s age happens to correspond to the number of provinces ruled over by Esther. And that’s sort of an intriguing coincidence, maybe.

But does Queen Esther, this heroine of the Purim saga, have anything really to do with Sarah, Abraham’s wife?

So… the question really is: Was Rabbi Akiva just joking here – was this really a harmless little stunt to wake his sleepy students? Or did Rabbi Akiva’s little 'wake-the-students-joke' conceal a hidden meaning that his students, and we, might eventually glean from it?

# Connecting

Sarah to

# Esther

To begin to see what Rabbi Akiva might have been getting at, let’s start with this question: Did Sarah and Esther truly have anything fundamental in common with one another?

At face value, not so much. They are notable figures of the Bible, they’re both women. But a lot of other women are also notable in the Bible: Miriam, Deborah, Yael, Ruth, to name just a few.

And yet, in Rabbi Akiva’s mind, there was actually something particular about Sarah and Esther that seems to have bound them together. Their respective 'hundred-and-twenty-sevens' were somehow aligned with one another. What was that quality that bound these women together?

# What

Does

# the Bible Say

About

# Sarah's Age?

To get a clue, I want to take you back to what Rashi actually tells us was Abraham’s eulogy, as it were, for Sarah. Now, to be sure, although the text of the Torah tells us that Abraham did eulogize Sarah, it doesn’t tell us what he said. Rashi surmises, though, that the way the Torah counts Sarah’s 127 years alludes to the essence of Abraham’s eulogy.

וַי ִ ּהְיו ּחַי ֵ ּי שָׂרה, מֵאָה שָׁנ ָה וְעֶשְׂרים שָׁנ ָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנ ִים שְׁנ ֵי, חַי ֵ ּי ׂרה

And the life of Sarah was a hundred years, twenty years, seven years; those were the years of the life of Sarah.

So Rashi, when he interprets the breakup of these years into groups, he suggested there were three groups of years, each connected to the other. When Sarah was a hundred, Rashi says, she was as guiltless, as free from sin as when she was just twenty. And when she was twenty, she was as beautiful, as innocent-looking, as when she was seven. And that, Rashi says, was the essence of Abraham’s eulogy.

Now, a couple years back – in our very first year of parsha videos – I actually talked with you about what might be the power behind Rashi’s words here. I quoted for you something Rabbi Soloveitchik said about this Rashi.

Rabbi Soloveitchik saw in Rashi a kind of path through time that Sarah charted.

7. 20. 100. Three stages...

As we go through life, Rabbi Soloveitchik said, we all go through stages:

Earliest youth is filled with innocence, exuberance and curiosity. We’re discovering ourselves. And when we become adolescents, we start prizing independence.

As we get older we find ourselves responsible for others and focused on the future.

And eventually, adulthood gives way to middle age, and middle age gives way to our sunset years.

Each of these stages comes with new priorities, new vistas, new ways of looking at our lives and new ways of looking at the world.

Now, most of us go through life living each stage, and then leaving it behind as we are experiencing the next one. But there’s another way to go through life, an extraordinary way. It’s the way Sarah did it, Rabbi Soloveitchik says — and it is what Rashi was getting at with his cryptic comment.

# What We Learn

About

# Sarah

You see, the way Sarah did it, you don’t just passively travel through life’s stages, discarding the past for the more immediate stage of the present. No, you build as you go: You take each stage with you as you

encounter the next one.

So, you know, you’re seven, you’re wide-eyed and curious. But as the years pass and you approach 20, you don't exchange that curiosity of youth for independence and self-discovery of your new adolescent self. No. You take it with you, that curiosity, you merge it somehow into your new, teenage self.

And as you progress further, towards adulthood, and you start attaining a little bit of wisdom, you merge that wisdom with the curiosity and independence of your earlier stages. And that kind of synthesis, it continues – through adulthood, through middle age, through your later years.

And that, Rabbi Soloveitchik says, is what marked Sarah, in Abraham’s eyes, as so extraordinary. She was able to bring all of her earlier selves with her, as she aged. It made her years more powerful, more potent.

Okay, so with this in mind, let’s come back to Rabbi Akiva and his sleepy students.

# What Really

Connects

# Sarah and Esther?

Rabbi Akiva connected Sarah’s 127 years with Esther’s 127 provinces. And I had asked you: What quality seems to unite Sarah and Esther? I think we are now in a position to answer that question.

The quality was: Queenship. Let me explain.

You see, a queen, when successful, is an uniter. She is not merely someone who makes the rules for a certain territory or decides the fate of her subjects in that territory. A queen does do all that, but if she is really successful, she also unites her subjects in some way, she transforms a mere territory into a nation. The people that comprise a nation are not just individuals, milling around, living in proximity to one another. They have some sort of common cause that binds them together, and the monarch is a living symbol of that cause. Hopefully, she works proactively to advance it.

How does a king or a queen advance that cause? At their best, monarchs find ways to join individual talents to create a larger whole. Bob is a blacksmith, Phil is a farmer, Carol is a shepherdess, Beryl is a tailor... and the monarch? The monarch finds a way to incorporate the energies of Bob, Phil, Carol, and Beryl, towards common goals.

A king or queen unites unique individuals and inflects their talents towards the service of the nation’s cause.

Esther played such a role on the grandest of stages, on the world stage, uniting peoples across far-flung provinces. She was a ruler of territory, of space. But, Rabbi Akiva argues, she was actually living out a vision first formulated by her ancestor Sarah. A person who we might call an empress of time.

You see, what Rabbi Akiva was really saying is that Esther had a teacher, as it were. What Esther did on a grand scale, when she united individual people, Sarah, long before her, did on a much more private,

personal level, when she united individual moments – moments of her own life.

In doing that, Sarah was a ruler of years. She bound years together so that they were not lost as time marched on; she allowed the whole of her moments to become more than the sum of their parts.

# Another Clue: The Meaning of Sarah's Name

And here’s the kicker. Think for a minute about Sarah’s name, how she got her name. Her name actually expresses royalty. Her name was originally Sarai, which can be translated as 'my princess,' almost as if it were a term of endearment that Abraham, her husband, have used for her.

But then one day, God came out of the clouds and changed her name. He told Abraham that from here on out, Sarai was to be known as Sarah:

אמֶר אֱלֹקים אַבְרהָםאֶל־ שָׂ ַרי אִשְׁתְּךָ תִקְראלֹא־ שְׁמָהּאֶת־ שָׂ ָרי כִּי שָׂ ָרה שְׁמָהּ...מַלְכֵי עַמִּים מִמֶּנ ָּה י ִהְיו ּ׃וַיֹ ּ

And God said to Abraham, 'As for your wife Sarai, you don’t call her Sarai, her name is Sarah… Rulers of nations shall come from her.' (Genesis 17:15–16)

Sarah. Not 'my princess,' just 'princess.' It was as if God was saying to Abraham: She is not merely your princess. She is more universal than that. Rulers of nations will come from her. She is to be a princess of the world. She belongs to humanity itself.

# Why Is Sarah So Important?

Listen carefully to those words of the verse: 'Rulers of nations shall come from her.' Note the plural there: nations. Many of them.

So let me ask you: Historically, when did that prophecy come true? When did a descendant of Sarah live to become not just queen over a particular nation, but a ruler of many nations – an empress, as it were?

It happened at the dawn of the age of empires, in the days of Achashveirosh, when Esther became queen over Persia’s 127 provinces. The largest empire the world had ever seen.

You see, the woman who ruled over 127 territories was the descendant of the woman who, in her own life, had lived to 127 years, had ruled over 127 years. Two queens but of different realms: Years and territories; time and space.

Not all of us can be emperors over space. We don’t have to be. But we can be emperors of time in our own lives.

Indeed, Esther is not the only one who can learn from Sarah. Sarah’s example can help us, her descendants, also find ways to become masters of our moments, just like she was.



**CHAYEI SARAH: WHAT MAKES FOR A SUCCESSFUL LIFE?**

Welcome to the Aleph Beta Study Guide to Parshat Chayei Sarah!

**This guide corresponds to the video:** [**Chayei Sarah: What Makes For An Extraordinary Life?**](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/sarahs-old-age-life)

**What Makes For An Extraordinary Life?**

Have you ever been in the presence of someone who you felt was an extraordinary person? Or, have you ever looked at an older person and thought, “Wow - that’s what I want to be like when I’m that age”? What is it that makes these people so extraordinary? What have they achieved that distinguishes them from the crowd?

### LOOK INSIDE: The Death of Sarah



The opening lines of our parsha offer us a possible answer in the example of our extraordinary matriarch, Sarah, when we hear about her death and burial.

Read through the verses below describing these events. Do you notice anything that stands out in the description of Sarah’s death? How is it different from other deaths recorded until this point in the book of Genesis?

**Genesis 23:1-2**

##### בראשית כג:א-ב

**1** Sarah’s lifetime, the span of Sarah’s life, came to

ׂש ָרה, ֵמ ָאה ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ֶע ְ ׂש ִרים ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ׁ ֶש ַבע ׁ ָש ִנים-- ׁש ֵני,

ח ֵ ּיי

**א** ו ִ ּי ְהי ּו

one hundred and twenty-seven years. 2 Sarah died in

ֹון-- ְב ֶא ֶרץ ח ְבר

הוא

ַית ַא ְר ַּבע ּב ִק ְר

ׂש ָרה,

ָּת ָמת ו

ׂש ָרה. **ב**

ח ֵ ּיי

Kiriath-arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her.

ל ָ ׂש ָרה, ְו ִל ְב ּ ֹכ ָת ּה.

ל ְס ּ ֹפד

בא, ַא ְב ָר ָהם,

ּכ ָנ ַען; ַו ָ ּי

The Bible tells of many deaths before Sarah. There are full chapters that list generation after generation of genealogy, with the refrain: “And x lived for y years; and he died.” Sarah, however, is the first person who doesn’t simply die and disappear from memory - Sarah is eulogized. The text goes out of its way to tell us that Abraham came to pay a tearful tribute to her life.

But while the Bible sees fit to mention that Abraham eulogized Sarah, it leaves us wondering about what he actually said. What were Sarah’s unique qualities that Abraham spoke about in this moment? But the Bible leaves out these important details… or does it?

### INSTRUCTIONS

There are a lot of divrei Torah on the parsha. How is this different?

At Aleph Beta, we believe that the Torah is a guidebook that answers life’s biggest questions, offering profound insights about how we should live our lives. Moreover, we believe that Jewish tradition has always recognized the right of all readers, in every generation, to look at the text themselves and try to decide what they think it means. That means you. That’s why you are the most important author of this quest through the sources. We think that this guide offers a fun, stimulating and relevant path through the sources, but if you get wrapped up in a stimulating discussion and never make it past page 2, we’ll consider that a success!

Is this guide for self-study or should I study it with others?

Either works! You can gather a small group of friends to explore it together, share it with a chevruta (learning partner), or go through it by yourself.

Do I need to prepare anything or can I just jump in?

Just jump in! Even if you’re planning to use this for a group discussion, just open up to page 1 and get going. (If you read it in advance, it will spoil the fun!) The only thing you should do in advance is print out copies of the “Source Sheet” for the other participants, so everyone can follow along and engage with the sources.

About the Author

Most of the material within – although not the particular language contained in this guide - was first developed and taught by Rabbi David Fohrman, founder and CEO of Aleph Beta, and is presented in his video, “Chayei Sarah: What Makes For A Successful Life?” (available for viewing at www.alephbeta.org). This guide was written by Ami Silver, edited by Beth Lesch and Rivky Stern, and arranged by Laura Schembre.

A careful reading of the verses reveals that there is indeed a tribute to Sarah hidden here in the text. Take a look at the peculiar way the Bible chooses to tell us about the years of Sarah’s life (Genesis 23:1):

**Genesis 23:1**

ׂש ָרה

ח ֵ ּיי

ׂש ָרה, ֵמ ָאה ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ֶע ְ ׂש ִרים ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ׁ ֶש ַבע ׁ ָש ִנים-- ׁש ֵני,

ח ֵ ּיי

ו ִ ּי ְהי ּו

Sarah’s lifetime, the span of Sarah’s life, came to one hundred and twenty-seven years.

Now, if you’re looking at the English translation, there’s nothing too peculiar about this verse. It sounds like the text is simply telling us that Sarah died at 127. But in Hebrew, it’s really strange. A literal translation would be: “Sarah’s lifetime came to 100 years, and 20 years, and 7 years.”1

### PONDER THIS



What do you make of this phrasing? What do you think the Bible is trying to convey about Sarah and her life?

1 And no, this isn’t the typical way you’d expect the Hebrew to be written.

**Here’s how it seems to us:** This unusual phrasing leaves room for interpretation, but it seems like when the Bible repeats the word “years” over and over again, it’s actually breaking Sarah’s life into three distinct units.

## Rashi’s Explanation

Indeed, this is the line of reasoning that Rashi takes, in one of his most famous comments in the entire book of Genesis. Here’s how Rashi makes sense of the unusual language here:

**Rashi on Genesis 23:1**

**And the life of Sarah was one hundred years and**

##### רש”י על בראשית כג:א

**ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים:** לכַ ְך

**twenty years and seven years:** The reason that the

ל ָך ׁ ֶש ָּכל ֶא ָחד ִנ ְד ָר ׁש ל ֲע ְצמ ֹו.

כ ָלל ּו ְכ ָלל, ל ֹו ַמר ּב ָכל

נ ְכ ָּתב ׁ ָש ָנה

word “years” was written after every digit is to tell you

ח ְט ָאה, ׁ ֶש ֲה ֵרי ֵאי ָנ ּה ּבת

ּבת ק’ ּכ ַּבת כ’ ל ֵח ְטא, ַמה בת כ’ לֹא

that every digit is to be expounded upon individually: when she was one hundred years old, she was like

a twenty-year-old regarding sin. Just as a twenty- year-old has not sinned, because she is not liable to punishment, so too when she was one hundred years old, she was without sin. And when she was twenty, she was like a seven-year-old as regards to beauty.

ז’ לי ֹו ִפי: ּכ ַבת

ק’ בלֹא ח ְטא, ּו ַבת כ’ ּבת

ע ֹו ְנ ׁ ִשין, ַאף

Rashi is saying that while Sarah’s life was 127 years, the Bible breaks it up into three separate units to tell us something about her life: At 100 years of age, Sarah was as guiltless from sin as when she was 20, and at the age of 20, she was as beautiful and innocent-looking as when she was 7.

This sounds cute, but what is Rashi really getting at here? What difference does it make if she was beautiful and guiltless at different ages? If the Bible was really trying to tell us about Sarah’s virtues, it should have said: “And Sarah died at the ripe old age of 127, a beautiful woman who was free of sins.” Why praise Sarah specifically in this way? Is there a larger meaning to this?

## The Stages of Life

As we move through life, we go through different stages. As a young child, you live in a state of innocence, curiosity and exuberance. You can become totally absorbed by just about anything, be it chasing pigeons on the sidewalk, watching clouds move overhead, or simply asking “WHY?” about everything around you. As you grow into a teenager, other things take priority and you begin to value and explore your independence. Things like curfew, a driver’s license, and all kinds of new experiences and identities take center stage. As you grow beyond adolescence, new priorities begin to emerge. You want to settle down, choose a career path, you want to get married. A bit later in life, you begin to raise kids and you start to wonder about your values: what do I stand for? How do I educate my children? We can all attest that life comes with different stages, and each with its own set of concerns, needs and experiences.

### PONDER THIS



We all go through similar stages in life, and we face a lot of similar choices and situations along the way. What transforms this process from something common to something extraordinary? What differentiates the extraordinary person from all the rest?

**We want to suggest2:** Life is inevitably a journey through different stages, but there are two ways a person can go through these stages of life. These two paths make for two very different kinds of people.

One approach is to pass through life’s stages one by one. You go through stage A, and after that you leave stage A behind and enter stage B. As you go from stage B to stage C, you leave stage B behind, and so on throughout your life. We can call this the ordinary way to go through life.

But there’s another path, an extraordinary way to live one’s life. It’s the way Sarah did it. It involves taking each stage of life with you as you grow. As you grow out of childhood, you don’t discard your innocence when you reach a new stage. You keep the exuberance and curiosity of your youth and build on it. And then, as you become an adult and you grow wiser and accumulate more life experience, you bring your childlike qualities along with you and integrate them into your life as you settle on a career and build a family.

Then, as you move on to the next stages in life, you begin to ask yourself, “What impact am I making on this world?” You don’t get obsessively focused on that question, because you’re carrying your earlier stages with you. You still have the curiosity and exuberance of a child, and you also now bring the wisdom, life experience and insights you gained came from raising your own kids. And as you embrace these questions of what impact you will have on the world, you fuse all of your life experiences together.

When you reach even later stages of life, and death begins to become all too real, it doesn’t feel like the only thing that preoccupies you. You’re not leaving the rest of your life behind behind you at this point. Rather you bring it all with you. When you live this way, your experience at every stage of life is enriched by everything that came before.

## A Symphonic Life

When you consider the stages that compose your life, you can sense how each stage seems to strike a different chord, as if each one plays a different musical note. The ordinary thing to do is to strike one note at a time, to focus all of your energy on the concerns and impressions that are in front of you in your current stage of life. But all said, that’s kind of like playing a Fisher Price xylophone - it makes a singular, dull sound.

But if you can take one musical note and join it with another, and then take these notes and join them to another

- it creates something we call harmony. It makes for a deep, rich sound that has many layers. It’s the stuff that symphonies are made of.

This, in essence, is what it means to live an extraordinary life. When you are 20, you still have your 7 year-old self with you. When you’re 100, you still have the 7 year-old and the 20 year-old selves with you. An extraordinary life is one that integrates all of life’s stages together into a single whole.

This is the quality that the Bible praises in its “eulogy” for Sarah. It’s the kind of life that Sarah led. It’s a life worth honoring and remembering. In just a few words, Rashi expresses what made Sarah so extraordinary.

