

Parashat Chayeh Sarah, 5779, 2018:

*We Are All Hashem's Children*

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, and Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, the *refuah shlaimah* of Yakir Ephraim ben Rachel Devorah, Mordechai ben Miriam Tovah and the safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world, **and the Kedoshim of the Pittsburgh terrorist attack.**

Our *parasha* relates the deaths of one of history's most spiritually-dynamic couples, Sarah and Abraham:

And Sarah died in Kiriath Arba, which is Hebron, in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her. (*Sefer Bereishit* 23:2)

And Abraham expired and died in a good old age, old and satisfied, and he was gathered to his people. (25:8, these and all Bible translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*)

Shortly after the Torah narrates the story of Abraham's passing, we encounter the following *pasuk* (verse): "Now it came to pass after Abraham's death, that G-d blessed his son (*b'no*) Isaac, and Isaac dwelt near Be'er Lachai Ro'i." (25:11) *Midrash Tanchuma*, Parashat Lech Lecha IV, notes that prior to Abraham's arrival on the historical scene, Hashem, and Hashem alone, bestowed *brachot* (blessings) upon mankind. As proof of this assertion, the Midrash cites the cases of Adam, Eve and Noah, wherein we find: "And G-d blessed them [Adam and Eve], and G-d said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...'" (1:28), "And G-d blessed Noah and his sons, and He said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'" (9:1) According to the Midrash, this changed at the beginning of Parashat Lech Lecha when Abraham responded to Hashem's call:

"Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and

I will make your name great, and [you shall] be a blessing (*v'heyah bracha*).”  
(Emendations my own)

At this juncture, our Midrash suggests that Abraham acquired the ability to bestow a *bracha* upon others. If that is the case, why did the Almighty, rather than Abraham, bless Isaac in our *parasha* –13 chapters later? The Midrash suggests the following answer:

Once Isaac was born, Abraham very much wanted to bless him. [Unfortunately, he saw with *ruach hakodesh* – prophetic insight] that Esau and Jacob were to come forth from Isaac, as such, he refrained from blessing him. At that moment, Abraham declared: “Let the Master of the World come and bless he Whom He so desires.” (Translation and brackets my own)

In sum, even though Abraham was given the gift to bless others, he did not bless Isaac, since through *ruach hakodesh* he knew his progeny would one day include both Esau and Jacob, and did not want his *bracha* to rest upon Esau. Abraham therefore declared: “Let the Master of the World come and bless he Whom He so desires.” According to this interpretation, the phrase, “G-d blessed his son (*b'no*) Isaac,” refers to Abraham as the father, and Isaac as his son.

In his *Commentary on the Torah*, Rabbi Moses Alshich (known as the “Alshich HaKadosh,” 1508-1593) interprets our *pasuk*, “Now it came to pass after Abraham's death, that G-d blessed his son (*b'no*) Isaac, and Isaac dwelt near Be'er Lachai Ro'i,” in a very different manner. Although he begins by agreeing with our Midrash that the Almighty gave Abraham the ability to bless others, he diverges by suggesting that, in order to avoid blessing Ishmael in addition to Isaac, Abraham withheld his blessings from his entire family. After Abraham's passing, Hashem, therefore, directly imparted His *bracha* to Isaac. Additionally, the Alshich HaKadosh asserts that the word, “*b'no*,” in the phrase, “G-d blessed his son (*b'no*) Isaac,” appears to be superfluous, since we certainly know by now

that Isaac was Abraham's son. Why, then, he implicitly asks, does the text add the word, "b'no?" He offers a fascinating response to this question that offers us keen insights into our relationship with the Almighty:

But it may well be said that it is the normal way for one who buries his father to become profoundly saddened – for his father's shadow has departed from upon him. Yet, when he is a tzaddik (a thoroughly righteous individual), he is not afraid, for he knows he remains a son to Hashem, for He, may He be blessed, will be a father unto him, and he will be His, may He be blessed, son...[This, then is the correct interpretation of the phrase,] "G-d blessed his son (b'no) Isaac," namely, that after the death of Abraham, Hashem blessed Isaac His son, as if He said to him, "If Abraham has departed, [do not fear,] for you are a son to Me. [Moreover,] I am your Father who exists for all eternity." Therefore, [the Almighty] blessed him [Isaac] in order to strengthen his heart [and mind so he would be able to successfully continue upon his life's journey.] (Translation, underlining and brackets my own)

Clearly, few of us possess the *tziddkut* (righteousness) of *Yitzhak Avinu* (our father, Isaac). Yet, we can all take comfort in knowing that Hashem has told us, "You are children of the L-rd, your G-d." (*Sefer Devarim* 14:1) This means that no matter how many challenges and trials we may encounter in our lives, and no matter how dark the night may be, a new dawn of Hashem's deliverance will surely burst forth. As *Ya'akov Avinu* (our father, Jacob) taught us so long ago, "For Your salvation, I hope, O' L-rd!" (*Sefer Bereishit* 49:18) May this time come soon and in our days, *v'chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom

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They may also be found on <http://www.yutorah.org/> using the search criteria of Etengoff and the parasha's name.

The email list, *b'chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mailto:rdbe718@gmail.com>.

\*\*\* My audio *shiurim* for Women on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

\*\*\* I have posted 164 of [Rabbi Soloveitchik's](#) English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link.