

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Chayei Sarah:*** **Genesis 25:1-18**
 Haftarah: **I Kings 1-28-31**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Corinthians 15:54-57**

These, then, are the days of Avraham's life ...

[Genesis 25:7a]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 116:15-19;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #2, *Teshuvah* [the Prayer of Return]

Vayosef Avraham vayikach ishah – and Avraham added a wife ... ***ush'mah Keturah*** - and her name was Keturah ... ***Vateled lo et-Zimran v'et-Yokshan v'et-Medan v'et-Midyan v'et-Yishbak v'et-Shuach*** – and she bore to him Zimran, Yikshan, Medan, Midyan, Yish'bak, and Shuach. **Genesis 25:1.**

Yitzchak and Rivkah have wed; the camp of the Redeemed has embraced a new matriarch. Excitement fills the air. But ... what lies ahead for Avraham? As the 2nd Generation Covenant Couple is preparing to take Torah's center stage, Avraham is preparing to make his exit. How will he – how should aging members of the Kingdom Counterculture – ‘finish’ the race of mortal life? How are people of the Holy One's *more excellent way* people supposed to approach and navigate the fearsome ‘end-of-life-challenges everyone dreads?

Running the Race Well Requires Finishing it With a Strong ‘Kick’

Dealing with the immediate trauma of a spouse's death is one thing. Working through the stages of grief is another. But facing the gauntlet of day-by-day, season-by-season, anniversary-by-anniversary loneliness that follows – well, that may be the greatest faith-crucible of all. Avraham's *emunah* [KJV ‘faith’] has gotten him through every challenge thus far - will this one do him in? Will loneliness, declining health, diminishing vigor, and a shrinking sphere of influence cause him to get crusty, irritable, and unpleasant to be around? Will he declare his *Lech Lecha* days ‘over’, his calling fulfilled, and his covenant responsibilities fulfilled? Will this stage of life be where he bows out, content to leave to others the great mission of modeling the ‘more excellent way’ to the raging nations? Will he now be content to remember and tell his grandchildren how good walking with the Holy One ‘once was’ for him and Sarah in days gone by? Will he drop the ways of covenant in favor of chasing some self-indulgent ‘bucket list’ of things his flesh or pseudo-intellect ‘always wanted to do/experience = like the vain imagination

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obsessed peoples of the world? NOT ... ON ... YOUR ... LIFE! The Holy One has promised Avraham: *you will go do your fathers b'shalom* – i.e. in wholeness, wellness, satisfaction, completeness, and peace. *You will be buried b'seivah tovah* – i.e. in good greyness. **Genesis 15:15**. For this reason, Avraham is not going to be written out of the script of the Grand Plan just because his soul-mate Sarah has died. There is not an ounce of 'quit' in the covenant – for the covenant does not run off of human emotion but off of Divine energy and inspiration. What is the state of Avraham? He has been shaken, but he is not broken. He has been dealt a powerful blow, but his devotion to the Holy One, to the Covenant, or to the Grand Plan for the Redemption of mankind and the Restoration of Creation has not faltered – and will not wane. Despite all the trials he has endured; in the face of what some might call the *slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*; notwithstanding everything he has suffered, somehow nonetheless, it is well ... *it is well* ... with his soul! He may not exactly be a spring chicken, but just look at him go! Seasons and scenery change, and people, institutions, nations, and generations pass from view; but faith, hope and love remain - and for people of the Covenant, life goes on.