2 This is based on an idea from Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik. For more, see his work “Abraham’s Journey”, pages 184-187.



Chayei Sara: What Makes For A Successful Life?

Source Sheet

##### Genesis 23:1-2

**בראשית כג:א-ב**

**1** Sarah’s lifetime, the span of Sarah’s life, came to one

ׂש ָרה, ֵמ ָאה ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ֶע ְ ׂש ִרים ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ׁ ֶש ַבע ׁ ָש ִנים-- ׁש ֵני,

**א** ו ִ ּי ְהי ּו ח ֵ ּיי

hundred and twenty-seven years. **2** Sarah died in Kiriath-

ח ֵ ּיי ׂש ָרה. **ב** ו ָּת ָמת ׂש ָרה, ּב ִק ְר ַית ַא ְר ַּבע הוא ח ְבר ֹון-- ְב ֶא ֶרץ ּכ ָנ ַען;

arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her.

בא, ַא ְב ָר ָהם, ל ְס ּ ֹפד ל ָ ׂש ָרה, ְו ִל ְב ּ ֹכ ָת ּה.

ו ָ ּי

##### Rashi on Genesis 23:1

**And the life of Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years:** The reason that the word “years” was written after every digit is to tell you that every digit

ּבכָל

**רש”י על בראשית כג:א**

**ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים**

**שנה ושבע שנים:** לכַ ְך ִנכְ ָּתב ׁ ָש ָנה

כ ָלל ו ְכ ָלל, ל ֹו ַמר ל ָך ׁ ֶש ָּכל א ָחד ִנ ְד ָר ׁש

is to be expounded upon individually: when she was one

hundred years old, she was like a twenty-year-old regarding

ֵח ְטא, מה בת כ’ ל

ל ֲע ְצמ ֹו. ּבת ק’ ּכ ַּבת כ’

sin. Just as a twenty-year-old has not sinned, because

ּבת ע ֹו ְנ ׁ ִשין, אף

ח ְט ָאה, ׁ ֶש ֲה ֵרי אי ָנ ּה

לֹא

she is not liable to punishment, so too when she was one hundred years old, she was without sin. And when she was twenty, she was like a seven-year-old as regards to beauty.

ֹו ִפי: לי

ַבת ז’ ּכ

ַבת כ’ ו

ח ְטא,

בלֹא

ּבת ק’

[www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org/) ALEPH BETA STUDY GUIDE ON PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH - PAGE 5

Think of friends and family who will love it as much as you did - and share it with them!

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Thanks for understanding - we love you guys, too.

Love the guide?

Then SHARE and SUPPORT!

Hi everybody, this is Rabbi David Fohrman and welcome to Parshat Chayei Sarah.

Have you ever met an elderly person, some really advanced in years, you looked at them and you said to yourself, “that's how I want to be when I get to be that age”?. Have you ever met that kind of person like that and sensed that you are in the presence of an extraordinary human being? I had a grandmother like that, she died a while ago but my wife would always comment about her, “that's how I want to be when I get to be her age”. When you meet people like that, do you ever stand back and ask yourself, what makes them so extraordinary, what is it that they are doing right which is so hard to do? I’m going to say that it all boils down to something that appears in the very first verse of this week's parsha.

# Explaining Sarah's Death at 127 Years of Age

This week's Parsha talks about the eulogy that Abraham gave for his wife Sarah. We don't know much about the eulogy, “vayoavo Avraham lispod leSarah v'livkotah”, we just know that Abraham gave one and cried for her but it's almost as if the Torah itself provides its eulogy for Sarah in the very first verse of the Parsha” “v’yehiyu chayei Sarah me’ah shanah v’esrim shanah v’sheva shanim sh’nei chayei sarah”, this

verse which talks about the 127 years of Sarah's life is the basis for one of the most famous comments of

Rashi and all of [Sefer Bereishit](https://www.alephbeta.org/torah/genesis). Rashi notices that the verse doesn't just say that Sarah died when she was 127 years old. It says that she was a 100 years, 20 years, and 7 years, and Rashi is bothered by the need to interpolate the word 'years' between each of these It breaks up the units. It’s 127 years but there's, like, three separate units, 100, 20 and 7, and Rashi argues that the meaning of this is that when she was 100 she was like 20, when she was 20 she was like 7. When she was 100, she was as guiltless from sin as if she was 20, when she was 20 she was as beautiful, as innocent looking, as if she was 7. What's Rashi getting at here? Is there a larger meaning here?

I heard an idea a long time ago quoted in the name of Rabbi Soloveitchik, zt”l and I want to share it with you. Part of being human means going through different stages in life. When you are young, when you are a child, it is a stage of innocence, curiosity, exuberance, and when you become a teenager, adolescence, independence is prized. A little bit later in life, different priorities emerge naturally, you look to settle down and look to get married. A little bit later in life you start to raise your kids, you start wondering about your values, what exactly is it that I stand for, how do I want to educate my children? Life comes with a lot of different stages. What makes for the extraordinary person?

# Sarah's Age as a

Metaphor

for

# Life?

Well, you can say that there are two different ways of going through the stages of life. You can almost divide people into two kinds of people.

One way is to pass through them, to go through stage A and after you go through stage A, you leave stage A behind and enter stage B. As you go from stage B to stage C, you leave stage B behind. So you go to stage C. That's the ordinary way to go through life, but there's an extraordinary way to go through life--the way Sarah did it. You take each stage with you and you build, but as you go towards 20, you

don't exchange that innocence for a new stage in life. You keep that innocence and that exuberance, that curiosity, and you build on it.

As you become an adult, as you grow wise, as you accumulate life experience, you don't leave being a child behind. You bring the innocence, the exuberance, the curiosity of childhood along with you and integrate that into your life experience. As you go to later stages of your life, as you ask yourself, “what's the impact that I am going to leave on the world?”-- instead of becoming obsessed with that question, you bring the innocence, the exuberance, the curiosity of childhood along with you. You bring the wisdom, the life experience, the definitions of principles that come from “how am I going to educate my kids?”, the questions that preoccupied me in my thirties, you bring that with you. As you begin to embrace the questions of what impact I am going have on the world, my mid-life crisis, I fuse it all together and as I go towards the even later stages of life, when death starts to become real, that too doesn't fill my gaze as the only thing that preoccupies me.

# Living an Extraordinary Life, like Sarah

I don't leave the rest behind, I bring it all with me, and my experience at every stage is enriched for it, each stage in life strikes a different note, a different musical note, but when I strike one note at a time, that's ordinary, that's like playing the kind of xylophone that Fisher Price makes. When I take one note and integrate it into another, you know what we call that? We call that harmony. That is the stuff out of what symphonies are made. That's what it means to live an extraordinary life.

When you are 20, you still have 7 and when you are 100, you still have 7 and 20, also. You’re 100 years, you’re 20 years, you’re 7 years, you’re all of it together. That's the eulogy that torah gives for Sarah. And that, in the view of Rabbi Soloveitchik, is what Rashi means, when in just a few words, he expresses what makes her so extraordinary.



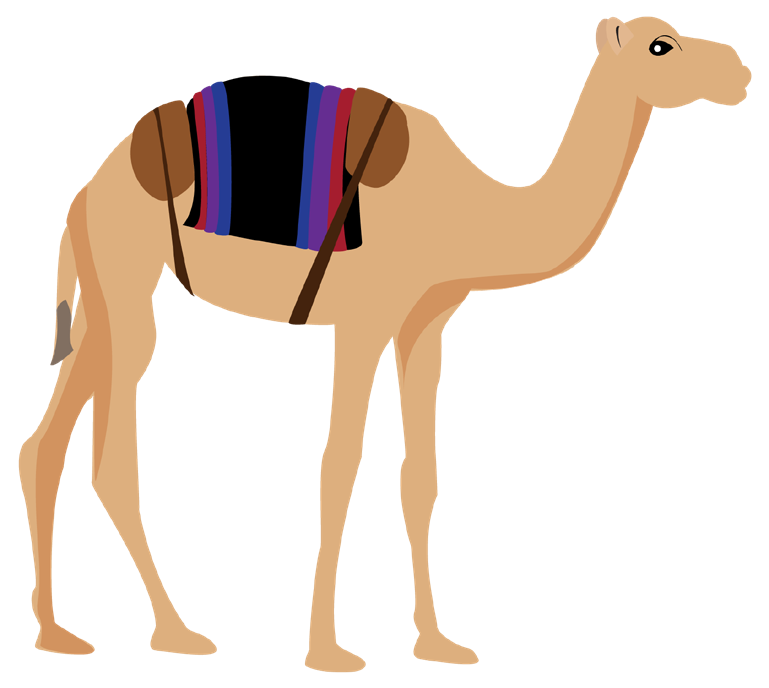
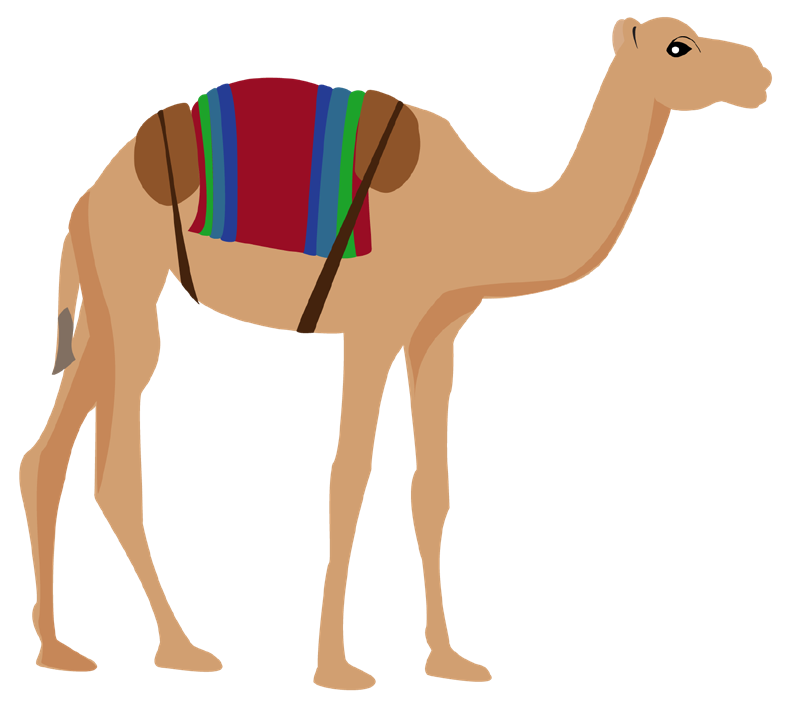
**CHAYEI SARAH: ELIEZER AND SAMUEL’S SURPRISING CONNECTION**

Welcome to the Aleph Beta Study Guide to Parshat Chayei Sarah!

**One Becomes Two**

How many beings would you say there are in a marriage? Two, right? But actually, in every successful marriage, there’s a third being. We’re not talking about God (although that may certainly be true). We’re talking about something else.

And Parshat *Chayei Sarah* reveals that something else in a very interesting way. You can see it in the Torah’s account of Eliezer - Abraham’s trusty servant - and his search for a wife for Isaac, Abraham’s son.



Eliezer is dispatched to Charan, home to Abraham’s relatives. When he gets there, he prays to God and devises a plan to find Isaac the perfect mate. *God, give me a sign.*

*I’m going to stand here by the well, and the woman who offers water to me and my camels: I’ll know that she’s the woman You have chosen for Isaac.* Sure enough, Rebecca comes along and does exactly what he described: offers to draw water for Eliezer and his camels. And so the courtship begins.

Now, the curious thing is that this story seems to repeat itself elsewhere in the Torah: in the Book of Samuel. It’s not merely that the stories share similar themes, or a repeating

phrase here or there. The connections run much deeper than that. Let’s review the events from the Eliezer tale, one by one - and if you’re familiar with the Book of Samuel, you can try to guess which story we have in mind.

## Wells and Prophecies

Let’s begin with Eliezer’s arrival in Charan:

**Genesis 24:12-13**

**ל ׁ ְשאֹב**

ִעיר, **יֹ ְצאֹת** ה

ה ָּמ ִים; ּו ְבנ ֹות ַא ְנ ׁ ֵשי

ה ֵּנה ָא ֹנ ִכי ִנ ָ ּצב, ַעל-עין

ה ּי ֹום; ַו ֲע ֵ ׂשה-ח ֶסד, ִעם ֲאדֹ ִני ַא ְב ָר ָהם.

**מָ ִים.**

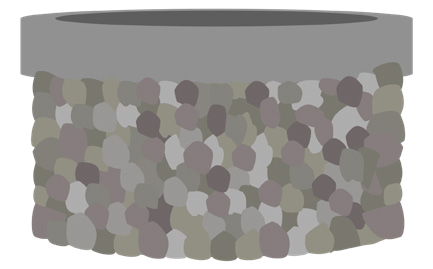
ָפ ַני ל

ְק ֵרה-נא ה

ו ּיֹא ַמר-- ְיקוה ֱאלֹקי ֲאדֹ ִני ַא ְב ָר ָהם,

And he said, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham, grant me good fortune this day, and deal graciously with my master Abraham. Here I stand by the spring as the daughters of the townsmen are **coming out to draw water**.

**INSTRUCTIONS**



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Either works! You can gather a small group of friends to explore it together, share it with a chevruta (learning partner), or go through it by yourself.

Do I need to prepare anything or can I just jump in?

Just jump in! Even if you’re planning to use this for a group discussion, just open up to page 1 and get going. (If you read it in advance, it will spoil the fun!) The only thing you should do in advance is print out copies of the “Source Sheet” for the other participants, so everyone can follow along and engage with the sources.

About the Author

Most of the material within – although not the particular language contained in this guide - was first developed and taught by Rabbi David Fohrman, founder and CEO of Aleph Beta, and is presented in his video, “Parshat Chayei Sarah: Eliezer and Samuel’s Surprising Connection” (available for viewing at [www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org/)). This guide was written by Beth Lesch, edited by Rivky Stern, and arranged by Laura Schembre.

Take a look at the last three words. That exact phrase, “come out to draw water” (*yotz’ot lish’ov mayim*), appears in only *one other place* in the entire Torah: the Book of Samuel.

And it’s not just that phrase. Take a look at these two verses from the Eliezer story, in which we find a cluster of words which also appear in the Samuel tale:

**Genesis 24:15-16**

ּבן-מ ְל ָּכה, ֵא ׁ ֶשת ָנחור ֲא ִחי ַא ְב ָר ָהם; ְו ַכ ָ ּד ּה, ַעל- ׁש ְכ ָמ ּה. ְו ַה ַּנ ֲע ָר, טֹ ַבת ַמ ְר ֶאה ְמאֹד--

ְבת ּו ֵאל ל

ל ַד ֵּבר, **ְוהִ ֵּנה**רִ ְב ָקה **יֹצֵאת** ֲא ׁ ֶשר ֻי ְּל ָדה

ָּלה ּכ

ו ְי ִהי-הוא, **ֶטרֶם**

כ ָ ּד ּה **ַו ָּתעַל.**

ָנה, ַו ְּת ַמ ֵּלא ה ַע ְי

ּבת ּו ָלה, ְו ִאי ׁש לֹא ְי ָד ָע ּה; ַו ֵּת ֶרד

And it was **before** he finished speaking, and **behold**: Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor, **came out** with her jar on her shoulder. The maiden was very beautiful, a virgin whom no man had known. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, and **came up**.

Next, consider what happens when Rebecca brings Eliezer to her family’s home. Laban, Rebecca’s brother, rushes out to invite Eliezer to eat with them. But before sitting down to a meal, Eliezer insists on recounting his tale: about how he received a prophetic message that God has chosen Rebecca. This too happens in the Book of Samuel: a man is invited to a meal, but before eating, a prophetic message is disclosed about someone who has been chosen by God.

What story in the Book of Samuel shares *all* of these elements - every single one - in the

*exact same order* in which they occur in the Book of Genesis?

## A King Is Chosen

It’s the selection of Saul as the first king of Israel, which is recounted in Chapter 9 of I Samuel.

When that chapter opens, when we first meet Saul, he isn’t yet king. His father has sent him to look for lost donkeys, and he goes to inquire of the prophet Samuel who lives in the neighboring town. There we encounter that cluster of key words which you will recognize from the Eliezer tale:

ֶני ָך; ַמ ֵהר ל ָפ

ה ֵּנה

**I Samuel 9:11-14**

הרֹ ֶאה. ַו ַּת ֲע ֶני ָנה או ָתם ַו ּתֹא ַמ ְר ָנה ֵ ּי ׁש,

ֶזה ּב

ֵי ׁש ה

**ל ׁ ְשאֹב ָמ ִים**; ַו ּיֹא ְמר ּו ָל ֶהן,

ְו ֵה ָּמה ָמ ְצאו ְנ ָער ֹות, **יֹ ְצא ֹות** ה ִעיר,

ֲע ֵלה ּב ַמ

ה ָּמה, עֹ ִלים

לֹא-יֹא ַכל ה ָעם ַעד- ּבאו-- ִכי-הוא ּכי

ָמ ָתה ֶל ֱאכל, ה ָּב

ִעיר ּכן ִּת ְמ ְצאון אֹת ֹו ּב **ֶטרֶם** ַי ֲע ֶלה ב ֲא ֶכם ה

ִכי ֶז ַבח ה ּי ֹום ָל ָעם, ּב ָּב ָמה. ּכ ּבא ָל ִעיר--

ה ּי ֹום ּכי

ע ָּתה,

ה ִעיר, ְו**הִ ֵּנה** ׁ ְשמ ּואֵל **יֹצֵא** ל ְק ָראתם,

ֹוְך ּבת

ִאים ּב

כ ַה ּי ֹום ִּת ְמ ְצאון אֹת ֹו. ַו ַ ּי ֲעל ּו, ה ִעיר; ה ָּמה,

ִאים; ְו ַע ָּתה ֲעל ּו, ּכי-אֹת ֹו ה ְּק ֻר

ה ֶ ּז ַבח, ַא ֲח ֵרי-כן יֹא ְכל ּו

י ָב ֵרְך

**לעֲל ֹות** ה ָּב ָמה.

As they were climbing the ascent to the town, they met some girls **coming out to draw water**, and they asked them, “Is the seer in town?” “Yes,” they replied. “He is up there ahead of you. Hurry, for he has just come to the town because the people have a sacrifice at the shrine today. As soon as you enter the town, you will find him **before** he goes up to the shrine to eat; the people will not eat until he comes; for he must first bless the sacrifice and only then will the guests eat. Go up at once, for you will find him right away.” So they went up to the town; and as they were entering the town, **behold**: Samuel **came out** toward them, **on his way up** to the shrine.

