

Shabbat CHAYEI SARAH

GENESIS 23:1-4.....25:1-11

KEY KOSHI:

HOW is the framing of Sarah & Abraham's death a lesson in living?
WHAT legacy does death leave for we who remain?

P'SHAT...Entering the Timeless Text: *HOW do we experience it this moment?...*

<p>23:1] Sarah's lifetime—the span of Sarah's life—came to one hundred and twenty-seven years. 2] Sarah died in Kiriath-arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham proceeded to mourn for Sarah and to bewail her. 3] Then Abraham rose from beside his dead, and spoke to the Hittites, saying, 4] "I am a resident alien among you; sell me a burial site among you, that I may remove my dead for burial."</p>	<p>¹ וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעֵי שָׁנִים שָׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה : ² וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה בְּקִרְיַת אַרְבַּע הוּא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיְבֹא אַבְרָהָם לְסַפֵּד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבַכְתָּהּ : ³ וַיִּקָּם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי מֵתוֹ וַיֵּדְבֵר אֶל־בְּנֵי־חֵת לֵאמֹר : ⁴ גְּרוֹתוֹשֵׁב אֲנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תָּנוּ לִי אַחֲזַת־קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָהּ מִתִּי מִלְפָּנָי :</p>
<p>25:1] Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2] She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. 3] Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. The descendant of Dedan were the Asshurim, the Letushim, and the Leummim. 4] The descendants of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Enoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were descendant of Keturah. 5] Abraham willed all that he owned to Isaac; 6] but to Abraham's sons by concubines Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and he sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the East. 7] This was the total span of Abraham's life: one hundred and seventy-five years. 8] And Abraham breathed his last, dying at a good ripe age, old and contented; and he was gathered to his kin. 9] His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre, 10] the field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites; there Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife. 11] After the death of Abraham, God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac settled near Beer-lahai-roi.</p>	<p>¹ וַיִּסֹּף אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה וּשְׁמָהּ קֵטוּרָה : ² וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ אֶת־זִמְרָן וְאֶת־יֶקֶשׁוֹן וְאֶת־מִדְּן וְאֶת־מִדְּן וְאֶת־יֶשְׁבֶּק וְאֶת־שׁוּחַ : ³ וַיִּקְשֹׁן יָלֵד אֶת־שֶׁבָא וְאֶת־דִּדָן וּבְנֵי דִדָן הֵיוּ אֲשׁוּרִים וְלִטּוּשִׁים וְלֵאֲמִים : ⁴ וּבְנֵי מִדְּן עֵיפָה וְעֵפֶר וְחִנֹּד וְאֲבִידָע וְאֶלְדָּעָה כָּל־אֵלֶּה בְנֵי קֵטוּרָה : ⁵ וַיִּתֵּן אַבְרָהָם אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ לְיִצְחָק : ⁶ וּלְבְנֵי הַפִּילִגְשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לְאַבְרָהָם נָתַן אַבְרָהָם מִתְּנַת וַיִּשְׁלַחֵם מֵעַל יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בְּעוֹדוֹ חַי קִדְמָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ קֶדֶם : ⁷ וְאֵלֶּה יְמֵי שְׁנֵי־חַיֵּי אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־חֵי מֵאֵת שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וְחֶמֶשׁ שָׁנִים : ⁸ וַיָּגוּעַ וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה זָקֵן וְשָׂבַע וַיִּאֲסֹף אֶל־עַמּוּיוֹ : ⁹ וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אוֹתוֹ יִצְחָק וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל בְּנָיו אֶל־מַעְרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֶל־שְׂדֵה עֶפְרָן בֶּן־צֹחַר הַחִתִּי אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי מַמְרֵא : ¹⁰ הַשְּׂדֵה אֲשֶׁר־קָנָה אַבְרָהָם מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־חֵת שְׁמָה קֶבֶר אַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ : ¹¹ וַיְהִי אַחֲרַי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם וַיִּבְרַךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק עִם־בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאֵי :</p>

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוֵּנוּ לְעִסוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה.
Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.
Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ...Living the Text's Truth: *HOW do we make meaning of ☆Time....?*

23:1-2 Sarah's lifetime—the span of Sarah's life—came to one hundred and twenty seven years. Sarah died in Kiryat-Arbah... And Abraham came to mourn for her and to bewail her.

