YOVEL PUBLICATIONS

WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

חַיֵּי שָׂרָה

CHAYEI SARAH

The Life of Sarah



"I will also draw for your camels,
until they have finished drinking."

Genesis 24:19

Torah: Genesis 23:1–25:18 ♦ Haftarah: 1 Kings 1:1–31

The Life, the Bride and the Promise.

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THE WEEKLY TORAH & PROPHETS

Torah: Genesis 23:1–25:18

Haftarah: 1 Kings 1:1–31

SCRIPTURE SOURCE

Scripture quotations are based on the World Messianic Bible British Edition (WMBB), a public-domain translation. Where the WMBB renders the Hebrew Divine Name as LORD or GOD, Yovel Publications uses YHVH in accordance with its house style. Such adaptations are editorial choices of Yovel Publications and are not part of the original WMBB text.

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WHY READ THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION?

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For thousands of years, the people of God have gathered around the Scriptures to hear the words of Moses and the Prophets. The first followers of Yeshua did not regard these Scriptures as something belonging to a discarded religion or a bygone age. They were the Scriptures from which the Good News of Messiah was proclaimed.

The book of Acts gives us a wonderful glimpse of this practice. When Paul and his companions entered the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia on the Sabbath, we are told:

> *"After the reading of the Torah and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, 'Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, speak.'"*
>
> Acts 13:15

Paul then stood and proclaimed Yeshua from the story of Israel. The setting is important. The Torah and the Prophets were being read on the Sabbath, and it was from within that Scriptural framework that the apostles proclaimed Messiah.

Later in the same chapter, Gentiles also wanted to hear more:

> *"The next Sabbath, almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God."*
>
> Acts 13:44

The earliest proclamation of Yeshua was therefore not detached from the Torah and the Prophets. It grew naturally out of them.

MOSES WROTE ABOUT ME

♦ ♦ ♦

Perhaps no reason for studying Torah could be stronger than the words of Yeshua Himself. Speaking to those who searched the Scriptures yet failed to recognise Him, Yeshua said:

> *"For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote about me. But if you don't believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"*
> John 5:46–47

MOSES WROTE ABOUT YESHUA.

That means Torah is not merely a collection of ancient laws and historical events. Within its pages are patterns, promises, shadows and prophetic pictures that point us toward Messiah.

The Passover lamb speaks of Him. The manna from heaven speaks of Him. The Rock in the wilderness speaks of Him. The tabernacle and priesthood speak of Him. The appointed Feasts speak of Him. The sacrifices, deliverances, covenants and great events of Torah continually prepare the reader to recognise the One who was to come.

Yeshua did not say that believing in Him should cause us to disregard Moses. He made the connection in the opposite direction: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me." And then He gave the sobering counterpart: "If you don't believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

This changes the way we approach the Torah. We are not returning to Moses instead of following Yeshua. We are reading Moses because we follow Yeshua, and because Yeshua Himself told us that Moses wrote about Him.

After His resurrection, Yeshua demonstrated precisely this way of reading Scripture. On the road to Emmaus:

> *"Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."*
> Luke 24:27

Beginning with Moses, Yeshua showed His disciples the things written concerning Himself. That is the spirit in which these Weekly Torah Portion booklets are offered.

Each week we will walk through another portion of Torah, allowing Scripture to tell its own story while following the threads that run through the Prophets, the Writings and the Apostolic Scriptures. Along the way we will look for the patterns of redemption, covenant, Kingdom and restoration—and above all, we will look for Yeshua.

"HE WROTE ABOUT ME."

So open the Torah. Give ear. And let us discover what Moses has to tell us about Messiah.

A PRAYER BEFORE WE BEGIN

♦ ♦ ♦

The Psalmist prays directly to YHVH:

> *"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of your Torah."*
> Psalm 119:18

And so, before opening this week's portion, let us make that prayer our own:

> *YHVH, open our eyes as we open Your Word. Give us ears to hear and hearts ready to receive. Show us the wondrous things in Your Torah, and above all, help us to recognise Yeshua, the One of whom Moses wrote. Lead us by Your Spirit into truth, understanding and faithful obedience. Amen.*

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THE TORAH

CHAYEI SARAH

חַיֵּי שָׂרָה

The Life of Sarah

Genesis 23:1–25:18

The Life, the Bride and the Promise.

The Life That Continues Through Death

♦ ♦ ♦

Chayei Sarah means "the life of Sarah", yet the portion opens with her death. It counts the years of her life and in the same breath tells us that she died at Kiriath Arba, which is Hebron. It closes with another grave: Abraham, full of years, gathered to his people and laid beside her in the cave of Machpelah. Between the two burials stands a wedding. The father sends his servant to a distant land. A bride is found at a well. She says, "I will go." And the son of promise lifts up his eyes and sees the camels coming.

A grave at the beginning. A grave at the end. A bride in the middle.

The portion is named for Sarah's life, not her death, because "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). The promise is not buried with Sarah, and it does not die with Abraham. It passes to Isaac and Rebekah, and through them it moves on towards the Seed in whom all the nations are blessed. Abraham buys a tomb as a man who expects resurrection. The servant fetches a bride for a son who has already been received back from the altar.

The Haftarah opens with the same words: King David was old, advanced in years. Once again the question is who will inherit, and once again YHVH keeps His oath. A son who exalts himself is passed over, the promised son is set upon the throne, and Bathsheba bows and says, "Let my lord King David live forever!" (1 Kings 1:31). The life of Sarah, the bride of Isaac and the throne of David meet in one Person: Yeshua Messiah, the beloved Son, the Bridegroom who is coming, and the King who lives forever.

