



CHAYEI SARAH

BUY LOCAL, REACH GLOBAL

Judaism Isn't Just for Jews

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Chayei Sarah

Sarah dies at age 127 and is buried in the Machpelah Cave in Hebron, which Abraham purchases from Ephron the Hittite for 400 shekels of silver.

Abraham's servant Eliezer is sent to Charan with gifts, in order to find a wife for Isaac. At the village well, Eliezer asks G-d for a sign: When the maidens come to the well, he will ask for some water to drink; the woman who will offer to give his camels water to drink as well

shall be the one destined for his master's son.

Rebecca, the daughter of Abraham's nephew Bethuel, appears at the well and passes the "test." Eliezer is invited to their home, where he repeats the story of the day's events. Rebecca returns with Eliezer to the land of Canaan, where they encounter Isaac praying in the field. Isaac marries Rebecca, loves her, and is comforted over the loss of his mother.

Abraham takes a new wife, Keturah (Hagar), and he fathers six additional sons, but Isaac is designated as his only heir. Abraham dies at age 175, and his two eldest sons, Isaac and Ishmael, bury Abraham next to Sarah.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Is Judaism particularist and only for Jews, or is it universal, with a message for all of humanity?





After Sarah's passing, Abraham, at 137 years old, married Keturah and had six more children.

TEXT 1A

Genesis 25:1-2

א. וַיִּסַּף אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה וּשְׁמָהּ קְטוּרָה.

ב. וַתֵּלֶד לּוֹ אֶת זִמְרָן וְאֶת יַקְשָׁן וְאֶת מֵדָן וְאֶת מִדְיָן וְאֶת יִשְׁבָּק וְאֶת שׁוּאֵחַ.

1. And Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah.
2. And she bore him Zimran, Yakshan, Medan, Midian, Yishbak, and Shu'ach.

As they grew up,
Abraham gave them gifts
and sent them away.



TEXT 1B

Genesis 25:5-6

ה. וַיִּתֵּן אַבְרָהָם אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ לְיִצְחָק.

ו. וְלִבְנֵי הַפְּיִלְגָּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לְאַבְרָהָם נָתַן אַבְרָהָם
מִתְּנַת, וַיִּשְׁלַחם מֵעַל יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בְּעוֹדָנוּ חַי קְדָמָה
אֶל אֶרֶץ קְדָם.

5. And he gave everything he owned to Isaac.

6. And to the concubines' sons, Abraham gave gifts and sent them away from his son Isaac, during Isaac's lifetime, to a land in the East.

QUESTION

If Isaac was always meant to be Abraham's true heir, and the others were deliberately sent away to affirm that, why did Abraham have more children at all?



When Isaac was born thirty-seven years earlier, the Torah makes a big deal of this miracle.

TEXT 2

Genesis 18:11-14

יא. וְאַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה זְקֵנִים בָּאִים
בְּיָמֵם, חָדַל לְהָיוֹת לְשָׂרָה אֲרַח
כְּנָשִׁים.

יב. וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר,
אַחֲרַי בְּלִתִּי הֲיִתָּה לִי עֶדְנָה וְאוֹנִי
זָקֵן.

יג. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָהָם, לָמָּה זֶה
צִחְקָה שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר הֲאֵף אֲמַנָּם
אֵלֶּךְ וְאוֹנִי זְקֵנָתִי.

יד. הֲיִפְלֵא מֵה' דְּבָר, לְמוֹעֵד
אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כָּעֵת חַיָּה וּלְשָׂרָה בֵּן.

11. Abraham and Sarah were elderly; they had arrived with their days. The feminine cycle had ceased for Sarah.

12. Sarah laughed inwardly: "After I withered, will I be delicate again? And my master is old."

13. And G-d said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I give birth after I have aged?'"

14. "Is anything too wondrous for G-d? I will return at this time in a year, and Sarah will have a child."

QUESTION

Why is there no mention of the miracle of Abraham's children with Keturah?

