

PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH
GENESIS 23:1-25:18



Paris Street; Rainy Day
Painting by Gustave Caillebotte

TO BE CURIOUS ABOUT THE ABSENT

1. The lifetime of Sarah was one hundred twenty-seven years. Sarah died... (Genesis 23:1-2)

Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. (Genesis 25:1)

She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. (Genesis 25:2)

2. The death of Sarah is juxtaposed to the binding of Isaac because as a result of the news of the binding – that her son had been readied for slaughter, and had been all but slaughtered, her soul flew from her and she died. (Rashi, Genesis 23:2)

“Keturah.” This is Hagar; she is called Keturah because her deeds were pleasing as incense (*ketoret*). (Rashi, Genesis 25:1)

“Abraham gave gifts.” He gave over to them the power to perform sorcery. (Rashi, Genesis, 25:6)

“He sent them eastward to the land of the east.” He counselled them: “The farther you can go to the rising of the sun, lest you be burnt by the burning coal of Isaac.” (Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 61.7)

3. The word midrash is a Hebrew word meaning “to search out, to seek, to inquire.” Midrash is the imaginative retelling of a story, based on the fact we know, and imaginatively filling out those areas about which there is no record...they aim to give voice to the silences. the unknown, and the white spaces between words. Midrashic ‘giving voice’ can release silences into the wide realm of images, art, drama, poetry, prose and music....Midrash gives us permission to travel as explorers into the infinite depth of meaning and possibilities that arise....When we explore both what the texts offer us as well as the silences about Ignatius’ life journey, *we notice what might be behind and beyond the text.* (Dr. Sally Longley, “Midrash as a Creative Hermeneutic for the Festive Pilgrimage with Ignatius”)
4. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy readymade...but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into attention. (George Eliot)
5. The artistic vision helps us to see that we see constructively, and to perceive that the world is always coming into focus in numerous shades and angles....The reader is crucial in a very particular sense; for it is the reader who opens new pathways in the texture of the scripture, and reveals new patterns in its warp and woof. (Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*)