Chayei Sarah:
The Beauty and Life of Sarah

♦ ♦ ♦

Genesis 23:1–2

Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years. The Hebrew counts them in a particular way: one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years. Every part of her life is numbered and honoured, and the life is announced before the death is told.

Though she died, yet she lives.

Yeshua said it at another graveside: "He who believes in me will still live, even if he dies" (John 11:25).

The portion is called the life of Sarah, yet it opens with her death. That is the order of the Kingdom: true life begins with a death. "We were buried therefore with him through immersion into death, that just as Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Her name means princess. It comes from Sar, a prince, the word Isaiah uses when he names the coming Child Sar Shalom, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). In this very chapter the sons of Heth give Abraham a title of the same rank, Nasi: "a prince of God" (Genesis 23:6). This is the royal family of Scripture. When YHVH renamed Sarai, He said of her:

> *"I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. Yes, I will bless her, and she will be a mother of nations. Kings of peoples will come from her."*
>
> Genesis 17:16

Kings of peoples. Sarah's line runs through David's throne to Messiah the King, and in Him it does not end in a palace. He "made us to be a

Kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (Revelation 1:6), "a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9).

Notice what the blessing did. Sarah had been barren all her life, and the blessing of YHVH removed the barrier. He does not merely make our limits more comfortable. He overrules them.

Sarah was also very beautiful. The word is Yapheh, and its first use in Scripture is of Sarah (Genesis 12:11). Yet Scripture's last word on her beauty is not about her face:

> *"...the hidden person of the heart, in the incorruptible adornment of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight... So Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose children you now are if you do well and are not put in fear by any terror."*
> 1 Peter 3:4, 6

Hebrew beauty is not Greek beauty. Athens admired form and proportion. Scripture looks at the hands and the mouth. Sarah's beauty was her faith made visible in her deeds and her words, so that the covenant of the Holy One came to life wherever she went.

Our age spends fortunes on what fades. What do our hands do, and what do our mouths say, when no one is admiring us? That is where covenant beauty is formed.

Sarah's life also foreshadows the life of her people. Twice she was taken into the house of a foreign ruler, by Pharaoh (Genesis 12:15) and by Abimelech (Genesis 20:2), and twice YHVH brought her out. In Egypt, "YHVH afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai" (Genesis 12:17), and Abram was sent away "with his wife and all that he had" (Genesis 12:20). Her children would live the same story:

plagues on Egypt, and a people sent out who "plundered the Egyptians" (Exodus 12:36). The life of Sarah is the life of the Hebrew people.

She is also the first sister and spouse (Genesis 20:12), the language of the Song: "my sister, my bride" (Song of Songs 4:9). We are both to Yeshua: family, for "he is not ashamed to call them brothers" (Hebrews 2:11), and bride, for "the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7).

Sarah says little in Torah, but what she says is weighty. Her words, "Cast out this servant and her son!" (Genesis 21:10), become the Scripture Paul uses to explain bondage and promise (Galatians 4:30). Then he reaches for Isaiah 54, "Sing, barren, you who didn't give birth!", to show that Sarah is a shadow of our true mother: "the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26). Isaiah 51 lies beneath it all:

> *"Listen to me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek YHVH. Look to the rock you were cut from, and to the quarry you were dug from. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you."*
> Isaiah 51:1–2

Sarah did not begin as a woman of easy faith. When the promise came, she laughed within herself (Genesis 18:12). She was ninety, her womb was dead, and every year of waiting had said no. Yet Scripture remembers her not for her laughter but for her faith: "By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive… since she counted him faithful who had promised" (Hebrews 11:11). Her faith did not rest on what she could see in herself. It rested on the faithfulness of the One who had spoken. That is the faith YHVH honours. When the promise seems impossible and the years of waiting are long, the question is not how strong we are, but how faithful He is.

Isaac was not the child of human strength but of a promise believed. So Paul writes, "Now we, brothers, as Isaac was, are children of promise" (Galatians 4:28), born "according to the Spirit" (Galatians 4:29). That is why our mother is the Jerusalem above. Yeshua told Nicodemus the same thing with a word built on the same root: he must be born Anothen, born from above, born of the Spirit (John 3:3–8). The Jerusalem above is the mother; being born from above is the birth. We are Sarah's children not by blood, but by promise.

Then Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

The word for mourn is Saphad, and this is its first appearance in Scripture. Its later appearances lift our eyes to the future:

> *"They will look to me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for his only son, and will grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for his firstborn."*
> Zechariah 12:10

The "only son" there is Yachid, the word used of Isaac on Moriah last week. John sees that mourning spread across the earth when Messiah comes with the clouds: "every eye will see him, including those who pierced him. All the tribes of the earth will mourn over him" (Revelation 1:7).

The first mourning in Scripture is for the mother of the promised son. The great mourning to come is for the Son Himself.

Yet mourning is not the end. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). This very portion closes with a son comforted after his mother's death.

The word for weep is Bakah, and this is its second appearance. The first was in the wilderness, when Hagar wept over Ishmael (Genesis 21:16). Paul makes Hagar the covenant "bearing children to bondage" (Galatians

4:24). Hagar wept as one who could see no way forward. Abraham wept as a man about to buy a grave in hope.

The word will sound again and again in the family of promise. Esau "lifted up his voice, and wept" (Genesis 27:38). Jacob kissed Rachel, "and lifted up his voice, and wept" (Genesis 29:11). Joseph "fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept" (Genesis 45:14). Each wept for a different reason, and YHVH was at work in every one of their tears.

The same tears. A different hope.

For all who weep in faith there is a promise: "Those who sow in tears will reap in joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed for sowing, will certainly come again with joy, carrying his sheaves" (Psalm 126:5–6).

Faith does not forbid our tears. It gives them a direction.