TEXT 3A

*Nachmanides,
Genesis 46:7*

אומר לך דבר שהוא אמת וברור בתורה. כי הנסים הנעשים
על ידי נביא שיתנבא כן מתחילה, או מלאך נגלה במלאכות
השם, יזכירם הכתוב. והנעשים מאליהן לעזור צדיק או
להכרית רשע, לא יזכירו בתורה או בנביאים.

I will tell you something true and clear about the Torah. The Torah only mentions miracles that a prophet or an angel foretold. The Torah does not mention every miracle that occurred to assist a good person or punish a wicked person.

TEXT 3B

*Rabbi Naftali Tzvi
Yehudah Berlin,
Haamek Davar,
Genesis 25:2*

אף על גב שכבר היה זקן הרבה מאשר היה בלידת
יצחק, מכל מקום לא נחשב בזה נס. אחר שנפתח
הצור ונעשה אותו גוף טבע להוליד גם בהיותו
כעץ יבש.

Abraham was much older than he was at Isaac's birth;
nevertheless, this was not considered a miracle. Once the door
was opened [for Isaac's birth] and his body became capable of
procreation despite his advanced age, it remained that way for
the rest of his life.

TEXT 3C

Rabbi Noach Gad
Weintraub,
Biyeshishim
Chochmah, p. 57

בעת שהותו בירושלים על גג ביתו באחד מימי הקיץ
פתח הרבי מגור, זכר צדיק לברכה, בעל אמרי אמת,
ואמר:

כתיב, "ויוסף אברהם ויקח אשה ושמה קטורה, ותלד
לו את זמרן ואת יקשן" (בראשית כה, א). לפני לידת
יצחק אבינו, עליו השלום, עברו על אברהם ושרה
קושי סבל ויסורין. ואולם אחרי מותה של שרה,
"ויקח אשה ושמה קטורה" בלי שום קושי ובקלות.
ומי נולד? "את זמרן ואת יקשן". ללמדנו, כדי לזכות
בבן כיצחק קומט טאקע אן שוועהר.

ובלשונו הטהור: "וואס דא האט זיך אפגעטין ווען
אברהם מיט שרה זענען געגאנען האבין יצחק,
סארינע קושיים דא זענען געווען! אבער אחר מותה
של שרה, ויקח אשה ושמה קטורה, קיין קשיות, קיין
אפגעטין, גרינג. געהאט וועמען? את זמרן ואת
יקשן. א יצחק ציא האבין קומט טאקע אן שוועהר".

During his visit to Jerusalem, Rabbi Avraham
Mordechai Alter of blessed memory, Rebbe of
the Gur Chasidic dynasty and author of *Imrei
Emet*, was once relaxing on the rooftop of his
lodgings on a hot summer day, and he said:

"The Torah says, 'And Abraham took another
wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bore
him Zimran, Yakshan, . . .' (Genesis 25:1–2).
Before the birth of our Patriarch Isaac, of
blessed memory, his parents Abraham and
Sarah underwent all kinds of difficulties,
burdens, and suffering. However, Abraham
married Keturah easily, with no obstacles, after
Sarah's passing. And who was born? A Zimran
and a Yakshan. This teaches us that meriting a
child like Isaac doesn't come easily."

THREE ANSWERS

- A. The Torah only records miracles that were foretold by angels or prophets.
- B. It was no longer miraculous because Abraham's ability to have children had already been restored.
- C. The Torah highlights miracles that reflect spiritual breakthroughs. Isaac's birth marked such a moment; Keturah's children, though miraculous, did not.

Isaac's birth was a watershed event for all humanity. It was a global miracle that sparked personal miracles in many people's lives.



TEXT 4A

Genesis 21:6

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה, צָחַק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים,
כָּל הַשְּׂמֵעַ יִצְחַק לִי.

And Sarah said, "G-d gave me a reason to rejoice. Everyone who hears about this will rejoice with me."

TEXT 4B

Rashi, ad loc.

