

And the life of Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years—the years of Sarah’s life (Gen. 23:1). Rashi explains that "all her years were the same, for good." Rabbi Eveli Bryer (a student of the Chasam Sofer’s student R. M. Katz and the Chasan Sofer) wrote in a notebook of Aggadic novella that he heard from his teachers that Rashi intends to answer an unspoken question: Why did Sarah not live 175 years like her husband Avraham did. To this, Rashi answers that Avraham only recognized his Creator at the age of 48 (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 30:8), so he lived 127 years from then (48 + 127 = 175). But Sarah’s entire life was “equal for the better”, meaning that throughout her life, she always recognized her Creator; she did not have any years of her lifespan during which she did not recognize Hashem. For this reason, Sarah only lived 127 years, while Avraham lived 175.

And the life of Sarah was... (Gen. 23:1). The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* 102) explains that the episode of *Akeidas Yitzchok* is juxtaposed to the episode of Sarah’s death in order to teach us that through news of the *Akeidah*, Sarah died. According to the Midrash, the Satan came and told Sarah about the *Akeidah*, and her soul jumped out of her and she died. Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen of Tzfas (*Sifsei Kohen*) cites this Midrash asks why she died when hearing of the *Akeidah*, we would have expected that she be ecstatic that Hashem chose her son as a sacrifice, especially because Sarah was not like just any person, but was a prophetess to whom Avraham came in second. Moreover, even the cursed Emorites who offered their children up as sacrifices would do so with joyous fanfare, so why should we expect anything less of Sarah? He also cites another opinion that says that when she heard about the *Akeidah*, Sarah committed suicide, but questions this opinion as well in light of the Rabbinic statement that “He who kills himself has no portion in the World to Come”.¹ In light of all of this, Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen proposes a Kabbalistic understanding to this issues at hand. He explains that Sarah is a reincarnation of Eve, as she rectified Eve’s sins. For this reason, she was called Sarai (שרי), as though Hashem forgave her prior misdeeds, because the rabbinic expression which refers to forgiveness literally says, “his Master allowed him” (שרי ליה מאריה). When Sarah saw the Satan, she became scared because she thought he would try to entice her to sin and she would not be able to withstand the test, and end up bringing “death” to her and her descendants for the World to Come, in the same way that the original Eve brought “death” to her and her descendants in This World. According to the first opinion, she died out of this great fear of the Satan. According to the second

¹ R. Dovid Luria (in his glosses to *Kiddushin* 81b) writes that one who kills oneself as a means of atoning for his sins is not considered as somebody who commits suicide. He cites such an idea from *Asifas Zekanim* (*Kesubos* 103b) in the name of Rabbeinu Kalonymous, and the *Maharit* (there). See also R. Akiva Eiger’s glosses to *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah*, 345) and R. Yaakov Reischer’s responsa *Shevus Yaakov* (vol. 2, 111).

opinion, she killed herself, because she reasoned that the Satan could only affect her body, but not her soul, so she “gave him” her body, thereby allowing her soul to escape unharmed. Her “shortcomings” were later rectified by her future daughter-in-law Rivkah, as her original name *Sarai* (= 510) in *gematria* equals *Yitzchok* + *Rivkah* (=515), which an additional five to represent the “tent” within which Yitzchok and Rivkah were unified. This is why the Torah says that after Yitzchok and Rivkah got married, Yitzchok brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent (Gen. 24:67). See also *Minchas Yebuda* by the Riva who explains that Sarah died out **of the sheer happiness** at hearing that her son was chosen to be a sacrifice for Hashem.

