

וְיִשְׁמָאֵל

Midrash Tanchuma teaches that the well-known verses of "Eishet Chayil" (Mishlei 31:10-31) were our Patriarch Avraham's eulogy for our Matriarch Sarah, whose passing is recorded in this week's *Parashah*. For example:

Avraham said, "Her husband's heart trusted her" (31:11). When? asks the *Midrash*. When he said (*Bereishit* 12:13), "Please say you are my sister," trusting Sarah would follow his instructions though they were unpleasant for her.

Avraham said, "She distinguished between wool and flax" (31:13)--a metaphor for Yitzchak and Yishmael, respectively, when Sarah said (*Bereishit* 21:10), "Drive out this maidservant (Hagar) with her son (Yishmael)."

Avraham said, "She arose while it was still night" (31:15). When "Avraham woke up early in the morning" to go to the *Akeidah* (*Bereishit* 22:3), Sarah got up early as well to prepare provisions, and she also accompanied Avraham and Yitzchak as they began their journey.

Avraham said, "She envisioned a field and acquired it" (31:16), i.e., Sarah thought about the "Field of Machpeilah" (see *Bereishit* 23:19), and she was buried in it. Sarah had seen prophetically that this field was holy, so she had encouraged Avraham to buy it.

Avraham said, "She spread out her palm to the poor" (31:20), i.e., Sarah gave charity and she clothed those who were in need.

Avraham said, "She fears not *Sheleg* (literally, 'snow') for her household, for all her household was clothed in *Shanim* (literally, 'scarlet wool')" (31:21)--Sarah had no fear of her children descending to *Gehinom* because they are clothed with "She'na'ayim"/ two things--*Brit Milah* and *Shabbat*. (*Midrash Tanchuma* with selected commentaries)

בראשית Bereishit

Shabbat

There is a widespread custom to sing or recite "Eishet Chayil" (*Mishlei* 31:10-31) on Friday night, following *Shalom Aleichem*. Many reasons are given for this custom:

- R' Joseph H. Hertz z"l (1872-1946; Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom) writes: "The exalted position of the Jewish wife is stressed by the recital of [*Eishet Chayil*], which is an alphabetic Ode on the Perfect Wife. Her nobility of character is matched by her domestic efficiency. She is industrious and sagacious, kind-hearted and honored." (*The Authorized Daily Prayer Book* p.404)
- R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the *Shelah Hakadosh*; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630) writes that *Eishet Chayil* alludes to the *Shechinah* / the Divine Presence, "as is known to those who know the hidden wisdom." He adds: Its twenty-two verses parallel the twenty-two pathways Above which are open now (on Friday night) to pour blessings ("Berachot") from the reservoir ("Bereichah") on High. (*Siddur Ha'Shelah*)
- R' Avraham Eliezer Hirshovitz z"l (1859-1924; rabbi in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) writes: We recite *Eishet Chayil* / "An accomplished woman" on Friday night because *Shabbat* is like a princess bride who comes to meet her beloved groom, *Yisrael*. (*Otzar Kol Minhagei Yeshurun*)
- R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (1823-1900; *Chassidic Rebbe* in Lublin, Poland) writes that as a result of receiving a *Neshamah Yeteirah* (literally, "extra soul") on *Shabbat*, which is itself called a "bride," a Jew's *Yir'ah* / reverence of G-d is increased, thus making the Jewish People as a whole a worthy partner (i.e., "Eishet Chayil") to Hashem. (*Pri Tzaddik: Chayei Sarah* 1)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Donate online: <https://thetorahspring.org/donate>

Donations to Hamaayan are tax deductible.



Sponsored by

the Parness family, in memory of Max Parness a"h

Mrs. Rochelle Dimont and family, in memory of
father and grandfather Rabbi Louis Tarshish
(Harav Elazar ben Yechiel Shruga Feivish Halevi a"h)

“They called Rivka and said to her, ‘Will you go *Im* / with this man?’ And she said, ‘I will go’.” (24:58)

R’ Yaakov ben Asher z”l (the “*Ba’al Ha’turim*”; Germany and Spain; 1269-1343) notes that the final Hebrew letters of “with this man” spell “Moshe.” But why should Moshe Rabbeinu be alluded to in this verse? asks R’ Yehoshua Kaniel z”l (1895-1970; Chief Rabbi of Haifa, Israel).

Also, R’ Kaniel asks, *Midrash Tanna D’vei Eliyahu* states that the Exodus from Egypt took place in Rivka’s merit. How so?

Lastly, R’ Kaniel notes, the phrase “with this man” uses the Hebrew word “*Im*” (עם) to mean “with,” while earlier (in verse 55–“Let the maiden remain *Itanu* / with us a year or ten [months]; then she will go”), Rivka’s family used the word “*Et*” (את) for “with.” Why?