Even after experiencing the emotional trauma of Sarah's departure, Avraham was in no hurry to follow his beloved into the good night she had entered. He may have been well on his way to 'old and full of years', but he was still a force to be reckoned with – and virtually exploding with vim, vigor, and vitality. He refused to resign to either grief or loneliness; instead he embraced life and exuded *shalom*. He no interest in either a recliner or a pity party. He was not about to exchange his passion for God and life for offense, outrage, bitterness, or depression; he chose instead to embrace the transforming energy of *humility*, the healing power of *wonder*, the wholeness-enhancing approach of *gratitude*, and the transcendence-enabling fuel of *joy*. He refused to be painted as a victim of circumstance, or to define let his future be defined by what he had lost or suffered in the past. He summoned his faculties. He drew upon the energy of the Words the Holy One had spoken over him. He bucked up, pressed in, and pressed on. He rose up with wings like an eagle, ran the race of life without growing weary, and walked the course set before him without fainting. He zealously guarded both his love of the Holy One and his optimism concerning his fellow man. He chose to hope in – and trust – the Holy One's wisdom and Covenant faithfulness instead of wallowing in fear, confusion, disappointment, discontentment, disillusionment, or any of the *yetzer ra's* other prototypical puddles of poison. He strengthened himself daily through *meditation* and *mitzvot*. He held on tightly to zeal. Moreover, he had quite a Kingdom to-do list to keep him occupied. He had the blessing of the Creator of the Universe to steward, administrate, and disperse in the world. See **Genesis 12:2-3**. He had been empowered to 'walk before the Holy One's Face and be *tamim* – i.e. a model of wholeness. See **Genesis 17:1**. He had been appointed as the 'point man' of

all Kingdom-of-Heaven to the kingdoms-of-this-world Diplomacy. He had been given an open door of influence into the culture of the Philistines and Hittites who lived nearby and traded with him. He had his beloved son Yitzchak to train in the art/discipline of walking in the Way of the Holy One, and *asah*-ing [*i.e.* building, making visible and manifest for all to see] the Kingdom patterns and protocols of *tzedakah* and *mishpat*. See **Genesis 18:19**. He had the field, the orchard, and the cave/grave at Machpelah to *abad* [*i.e.* to tend, beautify, husband, steward, and make fruitful], to *shamar* [*i.e.* to cherish, watch over, guard, and defend] and to *preserve for future generations*. See **Genesis 23**. He had herds and flocks to nurture. And he knew there were still an infinite number of nooks and crannies of Creation into which *chai v'chesed v'shalom* – *i.e.* life, covenantal kindness, and peace/wholeness/fullness - needed to be sown.

Rising From the Sackcloth and the Ashes ... And Pressing On

In the aftermath of Sarah's death, Avraham continued to pitch his tent near *Be'er Sheva*. Yitzchak and Rivkah moved a little further south, establishing their own household at an oasis known as *Be'er LaChai Roi*. So, the two human beings who had mattered the most to Avraham for decades – Sarah and Yitzchak - were suddenly absent from his daily activities. He was not about to let loneliness *consume his joy*, rob his *shalom*, or *drain his passion for life*. But where was he to go from here? What was to become the focus of his life – and who was to be his partner[s] in conversation - on a day-to-day basis? Who was to laugh with – and sometimes at – him? Whose cup was he to pour at the time of Kiddush? Over whose *challah* was he to say Ha-Motzee? Who was he to declare to be, and honor as, an *eishet chayil* [woman of strength/virtue]? With whom was he to share his hours, his meals, and his stories? Who was he to teach the Way of the Holy One, and team up with to *asah* a counterculture of *tzedekah u'mishpat* in every place his foot happened to tread? With whom was he to share his dreams and visions; his pleasure and pain; and his laughter and tears?

Moreover, what was to become of the great herds and flocks he and Sarah had accumulated over the years? Who would care for the sick ones? Who would carry the injured ones? Who would keep vigil through the night with the ewes and nannies while the babies are fighting their way through the birth canal? Who would plant and harvest the field he has purchased from *Efron* the Cheti? Who would keep watch over Sarah's tomb? And when Avraham's race on earth was run, and he joined Sarah and his fathers in the sleep of death, what would become of the Covenant that has been established between him, his seed, and the Creator of the Universe? Was he supposed to be content to sit around the fire with other old men swapping tales about the 'glory days'? Or was he to find a way to *keep promoting*

the Kingdom of Heaven agenda in the world in the present tense - and continue to shape the future for generations?