... one hundred years and twenty years and seven years... (Gen. 23:1). R. Ephraim Luntshitz in *Kli Yakar* asks why the word “years” is written in singular form (*shanah*) when attached to the numbers one-hundred and to twenty, but written in the plural form (*shanim*) when mentioning the seven years. Logically, one would expect the higher numbers to be in plural notation, and the lower numbers to be in single notation? He explains answers that with pious individuals, even though their whole life is a life of “completion”, they only acquire a greater sense of “completion” in their later years, as they approach the Gates of Death. This is both because a Torah Scholar continuously gains more and more wisdom as he gets older, and because they are coming closer and closer to the Eternal Light of the World to Come. Either way, because of this, the degree of “completion” achieved in one’s earlier years is considered like a single year when compared to the degree of “completion” that a pious man can achieve in later years. For this reason, the same phenomenon of using the plural form of “years” for the higher numbers and the singular form for lower numbers, is also found when discussing the life-span of Avraham (Gen. 25:7) and Yitzchak (Gen. 36:28), and certainly for Yishmael (Gen. 25:17) whose last days were certainly more fruitful than his earlier days (because he repented at the end of his life). R. Yeshaya Horowitz of Frankfurt (*Shelah* to Chayei Sarah, *Derech Chaim Tochachas Mussar*) also mentions similar ideas, and explains that when as a Torah Scholar gets older, he becomes wiser, while as long as an ignoramus gets older, he becomes stupider (see *Shabbos* 152a). With this, *Shelah* explains that when the question of Rivkah marrying Yitzchak was first proposed, her brother Lavan answered before her father Besuel (see Gen. 24:50): Because Besuel was an ignoramus who became old, he was too stupid to answer the question, so Lavan spoke up first. R. Yonah of Gerona (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 2:9) offers a similar discussion of how the pious elders use their energies for the service of Hashem. He writes that when the righteous become old, they continue to channel their strengths and energize their powers for the worship of Hshem, as the rabbis say (*Shabbos* 152a): Torah Scholars, as long as they are getting old, they wisdom continues to compound, as it says, “They will still produce in their old age, they will be robust and refreshed” (Ps. 82:15).

... *one hundred years and twenty years and seven years...* (Gen. 23:1). Rashi explains that when Sarah was twenty years old, she was as beautiful as though she was seven years old. Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, the late Mashgiach of the Mir (*Daas Torah* p. 103, *Biurim to Chayei Sarah*) asks why the physical beauty of the matriarchs is considered so praiseworthy. He answers that a person's physical characteristics are reflections of one's spiritual reality, such that if a person is truly "complete" in a spiritual sense, this will manifest itself in a physical way. So a person who is spiritually "beautiful" can expect to also be physically "beautiful". For this reason too the Talmud (Bava Metzia 84a) speaks of certain Tannaic and Amoraic sages as being physical beautiful—it is simply an indication that they were spiritually "complete" as well. Rabbi Avraham Schorr (*HaLekach veHaLibuv*, 5762, p. 29) also asks this question and continues to ask a similar question about another passage of Rashi. Elsewhere, the Torah mentions a woman named Yiscah (Gen. 11:29), and Rashi (there) explains that this is another name for Sarah because she would gaze (*sachab*) with a Holy Spirit, and because everybody would gaze (*sochin*) upon her beauty. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Darash Moshe*) asks: why is it considered praiseworthy for Sarah that everybody gazed at her beauty, such matters like staring at beautiful women are generally considered at best mundane? He answers that when people stared at Sarah's beauty, they were not aroused to any physical objectives. Rather, when they saw her, they were captivated by her Godly aspects and saw her as a reflection of God's image, this would inspire them to do good things. Accordingly, Sarah's beauty was not a mundane matter, but rather a means towards stirring the masses for lofty goals. For this reason, Rashi explains that when Sarah was twenty years old, she was as beautiful as though she was seven years old. The beauty of a child is a beauty of innocence, and though undeniably beautiful it does not inspire in normal people anything untoward. Such a child is generally not even aware of her own beauty. That innocence serves to inspire the onlookers to do something positive, not something negative. Our Mother Sarah was praised in this way that even when she had reached the age of twenty, she still had the beautiful innocence of a seven-year old.

In Kiryat Arba (Gen. 23:2). In *Bereishis Rabbah* (§58:4), it says that the reason the city is called "Kiryat Arba" (literally, "the City of Four") is because there were four righteous men who were Fathers of the World who were buried there: Adam, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Alternatively, the Midrash says that it was because the four Matriarchs of the World were buried there: Chava, Sarah, Rivkah, and Leah. The commentators ask how the Midrash can refer to Adam and Chava as Avos/Imahos, if the Talmud says (*Brachos* 16a), "We may only call three people Fathers [i.e. Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov] and may only call four women Mothers [i.e. Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah]". How then can Adam and Chava also be called a Father/Mother? R. Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai (*Pesach Einaim* to the beginning of *Eduyos*) answers in the name of R. Yosef Yaavetz (who was expelled from Spain

