

Sarah Imenu: Everything is NOT as it Seems

<u>Breishit 11:29-31</u>	
<p>Abram and Nahor took to themselves wives, the name of Abram's wife being Sarai and that of Nahor's wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.</p> <p>Now Sarai was barren, she had no child.</p> <p>Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan; but when they had come as far as Haran, they settled there.</p>	<p>וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם וְנָחוֹר לָהֶם נָשִׁים שֵׁם אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם שָׂרָי וְשֵׁם אִשְׁת־נָחוֹר מִלְכָּה בַת־הָרָן אֲבִי־מִלְכָּה וְאֲבִי יִסְכָּה: וַתְּהִי שָׂרַי עֲקָרָה אֵין לָהּ יָלֵד: וַיִּקַּח תְּרָח אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בֶּן־הָרָן בֶּן־בְּנוֹ וְאֶת־ שָׂרַי כַּלְתּוֹ אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ וַיֵּצְאוּ אֹתָם מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים לָלֶכֶת אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־חָרָן וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם:</p>

<u>Masechet Megillah 14a</u>	
<p>Sarah, as it is written: "Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah" (Genesis 11:29). And Rabbi Yitzhak said: Iscah is in fact Sarah. And why was she called Iscah? For she saw [sakhta] by means of divine inspiration, as it is stated: "In all that Sarah has said to you, hearken to her voice" (Genesis 21:12). Alternatively, Sarah was also called Iscah, for all gazed [sokhin] upon her beauty.</p>	<p>וְאָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק יִסְכָּה זוֹ שָׂרָה. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׂמָהּ יִסְכָּה? שֶׁסָּכְתָה בְּרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר כָּל אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלַיךְ שָׂרָה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ. דְּבַר אַחֵר, יִסְכָּה שֶׁהִכָּל סוֹכִין בְּיוֹפֶיהָ.</p>

→ How are we introduced to Sarah in the pesukim? What is the significance of this introduction?

<u>Breishit 12:5</u>	
<p>Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the wealth that they had amassed, and the persons that they had acquired in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in the land of Canaan...</p>	<p>וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בֶּן־אָחִיו וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ וְאֶת־הַנַּפְשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ לָלֶכֶת אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן:</p>

<u>Rashi ibid.</u>	
<p>[The souls] that they had gotten (literally, made) in haran — The souls which he had brought beneath the sheltering wings of the Shechinah. Abraham converted the men and Sarah converted the women and Scripture accounts it unto them as if they had made them (Genesis Rabbah 39:14).</p>	<p>אשר עשו בחרן. שֶׁהִכְנִיסוּ תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׂכִינָה; אַבְרָהָם מְגִיר אֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים וְשָׂרָה מְגִירַת הַנָּשִׁים, וּמַעֲלָה עֲלֵיהֶם הַכְּתוּב כָּאֵלוּ עָשָׂאוּם; וּפְשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מְקַרָּא עַבְדִּים וּשְׂפָחוֹת שֶׁקָּנוּ לָהֶם, כְּמוֹ "עָשָׂה אֶת כָּל הַכְּבֹד הַזֶּה"</p>

<p>However, the real sense of the text is that it refers to the men-servants and to the maidservants whom they had acquired for themselves. The word “עשה” is used here as (in Genesis 31:1), “he has acquired (עשה) all this wealth”, and (Numbers 24:8), “And Israel acquires (עושה) wealth” – an expression for acquiring and amassing.</p>	<p>(שם ל"א), "וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עָשָׂה חַיִּיל" (במדבר כד יח), לְשׁוֹן קוֹנֵה וְכוּנֵס:</p>
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→ What unique perspectives did Sarah add to this “conversion” partnership? In particular, can you think of times where Sarah and Avraham disagreed?

<p><u>Breishit 16:1-6</u></p>	
<p>Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. She had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, “Look, the LORD has kept me from bearing. Consort with my maid; perhaps I shall have a son through her.” And Abram heeded Sarai’s request. So Sarai, Abram’s wife, took her maid, Hagar the Egyptian—after Abram had dwelt in the land of Canaan ten years—and gave her to her husband Abram as concubine. He cohabited with Hagar and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was lowered in her esteem. And Sarai said to Abram, “The wrong done me is your fault! I myself put my maid in your bosom; now that she sees that she is pregnant, I am lowered in her esteem. The LORD decide between you and me!” Abram said to Sarai, “Your maid is in your hands. Deal with her as you think right.” Then Sarai treated her harshly, and she ran away from her.</p>	<p>וְשָׂרַי אֵשֶׁת אַבְרָם לֹא יָלְדָה לוֹ וְלֵהּ שִׁפְחָה מִצְרַיִת וְשִׁמְהָ הַגֵּרָ: וְתֹאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל-אַבְרָם הִנֵּה-נָא עֲצָרְנִי ה' מִלְּדוֹת בֶּאֱנָא אֶל-שִׁפְחָתִי אוּלַי אֲבִנָּה מִמֶּנָּה וְיִשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרַי: וַתִּקַּח שָׂרַי אֵשֶׁת-אַבְרָם אֶת-הַגֵּר הַמִּצְרַיִת שִׁפְחָתָהּ מִקֶּץ עֶשְׂרֵי שָׁנִים לְשֵׁבֶת אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַתִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָם אִישָׁה לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה: וַיְבֵא אֶל-הַגֵּר וַתְּהַר וַתֵּלֶד כִּי הָרְתָה וַתִּקַּל גְּבֻרָתָהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ: וְתֹאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל-אַבְרָם חֲמָסִי עָלֶיךָ אֲנֹכִי נָתַתִּי שִׁפְחָתִי בְּחִיקְךָ וַתֵּלֶד כִּי הָרְתָה וְאֶקַּל בְּעֵינֶיהָ יִשְׁפֹּט ה' בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיהָ: וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל-שָׂרַי הִנֵּה שִׁפְחָתְךָ בְּיָדְךָ עֲשִׂי-לָהּ הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיהָ וַתַּעַנֶּה שָׂרַי וַתִּבְרַח מִפְּנֵיהָ:</p>