הַרְבֵּה עֲקָרוֹת נִפְקְדוּ עִמָּהּ, הַרְבֵּה חוֹלִים
נִתְרַפְּאוּ בוֹ בַּיּוֹם, הַרְבֵּה תְּפִלוֹת נִעֲנוּ עִמָּהּ,
וְרַב שְׂחֹק הָיָה בְּעוֹלָם.

Many infertile women gave birth alongside Sarah.
Many ill people were cured on that day. Many prayers
were answered alongside her prayer. Thus, there was
much rejoicing in the world.

QUESTIONS

1. Why was Isaac's birth such a public miracle? Why did it impact so many beyond Abraham and Sarah?
2. If it benefited others, why assume it led to more miracles? What's the reasoning behind that idea?

ANSWER

Isaac's birth was the first Jewish birth and a turning point for humanity. Judaism carries a universal message, so this miracle had to be seen and felt worldwide.

TEXT 5

Talmud, Zevachim
116a

שכשניתנה תורה לישראל, היה קולו
הולך מסוף העולם ועד סופו. וכל מלכי
עובדי כוכבים אחזתן רעדה בהיכליהן
ואמרו שירה, שנאמר: "ובהיכלו כולו
אומר כבוד" (תהלים כט, ט).

נתקבצו כולם אצל בלעם הרשע ואמרו
לו: מה קול ההמון אשר שמענו, שמא
מבול בא לעולם?

אמר להם: "ה' למבול ישב, וישב ה'
מלך לעולם" (שם, י). כבר נשבע
הקדוש ברוך הוא שאינו מביא מבול
לעולם.

אמרו לו: מבול של מים אינו מביא,
אבל מבול של אש מביא, שנאמר: "כי
הנה באש ה' נשפט" (ישעיה סו, טז).

When the Torah was given to the Jewish people, a great sound was heard from one end of the world to the other. All the pagan kings trembled in their throne rooms and sang an ode to G-d, as it is written, "And in his chamber, everyone spoke of His glory" (Psalms 29:9).

They then gathered before Balaam, the wicked soothsayer, and asked, "What is this incredible sound that we heard? Is the world being visited by a flood?"

He replied, "It is written, 'G-d sat enthroned at the flood, G-d sat as king forever' (ibid., 29:10). G-d swore that he would never bring another flood to the world."

They replied, "He might not bring a flood of water, but He might deluge the world with fire, as it is written, 'Behold, G-d will contend [with His adversaries] with fire'" (Isaiah 66:16).



TEXT 5

*Talmud, Zevachim
116a*

אמר להן: כבר נשבע שאינו משחית כל
בשר.

ומה קול ההמון הזה ששמענו?

אמר להם: חמדה טובה יש לו בבית
גנזיו שהיתה גנוזה אצלו תתקע"ד
דורות קודם שנברא העולם, וביקש
ליתנה לבניו. שנאמר: "ה' עוז לעמו
יתן" (תהלים כט, יא).

מיד פתחו כולם ואמרו, "ה' יברך את
עמו בשלום" (שם).

Balaam replied, "G-d promised He would never
destroy the world again."

"What, then, is this terrible sound we all heard?" they
asked.

He replied, "G-d kept a hidden delight in His treasure
room for 974 generations before the world was
created. He now seeks to give it to His children, as it
is written, 'G-d will give strength to His nation'
(Psalms 29:11)."

They immediately replied, "G-d will bless His nation
with peace" (ibid.).



The Giving of the Torah was a global event that transformed the foundation of existence itself. The impact was felt across the globe and reshaped values and norms.

TEXT 6

Talmud, Shabbat 88a

“וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי,” ה' יְתִירָה לָמָּה לִי?

מִלְמַד שְׁהַתְנָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עִם מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית, וְאָמַר לָהֶם: אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקַבְּלִים הַתּוֹרָה, אַתֶּם מִתְקַיְּמִין. וְאִם לֹא, אֲנִי מַחְזִיר אֶתְכֶם לְתוֹהוּ וָבוֹהוּ.

