

THE TANACH STUDY CENTER mail.tanach.org
In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag
Questions for Self Study - by Menachem Leibtag

PARSHAT CHAYEI SARA

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

YITZCHAK & YISHMAEL

1. Have you ever heard of a place in Israel called 'Be'er Lachai Ro'i'? If so, in what area of Israel is it located, and to the best of your recollection, what Biblical events took place there.

If not, review Breishit 24:62 and 25:11 (in their context), noting how this seems to be an area where Yitzchak was living. Can you explain why he chose this site?

Has this same site ever been mentioned earlier in Chumash? In case you don't recall, review the story in 16:5-16. Based on that story, in what manner may it be significant that Yitzchak chose to live there? In your answer, relate to the relationship between Yitzchak and Yishmael, as can be implied in 25:9. Note as well 25:12-18.

Finally, see Ramban, Seforno, and Radak on 24:62 in relation to this question. Note how each opinion is quite different.

2. Towards the end of the Parsha, Avraham sends away all of his children (except Yitzchak) to "Kedma, el eretz kedem" (25:6), while Yitzchak remains in Eretz Canaan. Relate this Biblical 'direction' of 'kedem' to Breishit 3:24, 4:16, 11:2, & 13:11 (note Rashi)! Based on those sources, why do you think that the Torah found it necessary to tell us this 'direction' in relation to where Avraham sends his other children?

'LASUACH BA-SADEH'

3. In 24:63, we are told that Yitzchak had gone 'lasuach ba-sadeh'. In your opinion, what does this phrase mean?

Can you remember an earlier usage of a similar word in Sefer Breishit? If so, can you explain how this may be related?

4. Next, study the classic commentators on this pasuk, noting the 'pshtat' interpretations as presented by Ibn Ezra and Rashbam; as well as (what appears to be) the 'drash' approach of Rashi (and Rabbeinu Chananel). [Note also Seforno.]

Can you explain how these interpretations relate to Breishit 2:5? Be sure that you find the connection between Rashi on 24:63 and Rashi on 2:5.

Finally, see Chizkuni on 25:63. Can you explain why he relates this pasuk to Gan Eden? Based on 2:5, can you explain why this 'drash' may be 'pshtat'?

'EVED AVRAHAM' & RIVKA

5. Note that throughout the entire Parsha, we are never told the name of the 'eved Avraham'! Chazal explain that the eved was Eliezer, and that Avraham feared that Eliezer wanted Yitzchak to marry his own daughter. Can you support this based on 15:1-4?

6. Even though Avraham's servant comes from far away, Rivka's family readily agrees to send her back with him. Review the story in 24:48-52, especially their stated reason for agreeing in 24:50!

Use this pasuk to explain why they agree, and why it was necessary for Eliezer to repeat the entire story of how he met Rivka (i.e. from 24:33-50). [Note how 24:53 provides an additional reason.]

7. Note the bracha that Rivka receives from her family: "achoteinu, chaya le-alfei revava, ve-yirash zar'ech et sha'ar son'av" (24:60). Compare this to God's earlier promise to Avraham at the Akeida: "ve-yirash zar'acha et sha'ar oyvav" (22:17). What is the significance of this parallel?

See Rashi & Rashbam.

PART II- QUESTIONS FOR SHIUR PREPARATION

For shiur on the topic - AVRAHAM & BNEI CHET

1. Avraham introduces his wish to buy a burial plot from Bnei Chet with the phrase "ger ve-toshav anochi imachem" (see 23:4).

How did you understand the words 'ger' and 'toshav'?

Are these two **different** reasons, or do both words together explain one reason? [See the commentators, noting how most of them provide more or less the same interpretations [e.g. Rashbam, Ramban, Ibn Ezra.]

Then, as you study Rashi's interpretation, note how he explains "pshtat and then drash. In your opinion, why does Rashi find it necessary to quote this Midrash Agadda? Can you suggest a deeper meaning?

Next, review Vayikra chapter 25, noting its primary topics as well as the phrase 'ger ve-toshav' in 25:23, 35, & 47. What is the meaning of this phrase in 25:23, and its significance in the context of 25:23-24?

Finally, note the Torah's use of the word 'achuza' in 25:24. How does this relate back to Breishit 23:4 and the phrase 'achuzat kever'.

2. Let's return to Avraham's request to buy an **achuzat** kever from Bnei Chet in 23:4. What does the word achuza mean?

What 'shoresh' does it stem from? What other words share the same shoresh? (See for example Breishit 22:13, 25:26, 47:27, Shmot 4:4.)

Compare this with other uses of achuza as in: Breishit 47:11, Vayikra 14:34, Bamidbar 27:7, 32:5,22.

Can you explain why we often find the verb 'natan' [to give / grant] associated with the word achuza, as in the above examples?

Based on your answer to the above question, explain the meaning of achuza in Breishit 17:7-8 (in relation to God's promise of Eretz Canaan in brit mila). Compare this to the Torah's use of the word 'yerusha' when it describes how the land is being given to Avraham Avinu in brit bein ha-btarim (note Breishit 15:3-8,18.)

3. To understand more precisely what the word yerusha implies, see Bamidbar 33:50-53, and also Vayikra 20:24. In these examples, what type of 'ownership' does the word yerusha imply? Based on these sources, what in your opinion is the difference between the acquisition of land based on achuza or yerusha?