There they are: all five words/phrases, in the exact same order in which they occur in the Eliezer tale. Indeed, not only the words are similar but the themes are, too. In the Book of Genesis, Eliezer has been dispatched out of town on a mission, just like Saul was dispatched by his father. Eliezer comes bearing gifts to give to Rebecca, just as Saul has gifts for the prophet. And both sets of verses describe the moment in which two important individuals meet for the first time: in one, Eliezer and Rebecca; in the other, Saul and Samuel.

What about the prophetic message? That’s what comes next in the Saul story:

**I Samuel 9:17**

ַע ִּמי. ּב

ה ִאי ׁש ֲא ׁ ֶשר ָא ַמ ְר ִּתי ֵא ֶלי ָך, ֶזה ַי ְעצֹר

ו ׁ ְשמ ּו ֵאל, ָר ָאה ֶאת- ׁשאול; ַויקוה ָע ָנהו--ה ֵּנה

As soon as Samuel saw Saul, the LORD declared to him, “This is the man that I told you would govern My people.”

Samuel invites Saul to join him for a meal, but before they eat, Samuel reveals a divine secret: that Saul has been chosen by God to be the next king of Israel:

ל ָך,

ְבד ֹות האֹ

**I Samuel 9:19-20**

ָך ַא ִּגיד ָלְך. ְו ָל ֲאתֹנ ֹות ּב ְל ָב ְב

ה ּי ֹום; ְו ׁ ִש ַּל ְח ִּתי ָך ב ּ ֹב ֶקר, ְוכל ֲא ׁ ֶשר

ו ַ ּי ַען ׁ ְשמ ּו ֵאל ֶאת- ׁשאול, ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ָא ֹנ ִכי הרֹ ֶאה--ע ֵלה ל ָפ ַני ה ָּב ָמה, ַו ֲא ַכ ְל ֶּתם ִע ִּמי

ּו ְלכל ּבית ָא ִבי ָך. ל ָך,

ּכל-ח ְמ ַ ּדת ִי ְ ׂש ָר ֵאל--הל ֹוא

ה ָ ּי ִמים--אל- ּת ֶ ׂשם ֶאת- ִל ְּב ָך ָל ֶהם, ּכי ִנ ְמ ָצאו; ּו ְל ִמי,

ה ּי ֹום ׁ ְשלֹ ׁ ֶשת

And Samuel answered Saul, “I am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the shrine, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, after telling you whatever may be on your mind. As for your asses that strayed three days ago, do not concern yourself about them, for they have been found. And for whom is all Israel yearning, if not for you and all your ancestral house?”

The parallels between the two stories are remarkable: key phrases and themes, all proceeding in the exact same order. But the real question is: why? *Why* is the Book of Samuel echoing the Book of Genesis? What is it that the author of the Book of Samuel wants us to understand?

The most obvious connection between these stories is that someone special is being selected, and both of these selections happen through a kind of partnership between God and man. In Genesis, Rebecca is being selected as a wife for Isaac. In Samuel, Saul is being selected as king of Israel. The similarities are undeniable - but they seem to end there. After all, the Genesis tale is a personal story about marriage, whereas the Samuel tale is a political story about kingship.

But what if the connections continue? What if there is an essential similarity between marriage and kingship, which the author of the Book of Samuel is trying to highlight for us? And if there is, what could it be?

## The Third Entity

And this takes us back to the question that we posed at the start of this guide: how many beings are there in a marriage? Well, there’s the man and the woman, right?

So that’s true, but it’s not the whole truth. There’s the “he,” there’s the “she” - but then there’s a third entity: the “we.” When a man and woman marry, they create a nascent family, a new being - and that being has its *own* interests. For example, when both husband and wife are busy with work, it might be in neither of their interests to take off time for a romantic date night - but it’s certainly in the interest of the “we.”

When you think about it, isn’t it really the same thing with a nation? When a nation is formed, that too creates a joint entity, a “we.” The interest of that “we” doesn’t always line up with the interests of individual citizens. That’s why we have political leaders whose job it is to look out for the welfare of the “we.” That’s really the fundamental duty of a king.

You can see this clearly in an interview in which a reporter somewhat insensitively asked the mother of a Israeli boy who had been kidnapped: “Would you want the Prime Minister to swap hundreds of thousands of Palestinian militants in exchange for your son?” Soberingly, she replied: “It may be something that I, as a mother, would want. But I don’t think that the Prime Minister of Israel should be setting policy for his country by asking the mothers of kidnapped victims what *they* want.” She was stating a deep and abiding truth. It is the job of the leader to think about the “we”: what’s best for the nation as a whole. Indeed, in that sense, the king is the one who holds the nation together. He embodies the collective.1

So perhaps the institutions of marriage and kingship aren’t so disparate after all. They’re both about the formation and preservation of a “we.”

1 You see this in how Shakespeare often refers to kings by the name of their nation, e.g. “Welcome, my good friends! Say, Voltimand, what from our brother *Norway*?” (*Hamlet* Act 2, Scene 2)

## A Promise Comes To Fruition

Indeed, we want to suggest that there’s an even deeper connection between this marriage - between Isaac and Rebecca

- and *this* kingship - that of Saul. Do you recall the very first mention in the Torah of Israelite kingship? It was in God’s promise to Abraham in Parshat *Lech Lecha*:

**Genesis 17:6**

ּו ְמ ָל ִכים, ִמ ְּמ ָך ֵי ֵצאו. **לג ֹויִם**;

ְמאֹד, ּו ְנ ַת ִּתי ָך ּב ְמאֹד

ו ִה ְפ ֵר ִתי אֹ ְת ָך

I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make **nations** of you; and kings shall come forth from you.

God’s promise describes the steps through which Abraham’s legacy will take shape. First, Abraham will have many descendants. Then, those descendants will coalesce into a nation.

And finally, a leader will emerge who can guard the people’s collective interest. That chain starts with Isaac and Rebecca’s marriage, and it ends with the anointing of King Saul. Indeed, the marriage

of Isaac and Rebecca: that was the very first “we” that was created once Abraham received his promise. It was the very first coming together of individuals to make a collective entity. Through their marriage, God’s promise began to take shape. And it culminated with the gift of kings to Israel,

with the creation of the national “we,” a new sanctified entity. Saul’s anointing - it was like a marriage, but on a national scale.

When individuals enter into a “we,” the challenge is for them to take the needs of the “we” seriously. It’s easy to care about the needs of another individual. An individual is tangible. But the “we” is abstract. The challenge of a husband and wife, and of a king, is to guard the welfare of the “we.” If we want our unions - be they familial or national - to endure, we must take that seriously.

Think of friends and family who will love it as much as you did - and share it with them!

And when you do, please remember to support Aleph Beta. Nothing makes us happier than bringing eye-opening, soul-heartening, life-changing Torah directly to you — but it all costs money. Like the cost of the writing, editing, design and circulation of the guide that you’re reading. So until we win the lottery, we need your support. Encourage your friends to subscribe to Aleph Beta, so they can get the guides sent directly to them! Or if you shared it with a friend and it was an awesome experience for both of you, consider making a small donation to show your love.

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Chayei Sarah: Eliezer and Samuel’s Surprising Connection

Source Sheet Page 1

**Genesis 24:12–48 (abridged)**

**בראשית כד:יב–מח**

**12** And he said, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham,

ל ָפ ַני ה ּי ֹום; ַו ֲע ֵ ׂשה-

ְב ָר ָהם, ה ְק ֵרה-נא א

**יב** ַו ּיֹא ַמר-- ְיקוה אלֹקי אדֹ ִני

grant me good fortune this day, and deal graciously with

א ֹנ ִכי ִנ ָ ּצב, על-עין ה ָּמ ִים; ו ְבנ ֹות

ְב ָר ָהם. **יג** ה ֵּנה א

ח ֶסד, עם אדֹ ִני

my master Abraham: **13** Here I stand by the spring as

ה ִעיר, יֹ ְצאֹת ל ׁ ְשאֹב מ ִים. **יד** ְו ָה ָיה ה ַּנ ֲע ָר, א ׁ ֶשר אֹ ַמר א ֶלי ָה

א ְנ ׁ ֵשי

the daughters of the townsmen are coming out to draw water; **14** let the maiden to whom I say, ‘Please, lower your jar that I may drink,’ and who replies, ‘Drink, and I

כ ֵ ּדְך ְו ֶא ׁ ְש ֶּתה, ְו ָא ְמ ָרה ׁ ְש ֵתה, ְו ַגם- ְג ַמ ֶּלי ָך א ׁ ְש ֶקה--אֹ ָת ּה

ל ַע ְב ְ ּד ָך ל ִי ְצ ָחק, ו ָב ּה א ַדע, ּכי-ע ִ ׂשי ָת ח ֶסד עם-אדֹ ִני. **טו**

ה ִּטי-נא

הֹ ַכ ְח ָּת,

will also water your camels’—let her be the one whom

ְבת ּו ֵאל ל

א ׁ ֶשר ֻי ְּל ָדה

ְו ִה ֵּנה ִר ְב ָקה יֹ ֵצאת ל ַד ֵּבר,

ָּלה ּכ

ט ֶרם

ו ְי ִהי-הוא,

You have decreed for Your servant Isaac. Thereby shall

ְכ ָמ ּה. **טז** ְו ַה ַּנ ֲערָ, על- ׁש

א ְב ָר ָהם; ְו ַכ ָ ּד ּה,

ִחי א

א ׁ ֶשת ָנחור

ּבן-מ ְל ָּכה,

I know that You have dealt graciously with my master.”

ָלה, ְו ִאי ׁש לֹא ְי ָד ָע ּה; ַו ֵּת ֶרד ה ַע ְי ָנה, ַו ְּת ַמ ֵּלא מאֹד-- ְבת ּו

טֹ ַבת מ ְר ֶאה

**15** And it was before he finished speaking, and behold:

ּה; ַו ּיֹא ֶמר, ה ְג ִמי ִאי ִני ָנא מ ַעט- ל ְק ָראת

כ ָ ּד ּה ַו ָּת ַעל. יז ַו ָ ּי ָרץ ה ֶע ֶבד,

Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah the

מַ ִים מִ ַּכ ֵ ּדְך. **יח** ַו ּתֹא ֶמר, ׁ ְש ֵתה אדֹ ִני; ַו ְּת ַמ ֵהר, ַו ּתֹ ֶרד ּכ ָ ּד ּה על- ָי ָד ּה-

wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor, came out with her jar on

her shoulder. **16** The maiden was very beautiful, a virgin

-ו ַּת ׁ ְש ֵקהו. **יט** ַו ְּת ַכל, ל ַה ׁ ְשקֹת ֹו; ַו ּתֹא ֶמר, ַּגם ל ְג ַמ ֶּלי ָך א ׁ ְש ָאב, עד

whom no man had known. She went down to the spring,

ל ׁ ְש ּ ֹתת. **כ** ַו ְּת ַמ ֵהר, ַו ְּת ַער ּכ ָ ּד ּה אל-ה ׁ ּשֹ ֶקת, ַו ָּת ָרץ ע ֹוד

אם- ִכ ּל ּו,

filled her jar, and came up. **17** The servant ran toward her

ּה; ל

מ ׁ ְש ָּת ֵאה,

ְג ַמ ָּליו. **כא** ְו ָה ִאי ׁש ל ָכל-

ל ׁ ְשאֹב; ַו ִּת ׁ ְש ַאב,

אל-ה ְּב ֵאר,

and said, “Please, let me sip a little water from your jar.”

ּל ּו ּכ

ּכ ֲא ׁ ֶשר

**כב** ַו ְי ִהי,אם-לֹא.

ה ִה ְצ ִלי ַח ְיקוה ַ ּד ְר ּכ ֹו,

מ ֲח ִרי ׁש-- ָל ַד ַעת

**18** “Drink, my lord,” she said, and she quickly lowered her

מ ׁ ְש ָקל ֹו--ו ׁ ְש ֵני צ ִמי ִדים

ל ׁ ְש ּת ֹות, ַו ִ ּי ַּקח ה ִאי ׁש ֶנ ֶזם ָז ָהב, ּב ַקע

ה ְּג ַמ ִּלים

jar upon her hand and let him drink. **19** When she had let

ִּגי ִדי ָנא ה

מ ׁ ְש ָק ָלם. **כג** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ּבת-מי א ְּת,

ע ָ ׂש ָרה ָז ָהב

על- ָי ֶדי ָה,

him drink his fill, she said, “I will also draw for your camels,

ּבת- ְבת ּו ֵאל א ָליו,

ִלין. **כד** ַו ּתֹא ֶמר ל

ּבית-א ִביְך מקום לנ ּו,

לי; ה ֵי ׁש

until they finish drinking.” **20** Quickly emptying her jar into

the trough, she ran back to the well to draw, and she drew

ָליו, ַּגם- ּת ֶבן א

א ֹנ ִכי-- ֶבן-מ ְל ָּכה, א ׁ ֶשר ָי ְל ָדה ל ָנחור. **כה** ַו ּתֹא ֶמר

for all his camels. **21** The man, meanwhile, stood gazing

ע ָּמנ ּו-- ַגם-מקום, לל ּון. **כו** ַו ִ ּי ּקֹד ה ִאי ׁש, ַו ִ ּי ׁ ְש ַּתחו

ּגם-מ ְס ּפ ֹוא ַרב

at her, silently wondering whether the LORD had made

אלֹקי אדֹ ִני א ְב ָר ָהם, א ׁ ֶשר לֹא-ע ַזב

ּוְך ְיקוה ּבר

ליקוה. **כז** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר,

his errand successful or not. **22** When the camels had

ּב ֶ ּד ֶרְך ָנ ַח ִני ְיקוה, ּבית, א ֵחי אדֹ ִני.

ִני; א ֹנ ִכי, אדֹ

ח ְס ּד ֹו ַו ֲא ִמ ּת ֹו, מ ִעם

finished drinking, the man took a gold nose-ring weighing

ֶּלה. **כט** ו ְלרִ ְב ָקה ה ֵא

ל ֵבית א ָּמ ּה-- ַכ ְ ּד ָב ִרים,

ָר, ַו ַּת ֵּגד, ה ַּנ ֲע

כח ַו ָּת ָרץ,

a half-shekel, and two gold bands for her arms, ten shekels

ִאי ׁש החו ָצה, אל-ה ָע ִין. **ל** ַו ְי ִהי ּכ ְראֹת אל-ה

אח, ו ׁ ְשמ ֹו ל ָבן; ַו ָ ּי ָרץ ל ָבן

in weight. **23** “Pray tell me,” he said, “whose daughter are you? Is there room in your father’s house for us to spend

על- ְי ֵדי אחֹת ֹו, ו ְכ ׁ ָש ְמע ֹו את- ִ ּד ְב ֵרי ִר ְב ָקה

ה ִאי ׁש; ַו ָ ּיבא, אל-ה ִאי ׁש, ְו ִה ֵּנה עֹ ֵמד על-

את-ה ֶּנ ֶזם, ְו ֶאת-ה ְ ּצ ִמ ִדים אחֹת ֹו לאמֹר, ֹכה- ִד ֶּבר א ַלי

the night?” **24** She replied, “I am the daughter of Bethuel

the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.” **25** And she

ְּג ַמ ִּלים, על-ה ָע ִין. **לא** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר, ב ֹוא ּבר ּוְך ְיקוה; ל ָּמה ת ֲעמֹד, ּבחוץ, ה

went on, “There is plenty of straw and feed at home, and

ל ְּג ַמ ִּלים. **לב** ַו ָ ּיבא ה ִאי ׁש ה ַּב ְי ָתה, ַו ְי ַפ ַּתח

ו ָמקום

ַּב ִית, ה

ִּני ִתי ִפ

ו ָא ֹנ ִכי

also room to spend the night.” **26** The man bowed low in

ַר ְג ָליו, ְו ַר ְג ֵלי ל ְרחֹץ

ַמ ִים ו

ְּג ַמ ִּלים, ל

ְס ּפ ֹוא, ו ִמ

ֶבן ֶת

ה ְּג ַמ ִּלים; ַו ִ ּי ֵּתן

homage to the LORD **27** and said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld His steadfast faithfulness from my master. For I have been guided on my errand by the LORD, to the house of my master’s kinsmen.” **28** The maiden ran and told all this to her mother’s household. **29** Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. Laban ran out to the man at the spring— **30** when he saw the nose-ring and the bands on

האֲ ָנ ׁ ִשים אֲ ׁ ֶשר אִ ּת ֹו. **לג** ויישם (ו ּי ּו ַ ׂשם) ל ָפ ָניו, ל ֱאכל, ַו ּיֹא ֶמר לֹא

אֹ ַכל, עד אם- ִ ּד ַּב ְר ִּתי ְ ּד ָב ָרי; ַו ּיֹא ֶמר, ַ ּד ֵּבר. **לד** ַו ּיֹא ַמר: ע ֶבד א ְב ָר ָהם,

אָ ֹנ ִכי.… **מב** ָו ָאבא ה ּי ֹום, אל-ה ָע ִין; ָואֹ ַמר, ְיקוה אלֹקי אדֹ ִני א ְב ָר ָהם, אם- ֶי ׁ ְש ָך- ָנא מ ְצ ִלי ַח ַ ּד ְר ִּכי, א ׁ ֶשר א ֹנ ִכי הֹ ֵלְך ע ֶלי ָה. **מג** ה ֵּנה א ֹנ ִכי

נ ָ ּצב, על-עין ה ָּמ ִים; ְו ָה ָיה ה ַע ְל ָמה, ה ּיֹ ֵצאת ל ׁ ְשאֹב, ְו ָא ַמ ְר ִּתי א ֶלי ָה, ִני ה ׁ ְש ִקי ִני-נא מ ַעט-מ ִים מ ַּכ ֵ ּדְך. **מד** ְו ָא ְמ ָרה א ַלי ַּגם-א ָּתה ׁ ְש ֵתה, ְו ַגם ל ְג ַמ ֶּלי ָך א ׁ ְש ָאב--הוא ה ִא ׁ ָּשה, א ׁ ֶשר-הֹ ִכי ַח ְיקוה ל ֶבן-אדֹ ִני. מה א



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his sister’s arms, and when he heard his sister Rebekah

ׁש ְכ ָמ ּה, על-

אל- ִל ִּבי, ְו ִה ֵּנה ִר ְב ָקה יֹ ֵצאת ְו ַכ ָ ּד ּה

ַד ֵּבר ל

ַכ ֶּלה א

ט ֶרם

say, “Thus the man spoke to me.” He went up to the man, who was still standing beside the camels at the spring.

