

תלמוד-תורה ביחד ממרחק
TORAH-STUDY TOGETHER FROM AFAR

November 21, 2020



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה:

Parashah Stats

<u>Weekly Portion:</u>	Tol'dot
<u>Consists of:</u>	Genesis 25:19-28:9
<u>Sequence—</u>	
<u>in annual Torah cycle:</u>	6 th of 54
<u>in Book of Genesis:</u>	6 th of 12



- A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Genesis 26:12-33

Context: Genesis, first of the Five Books of the Torah, is an account of Abraham's and Sarah's lineage through their grandson Jacob as the founder of the Israelite people.

Content: In time of drought God persuades Isaac not to leave Canaan for Egypt, and to remain within the Promised Land. Isaac comes to terms with Avimelech, the ruler of Gerar, and is given license to settle in that frontier outpost of Philistine territory.

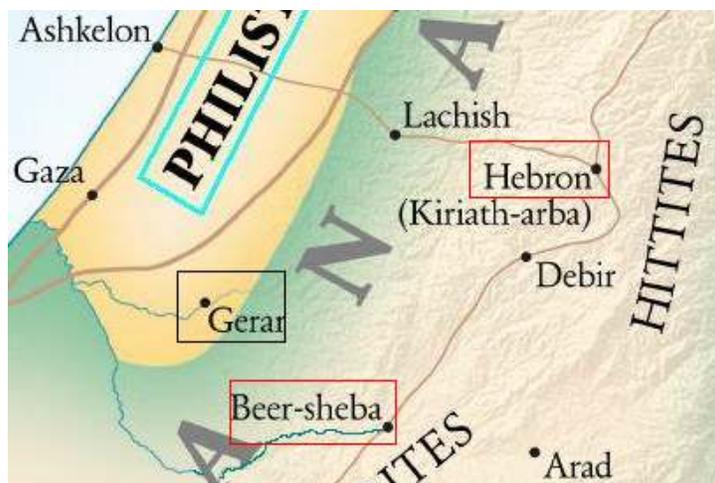
26:12] - Isaac sowed in that land, and **realized that year a hundred-fold harvest yield**, because The Eternal One had blessed him.

וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בְּאֶרֶץ הַהוּא וַיִּמְצָא
בְּשָׁנָה הַהוּא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים
וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ יְהוָה:

	wheat	bushels sown	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	} per acre	
			bushels yield	32	40	46	45	47		46
			proportion.....	64	40	31	23	19		15
	barley	bushels sown	----	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	} per acre	
			bushels yield	----	56	58	57	56		55
			proportion.....	----	56	39	28	22		18
	oats	bushels sown	----	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	} per acre	
			bushels yield	----	36	51	81	82		83
			proportion.....	----	41	34	41	33		28

[26:13] So the man became great, getting continually richer until he was very wealthy. [26:14] He had vast flocks and herds, and a large household— **so the Philistines became jealous of him.** [26:15] (Now all those wells which his father's servants had dug— in the days of his father Abraham— **the Philistines had sealed up, by filling them in with dirt).**

וַיִּגְדַּל הָאִישׁ וַיִּלְךְ הַלֹּךְ וַיִּגְדַּל עַד
כִּי-גָדַל מְאֹד: וַיְהִי-לוֹ מִקְנֵה-צֹאן
וּמִקְנֵה בָקָר וַעֲבֵדָה רַבָּה וַיִּקְנְאוּ
אֹתוֹ פְּלִשְׁתִּים: וְכָל-הַבְּאֵרֹת אֲשֶׁר
חָפְרוּ עֲבָדֵי אָבִיו בְּיַמֵּי אַבְרָהָם
אָבִיו סָתְמוֹם פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּמְלְאוּם
עָפָר:



