

פרשת

חיי שרה

Parashat Chayei Sarah

*Bereshit / Genesis 23:1-25:18, 1 Kings 1:1-31
Matthew 2:1-23*

The Significance of Studying the Torah Today

As we study the Torah portions, Parshiot Lech Lecha, Vayera, and Chayei Sarah, we are faced with the idea of growing old. Old age has many frightening aspects, such as the aging body is more susceptible to illness; declining strength; feelings of uselessness (*especially after retirement*); the loss of friends and loved ones through death; the reality of one's own death drawing nearer; loneliness; feelings of alienation from one's children and grandchildren, who are busy with other interests and pursuits; and, financial concerns due to the decrease in income. The American culture does not esteem the elderly as a self centered society. This is emphasized by America's pursuit of pleasure and success, viewing the elderly as a financial burden as opposed to a treasure of knowledge and insight. As we grow older, we should involve ourselves in looking at our lives and asking the question "*what was I like then, as opposed to what I am like now?*" This question is centered around the fact that we should be on a journey of becoming people of ever increasing faith. For example, if you are a negative and a anti-social person now, you will not be a positive, social, and cheerful person in the future. We need to be involved in developing our walk

with the Lord God of Israel now and in this moment, because if we do not actively seek this for our lives, *it will not* automatically, mysteriously, and miraculously come about at a future time. For example, the circumstances in which David found himself at the time of Absalom's rebellion, he said was "*shame*" (*Tehillim / Psalms 71:1*); "*oppressed by evil men*" (*71:4*); "*enemies speaking against him and seeking to kill him*" (*71:10-13, 71:24*); "*a life of many troubles*" (*71:7 and 71:20*); and we are told that "*he had trusted God from his youth*" (*71:5 and 71:17*); and "*now he was old and gray*" (*71:9 and 71:18*). The major aspect of his walk with the Lord which helped him to stand strong in those troubling times, was in developing a deep relationship with the Lord God of Israel. The psalmist speaks of having "*been taught of God even from his youth*" (*71:17*). He knew the Lord as "*his refuge*" (*71:1, "strong refuge," 71:7*) and "*his righteous Savior*" (*71:2*). He speaks of the Lord's mighty deeds (*71:16*), "*His strength and power*" (*71:18*), and all the great things He has done (*71:19*). It is obvious, based upon the words of the psalm, that he had developed into a greater faithfulness in his old age. Through the difficult situations in his life he maintained his faithfulness to the Lord God of Israel. In Parashat Chayei Sarah, we see the faithfulness of Abraham in a similar manner, growing more faithful to the Lord in his old age. The question is, are you growing in your relationship and in your faith with the Lord as you get older? Has your faith increased? The process of growing in faith involves growing in the knowledge of God and in applying His Word to your life! One of the most important things that each one of us can do to prepare for the future is to spend time in God's Word and to spend time planning to serve Him every day! i.e. "*How can I be a blessing to others in a way that demonstrates my faith and the faithfulness of our Father in heaven?*" Like we discussed in Parashat Vayera last week, does your congregation place an emphasis upon these things as we have been taught by Abraham, Yeshua, and the disciples?

The Scriptures we are be looking at this week are from *Bereshit / Genesis 23:1-2 and 24:1-9*.

Bereshit / Genesis 23:1-2, and 24:1-9

23:1 Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. 23:2

Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

א וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שְׁנַיִם
חַיֵּי שָׂרָה: ב וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה בְּקִרְיַת אַרְבַּע הוּא הַחֲבֹרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ
כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֵא אַבְרָהָם לְסֹפֵד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבַכְתָּהּ:

24:1 Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way. 24:2 Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh, 24:3 and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, 24:4 but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac." 24:5 The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?" 24:6 Then Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there! 24:7 The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. 24:8 But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there." 24:9 So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