ה ַע ְי ָנה, ַו ִּת ׁ ְש ָאב; ָואֹ ַמר א ֶלי ָה, ה ׁ ְש ִקי ִני ָנא. **מו** וַ ְּת ַמ ֵהר, וַ ּת ֹו ֶרד מ ָע ֶלי ָה, ַו ּתֹא ֶמר ׁ ְש ֵתה, ְו ַגם- ְג ַמ ֶּלי ָך א ׁ ְש ֶקה; ָו ֵא ׁ ְש ְּת, ְו ַגם ה ְּג ַמ ִּלים

ו ֵּת ֶרד

ּכ ָ ּד ּה

**31** “Come in, O blessed of the LORD,” he said, “why do you

ַו ּתֹא ֶמר ּבת- ְבת ּו ֵאל א ְּת,

ה ׁ ְשקָ ָתה. **מז** ָו ֶא ׁ ְש ַאל אֹ ָת ּה, ָואֹ ַמר ּבת-מי

remain outside, when I have made ready the house and a

מ ְל ָּכה; ָו ָא ִ ׂשם ה ֶּנ ֶזם על-א ָּפ ּה, ְו ַה ְ ּצ ִמי ִדים

ּבן-נחור, א ׁ ֶשר ָי ְל ָדה- ּל ֹו

place for the camels?” **32** So the man entered the house, and the camels were unloaded. The camels were given straw and feed, and water was brought to bathe his feet and the feet of the men with him. **33** But when food was set before him, he said, “I will not eat until I have told my tale.” He said, “Speak, then.” **34** “I am Abraham’s servant,” he began… **42** “I came today to the spring, and I said: O LORD, God of my master Abraham, if You would indeed grant success to the errand on which I am engaged! **43** As I stand by the spring of water, let the young woman who comes out to draw and to whom I say, ‘Please, let me

drink a little water from your jar,’ **44** and who answers, ‘You may drink, and I will also draw for your camels’—let her

be the wife whom the LORD has decreed for my master’s son.’ **45** I had scarcely finished praying in my heart, when Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder, and went down to the spring and drew. And I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ **46** She quickly lowered her jar and said, ‘Drink, and I will also water your camels.’ So I drank, and she also watered the camels. **47** I inquired of her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ And she said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.’ And I put the ring on her nose and the bands on her arms. **48** Then I bowed low in homage to the LORD and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who led me on the right way to get the daughter of my master’s brother for his son.

ָו ֲא ָב ֵרְך, את- ְיקוה אלֹקי ַק ַחת את- ַבת-א ִחי אדֹ ִני ליקוה; א ֶמת, ל

ַעל- ָי ֶדי ָה. **מח** ָו ֶא ּ ֹקד ָו ֶא ׁ ְש ַּת ֲח ֶוה, אדֹ ִני א ְב ָר ָהם, א ׁ ֶשר ה ְנ ַח ִני ּב ֶד ֶרְך

ִלבְנ ֹו.

**1 Samuel 9:3-20**

#### סמואל א ט:ג–כ

**3** Once the asses of Saul’s father Kish went astray, and Kish said to his son Saul, “Take along one of the

ֹו, ּבנ

קי ׁש אל- ׁשאול

ֲאתֹ ֹנת. **ד** את-ה

ל ִקי ׁש, א ִבי ׁ ָשאול; ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ְּנ ָע ִרים, ְוקום לְך, ּב ֵּק ׁש מ ַה

ה ֲאתֹנ ֹות, ַחד את-א

**ג** ַו ּתֹא ַב ְד ָנה,

קח-נא א ְּת ָך

servants and go out and look for the asses.” **4** He passed

מ ָצאו; ַו ַ ּי ַע ְבר ּו ב ֶא ֶרץ-

בר ּב ַהר-א ְפ ַר ִים ַו ַ ּי ֲעבר ּב ֶא ֶרץ- ׁש ִל ׁ ָשה, ְולֹא

ו ַ ּי ֲע

into the hill country of Ephraim. He crossed the district

of Shalishah, but they did not find them. They passed

ֶא ֶרץ ּב

בר ּב ֶא ֶרץ- ְי ִמי ִני ְולֹא מ ָצאו. **ה** ה ָּמה, ּבאו

ַש ֲע ִלים ָו ַא ִין, ַו ַ ּי ֲע

through the district of Shaalim, but they were not there.

א ִבי מן-

א ׁ ֶשר-ע ּמ ֹו, ל ָכה ְו ָנ ׁש ּו ָבה-- ּפן- ֶי ְח ַ ּדל

צ ּוף, ְו ׁ ָשאול א ַמר ל ַנ ֲער ֹו

They traversed the [entire] territory of Benjamin, and still

ה ּזֹאת,

ֵּנה-נא אי ׁש-אלֹקים ּב ִעיר ה

**ו** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ל ֹו,לנו.

ה ֲאתֹנות, ְו ָד ַאג

they did not find them. **5** When they reached the district of

ע ָּתה, ֵנ ְל ָכה ׁ ָּשם--או ַלי ַי ִּגיד

ֹוא ָיב ֹוא; ב

א ׁ ֶשר- ְי ַד ֵּבר

ֹכל

ו ָה ִאי ׁש ִנ ְכ ָּבד,



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Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with him, “Let us

ֹו, ְו ִה ֵּנה ֵנ ֵלְך ל ַנ ֲער

ע ֶלי ָה. **ז** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ׁ ָשאול

א ׁ ֶשר-ה ַל ְכנ ּו

את- ַ ּד ְר ֵּכנ ּו

לנ ּו,

turn back, or my father will stop worrying about the asses

ִאי ׁש ל

ְל ָה ִביא אין-

ְת ׁש ּו ָרה ו

ֵּכ ֵלינ ּו, מ

א ַזל

ֶּל ֶחם ה

ִאי ׁש-- ִכי ל

ו ַמה- ָנ ִביא

and begin to worry about us.” **6** But he replied, “There is a

ׁשאול, ַו ּיֹא ֶמר, ה ֵּנה את-

ַּנ ַער, ל ֲענ ֹות ה

ה ֱאלֹקים: מה, א ָּתנ ּו. **ח** ַו ּיֹ ֶסף

man of God in that town, and the man is highly esteemed; everything that he says comes true. Let us go there;

ׁש ה ֱאלֹקים, ְו ִה ִּגיד לנ ּו את- ל ִאי

ׁש ּב ֶל ְכ ּת ֹו ל ְדר ֹו ׁש אלֹקים, ה ִאי

נ ְמ ָצא ב ָי ִדי ֶר ַבע ׁ ֶש ֶקל ּכ ֶסף; ְו ָנ ַת ִּתי ּדרְ ֵּכנ ּו. **ט** ל ָפ ִנים ּב ִי ְ ׂש ָר ֵאל, ֹכה-א ַמר

perhaps he will tell us about the errand on which we set

ָפ ִנים הרֹ ֶאה. **י** ל

ּו ְו ֵנ ְל ָכה, עד-הרֹ ֶאה: ּכי ל ָּנ ִביא ה ּי ֹום, ִי ָּק ֵרא לכ

out.” **7** “But if we go,” Saul said to his servant, “what can we bring the man? For the food in our bags is all gone,

אל-ה ִעיר, א ׁ ֶשר-

ו ּיֹא ֶמר ׁ ָשאול ל ַנ ֲער ֹו ט ֹוב ְ ּד ָב ְר ָך, ל ָכה ֵנ ֵל ָכה; ַו ֵ ּי ְלכ ּו,

and there is nothing we can bring to the man of God as

מ ְצאו

ִעיר, ְו ֵה ָּמה ה

ֲע ֵלה ּב ַמ

ָּמה, עֹ ִלים ה

האֱלֹקים. **יא**

ָשם, אִי ׁש

a present. What have we got?” **8** The servant answered

ֶזה הרֹ ֶאה. **יב** ּב

ֶהן, ה ֵי ׁש ל

נ ָער ֹות, יֹ ְצאות ל ׁ ְשאֹב מ ִים; ַו ּיֹא ְמר ּו

Saul again, “I happen to have a quarter-shekel of silver. I

ּכי ה ּי ֹום ּבא ע ָּתה,

ו ַּת ֲע ֶני ָנה או ָתם ַו ּתֹא ַמ ְר ָנה ֵ ּי ׁש, ה ֵּנה ל ָפ ֶני ָך; מ ֵהר

can give that to the man of God and he will tell us about

**יג** ּכב ֲא ֶכם ה ִעיר ּכן ִת ְמ ְצאון אֹת ֹוּב ָּב ָמה.

ל ִעיר-- ִכי ֶז ַבח ה ּי ֹום ל ָעם,

our errand.”— **9** Formerly in Israel, when a man went to

ָעם עד- ּבאו-- ִכי-הוא ה

לֹא-יֹא ַכל ּכי

ָמ ָתה ל ֱאכל, ה ָּב

ּב ֶט ֶרם ַי ֲע ֶלה

inquire of God, he would say, “Come, let us go to the seer,”

ּו, ּכי-אֹת ֹו כ ַה ּי ֹום על

יֹא ְכל ּו ה ְּק ֻר ִאים; ְו ַע ָּתה א ֲח ֵרי-כן

י ָב ֵרְך ה ֶ ּז ַבח,

for the prophet of today was formerly called a seer.— **10**

Saul said to his servant, “A good idea; let us go.” And they

ֹוְך ה ִעיר, ְו ִה ֵּנה ּבת

ִעיר; ה ָּמה, ּב ִאים ה

ִת ְמ ְצאון אֹת ֹו. **יד** ַו ַ ּי ֲעל ּו,

went to the town where the man of God lived. **11** As they

ֶזן את-אֹ

ָּב ָמה. **טו** ַויקוה, ָּג ָלה ה

ֲעל ֹות ל

ְק ָראתם, ל

ְשמ ּו ֵאל יֹ ֵצא

were climbing the ascent to the town, they met some girls

לאמֹר. **טז** ּכ ֵעת מ ָחר א ׁ ְש ַלח

ְפ ֵני ב ֹוא- ׁשאול ל

ְשמ ּו ֵאל, י ֹום א ָחד,

coming out to draw water, and they asked them, “Is the

ל ָנ ִגיד על-ע ִּמי ִי ְ ׂש ָר ֵאל, ְוהו ׁ ִשי ַע

מ ֶא ֶרץ ּב ְנ ָי ִמן, ו ְמ ׁ ַש ְח ּת ֹו

א ֶלי ָך אי ׁש

seer in town?” **12** “Yes,” they replied. “He is up there ahead of you. Hurry, for he has just come to the town because

את-ע ִּמי, מ ַ ּיד ְפ ִל ׁ ְש ִּתים: ּכי ָר ִאי ִתי את-ע ִּמי, ּכי ּב ָאה צ ֲע ָקת ֹו א ָלי. **יז** ּו ׁ ְשמ ּו ֵאל, ָר ָאה את- ׁשאול; ַויקוה ע ָנהו--ה ֵּנה ה ִאי ׁש א ׁ ֶשר א ַמ ְר ִּתי

the people have a sacrifice at the shrine today. **13** As soon

as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes

א ֶלי ָך, ֶזה ַי ְע ֹצר ּב ַע ִּמי. **יח** ַו ִ ּי ַּג ׁש ׁ ָשאול את- ׁשמ ּו ֵאל, ּבת ֹוְך ה ׁ ָּש ַער;

up to the shrine to eat; the people will not eat until he comes; for he must first bless the sacrifice and only then

ו ּיֹא ֶמר ה ִּגי ָדה- ָנא לי, אי-זה ּבית הרֹ ֶאה. **יט** ַו ַ ּי ַען ׁ ְשמ ּו ֵאל את-

ַו ּיֹא ֶמר א ֹנ ִכי הרֹ ֶאה--ע ֵלה ל ָפ ַני ה ָּב ָמה, ַו ֲא ַכ ְל ֶּתם ע ִּמי ה ּי ֹום; ָשאול,

will the guests eat. Go up at once, for you will find him

**כ** ְו ָל ֲאתֹנות האֹ ְבד ֹותלְך.

ִּגיד א

ב ּ ֹב ֶקר, ְוכל א ׁ ֶשר ּב ְל ָב ְב ָך

ו ׁ ִש ַּל ְח ִּתי ָך

right away.” **14** So they went up to the town; and as they

ִנ ְמ ָצאו; ו ְל ִמי, ּכי

ִל ְּב ָך ל ֶהם, את-

ל ָך, ה ּי ֹום ׁ ְשלֹ ׁ ֶשת ה ָ ּי ִמים--אל- ּת ֶ ׂשם

were entering the town, Samuel came out toward them, on his way up to the shrine. **15** Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed the following to Samuel: **16** “At this time tomorrow, I will send a man to you from the territory of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him ruler of My people Israel. He will deliver My people from the hands of the Philistines; for I have taken note of My people, their outcry has come to Me.” **17** As soon as Samuel saw Saul, the LORD declared to him, “This is the man that I told you would govern My people.” **18** Saul approached Samuel inside the gate and said to him, “Tell me, please, where is the house of the seer?” **19** And Samuel answered Saul,

“I am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the shrine, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you

ִבי ָך. א

ּבית

ּכל-ח ְמ ַ ּדת ִי ְ ׂש ָר ֵאל--הל ֹוא ל ָך, ו ְלכל



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go, after telling you whatever may be on your mind. **20** As for your asses that strayed three days ago, do not concern yourself about them, for they have been found. And for whom is all Israel yearning, if not for you and all your ancestral house?”

##### Genesis 17:6

**6** I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations of you; and kings shall come forth from you.

ְּמ ָך ֵי ֵצאו. מ

ְמ ָל ִכים, ו

ֹו ִים; לג

ַת ִּתי ָך ו ְנ

מאֹד,

ְמאֹד ּב

#### בראשית יז:ו

**ו** ְו ִה ְפ ֵר ִתי אֹ ְת ָך



**CHAYEI SARAH: WHAT MAKES FOR A SUCCESSFUL LIFE?**

Welcome to the Aleph Beta Study Guide to Parshat Chayei Sarah!

**This guide corresponds to the video:** [**Chayei Sarah: What Makes For An Extraordinary Life?**](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/sarahs-old-age-life)

## What Makes For An Extraordinary Life?

Have you ever been in the presence of someone who you felt was an extraordinary person? Or, have you ever looked at an older person and thought, “Wow - that’s what I want to be like when I’m that age”? What is it that makes these people so extraordinary? What have they achieved that distinguishes them from the crowd?

### LOOK INSIDE: The Death of Sarah



The opening lines of our parsha offer us a possible answer in the example of our extraordinary matriarch, Sarah, when we hear about her death and burial.

Read through the verses below describing these events. Do you notice anything that stands out in the description of Sarah’s death? How is it different from other deaths recorded until this point in the book of Genesis?

**Genesis 23:1-2**

##### בראשית כג:א-ב

**1** Sarah’s lifetime, the span of Sarah’s life, came to

ׂש ָרה, ֵמ ָאה ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ֶע ְ ׂש ִרים ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ׁ ֶש ַבע ׁ ָש ִנים-- ׁש ֵני,

ח ֵ ּיי

**א** ו ִ ּי ְהי ּו

one hundred and twenty-seven years. 2 Sarah died in

ֹון-- ְב ֶא ֶרץ ח ְבר

הוא

ַית ַא ְר ַּבע ּב ִק ְר

ׂש ָרה,

ָּת ָמת ו

ׂש ָרה. **ב**

ח ֵ ּיי

Kiriath-arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her.

ל ָ ׂש ָרה, ְו ִל ְב ּ ֹכ ָת ּה.

ל ְס ּ ֹפד

בא, ַא ְב ָר ָהם,

ּכ ָנ ַען; ַו ָ ּי

The Bible tells of many deaths before Sarah. There are full chapters that list generation after generation of genealogy, with the refrain: “And x lived for y years; and he died.” Sarah, however, is the first person who doesn’t simply die and disappear from memory - Sarah is eulogized. The text goes out of its way to tell us that Abraham came to pay a tearful tribute to her life.

But while the Bible sees fit to mention that Abraham eulogized Sarah, it leaves us wondering about what he actually said. What were Sarah’s unique qualities that Abraham spoke about in this moment? But the Bible leaves out these important details… or does it?

