

**Chayei Sarah**

**The Life of Sarah**

**The Love Story**

**Torah:** Genesis 23:1-25:18

**Haftarah:** I Kings 1:1-37

**Brit Chadashah:** (Matthew 1:1-17 (Luke 3:23-38)

Reading Andrea pp. 105, 107 & Ps. 45. Jewish Hero: Timothy. Carrier: Alan

Although this Torah Portion is called the Life of Sarah, it actually deals with events after her death. We learn that once Abraham has secured a wife for his Isaac, he takes another concubine and fathers six more sons. The portion ends with the death and burial of Abraham and also with the death and the posterity of Ishmael.

When you examine closely the ages which are given in the Bible, we discover that Sarah has Isaac all to herself for 37 years before she died. After her death, Abraham lived for another 38 years. When Abraham died, Ishmael was 88 and Isaac was 75, while Jacob was 15. Ishmael died when he was 137 years old. His brother Isaac was 124 years old at the time and Jacob was 64. None of the ages of Abraham's six sons by Keturah are given in the account and we are merely told they were sent into the East, far from Isaac.

It is likely that there was some contact between Ishmael and Isaac, since they came together to bury their father and later, Isaac's son, Esau, took one of Ishmael's daughters as a wife. The Ancient Middle East was made up of any number of people groups which were either invaders from the outside or made up of the fragments of scattered people groups which came together to form new people groups.

The sons of Ishmael formed a series of twelve new people groups, which later disappeared into the racial mix of the Middle East at some unspecified point in history. The Bible records the significant details of the lives of those people who made up the nation of Israel from the time of Abraham down to the time of our Messiah. Other people may be mentioned in conjunction with this core group, but very little detail is given about their lives.

Abraham lived a good long life and fathered eight sons. We are not told that he fathered any daughters but he did become the father of many nations and his posterity will later become a blessing to all nations in our beloved Messiah.

The story opens with Abraham purchasing a burial cave for his deceased wife. At this point in history, the Hittites ruled the Middle East, but their influence was declining as other groups moved into the area. When Abraham first negotiates a burial plot for Sarah, the Hittites offer to give him the land, which would have begun an assimilation into their culture.

Abraham does not want to become a Hittite, so he purchases the land from a disgruntled Hittite called Ephron. The phrase: "what is it between you and me" is used to express anger or disgust. Abraham did not want his descendants to share the fate of the declining Hittites.

Once Sarah is buried, he sets about acquiring a wife for his soon to be 38 year old son. It may be that he was not married before this point because Sarah did not want to share her wonder baby with another woman.

He sends his most senior retainer to his brother's people and makes him swear a solemn oath, which we would find bizarre in our culture today. Abraham has the man grab his private parts while he is swearing the oath, which is what under my thigh means. Even our modern word to testify has a strange origin and comes from the same root word as testicles. When a Roman was giving evidence, he would have to hold his testicles as a sign that what he was saying was true. This is what to testify originally meant. I don't think anyone is interested in reviving either custom for our modern world.

There are three stipulations which his servant must swear to. First, he must not take a Canaanite woman for Isaac and second he is to seek for a wife among Abraham's relatives. He is released from his oath if she refuses to come. Lastly, he must never take Isaac out of Canaan, which is a way of saying that Isaac is not to join any other people group, nor be assimilated into any of the Canaanite groups he is to live among.

The servant took a considerable following with him and brought a significant amount of treasure for the bride price (the dowry). When he arrives in the area where Abraham's nephew, Nachor, lives, he pronounces a prayer of faith, asking that the woman who offers water to him and his entourage, would be the one intended to become the wife of Isaac.

When Rebecca pours water for the servant and his group, he inquires as to her name and begins to transfer the dowry to her with another custom which we would find strange unless we were part of the avant garde section of our modern society. He put golden bracelets on her arms and a golden ring in her nose, which was obviously already pierced.

He is invited to her settlement and begins the process of negotiating a dowry. Once it is determined that she is willing, along with what the servant has already given, he makes some final gifts to the family. They want him to linger, possibly to squeeze some more treasure out of him, but he departs because the wedding contract has already been sealed. When she arrives, Isaac falls in love with her and ceases grieving for his mother. Abraham then gets on with the rest of his life, which we have already discussed.

The Haftarah portion deals with the attempted putsch (take over) by Adonijah, David's eldest surviving son. He is almost successful until the prophet Nathan warns the King about what is going on and David formally declares Solomon as his legitimate heir. This was due to the unusual promise David made to Bath-Sheba, even though he had nearly seventy sons who were all older than Solomon. The story of Adonijah's treachery does not end with this portion. He is later killed when he tried to marry David's last concubine, which would have given him a chance to again claim the throne over his younger brother.

The New Testament portion deals with Matthew's royal genealogy of our Messiah, which is really Joseph's genealogy. It is given to show that there are four Gentile women in the messianic line and that the Messiah came precisely at G-d's appointed time. Mary's genealogy is given in Luke 3:23-38. Matthew's genealogy lists 42 generations between Abraham and Yeshua, while Luke lists 77 generations between Adam and Messiah. Each had a specific purpose and must not be taken as strictly chronological. The main difference between the two is that Mary is descended from Nathan, Solomon's brother. The line from Solomon was cursed because of the treachery of the last king of Judah who rebelled against Babylon, even though he sworn an oath before the L-rd not to do so.