At the tomb of Lazarus, knowing He would call him out, "Yeshua wept" (John 11:35). He grieved with those who grieved, and then He raised the dead. That is the shape of Chayei Sarah. The grave is real. The tears are real. And the life is stronger.

A Stranger Who Buys a Grave

♦ ♦ ♦

Genesis 23:3–20

"Abraham rose up from before his dead" (Genesis 23:3). The word is Qum, to rise, to stand up, and it sounds four times in this chapter. Abraham rises in verses 3 and 7, and then the field and the cave themselves "rise" to Abraham, established as his possession, in verses 17 and 20. It is the word of resurrection: "Their dead bodies shall arise" (Isaiah 26:19). Abraham stands up from beside a body to buy a grave, and he does it as a man who expects to rise.

> *"I am a stranger and a foreigner living with you. Give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."*
>
> Genesis 23:4

Abraham has walked this land for more than sixty years and owns none of it. Hebrews tells us why Abraham could live this way without bitterness:

> *"By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*
>
> Hebrews 11:9–10

Abraham is in the world but not of it. He is looking for the city God builds, and Hebrews names it: "Mount Zion... the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22). We, his seed, seek the same city.

Look up.

Abraham pays honestly and buries with honour, but he never mistakes the present for home. A sojourner holds his possessions with an open hand and the promises of God with a closed one.

The sons of Heth answer with great courtesy: "Hear us, my lord. You are a prince of God amongst us" (Genesis 23:6). They call Abraham Adoni, "my lord"; when Abraham pleaded for Sodom, he addressed YHVH as Adonai (Genesis 18:27). The two words are written with the same letters; only the vowels differ. One is courtesy given to a man. The other belongs to YHVH alone.

Abraham asks them to "entreat" Ephron for him (Genesis 23:8). The word is Paga, to approach on another's behalf, the word Isaiah uses of the Servant who "made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12). Abraham needs an intercessor to secure a place for the dead. Messiah became the Intercessor who secures life for the dead.

This transaction shows that Abraham did not yet possess the land. YHVH had promised it to his offspring "for an everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:8). The word is Achuzzah, the very word used when the field is deeded to Abraham "as a possession for a burial place" (Genesis 23:20). But his offspring would first be afflicted four hundred years (Genesis 15:13). The inheritance was certain. It was not yet. Abraham's only possession in the land of promise is a grave.

And he buys it believing.

Ephron makes a show of generosity, then names his price in the same breath: "What is a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver between me and you?" (Genesis 23:15). Abraham does not haggle. He weighs out the full amount in the hearing of all at the city gate, "according to the current merchants' standard" (Genesis 23:16). He will not take as a favour what he can rightly buy. Honest dealing is itself a testimony.

Ephron is a son of Heth, of the line of Canaan (Genesis 10:15). The people who sold Abraham his grave remained a snare to his family: Rebekah will one day be weary of her life because of the daughters of Heth (Genesis 27:46).

Consider the place itself. Hebron comes from Chavar, to join: the place of companions. Abraham built an altar there (Genesis 13:18), and YHVH appeared to him there at Mamre (Genesis 18:1). Its older name, Kiriath Arba, recalls Arba, "the greatest man amongst the Anakim" (Joshua 14:15). Caleb received it as his inheritance (Joshua 14:14), and David reigned there seven years and six months (2 Samuel 5:5).

The city of the fathers' graves. The city of giants. The reward of the faithful spy. The first royal city.

On the Sabbath of this portion many in Israel gather at the cave of the patriarchs. Yet God is the God of the living, and we do not seek the living amongst the dead (Luke 24:5).

Abraham's purchase is the first of four in the heart of the land. Jacob bought ground at Shechem (Genesis 33:19). David bought the threshing floor of Araunah, the site of the Temple (2 Samuel 24:24). Omri bought the hill of Samaria (1 Kings 16:24). Hebron, Shechem, Jerusalem and Samaria: each recorded in Scripture as bought and paid for, and each disputed by the nations today.

Why would a man who owns nothing buy a grave? Because he believed God, "who gives life to the dead, and calls the things that are not, as though they were" (Romans 4:17). Abraham bought a tomb in hope. Yeshua emptied a tomb in triumph. "Messiah has been raised from the dead. He became the first fruit of those who are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The cave of Machpelah is not the end of the story. It is a place of waiting. The stranger who stood up from before his dead will stand up again, and so will all who share his faith.

The Father Sends the Servant

♦ ♦ ♦

Genesis 24:1–27

"Abraham was old, and well advanced in age. YHVH had blessed Abraham in all things."
Genesis 24:1

Last week we stood on Moriah, where the beloved son was received back from the dead in a figure (Hebrews 11:19). Now, after that picture of death, burial and resurrection, the father turns to the next great matter. A bride for the son.

The order is the Gospel's order. First the Lamb. Then the bride.

Abraham calls "his servant, the elder of his house, who ruled over all that he had" (Genesis 24:2). Abraham's steward was Eliezer, "my God is help" (Genesis 15:2). Yet in this whole chapter, the longest in Genesis, the servant is never named. He speaks of his master. He speaks of his master's son. He never speaks of himself.

Here is a picture of the Holy Spirit. Yeshua promised the Helper and said of Him:

"He will not speak from himself; but whatever he hears, he will speak... He will glorify me, for he will take from what is mine and will declare it to you."
John 16:13–14

The Father sends. The Servant goes. The Son waits. The bride must be found, told, given gifts and brought home.

In Luke 16 a beggar named Lazarus is "carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22). Lazarus is the Greek form of Eleazar, "God has helped", almost the very name of Abraham's steward.

Abraham says, "If they don't listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Yeshua did raise a man named Lazarus, and Abraham's words came true to the letter: the chief priests did not believe, and plotted to kill them both (John 11:53; 12:10).

