

Short comments on Parashat Hayyei Sarah Volume 2 Number 5
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בראשית כ"ג:ב' ותמת שרה בקרית ארבע הוא חברון בצרן
כנען ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולבכתה:

Genesis 23:2 Sarah died in Kiriath-arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham proceeded to mourn for Sarah and to bewail her. Abraham and Sarah were living apart. He in Beersheva, she in Hebron. About 70 km. A day's journey. Why are they apart? Why does he mourn before he wails? Perhaps the mourning took place in public and the wailing in private.

כ"ג:ו' שמענו אדני נשיא אלקים אמה בתוכנו במבחר קברינו
קבר את־מתה איש מלנו את־קברו לא־יכלה מן־ה מקבר מתה:

23:6 “Hear us, my lord: you are a prince of God among us. In the pick of our graves bury your dead; none of us will deny you his grave for burying your dead.” A glimpse into the way the people of Canaan perceive him. While Abraham no longer lives there, having moved away after the destruction of Sodom, they remember something special about him. Abraham declines their offer of a free grave. Why? If he chooses a plot that belonged to someone else, it would create conflict. More importantly, Abraham wants an irrevocable, clear, clean title to the plot.

כ"ג:ט"ז וישמע אברהם אל־עפרון וישקל אברהם לעפרון
את־הכסף אשר דבר באזני בני־חת ארבע מאות שקל כסף
עבר לספר:

23:16 Abraham heeded Ephron and Abraham weighed out to Ephron the silver he spoke of in the hearing of the Hittites—four hundred silver shekels at the merchants' tried rate. As soon as Ephron named his price, Abraham plunked the cash on the table. About 3.5 kg of silver. The price was exorbitant for the property, but he shelled it out to prevent any further negotiation and avoid dispute. And no doubt to impress them also. The witnesses heard the deal with their ears, but saw the money transfer with their own eyes.

כ"ד:ג' ואשביעך בה' אלקי השמים ואלקי הארץ אשר לא־
תקח אשה לבני מבנות הפנעני אשר אנכי יושב בקרבך:

24:3 and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell... Why not didn't he want Isaac to marry a Canaanite? 1. He didn't want people to claim that the possession of the land was due to inheritance from Canaanites.

(Hizkuni, Bekhor Shor). 2. They were cursed. (Ramban, Radak, Bahya). 3. No Canaanite woman was worthy of him. (Sforno). 4. He wants Isaac to marry within the family. (Rashbam). 5. Because they did not share his values.

כ"ד:ו'־ח' ויאמר אליו אברהם השמר לך פורתישׁיב את־בני
שמיה: ה' אלקי השמים אשר לקחני מבית אבי ומארץ
מולדתי ונאשר דבר־לי ונאשר נשבע־לי לאמר לזרעך אתן את־
הארץ הזאת הוא ישלח מלאכו לפניך ולקחת אשה לבני
משם: ואם־לא תאבה האשה ללכת אחריך ונלקית משבעתי
זאת רק את־בני לא תשוב שמיה:

24:6-8 Abraham answered him, “On no account must you take my son back there! The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from my native land, who promised me on oath, saying, ‘I will assign this land to your offspring’—He will send His angel before you, and you will get a wife for my son from there. And if the woman does not consent to follow you, you shall then be clear of this oath to me; but do not take my son back there.” Why doesn't Abraham want Isaac to go back there? Because if he goes, he's liable to stay. Isaac has nobody in Canaan. The pull of the woman's family would be too strong to resist. Isaac would get pulled into her orbit. Which tells us what Abraham thinks about him. Lots of ש.ו. in that there passage.

כ"ד:י"ד והיה הנער אשר אמר אליה הטיגא כדף ואשתה
ואמרה שמה וגם־גמליך אשקה אתה הכחף לעבדך ליצחק ובה
אנע כ־עשית חסד עם־אדני:

24:14 let the maiden to whom I say, ‘Please, lower your jar that I may drink,’ and who replies, ‘Drink, and I will also water your camels’—let her be the one whom You have decreed for Your servant Isaac. Thereby shall I know that You have dealt graciously with my master.” Her outward beauty will be self-evident. He is testing for her inner beauty. What could have been more important if she would carry on the covenant.