א וַאֲבָרְהָם זָקֵן כָּא בְּיָמָיו וַיְהִי בְרָךְ אֶת-אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל:
ב וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל-עֶבְדוֹ זָקֵן בֵּיתוֹ הַמְּשַׁל בְּכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ
שָׁמַיִם-נָא יָדָה תַּחַת יָרְכִי: ג וַאֲשַׁבֵּיעָה בַּיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם

וְאֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִקַּח אִשָּׁה לְבָנִי מִבְּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר
אָנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּקִרְבּוֹ: ד כִּי אֶל-אֶרְצִי וְאֶל-מוֹלַדְתִּי תֵלֵךְ וְלִקְחָתָּ
אִשָּׁה לְבָנִי לְיִצְחָק: ה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הֶעֱבַד אוֹלֵי לֹא-תֹאכְלָהּ
הָאִשָּׁה לְלֶכֶת אַחֲרַי אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת הִהְשִׁיב אֲשִׁיב אֶת-בְּנֵךְ
אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-יֵצְאתָ מִשָּׁם: ו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲבָרְכֶם הַשָּׁמַר
לְךָ פֶּן-תָּשִׁיב אֶת-בְּנֵי שְׂמָה: ז יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר לִי-
קַחְנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי וּמֵאָרֶץ מוֹלַדְתִּי וְאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר-לִי וְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע-
לִי לֵאמֹר לְזַרְעֶךָ אֶתֶּן אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת הוּא יִשְׁלַח מַלְאָכָו לְפָנֶי-
נִיךָ וְלִקְחָתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבָנִי מִשָּׁם: ח וְאִם-לֹא תֹאכְלָהּ הָאִשָּׁה לְלֶכֶת
אַחֲרַיךָ וְנִקִּיתָ מִשְׁבַּעְתִּי זֹאת רַק אֶת-בְּנֵי לֹא תָשִׁיב שְׂמָה: ט
וַיִּשָּׂם הֶעֱבַד אֶת-יָדוֹ תַּחַת יָרֵךְ אֲבָרְכֶם אֲדַנְּיוּ וַיִּשְׁבַּע לוֹ עַל-
הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה:

In Parashat Vayera, Abraham was given a blessing of a son (Isaac) in whom his hoped rested and is in part upon which the covenant he had with the Lord is based (*i.e. Parashat Lech Lecha: the blessing of his seed, Bereshit / Genesis 12*). The Author of the book of Hebrews offers and interpretation of the Torah portion saying the following:

Hebrews 11:17-19

11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son 11:18 it was he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac your descendants shall be called.'
11:19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. (NASB)

Abraham's obedience to what the Lord had called him to do to Isaac testified to his faith in the covenant promises of God. The rabbis believed that this was an illustration of Abraham's belief in the resurrection, that is connected to restoration, redemption, and salvation. This illustrates for us the significance of Abraham's actions as they are connected to his faith, just as James wrote in his book saying the following:

James 2:20-24

2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 2:22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God. 2:24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. (NASB)

Notice how James speaks of Abraham offering up his son on the altar. According to Parashat Vayera, Abraham did not complete the task, the Lord God stopped him, yet James says that he offered him up. This is synonymous to the rabbinic concept of studying the Torah and the sacrifices, it is as if one goes up to the temple mount, rebuilds the temple, and offers a sacrifice to the Lord. The intention in one's heart is to be coupled to one's actions and willingness to do so. James speaks of faith and works saying that our faith is perfected in the works that we do in serving the Lord. He also calls Abraham a friend of God. This friendship comes by reason of the covenant where the Lord tested the extent of his loyalty, and Abraham was successful in his faithfulness to the Lord. Do you believe the Lord tests us today in the covenant we have in Yeshua the Messiah? The point is that the fulfillment of the covenant promises the Lord God of Israel made with Abraham were contingent upon his obedience to the Lord. The Scriptures illustrate for us that the covenant of God was a two-way relationship. It was because Abraham was willing to offer up his son, that the Lord God agreed to keep His obligations according to the promises. Abraham demonstrated his covenant loyalty through his faith. *“Is the covenant that we have today in Yeshua the Messiah dependent upon our obedience to the faith?”* Asked another way, *“Do you demonstrate your covenant loyalty through your faith today?”* *“Do you keep your obligations of the covenant we have in Yeshua the Messiah?”* *“Are there obligations of the covenant in Yeshua the Messiah?”*

Let's look at a few verses from the Scriptures.



