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Parshah and Haftara of Chayei Sara
by Julie Zhuk on 2022-11-19

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Parshah Chayei Sara

Sarah dies at the age of 127, she is buried in the cave of Machpelah in Hebron. Abraham purchased the Hittite for four hundred shekels of silver. Abraham had a servant named Eliezer, he was sent laden with lots of gifts to Charan. He was sent there in order to find a wife for Isaac, it was at the village well that Eliezer asked G-d for a sign and when the maidens came to the well, he asked for some water to drink. That woman who will offer to give the camels something to drink will be the same one to marry the master's son. Rebecca was the daughter of Abraham's nephew, Bethuel, who comes to the well and passes that test! Eliezer is then invited to their home where he repeats the story's day of events.

Then Rebecca returns with Eliezer to the land of Canaan and there she sees Isaac praying in the field. Isaac marries Rebecca, he shows love to her and is comforted over the loss of his mother. Abraham takes a new wife, Keturah (aka Hagar) he fathers six additional sons, but Isaac is designated to be his only heir. Abraham dies at the age of 175, he is buried next to his wife Sarah. Next to Sarah are buried two of his eldest sons, Isaac and Ishmael. That is the basic historical story of what happened in this week's Parsha. There was a Rabbi by the name of Lord Jonathan Sacks. The number one question he used to ask people was, what is the number one question people ask Rabbis?

People were always asking where was G-d when there was the holocaust, why bad things happen to good people, and last but not least what happened to all the miracles G-d used to perform many thousands of years ago? Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks never had the answer that people wanted to hear. There was one question that he did remember people asking before he passed away. That question was when people came up to him and reminded him, "Do you remember me?" That Rabbi never lost touch with the experience he had with any person. He was very well aware that people wanted more than just answers to their questions. What people really wanted was to be acknowledged and to that, they actually exist.

From this Parsha, we learn that Abraham must have been the most brilliant man of his generation. He alone managed to discover G-d and decided that a monotheistic religion is the only one that works. During Abraham's time, people were practicing paganism. He was able to change the pagan world, he was able to teach people to embrace a Supreme Being. He didn't do this through his brilliance or philosophy, it was through his kindness. He was always going out of his way to help others out. This characteristic stuck through all the generations of our foremothers and forefathers. In Parsha Chayei Sarah, we learn of the very first shidduch that happened, this is talking about Rebecca being chosen to be Isaac's wife.

Her beauty definitely helped Isaac fall in love with her, but the fact that she had so much kindness to offer others did the trick. She was a kind, caring, and extremely generous person. Eliezer was the first person to experience, Rebecca's kindness. He experienced this when he came to the well and needed water for ten of his camels. This information is coming from a Chabad source, whoever wrote the piece about this week's Parsha claimed that it took two hundred liters. For ten camels to get water, meant Rebecca refilled two thousand liters of water for Eliezer and his crew.

It was no small effort on Rebecca's part, still, she didn't mind going to get so much water for Eliezer, his crew, and the camels.

Parsha compares Rebecca to Sarah, they were both exceptionally kind. This week's Parsha mentions Sarah, from the beginning. It's the first thing mentioned because she had passed away. The name of the Parsha translates to the "Life of Sarah". The Parsha has a profound answer for this, our lives are measured not just by what we do as individuals. Also what we do for our family and for posterity matters. What we learn from the marriage of Rebecca and Isaac, is the next generation of Jewish continuity is assured. We know with certainty, when Sarah was alive she lived her life in a meaningful and productive way.

The way she lived her life was eternal and the same goes for Isaac's wife, Rebecca. Back to the famous, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. For many people, he was a very inspiring man. He left the world in a physical manner. Those people he touched, made a significant difference in their lives. With that said, even though he is gone, he still lives through these people.

Haftara Chayei Sara

This is the story of King David when he was much older. He was in the last years of his life and the Haftara describes what life was like for him. There is a distinct contrast between Avraham and David. Avraham was youthful and vigorous as an old man, he even remarried at the age of 140. The same didn't happen to David. Avraham always did whatever G-d expected of him, and it wasn't so much that David didn't. He just had some faults that set him back in his life, which happened late in his life. Going back to history, when he was younger Shaul was king and he tried to go after him, with the intention of hurting or killing him. Not just Shaul, but his crew of army that he convinced David was a bad influence.