in 1492) that the term “Fathers of the World” differs from the term “Father”. For this reason, R Akiva in the Mishnah (*Eduyos* 1:4) refers to the Tannaic authorities Hillel and Shammai as Fathers of the World, even though only Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov are considered Fathers. Why, then, is Chava called a Mother, even though only Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah are called Mothers (and one cannot answer that she is the Mother of the World, because the Midrash does not use that phrase about Chava, it only says Fathers of the World regarding the four men)? R. Chanoch Zundel of Bialystok (in *Anaf Yosef* there) writes in the name of R. Shmuel Jaffe-Ashkenazi (*Yefe Toar* there) that the rule of ““We only call three people Fathers...” only applies from the time of Avraham and onwards, but Adam who lived before Avraham can indeed be called a Father. According to this, we can explain that by the same logic, Chava can justifiably be called a Mother, because she lived before Sarah. We can also ask from another Midrash (*Esther Rabbah* 1:11) which refers to the Six Mothers: Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah. How can all six of them be considered mothers, if the Talmud says there are only Four Mothers? Ritva explains (in his commentary to *Yevamos* 46a) that when the Talmud says that only four women are called Mothers, this only refers to calling them mothers in the context of prayer, e.g. to say “Miriam, our mother” or “Yocheved, our mother”. But outside the realm of prayer, one can apply the term “mother” to other women. The Rashba writes in the name of the Raavad that the Talmud only means that we are obligated to honor only three forefathers as Fathers of the Jewish people, but if somebody says—even in prayer—Whoever answered Reuven, our Father, or Shimon our Father, he has not done anything wrong. According to this, we can *certainly* call Adam our “Father” and Chava our “Mother”.

And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry for her... (Gen. 23:2). The letter *kaf* of the word “and to cry for her” (ולביתה) is written smaller than regular. R. Yaakov Baal HaTurim explains that the small *kaf* hints to the fact that he Avraham did not cry over Sarah as much because she was old (and lived a full life). Alternatively, he explains that Avraham did not eulogize her as much because she aroused Hashem’s judgement upon herself (see Gen. 16:5), and was therefore somewhat culpable in her own death. Because of this, Avraham applied to her—to a very minor extent—the principle that one who commits suicide is not eulogized. *Paneach Raza* says that the *kaf* is smaller because even though Avraham eulogized her enough, he did not cry over her loss enough. The Vilna Gaon (cited in *Pninim miShulchan HaGra*) explains that Avraham did not cry over her death so much because he knew that she had completed her role in the world, so the pain of her death was mitigated somewhat. Others cite in the name of the Vilna Gaon that because Sarah died on Erev Sukkos, Avraham did not have a chance to cry excessively over her, since the shiva period ends as Sukkos begins. R. Binyamin Meir Dannon (*Beer baSadeh*) writes that the small *kaf* tells you to also read the word as if the *kaf* were not there, such that the word “and to cry

for her” (ולביתה) would be understood as “and for her house” (ולביתה), an allusion to the loss of the three miracles associated with Sarah’s tent. R. Mendel Kasher in *Torah Shlemah* (23) cites the medieval work *Mincha Belulah* which explains that the small *kaf* alludes to the fact that when Sarah died, her daughter also died with her. This is alluded to in the text of the Bible, because if one reads the word “and to cry for her” (ולביתה) without the letter *kaf*, the word can become “and for her daughter” (ולבתה), rendering the full sentence: “And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and her daughter” (see also Maharshal’s *Yerios Shlomo* and *Maharil Diskin Al Ha-Torah*). The Chasam Sofer (R. Moshe Sofer) similarly writes in *Toras Moshe* that that Sarah’s daughter died, but not that she died at the same time as Sarah, rather that he died beforehand, but only with the death of Sarah did Avraham feel the tragedy of his daughter’s earlier death as well. Nonetheless, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe* vol. 4, 40:6) finds this whole concept difficult to accept because we do not find that Avraham was deserving of such a severe punishment that his child would die in his lifetime. Moreover, that Avraham even had a daughter is not explicit anywhere in the Bible, but is rather alluded to later on when it says “And Hashem blessed Avraham with everything” (Gen. 24:1), which, according to one opinion in the Talmud (*Bava Basra* 16b), means that he had a daughter named Bakol (בכול, literally “everything”). If his daughter predeceased him, then what sort of blessing would this be? Moreover, this verse which alludes to Avraham’s daughter was said *after* Sarah death, not beforehand, which suggest that Bakol at least outlived Sarah (and was possibly even born after her death from another wife of Avraham). On the other hand, there is an advantage to accepting the explanation of the *Mincha Belulah*: The Tosafists (*Bava Basra* 147b) ask that according to the opinion that a Noahide is allowed to marry his sister, why then did Avraham not marry off Yitzchak to his sister Bakol. R. Shlomo HaKohen, a Dayan in Vilna and great-grandfather of the famous R. Nachum Partzovitz, Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, writes (in his second introduction to his work *Binyan Shlomo*) teaches in the name of his father that according to the *Mincha Belulah* (and *Chasam Sofer*) this question is moot, because by the time that Avraham was ready for Yitzchak to get married, Bakol had already died. R. Yonsason Shteiff (*Amaros, Chayei Sarah* 22) explains that really Bakol did not die when Sarah died, but that Avraham nonetheless cried over his daughter when Sarah died because with the loss of Sarah, Bakol lost her main guide in being initiated in the modest and holy ways of Jewish women, and thus he cried for her, for her loss was the most poignant. See also the contemporary work *Kisrei Osiyos*, and R. Chaim Palagi’s *Chaim LeGufa* who compile many more explanations from various sources to explain the small *kaf* in the word “and to cry for her” (ולביתה).