Shemot / Exodus 20:2-3 and Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:6-7 “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.”

Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:16 “Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiffnecked no longer.”

Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:6 “And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”

Romans 2:29 “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart ...”

Colossians 2:11 “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands ...”

Hebrews 3:7-4:7

3:7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today if you hear His voice, 3:8 Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, 3:9 Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me And saw My works for forty years. 3:10 ‘Therefore I was angry with this generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, And they did not know My ways’; 3:11 As I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ 3:12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 3:13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 3:14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, 3:15 while it is said, ‘Today if you hear His voice, Do not

harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.’ 3:16 For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? 3:17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 3:18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? 3:19 So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. 4:3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, ‘As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,’ although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4:4 For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works’; 4:5 and again in this passage ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ 4:6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, 4:7 He again fixes a certain day, ‘Today,’ saying through David after so long a time (NASB)

Considering a few verses from the Torah and the Apostolic Writings, in *Shemot / Exodus 20:2-3* and *Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:6-7* Moshe speaks in broad terms saying that we are to have no other gods before the Lord God of Israel. This may include many things, such as money or sports which may take the place of an idolatrous practice depending upon how consumed one is with each of these. Do you believe these Scriptures are obligatory for us today? Is it possible to say that we have salvation in Yeshua the Messiah if we hold on to, worship, and serve other gods? Notice how in *Hebrews 3:7-4:2*, the author of Hebrews comments on these stiff-necked people saying they received the same Gospel message (*Hebrews 4:2*, “*For indeed we have*

had good news preached to us, just as they also,” כִּי גַם אֲלִינוּ בֵּאֵה הַבִּי שׁוֹרָה כְּמוֹ אֲלֵיהֶם אֲךָ לֹא הוֹעִיל לָהֶם דְּבַר הַשְּׁמוּעָה מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִתְעַרְבּוּ: באמונה לשמעיים: και γάρ ἔσμεν εὐηγγελισμένοι καθάπερ κάκεινοι, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ὠφέλησεν ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς ἐκείνους, μὴ συγκεκερασμένους τῇ πίστει τοῖς ἀκούσασιν) but failed as they did not live their faith (works), a key component of salvation. Note the context of the book of Hebrews which states that they heard the Gospel message (הַבְּשׂוּרָה, εὐηγγελισμένοι) just as we did. What is that Gospel message that they heard? Is it the Torah imperatives to seek the Lord God in heaven and to live in righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth? The definition of the Greek word εὐηγγελισμένοι is as follows:

εὐαγγελίζω, v \{yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo}

1) to bring good news, to announce glad tidings 1a)
used in the OT of any kind of good news 1a1) of the joyful tidings of God’s kindness, in particular, of the Messianic blessings 1b) in the NT used especially of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ, and of what relates to this salvation 1c) glad tidings are brought to one, one has glad tidings proclaimed to him 1d) to proclaim glad tidings 1d1) instruct (men) concerning the things that pertain to Christian salvation

Do you find it interesting that the author of Hebrews claims the Gospel message was taught in the Torah to the people in the wilderness? The term “*stiff-necked*” is equivalent to not having faith. The Lord God called that generation in the wilderness stiff-necked because they failed to trust (have faith) in the Lord by placing their faith into actions.

The rabbis in the rabbinic literature believe the Torah at Sinai was given out of mercy for several related purposes:

1. To give guidance to man due to his sins.
2. To “*stir up*” in man the knowledge of what is right and wrong. To provide man the understanding there is a “*line to cross*,” in which human nature is tempted to do

on a daily basis which leads us to live repentant lives.
(*Romans 7:7-11*)

3. To help man understand how he falls short of God's holiness ultimately leading to our searching out the mercy of God.
4. To provide man with a way to perform Teshuvah (to Repent of his sins), and to whom he must trust for salvation, the Lord God of Israel.