## Sermon: Preparing for Chanukah: We Are The Building

Passage: ***"Therefore you are no longer strangers, neither those who are outsiders; you are fellow citizens with the saints, people of the house of G-d. You have been built on the foundation of the Apostles and the prophets, Yeshua HaMashiach Himself being the chief cornerstone. In Him, the entire building is joined together to be a holy temple in the L-rd. In Him, you are also built together spiritually into a holy dwelling place for G-d."***  
(Ephesians 2:19-22)

As we approach our move to an as of yet unspecified new building, I wanted to clarify that through out the process, we are the building which G-d is constructing, no matter where we eventually end up. In Ephesians, Paul is addressing a group which contains many Gentiles and he wants to clarify the nature of their position in the purposes of the Messiah.

There is one new man, made up of Jews and Gentiles who are equal partners as the redeemed people of G-d. Jews remain the chosen people, but equal citizenship is also given to all and any Gentile converts who become believers in the Messiah from Nazareth. Jews do not have to cease being Jews and Gentiles are not obligated to convert to Judaism as part of what it means to become part of the body of Messiah.

If you like, there are now two spiritual genders, the first, Jewish and the second, Gentile. It is not so much where you are, but who you are, which matters. We are being built up into an habitation of G-d through the Spirit of G-d and this is not geared to a special location because we are more than just a piece of real estate – we are a piece of spiritual construction. He is able to use all that we are going through as part of His building plan and He is not going to let any of it go to waste.

It is effectively His community and we get to sit back and watch as His hand provides for us and opens doors that we did not even know existed. We may not feel comfortable with what we are required to be dealing with, but everything which comes our way has to have His seal of approval before it is allowed into our lives. Our job is to figure out how to relate to the changes which He brings our way because we know that He always has our best interests at heart.

Our foundation in Him is solid and none of the happenstances of life can ever change the reality that He has a plan for each of our lives, over and above the things which we may not even see coming our way. I dislike uncertainty and would like to see things figure themselves out without any of the tensions which uncertainty brings into our lives, but we are never in charge of the things which our King allows to come into our lives.

He is both bringing new things into our lives and bringing new people into His kingdom because He has always been into the spiritual construction business and believers will always be part of his prime real estate. We will always be very important to Him, both as individuals and as a community, whatever we are called to face because we are never really in charge of the whatever He brings into our lives. It is really a question of who is in charge of our lives and as long as we realize that He is the one who is calling the shots, we know that all of the other details will fall into place eventually.

It is never a question of where we end up, as much as it is a question of how we see things

unfolding when we face uncertainties in our lives. I have been young and now I am aging, but I have never seen the righteous abandoned, even through the wildest weather life has sent our way.

Wherever we are and whatever is going on in our lives, the purposes of G-d are more certain than the rising and setting of the sun. However, the question remains whether they are certain in our lives, whatever He brings our way.

It is true that we should always nail down as much as we can in our lives and leave as little to chance as possible, as we wander through this life on our journey to our Father's home in glory. But we will really move ahead and make actual spiritual progress as we acknowledge that we are only in charge of our reactions and leave the rest up to Him.

There are any number of locations where our congregation could relocate and fulfill our mandate to be an outreach to both the Jews and the Gentiles of our fair city. The question will always be how effective we are about our outreach, because the building program of G-d does not depend on us, we depend on it. What is He building into our lives as a community? What is He building into our lives as unique individuals?

There are many questions we may have about what the coming kingdom may look like and we may never have all of them answered. He is never about satisfying our curiosity and He will always be about teaching us to have faith in Him and learning about obedience to His Word, no matter what comes our way. We have had an excellent time in 2019 and we can look forward to an even better time in 2020, even with all the uncertainties it will bring.

We need to see ourselves as G-d's prime real estate and never think that we have been passed over or are being neglected because He has so many other things to do. He has His eye on the sparrow and He has counted all the hairs on our head and He has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. What more could we ask for?

If our eyes could only see things from His perspective, we would worry less and worship more. We are integral parts of His eternal building project and this is the work which will always get done, no matter what else happens to us as we pass through this life. Instead of worrying when and where the final temple will be built, we need to see what He is building in our lives, right before our eyes.

We live in an often confusing world and we may not understand all the changes which modern technology brings our way. However, as long as we are aware of the building activity of G-d in our lives, the rest will always eventually fall into place. Is He the chief cornerstone of your life? Does everything in your life revolve around Him through His Word? I may wish for less drama and more peace, but my primary concern should always be about how well I am letting Him build His kingdom into the ups and downs which life is always bringing my way.

How good are we at choosing solid, good spiritual building materials into our lives as we face all the uncertainties which are lying in wait for us, just beyond our ability to see them coming? I wish we were already set up, getting used to our new location, but until that happens (and it will), we need to see that in the kingdom purposes of G-d, there are no uncertainties, just choices we are called to make. What kind of choices are you making?

