

Vayera - Rabbi Lerner - October 28, 2012

The Birth of Yitzchak and Expulsion of Hagar & Yishmael

21:1: *And Hashem remembered Sarah as He had said; and Hashem did for Sarah as He had spoken.* The Abarbanel looks carefully at the juxtaposition of parshios. The story of the birth of Yitzchak followed the story of Avimelech who had been punished along with his people after he had taken Sarah to his palace. They were punished with infertility and a closing of all of their orifices. Avraham prayed for all of them, and Hashem listened to his Tefilos and healed Avimelech along with the rest of the Pelishtim. Our sages tell us in the Gemorrah Bava Kama that if a person has an ailment and davens for others with the same problem, he will be healed first. Because Avraham davened for the Pelishtim, Hashem responded by healing Sarah.

Hashem "remembered" Sarah - does it just mean remembered? **Ramban**: he examined her life. **Abarbanel**: it means careful scrutiny of the person, that God was inspecting her. **Oznayim LaTorah**: Why is there the seeming redundancy of *remembering her* and then *doing to her* as promised? Sarah had problems with fertility, but it was more than that - she was lacking a uterus according to the Gemorrah in Yevamos; based on normal laws of nature there was no hope of curing her. The first term in this pasuk means remembering what was promised to her; the second term of *His doing to Sarah as He had spoken* means he rebuilt her anatomy. As a result of that she was able to then conceive.

21:2: *Sarah conceived and bore a son unto Avraham in his old age, at the appointed time which God had spoken.* Some say it was a full year. Why a full year? **Ramban**: There were questions raised whether Avraham had fathered the child - a shorter time would have increased the suspicions that it was Avimelech's child; a year later eliminates that concern, and it had to be Avraham's child. There were still some scoffers who said it was Avimelech's child.

21:3: *Avraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah had borne him, Yitzchak.* These two pasukim confirm that Sarah gave birth to a son from Avraham. Why was it necessary to have this repeated?

21:4: *Avraham circumcises his son Yitzchak at the age of eight days as God had commanded him.* This was the first Bris Milah done on the proper day.

21:8: *The child grew and was weaned. Avraham made a great feast on the day Yitzchak was weaned.* This was a party at Yitzchak's weaning, not his Bris. **Rabbeinu Bachya**: there is no doubt that the great personages of the generation were present at this party that was tended by Avraham in celebration of Yitzchak - firstly, Avraham was very well known throughout the Near East; furthermore, this was a great miracle to give birth like this at their advanced ages, after they had been unsuccessful for so many years and after Sarah had already ceased having normal menstrual cycles. In addition, people came because Avraham was incredibly wealthy. And probably the greatest kings and wise people were there since Avraham was considered a prince of God - this too was a great draw for people to attend. None of this is stated openly in the Torah, but these are the people Avraham associated with. Because it was a party of happiness, the list of names of attendees is not divulged. On the other hand, in a house of mourning, the names of all the attendees are listed - we see this in Iyov, when there is a list of people who attended to give him comfort. From this Shlomo Hamelech learned in Koheles that it is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of celebration - the Torah heaps praise on those who go to pay a Shiva call, as opposed to those who go to a party to celebrate. God prefers when you go to do an act of chesed.

Rabbeinu Bachya: normally the custom is to make the party on the day of birth or the day of the Bris - here it was the day he was weaned. Why did Avraham wait until then? That is the day that Avraham considered Yitzchak ready to be transitioned to be his heir, when he could begin to learn Torah. Others say that the day *Higamel Es Yitzchak* could mean his Bris - *Higamel* is hey and gimel - 8 - and mal, circumcised - that it was the day he was eight when he was circumcised. The minhag of saying 'Baruch Habah' at the beginning of a Bris is to focus on the word **Habah** - hey, beis, aleph - 8.

21:7: *And she said, "who is the One who said to Avraham that 'Sarah would nurse children'? For I have borne a son in his old age.* **Rashi:** it means who would praise God to see this amazing thing. **Ramban:** it means who would have said the words to Avraham and Sarah about these two miracles of the birth and her ability to nurse the baby. People were tremendously skeptical, and Hashem made her able to nurse many children to prove that her body was rejuvenated; mothers who came to the party brought their own babies to see if she could really nurse. This created a tremendous buzz about this miracle that was open before their eyes.