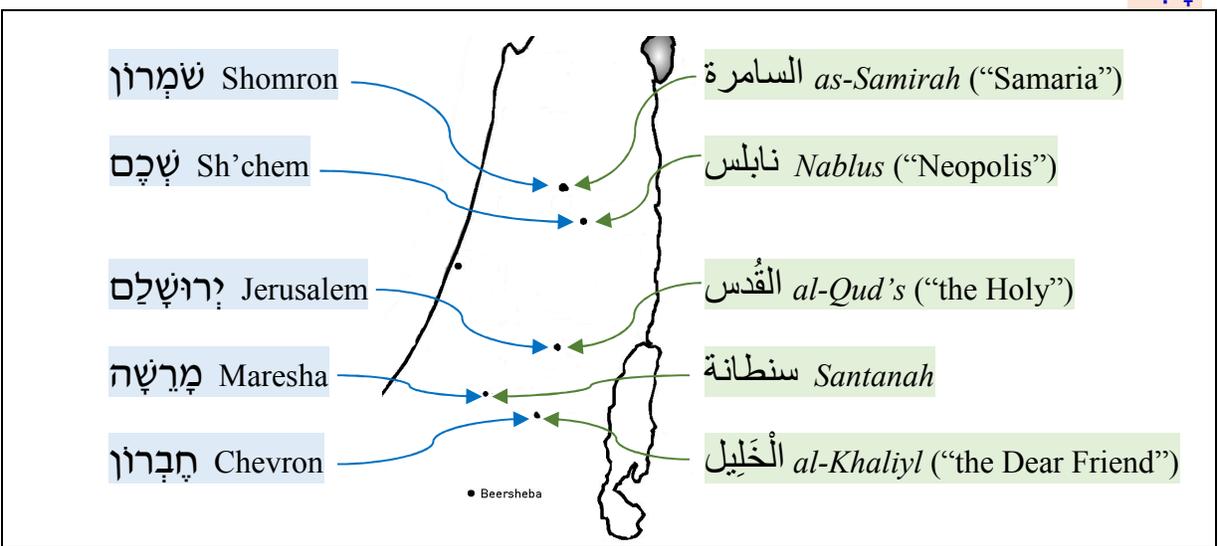
[26:16] Then Avimelech told Isaac: “Go away from us, for **you have become far mightier than we.**”

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶל-יִצְחָק לֵךְ מֵעִמָּנוּ כִּי-עֲצַמְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ מְאֹד :

וְשֵׁם רְאִינוּ אֶת-הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֵנָק מִן-הַנְּפִלִים
 A) Numbers 13:33 - We saw there giants, of a titanic race of primeval giants,
 וַנְּהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחַגְבִּים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְעֵינֵיהֶם
and we viewed ourselves as mere grasshoppers— for so they must have seen us!”

26:17] - So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the watercourse of G'rar, where he settled. [26:18] - **Isaac re-dug the water wells** which had first been excavated in the days of his father Abraham (and which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham's death), **calling them by the same names his father had given them.**

וַיֵּלֶךְ מִשָּׁם יִצְחָק וַיַּחַן בְּנַחַל-גְּרָר וַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁם : וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק וַיַּחְפֹּר אֶת-בְּאֵרֵת הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ בִּימֵי אֲבִרְהָם אָבִיו וַיִּסְתְּמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים אַחֲרָי מוֹת אֲבִרְהָם וַיִּקְרָא לָהֶן שְׁמוֹת כַּשְׁמוֹת אֲשֶׁר-קָרָא לָהֶן אָבִיו :



26:19] - But when Isaac's servants, digging in the wadi, found there a well of spring water, [26:20] **the herdsmen of G'rar contended** with Isaac's herdsmen. They delared: "That is our water!"

So he named it 'Esek ["contention"], because they contended with him. [26:21] – But once [his workers] had dug another well, **they disputed that one also**; so he named it **Sit-nah** ["opposition"].

וַיִּחְפְּרוּ עֲבָדֵי-יִצְחָק בְּנַחַל וַיִּמְצְאוּ-
שָׁם בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים: **וַיִּרְיִבוּ רֵעֵי**
גָּרָר עִם-רֵעֵי יִצְחָק לֵאמֹר לָנוּ
הַמַּיִם

וַיִּקְרָא שְׁם-הַבְּאֵר עֵשֶׂק כִּי
הִתְעַשְׂקוּ עִמּוֹ וַיִּחְפְּרוּ בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת
וַיִּרְיִבוּ גַם-עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ
שִׁטְנָה :

verb ש-ט-נ "oppose with enmity; accuse, file suit against; condemn"	
noun שִׁטְן "an enemy; an opponent; an accuser"	
לא-יֵרֵד עִמָּנוּ בַּמִּלְחָמָה וְלֹא- יְהִי־לָנוּ לְשִׁטְן בַּמִּלְחָמָה	וַיְהִי שִׁטְן לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל-יְמֵי שְׁלֹמֹה
B) I Samuel 29:4 - "Let this fellow not go off with us to war, so that this one will not turn on us as an opponent in battle."	C) I Kings 11:25 - [R'zon ben-EliYada'] remained an enemy of Israel all the days of King Solomon.