The Torah was also given to instruct (teach) a man how to live for God and how to live with our neighbors (*Matthew 22:37-40*). These truths are eternal, and the fact that we have faith in Yeshua the Messiah does not void what the Torah says about HOW to do these things. The Modern Theologies taught in Christianity today state that we don't have to follow the Torah, as Jesus nullified its specifics by summarizing everything in the two commandments which He had taken from the Torah, to love the Lord God and to love your neighbor as yourself. Instead of following God's revelation (the Torah), Christianity says we are now "*set free from the Law,*" where we now follow something called "*the law of love*" or "*law of Christ.*" The Modern Theologies also teach that we are now "*led by the Spirit*" and are no longer subject to "*the Law.*" *Galatians 5* and *Romans 7* illustrate what it means to be led by the Spirit of God (to walk in the Spirit), Paul explains this is synonymous to obeying God's Torah (*Romans 3:31*). The facts are that the Lord did not give the commands to be difficult, as is stated in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:11-14*.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:11-14

30:11 'For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.

30:12 'It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' 30:13 'Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'

30:14 'But the word is very near you, in your mouth

and in your heart, that you may observe it. (NASB)

יֵא כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם לֹא-נִפְלְאת הוּא
מִמֶּךָ וְלֹא-רְחִיקָה הוּא: יב לֹא בְשָׁמַיִם הוּא לְאמֹר מִי יַעֲלֶה-
לָנוּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְיִקְחֶהָ לָנוּ וְיִשְׁמְעֵנוּ אֹתָהּ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָה: יג וְלֹא-
מֵעֶבֶר לַיָּם הוּא לְאמֹר מִי יַעֲבֹר-לָנוּ אֶל-עֶבֶר הַיָּם וְיִקְחֶהָ לָנוּ
וְיִשְׁמְעֵנוּ אֹתָהּ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָה: יד כִּי-קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד כְּפִיךָ
וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ:

The Lord God has always asked that we first recognize and trust in Him before trying to “do” anything for Him. This is what it means to do things in His Name. To have faith and to trust in Him is the “*first commandment*.” This is the major premise for Teshuvah (repentance), that we recognize the Lord God, His holiness and righteousness, and how we fall short. Then we seek Him to help in our turning from sin. *Te-hillim / Psalms 106* speaks at length on the idea that no matter what we have done, the Lord is merciful and remembers His covenant with us.

Radak has the following to say regarding *Bereshit / Genesis 24:3* that is related to what we have been studying thus far.

Radak on Bereshit / Genesis 24:3 Part 1

ואשבִיעךְ..ואלוקי הארץ, meaning that the same G'd Who is ruler in the heavens also exercises His control down here on earth. Do not think that if you do not honor an oath made to the G'd in heaven that failure to honor it would not have negative consequences for you here on earth. When Avraham speaks of his own self, as opposed to the need to make someone else take an oath, he only needs to refer to the “G'd of the heavens” (compare verse 7) Avraham was well aware of G'd being also the G'd on earth. In Bereshit Rabbah 59:8 Rabbi Pinchas is quoted as saying that until He revealed Himself to His creatures G'd was known only as the “G'd of the heavens,” whereas after He revealed Himself to His creatures [or to an individual creature by performing a miracle for such a person Ed.] He also became known

as the "G'd of the earth."

Radak speaks of honoring God and disobeying God, and the resulting consequences of sin and disobedience. The opening premise is that the Lord God is ruler in the heavens, and He is also ruler on earth as well. In Parashat Chayei Sarah, specifically in *Bereshit / Genesis 24:1-8*, we are given the illustration that as get older, we should not get hardened to sin. With both Abraham and David as our example, we are to finish stronger to maintain the faith! How this is accomplished is by seeking the Lord, His presence in our lives, His face through prayer, through the study of God's Word, and through practicing our faith! This is why the Torah is so important for our lives today!