Shaul wanted to remain king, he didn't know the plan G-d had for David to be king. Or if he did, he didn't like it, he wanted to remain king. At some point when Shaul was hunting down David, the army crew of David's was hiding out in a cave. They saw Shaul and his army were nearby and they tried to convince David to go after Shaul. They wanted David to kill Shaul, now he had a chance. David was too much of a peaceful man, he said to his soldiers that he didn't want to kill a man that G-d set as king. Instead, David decided to cut off a piece of a garment/ the coat that Shaul was wearing.

Shaul didn't notice him doing this, later when the two of them saw each other again, David showed him that he cut off a piece of clothing. G-d wasn't happy with David cutting off a piece of Shaul's coat. This all happened when David was young, with time he had gotten older and the Haftara starts with him being seventy years old. The former hero in the Haftara was David and he did it in a vigorous way. Now that he was much older, hitting seventy, he had lost his strength and felt weak and withered. David felt this way, he had aged prematurely because of the hardships and anguish he had suffered most of his life.

When he was younger, as mentioned before he was persecuted by Shaul. He was always running from one place to another and after he became king, he was engaged in a war with other nations. Some years passed and David always was busy repenting for the sin he had committed with BasSheva. David never stopped doing teshuva, he kept stating that his sin was constantly in front of him. This is from the book of Tehillim: My knees stumble from fasting and my flesh is devoid of fat. The Haftara adds to the burdens of King David, that two of his sons, Amnon and Avshalom had caused him a lot of deep heartaches. Amnon was known for committing a sin with Tamar.

She was the daughter of David, who was technically not related to Amnon. After doing, Amnon's half-brother Avshalom took matters into his own hands and decided to avenge her by killing Amnon. After this happened, Avshalom committed another crime. Avshalom rebelled against King David and then he was forced to leave Jerusalem and organize an army against his own son. King David won the war, but he was plunged into a deep mourning period, because his general Yoav went against David's wishes. Yoav killed Avshalom, and he may have made poor choices in life, but he was still the son of David. Soon after this happens, King David marries BasSheva, he had sworn to her that her son would become king. David's oath was confirmed by the prophet Nassan. He prophesied that they would have a son together named, Shlomo, and he would sit on David's throne. Not only that, but there would be peace at this time.

David had another son, who wasn't so great and his name was Adoniyahu. He came from another wife, not BasSheva. When David was seventy years old or so, his body lost its natural feeling of warmth. No matter how many covers or blankets he used, he still felt cold. The reason for this is as mentioned earlier in the Haftara that he didn't kill Shaul, but cut off a piece of his coat. In the Haftara it states that when G-d saw David do this, He realized how little regard David had for clothing. From G-d's perspective, for a tzaddik like David, what he did was considered a grave sin. Transgressions against G-d were only considered to be atoned when, someone in this old age didn't have clothing to keep them warm. King David had medical advisors, who suggested a way to keep him warm. That was to have physical contact with a human being, that would be a girl by the name of Avishag.

She was a young girl from the city of Shunam. She was hired for this purpose and at first she wanted to get married to David. David refused because he had the limitation of how many wives he was allowed to have as a king. That limitation was eighteen wives, he also didn't want to divorce one just for the sake of taking on this young girl. Had they gotten married, it would have been a great sacrifice on the part of the girl. David was much older than her. David was able to control his evil inclination and only used this girl when it was permissible for him to keep him warm. It was at that time, David's son Adoniyahu decided to make himself be the heir to the throne, instead of the son that David shared with BasSheva. Adoniyahu was aware that his father, David loved him dearly. He believed that David wouldn't interfere with him. David had always been kind to Adoniyahu, for he was a good-looking man. David never criticized his son's improper behavior.

Maybe David thought that if he was strict with Adoniyahu, he would only rebel. Adoniyahu's older brother, Avshalom had rebelled against David. When Adoniyahu started acting like he were the heir to the throne, King David stayed silent. Adoniyahu started to ride around in a royal chariot with fifty men running in front of him. They were his bodyguard, just as Avshalom had done before he died. Adoniyahu considered himself to be his father's rightful successor, he was the fourth son of David's and two of his older brothers had died. Adoniyahu was aware that his younger brother Shlomo had been promised the throne, but Adoniyahu convinced himself that Shlomo wasn't worthy of having that position. The reason for this was, Shlomo's mother was BasSheva, and her marriage to King David was still being talked about throughout the land. Adoniyahu felt pretty secure that he would gain the throne, since David's right-hand man, the General Yoav supported him. This general Yoav, knew that David was angry at him for having executed, among the others, his beloved son Avshalom.