→ What could have led to Sarah being degraded in the eyes of Hagar? Why was this so problematic that Sarah needed to react in this way?

<p><u>Rashi ibid.</u></p>	
<p>Her mistress was slighted in her eyes – She said, “As regards this woman Sarai, her conduct in private can certainly not be like that in public: she pretends to be a righteous woman, but she cannot really be righteous since all these years she has not been privileged to have children, whilst I have had that blessing from the first union” (Genesis Rabbah 45:4).</p>	<p>וַתִּקַּל גְּבֻרָתָהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ. אָמְרָה שָׂרַי זוֹ אֵין סִתְרָה כְּגֻלְיָהּ-מְרֵאָה עֲצָמָה כְּאֵלוֹ הִיא צְדָקוֹת וְאִינָה צְדָקוֹת, שְׁלֹא זָכְרָתָה לְהַרְיוֹן כָּל הַשָּׁנִים הַלָּלוּ, וְאִנִּי נִתְעַבְרָתִי מִבִּיָּאָה רֵאשׁוּנָה (בראשית רבה):</p>

<u>Breishit 21:5-6</u>	
Now Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter; everyone who hears will laugh with me.”	וַאֲבִרְהֵם בֶּן־מֵאֵת שָׁנָה בְּהוֹלֵד לוֹ אֵת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ: וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צִחֻק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹקִים כָּל־הַשְּׁמַע יִצְחָק־לִי:

→ What are the potential meanings of the name “Yitzchak”, and how does that correlate with Sarah’s reaction?

<u>B’chor Shor ibid.</u> Author: Yosef Bekhor Shor Composed: Middle-Age France, c.1145 - c.1195 CE An independent and original commentary on the Torah focused on the simple understanding (peshat) by one of the Tosafist masters. This work would become influential among subsequent Ashkenazi commentators, such as Chizukuni.	
God has brought me laughter - Because of this, he was called Yitzchak, so that others will rejoice/laugh upon seeing him saying, “Did you see that Sarah gave birth to a child at 90 years of age?!” [Self-translated]	צחוק עשה לי אלקים. כלו' הכי קרא שמו יצחק, שיצחקו עלי בני אדם לאמר "ראיתם שרה ילדה לצ' שנים"!?]

<u>Breishit 21:9-12</u>	
Sarah saw the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham playing. She said to Abraham, “Cast out that slave-woman and her son, for the son of that slave shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.” The matter distressed Abraham greatly, for it concerned a son of his. But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed over the boy or your slave; whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be continued for you.”	וַתִּרְא שָׂרָה אֶת־בֶּן־הַגֵּר הַמִּצְרִית אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה לְאַבְרָהָם מִצִּחֻק: וַתֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָהָם גֵּרְשׁ הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־בְּנָהּ כִּי לֹא יִירָשׁ בֶּן־הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת עִם־בְּנֵי עַם־יִצְחָק: וַיַּרַע הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּעֵינֵי אַבְרָהָם עַל אֹדֶת בְּנוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אַל־יַרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ עַל־הַנְּעָר וְעַל־אֲמָתְךָ כֹּל־אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלֶיךָ שָׂרָה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ כִּי בְיִצְחָק יִקְרָא לָהּ זָרַע:

→ Contrast the way in which the shorash צחק is used by Yishmael as it used with Sarah above.

<u>Breishit Rabbah 53</u>	
And I [Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai] say that this is to be interpreted to the praise [of Ishmael that he was playing]. This expression of making sport is only used as 'inheritance'. In the moment that Itzchak our father was born all were happy. Ishmael said to them: are you dumb? I am the first-born, I am going to receive double portion [of the inheritance], that from the answer of Sarah our	וְאוֹמֵר אֲנִי בּוֹ דָּבָר [מִצְחָק] לְשִׁבַח אֵין לְשׁוֹן הַזֶּה שֶׁל צִחֻק אֵלֹא לְשׁוֹן יִרְשָׁה, שֶׁבְּשָׂעָה שֶׁנּוֹלַד אָבִינוּ יִצְחָק הָיָה הַכֹּל שְׂמֵחִים, אָמַר לָהֶם יִשְׁמַעֵאל שׁוֹטִים אַתֶּם, אֲנִי בָּכוֹר וְאֲנִי נוֹטֵל פִּי שְׁנַיִם, שְׂמֵתְשׁוּבַת אֲמִנוּ שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם (בְּרֵאשִׁית כֹּא, י): 'כִּי לֹא יִירָשׁ בֶּן הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת עִם בְּנֵי אֶפְלוּ,