IBN EZRA...Note that "life" is a plural word in the Hebrew; it never occurs in the singular.

MIDRASH HAGADOL ...Why is Sarah's life divided into segments? To teach you that for the righteous each time of life counts; young or old, every day makes a life.

RASHI... It was written in this way, says the Aggadah, so that each could be understood differently. At 100 she was as free of sin as at 20, and at 20 she was as pure as she was at 7. "shanah" is repeated at each stage of Sarah's life to teach that they were all equal in goodness.

RAMBAN...RASHI's midrashic explanation is incorrect. Abraham's age at death is given exactly the same way. The explanation—including for why the Hebrew says 100 years and 20 years and 7 years—must be a linguistic one. Every year cannot be equal in goodness, rather the intent is that each is differentiated, no two are the same.

ABARVANEL...It seems to me that her age is divided into three parts because she was physically youthful until age 100, not long after she gave birth; spent the next 20 years older but active, and then spent the last 7 years in old age...But all three stages were good and could thus be labeled "life"—for years of grief and pain cannot be called living.

23:3-4 Then Abraham rose from beside his dead, and spoke to the Hittites saying, "I am a resident-alien among you; grant me a burial site..."

ARTSCROLL... The MIDRASH homiletically renders this phrase "And Abraham arose from the face of his death," for now, with the death of his wife, he saw his own death staring him in the face.

25:7-8 Now these are the days of the years of Abraham's life...Abraham breathed his last, dying at a ripe old age, sated with years, and he was gathered to his kin

RADAK... "b'sayvah tovah—at a good old age"—For he lived to see his children and his twin grandchildren turn 15, treated with dignity and respect by them all his days...The Midrash adds, he lived to see his son Ishma'el return as a *Ba'al Teshuvah*.

RAMBAN... "zakeyn v'save'ah"—Abraham lived to see all the desires of his heart fulfilled. This is the mark of the righteous who are content with their lot, in contrast with those who are never satisfied

SARNA... "zakeyn v'save'ah—old and contented"—Such a summation of a life is found with no other personality in biblical literature. The phrase describes not his longevity, but the quality of his earthly existence.

S'FORNO... and he was gathered to his people"...Abraham was gathered into the bond of eternal life attached to the bundle of souls which are the righteous of all generations...

RALBAG... "vaYe-aseyf el-Amav"...The phrase may mean he was gathered to those intellectual concepts he'd attained during his lifetime. One who clings to material things cannot be gathered to the ideas which are his true kin.

V:9-10 His sons Isaac & Ishma'el then buried him in the cave of Machpelah...There buried were Abraham and Sarah—his wife.

M'SORAH...The Hebrew phrase "Abraham and Sarah" occurs nowhere else except Gen 18:11, when the announcement of Isaac's birth is shared...Here now, together in death, "Abraham and Sarah his wife."

DRASH... Decoding the Message: *WHICH Way in the direction of Redemption...?*

Rabbi MORRIS MARGULIES...

"And the life of Sarah was a hundred years and twenty years and seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah."

This opening sentence of our Torah reading is, to say the least, awkward. The information in it could easily have been condensed as follows: Sarah lived one hundred and twenty seven years. It seems to me that a major point is being made here. Every year in Sarah's life was weighty. She made her life count. The Torah, therefore, deliberately dwells upon her years; it seems, indeed, to caress each one of them as though it were a precious gem.

Time in and of itself is a vacuum, empty of content, bereft of meaning. Only the human being can, if he chooses, invest it with significance. I think that the expression "time hangs heavily on his hands" misses the mark. On the contrary, the human being who does nothing meaningful with his time is dealing with a vacuum—and a vacuum is absolutely weightless. The reason he does nothing is precisely because he takes time lightly. Only he upon whose conscience time, with its enormous potential, hangs heavily is likely to do something about making time count.