King David never dared to punish his powerful general Yoav, had a feeling that David would command for his heir, Shlomo, to get rid of or even kill him. This was one of the reasons Yoav had sided with Adoniyahu. He also had his own personal reasons, and there was another person who supported Adoniyahu's motivated by self-interest. It was the former kohen gadol named, Evyasar. King David removed Evyasar from office, because he came from the accursed family of Eli. Evyasar was hoping to regain his position as kohen gado under the reign of Adoniyahu. General Yoav and the kohen Evyasar came together to help Adoniyahu have a banquet where he would be crowned as the next king. Adoniyahu invited his younger brother and all the courtiers who had supported him. This time he excluded Shlomo. There were many animals that were killed for this grand occasion. The verse tells us that the feast takes place by the rock called "Zocheles." This is important, because that name translates to snakes that slither in the dust.

This story is brought up for a reason. It was to express that anyone who would dare to mess with the kingship from David's family deserved to be bitten by snakes. The Midrash asks us why does a person who illegally take the kingship deserve to be bitten by snakes? It's because G-d originally was the One who created the snake to be superior to all animals. The snake was not happy, he was jealous of Adam, it persuaded Chava to transgress when seizing to take Adam's place. One who tries to snatch the kingship from David's family is acting just like the snake from the Gan Eden.

That is why they deserve to be bitten by a snake. Back to the story of Queen BasSheva and the Prophet Nassan, how they intercede with King David. Adoniyahu was sure that his father who was very old and never criticized him before, would accept his coronation. G-d inspired the prophet Nassan with the idea of coming forward to Queen BasSheva with the news. The prophet asked the queen if she heard that Adoniyahu had proclaimed himself to be king without the permission of King David himself. The prophet asked the queen after King David dies, he will contest that your son Shlomo be the right to the throne. The prophet was suggesting for the queen to quickly talk to David and share what happened. She was to remind King David that he once swore to make their son Shlomo, be king when David died.

The prophet Nassan said to the queen, while you speak to King David, I am going to come and confirm your words. The prophet thought that two are better than one. Furthermore, if the king was to hear the report from both BasSheva and himself (being the prophet) he would take it seriously. The queen agreed to do this, go speak to King David. The king saw her and wondered why she came to talk to him, he felt like it must be rather important. She expressed to him that he once swore to her that their son Shlomo would be the next one on the throne. The queen informed David of Adoniyahu proclaiming himself to be king without David's knowledge. She reminded David, that what Adoniyahu is doing makes him guilty of treason. She told David

about Adoniyahu making a lavish feast, to which he invited all of his supporters such as, the kohen Evyasar and General Yoav. She added that Adoniyahu didn't invite Shlomo knowing full well that Shlomo had been promised to be king.

The queen called David her master, saying that all the people are waiting for him to inform them who would be the next person to take his place. If David was to stay silent now, it would be assumed that he approved of Adoniyahu's rulership. If David was to do that, then lie down with his fathers when he is dead, then BasSheva's son, Shlomo and her would be banished from the palace or even put to death. BasSheva was speaking, just as Nassan had promised he came and fell to the ground. Even a prophet has to honor the king. BasSheva withdrew after seeing the prophet. Nassan had elaborated to David on the details of Adoniyahu's coronation. Nassan concluded that all those who are loyal to Shlomo, including himself, being the prophet weren't invited to this coronation. The prophet asked David if it was in fact that Adoniyahu was acting on David's orders?

David's answer was of course not, he decided to take matters into his own hands. He knew that he had to take immediate action, otherwise a catastrophe would happen. David was old and weak, but he mustered up all of his strength. He told the prophet to call BasSheva. Seeing her, David swore to her by the life of G-d Who redeemed David from all of his hardships: today he was going to fulfill his oath and Shlomo would rule after him. BasSheva heard this and bowed twice in gratitude and prostrated herself in front of David. She said the words, may the king live forever. The Haftara explains that those words meant, may his soul live on forever in the world to come. The Haftara ends at this part, but there is another ending that ties into Shlomo being anointed as king. King David commanded to call the kohen gadol Tzadok, the prophet Nassan, and Benayahu, who was the president of the Jewish court.

All of these came and David's servants as well. Shlomo was to ride on David's mule to the river Gichon. This was the spring Shiloach near Jerusalem. In the presence of the prophet and the head of the Jewish court, Shlomo was to be anointed with the holy oil. This was done to indicate that Shlomo was chosen to be king. King David said for the shofar to be blown and to proclaim that King Shlomo should live. David commanded for Shlomo to be anointed near a spring because back then it was customary to anoint kings by a body of water as a symbol that their reign should be continuous just like a stream.