What are you letting G-d build into your life? Do you realize that we are all part of a heavenly

building program that will function and flourish even if they start arresting us and try to exterminate us along with the faith we embrace? The brief moments it is our privilege to live through in this life, are really nothing compared to the heavenly reality we are headed towards.

We have a double foundation, which is even a triple reality. First we have the prophets who mentioned the arrival of the blessed Messiah we serve. Next, we have the apostles, who taught us how this blessed reality was really a complete fulfillment of all the prophets had to say. Finally, we have the Messiah, who not only links the prophets and the apostles together, but who shows us how to live as we see the final purposes of G-d unfold before our eyes.

Our lives will always be about the good news of the kingdom, as long as we remain focused on Him through His Word. It will never be all about where we eventually end up as a community, as much as it will be about who we are as believers, as we see the end of the world come stumbling our way.

I often find this life confusing and troublesome and I frequently wonder why good people suffer and why foolish people are elected to govern our nation, along with the other nations of this world. It is because of the goodness of G-d that we are not consumed and as long as I have my eyes on this spiritual reality, neither the good news nor the bad news which this old world can bring our way, has the ability to trouble me. I have seen the end of the world and am really waiting for the final judgment of G-d. My spiritual portfolio needs to be what my life is all about and I need to ask myself how well the final purposes of G-d are doing in the decisions I make every day.

There is a kingdom coming which will overcome all resistance and grind into oblivion anything which tries to get into its way. Are you letting this spiritual reality finish its work in your life? We are not called to fit into this fading world and we are certainly not called to adopt its fickle agenda. There is so much in this world which appears to shine brightly, even though G-d's word condemns it as criminal darkness.

Our global economy is bringing prosperity to more and more people, even as we pollute the air and cut down more trees than we are willing to plant. The water that comes into our homes is less and less safe to drink and many of the foods we consume have more noxious additives than some of the poisons our ancestors avoided.

We still possess enough weapons of mass destruction to kill every person on the planet several times over. Master criminals are always plotting new scams to try and separate us from our hard earned cash and even as we speak, new medicine resistant diseases are cropping up across our globe. Crazy people and evil people are developing new mind games to mess with our ability to walk the straight and narrow with our Saviour. We live on the verge of global destruction and global warming is happening, despite our best efforts to minimize the impact our industries have on where our climate is heading.

All of this is only the icing on the cake, when it comes to the final purposes of G-d, as we see the days of Noah building momentum towards another, final global darkness. And yet we should never become discouraged because the purposes of G-d will always have the final say in whatever is allowed to happen to our politically correct, darkening world.

G-d is moving to complete the construction of His generationally eternal dwelling place and that includes each of us and all of us. All the previous generations of believers form a solid

foundation that our lives are building upon and the finished product will be beautiful beyond description. What is a little uncertainty and some tribulation, compared to the wonder and the power of what is coming down the pipes our way?

We may have to deal with considerable discomfort and our new location will definitely take a lot of getting used to, but as long as we remain focused on the coming kingdom, we know that everything will eventually turn out the way it is supposed to. Please keep our leadership in prayer as we examine various potential locations because we know that G-d has a plan for this congregation and He will never leave us nor forsake us.

There are many ministries which are reaching out to the lost and dying of our fair city and this moving scenario is helping me to see how active the Messiah is in the most surprising locations. However, I know that His blessing extends to us and to our relocation and we must never lose sight of this wonderful reality.

The world around us is slipping into a technological darkness even greater than the one which enveloped the world of Noah and his family and that in itself is a terrifying realization which could keep us up at night. Were it not for the power and the wonder of G-d's coming Kingdom in our blessed Messiah, I might lose heart as I listen to the many voices which are screaming to be heard. I might even consider moving to some isolated tropical island or even digging the deepest nuclear war bunker this world has ever seen.

We are faced with one of three choices and I want to close with this. We can either run and hide and hope that the foolishness of this world passes us by or we can join the ranks of all those noisy activists who are convinced that they can actually make a difference before the global indifference they are trying to overcome. Neither of these two choices are really spiritually palatable because there are bigger issues which come into play.

There are the forces of darkness which are lining up against the kingdom purposes of G-d and our souls are the price which they are both trying to win. Our third choice is the best choice and that is to be involved in the kingdom purposes of G-d, no matter what else is happening in our lives.

He is building His future heavenly dwelling place in the lives of every generation of believers and that is all He wants to do as our world slips back into the chaos that once brought about the flood in the days of Noah. You are either part of His program or are part of the resistance which He will mightily overcome. It is time to choose sides and either live every day for the world which is coming, or cling to the one which is always passing away.

Where will you be tomorrow? Next week? Next year? Is your life kingdom oriented or has the folly of this life infected your heart and soul? I want to live as a living stone which the Messiah is using to build into His eternal dwelling place as the time of His return draws nearer and nearer. Are you a part of His prime real estate or is your life just kindling for the eternal fire which His return will certainly ignite? Join us as we find a new place to hang our hats and watch and see all the wonderful things which His love has in store for us because nothing less is worth our spiritual attention. What has got your spiritual attention? Shabbat shalom and Shavua Tov.