Life Goes On

The Holy One delighted in and cared deeply for Sarah; but the covenant He cut with Avraham was for the sake of humanity as a species, and for Creation as an ecosystem, not just for the benefit of one matriarch. Covenants *run with the land*; therefore, when the human participants in the Covenant grow old, suffer violence, or even die, the Covenant just keeps doing what the Holy One designed it to do. It just keeps bringing downdrafts of Heaven to earth to all human beings that align with it. The human beings involved in a Covenant are merely transponder² agents – embedded transceivers as it were – whose doing of a prescribed thing at a given location opens the flow of a downdraft of Divine Energy over that person and the area he or she inhabits. When one such human transceiver – in this case, Sarah – dies, the Covenant goes on. The Covenant, you see, is merely a pre-programmed response of Creation – i.e. *ha-shamayim v'ha-aretz* – to the presence of certain activating conditions. It works sort of like the meteorological phenomenon of the *dew point* [i.e. the temperature at which the water vapor contained in a volume of air at a given atmospheric pressure reaches saturation and condenses, causing dew to form on all affected surfaces]. The moment any human being produces the ‘activating conditions’, or ‘triggers’ established by the Covenant, the pre-programmed response of nearby Creation – in both its *ha-shamayim and ha-aretz* components - kicks in. Covenantal blessings begin to cover the person and affect the area surrounding him or her like ‘dew’ showers cover the earth. Hence David famously wrote, with complete confidence: ***You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely tov v'chesed*** – *goodness and mercy* - ***will follow me all the days of my life*** Psalm 23:5b-6a.

So, despite Sarah’s death, all the ‘*blessedness*’, the ‘*greatness of name*’, the ‘*blessing of all families*’, the ‘*father of many nations*’ empowerments that the Holy One had promised to Avraham remained – for as long as he continued to *teach his children and his household after him to cherish and guard the Way of the Holy One*, and to engage in the messy business of *building/making/forming on earth a functional counterculture of tzedakah u'mishpat*. Genesis 18:19. Avraham was still strong, active, and in good health – and ‘under orders’, as it were. Sarah’s death was extremely painful; Yitzchak’s marriage was exceedingly joyful. But neither of these events, nor anything else, could change his calling or his mission. He just had to find a new way to be about the Father’s ‘*walk in and dispense blessing, teach your children and household the Way, and make tzedekah and mishpat known*’

² In aeronautics, a *transponder* is an automated transceiver – i.e. combined receiver and transmitter – embedded in an aircraft. The function of a transponder is to emit a coded identifying signal in response to an interrogating received signal.

business. He just had to sire new children – and teach the wonderful things he had learned about the Kingdom of Heaven to a new, extended household. He is being driven forward by the pulsing energy of the Divine Words that he has *sh'ma*-ed, and is still *sh'ma*-ing. They are like a life-force growing inside him the way a baby grows inside a woman's womb - setting off powerful chemical and hormonal reactions and activating powerful, focus-shifting and behavior-altering instincts. Those words must be cherished, meditated upon, cultivated, nurtured, and then - at the appointed time of viability - brought forth and released into the atmosphere. This empowered, impassioned sower of seed, which is the Word of the Creator, is just who Avraham has become.

How Will Avraham Finish the Race?

So, after grieving for Sarah and arranging the marriage between Yitzchak and Rivkah, Avraham found another human to share his dreams – and his final years - with. She was not Sarah, of course; but who could be? He had too much life, love, and wisdom in him to keep it to himself.