כ"ד:י"ז ויט גררן העבד לקראתה ויאמר הגמליני גא מעט־
מים מפדך:

24:17 The servant ran toward her and said, “Please, let me sip a little water from your jar.” What a great word, *hagmi'ini!* It's the only occurrence in the Bible of that word. It sounds like he's desperate and it comes out with great urgency. *Please, I petition you for a potation!*

What Eliezer Said Before the Encounter	What Eliezer Said During the Encounter	What Eliezer Said After the Encounter
<p>והיה הנער אשר אמר אליה השיגה כדור ואשתה ואמרה שמה וגם גמליה אשקה אתה הלכת לעבדך ליצחק ובה אדע כיעשית חסד עם אדוני:</p>	<p>ונרץ העבד לקראתה ויאמר הגמיאיני נא מעט מים מכדך: ותאמר שמה אדוני ותמהר ותרד כדה על ידה ותבל להשקותו ותאמר גם לגמליה אשאב עד אם בלו לשתת:</p>	<p>אני טרם אכלה לדבר אל לבי והנה רבקה יצאת וכדה על שכמה ותרד העינה ותשאב ואמר אליה השקיני נא: ותמהר ותרד כדה מעליה ותאמר שמה וגם גמליה אשקה ואשת וגם הגמלים השקותה:</p>
<p>let the maiden to whom I say, 'Please, lower your jar that I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels'—let her be the one whom You have decreed for Your servant Isaac. Thereby shall I know that You have dealt graciously with my master."</p>	<p>The servant ran toward her and said, "Please, let me sip a little water from your jar." "Drink, my lord," she said, and she quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and let him drink. When she had let him drink his fill, she said, "I will also draw for your camels, until they finish drinking."</p>	<p>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.' She quickly lowered her jar and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels.</p>

This is an example of great story-telling! The scene plays out in the servant's mind one way; it transpires another way in real time, and he re-counts it in yet a third way. He imagines her coming from the water source, carrying a jar and setting the jar down so that he could pick it up and drink from it by himself. Instead, when he sees her from a distance – and sees how stunningly beautiful she is! – he runs up to her frantically and literally begs her for a sip from the jar. Instead of her saying simply, "Drink," as he thought she would say, she uses respectful language – "Drink, my lord," deferential to him, but ironically, she coolly takes control of the situation. She lowers the jar from

her shoulder and holds it while he sips from it, a far more intimate and charged moment than he imagined. But she is in control. As we watch this unfold, we are waiting with suspense to see if she will follow through with the camels, which she does. Is there a difference between saying: *I will also water your camels*, and: *I will also draw water for your camels*? Yes. "Watering" is to stand over them and give them water directly. "Drawing water" means she has to go back and forth to the well. It's more time consuming which makes it more conspicuous and puts a greater barrier between him and her. He imagined the scene transpiring in one way but he loses composure. She overcomes

her own momentary vulnerability and takes control of the situation. When he relates what happened at the well to Bethuel and Lavan, he changes the *hagmi'ini na* – "Give me a sip," to *hashkini-na* – "Give me a drink," which is less intimate. Up until this moment, they don't know what he wants. Rebekah's family might be thinking that **this guy wants to marry her himself!** The servant dispels that by lowering the intensity of the encounter in the way he tells the story. He deliberately misquotes her as an act of grace and respect, emphasizing what he has already discovered: she is resolute, kind, determined, strong, and worthy of being a wife to his master's son.

כ"ד:ל"ד ויאמר עבד אברהם אדוני:
24:34 "I am Abraham's servant," he began. The story begins. Setting the stage. In three words. The basic information. Shock. Wonder. Surprise!

כ"ה:א' ויסף אברהם ויקח אשה ושמה קטורה:
25:1 Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. Some say she was Hagar. But it is much more likely that she was a different person. If we follow the narrative arc of the story, Abraham is now

140 years old and now starts over, basically building a new family. The astonishing part of this is that he is not instructed to do so; he knows that they will have no share in the covenant. The descendants are identified with peoples who live in the Arabian peninsula and trade in spices. Midian will play a significant role later on in the life of Moses and in the life of Israel. Even at 140, Abraham loves life and finds meaningful companionship. Shabbat Shalom!