...the doubled cabé... (Gen. 23:9). In the commentary *Zohar HaHagadah* to the *Haggadah Shel Pesach* (pg. 39), R. Yeshaya Asher Zalman Margolies writes that he heard from the elders of Chevron in the name of R. Eliezer Mendel of Lelov that there is a tradition which tells

that the Cave of the Patriarchs spans the entire face of the city of Chevron, such that the entire city rests upon the Holy Cave. See also *Megadim Chadashim* (*Bereishis*, p. 363) about this.

And Avraham listen to Ephron, and he measured for Ephron the silver that he spoke [about] in the ears of the Sons of Ches: four-hundred silver shekel, mercantile tender (Gen. 23:16). R. Chaim Palagi (Tnufah Chaim to Chayei Sara 23:16) points out that the word Ephron (עפרון = 400) is written without the letter *vav* to allude to the 400 shekel with Avraham gave him. Moreover, he notes that the Zohar writes that the letter *vav* is a symbol of generosity and even life itself, the exact opposite of Ephron's behavior in this episode. For this reason, the letter *vav* is missing from his name.

And Avraham was old, he survived [many] days, and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything (Gen. 24:1). The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 107a) says that until Avraham, nobody experienced outward symptoms related to old-age. However, from when Avraham became old, Hashem made old people look different than younger people² so that others would be able to differentiate between Avraham and Yitzchak (who otherwise looked identical). The Chida (*Maris Ayin* to *Sanhedrin* 107a) explains that this is alluded to in the verse at hand which juxtaposes Avraham being old with "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything". What is the connection between these two sentences? Rashi explains that *everything* refers to Avraham fathering a son. This hints to the idea that Avraham only "became old" on account of his son (i.e. so people can tell the difference between him and his son). R. Yaakov Lorberbaum, the Nesivos, in his work on the Aggados, *Emes Le-Yaakov* (to Bava Metzia 87a) explains that this does not literally mean that beforehand people did not get old at all, and thus could not tell the difference between the elderly and the young. Rather, it means that people did not realize the value of old age and the greatness of the experience of the elderly until Avraham came to the world and taught this value. See also *HaDrash vaHaIyun* (*Chayei Sarah*, *Maamar* 94), cited by R. Yonason Steif (*Amaros*, *Chayei Sarah* 55).

The lass (Gen. 24:43). *Peirush ha-Rokeach* explains that Rikvah was called a "lass" (עלמה) because she was hidden (נעלמה) from other people through her modesty.

And he said, go, may Hashem bless you... (Gen. 24:31). The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 60;7) and the *Zohar* (vol. 3, 158a) explain that even though Avraham's servant Eliezer was a descendant of the cursed Cham, because he properly served his master Avraham, he was excluded from the curse and entered into the blessing. To this effect, the Chida (*Dvash le-Fi*,

² R. Yaakov Lorberbaum in *Emes Le-Yaakov* (to Bava Metzia 87a) argues that this does not literally mean that beforehand people could not tell the difference between the elderly and the young; rather, it means that people did not realize the value the elderly like they did afterwards. See also *HaDrash vaHaIyun* (*Chayei Sarah*, *Maamar* 94), cited by R. Yonason Steif (*Amaros*, *Chayei Sarah* §55).

Maareches Aleph 23) explains that by way Divine intervention, Hashem had Lavan say these words to Eliezer to show him that he has now entered the realm of the blessed, and is no longer included in the curse of his genealogy. See also *HaMussar VeHaDaas* of R. Avraham Jofen z"l to our Parshah who elaborates on this idea.

