

Parashat Hayyei Sarah: O Captain! My Captain!

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Bereishit 25:7-10	
וְאֵלֶּה יְמֵי שְׁנֵי-חַיֵּי אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר-חִי מֵאֵת שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וְחֹמֶשׁ שָׁנִים: וַיָּגֹעַ וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה זָקֵן וְשָׂבַע וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל-עַמּוּיוֹ:	This was the total span of Abraham's life: one hundred and seventy-five years. And Abraham breathed his last, dying at a good ripe age, old and contented; and he was gathered to his kin.

Bereishit 47:9	
וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-פַּרְעֹה יְמֵי שְׁנֵי מִגְוְרֵי שְׁלָשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה מָעַט וְרָעִים הָיוּ יְמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי וְלֹא הָשִׁיגוּ אֶת-יְמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי אֲבוֹתַי בְּיַמֵּי מִגְוָרֵיהֶם:	And Jacob answered Pharaoh, "The years of my sojourn [on earth] are one hundred and thirty. Few and hard have been the years of my life, nor do they come up to the life spans of my ancestors during their sojourns."

1. Abraham Was "Old and Content"

Bavli Bava Batra 91a-b	
וַאֲמַר רַב חֲנַן בַּר רַבָּא אָמַר רַב: עֶשְׂרֵי שָׁנִים נִחְבְּשׁ אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ – שְׁלֹשׁ בְּכוּתָא, וְשִׁבְעַת בְּקַרְדּוּ. וְרַב דִּימִי מִנְהַרְדֵּעָא מַתְנִי אִיפְכָא. אָמַר רַב חֲסִידָא: עֵיבָרָא זַעִירָא דְכוּתָא – זָהוּ אֹר כְּשָׂדִים.	And Rav Hanan bar Rava says that Rav says: Our forefather Abraham was imprisoned for ten years, because he rejected the idol worship that was accepted in his land. He was imprisoned for three years in the city of Khuta , and seven years in Karddu . And Rav Dimi of Neharde'a teaches the opposite , that he was imprisoned seven years in Khuta and three in Karddu. Rav Hilda said: The small passage of Khuta, this is Ur of the Chaldeans (Bereishit 11:31).
וַאֲמַר רַב חֲנַן בַּר רַבָּא אָמַר רַב: אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם שֶׁנִּפְטָר אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ מִן הָעוֹלָם, עָמְדוּ כָּל גְּדוּלֵי אוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם בְּשׁוּרָה; וְאָמְרוּ: אוֹי לוֹ לְעוֹלָם שֶׁאֲבָד מִנְהִיגוֹ, וְאוֹי לָהּ לְסָפִינָה שֶׁאֲבָד קִבְרָנִיטָה.	And Rav Hanan bar Rava says that Rav says: On that day when our forefather Abraham left the world, the leaders of the nations of the world stood in a line, in the manner of mourners, and said: Woe to the world that has lost its leader, and woe to the ship that has lost its captain.

Sforno on Bereishit 25:8	
וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל עַמּוּיוֹ. נֶאֱסָף אֶל צָרוֹר הַחַיִּים לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם עִם צִדִּיקֵי הַדּוֹרוֹת שֶׁהֵם עַמּוּיוֹ וְדוֹמִים אֵלָיו וְאָמְרוּ עַמּוּיוֹ בְּלִשׁוֹן רַבִּים כִּי אֲמַנָּם רַב הַהֲבָדֵל בֵּין הַצִּדִּיקִים בְּמַעֲלָה עִם הָיִיתָם כָּלֵם זֻכִּים	וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל עַמּוּיוֹ, he was attached to the bundle of souls who are part of the life after death, all of whom the righteous of the various generations who were like him in lifestyle. The reason why the Torah employs the term עַמּוּיוֹ his peoples" in the plural is that there are all kinds

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted were ,.

לחיי עולם...	of different spiritual levels among the righteous souls, not all attained the same level of righteousness while on earth although all of them share the experience of enjoying eternal life..
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Rabbeinu Bahya on Bereishit 25:8	
<p>זָקֵן וְשֹׁבֵעַ. לִפִּי שְׁנִיתְבָּרָה אֲבִרָהֶם בְּכָל דִּבְרֵי וְהִיא שָׁלֵם בְּכָל מִינֵי הָעֶשֶׂר וְהַכְּבוֹד הַגִּיד עֵתָה שְׂיֵצֵא מִן הָעוֹלָה"ז זָקֵן וְשֹׁבֵעַ מְכֹל טוֹב. וְלִזְהָ לֹא אָמַר וְשֹׁבֵעַ יָמִים כִּי הִיא בְּמִשְׁמַע שֶׁהִיא חֹסֶר מִשְׁאָר הַדְּבָרִים וְלֹא שֹׁבֵעַ מֵהֶם כִּי אִם הַחַיִּים. וְעַ"כּ הַגִּיד לָנוּ הַכְּתוּב מִדּוֹתָיו הַטּוֹבוֹת שְׂיֵצֵא שֹׁבֵעַ מִן הָעוֹלָם מְכֹל דִּבְרֵי כִּי לֹא הִיא מִתְאַוָּה לְמוֹתָרוֹת. כְּעִנְיָן שֶׁכְּתוּב בְּדִיד ע"ה (תְּהִלִּים כ"א:ג') תִּאָּזֵן לָבוֹ נִתְּנָה לוֹ. וְלֹא כְּשֶׁאֵר בְּנֵי הָעוֹלָם שֶׁכְּתוּב (קֹהֶלֶת ה'ט') אוֹהֵב כֶּסֶף לֹא יִשְׁבֵּעַ כֶּסֶף. וְכֵן דָּרְשׁוּ רַז"ל אֵין אָדָם יוֹצֵא מִן הָעוֹלָם וְחֹצֵי תַּאוֹתוֹ בִּידוֹ. יֵשׁ בִּידוֹ מִנֶּה מִתְאַוָּה מֵאֲתִים יֵשׁ בִּידוֹ מֵאֲתִים מִתְאַוָּה לַעֲשׂוֹת ד' מֵאוֹת. שְׁנֵאֲמַר אוֹהֵב כֶּסֶף לֹא יִשְׁבֵּעַ כֶּסֶף.</p>	<p>זָקֵן וְשֹׁבֵעַ, "old and content." Seeing that the Torah had told us previously that Avraham had been blessed by God in all that mattered, and that he had been the recipient of material wealth and honour of every conceivable kind, the Torah tells us that because of this, he died without any regrets, did not feel that there were things he had not been able to achieve. This was in pronounced contrast to the fate of the average person of whom we are told in Kohelet Rabbah 1,34 that "when a person dies, half his aspirations in life for acquisitions went unfulfilled." If he had once made the acquisition of say 1 million his objective, he had raised this objective as soon as he had realised it, so that when he died, he had felt cheated by life. The author of Kohelet called this syndrome כֶּסֶף לֹא יִשְׁבֵּעַ כֶּסֶף, "he who loves silver will never get enough of it" (Kohelet 5,9).</p>

2. O Captain! My Captain!

Walt Whitman, "O Captain! My Captain!" (April 16, 1865)
<p>O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done; The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won; The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting, While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring: But O heart! heart! heart! O the bleeding drops of red, Where on the deck my Captain lies, Fallen cold and dead.</p>
<p>O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells; Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills; For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding; For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning; Here Captain! dear father! This arm beneath your head; It is some dream that on the deck, You've fallen cold and dead.</p>
<p>My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still; My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will; The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done; From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won; Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells! But I, with mournful tread, Walk the deck my Captain lies, Fallen cold and dead.</p>
Big Question: What makes hospitality sacred?