R’ Kaniel explains: R’ Meir Leibush Weiser z”l (1809-1879; Poland, Romania, and Ukraine; known as “*Malbim*”) writes that of the two words for “with,” “*Et*” refers to being secondary or auxiliary, while “*Im*” refers to being a full partner. Rivka’s family wanted her to stay “*Itanu* / with us”--not to identify with them as an idolator, but simply to spend time in their company to prepare gradually for the very different life she would experience as Yitzchak’s wife. So they asked her, “Will you go *Im* / with . . . ?” Do you feel ready to be a full partner with such a holy man? And she answered unequivocally, “Yes!”

When *Hashem* told Moshe to take *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt, he wondered how they could make such a drastic transition--after all, they were idolators like the Egyptians, say our Sages. Do not worry, *Hashem* told Moshe; Rivka already established a precedent for such a dramatic change. (Divrei Yehoshua)



“Her husband’s heart trusted her.” (Mishlei 31:11)

R’ Aryeh Finkel z”l (1931-2016; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Mir Yeshiva in Modi’in Ilit, Israel) writes: This refers to a husband who respects his wife. How so? R’ Finkel quotes R’ Chaim Shmuelevitz z”l (1902-1979; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Mir Yeshiva in Shanghai and Yerushalayim), who used to say: Respecting one’s wife means respecting her in one’s heart, not merely behaving outwardly with respect. It means showing one’s wife that he sees her as someone he can count on. (Of course, adds R’ Finkel, respect is also shown by the way one speaks. But, when a person respects another in his heart, he speaks differently to that person.)

R’ Finkel elaborates on the meaning of “respect”: The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 49a) says that when Rabbi Akiva died, *Kavod* / respect for the Torah ceased. *Rashi* z”l explains that Rabbi Akiva was someone who attributed meaning to every drop of ink in the Torah--every “crown” and every serif on every letter. Likewise, R’ Finkel writes, respecting another person--including one’s wife--means trusting that every action that the other person does is thought out and for a purpose.

Respecting one’s wife brings the *Shechinah* into the home, and with it blessing. All around, it is a recipe for success, R’ Finkel writes.

(*Har Yera’eh Al Mishlei*)

“Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry for her.” (23:2)

Midrash Rabbah asks: From where did Avraham come? It answers: He came from *Har Ha’moriah*--i.e., from the *Akeidah*.

R’ Baruch Leizerowski z”l (rabbi in Lodz, Poland; Munich, Germany; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; died 2000) asks: Why is it significant that Avraham came from *Har Ha’moriah*? Moreover, it is understandable that Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bury her, but why does the verse say that he came “to cry for her”? He could have cried anywhere!

R’ Leizerowski answers: At first glance, it is not obvious that one should cry for the deceased--especially if the deceased was righteous--for the *Gemara* (*Chullin* 6b) teaches: “*Tzaddikim* are greater in death than in life!” Moreover, by crying over the deceased, one appears to be questioning *Hashem*’s judgment.

Because of these questions, the Torah makes a point of telling us that Avraham came to cry for Sarah, from which we learn that it is indeed permissible to cry for the deceased. But how did Avraham himself know that? This is what *Midrash Rabbah* is answering: Avraham had just come from *Har Ha’moriah*, where, according to our Sages, the angels themselves had cried for Yitzchak, who they thought was about to die (see *Rashi* z”l to *Bereishit* 27:1). (Ta’am Baruch)



“[It was] a purchase for Avraham in the view of *Bnei Chet* / the children of Chet.” (23:18)

Midrash Rabbah comments: How much ink was spilled and how many quills were broken in order to write “*Bnei Chet*”! They are mentioned ten times [in this *Parashah*], paralleling the *Aseret Ha’dibrot* / the Ten Commandments, to teach that one who helps a *Tzaddik* with his affairs is likened to one who observes the *Aseret Ha’dibrot*. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R’ Dov Kook *shlita* (Teveryah, Israel) writes: The *Bnei Chet* were sinful idolators. The reason so much ink was spilled and so many quills were broken--all figuratively speaking--was because the Torah resisted, so-to-speak, mentioning them. The Torah does not even record that the *Bnei Chet* actually helped Avraham. Nevertheless, their willingness to hear his words and their expressed desire to help him is enough to earn them the title of “one who helps a *Tzaddik* with his affairs.”

R’ Kook adds: How much more so is one who actually helps a *Tzaddik* with his affairs deserving of acclaim!

(Quoted in *B’tzel Ilan Ha’Chaim* II, Introduction)