And Rivkah lifted her eyes and she saw Yitzchok, and she fell from atop the camel (Gen. 24:64). Rashi says that Rivkah saw Yitzchak's glory, and she was astonished by him. *Minchas Yebuda* written by the Riva, explains that she fell off her camel when she saw Yitzchak returning from the Garden of Eden in the way that dead people walk (i.e. with the feet on top and their head below), because he was returning from Eden which is a world that is the opposite of ours (this explanation also appears in *Moshav Zekanim*). Others explain that she saw that he was very good looking (see also *Paneach Raza*). R. Ovadiah of Bartenuro (in *Amar N'keh*) similarly explains that Yitzchok went to the Garden of Eden in order to heal himself of the cut that his father gave him on his neck when slaughtering him at the *Akeidah*, he too explains that due to his recent arriving from the Garden of Eden, Yitzchak was walking around upside down. Riva (to Gen. 25:27) also cites a Midrash that Yitzchak spent two years in the Garden of Eden recovering from the cut that his father gave him when he began to slaughter him. The *Chizukuni* finds an allusion to all of this in the Torah's account of the story of the *Akeidah* which concludes by saying, "And Avraham returned to his lads" (Gen. 24:19), implying that *only* Avraham returned home, but Yitzchak remained away—because he went to the Garden of Eden for *three* years.³

And Yitzchok brought her to the tent of his mother Sarah... (Gen. 24:67). Rashi explains that there were three miracles which occurred with Sarah's tent that ceased to exist when she died, but returned when Rivkah moved into her tent. These three miracles were the Shabbos candles which lasted the entire week, bread which did not spoil during the week, and presence of a special cloud over the tent. Rabbi Chaim Vital (*Etz HaDaas Tov*, vol. 2, 342) explains that all three of these miracles are related to the idea that Sarah rectified whatever sins Chava committed by eating the Forbidden Fruit (see also *Zohar Chadash*, *Yisro* 52a and *Nachal Kedumim* at the beginning of *Parshas Chayei Sarah*). By causing Adam to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, Chava brought death to the world and effectively "extinguished" what our Sages (Midrash Tanchuma, Bereshis 1) refer to as "the Candle of the World" (i.e. the soul of Adam). In response, Sarah sought to rekindle the flame of the world and brought other women closer to God, so her candle remained lit from one *Erev Shabbos* to the next *Erev Shabbos*. By convincing Adam to eat from the Tree of Knowledge (which some sources say was wheat), Chava soiled the Challah (First Bread) of the World

³ See Otzar Pelaos Hatorah for an absolutely amazing interpretation of this on an allegorical level from the saintly Minchas Elazar of Munkacz.

(i.e. Adam). In response, Sarah would take extra care to separate the *Challah* tithes only when in a state of ritual purity, so her bread remained unblemished and unspoiled throughout the week. By causing Adam to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, Chava caused the Holy Presence of Hashem to leave the Lower Realms and retreat to the Upper Realms, yet Sarah strove throughout her life to bring the Glory of Hashem to all of mankind, so a special Cloud of Glory rested upon her tent.

And to the sons of the concubines, Avraham gave gifts... (Gen. 25:6). Rashi cites the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 91a) that explains that this means that Avraham revealed to them special Names of Impurity, Rashi (there) explains that these Names of Impurity refers to sorts of witchcraft and summoning demons. And yet, it sounds absurd at first glance that Avraham would teach his own children these occultist practices, because Avraham spent his entire life spreading the word of God and drawing other people to Holiness; why would the legacy that he bequeathed to his own children be something to the contrary of his life's mission? R. Aharon Worms (*Meorei Ohr*, vol. 7 p. 18a) explains that Avraham's objective was to insure that his descendants would be familiar with witchcraft and the like in order that they would be able to withstand social pressures to engage in the dark arts. Alternatively, just as the Sanhedrin was required to be familiar with the inner workings of witchcraft in order to be able to try offenders convicted of such practices (see *Sanhedrin* 17a), so did Avraham want his children to be familiar with such things to know exactly what was forbidden and what not.

