

Parasha Meditation Chayei Sarah

Bereishit 23:1-25:18

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

With Hashem in the Field

Introduction:

The Torah Source for Jewish Meditation

This week's *parasha* is about finding a wife for Yitzchak and about Yitzchak's prayer for his soul-mate. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan discovered the first source for Jewish meditation in this week's *parasha*, where it states that "Yitzchak went out to speak (*lasuach*) in the field (*ba-sadeh*)."¹

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לְפָנֹת עָרֶב וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה גַמְלִים בָּאִים: (ספר בראשית פרק כד פסוק סג)

"Yitzchak went out to meditate in the field towards the evening, and he lifted his eyes and saw, behold camels were coming."²

The Solitude of the Field

Experiencing the solitude of the field and connecting with nature while watching the sheep is conducive to contemplation and communion with G-d. Our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov, were shepherds because this vocation offered perfect opportunity for meditative connection with Hashem. According to Rashi, when "Yitzchak went out *lasuach* in the field," he was praying to Hashem. We learn this from the way the word *lasuach* is used in *Tehillim*:³ "A Prayer of the afflicted...when he fainted, and poured out his prayer (*sicho*) before Hashem."⁴

Praying in the Field

Rashbam finds a parallel to the word *lasuach* in the word scrub (*siach*) mentioned in the creation story.⁵ He explains that Yitzchak went out in the field to inspect his crop.⁶ Chizkuni synthesizes these two views, explaining, that Yitzchak went out of the Garden of Eden where he had been living for the last three years since his *Akeida* (near-sacrifice). He went out in order to (*lasuach*) plant trees, and to inspect his work, but also in order to (*lasuach*) converse/pray.⁷

Prayer for Spiritual Crop with His Life Partner

Imagine Yitzchak walking between his plants (*sichim*) enjoying the beauty of Hashem's blessings manifested in the majestic trees, as the sun is beginning to set behind the hills. While he inspects his plantings, he pours out his heart to Hashem in prayer, the prayer for his crop, shifts to the

¹ Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan *Meditation and the Bible*, Maine, Samuel Weiser Inc, p.101.

² *Bereishit*, Chapter 24, Verse 63.

³ Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak, France, (1040-1105), *Bereishit* 24:63.

⁴ *Tehillim* 102:1.

⁵ "No shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up..." (*Bereishit* 2:5).

⁶ Rashbam, Rabbi Shemuel ben Meir, (Rashi's grandson) France, (1083-1174), *Bereishit* 24:63.

⁷ Based on Chizkuni, Rabbi Chezkunyah ben Manoach, France, (thirteen century), *Bereishit* 24:63.



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prayer for his spiritual crop – the offspring that he yearns for, shifting to the prayer from the deepest part of his soul, the prayer for his life-partner in serving Hashem and bringing forth children – the prayer for a wife.⁸ Immediately, as he completes his prayer – the *mincha* (afternoon) prayer that he established for all future generations,⁹ at this pivotal moment, “he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, there were camels coming,”¹⁰ bringing his soul-mate Rivka towards him.

The Power of the Mincha (Afternoon) Prayer

Yitzchak’s afternoon prayer for his soul-mate was immediately answered. From here we learn that especially the mincha (afternoon) prayer is answered.¹¹ Yitzchak’s prayer close to the sunset also hints that “before the sun of Sara set, the sun of Rivkah shines.”¹² “Therefore, Scripture informs us that Rivkah came close to sunset... so that these righteous women, who are like the orbit of the sun, should never lack from the world; and in order that there should never lack a lit candle in the tent, an overhanging cloud and the blessing in the dough.”¹³

***Hitbodedut* before Rabbi Nachman**

One of the earlier supports for Biblical *hitbodedut* (speaking with Hashem in the field), advocated so highly by Rabbi Nachman, is the Sforino who explains that when “Yitzchak went out *lasuach*” – he turned away from the main road, in order to pour out his prayer before Hashem in the quiet field where he wouldn’t be interrupted by other people.¹⁴

Meditation:

Sit comfortably in your chair, close your eyes and take deep breaths several times. Breathe deeply and feel completely relaxed in all of the limbs of the body.

1. After a minute or two of relaxing breathing imagine that you are alone in the middle of a lush field. There are no other people, only trees, shrubs, herbs and grass. Enjoy looking at the lushness of the leaves, the textures of the branches, feel the crispy moist earth under your feet.
2. Inhale the fresh smells of the leaves and grasses after the rain. Hear the rustling of the trees in the wind, and the song of the birds in their branches. Taste the tastes of clean fresh air as you inhale both from your nose and your mouth.
3. Now imagine how all the beauty of nature, that you behold, inspires you to pour out your soul in the deepest prayer. As you pray, imagine how every blade of grass, every tree-branch, every bird of the field joins your prayer, imagine how the entire field becomes energized, sanctified and synchronized with your breath of prayer.

