

# א ביסל תורה!

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כ"ג חשוון תשפ"ו · חיי שרה

## The Passing of the Torch

By Yochanan Cramer '28

In פרשת חיי שרה, the תורה marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. In doing so, this פרשה delves into several symbolic "passings of the torches": from בני חת to אברהם, from אברהם to יצחק, and from שרה to רבקה. Each of these transitions holds a unique meaning, reflecting different dimensions of both human and spiritual connection. Let us explore a few key examples, specifically being אדם לחבירו (between one person and another). Through moments of loss, continuity, and renewal, we witness how faith and legacy are passed from one generation to the next.

The first transfer of legacy appears at the very start of the parsha, in אברהם's negotiation with בני חת over a burial site for שרה. Seeking a resting place for his wife, אברהם approaches them with humility: "אֲנִי גֵר־תּוֹשֵׁב אֶנְכִּי עִמָּכֶם תְּנֵה לִי" "I am a resident alien among you; sell me a burial site among you, that I may bury my dead before me" (בראשית כג:ד). After a careful exchange marked by utmost respect and dignity, אברהם finalizes the purchase with עפרון of חת; a moment that represents not only a transaction, but also the establishment of אברהם's first permanent foothold in the Land of Israel: "אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף עֹבֵר" "And אברהם paid the money ... four hundred שקלים of silver at the going merchants' rate" (בראשית כג:טז).

The next "passing of the torch" takes place between אברהם and יצחק. יצחק inherits not only אברהם's spiritual legacy, but also his great material wealth. Earlier, in פרשת לך לך, the תורה highlights אברהם's prosperity: "וְאַבְרָם כְּבֵד מְאֹד בְּמִקְנֵהוּ" "and אברהם was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold" (בראשית יג:ב). In our פרשה, as אברהם nears the end of

his life, he ensures that both his possessions and his purpose will continue through יצחק. "וְאֵת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לִי לְיִצְחָק" "and אברהם gave all that he had to יצחק" (בראשית כה:ה).

Finally, we reach a more subtle - yet deeply moving - spiritual transition from שרה to רבקה. When אליעזר brings רבקה to יצחק, the תורה describes a moment of profound continuity between generations of matriarchs, as רבקה steps into the spiritual role once held by שרה: "וַיְבִיאָהּ יִצְחָק הָאֵלֶּלֶה" שרה: "וַיֵּקַח אֶת-רִבְקָה וַתְּהִי-לִי לְאִשָּׁה וַיֵּאָהֲבָהּ וַיִּנָּחֶם יִצְחָק אַחֲרֵי שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיֵּקַח אֶת-רִבְקָה וַתְּהִי-לִי לְאִשָּׁה וַיֵּאָהֲבָהּ וַיִּנָּחֶם יִצְחָק אַחֲרֵי שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ" "And יצחק then brought her into the tent of his mother שרה, and he took רבקה as his wife. יצחק loved her and found comfort after his mother's death (בראשית כה:י). רש"י explains that when רבקה entered שרה's tent, the miracles that had once filled it returned: the שבט candle that stayed lit from week to week, the divine blessing in her dough, and the protective cloud that hovered above her tent. In essence, רבקה became שרה's continuation - not merely replacing her, but reviving her spiritual light. תרגום deepens this even further, emphasizing not only the physical light returned, but also the spiritual "light" of שרה's righteousness that רבקה embodied returned. יצחק's comfort was born out of recognition that רבקה's deeds reflected those of his mother whom he was mourning over, providing him everlasting comfort.

Each of these moments in פרשת חיי שרה reflects a different kind of inheritance - whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. From אברהם's integrity with בני חת, to his faithful transfer of blessing to יצחק, to the renewal of שרה's light through רבקה, the פרשה captures the essence of legacy in the תורה: that true succession is not merely about property or lineage, but about values, faith, and the enduring spirit of חסד that passes from one generation to the next.

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## רבקה's Search for אליעזר

By Akiva Huff '26

רבקה features one of the most consequential episodes in the history of ישראל: אליעזר's search for יצחק's wife. אליעזר entrusts his servant אברהם with finding a wife for אברהם's son יצחק. This task is incredibly important because יצחק's wife will be the mother of all of ישראל, and, therefore, אליעזר is expected to be incredibly careful and selective when choosing יצחק's future wife. אליעזר journeys to חרן with riches and arrives one evening at a well with 10 thirsty camels. אליעזר conjures a plan for how he will pick יצחק's wife: he will ask young women by the well for water for himself, and whoever says yes and offers water for אליעזר's ten camels as well, Hashem has sent as the right woman for יצחק. Granted, going above and beyond to perform חסד is a positive attribute that is befitting of the mother of ישראל, but can this one quality alone be qualification enough for such a significant role? חז"ל criticize אליעזר for his careless use of language here. The Gemara on תענית ד. points out that אליעזר's request is improper because the woman who fulfills אליעזר's request could be blind or incapacitated in a different way. אליעזר's mission is to find a woman whose traits will be inherited by all of יצחק's descendants, so he should be extremely selective in his choice. Yet, אליעזר binds himself in his own request such that he is required to take whomever offers to feed his camels regardless of their other traits. This Gemara understands אליעזר's plea to Hashem as an oath that אליעזר is forbidden to violate after taking it upon himself.

The Gemara on תענית ד. compares אליעזר's improper oath to two other instances in תנ"ך. In ספר שמואל, שאול says that he will give his daughter to anyone who kills גלית - the פלישתי giant. Here too, שאול is careless in his language as it could be a slave or a ממזר who will kill גלית, and then שאול would be obligated to give his daughter to someone who is not only unbefitting of marrying a princess, but who could

be forbidden to marry. The third example is יפתח's oath in ספר שופטים; יפתח makes an oath that if G-d allows him to defeat עמון in war, he will bring the first thing that comes out of his house as a burnt-offering to G-d. The first thing that comes out of יפתח's house could be an animal, but could also be a human being, making this another reckless oath.

אליעזר, שאול המלך, and יפתח all carelessly use imprecise language, which has the potential to lead to detrimental consequences, yet the three cases play out very differently. אליעזר and שאול המלך are both blessed with positive responses to their reckless requests. The first woman who fulfills אליעזר's condition is רבקה who is a beautiful צדקה and the perfect wife for יצחק and mother for ישראל. Similarly, the man who kills גלית is דוד - the future king of Israel who is more than befitting of marrying שאול's daughter. On the other hand, יפתח's oath resolves tragically; עמון defeats יפתח, and then יפתח's daughter is the first thing to come out of his house, so he sacrifices his own daughter in accordance with his oath.

אליעזר's improper use of language at such a pivotal point in the history of ישראל teaches us to be careful and precise with every word that we say because holes in our language can have unintended tragic consequences. 'ברוך ה' that despite אליעזר's error, he was still guided towards אמונו, רבקה, but not everyone is זוכה this as the heartbreaking story of יפתח demonstrates for us.

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