What King David said did come true, and at the young age of twelve, Shlomo had been crowned king over all the Jewish people. This unwelcoming news soon reached the ears of Adoniyahu. He started to fear for his life, hearing that his brother Shlomo was now king. He started to beg Shlomo to forgive him. We learn that Shlomo was on board with forgiving his brother Adoniyahu, but he told him as long as you conduct himself properly, I won't harm him. Adoniyahu waited until his father David passed away. It was then that he sought to provoke Shlomo. Adoniyahu asked Shlomo if he could marry Avishag, who was the Shunamite woman that was once hired to keep King David warm. Shlomo realized soon enough that Adoniyahu was doing this as a pretext for rebellion.

If Shlomo was to refuse, Adoniyahu would get his own followers to go against the king. If Shlomo was to agree, then Adoniyahu would claim his right to have the throne. Shlomo commanded to have Adoniyahu put to death. We learn some morals from this Haftara. When G-d favors a person, all plots that go against him will fail. They will even turn into an advantage for him. Adoniyahu planned a coronation for himself in order to push Shlomo away from being a

king. This very act had stopped Shlomo's coronation and if it wasn't for Adoniyahu's feast, a bitter controversy about the right to the throne would have broken out after David had died.

Adoniyahu had powerful supporters, it was going to be hard for Shlomo to gain the upper hand. Since Adoniyahu established himself as king during David's lifetime, David officially installed for Shlomo to be king. This smoothed the path for Shlomo to become the new king after David had died. Going back into biblical history to the story of Yosef and his brothers, he told them that they had evil intentions when they wanted to sell him. This was back in Egypt, but G-d planned everything to work out for the best. Instead of worrying about the enemy's schemes, a person should concern themselves to gain the favor of G-d. This will assure the person the road to being successful.

The Haftara also shows us that we can't condemn David for the sin of him sleeping with BasSheva. G-d was angry at David and He punished him. He had his own reasons for doing this. As far as we are concerned, David's marriage to BasSheva was approved by G-d. If it had not been, G-d would have sent His prophet to call their son Shlomo, "Yedidya, the beloved of G-d" and to promise him kingship forever. In the book of Koheles, there is a verse that states, "Two are better than one and the threefold cord is not easily severed."

What it is saying is that the "the two" refers to David and BasSheva whose union was blessed by the prophet Nassan. He blessed these two because the outcome was they had a son together who was Shlomo and he became the next king after David died. The Jewish source of Chofetz Chaim once wrote to a rich man, since you're well versed in the Torah, and you're a G-d fearing person, I assume you won't mind my bringing your attention to a certain point. In fact, I am sure that you will be grateful to me.

We find in the verse that when David got old, the prophet Nassaon admonished him to leave clear instructions regarding his successor because if he didn't there would be a lot of trouble in the land after his passing. We do not find that David was angry at Nassan for telling him about his eventual death. It was the opposite, David right away took steps to rectify a difficult situation. We learn from David, that we are obligated during our lifetime to make a will that concerns the proper distribution of our possessions. We can't rely on our sons to take care of this matter after we are deceased.

Children have been known to go against their parent's wishes and fight with each other during the lifetime of their parents. Sometimes children will fight with each other for a long time, long after their parents have passed on.

There was a source that talked about David seizing with tremors until the Angel of Death wiped his sword on David's coat. The angel was hinting to David that he was to blame for the plague that struck the people. It wasn't until David died, that his shivers affected him. He felt these shivers even when he was warmly dressed.

The Jewish source of Chida (Tzavral Shalal) explains that David had atoned for his sin with BasSheva by using the woman, Avishag to keep warm. David's eldest son was Amnon, and the third one, Avshalom had been killed. David's second son was Kilav, he was the son of Avigail who was an extraordinary talmid chacham and tzaddik. He didn't want to become king. There

were commentators who questioned why the prophet Nassan, found it so important to interfere at all. Meaning, why couldn't he just have let matters run their own course, knowing that there had been a prophecy from G-d that Shlomo would become the next king.

The reasons for these were that G-d's promises He makes us, are conditional. G-d was capable of canceling His prophecy if either David, BasSheva, or Shlomo transgressed against Him. The prophet Nassan, knew that prophecy is not absolute, and that was why he took steps to interfere. The last thing that is mentioned about this topic, it is proper for a prophet to make efforts to fulfilling their prophecy.