### INSTRUCTIONS

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A careful reading of the verses reveals that there is indeed a tribute to Sarah hidden here in the text. Take a look at the peculiar way the Bible chooses to tell us about the years of Sarah’s life (Genesis 23:1):

**Genesis 23:1**

ׂש ָרה

ח ֵ ּיי

ׂש ָרה, ֵמ ָאה ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ֶע ְ ׂש ִרים ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ׁ ֶש ַבע ׁ ָש ִנים-- ׁש ֵני,

ח ֵ ּיי

ו ִ ּי ְהי ּו

Sarah’s lifetime, the span of Sarah’s life, came to one hundred and twenty-seven years.

Now, if you’re looking at the English translation, there’s nothing too peculiar about this verse. It sounds like the text is simply telling us that Sarah died at 127. But in Hebrew, it’s really strange. A literal translation would be: “Sarah’s lifetime came to 100 years, and 20 years, and 7 years.”1

### PONDER THIS



What do you make of this phrasing? What do you think the Bible is trying to convey about Sarah and her life?

1 And no, this isn’t the typical way you’d expect the Hebrew to be written.

**Here’s how it seems to us:** This unusual phrasing leaves room for interpretation, but it seems like when the Bible repeats the word “years” over and over again, it’s actually breaking Sarah’s life into three distinct units.

## Rashi’s Explanation

Indeed, this is the line of reasoning that Rashi takes, in one of his most famous comments in the entire book of Genesis. Here’s how Rashi makes sense of the unusual language here:

**Rashi on Genesis 23:1**

**And the life of Sarah was one hundred years and**

##### רש”י על בראשית כג:א

**ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים:** לכַ ְך

**twenty years and seven years:** The reason that the

ל ָך ׁ ֶש ָּכל ֶא ָחד ִנ ְד ָר ׁש ל ֲע ְצמ ֹו.

כ ָלל ּו ְכ ָלל, ל ֹו ַמר ּב ָכל

נ ְכ ָּתב ׁ ָש ָנה

word “years” was written after every digit is to tell you

ח ְט ָאה, ׁ ֶש ֲה ֵרי ֵאי ָנ ּה ּבת

ּבת ק’ ּכ ַּבת כ’ ל ֵח ְטא, ַמה בת כ’ לֹא

that every digit is to be expounded upon individually: when she was one hundred years old, she was like

a twenty-year-old regarding sin. Just as a twenty- year-old has not sinned, because she is not liable to punishment, so too when she was one hundred years old, she was without sin. And when she was twenty, she was like a seven-year-old as regards to beauty.

ז’ לי ֹו ִפי: ּכ ַבת

ק’ בלֹא ח ְטא, ּו ַבת כ’ ּבת

ע ֹו ְנ ׁ ִשין, ַאף

Rashi is saying that while Sarah’s life was 127 years, the Bible breaks it up into three separate units to tell us something about her life: At 100 years of age, Sarah was as guiltless from sin as when she was 20, and at the age of 20, she was as beautiful and innocent-looking as when she was 7.

This sounds cute, but what is Rashi really getting at here? What difference does it make if she was beautiful and guiltless at different ages? If the Bible was really trying to tell us about Sarah’s virtues, it should have said: “And Sarah died at the ripe old age of 127, a beautiful woman who was free of sins.” Why praise Sarah specifically in this way? Is there a larger meaning to this?

## The Stages of Life

As we move through life, we go through different stages. As a young child, you live in a state of innocence, curiosity and exuberance. You can become totally absorbed by just about anything, be it chasing pigeons on the sidewalk, watching clouds move overhead, or simply asking “WHY?” about everything around you. As you grow into a teenager, other things take priority and you begin to value and explore your independence. Things like curfew, a driver’s license, and all kinds of new experiences and identities take center stage. As you grow beyond adolescence, new priorities begin to emerge. You want to settle down, choose a career path, you want to get married. A bit later in life, you begin to raise kids and you start to wonder about your values: what do I stand for? How do I educate my children? We can all attest that life comes with different stages, and each with its own set of concerns, needs and experiences.

### PONDER THIS



We all go through similar stages in life, and we face a lot of similar choices and situations along the way. What transforms this process from something common to something extraordinary? What differentiates the extraordinary person from all the rest?

**We want to suggest2:** Life is inevitably a journey through different stages, but there are two ways a person can go through these stages of life. These two paths make for two very different kinds of people.

One approach is to pass through life’s stages one by one. You go through stage A, and after that you leave stage A behind and enter stage B. As you go from stage B to stage C, you leave stage B behind, and so on throughout your life. We can call this the ordinary way to go through life.

But there’s another path, an extraordinary way to live one’s life. It’s the way Sarah did it. It involves taking each stage of life with you as you grow. As you grow out of childhood, you don’t discard your innocence when you reach a new stage. You keep the exuberance and curiosity of your youth and build on it. And then, as you become an adult and you grow wiser and accumulate more life experience, you bring your childlike qualities along with you and integrate them into your life as you settle on a career and build a family.

Then, as you move on to the next stages in life, you begin to ask yourself, “What impact am I making on this world?” You don’t get obsessively focused on that question, because you’re carrying your earlier stages with you. You still have the curiosity and exuberance of a child, and you also now bring the wisdom, life experience and insights you gained came from raising your own kids. And as you embrace these questions of what impact you will have on the world, you fuse all of your life experiences together.

When you reach even later stages of life, and death begins to become all too real, it doesn’t feel like the only thing that preoccupies you. You’re not leaving the rest of your life behind behind you at this point. Rather you bring it all with you. When you live this way, your experience at every stage of life is enriched by everything that came before.

## A Symphonic Life

When you consider the stages that compose your life, you can sense how each stage seems to strike a different chord, as if each one plays a different musical note. The ordinary thing to do is to strike one note at a time, to focus all of your energy on the concerns and impressions that are in front of you in your current stage of life. But all said, that’s kind of like playing a Fisher Price xylophone - it makes a singular, dull sound.

But if you can take one musical note and join it with another, and then take these notes and join them to another

- it creates something we call harmony. It makes for a deep, rich sound that has many layers. It’s the stuff that symphonies are made of.

This, in essence, is what it means to live an extraordinary life. When you are 20, you still have your 7 year-old self with you. When you’re 100, you still have the 7 year-old and the 20 year-old selves with you. An extraordinary life is one that integrates all of life’s stages together into a single whole.

This is the quality that the Bible praises in its “eulogy” for Sarah. It’s the kind of life that Sarah led. It’s a life worth honoring and remembering. In just a few words, Rashi expresses what made Sarah so extraordinary.

2 This is based on an idea from Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik. For more, see his work “Abraham’s Journey”, pages 184-187.



Chayei Sara: What Makes For A Successful Life?

Source Sheet

##### Genesis 23:1-2

**בראשית כג:א-ב**

**1** Sarah’s lifetime, the span of Sarah’s life, came to one

ׂש ָרה, ֵמ ָאה ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ֶע ְ ׂש ִרים ׁ ָש ָנה ְו ׁ ֶש ַבע ׁ ָש ִנים-- ׁש ֵני,

**א** ו ִ ּי ְהי ּו ח ֵ ּיי

hundred and twenty-seven years. **2** Sarah died in Kiriath-

ח ֵ ּיי ׂש ָרה. **ב** ו ָּת ָמת ׂש ָרה, ּב ִק ְר ַית ַא ְר ַּבע הוא ח ְבר ֹון-- ְב ֶא ֶרץ ּכ ָנ ַען;

arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her.

בא, ַא ְב ָר ָהם, ל ְס ּ ֹפד ל ָ ׂש ָרה, ְו ִל ְב ּ ֹכ ָת ּה.

ו ָ ּי

##### Rashi on Genesis 23:1

**And the life of Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years:** The reason that the word “years” was written after every digit is to tell you that every digit

ּבכָל

**רש”י על בראשית כג:א**

**ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים**

**שנה ושבע שנים:** לכַ ְך ִנכְ ָּתב ׁ ָש ָנה

כ ָלל ו ְכ ָלל, ל ֹו ַמר ל ָך ׁ ֶש ָּכל א ָחד ִנ ְד ָר ׁש

is to be expounded upon individually: when she was one

hundred years old, she was like a twenty-year-old regarding

ֵח ְטא, מה בת כ’ ל

ל ֲע ְצמ ֹו. ּבת ק’ ּכ ַּבת כ’

sin. Just as a twenty-year-old has not sinned, because

ּבת ע ֹו ְנ ׁ ִשין, אף

ח ְט ָאה, ׁ ֶש ֲה ֵרי אי ָנ ּה

לֹא

she is not liable to punishment, so too when she was one hundred years old, she was without sin. And when she was twenty, she was like a seven-year-old as regards to beauty.

ֹו ִפי: לי

ַבת ז’ ּכ

ַבת כ’ ו

ח ְטא,

בלֹא

ּבת ק’

[www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org/) ALEPH BETA STUDY GUIDE ON PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH - PAGE 5

Think of friends and family who will love it as much as you did - and share it with them!

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**PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH: ELIEZER & SAMUEL**’**S SUPRISING CONNECTION**

**This guide corresponds to the video:** [**Chayei Sarah: Eliezer And Samuel's Surprising Connection**](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/isaac-rebekah-marriage-meaning)

**SABBATH TABLE OUTLINE**



1. How many beings/entities are there in a marriage?
   1. A man and a woman
   2. If you are religious about it, you may say there is God too
   3. There is something else too: our pasha reveals this in a very interesting way
2. This week's parsha:
   1. Abraham sends his servant Eliezer to his original homeland Haran to find someone suitable for Isaac to marry
   2. Eliezer gets to Haran and settles on test: the woman who offers water for him and camels to drink is kind and passes the test (shows God has chosen her)

Guide by Dr. Sarah Levy

* 1. Rebecca comes along and offers water for him and camels to drink
  2. Eliezer presents her with bracelets and says he has a man for her
  3. She runs to her family, and they bring him in
  4. He explains the story to her family
  5. This is the courtship story

1. This story seems to reappear later in the book of Samuel event after event (Genesis 24:13-16)
   1. And the women of the village are going out to draw water (exact phrase appears in Samuel and nowhere else)
   2. Just as he was finishing, Rebecca was going out (same words appear in Samuel)
   3. Rebecca fills up her jug and goes up (also appears in Samuel)
   4. Rebecca goes in and tells her family, and Laban invites him in, and he wants to tell the family about the Divine secret (also in Samuel)
2. What story has all of these elements? Selection of Saul as the king of Israel
   1. Saul is a regular guy who goes looking for his donkeys with his servant
   2. The servant mentions a prophet who may be able to help locate the donkeys
   3. They cannot find the prophet, but they find girls who are going out to draw water from a well (I Samuel 9:11)
   4. They ask the girls about the prophet and are told that he is in the town
   5. Just before he goes up to make an offering, something happens (9:13)
   6. Samuel goes out to greet them (9:14) to go up
   7. God had told Samuel that he wants him anoint someone from Benjamin as king
   8. Samuel invites Saul to go on the stage and meet with him to tell him a divine secret



1. Connections are remarkable
   1. We're not just talking about a couple of words
   2. Many events with the same words
   3. Why is the book of Samuel echoing Genesis?
2. What does the author of the book of Samuel want you to understand?
   1. Someone special is being selected in each case: Rebecca as a wife in Genesis and Saul as king in Samuel
      1. Both selections happen through a kind of partnership between God and people
      2. There is a chosen person being selected for a job, but what kind of job?
         * Is there some kind of connections between marriage and kingship?
   2. The connection between marriage and kingship: both are about the formation of a new kind of entity
      1. In marriage the man and woman make the marriage
         * They both have to think about each other
         * Additionally, together they create *we*, a 3rd entity
      2. In kingship, it's the same thing
         * In Lech Lecha, there is a promise of different parts: 1. Children 2. Children will be a nation 3. Kings will come
         * Kingship just seems like the cherry on top, but it's all connected
         * The nation is solidified with the king
         * What is the job of the king? To look out for the *we*
3. Thinking about the *we*
4. When three boys were kidnapped, one of the mothers made a statement about the difference between the individual citizen's interests and those of the greater community
5. It is the job of the leader to think about the collective *we*, what is best for the nation as a whole
6. It is the existence of the king that pulls the nation together and makes it into a *we*
7. Shakespeare describes kings as the name of the nation: the king embodies the nation
8. The first "we" created after Abraham’s promise about his future children: the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca



* 1. Through that marriage, the beginning of the promise of children would come to Abraham
  2. The promise culminated with kings in Israel
  3. Through those kings, a nationality would be created (like marriage on a national scale)

1. When individuals enter into a *we*, the challenge is for them to take *we*

seriously

* 1. *My* needs and *your* needs are tangible, but the *we* is abstract
  2. The challenge of a king or leader is to make the *we* happen
  3. The challenge of a man and woman who unite in marriage, the challenge is to make that *we* happen too - through that union, they bring into being the sanctified *we* that is their marriage and is their family





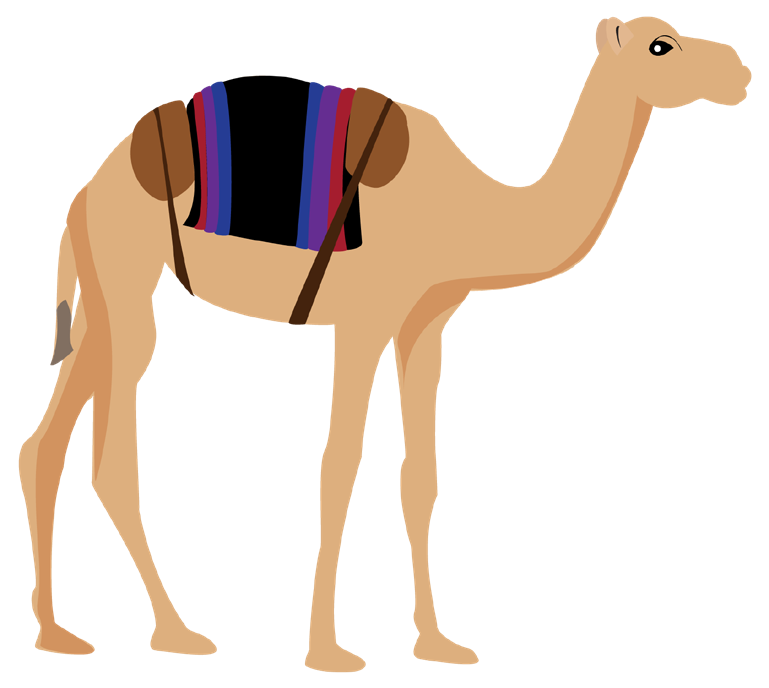
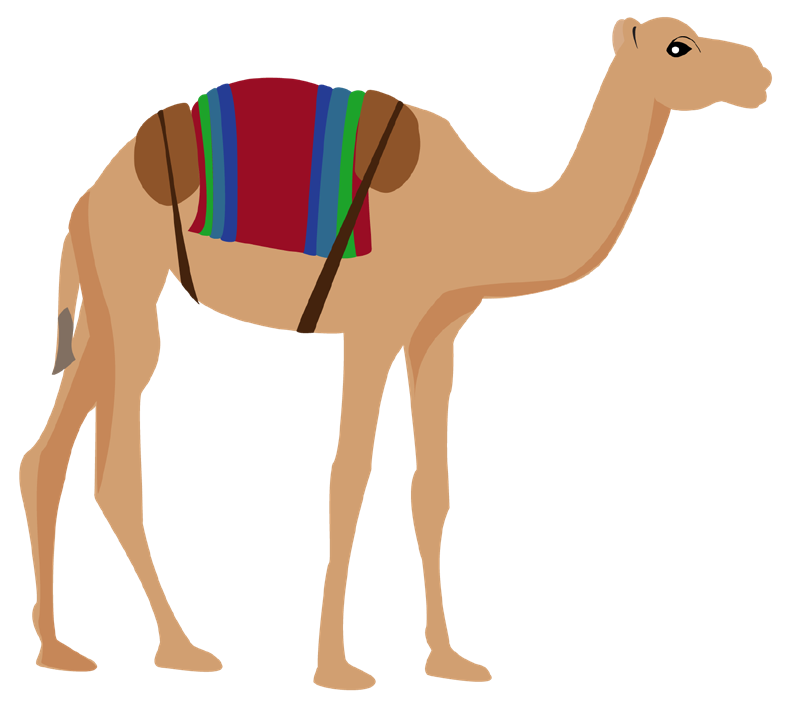
**CHAYEI SARAH: ELIEZER AND SAMUEL’S SURPRISING CONNECTION**

Welcome to the Aleph Beta Study Guide to Parshat Chayei Sarah!

## One Becomes Two

How many beings would you say there are in a marriage? Two, right? But actually, in every successful marriage, there’s a third being. We’re not talking about God (although that may certainly be true). We’re talking about something else.

And Parshat *Chayei Sarah* reveals that something else in a very interesting way. You can see it in the Torah’s account of Eliezer - Abraham’s trusty servant - and his search for a wife for Isaac, Abraham’s son.



Eliezer is dispatched to Charan, home to Abraham’s relatives. When he gets there, he prays to God and devises a plan to find Isaac the perfect mate. *God, give me a sign.*

*I’m going to stand here by the well, and the woman who offers water to me and my camels: I’ll know that she’s the woman You have chosen for Isaac.* Sure enough, Rebecca comes along and does exactly what he described: offers to draw water for Eliezer and his camels. And so the courtship begins.

Now, the curious thing is that this story seems to repeat itself elsewhere in the Torah: in the Book of Samuel. It’s not merely that the stories share similar themes, or a repeating

phrase here or there. The connections run much deeper than that. Let’s review the events from the Eliezer tale, one by one - and if you’re familiar with the Book of Samuel, you can try to guess which story we have in mind.