26:22] - He moved from there and **dug yet another well**, over which they did not quarrel; so he called it R'hovot ["spaciousness"], saying, "Now at last The Eternal One has granted us ample space to increase in the land." [26:23] - From there he went up to Be'er-sheva.

וַיַּעֲתֵק מִשָּׁם וַיִּחְפֹּר בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת
וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רְחוֹבוֹת
וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי-עֲתָה הִרְחִיב יְהוָה לָנוּ
וּפְרִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ: וַיַּעַל מִשָּׁם בְּאֵר
שֶׁבַע:

D) Tamara Cohn Eskanazi (1951-), *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* - **Isaac's peaceful disposition is apparent** in the patience with which he digs and re-digs wells. When his ownership of wells is challenged, he relinquishes them, whereas his father Abraham had stood his ground (21:25). Later, **Isaac's passivity and persistence pay off** when AviMelech recognizes his merit and concludes a treaty with him.

26:24] - That night The Eternal One appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. **Fear not, for I am with you**, and I will bless you and increase your offspring for the sake of My servant Abraham."

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ
אַל-תִּירָא כִּי-אֲתָךְ אֲנֹכִי וַיְבַרְכְּתִיךָ
וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת-זַרְעֲךָ בְּעִבּוֹר אַבְרָהָם
עֲבָדִי:

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אַל-תֵּרֵד מִצְרַיִמָּה שָׁכֵן בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ
E) Genesis 26:2-3 - The Eternal One appeared to [Isaac], telling him: "Do not go down to Egypt; rather, dwell in the land which I will tell you.
גֹּר בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְאֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ וְאַבְרַכְךָ
"Reside in this land, and **I will be with you to bless you!**"

F) Harold Kushner (1935-), *Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary* - Why does God appear to Isaac now? From God's message, it would seem that Isaac was discouraged, **perhaps because of his repeated conflicts with neighbors, perhaps with the resigned recognition of a middle-aged man that he would never match the achievements of his father.** God assures him that his life is still rich with meaning and purpose.

26:25] - So he built an altar there and invoked The Eternal One by name. Isaac pitched his tent there, and **his servants began digging a well.**

וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה
וַיִּטְּ שָׁם אֹהֶלוֹ וַיִּכְרוּ-שָׁם עֲבָדָיו-
יִצְחָק בְּאֵר :

וַיִּטֵּעַ אֶשֶׁל בְּבְאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיִּקְרָא-שָׁם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה אֵל עוֹלָם
G) Genesis 21:33 - [Abraham] **planted an eshel** at Be'er-Sheva, and invoked there the name of The Eternal One, the Everlasting God,

26:26] – Then AviMelech came to him from G'rar, with Ahuzzat his councilor and Fee-Kole chief of his troops. [26:27] - Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me, **seeing that you have been hostile to me and have driven me away from you?**”

וְאַבְימֶלֶךְ הֵלָךְ אֵלָיו מִגְרָר וְאַחֲזַת
מִרְעֵהוּ וּפִיכַל שֵׁר-צָבָאוֹ : וַיֹּאמֶר
אֲלֵהֶם יִצְחָק מֵדוּעַ בָּאתֶם אֵלָי
וְאַתֶּם שָׂנֵאתֶם אֹתִי וַתִּשְׁלַחֲנִי
מֵאַתְכֶם :

26:28] – They replied “**We have truly seen** that The Eternal One has been with you, and we thought: ‘**Let there be a sworn treaty between our two parties**, between you and us.’ Let us make a pact with you [26:29] - that you will not do us harm, **just as we have not molested you but have always dealt kindly with you and sent you away in peace.** For you are now **blessed of The Eternal One!**”