Abraham binds the servant with an oath, as YHVH had sworn by Himself on Moriah (Genesis 22:16). "Please put your hand under my thigh." The Hebrew Na, please, is the word YHVH used last week: Kach Na, "take, please" (Genesis 22:2).

The hand is placed under the thigh, Yarech, near the sign of the covenant. The thigh is where descendants come from: the Hebrew calls Jacob's family Yotzei Yerecho, those who came out of his thigh (Genesis 46:26). The oath is sworn upon the Seed, and Paul names Him: "as of one, 'To your offspring', which is Messiah" (Galatians 3:16). And on His thigh a name is written: "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:16).

Then the servant asks the honest question: "What if the woman isn't willing to follow me to this land?" (Genesis 24:5). The word is Avah, to be willing, the word of Israel's refusal: "Israel desired none of me" (Psalm 81:11). The bride will not be dragged. She must choose. Grace does not create puppets. Grace creates willing people.

Abraham is firm on one point: "Only you shall not bring my son there again" (Genesis 24:8). The son does not go back. The bride must come out. And YHVH "will send his angel before you" (Genesis 24:7), the same promise Israel will hear on the way out of Egypt (Exodus 23:20).

The servant takes ten of his master's camels laden with good things to the city of Nahor (Genesis 24:10), a family that "served other gods" (Joshua 24:2). The word camel appears eighteen times in Genesis 24. The camels

carry gifts on the way out and bring back the bride. Camel in Hebrew is Gamal, and the same letters spell the verb Gamal, to deal bountifully, to reward, which Isaiah uses of the great goodness YHVH has bestowed on the house of Israel (Isaiah 63:7). The camels carry the reward.

He makes the camels kneel by the well at evening (Genesis 24:11). Scripture meets women at wells again and again: Rebekah, Rachel, Zipporah, the woman of Samaria. "With joy you will draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3), the wells of Yeshuah, the very name of Yeshua, "for it is he who shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Then he prays:

> *"YHVH, the God of my master Abraham, please give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham... let her be the one you have appointed for your servant Isaac."*
> Genesis 24:12, 14

"Kindness" is Chesed, covenant loyalty.

"Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah came out" (Genesis 24:15). "Before they call, I will answer" (Isaiah 65:24). "Your Father knows what things you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8). This does not make prayer unnecessary. It makes prayer confident. We do not pray to inform the Father. We pray to join Him in what He is already doing.

Rebekah is "very beautiful to look at, a virgin" (Genesis 24:16), Betulah. In verse 43 the servant calls her Almah, the word of Isaiah 7:14 concerning the mother of Immanuel. When the Scriptures were rendered into Greek, both became Parthenos, the word Matthew uses of Miriam (Matthew 1:23). The bride of Isaac is a virgin. The mother of Messiah is a virgin. The bride of Messiah is presented to Him "as a pure virgin" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

"Drink, my lord," she says, and she hurries. Then she offers more than he asked: "I will also draw for your camels, until they have finished drinking" (Genesis 24:19). Ten thirsty camels after a desert journey drink a great deal, and she runs back and forth until every one is satisfied. The bride of Messiah is marked by the same overflowing generosity: "He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, from within him will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

Notice the pace of this chapter. The servant "ran to meet her" (Genesis 24:17). Rebekah "hurried", and "ran again to the well" (Genesis 24:18, 20). Last week Abraham ran from the tent door to meet his guests, and ran to the herd (Genesis 18:2, 7). Love does not dawdle. The bride of the Song calls, "Come away, my beloved!" (Song of Songs 8:14), and the Bridegroom answers, "Yes, I am coming soon" (Revelation 22:20).

"The man looked steadfastly at her, remaining silent, to know whether YHVH had made his journey prosperous or not."
Genesis 24:21

The word for his gaze of wonder is Sha'ah, and it appears only here in Scripture. He holds his peace, Charash, the word behind Zephaniah's "He will calm you in his love" (Zephaniah 3:17). And "prosperous", Tzalach, is success in accomplishing the will of the master, as YHVH's word "will prosper in the thing I sent it to do" (Isaiah 55:11). Biblical prosperity is not measured by profit, but by whether YHVH's purpose has been done.

Psalm 118 prays the same prayer: "Save us now, we beg you, YHVH! YHVH, we beg you, send prosperity now" (Psalm 118:25). Send prosperity is Hatzlichah, the same Tzalach. Save us now is Hoshia Na, the cry that met Yeshua as He rode into Jerusalem: "Hoshia'na to the son of David!" (Matthew 21:9).

When the camels have finished drinking, he brings out "a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold" (Genesis 24:22). The half-shekel is the Bekah, given for every soul counted in Israel (Exodus 38:26), "a ransom for his soul" (Exodus 30:12). It comes from Baqa, to split, used of the wood split for Isaac (Genesis 22:3) and the sea divided for Israel (Exodus 14:16). The bracelets are Tsamid, from Tsamad, to join or bind. The bride is ransomed, then joined.

She is "the daughter of Bethuel", the family named at the close of last week's portion (Genesis 22:23). The answer was prepared before the servant set out. And she offers more than he asked: "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge in" (Genesis 24:25). "Exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

And the servant worships:

> *"The man bowed his head, and worshipped YHVH. He said, 'Blessed be YHVH, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his loving kindness and his truth towards my master. As for me, YHVH has led me on the way to the house of my master's relatives.'"*
> Genesis 24:26–27

This is worship. He bows. He calls on the Name. He blesses YHVH and testifies that he has been led. Here Emet, truth, appears for the first time in Scripture, and so does Nachah, "led", the word of the pillar of cloud (Exodus 13:21) and of the Shepherd who "guides me in the paths of righteousness" (Psalm 23:3). Truth and guidance enter the Bible together, at a well, on the road to the bride.