## Wells and Prophecies

Let’s begin with Eliezer’s arrival in Charan:

**Genesis 24:12-13**

**ל ׁ ְשאֹב**

ִעיר, **יֹ ְצאֹת** ה

ה ָּמ ִים; ּו ְבנ ֹות ַא ְנ ׁ ֵשי

ה ֵּנה ָא ֹנ ִכי ִנ ָ ּצב, ַעל-עין

ה ּי ֹום; ַו ֲע ֵ ׂשה-ח ֶסד, ִעם ֲאדֹ ִני ַא ְב ָר ָהם.

**מָ ִים.**

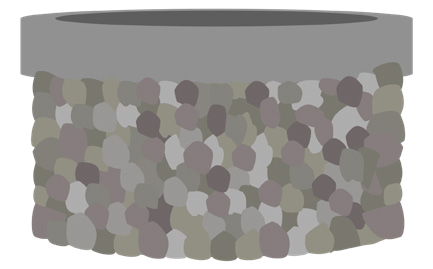
ָפ ַני ל

ְק ֵרה-נא ה

ו ּיֹא ַמר-- ְיקוה ֱאלֹקי ֲאדֹ ִני ַא ְב ָר ָהם,

And he said, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham, grant me good fortune this day, and deal graciously with my master Abraham. Here I stand by the spring as the daughters of the townsmen are **coming out to draw water**.

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Take a look at the last three words. That exact phrase, “come out to draw water” (*yotz’ot lish’ov mayim*), appears in only *one other place* in the entire Torah: the Book of Samuel.

And it’s not just that phrase. Take a look at these two verses from the Eliezer story, in which we find a cluster of words which also appear in the Samuel tale:

**Genesis 24:15-16**

ּבן-מ ְל ָּכה, ֵא ׁ ֶשת ָנחור ֲא ִחי ַא ְב ָר ָהם; ְו ַכ ָ ּד ּה, ַעל- ׁש ְכ ָמ ּה. ְו ַה ַּנ ֲע ָר, טֹ ַבת ַמ ְר ֶאה ְמאֹד--

ְבת ּו ֵאל ל

ל ַד ֵּבר, **ְוהִ ֵּנה**רִ ְב ָקה **יֹצֵאת** ֲא ׁ ֶשר ֻי ְּל ָדה

ָּלה ּכ

ו ְי ִהי-הוא, **ֶטרֶם**

כ ָ ּד ּה **ַו ָּתעַל.**

ָנה, ַו ְּת ַמ ֵּלא ה ַע ְי

ּבת ּו ָלה, ְו ִאי ׁש לֹא ְי ָד ָע ּה; ַו ֵּת ֶרד

And it was **before** he finished speaking, and **behold**: Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor, **came out** with her jar on her shoulder. The maiden was very beautiful, a virgin whom no man had known. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, and **came up**.

Next, consider what happens when Rebecca brings Eliezer to her family’s home. Laban, Rebecca’s brother, rushes out to invite Eliezer to eat with them. But before sitting down to a meal, Eliezer insists on recounting his tale: about how he received a prophetic message that God has chosen Rebecca. This too happens in the Book of Samuel: a man is invited to a meal, but before eating, a prophetic message is disclosed about someone who has been chosen by God.

What story in the Book of Samuel shares *all* of these elements - every single one - in the

*exact same order* in which they occur in the Book of Genesis?

## A King Is Chosen

It’s the selection of Saul as the first king of Israel, which is recounted in Chapter 9 of I Samuel.

When that chapter opens, when we first meet Saul, he isn’t yet king. His father has sent him to look for lost donkeys, and he goes to inquire of the prophet Samuel who lives in the neighboring town. There we encounter that cluster of key words which you will recognize from the Eliezer tale:

ֶני ָך; ַמ ֵהר ל ָפ

ה ֵּנה

**I Samuel 9:11-14**

הרֹ ֶאה. ַו ַּת ֲע ֶני ָנה או ָתם ַו ּתֹא ַמ ְר ָנה ֵ ּי ׁש,

ֶזה ּב

ֵי ׁש ה

**ל ׁ ְשאֹב ָמ ִים**; ַו ּיֹא ְמר ּו ָל ֶהן,

ְו ֵה ָּמה ָמ ְצאו ְנ ָער ֹות, **יֹ ְצא ֹות** ה ִעיר,

ֲע ֵלה ּב ַמ

ה ָּמה, עֹ ִלים

לֹא-יֹא ַכל ה ָעם ַעד- ּבאו-- ִכי-הוא ּכי

ָמ ָתה ֶל ֱאכל, ה ָּב

ִעיר ּכן ִּת ְמ ְצאון אֹת ֹו ּב **ֶטרֶם** ַי ֲע ֶלה ב ֲא ֶכם ה

ִכי ֶז ַבח ה ּי ֹום ָל ָעם, ּב ָּב ָמה. ּכ ּבא ָל ִעיר--

ה ּי ֹום ּכי

ע ָּתה,

ה ִעיר, ְו**הִ ֵּנה** ׁ ְשמ ּואֵל **יֹצֵא** ל ְק ָראתם,

ֹוְך ּבת

ִאים ּב

כ ַה ּי ֹום ִּת ְמ ְצאון אֹת ֹו. ַו ַ ּי ֲעל ּו, ה ִעיר; ה ָּמה,

ִאים; ְו ַע ָּתה ֲעל ּו, ּכי-אֹת ֹו ה ְּק ֻר

ה ֶ ּז ַבח, ַא ֲח ֵרי-כן יֹא ְכל ּו

י ָב ֵרְך

**לעֲל ֹות** ה ָּב ָמה.

As they were climbing the ascent to the town, they met some girls **coming out to draw water**, and they asked them, “Is the seer in town?” “Yes,” they replied. “He is up there ahead of you. Hurry, for he has just come to the town because the people have a sacrifice at the shrine today. As soon as you enter the town, you will find him **before** he goes up to the shrine to eat; the people will not eat until he comes; for he must first bless the sacrifice and only then will the guests eat. Go up at once, for you will find him right away.” So they went up to the town; and as they were entering the town, **behold**: Samuel **came out** toward them, **on his way up** to the shrine.

There they are: all five words/phrases, in the exact same order in which they occur in the Eliezer tale. Indeed, not only the words are similar but the themes are, too. In the Book of Genesis, Eliezer has been dispatched out of town on a mission, just like Saul was dispatched by his father. Eliezer comes bearing gifts to give to Rebecca, just as Saul has gifts for the prophet. And both sets of verses describe the moment in which two important individuals meet for the first time: in one, Eliezer and Rebecca; in the other, Saul and Samuel.

What about the prophetic message? That’s what comes next in the Saul story:

**I Samuel 9:17**

ַע ִּמי. ּב

ה ִאי ׁש ֲא ׁ ֶשר ָא ַמ ְר ִּתי ֵא ֶלי ָך, ֶזה ַי ְעצֹר

ו ׁ ְשמ ּו ֵאל, ָר ָאה ֶאת- ׁשאול; ַויקוה ָע ָנהו--ה ֵּנה

As soon as Samuel saw Saul, the LORD declared to him, “This is the man that I told you would govern My people.”

Samuel invites Saul to join him for a meal, but before they eat, Samuel reveals a divine secret: that Saul has been chosen by God to be the next king of Israel:

ל ָך,

ְבד ֹות האֹ

**I Samuel 9:19-20**

ָך ַא ִּגיד ָלְך. ְו ָל ֲאתֹנ ֹות ּב ְל ָב ְב

ה ּי ֹום; ְו ׁ ִש ַּל ְח ִּתי ָך ב ּ ֹב ֶקר, ְוכל ֲא ׁ ֶשר

ו ַ ּי ַען ׁ ְשמ ּו ֵאל ֶאת- ׁשאול, ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ָא ֹנ ִכי הרֹ ֶאה--ע ֵלה ל ָפ ַני ה ָּב ָמה, ַו ֲא ַכ ְל ֶּתם ִע ִּמי

ּו ְלכל ּבית ָא ִבי ָך. ל ָך,

ּכל-ח ְמ ַ ּדת ִי ְ ׂש ָר ֵאל--הל ֹוא

ה ָ ּי ִמים--אל- ּת ֶ ׂשם ֶאת- ִל ְּב ָך ָל ֶהם, ּכי ִנ ְמ ָצאו; ּו ְל ִמי,

ה ּי ֹום ׁ ְשלֹ ׁ ֶשת

And Samuel answered Saul, “I am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the shrine, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, after telling you whatever may be on your mind. As for your asses that strayed three days ago, do not concern yourself about them, for they have been found. And for whom is all Israel yearning, if not for you and all your ancestral house?”

The parallels between the two stories are remarkable: key phrases and themes, all proceeding in the exact same order. But the real question is: why? *Why* is the Book of Samuel echoing the Book of Genesis? What is it that the author of the Book of Samuel wants us to understand?

The most obvious connection between these stories is that someone special is being selected, and both of these selections happen through a kind of partnership between God and man. In Genesis, Rebecca is being selected as a wife for Isaac. In Samuel, Saul is being selected as king of Israel. The similarities are undeniable - but they seem to end there. After all, the Genesis tale is a personal story about marriage, whereas the Samuel tale is a political story about kingship.

But what if the connections continue? What if there is an essential similarity between marriage and kingship, which the author of the Book of Samuel is trying to highlight for us? And if there is, what could it be?

## The Third Entity

And this takes us back to the question that we posed at the start of this guide: how many beings are there in a marriage? Well, there’s the man and the woman, right?

So that’s true, but it’s not the whole truth. There’s the “he,” there’s the “she” - but then there’s a third entity: the “we.” When a man and woman marry, they create a nascent family, a new being - and that being has its *own* interests. For example, when both husband and wife are busy with work, it might be in neither of their interests to take off time for a romantic date night - but it’s certainly in the interest of the “we.”

When you think about it, isn’t it really the same thing with a nation? When a nation is formed, that too creates a joint entity, a “we.” The interest of that “we” doesn’t always line up with the interests of individual citizens. That’s why we have political leaders whose job it is to look out for the welfare of the “we.” That’s really the fundamental duty of a king.

You can see this clearly in an interview in which a reporter somewhat insensitively asked the mother of a Israeli boy who had been kidnapped: “Would you want the Prime Minister to swap hundreds of thousands of Palestinian militants in exchange for your son?” Soberingly, she replied: “It may be something that I, as a mother, would want. But I don’t think that the Prime Minister of Israel should be setting policy for his country by asking the mothers of kidnapped victims what *they* want.” She was stating a deep and abiding truth. It is the job of the leader to think about the “we”: what’s best for the nation as a whole. Indeed, in that sense, the king is the one who holds the nation together. He embodies the collective.1

So perhaps the institutions of marriage and kingship aren’t so disparate after all. They’re both about the formation and preservation of a “we.”

1 You see this in how Shakespeare often refers to kings by the name of their nation, e.g. “Welcome, my good friends! Say, Voltimand, what from our brother *Norway*?” (*Hamlet* Act 2, Scene 2)

## A Promise Comes To Fruition

Indeed, we want to suggest that there’s an even deeper connection between this marriage - between Isaac and Rebecca

- and *this* kingship - that of Saul. Do you recall the very first mention in the Torah of Israelite kingship? It was in God’s promise to Abraham in Parshat *Lech Lecha*:

**Genesis 17:6**

ּו ְמ ָל ִכים, ִמ ְּמ ָך ֵי ֵצאו. **לג ֹויִם**;

ְמאֹד, ּו ְנ ַת ִּתי ָך ּב ְמאֹד

ו ִה ְפ ֵר ִתי אֹ ְת ָך

I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make **nations** of you; and kings shall come forth from you.

God’s promise describes the steps through which Abraham’s legacy will take shape. First, Abraham will have many descendants. Then, those descendants will coalesce into a nation.

And finally, a leader will emerge who can guard the people’s collective interest. That chain starts with Isaac and Rebecca’s marriage, and it ends with the anointing of King Saul. Indeed, the marriage

of Isaac and Rebecca: that was the very first “we” that was created once Abraham received his promise. It was the very first coming together of individuals to make a collective entity. Through their marriage, God’s promise began to take shape. And it culminated with the gift of kings to Israel,

with the creation of the national “we,” a new sanctified entity. Saul’s anointing - it was like a marriage, but on a national scale.

When individuals enter into a “we,” the challenge is for them to take the needs of the “we” seriously. It’s easy to care about the needs of another individual. An individual is tangible. But the “we” is abstract. The challenge of a husband and wife, and of a king, is to guard the welfare of the “we.” If we want our unions - be they familial or national - to endure, we must take that seriously.

Think of friends and family who will love it as much as you did - and share it with them!

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Chayei Sarah: Eliezer and Samuel’s Surprising Connection

Source Sheet Page 1

**Genesis 24:12–48 (abridged)**

**בראשית כד:יב–מח**

**12** And he said, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham,

ל ָפ ַני ה ּי ֹום; ַו ֲע ֵ ׂשה-

ְב ָר ָהם, ה ְק ֵרה-נא א

**יב** ַו ּיֹא ַמר-- ְיקוה אלֹקי אדֹ ִני

grant me good fortune this day, and deal graciously with

א ֹנ ִכי ִנ ָ ּצב, על-עין ה ָּמ ִים; ו ְבנ ֹות

ְב ָר ָהם. **יג** ה ֵּנה א

ח ֶסד, עם אדֹ ִני

my master Abraham: **13** Here I stand by the spring as

ה ִעיר, יֹ ְצאֹת ל ׁ ְשאֹב מ ִים. **יד** ְו ָה ָיה ה ַּנ ֲע ָר, א ׁ ֶשר אֹ ַמר א ֶלי ָה

א ְנ ׁ ֵשי

the daughters of the townsmen are coming out to draw water; **14** let the maiden to whom I say, ‘Please, lower your jar that I may drink,’ and who replies, ‘Drink, and I

כ ֵ ּדְך ְו ֶא ׁ ְש ֶּתה, ְו ָא ְמ ָרה ׁ ְש ֵתה, ְו ַגם- ְג ַמ ֶּלי ָך א ׁ ְש ֶקה--אֹ ָת ּה

ל ַע ְב ְ ּד ָך ל ִי ְצ ָחק, ו ָב ּה א ַדע, ּכי-ע ִ ׂשי ָת ח ֶסד עם-אדֹ ִני. **טו**

ה ִּטי-נא

הֹ ַכ ְח ָּת,

will also water your camels’—let her be the one whom

ְבת ּו ֵאל ל

א ׁ ֶשר ֻי ְּל ָדה

ְו ִה ֵּנה ִר ְב ָקה יֹ ֵצאת ל ַד ֵּבר,

ָּלה ּכ

ט ֶרם

ו ְי ִהי-הוא,

You have decreed for Your servant Isaac. Thereby shall

ְכ ָמ ּה. **טז** ְו ַה ַּנ ֲערָ, על- ׁש

א ְב ָר ָהם; ְו ַכ ָ ּד ּה,

ִחי א

א ׁ ֶשת ָנחור

ּבן-מ ְל ָּכה,

I know that You have dealt graciously with my master.”

ָלה, ְו ִאי ׁש לֹא ְי ָד ָע ּה; ַו ֵּת ֶרד ה ַע ְי ָנה, ַו ְּת ַמ ֵּלא מאֹד-- ְבת ּו

טֹ ַבת מ ְר ֶאה

**15** And it was before he finished speaking, and behold:

ּה; ַו ּיֹא ֶמר, ה ְג ִמי ִאי ִני ָנא מ ַעט- ל ְק ָראת

כ ָ ּד ּה ַו ָּת ַעל. יז ַו ָ ּי ָרץ ה ֶע ֶבד,

Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah the

מַ ִים מִ ַּכ ֵ ּדְך. **יח** ַו ּתֹא ֶמר, ׁ ְש ֵתה אדֹ ִני; ַו ְּת ַמ ֵהר, ַו ּתֹ ֶרד ּכ ָ ּד ּה על- ָי ָד ּה-

wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor, came out with her jar on

her shoulder. **16** The maiden was very beautiful, a virgin

-ו ַּת ׁ ְש ֵקהו. **יט** ַו ְּת ַכל, ל ַה ׁ ְשקֹת ֹו; ַו ּתֹא ֶמר, ַּגם ל ְג ַמ ֶּלי ָך א ׁ ְש ָאב, עד

whom no man had known. She went down to the spring,

ל ׁ ְש ּ ֹתת. **כ** ַו ְּת ַמ ֵהר, ַו ְּת ַער ּכ ָ ּד ּה אל-ה ׁ ּשֹ ֶקת, ַו ָּת ָרץ ע ֹוד

אם- ִכ ּל ּו,

filled her jar, and came up. **17** The servant ran toward her

ּה; ל

מ ׁ ְש ָּת ֵאה,

ְג ַמ ָּליו. **כא** ְו ָה ִאי ׁש ל ָכל-

ל ׁ ְשאֹב; ַו ִּת ׁ ְש ַאב,

אל-ה ְּב ֵאר,

and said, “Please, let me sip a little water from your jar.”