*There are three things that are too wonderful for me,
Yes, four that I do not understand:
the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent on a rock;
the way of a ship in the midst of the sea;
and the way of a man with a maiden.*

[Proverbs 30:18-19]

The name of Avraham's latter-years' companion was Keturah³. We are not told this woman's lineage, her culture, her age, her background, her worldview, or her relationship with the Holy One. We do not know anything about when, or where, or how, she and Avraham met and became a couple. We are not given any details about her and Avraham's adventures together. We do not know what they talked about, or when, or how, or even if she learned to laugh the way Sarah did. We don't know how Yitzchak responded to his new 'step-mother' – or how she responded to him. We obviously don't need to know these things. The Holy One has determined it should be *Avraham and Keturah's little secret*. But wait, our flesh cries! This is the father of *emunah* we are talking about here! This is *our story* as much as it is theirs!

Introducing Avraham's 'Other Family – i.e. the 'Household of The Nations'

Heretofore we have read nothing in Torah of anyone by the name of *Keturah*. We

³ **Keturah** = *Qaturah*, *kuf*, *tet*, *vav*, *resh*, *hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #6989, pronounced *ket-oo-raw'*. According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the word means 'incense'. The verb root is Strong's #6999, *qatar*, which means to *be fragrant*, or *give off a pleasant scent*. Hebrew tradition says that *Keturah* was a name subsequently given to Hagar, mother of Yish'mael. Torah, however, does not specifically state this to be the case.

know absolutely nothing of her nationality. We do not know the name of her father, mother, or any member of her family. We don't know where she was born, where she grew up, or where she has been while Avraham, Sarah, and Yitzchak have been walking in covenant with the Creator of the Universe. We are not told anything about what 'second wife choosing criteria' Avraham employed. We do not know Keturah's race, her skin color, her place of origin, her native language, or even her age. We do not know if this is her first marriage or if she is a widow. We do not know her worldview. We do not know what, if any, history she has with the Holy One – or with Sodom and Amarah, with Lot, with Melki-Tzedek, or with Avraham. We do not know her likes, her dislikes, her character traits, her strengths, her weaknesses, or what the idiosyncrasies of her personality are. We do not know if she is kind – or cruel. We do not know if she is a nurturer – or a manipulator. We do not really even know if we should consider her a friend – or a foe. The Holy One – Avraham's Friend – is apparently fully content to let Avraham Avinu keep these details about her secret from us. But we cannot help but wonder – what was it, dear, dear Patriarch, that drove you into the embrace of another woman after Sarah died? Was it grief? Was it loneliness? Was it Keturah's beauty? Was it love? Was it the desire to have more children? Was it destiny? Was it the Will of the Holy One – or was it a compromise of the flesh? We do not know the answer to these questions, of course. It is not our place to know – much less to judge. But it is altogether normal to ask questions. After all, we too, may suffer - or be suffering from – the loss of one we hold dear to the house of death.

Avraham did not mourn Sarah forever. After arranging a bride for Yitzchak, he jumped back into life full throttle. We are just told that he took Keturah – and that, though he had once been considered beyond the age of fruitfulness, he somehow fathered six more sons. And he celebrated thirty-eight more cycles of seedtime and harvest, privilege and accountability.

Don't be offended, Beloved. We are all *on the clock* – and if our time runs out, for those who remain *life must – and will - go on*. It must be so – for the sake of the Kingdom, and the Grand Redemptive Plan for mankind and Creation!

In Honor of Sarah

The real question we should be asking is not why Avraham did what he did after Sarah died, or whether what he did was 'right' or 'wrong'; the real question is how *will – how should – we respond to the loss of a loved one ourselves*. The question is *what have we learned – and not learned – from the life of Sarah*.

Sarah gave up absolutely everything familiar to her, everything dear to her, to follow Avram as Avram followed the Beautiful Voice of the Infinite Shepherd

across the world. She gave up her husband, the only security she knew, and was taken into a pagan's harem twice – once in Egypt, and once in Gerar. She made mistakes – giving Hagar into Avraham's arms in an effort to give him an heir – and she made and carried through on the hard choices that were necessary to ameliorate that mistake. Through it all she maintained her *dignity*, her *virtue*, her *beauty*, her *regal bearing*, and her *second-hand faith in the Holy One*. And she never, never forgot how to laugh. May we all be like Sarah in these regards, Dear One! May her life force live on - through her progeny.