Worship is the very subject when Yeshua meets another woman at another well: "the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). The contrast is sharp. Rebekah was untouched

by any man; the Samaritan woman had had five husbands. Rebekah gladly gave water; at Sychar it was Yeshua who asked for a drink. Rebekah is the bride as she should be. The woman at Sychar is the bride as she had become: thirsty, unfaithful and still sought. YHVH had said of His people, "they have forsaken me, the spring of living waters" (Jeremiah 2:13). Yet the Bridegroom came to the well Himself, offering "a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). He came to present His bride to Himself "not having spot or wrinkle" (Ephesians 5:27).

YHVH had sworn, "All the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring" (Genesis 22:18). Paul calls this the Gospel preached beforehand to Abraham (Galatians 3:8), and this chapter carries it forward. Through Isaac and Rebekah the line of the Seed continues to Jacob, his twelve sons and on to Messiah. This is our family tree, and as wild branches we have been grafted in (Romans 11:17).

The Father has sent His Spirit into a far country. He does not speak of Himself. He carries the riches of the Son's house. He is looking for a bride who will say yes.

"I Will Go": The Willing Bride

♦ ♦ ♦

Genesis 24:28–67

Rebekah runs to tell her mother's household, and her brother Laban runs out to the well. Notice what moves him: "When he saw the ring, and the bracelets on his sister's hands... he came to the man" (Genesis 24:30). Then he finds his religious voice: "Come in, you blessed of YHVH" (Genesis 24:31).

Laban, Lavan, means "white". A brick is Levenah, from the same root, and at Babel the root sounds twice: "Come, let's make bricks" is Nilbenah Levenim (Genesis 11:3). Babel was built of brick, by men who said, "let's make a name for ourselves" (Genesis 11:4). Abraham looked instead for "the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Rebekah leaves the house of brick-builders for the tent of promise.

The same root describes the cleansing only YHVH can give: "I will be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7); "they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). One whiteness is given from above. The other is manufactured below, man-made righteousness baked in the kiln of human effort. Yeshua saw it in His day: "you are like whitened tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones" (Matthew 23:27).

Laban teaches us the tactics of the enemy. He appears as a friend, but he is not: "even Satan masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Here he steps into his father's place, and in years to come he will deceive Jacob and change his wages ten times (Genesis 31:7).

Food is set before the servant, but he will not eat until he has told his message (Genesis 24:33). The errand comes before the appetite, and at

every turn he speaks of Abraham and Isaac. "The thing proceeds from YHVH," they answer (Genesis 24:50), and the servant bows himself to the earth and worships again. Then come the gifts:

> *"The servant brought out jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and her mother."*
> Genesis 24:53

Jewels of silver, jewels of gold and clothing: exactly what Israel carried out of Egypt on the night of redemption (Exodus 12:35; Genesis 15:14). The Spirit gives gifts to the bride of Messiah, and Revelation tells us what her garments are: "bright, pure, fine linen, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the holy ones" (Revelation 19:8).

Only now does the servant eat (Genesis 24:54). The covenant is settled. In the morning he says, "Send me away to my master." But her brother and her mother say, "Let the young lady stay with us a few days, at least ten" (Genesis 24:55).

"Don't hinder me," the servant replies, "since YHVH has prospered my way" (Genesis 24:56). The word is Achar, to delay, and Jacob will use it of his years with Laban: "I have... stayed until now" (Genesis 32:4). Laban's house is a house of delay. Running and haste fill this chapter. The enemy's tactic is delay, and a delay to obey is never neutral. The bride does not delay the call: "Behold, now is the acceptable time. Behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

> *"They called Rebekah, and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' She said, 'I will go.'"*
> Genesis 24:58

In Hebrew her answer is one word: Elech. I will go. It is the call of Abraham heard a second time, to leave country and father's house, as the

King's bride is told: "Forget your own people, and also your father's house" (Psalm 45:10).

Abraham was called out of Ur. Israel was brought out of Egypt. And the last call is the same: "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4). No one can make this choice for us, and no one, not even Laban, can stop us making it.

Rebekah does not wait the ten days, and she goes having never seen Isaac. She has heard of him, received his gifts and believed the servant's word. She is like us: "whom, not having known, you love. In him, though now you don't see him, yet believing, you rejoice greatly with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29).

So they send her away with a blessing: "may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and let your offspring possess the gate of those who hate them" (Genesis 24:60). It is the blessing YHVH spoke over Abraham after Moriah: "Your offspring will possess the gate of his enemies" (Genesis 22:17). Yeshua speaks the same language of His assembly: "the gates of Sheol will not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

"Rebekah arose with her ladies. They rode on the camels, and followed the man" (Genesis 24:61). Psalm 45 sees the same procession: "She shall be led to the king in embroidered work. The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to you" (Psalm 45:14).

Meanwhile Isaac has come from Beer Lahai Roi, the well named by Hagar for "a God who sees" (Genesis 16:13–14). He goes out into the field at evening to meditate. The word is Suach, and it appears only here in Scripture.

"He lifted up his eyes and looked. Behold, there were camels coming."
Genesis 24:63

YHVH once told his father, "Look now towards the sky, and count the stars" (Genesis 15:5). Lifting the eyes is the posture of faith. Isaac had been bound on the altar and had lost his mother. He carried it all into that field, to YHVH, and while he was meditating the answer came over the horizon.