וַיֹּאמְרוּ רָאוּ רָאִינוּ כִּי-הָיָה יְהוָה
עִמָּךְ וְנֹאמַר תְּהִי נָא אֵלֶּה בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ
בֵּינוֹנוּ וּבֵינְךָ וְנִכְרַתְתָּה בְרִית עִמָּךְ :
אִם-תַּעֲשֶׂה עִמָּנוּ רָעָה כַּאֲשֶׁר לֹא
נִגְעַנּוּךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂינוּ עִמָּךְ רַק-טוֹב
וְנִשְׁלַחְךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶתְּהָ עִתָּה בְרוּךְ
יְהוָה :

וַיָּבֹא אֶל-הָאִישׁ וְהָיָה עִמָּד עַל-הַגְּמְלִים עַל-הָעֵין וַיֹּאמֶר בּוֹא בְרוּךְ יְהוָה לָמָּה
תַּעֲמַד בַּחוּץ וְאַנְכִּי פְּנִיתִי הַבַּיִת

H) Genesis 24:30-31 - [Lavan] came running up to the man, who was still standing by the camels at the well, and said: “**Come, O blessed of The Eternal One!** Why should you remain standing outside? For I have cleared out the house to accommodate you!

I) Chayim ibn-Attar (1696-1742), *Or haChayim* on 26:28-29 - AviMelech and his companions stressed that just as they had not done any harm to Isaac in the past they now expected him to swear that he in turn would not do anything that would harm them in the future. Isaac could not be expected to understand what they meant by the “good” they had done for him, until they explained that **the very fact that they let him depart whole in body and assets was in itself an act of kindness.** Kings sometimes pass legislation to remit taxation and extend financial aid to some of their subjects. They do so for one of two reasons:

1) If the day would come when the government is in need of financial aid they would have grateful wealthy citizens to call upon to provide loans to the government.

2) In order to enhance the economic standing of their countries. A country which contains many wealthy people thereby adds to the glory of its rulers.

As a result one could have argued that any kindness AviMelech had done for Isaac were not of an altruistic nature, but were designed to enhance the king's personal reputation as a ruler over a successful country. AviMelech denied such an interpretation of his motives by saying: "just as we never harmed you," meaning that there were no selfish motives in that part of the "טוב good" they had done for Isaac. The very fact they had let Isaac depart with all his as-sets intact and had not imposed an emigration tax had made AviMelech's country poorer. According to their reasoning this proved that every kindness they had shown Isaac had been genuine, not self-interest— all of this was alluded to in the words **ראו ראינו**.

J) Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), T'rumat Tz'vi - this diplomatic mission from AviMelech is very significant. Although he himself had broken faith with the son of Abraham, violating the covenant he had made with Abraham [in 21:22-23], he was nonetheless anxious to obtain a covenantal oath from Isaac. During the later periods of Jewish national life, **the Jewish nation**, regardless of the circumstances at the time, **was noted and grudgingly respected for its adherence to all the covenants** it ever entered upon.

26:30] - Then he made for them a feast, and they ate and drank. [26:31] - Early in the morning, they exchanged oaths. Isaac then **dismissed them**, so they departed from him in peace.

וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתֶּה וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׂתּוּ :
וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ בַבֹּקֶר וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ אִישׁ
לְאָחִיו וַיִּשְׁלְחֵם יִצְחָק וַיֵּלְכוּ מֵאִתּוֹ
בְּשָׁלוֹם :

K) Genesis 24:54 - When they arose the next day, he said, "**Release me** to return to my master."

Structural forms of the verb ש-ל-ח

יִשְׁלַח

I/simple active - "he sent"

יִשְׁלַח

III/intensive active - "he dismissed"

26:32] - That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water!" [26:33] - He named it **Shivah** ["oath"]; therefore the name of the city is **Be'er-Sheva** to this day.

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיָּבֹאוּ עֲבָדֵי יִצְחָק
וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ עַל-אֲדוֹת הַבְּאֵר אֲשֶׁר
חָפְרוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ מִצְאָנוּ מַיִם :
וַיִּקְרָא אֶתֶּה שְׁבַעָה עַל-כֵּן שֵׁם-
הָעִיר בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה