

Parashat Hayyei Sarah: Yitzhak's Trauma

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Bereishit 24:63	
וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לְפָנוֹת עָרֶב וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה גְמָלִים בָּאִים:	And Yitzhak went out walking in the field toward evening and, looking up, he saw camels approaching.

"Hapax legomenon," Wikipedia
In corpus linguistics, a hapax legomenon ...is a word or an expression that occurs only once within a context: either in the written record of an entire language, in the works of an author, or in a single text.

1. Yitzhak in Prayer

Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 60:14	
...וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לְפָנוֹת עָרֶב, אֵין שִׁיחָה אֶלָּא תַפְלָה, שְׁנֵאמַר (תהלים קב, א): תַפְלָה לַעֲנִי כִי יַעֲטֹף וְלִפְנֵי ה' יִשְׁפֹךְ שִׁיחוֹ, וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר (תהלים נה, יח): עָרֶב וּבֹקֶר וְצַהֲרַיִם אֲשִׁיחָה וְגו'.	And Isaac went out <i>lasuach</i> in the field towards evening. <i>Sichah</i> only means prayer, as it says: "A prayer of the lowly one when faint, who pours forth a <i>Sichah</i> before the Eternal" (Psalm 102:1) and thus it says: "Evening, morning and noon I speak..."

Bavli Berakhot 26b	
יִצְחָק תִּקֵּן תַפְלַת מִנְחָה, שְׁנֵאמַר "וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לְפָנוֹת עָרֶב", וְאֵין "שִׁיחָה" אֶלָּא תַפְלָה, שְׁנֵאמַר "תַפְלָה לַעֲנִי כִי יַעֲטֹף וְלִפְנֵי ה' יִשְׁפֹךְ שִׁיחוֹ".	Yitzhak instituted the afternoon prayer, as it is stated: "And Yitzhak went out to converse [<i>lasuah</i>] in the field toward evening" (Genesis 24:63), and conversation means nothing other than prayer, as it is stated: "A prayer of the afflicted when he is faint and pours out his complaint [<i>siho</i>] before the Lord" (Psalms 102:1). Obviously, Yitzhak was the first to pray as evening approached, at the time of the afternoon prayer.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Kohen Hook, <i>Olat Reiyah</i> , Essays on Prayer 6	
שיחה תקרא התפלה, בשם משתתף עם צמחים ואילנות, שנקראו שיחים, על הפרחת הנפש בכחות חדשים, המסתעפים באפן טבעי ע"י רגשת הנפש בעבודה שבלב. זה ראוי ביותר לעת מנחת	Prayer is called <i>sichah</i> (conversation), sharing a name with the plants and trees which are called <i>sichim</i> , due to the blossoming of the soul with new powers, which branch out naturally through the excitation of the soul in the service of the heart. This is most fit to the time of

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

<p>ערב, שהאדם קרוב להסיר מעליו את הטרדות, ואז תוכל נפשו להתרומם בטבעה, ורגשי הקדש הטבעיים, האצורים בתוכה, לדבקה באלהים חיים ולהתגבר באהבתו ויראתו הטהורה, יוסיפו פרי תנובה וישלחו בדים ופאות להיות כדמות אילן רב ואחד השיחים. ההפרכה הטבעית הזאת מתוך יושר הנפש היא שרש להנהגת הדין, אל הנוטה מנתיב יושר של ארחות חיים...</p>	<p>the evening offering, (see Tehillim 141:2) when one is close to casting off their troubles. Then their soul can elevate her nature, and the natural holy emotions stored up in her, to join to the living God and overflow with His pure love and awe, increasing fertile fruit and sending out shoots and branches, taking the likeness of a mighty tree - one of the <i>sichim</i>. This natural blossoming from within the rightness of the soul is the root of the judgment which is passed upon the one who turns aside from the straight path of life.</p>
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2. Yitzhak in Nature

Ibn Ezra on Bereishit 24:63	
<p>לשוח. ללכת בין השיחים:</p>	<p>And Yitzhak went out to meditate: The word <i>la-su'ach</i> (to meditate) means to walk among the trees.</p>

Rashbam on Bereishit 24:63	
<p>ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה - כדכתיב: וכל שיח השדה כלומר: לטעת אילנות ולראות ענייני פועליו ואז בהיותו בשדה ראה גמלים באים והלך לקראתם לראות אם הם גמלי אביו שהוליך העבד.</p>	<p>ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה, the word לשוח is basically the same as שיח השדה, "the plants that grow in the field," (Genesis 2,5). Yitzchok went out to plant useful vegetation, trees, etc., and to check the work of his employees. While he was thus occupied he happened to see if per chance they were the camels belonging to his father which the servant Eliezer had been leading.</p>

Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein, "Parshat Toledot: Yizhak, Esav, and the Field" (5783)
<p>...the person who is alone in front of nature and all its mighty features might instead turn in another direction. He is liable to shake off society's chains and morals, and join a wild world where only the strongest survive and everything is subject to considerations of personal benefit. This is true not only at the behavioral level but also at the conceptual level: in such a reality, a person may think that he is solely in control of the world, which is all material and disconnected from the sublime.</p>

3. Yitzhak's Trauma

Dr. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, <i>The Beginning of Desire</i> , "Parashat Toledot: Sincerity and Authenticity," 163
<p>What emerges...is a portrait of Isaac imprinted with the deep death-knowledge of his Binding, face turned toward the dying of the light, darkly narrating his story to God. The field in which Isaac walks he transforms into the language of prayer.</p>

Rabbi Shai Held, <i>The Heart of Torah</i> , "Parashat Hayyei Sarah: On the Akedah and its Aftermath," 41
<p>Arguably...something even deeper is going on here. Isaac has just come from a terrifying encounter with God's mysterious, uncompromisingly demanding side. Much of what had guided him has been called into dramatic and excruciating question: Who is Abraham, a father who declares his presence to Isaac and yet agrees to sacrifice him? And who is the God who demands such behavior of Abraham?</p>