Behold, the camels are coming. The reward is coming. Isaac's reward is his bride. This is why Yeshua, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2): to purchase His bride, for "Messiah also loved the assembly and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). And this is how He will come again:

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, to repay to each man according to his work."
Revelation 22:12

Rebekah lifts up her eyes too, and comes down from her camel. The Hebrew says she fell, Naphal, from the camel (Genesis 24:64). She comes down at once from the height she has ridden on, as Miriam of Bethany fell at the feet of Yeshua (John 11:32). The bride does not meet her bridegroom from a high place. "Who is the man who is walking in the field to meet us?" At midnight the cry will go up: "Behold! The bridegroom is coming! Come out to meet him!" (Matthew 25:6). She takes her veil and covers herself. The bride is set apart for her husband alone. The Song sees the same bride: "Behold, you are beautiful, my love... Your eyes are like doves behind your veil" (Song of Songs 4:1).

Then "the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done" (Genesis 24:66). Told is Saphar, the word YHVH used when He told Abraham to

"count the stars" (Genesis 15:5). The servant gives his account, and every word of it is a promise kept.

> *"Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife. He loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."*
> Genesis 24:67

The bride is brought into Sarah's tent, the tent of the mother who pictures the Jerusalem above. The promise continues. And Isaac is comforted. The word is Nacham, first used of Noah, whose name carried the hope of comfort from the curse (Genesis 5:29). The Helper brings the bride, and the son is comforted.

The first coming paid the bride's price. The Spirit is still crossing the desert with the gifts. The Son is still in the field, lifting His eyes. And one evening soon, the camels will be seen on the horizon.

Gathered to His People

♦ ♦ ♦

Genesis 25:1–18

Abraham took another wife, Keturah, and she bore him six sons (Genesis 25:1–2). Her name speaks of incense. One son was Midian, whose people would carry Joseph to Egypt (Genesis 37:28) and join Balaam's counsel at Peor (Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14). Yet Jethro the Midianite gave Moses a wife and Israel wise counsel (Exodus 2:21; 18:19). Even in a line of strife, YHVH has His people.

"Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac" (Genesis 25:5). The sons of the concubines received gifts and were sent away "eastward, to the east country" (Genesis 25:6). East is the direction of exile in Genesis. The cherubim were placed at the east of Eden (Genesis 3:24), and Cain went to live east of Eden (Genesis 4:16).

Yet the prophets bring the east back. Among Keturah's descendants are Midian, Efah and Sheba (Genesis 25:2–4), and Isaiah sees them coming to Zion:

> *"A multitude of camels will cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Efah. All from Sheba will come. They will bring gold and frankincense, and will proclaim the praises of YHVH."*
>
> Isaiah 60:6

The sons of Keturah, sent away eastward, return bearing incense, as the wise men from the east came to the Child with gold and frankincense (Matthew 2:11).

Then Abraham "gave up his spirit, and died at a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people" (Genesis 25:8). He was one hundred and seventy-five, counted like Sarah's years: one hundred years, and seventy years, and five years. He had left Haran at

seventy-five (Genesis 12:4), the age Isaac is now: one hundred years in the land of promise.

"Isaac and Ishmael, his sons, buried him" (Genesis 25:9). The sons who had been parted stand together at their father's grave, and Abraham is laid beside Sarah, where Isaac, Rebekah and Leah will join them (Genesis 49:31). What a reunion when "the dead in Messiah will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

As we read of Abraham being gathered to his people, we remember that God is the God of the living. Abraham's life goes on in his seed:

> *"Know therefore that those who are of faith are children of Abraham... If you are Messiah's, then you are Abraham's offspring and heirs according to promise."*
> Galatians 3:7, 29

Descent alone does not make a child of Abraham. Yeshua said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). John the Immerser said the same before Him: "Don't think to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I tell you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Matthew 3:9). The true children of Abraham believe in Yeshua.

Abraham's children share Abraham's blessing: "those who are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham" (Galatians 3:9). Remember who blessed Abraham with bread and wine: Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High" (Genesis 14:18). Messiah is "a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4), and we are "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), kingship and priesthood joined as the Levitical order never allowed (2 Chronicles 26:18).

And notice how Abraham worshipped. Again and again he builds an altar and calls on the name of YHVH: at Bethel (Genesis 12:8), at

Hebron (Genesis 13:18), at Beersheba (Genesis 21:33). On Moriah he offered the ram in the place of his son (Genesis 22:13), but the mark of his whole life is the altar and the Name. Calling on the Name is the heart of Abrahamic faith: "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13). Psalm 116 holds it together:

> *"Precious in YHVH's sight is the death of his holy ones. YHVH, truly I am your servant. I am your servant, the son of your servant girl. You have freed me from my chains. I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call on YHVH's name."*
> Psalm 116:15–17

That is the offering Abraham's children bring still: "the fruit of lips which proclaim allegiance to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

"After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac, his son. Isaac lived by Beer Lahai Roi" (Genesis 25:11). The son of promise makes his home by the well where the Angel of YHVH found Hagar (Genesis 16:7–14). The God who saw the outcast is the God who blesses the heir.

YHVH had promised Ishmael "twelve princes" (Genesis 17:20), and here they are (Genesis 25:16). He keeps His word even to the son outside the covenant line.

Ishmael lived one hundred and thirty-seven years (Genesis 25:17). That was Abraham's age when Sarah died, and it was the age of Levi and of Amram when they died (Exodus 6:16, 20).

Consider these three men. All three belong to the order that came before the promise was fulfilled. Ishmael is Paul's picture of Sinai and the present Jerusalem: Hagar "is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to the Jerusalem that exists now" (Galatians 4:24–25), where the flesh persecutes the Spirit (Galatians 4:29). Levi is the priestly tribe. Amram is the

father of Moses the lawgiver and of Aaron the first high priest (Exodus 6:20). So 137 gathers the law, the earthly Jerusalem and the Levitical priesthood, and sets them beside the son of promise and the priesthood of Melchizedek that outlasts them all. The Levitical priests were many, "because they are hindered from continuing by death. But he, because he lives forever, has his priesthood unchangeable" (Hebrews 7:23–24).

