
***Problematic
Midrashim!***

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

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Chayei Sarah 5782



Isaac then brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rebekah as his wife. Isaac loved her, and thus found comfort after his mother's death. – **Bereshit 24:67**¹ For when Abraham came from Mount Moriah he received the news that Rebecca was born (22:20). Isaac was then thirty-seven years old, because at that time Sarah died and from the birth of Isaac until the Binding — when Sarah died — there were 37 years since she was 90 years old when Isaac was born and 127 when she died, as it is said, (23:1) “And the life of Sarah was [one hundred and twenty seven years]” — thus Isaac was then 37 years old. At that period Rebecca was born and he waited until she was fit for marriage — 3 years — and then married her (Seder Olam).

**Isaac then brought her
 into the tent of his
 mother Sarah...**
**וַיְבִאֶהָ יִצְחָק הָאֵלֶּלֶה
 שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ
 Bereshit 24:67**

Rashi on Bereshit 25:20² The well known traditional historic text known as seder olam in its first chapter, also writes that when Avraham returned from the Akeydah he was told that Rivkah had been born. The meaning of that Midrash was that she had been born some time ago. Another proof that she was of age is that we have an iron clad rule that parents must not marry off a girl who has already reached puberty unless she has been asked and given her consent. – **Chizkuni on Bereshit 25:20**³ Chazal here do not actually mean that Rivka was three years old, and wish instead to underscore her quality of pure innocence. – **Dr Yisroel Rosenson – Hatanakh**⁴ Sometimes I come across Talmudic stories that irritate or provoke me. The cultural milieu in which the

rabbis lived and wrote relates to women, non-Jews, children, and slaves in a way that I consider immoral. As a modern woman, many of these attitudes are not foreign to me, but when I confront them in learning, as in life, I opt not to stay angry and frustrated. Rather, I try to find evidence of other voices that challenge the mainstream and catch glimpses of rebelliousness and feminine empowerment. Allowing space for these other voices is a more fruitful political act than dismissing the Talmud as sexist. –

Ruth Calderon in the Introduction to ‘A Bride For One Night⁵. What this means is that the full power of the Torah has yet to come into our view. A new generation of the

Torah is unfolding still. There are some places we can sense the shift, even if we don't know what it will be. We know that the tale of Adam, Eve, and the Edenic vision will someday hold within it new structures and possibilities of gender, though we can't yet quite imagine how. Passages that are puzzling ciphers to us now, or academic curiosities...will find their place in the next generation's moral imagination, helping them articulate their vision for the world. **Avi Garelick, in Reading and Rereading**⁶