We have experienced a changing of the guard in relation to our matriarchs. Are we due for one in relation to our patriarchs as well? What lies ahead for our beloved 'friend of God? Will he just go quietly into that good night that eventually seems to claim us all? Or does he perhaps have yet one more '*Lech Lecha!*' surprise in him? We will see, Beloved.

The first man to cut covenant with the Creator of the Universe since the days of the Flood has not heard the Beautiful Voice of the Creator since the dramatic events of Moriyah. And alas, on this side of the afterlife he will never once hear that Voice again. But do not pity Avraham. The Words the Holy One spoke over him in times past are still alive and reverberating in him. They are still empowering him to be a transcender, an overcomer, and a lover of God. And so he plows ahead with life.

The Father's Blessing – and the Sons' Inheritance

Though Avraham had other children after Yitzchak he remained faithful to both the Holy One's declaration to him that ***from Yitzchak will your seed be called forth***. [Genesis 21:13 (a)] and to Sarah's instruction that ***the son of this handmaid will not be heir with my son, nor share inheritance with Yitzchak***. Genesis 21:10(b).

Vayiten Avraham et-kol-asher-lo l'Yitzchak

Avraham gave all that he had to Yitzchak,

V'liv'nei ha-pilagshim asher l'Avraham

but to the sons of the concubines who Avraham had,

natan Avraham matanot

Avraham gave allotments.

V'yeshaleichem me'al Yitzchak beno b'odeinu chai

and while he yet lived, he sent them away from Yitzchak his son,

kedmah el-eretz Kedem

eastward, to the land of Kedem.

[Genesis 25:5-6]

It is an act of patriarchal love to make arrangements *while yet living*, as did Avraham, for the division of one's estate. Indeed to leave this matter unattended is

not only unwise but unbiblical. Avraham did not leave open for question to whom his inheritance would go. He did not just let the survivors ‘fight it out’; nor did he leave it up to any legal authority to distribute his wealth. He gave stewardship entrustments to Yishmael and to the sons of Keturah, but he sent them away. He entrusted to Yitzchak all the rest, residue, and remainder of his estate – including Machpelah, the herds, and the flocks, the tent of Sarah, and as well as the vast repository of Divine Empowerments that he had received through his 100-year long walk of intimate friendship with the Creator of the Universe.

The Prototypical Wandering Aramean’s Final Journey

In the midst of a God-encounter long ago the Holy One promised Avraham that he would *join his fathers in peace, and be buried at a good old age. Genesis 15:15.* That promised was fulfilled. It was at the age of 175 years⁴, Torah tells us, that:

V’yigva v’yamot Avraham

And Avraham breathed his last/’gave up the spirit’⁵ and died

b’seyvah tovah zaken v’savei’a

in fullness, a white/gray-headed man, and satisfied;

v’ye’asef el-amav

and he was gathered to his people.

[Genesis 25:8]

As stated in the introductory shiur for this parsha, the euphemistic phrase ***v’ye’asef el-amav*** "and he was gathered to his people" alludes to nothing less than the immortality of the human soul. Let me explain why. Note that in Scripture the statement that a deceased person is 'gathered to his people' always occurs *before* any reference to that person’s burial. The sequence is *breathing the last* [physical death], followed by being gathered to one’s people [the departure of the soul for a realm in the spirit], then followed further by burial of the physical remains – which by then constitute nothing more than an empty shell. In Hebraic thought therefore the words "gathered to his people" are considered a reference to the departed soul being *ingathered among the souls of those who have already left this physical world*. In other words Scripture pictures burial as always something that always happens after the deceased has been ‘gathered to his people’. The implication is that the person himself [or herself] has already departed *long before* and been gathered to his or her people by the time his or her body is lowered into the grave or otherwise interred.