Attempt to relate this to the differences in the nature of the two covenants that God made with Avraham - i.e. in relation to the land: brit mila (see 17:3-8); and in relation to how Yisrael will become a nation in brit bein ha-btarim (see 15:1-20).

4. Based on these sources, does 'Eretz Yisrael' belong to Am Yisrael or to God? Relate this to the first Rashi in Chumash (read that Rashi carefully, noting its parallel in Yirmiyahu 27:5-6). Relate also to Shmot 19:4-6 ('ki li kol ha-aretz') and Vayikra 25:23-24. How does this relate to the primary theme of Sefer Breishit?

For Shiur on the topic - A WIFE FROM 'TOLDOT TERACH'

1. Note that both Avraham and Yitzchak insist that their [chosen] children take wives from the family of Nachor (see 24:3-4,10 and 28:2).

Note also who Avraham and Nachor married - see 11:29 and 20:12, and Rashi on those psukim. (Relate this also to Breishit 28:9.) What do you think is the significance of this phenomenon?

2. Based on the above, it would seem that there is something special about the children of **Terach** ('toldot Terach'). What do you think is the nature of this special quality? Relate your answer to 11:27-32. See also Seforno & Chizkuni on 11:31-32.

Relate this to the fact that the Torah specifies 'eileh toldot Terach' (11:27) at the conclusion of the series which began with 'eileh toldot Shem' (11:10), yet for some reason never introduces in a similar manner 'eileh toldot Avraham', even though we do later find 'eileh toldot Yitzchak' (25:19), and 'eileh toldot Yaakov' (37:2)!

Why do you think that toldot Avraham are 'missing', while we seem to have toldot Terach instead?

3. Where does the unit which began with toldot Terach end? (In other words, where is the next time that we find 'eileh toldot...')?

What would you consider the primary topic of this unit?

Note that this unit contains not only the story of Avraham, but also includes the story of Haran's and Nachor's children (see 19:30-38, 22:20-24 & 25:1-9.) Can you explain why these stories are included?

4. In your opinion, how does Sefer Breishit use the progression of the series of eileh toldot... to help develop its theme?

PART III - PARSHANUT

1. Read 24:1. What ambiguity is present in the Torah's use of the word ba-kol'?

a) What does the word ba-kol mean? Note how almost every parshan offers a different explanation. See Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rashbam and Radak. Try to explain the differences between the explanations.

b) Explain, according to each parshan, how this pasuk relates to the parshia that follows afterward.

c) Now, see Ramban. (The Ramban is quite long, but see at least the first section of his peirush.) How is Ramban's peirush different than the others? Why do you think Ramban enters into such detail here?

d) As you study these commentaries, attempt to notice what is typical of the style of each commentator?

2. Before Avraham sends Eliezer on his mission, he makes him take an oath - see 24:3. Read this pasuk carefully, noting what is difficult about the manner how Avraham describes God in this pasuk - "Elokei ha-shamayim ve-Elokei ha-aretz". Compare this to Avraham's own statement in 24:7!

First, note how Rashi understands 24:3, and what he learns from it! [See also the related Gemara in Mo'ed Katan 18b.]

Then see Ramban on 24:3. In what manner is his explanation of 'Elokei ha-aretz' totally different than Rashi's? Can you explain why? (Note that Ramban himself explains why!)

Next, see Seforno on 24:3. Explain how his interpretation is totally different than Rashi or Ramban.

Finally, see Radak on 24:3. Is his peirush most similar to Seforno?

Try to explain why.

How does Radak resolve the parallel in 24:7?

See also Rashi on 24:7.

How did Ramban deal with this problem in his peirush to 24:3?

[Note as well the very interesting (& philosophical) manner in which Chizkuni (on 24:7) relates to Rashi's peirush.]

3. At the middle of 24:7, we also find that Avraham says that God had 'spoken to him' and 'sworn to him' that he will give this land to his offspring. In your opinion, what specific incidents is Avraham Avinu referring to? In other words, when did God 'speak' [**diber**] to him, and when did God 'swear' [**nishba**] to him about the land for his offspring [zera va-aretz].

After you do (or don't) find an answer, see how Rashi, Radak, and Seforno related to this question. [Note also how Ramban argues with Rashi's explanation of 'diber li'.]

Which of these two interpretations relates primarily to the previous use of the word 'shevu'a', and which interpretation relates to the phrase that follows 'le-zar'acha eten et ha-aretz ha-zot'?

Use this distinction to explain the reason for this 'machloket'.

4. At the end of the Parsha (25:1-4), we are told of Avraham's children from a wife named Ketura. Chazal say that Ketura was actually Hagar, and that Avraham remarried her in his old age.

a) Do you think this idea is pshat?

b) Now see Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Chizkuni and Radak. Again, note how and why each parshan offers a different

opinion. Note also the reasons given for each interpretation.

5. Read 24:6-9, noting how Avraham's instructions to Eliezer include a 'promise' (?) that Hashem will send a 'guardian angel' to assure that Eliezer will be successful (read 24:7 carefully).

In your opinion, is Avraham's statement that God will send His angel to help a 'prayer' or a 'prophecy'? In your answer, relate to the entire set of psukim from 24:1-10.

After you have thought out the possibilities, see the commentaries of Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Chizkuni and Radak on this phrase.