

November 15, 2014

CHAYEI SARAH

Although this week's *parashah* is entitled "*Chayei Sarah*" - The Life of Sarah - it could very well have been titled "The Death of Sarah." There is very little in it about Sarah's life. Verse 2 of the *parashah* says that she lived to be 127 and died in Hebron. After Sarah's death, Abraham negotiated with Ephron the Hittite in an effort to buy a burial site for Sarah. Ephron keeps saying, "So take the cave already," And Abraham keeps saying, "So name me a price." Finally Ephron throws out a price of 400 shekels - pocket change for Abraham - and the deal is done. Following this transaction, the pages speak mostly about the journey of Abraham's servant in his quest to find a suitable bride for Isaac.

The next chapter of this saga begins by stating that "Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed him in every way." Well now, just hold on cow-girl. So far we have read that Abraham had to leave his comfy home in Haran, he felt the need to lie to Pharaoh about his wife, he had to send his first born son, Ishmael, away into the desert, save his nephew, Lot, from four kings, argue with HaShem about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and endure the anguish of being ordered to kill his son, Isaac. I always wondered what it meant to be blessed in every way.

This is what I think it means. Scripture says that Abraham already had everything and lacked nothing. He had wealth, possessions, honor, longevity, and children. One stream of thought is that in his old age, all Abraham really needed was to see that his son Isaac was well married. Maybe some grand-children would be nice. Another thought is that life does not always come in sweetness and light. There is a mixture of joy and sorrow. There is the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. Focusing on just the highlights of the good life is not realistic. You have to take the bad along with the good. That is why we have all been told that when life hands us lemons, we are supposed to make lemonade. Looking at it in this way, turning something bad into something good, shifts our focus away from our hardships and toward our inner response to whatever life throws at us. When we love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our strength, we will be able to embrace life to the fullest - the good, the bad, and the ugly. If we can do this and make the most of it, it will be with us as it was with Abraham. We will make lemonade and be blessed in every way.

In the haftarah selection, King David was handed a whole basket of lemons when his son, Adonijah, decided to usurp the throne of Israel and prevent the rightful heir, Solomon, from fulfilling his destiny as king. David did what he had to do to correct the situation - he made lemonade. In the B'rit Chadashah reading, Judas went looking for lemons. He betrayed Yeshua, but could not make lemonade . . . so he hanged himself. Don't be like Judas. Be like Abraham and David. Turn lemons into lemonade.

Hebrew Genesis 24:35-36

English Genesis 24:34-38

Haftarah 1 Kings 1:11-13

B'rit Chadashah Matthew 27:1-5