⁴ The years of Avraham’s life are also, like the years of Sarah’s life, set forth by Torah in stages. Torah tells us he lived *100 years*, and *70 years*, and *5 years*.

⁵ Gave up the spirit = *gava, gimel, vav, ayin*, Strong’s Hebrew word #1478, *gaw-vah*!. It means to breathe out with a deep breath. Figuratively, it refers to the separation of a man’s soul from his body.

Nevertheless, something must be done with the physical remains. They should not be left to biodegrade like the spent shell of a locust, or the shed skin of a snake. That is, of course, why Avraham went to great trouble – and unbelievable expense – to safely put away Sarah’s remains in the cave of Machpelah.

Avraham’s Burial

Though Avraham had taken a second wife he was buried alongside Sarah, the beloved wife of his youth. His bodily remains, as well, were laid to rest in the cave of Machpelah. His burial was the first – and apparently the only – thing Yishmael and Yitzchak did together. To his credit, Yishmael put aside his resentment toward Sarah [at whose word he and his mother had been banished] and his animosity toward Yitzchak [who had replaced him as Avraham’s favorite son], at least long enough to work with Yitzchak to escort their mutual father to, and settle his remains in, the earthly resting place from which he would await the resurrection. As Torah puts it:

Yitzchak and Yishmael, his sons, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Efron, the son of Tzochar the Hittite, which is before Mamre, the field which Avraham purchased of the children of Het. There was Avraham buried, with Sarah his wife.

[Genesis 25:9-10]

A Look Back at the Life of Avraham Avinu

Three weeks ago when we began the study of the life of Avraham [his name was then ‘Avram’] we said:

“How this ordinary man encountered the Most High God, was over many years humbled and transformed by Him, to the extent that he became not only the “*exalted father*” [in Hebrew, Avram] of the Hebrew peoples, but the “*Father of Many Nations*” [in Hebrew, Avraham] is one of the most critical theological lessons anyone seeking to truly know the Holy One must understand.”⁶

A little later we added:

“According to the sages of Israel ... Avraham ... was tested by the Holy One ten (10) times. Each test was an *ox-goad*, making Avram move, grow, get closer to the Divine Plan and to his Divine Destiny. Through Avram’s tremendous series of ever deepening encounters with the God of the Universe, in the midst of trials and tribulations, we learn not only *who he was*, but *Who God is*. Moreover, if we will hear, Beloved, I believe we will learn a lot about *who we were created to be*.⁷”

⁶ See the Rabbi’s son’s Introductory Shiur to Parsha ***Lech Lecha***.

⁷ See the Rabbi’s son’s Introductory Shiur to Parsha ***Lech Lecha***.

Let's look back at what we've learned as we've walked with Avraham through the last 100 years of his life. We have walked with him through 8 full-blown God-encounters, namely:

1. The *original call*, in Charan [Genesis 12:1-3];
2. The *first 'appearance'*, at Beit-El [Genesis 12:7];
3. The *instruction to walk the length and the breadth of the land*, at Beit-El [Genesis 13:14-17]
4. The *B'rit Ceremony, Act I* of II [Genesis 15]
5. The *B'rit Ceremony, Act II* of II [Genesis 17]
6. The *Divine Visitation at Hebron* [Genesis 18-19]
7. The *Instruction to let Sarah decide Yish'mael's fate*, at Hebron [Genesis 21:1-13]
8. The *instruction to present Yitzchak on Mount Moriyah* [Genesis 22:1-2].

We have eavesdropped on *multiple conversations* Avraham has had with angels. We have seen the Holy One *cut covenant with Avraham*. We have seen the Holy One *forgive many, many of Avraham's sins*. We have seen the Holy One *discipline* – and then turn around and *bless* -Avraham through an amazing array of life experiences. We have seen the Holy One *respond to Avraham's intercession*. And we have felt Avraham's pain and shared his joy on numerous occasions and in a wide variety of circumstances. Through it all, if we have ears to hear and eyes to see, Avraham has taught us important lessons about what it means to be *a friend of God*.