21:9: *Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, whom she had born to Avraham mocking (Metzachek).* **Chizkuni:** he was playing around as a normal child would; he was 13-14 years older than Yitzchak; he was a teenager acting normally for his age. Sarah became jealous of him, that he was stronger and better developed than Yitzchak; that is why she had him kicked out. **Rashi:** he was already doing the worst possible things, committing the three cardinal sins, gilui arayos, murder, avodah zarah - he would be a terrible influence on the young Yitzchak and she wanted him out of their home.

21:10: *And she said to Avraham, 'Drive out this slave woman with her son, for the son of that slave woman shall not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak'.* In Lech Lecha, after Hagar had consorted with Avraham and began to act haughty, Sarah was under the impression that Avraham had freed Hagar from being a slave, and when she then acted in an arrogant manner towards Sarah, she blamed Avraham for making her an equal to Sarah. Avraham told her that he had never freed her, that Sarah still controlled her and could do with her as she pleased. Here from Sarah's statement, it is clear that Avraham had corrected this previous impression, for it is evident from her statement that Sarah knew Hagar was still a slave woman.

Who is the main problem that Sarah wants driven out of her home - is it Hagar or Yishmael? **Ramban:** Sarah saw Yishmael ridiculing Yitzchak at this party that was all about Yitzchak becoming the heir of Avraham; Yishmael claimed that he is the bechor, the real heir, not Yitzchak. That is why Sarah said she doesn't want this child to inherit any part of Avraham; the target of her wrath was focused on Yishmael. Hagar is sent out as well because Yishmael is unable to be on his own. It is all about getting rid of the kid, that he should not be able to contest the Yerusha.

Abarbanel: The Ramban is incorrect - he claims that the focus was on the son because she says that this Ben Ha'ama - this son of a slave woman - would not inherit. But it was Sarah's real intention to get rid of Hagar; if she remained Avraham's pilegesh, she should not be living in the same home as the mistress of the house; if she is being treated as a secondary wife, she should be living somewhere else - she doesn't belong under the same roof. If she would remain in the house and Avraham should die, she would then be considered a full, equal wife and her children could lay claim to the inheritance along with Yitzchak. That is why she says to Avraham first to drive her out, and then her child - she is the primary person who must go.

21:11-13: *The matter greatly distress Avraham concerning his son. So Hashem says to Avraham 'Do not worry about the child and the shifchah - whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her*

voice since through Yitzchak will Avraham's children be called. But the son of the slave woman as well will I make into a nation for his is your offspring.

Ohr Hachayim: When it says that Sarah gave birth to Avraham a son in 21:2, it was to tell us that it was a miracle of conception, and also to say this is a real son to Avraham; Yishmael is not a real son; he was never called Ben Avraham by Hashem; Hashem is telling Avraham that he is incorrect in his thinking - he should not consider himself as having two sons - only Yitzchak should be considered his son. What then was the status of Hagar? She clearly was not freed, she was not a real wife; she is a concubine and the child was not considered a full child of his, as per halachah. This is what Avraham and Sarah were fighting about - was he a real Halachik son or not. Hashem had to step in and say that all of his children and descendants are through Yitzchak; Yishmael's children are rejected as far as Halachah is concerned.

Oznayim LaTorah: there are two famous descriptions of the descendants of Avraham - one as numerous as the dust of the earth, and the other as the stars in the heavens. Why both? The **Bais Halevi** says that at times one has to be bright like a star, but at times a humble person as the dust of the earth. Other opinions say that when the Jewish people follow the Torah they will be as untouchable as the stars in the heavens; when sinning, they will be downtrodden by all like the dust of the earth. But another interpretation is that there are two different lineages - Yishmael is like the dust of the earth; Yitzchak like the stars in the sky. His real children are from Yitzchak. Avraham thinks Yishmael is his son - he is concerned *al odos beno* - but he is not the real son. This is why they were sent out with virtually nothing from their home - because he is not Avraham's son who is to inherit him; Avraham's hands were tied from giving more than subsistence level food because Yishmael was not an inheritor.

Rabbeinu Bachya: giving them just water and bread was after Avraham saw the future, that Yishmael's sons would only give the Jews the same when they go into galus; there are no greater anti-Semites than the children of Yishmael, and no gifts should be given to a *sonei yisrael*. Avraham had not understood the concept until Hashem confirmed that Sarah was correct - he was a child of a *shifchah*, with no halachik status of a true son.