

Parshas Lech Lecha

“Now... Not Now”

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[“There's No Place in the World... for Israel”]

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The Torah tells us that Sarah Imeinu was an *akarrah* (barren woman).¹

And Sarah, the wife of Avram, had not given him a child. And Sarah said to Avram, “Behold, Hashem has held me back from having a child. Now, take my maid servant. Perhaps I will be built through her.”²

Sarah sought a child, born through her maid servant, to fill the void of childlessness.³ But she had a deeper intent as well. Perhaps the merit of sharing her husband with another woman would grant the wish of her heart. The unselfish act of providing a child for her husband would bring a child of her very own.⁴

Questions

Why is Sarah identified as “The wife of Avram”? It was well known that she was Avram’s wife. Why would the Torah need to mention it?

Sarah does not describe herself as one who is not capable of bearing children (an *akara*). She simply states that Hashem has temporarily held back children from her. This is in direct contradiction of how the Torah describes her. Why would Sarah say this?

Sarah tells Avram to take her maid servant “Now”. What is Sarah’s urgency?⁵

Analysis

Shlomo Hamelech says, “There is a time and period for all our desires beneath the heavens.”⁶

The medrash expounds on this passage. There is a time for everything. Avraham Avenu was introduced to the commandment of *bris milah* at the age of 99. Why wasn’t Avraham commanded in the mitzva before that time?

When Avraham was 70 years old, Hashem forged a covenant with him (the *bris bein habesarim*). Would it not have been appropriate for him to undergo the *bris milah* at that time? Or perhaps at the age of 85, prior to the birth of his elder son, Yishmael?

The medrash says, indeed, it would have been appropriate at the age of 70 or 85. But the *bris milah* had to wait. It waited until Avraham was 99 years old. At the age of 100, his child, Yitzchak, would then be born from total purity.⁷

¹ Bereishis 11:30

² Bereishis 16:1-2

³ Tur Ha’aruch

⁴ Rashi

⁵ Toras Moshe - Rav Moshe Alshich

⁶ Koheles 3:1

⁷ Bereishis Rabbah 46:2, Eitz Yosef

Shlomo Hamelech says, "There is no tzaddik in the world that does only good and does not sin."⁸ Although Avraham was certainly a tzaddik, he still had to battle with his passions. And the son of Avrohom who was to become "Yitzchak Avenu" cannot be born from one who stills struggles with physical passion. At the age of 99, Avraham aged. His passion ceased its rage. At this stage, he was ready to bring about the conception of Yitzchak. And It is finally time for his *bris milah*.

The purpose of Avraham and Sarah in this world was to produce the child Yitzchak. Yishmael, the elder son, was not Avraham's purpose. Thus, there was no need for Avraham to undergo a *bris milah* prior to the birth of Yishmael.

Answers

Sarah was born an *akarrah*. Under the normal laws of nature, she was incapable of bearing a child. But by the *bris bein habesarim* (covenant made with Avraham at age 70) that all changed. Hashem promised Avraham that he would father a child. As a direct result of this covenant, the natural laws held no sway over him and Sarah. Following the *bris bein habesarim* Sarah was miraculously able to transcend her barren nature. She was now capable of producing a child.

But although Sarah was now capable of producing a child, she still had no child. That is why Sarah said, "Hashem held back my child," meaning, "It's not the time yet for me to have a child yet."

And Sarah understood the reason for this.

Avraham was "only" 70 years old. And now is not the time. Any child born from Avraham at this time would be born from one who still struggles with his physical desire.

Such a child is not fit to be born from the union of Sarah and Avraham. Thus, Yitzchak was not born to the uncircumcised Avraham, who still struggled with the passions of the physical world. On the other hand, It was entirely fitting that passion-filled Yishmael should be born at that time to Avraham and the Egyptian maid servant Hagar.

Now is not the time for Yitzchak to be born. Now is the time for Yishmael to be born.

At the age of 99, when Avraham underwent the *bris milah*, he attained perfection and broke free of the attractions of the physical world, Hashem no longer held back.

And the child Yitzchak was born from Avraham and his true wife, Sarah. For Sarah, not Hagar, is the wife of Avraham.⁹

That is why the Torah highlights the fact that Sarah was Avraham's wife. She wasn't an ordinary wife. Sarah was his wife in purity. Sarah was the mother of Yitzchak Avenu.

And "**Now**" is the not the time for Yitzchak to be born. "**Now**" is Yishmael's time.

⁸ Koheles 7:20

⁹ Toras Moshe - Rav Moshe Alshich