The Greatest Legacy a Man of Mere Flesh and Blood Could Ever Ask For

What was Avraham's legacy? What about him should be alive and active in all of us? According to the sages our dear father Avraham was challenged with *ten tests or trials* - and *because of, and on the strength of his love for the Holy One* he persevered through and overcame each one⁸. Pirkei Avot 5:3. What he did – all he did – he did *for love*. He did nothing for earthly blessings. He did nothing in hope of heavenly reward.

⁸ According to the sages: "And these are the ten trials:

1. He was thrown into the furnace, as it says, "***I am God that took you out from Ur Kasdim.***"
2. God instructed him, "***Go for yourself.***"
- 3 & 4. Two tests concerning Sarah [first in Egypt, then in Gerar].
5. With Hagar, as it says, "***Consort, now, with my maid-servant.***"
6. And with Yishmael, as it says, "***Drive out this slave-woman [with her son].***"
7. [Going to war] with the kings, as it says, "***He armed his his disciples.***"
8. Circumcision: in that God instructed him, "***Walk before Me and be perfect.***"
9. In the Covenant Between the Parts, when the Holy One prophesied that his descendants would be enslaved in four exiles.
10. With Yitzchak (Isaac): "***Take, please, your son, your only one.***"

Avraham did not seek either wealth or power. He was not distracted from the humble yet world-changing mission to which he had been called by fame, by fortune, by the honors he received from men, by the adoration he received from women, by the adulation he received from children, or by the pride of personal achievement. All he did in life he did for the love of the Ever Watchful, Ever Faithful, Unseen Shepherd-King Who befriended him. He was in it for the love of His Creator – and absolutely nothing could seduce or pry him away from that love.

Avraham therefore did not allow his heart to become haughty and self-righteous. He did not try to make people be what he wanted them to be or do what he wanted them to do. He just loved them with the Holy One's love. He just treated them as he would have wanted to be treated.

Avraham avoided silly arguments with men over things like politics, philosophy, religion, property rights, what/who is good/evil, what/who is moral/immoral, what/who is true/false, what/who is fair/unfair, what/who is right/wrong, and what is proper and improper halakah. Any questions or concerns he had about such things he addressed only to the Unseen Shepherd, in prayers of intercession. He did not waste time assessing fault or blame for things that went wrong – he stayed focused on the mission he was assigned. He knew he did not have to crusade for or defend the honor of either the Creator of the Universe or the Truth – because both could take care of themselves much better than he could. He knew if one's 'god' had to be defended by a man, it was not God at all. And he came to understand that if one's perception of truth had to be either promoted or defended by a mortal, it was not Truth. He did not preach to men about injustice and unrighteousness – he *modeled* justice and righteousness to them in real time in real ways, by walking with and following the instructions and guidance of the Holy One wherever he went. He did not claim to be perfect – nor think himself so. He made mistakes – and then, in humility he allowed the Holy One to discipline him, to return him to the right path, and to restore both his vision and his passion. And through it all his love – for his God, for his family, and for his fellow man - never grew cold. This was the outworking of Avraham's *emunah*. And *this is his legacy*.

Is it Really 'Goodbye' ... or Just 'Until we Meet Again'?

