

# Torah Weekly

November 13-19, 2022  
19-25 Cheshvan, 5783

Torah reading:  
Chayei Sarah: Genesis 23:1 - 25:18  
Haftarah: Kings I 1:1-31

PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH

## Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

## Chanukah Gelt

For those incarcerated with children (under 13), Aleph Institute send Chanukah Gelt, Please be sure to send us your children's info and where we can send those gifts.

## Chanukah Candles

Please work with your Rabbi and chaplains to make the necessary arrangements for the lighting of the Chanukah candles.

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No One Forgotten.

## G-d of Heaven and Earth

Abraham is undoubtedly one of the most successful people in history. He began with an idea that pitted him against the entire world, but now, three millennia later, his ideas are mainstream.

Abraham was called *Ivri*, "the Hebrew," which literally means "from the other side," not just because he arrived in Canaan from the other side of the river, but because, figuratively, he was "on the other side" of society's belief system. While society was pagan, Abraham the Hebrew was the outcast, the one who believed in one G-d.

And today, the majority of the world's population, more than 3.8 billion people, consider themselves adherents to an Abrahamic religion.

How did Abraham view his achievements during his lifetime? What did he see as his mission? And how did he evaluate his own accomplishments?

In this week's Torah portion, we read about Abraham dispatching his servant Eliezer to Charan to find a wife for his son Isaac. While instructing Eliezer about the details of his mission, Abraham assures Eliezer that G-d will help him succeed in finding a proper match for Isaac. Abraham says:

The L-rd, G-d of the heavens, Who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and Who spoke about me, and Who swore to me, saying, "To your seed will I give this land," He will send His angel

before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. Rashi, the classic commentator on the Torah, is intrigued by Abraham's description of G-d. In this verse, Abraham refers to G-d only as the "G-d of heavens." Yet, in an earlier verse, Abraham refers to G-d as the "the G-d of the heaven and the G-d of the earth." Why the change? Rashi explains that Abraham was telling Eliezer the following: Now He is the G-d of the heaven and the G-d of the earth, because I have made Him familiar in the mouths of the people, but when He took me from my father's house, He was the G-d of the heavens but not the G-d of the earth, because mankind did not acknowledge Him, and His name was not familiar on the earth.

When Abraham first heeded G-d's calling, leaving his father's home and journeying to what would become the Land of Israel, G-d was only the G-d of the heavens. Now, Abraham was saying, after decades of work, G-d is not only the G-d of heaven, but He is also the G-d of the earth. He is at home in both realms.

This is Abraham's achievement. Abraham is not satisfied with a G-d in heaven; Abraham wants G-d to be felt right here on earth.

Each of our lives is made up of "heaven" and "earth." There are moments when we are connected to spirituality, prayer, acts of kindness, and Torah study, moments when we sense the Divine.

Then, there are the "earth" moments. Moments when we feel that our existence is mundane. We may be at

work, eating lunch, running errands, sitting in traffic; the list goes on.

Abraham teaches us that the core of Judaism is to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. The message of Judaism is that G-d wants to feel at home not only in heaven, but also on earth, that we can and should infuse our earthly activities with spirituality and meaning. To be a Jew is to experience that G-d is "G-d of the heaven and the G-d of the earth."

It's a little like the fellow who would make a fervent prayer to G-d every week that he win the lottery. After many months and no jackpot in sight, he lost his faith and patience. In anguished disappointment, he vented his frustration with the Almighty. "Oh, G-d! For months I've been praying to you. Why haven't you helped me win the lottery all this time?" Whereupon a heavenly voice was heard saying, "Because you haven't bought a ticket, dummy!"

I wish it were that simple to win lotteries. But the fact is that it is the same in all our endeavors. G-d helps those who help themselves. May we all do our part. Please G-d, He will do His. *By Rabbi Menachem Feldman*

## Did You Hear the Latest Scandal?

Is it just me, or does it seem like every other week we learn of another scandal involving some powerful, prominent leader?

A pious teacher who preached the high ground was found in a compromising situation. . . or the influential, squeaky-clean political figure

was being bribed all along.

The rumors leak out, and we're suddenly bombarded with proof about inappropriate conduct by individuals whom we had respected. Often enough, the scandal happened months or years before it becomes public. But sooner or later, the mask is stripped away and the fraudulent leader is exposed. The Mishnah at the very end of Tractate Sotah tells us that the generation before Moshiach will have leaders with "the face of a dog."

Ever watch a dog? He runs ahead freely, as if he is the master. But once there is a fork in the road, or a path that requires a decision, it becomes obvious that he is no leader. Now he looks back and awaits his master's direction, because his own sense of right and wrong is so totally inadequate.