“And it was evening, and it was morning, the sixth day” (Genesis 1:31). Why is the sixth day preceded by “the” [a definite article, whereas the other five days appear without the definite article]?

To teach us that G-d made a covenant with the works of Creation and said to them, “If the Jews accept the Torah [on the sixth day of Sivan], you will exist. If not, I will return you to the primordial state of chaos and disorder.”

The entire existence
of the world
depended on the Jews
accepting the Torah.





The **Noahide Code** is a set of laws for all humanity, meant to be accepted not just as universal morals but as commandments from G-d given through the Torah.

TEXT 7A

*Maimonides,
Mishneh Torah,
Hilchos Melachim
8:11*

כָּל הַמְקַבֵּל שִׁבְעַת מִצְוֹת וְנִזְקֵר לַעֲשׂוֹתָן, הֲרִי זֶה מִחֲסִידֵי אֲמוֹת הָעוֹלָם,
וַיֵּשׁ לוֹ חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

וְהוּא שִׁיקְבֵּל אוֹתָן וַיַּעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָן מִפְּנֵי שְׂצֻנָּה בְּהֵן הַקְּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא
בַּתּוֹרָה וְהוֹדִיעָנוּ עַל יְדֵי מַנְשֵׁה רַבָּנוּ שְׂבַנֵּי נֹחַ מִקֶּדֶם נִצְטִוּוּ בְּהֵן.

Those who accept these seven commandments and are scrupulous about their observance are among the righteous gentiles of the world and have a portion in the World to Come.

However, this is only if they accept and fulfill them because G-d commanded so in the Torah and informed us through our teacher Moses that the descendants of Noah were previously commanded to keep them.

QUESTIONS

Why should non-Jews observe the code because G-d commanded it in the Torah? Why is that binding on them?

TEXT 7B

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 35, pp. 96-97*

ונתבאר בזה . . . על פי מאמר חכמינו זכרונם לברכה, שכל הבריאה היא בשביל ישראל שנקראו ראשית ובשביל התורה שנקראת ראשית, היינו שאין זה דבר נוסף על מציאות הבריאה, אלא זה קשור עם עצם מציאותה.

ולכן, לאחר לידת עם ישראל ונתינת התורה, אי אפשר שיהיה איזה ציווי ה' לעולם מבלי אמצעות התורה וישראל - ולכן תלוי קיום שבע מצות בני נח בתורה ובישראל.

This can be explained . . . according to the teaching of our sages, that the entire Creation was for the Jews and the Torah. This tells us that the Torah is not a late addition to the world. Rather, it is tied to the very existence of the universe.

After the birth of the Jewish nation and the Giving of the Torah, it is impossible that G-d would communicate to the world independently from the Torah and the Jews. Therefore, the observance of the Noahide Code must be channeled through the Torah and the Jews.

ANSWER

The world is tied up with Torah and every human is directly linked to the Torah through the Jews.

The birth of Isaac changed the world's order, and Abraham and Sarah's names were changed to reflect this transformation.



TEXT 8A

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, ibid., p.
98*

שקודם לידת יצחק היה צריך להיות שינוי השם דאברהם ושרה,
"אב המון גוים", ו"שרה על כל".

כי בראשית יצירת עם ישראל בהולדת יצחק על ידי אברהם ושרה,
היה צריך להיות מודגש שמציאותם של ישראל . . . היא עיקר
ומטרת כללות הבריאה כולה.

Before Isaac's birth, his parents had to change their names to reflect their new roles; Abraham became a "father to the multitudes," and Sarah, a "princess to all people."

Before the birth of the Jewish people in the person of Isaac, the first Jew, it had to be clear that Jews are the primary purpose of Creation.



Everyone was invited to celebrate the birth of Isaac, even those who were the greatest mockers and detractors.