ּל ּו ּכ

ּכ ֲא ׁ ֶשר

**כב** ַו ְי ִהי,אם-לֹא.

ה ִה ְצ ִלי ַח ְיקוה ַ ּד ְר ּכ ֹו,

מ ֲח ִרי ׁש-- ָל ַד ַעת

**18** “Drink, my lord,” she said, and she quickly lowered her

מ ׁ ְש ָקל ֹו--ו ׁ ְש ֵני צ ִמי ִדים

ל ׁ ְש ּת ֹות, ַו ִ ּי ַּקח ה ִאי ׁש ֶנ ֶזם ָז ָהב, ּב ַקע

ה ְּג ַמ ִּלים

jar upon her hand and let him drink. **19** When she had let

ִּגי ִדי ָנא ה

מ ׁ ְש ָק ָלם. **כג** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ּבת-מי א ְּת,

ע ָ ׂש ָרה ָז ָהב

על- ָי ֶדי ָה,

him drink his fill, she said, “I will also draw for your camels,

ּבת- ְבת ּו ֵאל א ָליו,

ִלין. **כד** ַו ּתֹא ֶמר ל

ּבית-א ִביְך מקום לנ ּו,

לי; ה ֵי ׁש

until they finish drinking.” **20** Quickly emptying her jar into

the trough, she ran back to the well to draw, and she drew

ָליו, ַּגם- ּת ֶבן א

א ֹנ ִכי-- ֶבן-מ ְל ָּכה, א ׁ ֶשר ָי ְל ָדה ל ָנחור. **כה** ַו ּתֹא ֶמר

for all his camels. **21** The man, meanwhile, stood gazing

ע ָּמנ ּו-- ַגם-מקום, לל ּון. **כו** ַו ִ ּי ּקֹד ה ִאי ׁש, ַו ִ ּי ׁ ְש ַּתחו

ּגם-מ ְס ּפ ֹוא ַרב

at her, silently wondering whether the LORD had made

אלֹקי אדֹ ִני א ְב ָר ָהם, א ׁ ֶשר לֹא-ע ַזב

ּוְך ְיקוה ּבר

ליקוה. **כז** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר,

his errand successful or not. **22** When the camels had

ּב ֶ ּד ֶרְך ָנ ַח ִני ְיקוה, ּבית, א ֵחי אדֹ ִני.

ִני; א ֹנ ִכי, אדֹ

ח ְס ּד ֹו ַו ֲא ִמ ּת ֹו, מ ִעם

finished drinking, the man took a gold nose-ring weighing

ֶּלה. **כט** ו ְלרִ ְב ָקה ה ֵא

ל ֵבית א ָּמ ּה-- ַכ ְ ּד ָב ִרים,

ָר, ַו ַּת ֵּגד, ה ַּנ ֲע

כח ַו ָּת ָרץ,

a half-shekel, and two gold bands for her arms, ten shekels

ִאי ׁש החו ָצה, אל-ה ָע ִין. **ל** ַו ְי ִהי ּכ ְראֹת אל-ה

אח, ו ׁ ְשמ ֹו ל ָבן; ַו ָ ּי ָרץ ל ָבן

in weight. **23** “Pray tell me,” he said, “whose daughter are you? Is there room in your father’s house for us to spend

על- ְי ֵדי אחֹת ֹו, ו ְכ ׁ ָש ְמע ֹו את- ִ ּד ְב ֵרי ִר ְב ָקה

ה ִאי ׁש; ַו ָ ּיבא, אל-ה ִאי ׁש, ְו ִה ֵּנה עֹ ֵמד על-

את-ה ֶּנ ֶזם, ְו ֶאת-ה ְ ּצ ִמ ִדים אחֹת ֹו לאמֹר, ֹכה- ִד ֶּבר א ַלי

the night?” **24** She replied, “I am the daughter of Bethuel

the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.” **25** And she

ְּג ַמ ִּלים, על-ה ָע ִין. **לא** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר, ב ֹוא ּבר ּוְך ְיקוה; ל ָּמה ת ֲעמֹד, ּבחוץ, ה

went on, “There is plenty of straw and feed at home, and

ל ְּג ַמ ִּלים. **לב** ַו ָ ּיבא ה ִאי ׁש ה ַּב ְי ָתה, ַו ְי ַפ ַּתח

ו ָמקום

ַּב ִית, ה

ִּני ִתי ִפ

ו ָא ֹנ ִכי

also room to spend the night.” **26** The man bowed low in

ַר ְג ָליו, ְו ַר ְג ֵלי ל ְרחֹץ

ַמ ִים ו

ְּג ַמ ִּלים, ל

ְס ּפ ֹוא, ו ִמ

ֶבן ֶת

ה ְּג ַמ ִּלים; ַו ִ ּי ֵּתן

homage to the LORD **27** and said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld His steadfast faithfulness from my master. For I have been guided on my errand by the LORD, to the house of my master’s kinsmen.” **28** The maiden ran and told all this to her mother’s household. **29** Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. Laban ran out to the man at the spring— **30** when he saw the nose-ring and the bands on

האֲ ָנ ׁ ִשים אֲ ׁ ֶשר אִ ּת ֹו. **לג** ויישם (ו ּי ּו ַ ׂשם) ל ָפ ָניו, ל ֱאכל, ַו ּיֹא ֶמר לֹא

אֹ ַכל, עד אם- ִ ּד ַּב ְר ִּתי ְ ּד ָב ָרי; ַו ּיֹא ֶמר, ַ ּד ֵּבר. **לד** ַו ּיֹא ַמר: ע ֶבד א ְב ָר ָהם,

אָ ֹנ ִכי.… **מב** ָו ָאבא ה ּי ֹום, אל-ה ָע ִין; ָואֹ ַמר, ְיקוה אלֹקי אדֹ ִני א ְב ָר ָהם, אם- ֶי ׁ ְש ָך- ָנא מ ְצ ִלי ַח ַ ּד ְר ִּכי, א ׁ ֶשר א ֹנ ִכי הֹ ֵלְך ע ֶלי ָה. **מג** ה ֵּנה א ֹנ ִכי

נ ָ ּצב, על-עין ה ָּמ ִים; ְו ָה ָיה ה ַע ְל ָמה, ה ּיֹ ֵצאת ל ׁ ְשאֹב, ְו ָא ַמ ְר ִּתי א ֶלי ָה, ִני ה ׁ ְש ִקי ִני-נא מ ַעט-מ ִים מ ַּכ ֵ ּדְך. **מד** ְו ָא ְמ ָרה א ַלי ַּגם-א ָּתה ׁ ְש ֵתה, ְו ַגם ל ְג ַמ ֶּלי ָך א ׁ ְש ָאב--הוא ה ִא ׁ ָּשה, א ׁ ֶשר-הֹ ִכי ַח ְיקוה ל ֶבן-אדֹ ִני. מה א



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his sister’s arms, and when he heard his sister Rebekah

ׁש ְכ ָמ ּה, על-

אל- ִל ִּבי, ְו ִה ֵּנה ִר ְב ָקה יֹ ֵצאת ְו ַכ ָ ּד ּה

ַד ֵּבר ל

ַכ ֶּלה א

ט ֶרם

say, “Thus the man spoke to me.” He went up to the man, who was still standing beside the camels at the spring.

ה ַע ְי ָנה, ַו ִּת ׁ ְש ָאב; ָואֹ ַמר א ֶלי ָה, ה ׁ ְש ִקי ִני ָנא. **מו** וַ ְּת ַמ ֵהר, וַ ּת ֹו ֶרד מ ָע ֶלי ָה, ַו ּתֹא ֶמר ׁ ְש ֵתה, ְו ַגם- ְג ַמ ֶּלי ָך א ׁ ְש ֶקה; ָו ֵא ׁ ְש ְּת, ְו ַגם ה ְּג ַמ ִּלים

ו ֵּת ֶרד

ּכ ָ ּד ּה

**31** “Come in, O blessed of the LORD,” he said, “why do you

ַו ּתֹא ֶמר ּבת- ְבת ּו ֵאל א ְּת,

ה ׁ ְשקָ ָתה. **מז** ָו ֶא ׁ ְש ַאל אֹ ָת ּה, ָואֹ ַמר ּבת-מי

remain outside, when I have made ready the house and a

מ ְל ָּכה; ָו ָא ִ ׂשם ה ֶּנ ֶזם על-א ָּפ ּה, ְו ַה ְ ּצ ִמי ִדים

ּבן-נחור, א ׁ ֶשר ָי ְל ָדה- ּל ֹו

place for the camels?” **32** So the man entered the house, and the camels were unloaded. The camels were given straw and feed, and water was brought to bathe his feet and the feet of the men with him. **33** But when food was set before him, he said, “I will not eat until I have told my tale.” He said, “Speak, then.” **34** “I am Abraham’s servant,” he began… **42** “I came today to the spring, and I said: O LORD, God of my master Abraham, if You would indeed grant success to the errand on which I am engaged! **43** As I stand by the spring of water, let the young woman who comes out to draw and to whom I say, ‘Please, let me

drink a little water from your jar,’ **44** and who answers, ‘You may drink, and I will also draw for your camels’—let her

be the wife whom the LORD has decreed for my master’s son.’ **45** I had scarcely finished praying in my heart, when Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder, and went down to the spring and drew. And I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ **46** She quickly lowered her jar and said, ‘Drink, and I will also water your camels.’ So I drank, and she also watered the camels. **47** I inquired of her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ And she said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.’ And I put the ring on her nose and the bands on her arms. **48** Then I bowed low in homage to the LORD and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who led me on the right way to get the daughter of my master’s brother for his son.

ָו ֲא ָב ֵרְך, את- ְיקוה אלֹקי ַק ַחת את- ַבת-א ִחי אדֹ ִני ליקוה; א ֶמת, ל

ַעל- ָי ֶדי ָה. **מח** ָו ֶא ּ ֹקד ָו ֶא ׁ ְש ַּת ֲח ֶוה, אדֹ ִני א ְב ָר ָהם, א ׁ ֶשר ה ְנ ַח ִני ּב ֶד ֶרְך

ִלבְנ ֹו.

**1 Samuel 9:3-20**

#### סמואל א ט:ג–כ

**3** Once the asses of Saul’s father Kish went astray, and Kish said to his son Saul, “Take along one of the

ֹו, ּבנ

קי ׁש אל- ׁשאול

ֲאתֹ ֹנת. **ד** את-ה

ל ִקי ׁש, א ִבי ׁ ָשאול; ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ְּנ ָע ִרים, ְוקום לְך, ּב ֵּק ׁש מ ַה

ה ֲאתֹנ ֹות, ַחד את-א

**ג** ַו ּתֹא ַב ְד ָנה,

קח-נא א ְּת ָך

servants and go out and look for the asses.” **4** He passed

מ ָצאו; ַו ַ ּי ַע ְבר ּו ב ֶא ֶרץ-

בר ּב ַהר-א ְפ ַר ִים ַו ַ ּי ֲעבר ּב ֶא ֶרץ- ׁש ִל ׁ ָשה, ְולֹא

ו ַ ּי ֲע

into the hill country of Ephraim. He crossed the district

of Shalishah, but they did not find them. They passed

ֶא ֶרץ ּב

בר ּב ֶא ֶרץ- ְי ִמי ִני ְולֹא מ ָצאו. **ה** ה ָּמה, ּבאו

ַש ֲע ִלים ָו ַא ִין, ַו ַ ּי ֲע

through the district of Shaalim, but they were not there.

א ִבי מן-

א ׁ ֶשר-ע ּמ ֹו, ל ָכה ְו ָנ ׁש ּו ָבה-- ּפן- ֶי ְח ַ ּדל

צ ּוף, ְו ׁ ָשאול א ַמר ל ַנ ֲער ֹו

They traversed the [entire] territory of Benjamin, and still

ה ּזֹאת,

ֵּנה-נא אי ׁש-אלֹקים ּב ִעיר ה

**ו** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ל ֹו,לנו.

ה ֲאתֹנות, ְו ָד ַאג

they did not find them. **5** When they reached the district of

ע ָּתה, ֵנ ְל ָכה ׁ ָּשם--או ַלי ַי ִּגיד

ֹוא ָיב ֹוא; ב

א ׁ ֶשר- ְי ַד ֵּבר

ֹכל

ו ָה ִאי ׁש ִנ ְכ ָּבד,



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Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with him, “Let us

ֹו, ְו ִה ֵּנה ֵנ ֵלְך ל ַנ ֲער

ע ֶלי ָה. **ז** ַו ּיֹא ֶמר ׁ ָשאול

א ׁ ֶשר-ה ַל ְכנ ּו

את- ַ ּד ְר ֵּכנ ּו

לנ ּו,

turn back, or my father will stop worrying about the asses

ִאי ׁש ל

ְל ָה ִביא אין-

ְת ׁש ּו ָרה ו

ֵּכ ֵלינ ּו, מ

א ַזל

ֶּל ֶחם ה

ִאי ׁש-- ִכי ל

ו ַמה- ָנ ִביא

and begin to worry about us.” **6** But he replied, “There is a

ׁשאול, ַו ּיֹא ֶמר, ה ֵּנה את-

ַּנ ַער, ל ֲענ ֹות ה

ה ֱאלֹקים: מה, א ָּתנ ּו. **ח** ַו ּיֹ ֶסף

man of God in that town, and the man is highly esteemed; everything that he says comes true. Let us go there;

ׁש ה ֱאלֹקים, ְו ִה ִּגיד לנ ּו את- ל ִאי

ׁש ּב ֶל ְכ ּת ֹו ל ְדר ֹו ׁש אלֹקים, ה ִאי

נ ְמ ָצא ב ָי ִדי ֶר ַבע ׁ ֶש ֶקל ּכ ֶסף; ְו ָנ ַת ִּתי ּדרְ ֵּכנ ּו. **ט** ל ָפ ִנים ּב ִי ְ ׂש ָר ֵאל, ֹכה-א ַמר

perhaps he will tell us about the errand on which we set

ָפ ִנים הרֹ ֶאה. **י** ל

ּו ְו ֵנ ְל ָכה, עד-הרֹ ֶאה: ּכי ל ָּנ ִביא ה ּי ֹום, ִי ָּק ֵרא לכ

out.” **7** “But if we go,” Saul said to his servant, “what can we bring the man? For the food in our bags is all gone,

אל-ה ִעיר, א ׁ ֶשר-

ו ּיֹא ֶמר ׁ ָשאול ל ַנ ֲער ֹו ט ֹוב ְ ּד ָב ְר ָך, ל ָכה ֵנ ֵל ָכה; ַו ֵ ּי ְלכ ּו,

and there is nothing we can bring to the man of God as

מ ְצאו

ִעיר, ְו ֵה ָּמה ה

ֲע ֵלה ּב ַמ

ָּמה, עֹ ִלים ה

האֱלֹקים. **יא**

ָשם, אִי ׁש

a present. What have we got?” **8** The servant answered

ֶזה הרֹ ֶאה. **יב** ּב

ֶהן, ה ֵי ׁש ל

נ ָער ֹות, יֹ ְצאות ל ׁ ְשאֹב מ ִים; ַו ּיֹא ְמר ּו

Saul again, “I happen to have a quarter-shekel of silver. I

ּכי ה ּי ֹום ּבא ע ָּתה,

ו ַּת ֲע ֶני ָנה או ָתם ַו ּתֹא ַמ ְר ָנה ֵ ּי ׁש, ה ֵּנה ל ָפ ֶני ָך; מ ֵהר

can give that to the man of God and he will tell us about

**יג** ּכב ֲא ֶכם ה ִעיר ּכן ִת ְמ ְצאון אֹת ֹוּב ָּב ָמה.

ל ִעיר-- ִכי ֶז ַבח ה ּי ֹום ל ָעם,

our errand.”— **9** Formerly in Israel, when a man went to

ָעם עד- ּבאו-- ִכי-הוא ה

לֹא-יֹא ַכל ּכי

ָמ ָתה ל ֱאכל, ה ָּב

ּב ֶט ֶרם ַי ֲע ֶלה

inquire of God, he would say, “Come, let us go to the seer,”

ּו, ּכי-אֹת ֹו כ ַה ּי ֹום על

יֹא ְכל ּו ה ְּק ֻר ִאים; ְו ַע ָּתה א ֲח ֵרי-כן

י ָב ֵרְך ה ֶ ּז ַבח,

for the prophet of today was formerly called a seer.— **10**

Saul said to his servant, “A good idea; let us go.” And they

ֹוְך ה ִעיר, ְו ִה ֵּנה ּבת

ִעיר; ה ָּמה, ּב ִאים ה

ִת ְמ ְצאון אֹת ֹו. **יד** ַו ַ ּי ֲעל ּו,

went to the town where the man of God lived. **11** As they

ֶזן את-אֹ

ָּב ָמה. **טו** ַויקוה, ָּג ָלה ה

ֲעל ֹות ל

ְק ָראתם, ל

ְשמ ּו ֵאל יֹ ֵצא

were climbing the ascent to the town, they met some girls

לאמֹר. **טז** ּכ ֵעת מ ָחר א ׁ ְש ַלח

ְפ ֵני ב ֹוא- ׁשאול ל

ְשמ ּו ֵאל, י ֹום א ָחד,

coming out to draw water, and they asked them, “Is the

ל ָנ ִגיד על-ע ִּמי ִי ְ ׂש ָר ֵאל, ְוהו ׁ ִשי ַע

מ ֶא ֶרץ ּב ְנ ָי ִמן, ו ְמ ׁ ַש ְח ּת ֹו

א ֶלי ָך אי ׁש

seer in town?” **12** “Yes,” they replied. “He is up there ahead of you. Hurry, for he has just come to the town because

את-ע ִּמי, מ ַ ּיד ְפ ִל ׁ ְש ִּתים: ּכי ָר ִאי ִתי את-ע ִּמי, ּכי ּב ָאה צ ֲע ָקת ֹו א ָלי. **יז** ּו ׁ ְשמ ּו ֵאל, ָר ָאה את- ׁשאול; ַויקוה ע ָנהו--ה ֵּנה ה ִאי ׁש א ׁ ֶשר א ַמ ְר ִּתי

the people have a sacrifice at the shrine today. **13** As soon

as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes

א ֶלי ָך, ֶזה ַי ְע ֹצר ּב ַע ִּמי. **יח** ַו ִ ּי ַּג ׁש ׁ ָשאול את- ׁשמ ּו ֵאל, ּבת ֹוְך ה ׁ ָּש ַער;

up to the shrine to eat; the people will not eat until he comes; for he must first bless the sacrifice and only then

ו ּיֹא ֶמר ה ִּגי ָדה- ָנא לי, אי-זה ּבית הרֹ ֶאה. **יט** ַו ַ ּי ַען ׁ ְשמ ּו ֵאל את-

ַו ּיֹא ֶמר א ֹנ ִכי הרֹ ֶאה--ע ֵלה ל ָפ ַני ה ָּב ָמה, ַו ֲא ַכ ְל ֶּתם ע ִּמי ה ּי ֹום; ָשאול,

will the guests eat. Go up at once, for you will find him

**כ** ְו ָל ֲאתֹנות האֹ ְבד ֹותלְך.

ִּגיד א

ב ּ ֹב ֶקר, ְוכל א ׁ ֶשר ּב ְל ָב ְב ָך

ו ׁ ִש ַּל ְח ִּתי ָך

right away.” **14** So they went up to the town; and as they

ִנ ְמ ָצאו; ו ְל ִמי, ּכי

ִל ְּב ָך ל ֶהם, את-

ל ָך, ה ּי ֹום ׁ ְשלֹ ׁ ֶשת ה ָ ּי ִמים--אל- ּת ֶ ׂשם

were entering the town, Samuel came out toward them, on his way up to the shrine. **15** Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed the following to Samuel: **16** “At this time tomorrow, I will send a man to you from the territory of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him ruler of My people Israel. He will deliver My people from the hands of the Philistines; for I have taken note of My people, their outcry has come to Me.” **17** As soon as Samuel saw Saul, the LORD declared to him, “This is the man that I told you would govern My people.” **18** Saul approached Samuel inside the gate and said to him, “Tell me, please, where is the house of the seer?” **19** And Samuel answered Saul,

“I am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the shrine, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you

ִבי ָך. א

ּבית

ּכל-ח ְמ ַ ּדת ִי ְ ׂש ָר ֵאל--הל ֹוא ל ָך, ו ְלכל



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go, after telling you whatever may be on your mind. **20** As for your asses that strayed three days ago, do not concern yourself about them, for they have been found. And for whom is all Israel yearning, if not for you and all your ancestral house?”