<p>mother to Avraham 'because the son of this maidservant will not inherit with my son, with Itzchak' you learn that he would not inherit 'with my son' - even if he wasn't Itzchak - and 'with Itzchak' - even if he wasn't my son. All the more so [this is true] 'with my son, with Itzchak'.</p>	<p>שְׂאִינוּ יִצְחָק, וְעַם יִצְחָק אֶף עַל פִּי שְׂאִינוּ בְּנֵי, קֵל וְחֹמֶר עִם בְּנֵי עַם יִצְחָק.</p>
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<p><u>Breishit 17:15-16</u></p>	
<p>And God said to Abraham, “As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her Sarai, but her name shall be Sarah. I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she shall give rise to nations; rulers of peoples shall issue from her.”</p>	<p>וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶל-אַבְרָהָם שְׂרַי אִשְׁתְּךָ לֹא-תִקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמָהּ שְׂרַי כִּי שָׂרָה שְׁמָהּ: וַיְבָרַכְתִּי אֹתָהּ וְגַם נָתַתִּי מִמֶּנָּה לָךְ בֶּן וַיְבָרַכְתִּיהָ וְהָיְתָה לְגוֹיִם מְלֹכֵי עַמִּים מִמֶּנָּה יְהוּ:</p>

<p><u>Masechet Sanhedrin 107a</u></p>	
<p>David requested: “And I shall be clear from great transgression” (Psalms 19:14), meaning that my transgression with Bathsheba and Uriah will not be written in the Bible. God said to him: That is impossible. And just as the letter <i>yod</i> that I removed from the name of Sarai, wife of Abraham, when I changed her name to Sarah, was standing and screaming several years over its omission from the Bible until Joshua came and I added the <i>yod</i> to his name, as it is stated: “And Moses called Hosea, son of Nun, Joshua [<i>Yehoshua</i>]” (Numbers 13:16); the entire portion of your transgression, which is fit to be included in the Bible, all the more so it cannot be omitted.</p>	<p>"ונקיתי מפשע רב" - שלא יכתב סרחוני. אמר לו אי אפשר! ומה יו"ד ("י") שנטלתי משרי עומד וצווח כמה שנים עד שבא יהושע והוספתי לו שנאמר (במדבר יג, טז) ויקרא משה להושע בן נון יהושע, כל הפרשה כולה על אחת כמה וכמה.</p>

<p><u>Bamidbar 13:32; 14:6-9 (Parshat HaMeraglim)</u></p>	
<p>Thus they spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, “The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are men of great size; ... And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, of those who had scouted the land, rent their clothes and exhorted the whole Israelite community: “The land that we traversed and scouted is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD is pleased with us, He will bring us into</p>	<p>וַיִּצְיֵאוּ דַבַּת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֹתָהּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ אָרֶץ אֹכֶלֶת יוֹשְׁבֵיהָ הִוא וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אַנְשֵׁי מְדוּתִים: ... וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נֹון וְכָלֵב בֶּן-יִפְנֶה מִן-הַתְּרִים אֶת-הָאָרֶץ קִרְעוּ בְּגָדֵיהֶם: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-כָּל-עַדְת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד מְאֹד: אִם-חֲפֹץ בְּנֹו ה' וְהֵבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְנִתְּנָה לָנוּ אָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-הִוא זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ:</p>

<p>that land, a land that flows with milk and honey, and give it to us; only you must not rebel against the LORD. Have no fear then of the people of the country, for they are our prey their protection has departed from them, but the LORD is with us. Have no fear of them!"</p>	<p>אָךְ בְּהִ' אֶל־תִּמְרְדוּ וְאַתֶּם אֶל־תִּירְאוּ אֶת־עַם הָאָרֶץ כִּי לְחַמְנוּ הֵם סָר צִלָּם מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וְהִ' אֲתָנוּ אֶל־תִּירָאֵם:</p>
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→ What is the connection between Sarah and Yehoshua such that a letter from Sarah transfers to Yehoshua?

<p><u>Mishlei 31:25 ("Eishet Chayil")</u></p>	
<p>She is clothed with strength and splendor; She looks to the future cheerfully.</p>	<p>עַז־וְהִדְרָ לְבוּשָׁה לְתַשְׁחֵק לַיּוֹם אַחֲרוֹן:</p>

<p><u>Tehillim 126:2 "Shir Hamaalot"</u></p>	
<p>Then will our mouths be filled with laughter, and our tongue with joyous song. Then will they say among the nations: 'The Lord has done great things for them.'</p>	<p>אֲזַ יִמְלֵא שִׁחוֹק פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה, אֲזַ יִאֲמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם הַגְּדִיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם־אֱלֹהִים:</p>

→ What is the relationship between laughter and the end of days?