TEXT 8B

*Talmud, Bava
Metzi'a 87a*

אותו היום שגמל אברהם את יצחק בנו
עשה סעודה גדולה. היו כל אומות
העולם מרנגים ואומרים: ראיתם זקן
וזקנה שהביאו אסופי מן השוק
ואומרים "בנינו הוא", ולא עוד אלא
שעושין משתה גדול להעמיד דבריהם?

אברהם אבינו הלך וזימן כל גדולי
הדור, ושרה אמנו זימנה את נשותיהם,
וכל אחת ואחת הביאה בנה עמה,
ומניקתה לא הביאה. ונעשה גם בשרה
אמנו ונפתחו דדיה כשני מעיינות,
והניקה את כולן.

The day Abraham weaned his son Isaac, he made a grand celebration. All the nations gossiped and said, "Did you see the old man and woman who found a baby on the street, took him, and claimed him for their own? Not only that, but they also threw a great party to affirm their claim."

Our Patriarch Abraham went and invited all the generation's leaders, and our Matriarch Sarah invited their wives. Each of these women brought their baby along but did not bring their wetnurse. A miracle occurred: Sarah's breasts opened like two wellsprings, and she nursed all the babies.

TEXT 8C

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 35, p. 99*

שלא היה בזה נס נוסף, כי אם המשך ותוצאה מכללות הנס של לידת יצחק.
כי לידת יצחק לא היתה נס פרטי, רק לאברהם ושרה, אלא נס כללי
מלכתחילה, כדי שתהיה לידת יצחק נעשו אברהם ושרה "אב לכל העולם"
ו"שרה על כל". ובדרך ממילא כשארע הנס נפעל ונמשך ב"כל העולם"
וב"כל", ונשתנו סדרי בראשית (כולל אומות העולם).

This was not an additional miracle to the birth of Isaac. This was a continuation and result of the miracle of Isaac's birth.

The miracle of his birth was never intended to be Abraham and Sarah's private affair; it was designed from the beginning as a global affair. For Isaac to be born, G-d [changed his parents' names and] made Abraham the father and Sarah the princess of the entire world. As a result, when the miracle occurred, it automatically impacted the whole world and everyone in it. The entire order of nature changed for all nations.

Judaism's message is
for everyone, and Jews
serve as ambassadors
to all people.



TEXT 9

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, ibid.*

שהפלא והחסד דאברהם בהולדת יצחק, פעל גם שהוליד עוד (ששה)
בנים מקטורה.

כי כדי שבני ישראל יוכלו לפעול על אומות העולם, היתה פעולה מיוחדת
על ידי הקדוש ברוך הוא שגם אומות העולם ירגישו דבר זה גופא, שעיקר
מציאותו של העולם, כולל מציאותם דבני נח, הוא ישראל.

The wonder and kindness G-d showed Abraham when he fathered Isaac resulted in Abraham having six more sons with Keturah.