##### Genesis 17:6

**6** I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations of you; and kings shall come forth from you.

ְּמ ָך ֵי ֵצאו. מ

ְמ ָל ִכים, ו

ֹו ִים; לג

ַת ִּתי ָך ו ְנ

מאֹד,

ְמאֹד ּב

#### בראשית יז:ו

**ו** ְו ִה ְפ ֵר ִתי אֹ ְת ָך

Hi everybody! This is Rabbi David Fohrman and you’re watching [Aleph Beta](https://www.alephbeta.org/). Welcome to Parshat Chayei Sarah.

How many beings would you say are there in a marriage? I mean, there’s a man and a woman. If you are really religious about it, maybe there’s God too.

But let's keep things simple. I mean, there is a man and a woman – so, there's two beings, right? No, I still say, wrong! There's something else, too. And our parsha, I think, reveals them in a very interesting kind of way. Let me take you on a little journey here.

# Eliezer and Rebekah at the Well

In this week's parsha, Abraham dispatches his trusty servant Eliezer to his original homeland, Charan, to try to find somebody suitable for Isaac to marry.

Eliezer gets to Charan and settles on a test. He prays to God and says that he is going to kind of stand by a well, and the woman that offers his camels to drink and offers him to drink, that's a kind woman, and that's the person that God has chosen for Isaac to be a wife.

God sort of plays, as it were, and Rivka comes along as soon as he's finished talking and does what it is that the servant anticipates – offers his camels to drink, offers him to drink. Eliezer presents her with beautiful bracelets, says 'Have I got a man for you!'

She runs and tells her family; they bring him in, they offer him food. He says, 'No, before I eat, I want to tell you what it is that God has said – the divine sign.' And he repeats the whole thing over. And this really is the kind of courtship story, as it were, of Rivka through the agency of Eliezer.

So, I want to point out a curious thing to you. This story seems to reappear later on in the book of Samuel. It's not that there's just a couple of words here and there in the book of Samuel that remind you of the story. There is event after event; each one of these events happens in order.

Let me sketch out the elements of Genesis. For those of you who are familiar with the book of Samuel, you can try to guess what story is it that I'm thinking about.

# Connections to

Eliezer and Rebekah's

# Story

Okay, so here is the first element. Eliezer comes to town, right? He's there by the well: 'u’b’not anshei ha’ir yotzot lishov mayim,' 'and the women of the village were going out to draw water from the well.' That exact phrase appears in the book of Samuel and nowhere else in the Torah, besides Genesis.

But it's not just that phrase. Immediately after that, 'terem kilah l’daber,' 'just as he was finishing.' The Hebrew word terem appears not just in Genesis, but then again in this other story in the book of Samuel.

And right after terem, 'hinei rivka yotzeit' – 'and behold, Rivka was going out.' In that story in the book of Samuel, 'Behold!' Someone else was going out – the same words, hinei, yotzei.

And then right after that, Rivka goes to the well. 'Va’timaleh kadah,' she fills her jug; 'va’ta’al' – and goes up. 'Going up' is the next element in the book of Samuel.

You go a little further in the Genesis story, Rivka goes in and tells her family about this. The man from the family comes out, Laban, and says, 'Hey! Why are you standing outside? Come inside and come to eat.' Except that, the person being invited says, 'No, no, no. I only want to tell you about the Divine secret that just happened.'

Well, that same thing happens in the Book of Samuel. What story has all of these elements, every single one, in order, in the Book of Samuel echoing the Book of Genesis?

# Eliezer and Rebekah... and the

It's the selection of Saul as the first King of Israel.

# Book of

Samuel?

Here's the story: Saul’s just a regular, everyday guy. And his father has dispatched him to look for these donkeys. And he is going around with his servant and he is searching for these donkeys. They can't find them. The servant says, 'Hey, I hear there is a prophet in the next town over. Let's ask the prophet; maybe he can tell us where those donkeys are.'

So they're looking around and they can't find the prophet. But, 'heimah matzu na’arot yotzot lishov mayim' – 'they found these girls that were going out to draw water from the well.' They asked the girls, 'So, where is this prophet?' They say, 'He's in the town.' And he goes out on this stage – on this altar – to offer offerings publicly.

'B’terem ya’aleh habamatah,' just before he goes up on the bamah, 'Behold! Samuel goes out to greet them.'

'Behold! Here comes Rebecca' – 'Behold! Here come Samuel.' It's the moment right before the meeting of these two special people. In this case, Samuel and Saul. There, Eliezer and Rivka.

And then, just on cue, 'la’alot habamah' – where is Samuel going? He is going up on the stage. Remember how Rivka was going up? Picking up her jug?

The book of Samuel then says that God has told Samuel the day before that God wants Samuel to anoint, as king, someone from the tribe of Benjamin. And now God tells Samuel, 'That's the one! Right over there!' Samuel invites Saul to go up on the stage and eat with him, and then says, 'Hey! I want to tell you this divine secret!' He tells him that he is to be the first king of Israel.

So, it’s really quite remarkable. I mean, we’re not just talking about a couple of words here and there;

we're talking about one event after another event, after another event, after another event – that same word.

And the question is, why is the Book of Samuel echoing the Book of Genesis here? What does the author of the Book of Samuel want you to understand?

# Connecting

Kingship to

# Isaac and Rebekah's Marriage

The most obvious connection between these stories is that someone special is being selected. In the case of Genesis, it is Rivka being selected as a wife for Isaac; in the case of the Book of Samuel, it is Saul being selected as the king for Israel. Both of these selections happened through a kind of partnership between God and people.

There’s a chosen person being selected for a job, but what kind of job? I mean, here, it's almost as if the comparison breaks down. Because in the first case, she is selected for marriage. In the second case, he is selected for kingship. Is there some kind of connection between marriage and kingship? The two aren't really the same.

But I think that there really is a kind of very commonsense kind of connection between kingship and marriage. Kingship and marriage are really about the formation of a new kind of entity.

In marriage, who are the participants? A man and a woman make a marriage. So, there are two persons that you always have to think about in marriage. The man has to think about himself, but also has to think about his wife. The wife has to think about herself, but also has to think about her husband.

That's true, but that's not the whole truth. There's 'he,' there's 'she,' and there’s 'we.' The 'we' is a real entity, too. Together, they have created a new being, a nascent family.

It's actually the same thing with kingship. In Lech Lecha, Abraham gets a strange promise. We talked about this in last year's Lech Lecha video. The promise is composed of three parts. The first is, 'You'll have lots of children.' The second is, 'Your children will become a nation.' The third is, 'Kings will come from you.'

So, the kings at first glance just sound like a cherry on top. But it's just not the cherry on top. It is a direct line that connects all three of these promises. They are all about the formation of a ‘we.’

Having lots of children does not a nation make! God says, 'Not only will you have lots of children, but they're going to come together into a nation.' But a nation isn't really a nation until it has some sort of a form of government.

'Kings will come from you!' – that will really coalesce them into a nation. Because what do kings do? What is the job of a king? To look out for that third entity which is so easily ignored: Not just the 'he,' not just the 'she,' but the 'we.'

I remember recently when the three boys were kidnapped in the West Bank, and ultimately murdered, Racheli Frankel – the mother of one of these children – was asked by a rather insensitive reporter, before it was found that the children were murdered: 'Which do you want – the Prime Minister to swap hundreds of thousands of Palestinian militants for your son?' And she said, 'It may be something that I, as a mother, would want. But I don't think the Prime Minister of Israel should be setting policy for his country by asking mothers of kidnapped victims what it is that they want.'

She was saying a deep and abiding truth. Every citizen of the country would think first of themselves. And after themselves, they would think about other citizens of the country. But it is the job of the leader to think about the 'we' – the collective 'what's best for the nation as a whole.'

It's the existence of the king, the chief executive, to hold the nation together that makes it into a 'we.' If you look at Shakespeare and how Shakespeare describes the kings, he describes them by the name of the nation. This is how you talk about the king; the king embodies the community.

# The

Lesson

# Behind the Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah

What was the very first 'we' that was created once Abraham got the promise that he would be the 'father of a great nation'? The very first coming together of the individuals to make a 'we' was the marriage of his child, Isaac, with Rebecca.

Through that marriage, the beginning of a promise of children would come to Abraham. That promise culminated with the gift of kings to Israel; through those kings, a national ‘we’ would be created.

Another sanctified entity would come into being, also inspiring great joy – the celebrations of coronation, which the Book of Samuel talks about. It's like marriage on a national scale. It's the great macrocosmic 'we' that comes into being.

When individuals enter into a 'we,' the challenge is for them to take that 'we' seriously. You see, individuals are tangible. It is easy to see another individual, to worry about 'my needs,' 'your needs.' The 'we' is abstract.

The challenge of a king, the challenge of a leader, is to make the 'we' happen, to worry about it. The challenge of a man and a woman who unite in marriage is to make that 'we' happen too.

Through their united action, they bring a new entity into being, an entity that they must take seriously, and not discard easily. A sanctified 'we' that is their marriage and that is their family.



**THE PARSHA EXPERIMENT**

**PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH: FIND ME A FIND, CATCH ME A CATCH!**

This guide corresponds to the video: [Q: What Made Rebecca The Right Match For Isaac? A: More Than Just Kindness](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/story-of-isaac-finding-rebekah)

**SABBATH TABLE OUTLINE**



1. Compared to some of the exciting stories in the last few weeks, the stories in this week's parsha seem much less exciting
   1. Don't have anything grand like Creation or the flood or the Binding of Isaac
   2. Looking at what actually happens in this week's parsha:
      1. Sarah dies, and Abraham buys a burial plot
      2. Journey of Abraham's servant to find a wife for Isaac
      3. Finds Rebecca who returns with him to Abraham

Guide by Dr. Sarah Levy

* + 1. Abraham marries Keturah and has a few more kids
    2. Abraham dies
  1. The bulk of the parsha is the story of Eliezer trying to find a wife for Isaac
     1. Abraham has Eliezer find a wife, but not from where they live, Canaan, but from Abraham's homeland
     2. We hear all the details about his journey
     3. When he actually meets Rebecca, but we hear even more details - the conversation with Rebecca, the conversation with Rebecca's family
     4. In that conversation, he retells the entire story – we hear all these details, twice
  2. The Torah can be brief when it wants to be
     1. When Rebecca retells the story to her mother, it says that she tells "these things" (Genesis 24:28)
     2. The Torah is obviously retelling the story
     3. Eliezer's retelling of the story is not identical to the narrator's description; there are some really important differences
        + Possible that the Torah is trying to make you see these differences
        + Hidden in those discrepancies is the real story
        + Eliezer isn’t just retelling the story; something new is going on here
        + If we figure out what that is, get a deeper understanding of the story and figure out why it's here in the first place

1. Look at some of these discrepancies
   1. Abraham's instruction to Eliezer not to take a wife from among the Canaanites, but instead to go to his homeland
      1. In Eliezer's repetition, he tells him again not to take a wife from the Canaanites, but he adds that he should go to his father's house (Genesis 24:38)
   2. On Eliezer's journey, he prays to God for guidance to help him find a wife for Isaac
      1. What he asks for is different in the two accounts



* + 1. In the first account, he asks for God to be with him and to do kindness for Abraham (Genesis 24:12)
    2. When he retells the story, his prayer is different
       - He asks God to make him successful on his journey (Genesis 24:42)
       - In the first prayer, he asked God to do kindness for Abraham
       - The second prayer just asks for success – no kindness!
  1. Immediately after Eliezer makes his deal with God, he finds a girl who fulfills the conditions - what does he do next? That depends on which account you're reading
     1. In the actual account, after Eliezer gets water for his camels and for him, he gives jewelry to Rebecca and then asks who she is
     2. In his retelling, he flips the order; he asks who she is and **then** gives her jewelry
  2. Next difference: when Eliezer thanks God for helping him find the perfect girl for Isaac
     1. In his prayer to God, he blesses God for showing kindness and truth towards his master (Genesis 24:27)
     2. When he retells the story to Rebecca's family, the prayer changes to blessing God for guiding him in a path of truth, leaving out kindness (Genesis 24:48)
        + This is the second time he leaves out the word "kindness"
  3. Eliezer doesn't just add a few things or take out a few things; he actually changes things

1. Suggest that Eliezer saw something that made him want to change the story
   1. He realized something about Rebecca's family
   2. Think the thing he saw happens in a verse that most people might not even notice
   3. After Eliezer meets Rebecca, and Rebecca goes to tell her family, Lavan comes out and invites Eliezer to their home, giving straw and water and washing feet (Genesis 24:31- 32)
      1. Who did all of these things? Who un-muzzled the camels? Who gave them food? Who gave them water to wash their feet?
      2. Looking at it quickly, it seems like it's Lavan, but if you take a closer look, it's not
      3. word The ִאיׁש

Genesis 24:30

that is used is used throughout the story to refer to Eliezer - see

* 1. It seems that Lavan put on a show for Eliezer, telling him that he has plenty of room in the house, but once Eliezer gets there, Eliezer has to do all of the work
     1. He's the one who has to wash the feet of his own men and his camels
     2. That's what Eliezer saw
     3. Lavan put on a show for him and pretended that he valued kindness, but the truth is that he only cares about how things look on the outside
  2. He doesn't truly value kindness the way Eliezer does, and Eliezer realized that he quickly needed to change his story
     1. He cannot extoll the virtues of kindness and talk about what a great fit Rebecca will be in Abraham's value-centered family
     2. He needs to speak in their language
     3. He makes a few changes in his story to make this marriage more appealing to them

1. Looking at what he does - going back to those discrepancies
   1. When Eliezer tells them about the prayer he made to God to help him find Rebecca, he doesn't say "please do kindness," he says "please make me successful" - he takes out the word kindness because that's not something they value



* 1. When he tells them about how he thanks God, he does the same thing; he removes the mention of kindness and focuses only on truth
  2. Instead of kindness, Eliezer focuses on family and wealth more, because that seems to be the currency that they really value
  3. Taking a look before the story begins, before Abraham commands Eliezer, the verse says that God blessed Abraham with everything (Genesis 24:1), but that's all we hear
     1. When Eliezer retells the story, he adds rich detail, explaining what it all means
     2. He tells them that God gave Abraham sheep and cattle and gold and servants and maids and cows and donkeys
     3. Why is Eliezer telling them all of this?
        + He continues and says that when Sarah had Isaac, whom Rebecca is about to marry, Abraham gave all of his wealth to Isaac
        + That is what Rebeca's family values
        + They don't care about kindness; they care that their daughter is marrying someone who is really wealthy
  4. It's the same thing in terms of family
     1. In the first story, Eliezer gave her jewelry as soon as he saw the act of kindness; that's all he needed to see, and then he asked whom she was
     2. In his retelling of the story, he first asked whom she was, and then once he realized she was family, he was compelled to give her the jewelry
        + He makes it very clear in his retelling that what he values about Rebecca has nothing to do with kindness
        + It has to do with family and wealth

1. Before reading about the discrepancies, you read about Rebecca and see *her* kindness
   1. That is a wonderful trait in a wife
   2. After reading the discrepancies, you realize something a lot deeper about Rebecca
      1. She does kindness in a place where everyone around her does the opposite
         * She does kindness in a place of anti-kindness
         * Rebecca cares deeply even about Eliezer's camels, whereas Lavan couldn't care less
      2. Of whom does that remind you? Someone who does kindness when no one around them does - Isn't that Abraham?
         * Over these past weeks, we've talked about how Abraham is the Plan C
         * He the one who will create the model nation, a nation built on kindness, an example to the rest of the world
   3. Now, as Abraham's story draws to an end, and Abraham is about to die, his legacy, God's legacy, needs to continue with the next generation
      1. Rebecca is the perfect woman to carry the torch of Abraham's legacy
      2. She has the internal strength to model kindness in a place where there is none
      3. She, like Abraham, comes from this land and is able to journey to a new place, to build kindness even if the people around her do not share her values
         * This story becomes the perfect blueprint for the nation of Israel who are meant to value and model kindness
         * Together with Isaac, she’ll spread kindness to others and continue Abraham's legacy and God's legacy and bring blessing to the world