⁸ This section is based on Rabbeinu Bachaya, Rabbi Bachaya ben Asher, Spain, (1250-1340) *Bereishit* 24:63.

⁹ *Babylonian Talmud, Berachot* 26b.

¹⁰ The continuation of our original verse in *Bereishit* 24:63.

¹¹ *Kli Yakar*, Rabbi Ephraim Shelomo ben Aharon of Luntshits, Poland, (1550-1619), *Bereishit* 24:63.

¹² *Bereishit Rabah* 58:2.

¹³ *Kli Yakar, Bereishit* 24:63.

¹⁴ Rabbi Ovadiah ben Ya’acov, Italy, (1470-1550), *Bereishit* 24:63.



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4. Visualize the letters that spell out the word שָׂדֶה (field) First the fiery *sin* ש with its three flames denoting *shinui* – change – as you enter the new energy field of prayer.
5. Moving through the door of the letter *dalet* ד the – the poor – “that has nothing [*d’leit*] of her own.” Feel your own lowliness how you possess nothing of your own – how you are an empty vessel ready to receive Hashem’s blessings.
6. As you move to visualizing the last letter of the word שָׂדֶה the letter ה receive your gift from Hashem and manifest it into all the three garments of your soul – thought, speech and action.
7. Visualize the upper horizontal line of the ה while imagining Hashem purifying and filling your faculty of thought with His light.
8. Then visualize the right vertical line of the ה while imagine that your faculty of speech receives Divine illumination.
9. Finally as you visualize the unattached foot of the ה, imagine that all your actions become tuned up and synchronized with the Divine will.
10. Now visualize the entire word שָׂדֶה with the definite article the prefix ה – *heh*, as in הַשָּׂדֶה – *hasadeh*.

וְכָל שֵׂיטַת הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יִהְיֶה בְּאֶרֶץ וְכָל עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יִצְמָח: (בראשית פרק ב פסוק ה)

Every plant in the field was not yet in the earth, and every herb of the field had not yet sprouted forth.¹⁵
11. הַשָּׂדֶה Includes the *sin* ש and the *dalet* ד of Hashem’s name *Shadai* ש-ד-י, the two *hehs* ה add up to the final letter *yud* י (the numerical value of each *heh* is five adding up to the ten of the *yud*). Breath in as you visualize *Sha* ש. Breath out as you visualize *dai* די Repeat this breathing ten times.
12. The name *Shadai* refers to G-d’s power to make His Divinity conscious and accessible to every one of His creatures, regardless of their spiritual state. Imagine G-d’s power entering into every part of your life and being.
13. Imagine yourself at work; allow Hashem’s power to enter the field of your work.
14. Imagine yourself in relationship to those close to you; allow Hashem’s power to enter the field of your relationships.
15. Imagine yourself deeply in thought; allow Hashem’s power to enter the field of your contemplation.

¹⁵ Bereishit 2:5.

Notes:

The Talmud explains how *shacharit* (morning prayer), *mincha* (afternoon prayer) and *ma'ariv* (evening prayer) originates from the *avot* (forefathers) – Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'acov.¹⁶ *Shacharit* was established by Avraham, when he arose in the morning to view the destruction that Hashem had brought upon Sodom. "Avraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood (*amad*) before Hashem."¹⁷ We learn that the word "*amad*" refers to *tefilah*, because the words "*va'yamod*" and "*v'yipalel*" (standing and praying) are juxtaposed in another Torah verse.¹⁸ *Mincha* originated with Yitzchak, when he went out "*la'suach ba'sadeh* towards the evening."¹⁹ *Ma'ariv* was instituted by Ya'acov, when he was fleeing from Esav. "*Va'yifga ba'makom*" – He lighted upon the place..."²⁰ – "*pegiah*" refers to *tefilah*.²¹

Rabbi Elly Krinsky explains that the three references to prayer by the *avot* correspond to three different motivations for prayer. Yitzchak's prayer in the field corresponds to *tefilah* during ordinary day-to-day life – while working in the field (or in the office). The word *sicha* supports that Yitzchak's *tefilah* represents day-to-day prayer as this word is often translated to mean everyday conversation.²² Yitzchak, thus, represents the ability to be intensely focused on Hashem in the midst of the daily humdrum of life.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslau explains that the letter *bet* as a prefix, which usually means "in," can also mean "with." If so, we can understand that when Yitzchak went out to pray *ba-sadeh*, he was praying with the field! In other words, his prayer was so intense that nature itself felt compelled to join in.²³

¹⁶ *Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 26b.*

¹⁷ *Bereishit 19:27.*

¹⁸ *Tehillim 106:30.*

¹⁹ *Bereishit 24:63.*

²⁰ *Bereishit 28:11.*

²¹ *Midrash Agadah, Bereishit 46.*

²² See for example *Tehillim 119:97.*

²³ *Likutei Moharan, Part 2, Sign 1.*



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About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion.

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact info@berotbatayin.org or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at director@berotbatayin.org

or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

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