One might be tempted at this juncture to bid a sad 'goodbye' to Avraham Avinu. After all, he is dead and buried in the cave of Machpelah with Sarah. From this point in Torah our discussion will focus on Yitzchak, Ya'akov and their descendants. But let us not be so quick to say 'goodbye'. Perhaps we should instead say simply '*til we meet again.*' There is a stunning passage in the apostolic records of Yeshua's talmidim where the Rabbi is telling a parable about the realm of Eternal Life on the one hand and the realm of *she'ol*, or place of eternal death,

on the other. In that passage, the Rabbi assigns Avraham Avinu a very prominent role in, of all things, the realm of Eternal life. Look with me for a few moments at Luke 16:19-31:

*Now there was a certain rich man,
and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, living in luxury every day.
A certain beggar, named Eleazar, was laid at his gate, full of sores,
and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.
Yes, even the dogs came and licked his sores.*

*It happened that the beggar died, and that he was carried away
by the angels to Avraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried.
In She'ol, he lifted up his eyes, being in torment,
and saw Avraham far off, and Eleazar at his bosom.
He cried and said, 'Father Avraham, have mercy on me,
and send Eleazar, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water,
and cool my tongue! For I am in anguish in this flame.'
But Avraham said, '**Son, remember that you, in your lifetime,
received your good things, and Eleazar, in like manner, bad things.
But now here he is comforted, and you are in anguish.
Besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed,
that those who want to pass from here to you are not able,
and that none may cross over from there to us.'***

*He said, 'I ask you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house;
for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them,
so they won't also come into this place of torment.'*

*But Avraham said to him, '**They have Moshe and the prophets. Let them listen to them.'***

*He said, 'No, father Avraham, but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'
He said to him, '**If they don't listen to Moshe and the prophets,
neither will they be persuaded if one rises from the dead.'***

That is a rather long passage to quote in a lesson like this, I know. And theologians will scoff and say that *a parable is just a parable*, and proves nothing. Most will even tell you an 'Old Testament' figure like Avraham simply could not enter the Realm of Eternal Life, because he died before Yeshua died on the Roman execution stake and hence never accepted Yeshua as personal savior.

Believe what you want, of course. I however would rather rely upon even a parable from the mouth of the Rabbi than on all the books all the theologians in the world could ever write. So look for 'St. Peter' to meet you at the pearly gates if you desire. Me, I'll be looking to climb into Avraham's bosom - right next to Eleazar the beggar.

*May the God of Avraham be your God. May the blessing of Avraham rest upon you.
May you inherit all the Great and Precious promises.
And May you carry His seed into, and spread it through, the world*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 116:15-19

*Precious⁹ in the sight of the Holy One is the death of his holy ones¹⁰.
O Holy One, truly I am your servant. I am your servant, the son of your handmaid.
You have freed me from my chains.
I will offer to you the sacrifice¹¹ of thanksgiving,
And will call on the name of the Holy One.
I will pay my vows to the Holy One,
Yes, in the presence of all his people,
in the courts of the Holy One's house;
in the midst of you, Y'rushalayim.
Praise the Holy One!*

⁹ Precious = *yakar*, *yod*, *kuf*, *resh*, Strong's Hebrew word #3368, pronounced *yaw-kawr'*. The verb root is *yakar*, Strong's Hebrew word #3365, which Strong's defines as "to esteem, be prized, be valuable, be precious, be costly, be appraised".

¹⁰ Holy ones or saints = *Chasidin*, *chet*, *samech*, *yod*, *dalet*, *yod*, *nun sofit*, a masculine [or mixed gender] plural of *chasid*, *chet*, *samech*, *yod*, *dalet*, Strong's Hebrew word #2623, pronounced *khaw-seed'*. The verb root, of these words is, of course, *chesed*.

¹¹ Sacrifice = *zebach*, *zayin*, *beit*, *chet sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #2077, pronounced *zeh'-bakh*. This word is first found in Torah in Genesis 31:54. It is from the verb root *zabach*, meaning to put to death with a knife or sword, as an act of executing Divine judgment. The English word 'sacrifice' does not adequately [or, in today's English, at least] accurately, translate this word. We tend to consider a 'sacrifice' as something we abstain from [such as some Christian denominations give up something for Lent]. But unless there is a sharp blade, blood, and a death, there cannot be a *zebach*.