Time is often referred to as being wasted. The more profound truth, however, is that the person who does nothing with time wastes himself. Insofar as he permits his wonderful creative potential to lie barren he destroys that trait within him which alone can raise him above the level of the lower animals. The likeliest meaning of the expression that man was made in the image of God is that the Lord invested man with His bent for creativity. It would then follow that the chronic waster of time and self forfeits the image of God within him. Allowing time to flit by unfilled would then constitute the most frightful crime of all.

Alas, by this standard how many are the criminals among us! The disuse and abuse of time for so many is a life-pattern of mountainous proportions. The long hours we spend in childish patter over telephone wires, the staggering bite taken out of our precious time by cinematic and videonic "entertainment" bordering on the moronic, the endless slices of evening spent in the company of the Deuce of Spades—these and so many other destroyers of the Great Potential are responsible—more than anything else—for the tragic state of a world poised upon a thermonuclear precipice.

"These days of our years..." Ah, the days of our years. What do they say? What do they represent? What do they mean? O, mother Sarah, preach to us! O preach to us, mother Sarah!

SOD... Embodying the Mystery: *HOW is The Tree sustaining/re-cycling/sanctifying Life?*

PAUL KALANITHI...

[Neurosurgeon at Stanford, author of *When Breath Becomes Air*, finished posthumously by his wife Lucy.]

Death comes for all of us... It is our fate as living, breathing, metabolizing organisms. Most lives are lived with passivity toward death—it's something that happens to you and those around you. But Jeff and I had trained for years to actively engage with death, to grapple with it, like Jacob with the angel, and, in so doing, to confront the meaning of a life. We had assumed an onerous yoke, that of mortal responsibility. Our patients' lives and identities may be in our hands, yet death always wins. Even if you are perfect, the world isn't. The secret [as a neurosurgeon] is to know that the deck is stacked, that you will lose, that your hands or judgment will slip, and yet still struggle to win for your patients. You can't ever reach perfection, but you can believe in an asymptote toward which you are ceaselessly striving.

...Graham Greene once said that life was lived in the first twenty years and the remainder was just reflection. So what tense am I living in now? Have I proceeded beyond the present tense and into the past perfect? The future tense seems vacant.

...Everyone succumbs to finitude...Most ambitions are either achieved or abandoned; either way, they belong to the past. The future, instead of the ladder toward the goals of life, flattens out into a perpetual present. Money, status, all the vanities the preacher of Ecclesiastes described hold so little interest: a chasing after wind, indeed.

Yet one thing cannot be robbed of her futurity: our daughter, Cady. I hope I'll live long enough that she has some memory of me. Words have a longevity I do not...I don't know what this girl will be like when she is fifteen....There is perhaps only one thing to say to this infant, who is all future, overlapping briefly with me...That message is simple:

When you come to one of the many moments in life where you must give an account of yourself, provide a ledger of what you have been, and done, and meant to the world, do not, I pray, discount that you filled a dying man's days with a sated joy, a joy unknown to me in all my prior years, a joy that does not hunger for more and more but rests, satisfied.

LUCY KALANITHI...

...I expected to feel only empty and heartbroken after Paul died. It never occurred to me that you could love someone the same way after he was gone, that I would continue to feel such love and gratitude alongside the terrible sorrow, the grief so heavy that at times I shiver and moan under the weight of it. Paul is gone, and I miss him acutely nearly every moment, but I somehow feel I'm still taking part in the life we created together....Caring for our daughter, nurturing relationships with family, publishing this book, pursuing meaningful work, visiting Paul's grave, grieving and honoring him, persisting...my love goes on—lives on—in a way I'd never expected.

This doesn't make his death, our loss, any less painful. But he found meaning in the striving. On page 115 of this book, he wrote, "You can't ever reach perfection, but you can believe in an asymptote toward which you are ceaselessly striving."

Two days after Paul died, I wrote a journal entry addressed to Cady: "When someone dies, people tend to say great things about him. Please know that all the wonderful things people are saying now about your dad are true....Paul's decision to look death in the eye was a testament not just to who he was in the final hours of his life but who he had always been. For much of his life, Paul wondered about death—and whether he could face it with integrity. In the end, the answer was yes.

I was his wife and a witness.