And to the sons of the concubines, Avraham gave gifts... (Gen. 25:6). Rashi explains that the word “concubines” (פלגשים) is spelled *choser* (lacking, or “plene”), i.e. without the letter *yod*⁴ in order to teach that Avraham actually only had one concubine—for Hagar and Keturah were one and the same. Rashi further explains that “wives” are women that one marries with a *Kesubah* (document committing the man to supporting his wife), and “concubines” are women whom one marries without a *Kesubah*. There are two major problems with this Rashi that we must try to resolve. Firstly, what is the connection between the beginning of Rashi's comment (concerning the the word “concubines” alluding to Hagar and Keturah being the same person) and the end of his comment (in which he explains the Halachic difference between a “wife” and a “concubine”)? Secondly, Rashi asserts that the lack of *yod* in the word פלגשים alluded to the fact that Avraham only had one concubine, not multiple concubines. However, the suffix that denotes plurality in Hebrew is not just the letter *yod*, but the combination of *yod* and the final letter *mem*. In this case, even if there is no letter *yod* in the word פלגשים, there is still a *mem*; it does not say פלגש, or פלגשו. So how does Rashi deal with the letter *mem* appended to the word “concubine”? There is an explanation

⁴ See *Sifsei Chachamim* for a completely different reading of Rashi's assertion that this is “*choser*”.

cited in the name of the Vilna Gaon which addresses these issues:⁵ The Talmud (*Bava Kama* 89a) rules that it is forbidden for a man to live with his wife for even one moment, unless they have written a *Kesubah*. Why should this Halacha be true? What sort of trust does the *Kesubah* add to this union that cannot be achieved in any other way? Moreover, why is a marriage document called a *Kesubah* (כתובה), why is not just simply called a *kesav* (כתב, something written)? The Vilna Gaon explains that the Talmud elsewhere (*Sotah* 17a) characterizes the union of man and woman as the union of the letters *yod* and *hey*, because the difference between the word “man” (אִישׁ) and the word “woman” (אִשָּׁה) are exactly those two letters. The letters *yod* and *hey* make up half of the Hashem’s four letter name. What happened to the other two letters?⁶ Those two letters are supplied by the marriage document, which is called a *Kesubah* which has an extra *vav* and *hey* over the word *kesav*. By uniting man and woman through a committed marriage, represented by this document, one now has all four letters of Hashem’s Name, and so His Holy Presence can now fully rest on the couple. This is the relationship between man and “wife”. However, as Rashi explains, a “concubine” is a woman that somebody marries without a marriage document. In that situation, only two out of the four letters of God’s name are joined by this union. In other words, as a man-concubine relationship only reflects half of God’s name. After Rashi explained that the lack of *yod* in the word פלגשים alluded to Avraham only marrying *one* concubine, he was bothered by the presence of the *mem* in the word פלגשים. To justify the appearance of the letter *mem*, Rashi explained that a “concubine” is a woman that one marries without a marriage document, whose union only joins half of God’s name and not the whole name. This is because the word פלגשם (“concubine” with an extra *mem* at the end) can be read as פלג שם (“half the Name”), in allusion to what we have just written.

These are the years of the life of Avraham that he lived: one hundred years and seventy years and five years (Gen. 25:7). Is it not somewhat redundant to say: “These are the years of the life of Avraham *that he lived*”; they are the years of his life, obviously he lived them?! R. Moshe Alshich offers two ways of answering this question. Firstly, he explains that the Midrash (*Bereshis Rabbah* 63:16) asserts that Avraham was really supposed to live to the age of one-hundred and eighty (like his son Yitzchak did), but Hashem had him die five years earlier so that he would not see his grandson Esav stray from the proper path. According to this, out of the one-hundred and eighty years of Avraham’s prearranged

⁵ This is found in a manuscript entitled *Drashos ve-Chiddushei HaShas ve-Halacha*, written by R. Wolf Boskowitz (the Rav of Bonyhad), and was published in the *Hamaor HaGadol, Parshas Chayei Sarah*, pgs. 63-64.

⁶ R. Aryeh Leib Tzintz in *Melo Ha-Omer (Parshas Toldos)* asks this question and explains that having a son and daughter (the required offspring to complete the commandment of procreation) completes the picture, because a son represents the letter *vav* and a daughter represents the letter *hey*.

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A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff
PARSHAS CHAYEI SARA

lifespan, he only lived for 175 years. Alternatively, the Alshich explains that Avraham was not a natural-born Jew, but rather “converted” to Judaism by recognizing Hashem on his own. According to this, one might think that when we speak about the years that Avraham “lived” this only refers to the years he spent doing righteous deeds, but his early years are not counted. To that effect, the Torah tells us that all 175 years of his life, he acted righteously—even before he recognized Hashem.