Doesn't it sound a little like our generation, with our leaders lacking courage, backbone, and moral clarity? Leaders who don't know how to lead.

Sarah's name means "princess" or "ruler." Sarah realized that in order for teachers to educate and lead effectively, they need to clearly uphold their authority as mentors. Sarah taught her family, by example, that a leader must have a sense of moral clarity and dignity.

She and her husband were on a mission to teach the world about the one and true G-d. When she felt that there were negative influences in her own home, she took the uncomfortable position of insisting that they be sent away. And G-d personally told Abraham, "Listen to her voice."

But it was only at the end of her life that Sarah's leadership was fully evident.

This week's Parshah, Chayei Sarah, means "the life of Sarah." Paradoxically, it begins by telling us about the death of Sarah. Yet after her death, when her children and followers carry on her ideals, her influence becomes even more realized.

The conclusion of Sarah's life attested to the greatness of her leadership throughout her life, how she was constantly striving to reach higher.

Moreover, in her death, Sarah becomes even more alive. Her teachings and inspiration gain greater influence. By calling this portion, "the life of Sarah", we learn that the true value of Sarah's life became clear following her death, when the eternity of her values become revealed and carried on through those she influenced so positively and so thoroughly.

Because a true leader doesn't just lead. Through his personal example, he empowers others to lead.

A leader doesn't just do good deeds. He teaches others the meaning of goodness.

A leader doesn't just act with moral clarity. He teaches others what morality means.

Imagine if we had more examples of such leadership today. Imagine if we would become such examples.

By Chana Weisberg

**Monday, November 14, 2022 --- 20 Cheshvan, 5783**

**Birth of Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch (1860)**

The fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneersohn (known by the acronym "Rashab"), was born on the 20th of Cheshvan of the year 5621 from creation (1860).

After the passing of his father, Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch, in 1882, Rabbi Sholom DovBer assumed the leadership of the movement. Over the next 38 years, he wrote and delivered some 2,000 *maamarim* (discourses of Chassidic teaching) including the famed *hemshechim* (serialized discourses) which contain his profound analytical treatment of Chabad Chassidism. In 1897, he established the *Tomchei Temimim* yeshivah in Lubavitch, the first institution of Jewish learning to integrate the "body" (Talmudic and legal studies) and "soul" (philosophic and mystical) of Torah into a cohesive, living whole; it was this unique form of education and Torah study that produced the "Temimim" -- the army of learned, inspired and devoted torchbearers who, in the decades to come, would literally give their lives to keep Judaism alive under Soviet rule.

In 1915 Rabbi Sholom DovBer was forced to flee Lubavitch from the advancing WWI front and settled in Rostov-on-Don in southern Russia. In his final years, he began the heroic battle -- carried on under the leadership of his son and successor, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn -- against the new Communist regime's efforts to destroy the Jewish faith. Rabbi Sholom DovBer passed away in Rostov in 1920.

**Tuesday, November 15, 2022 --- 21 Cheshvan, 5783**

**Passing of R. David Ibn Zimra (1574)**

R. David ibn Zimra, known by the acronym Radvaz, was a great rabbi and scholar who led the Jewish communities of Egypt and Safed for sixty years. Radvaz was held in high esteem by his contemporaries, and is the author of 3000 responsa, covering a vast array of topics. Among his more famous students are R. Isaac Luria (the Ari) and R. Betzalel Ashkenazi (author of *Shitah Mekubetzes*). It is said that Elijah the Prophet revealed himself to him.

**Wednesday, November 16, 2022 --- 22 Cheshvan, 5783**

**Lisbon Earthquake (1755)**

A great earthquake struck Lisbon, Portugal, destroying much of the city including the courthouse of the Inquisition.

**Thursday, November 17, 2022 --- 23 Cheshvan, 5783**

**Hasmonean Holiday (137 BCE)**

In Talmudic times, Cheshvan 23 was commemorated as the day on which the stones of the altar which were defiled by the Greeks were removed from the Holy Temple.

**Friday, November 18, 2022 --- 24 Cheshvan, 5783**

**Passing of R. Avraham Azulai (1643)**

R. Avraham was a famous kabbalist who resided in Hebron, Jerusalem, and Gaza. He authored *Chesed L'Avraham*, and was the great-grandfather of R. Chaim Yosef David Azulai (the Chida). R. Avraham's signature had the appearance of a ship, to commemorate the time when the ship he was traveling on capsized along with all his possessions, and he was miraculously saved (*Shem Hagedolim*).