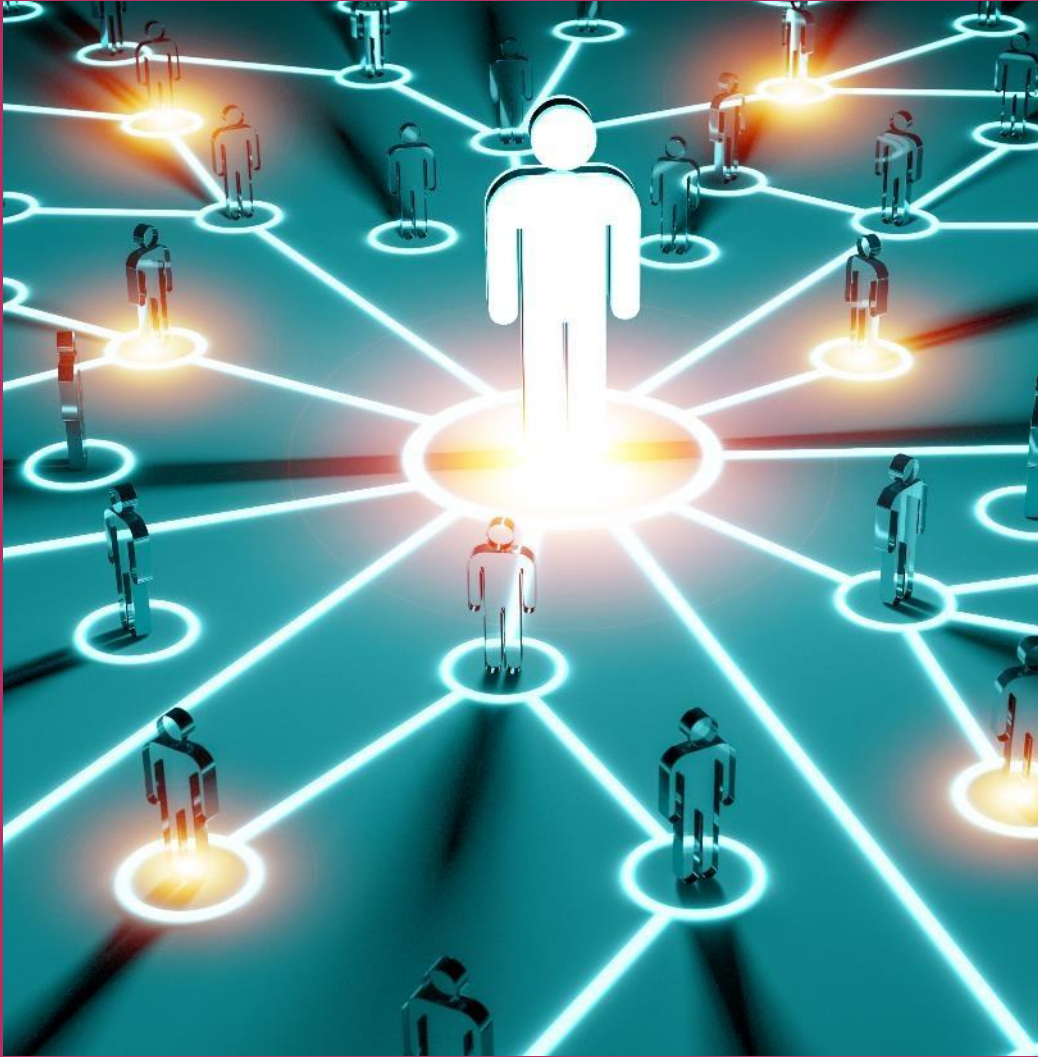
For Jews to be G-d's ambassadors to the world, non-Jews need to sense a connection with Jews. When G-d extended the miracle [by enabling Abraham to father non-Jewish nations], the nations realized that their primary purpose is intertwined with the Jews.

ANSWER

Abraham had more children to create a connection between himself and the non-Jewish nations. Although he sent them away, their role was to carry his values and show that even distant nations are still connected to him as the father of many nations.

ANSWER

The same miracle that enabled Isaac's birth also allowed Abraham to have more children later. Since both served the same purpose of spreading his influence to the nations, they were part of the same ongoing miracle.



The Jewish mission has a dual nature: we are distinct, but not detached. Our priority is the Jewish people, but our responsibility reaches beyond.

THE NOAHIDE CODE

1. Prohibition against idol worship
2. Prohibition against illicit sexual relationships
3. Prohibition against murder
4. Prohibition against theft
5. Prohibition against blasphemy
6. Prohibition against eating parts of animals while they are still alive
7. Obligation to establish courts of justice



KEY POINTS

1. The Jewish people are a stand-alone nation with clear lines that demarcate them from all other nations.
2. Nonetheless, Jews are G-d's ambassadors to broadcast the ideals and values of Judaism to all people.
3. The purpose of Creation was for Jews to teach the world the values of the Torah.
4. Had Jews not accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai, G-d would have returned the universe to a primordial state of chaos and disorder.
5. Accordingly, the birth of the Jewish people was not a private affair for Jews. It was a global celebration that would save and uplift the world.