Ishmael and Isaac grew up in the same tent and stood together at the same grave. Yet "the son by the servant was born according to the flesh, but the son by the free woman was born through promise" (Galatians 4:23). The difference was not the tent or the altar. It was the birth. Faith and religion often live side by side. They are not the same.

The portion that began with a grave ends with genealogies, the record of a promise still alive. Abraham's altars are gone, but the Name he called upon is called upon in every nation, because the Seed has come and the Priest-King has sat down at the right hand of God. And He will come again to raise His people from their graves.

THE PROPHETS

HAFTARAH

1 Kings 1:1–31

The oath, the throne and the King who lives forever.

Long Live the King

♦ ♦ ♦

1 Kings 1:1–31

"Now King David was old and advanced in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he couldn't keep warm."
1 Kings 1:1

"Abraham was old, and well advanced in age" (Genesis 24:1). Two old men. Two questions of succession. In both a young woman is sought, and the promised line is at stake.

The verb for warm is Yacham, used of Jacob's flocks when they conceived (Genesis 30:38–41). His servants seek "a young virgin", Na'arah Betulah, the very words used of Rebekah (Genesis 24:16), "that my lord the king may keep warm" (1 Kings 1:2). That word is Chamam, the word we met last week, when Elisha stretched himself on the Shunammite's son "and the child's flesh grew warm" (2 Kings 4:34). But "the king didn't know her intimately" (1 Kings 1:4). The promise will not come through sons of David's old age. It will come through the son YHVH has already named.

Warmth can be holy: "My heart was hot within me" (Psalm 39:3). It can be unholy, like the idolater warming himself at the wood he worships (Isaiah 44:16), or Peter warming himself on the night he denied his Lord (John 18:18). Where do we go to get warm?

They seek "a beautiful young lady throughout all the borders of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite" (1 Kings 1:3). Beautiful is Yapheh, first used of Sarah and then of Rachel (Genesis 29:17), and again and again of the bride in the Song of Songs. She is a Shunammite, from the town of last week's woman whose son was raised; Adonijah will later ask for her as a step towards the throne (1 Kings 2:17).

What follows is a tale of two kingdoms and two priesthoods.

> *"Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king.' Then he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him."*
> 1 Kings 1:5

He exalted himself. Consider the first rebel: "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven!... I will make myself like the Most High!'" (Isaiah 14:13–14). Paul sees the same spirit in the last rebellion (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Adonijah even copies his brother Absalom (2 Samuel 15:1).

And "his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, 'Why have you done so?'" (1 Kings 1:6). David never corrected this son. Solomon, who watched it all, would write, "One who spares the rod hates his son" (Proverbs 13:24). Love that never corrects is not kindness.

The humble way is the King's way (Proverbs 25:6–7). Yeshua made it a law of the Kingdom: "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11).

Look at the two camps. With Adonijah stand Joab, who "shed the blood of war in peace" (1 Kings 2:5), and Abiathar the priest. With David stand Zadok the priest, whose name means righteous; Benaiah, "YAH has built"; Nathan the prophet; and the mighty men (1 Kings 1:7–8). Two priests. Two kingdoms. One true king, and his name means Beloved: David, from Dod, the word of the Song (Song of Songs 1:2). The Son of David is the Beloved Son: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

Adonijah offers his sacrifices "by the stone of Zoheleth, which is beside En Rogel" (1 Kings 1:9). Zoheleth is the crawling stone, from the root used of the vipers "that glide in the dust" (Deuteronomy 32:24). Outside the city. Away from the king. Without the prophet, without Benaiah and

without Solomon (1 Kings 1:10). A throne claimed at the crawling stone is a throne YHVH has not given.

Then Nathan sends Bathsheba to the king:

> *"Didn't you, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying, 'Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne'? Why then does Adonijah reign?"*
> 1 Kings 1:13

YHVH had named Solomon before he was born: "his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days" (1 Chronicles 22:9). Messiah is the Son of David, so the everlasting throne is at stake (2 Samuel 7:12–16), and Nathan the prophet stands as witness, as Samuel did before him.

Adonijah's guests are already crying, "Long live King Adonijah!" (1 Kings 1:25). The Hebrew is Yechi HaMelech, "may the king live", from Chayah, to live, the root of Chayei Sarah. The King James Version renders it "God save king Adonijah", the cry of the English national anthem. The Hebrew cry is life.

David answers with an oath in the Name:

> *"As YHVH lives, who has redeemed my soul out of all adversity, most certainly as I swore to you by YHVH, the God of Israel... I will most certainly do this today."*
> 1 Kings 1:29–30

Jeremiah foresaw the nations learning to swear "by my name, 'As YHVH lives;' even as they taught my people to swear by Baal", and promised, "then they will be built up in the middle of my people" (Jeremiah 12:16). Baal means lord. The nations who turn from every other lord to the living Name are built into the covenant people.

Then the reading ends:

"Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth and showed respect to the king, and said, 'Let my lord King David live forever!'"
1 Kings 1:31

David is on his deathbed, and Bathsheba says, "Live forever." These are the usual words of the court (Nehemiah 2:3). Spoken to David, they say more than she knows. YHVH had promised him, "Your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16), and that promise lives in Messiah. The words speak too of David's own awakening from death: "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with seeing your form" (Psalm 17:15). Daniel declares it plainly: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life" (Daniel 12:2).

Beyond our reading, Solomon is anointed at Gihon, "bursting forth", with the prayer that his throne be greater than David's (1 Kings 1:37), and the news comes: "Solomon sits on the throne of the kingdom" (1 Kings 1:46).

He sits. The son of peace takes his seat.

Of Miriam's Son, Gabriel said, "he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. There will be no end to his Kingdom" (Luke 1:33). He did not exalt Himself as Adonijah did. He humbled Himself, and God highly exalted Him (Philippians 2:8–9). He "has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). He will come again to reign. And He lives forever.

The Haftarah is not a separate lesson added to the Torah portion. It echoes its central witness. A self-exalting rival is passed over. An oath sworn in the Name is kept. A beloved son is seated. And the last word, as at the start of Chayei Sarah, is life.

The Bride, the Son and the King

♦ ♦ ♦

Chayei Sarah began at a graveside, and between the graves it told the story of a bride. Sarah died, and her life did not end. The father sent the servant with gifts. A willing bride refused the delay and said, "I will go." And at evening the son lifted up his eyes, and behold, the camels were coming.

These are not separate stories. They are one Gospel.

The Father has given all that He has to the Son. The Lamb has been slain and raised. Now the Spirit has been sent into the far country to find a bride. He speaks of the Son, gives gifts and clothes the bride in fine linen.

The first coming paid the bride's price. The second will bring her home.

The cry will sound at midnight: "Behold! The bridegroom is coming!" The Son will come with His reward, and His reward is His bride. The King who sat down after His sacrifice will reign forever, and those who sleep in the dust will awake.

Until then, the question put to Rebekah is put to us: "Will you go with this man?"

There will be Labans urging us to wait ten days. But the God of Abraham is the God of the living, and the life of Sarah goes on in all who believe.

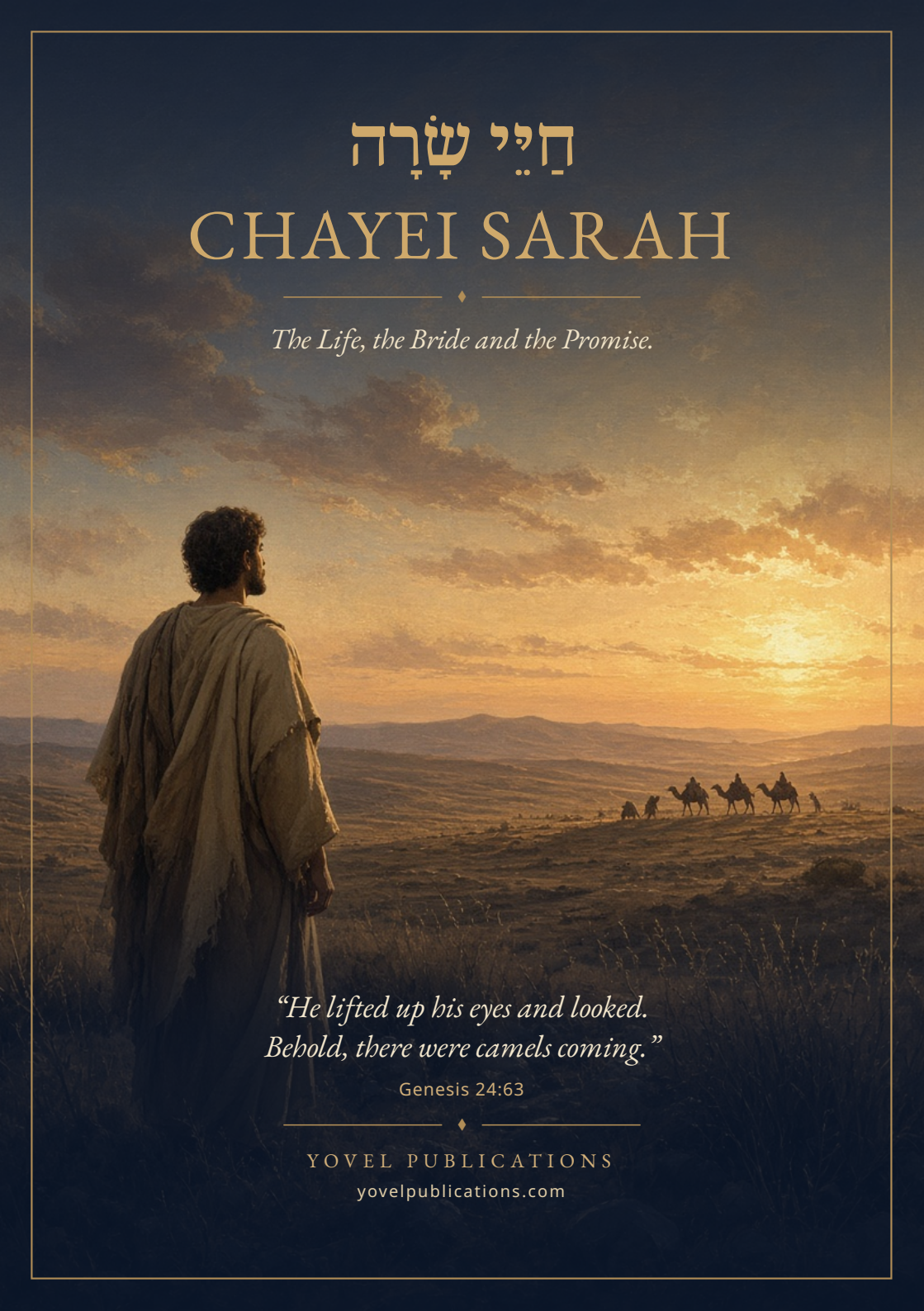
The Servant has come. The gifts have been given. The Son is waiting in the field.

I will go.

חַיֵּי שָׂרָה

CHAYEI SARAH

The Life, the Bride and the Promise.



"He lifted up his eyes and looked.
Behold, there were camels coming."

Genesis 24:63

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