

Parashat Pinhas: Serah Bat Asher

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Bemidbar 26:46	
וְשֵׁם בֵּת-אֲשֵׁר שֶׁרָח:	The name of Asher's daughter was Serah.—

1. Who Is Serah Bat Asher?

Bereishit 46:17	
וּבְנֵי אֲשֵׁר יִמְנָה וְיִשְׁוֹה וְיִשְׁוִי וְבִרְיָעָה וְשֶׁרָח אֲחֹתָם וּבְנֵי בִרְיָעָה חֶבֶר וּמַלְכִּיֵּאל:	Asher's sons: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah, and their sister Serah. Beriah's sons: Heber and Malchiel.

Rashi on Bemidbar 26:46	
וְשֵׁם בֵּת אֲשֵׁר שֶׁרָח. לְפִי שְׁהִיְתָה קִיָּמָת בְּחַיֶּיהָ מִנְּאָה כָּאֵן (סדר עולם):	And Asher's daughter was named Serah: Because she still remained alive after all these long years (Sotah 13a) it exceptionally mentions her here (Seder Olam 9).

2. Revealer of Secrets

Bavli Sotah 13a	
וּמִנֵּין הָיָה יוֹדֵעַ מֶשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ הֵיכָן יוֹסֵף קָבֹוּר? אָמְרוּ: סָרַח בֵּת אֲשֵׁר נִשְׁתַּיְיְרָה מֵאוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר. הֲלֹךְ מֶשֶׁה אֶצְלָהּ, אָמַר לָהּ: כָּלוּם אֶת יוֹדְעֵת הֵיכָן יוֹסֵף קָבֹוּר? אָמְרָה לוֹ: אֲרוֹן שָׁל מִתְּכֶת עָשׂוּ לוֹ מִצָּרִים וְקָבְעוּהוּ בְּנִילוֹס הַנָּהָר, כְּדִי שִׁיתְבָּרְכוּ מִיָּמָיו.	The Gemara asks: And from where did Moses our teacher know where Joseph was buried? The Sages said: Serah, the daughter of Asher, remained from that generation that initially descended to Egypt with Jacob. Moses went to her and said to her: Do you know anything about where Joseph is buried? She said to him: The Egyptians fashioned a metal casket for him and set it in the Nile [Nilus] River as an augury so that its water would be blessed.

Sefer Ha-Yashar, Sefer Bereishit: Parashat Vayigash	
(ט) וַיְכַל יוֹסֵף לְצוּוֹת אוֹתָם וַיֵּפֶן וַיֵּשֶׁב מִצְרִימָה, וּבְנֵי יַעֲקֹב הָלְכוּ אֶרֶצָה כְּנָעַן בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבִטְוָבָה אֶל יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם. וַיְבֹאוּ עַד גְּבוּל הָאָרֶץ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ, מָה נַעֲשֶׂה בַדָּבָר הַזֶּה לִפְנֵי אֲבִינוּ. כִּי אִם נִבְּאוּ אֵלָיו פֶּתְאוּם וַנִּגַּד לוֹ הַדָּבָר וַיִּבְהַל מְאֹד	(9) And when Joseph had finished giving them his orders, he turned: and went back into Egypt, and the sons of Jacob went to the land of Canaan, in joy and happiness to their father. And when they came to the boundaries of the land, they said to one another: What shall we do in bringing this matter before our father? For if we impart it to him suddenly, and tell him all about it, he will be greatly astounded at our words, and he will

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

מדברינו, ולא יאבה לשמוע אלינו. וילכו להם עד קרבם אל בתיהם וימצאו את שרח בת אשר אשר יוצאת לקראתם, והנערה טובה עד מאוד וחכמה ויודעת לנגן בכינור. ויקראו אליה ותבוא אליהם ותשק להם, ויקחוה ויתנו לה כינור אחד לאמור. בואי נא לפני אבינו וישבת לפניו, והך בכינור ודיברת ואמרת כדברים האלה לפניו. ויצאו אותה ללכת אל ביתם, ותיקח הכינור ותמהר ותלך לפנייהם ותשב אצל יעקב. ותיטיב הכינור ותנגן ותאמר בנועם דבריה, יוסף דודי חי הוא וכי הוא מושל בכל ארץ מצרים ולא מת. ותוסף ותנגן ותדבר כדברים האלה, וישמע יעקב את דבריה ויערב לו. וישמע עוד בדברה פעמיים ושלש, ותבוא השמחה בלב יעקב מנועם דבריה ותהי עליו רוח אלוקים וידע כי כל דבריה נכונה. ויברך יעקב את שרח בדברה הדברים האלה לפניו ויאמר אליה, בתי אל ימשול מות בך עד עולם כי החיית את רוחי. אך דברי נא עוד לפניי כאשר דיברת, כי שמחתי בכל דבריך. ותוסף ותנגן כדברים האלה ויעקב שומע ויערב לו וישמח, ותהי עליו רוח אלוקים. עודנו מדבר עמה והנה בניו באו אליו בסוסים ומרכבות ובגדי מלכות, ועבדים רצים לפנייהם. ויקם יעקב לקראתם וירא את בניו מלובשים בלבוש מלכות, וירא את כל הטובה אשר שלח יוסף אליהם. ויאמרו אליו, התבשר כי יוסף אחינו חי והוא המושל בכל ארץ מצרים, והוא אשר דיבר אלינו ככל אשר דיברנו אליך. וישמע יעקב את כל דברי בניו ויפג לבו אל דבריהם, כי לא האמין להם עד ראותו את כל אשר נתן להם יוסף ואשר שלח לו ואת כל האותות אשר דיבר יוסף אליהם. ויפתחו לפניו את שקיהם ויראוהו את כל אשר שלח יוסף, וידע יעקב כי נכונה דיברו וישמח מאוד על בנו.

refuse to listen to us. And when they went on until they approached their houses, they met Serah coming towards them, and the damsel was exceedingly beautiful and wise, and a skilled player on the harp; and they called her, and she came unto them, and she kissed them. And they took her and gave her a harp saying unto her: Go, we pray thee, before our father and sit down before him and strike this harp and speak unto him according to these words. And they instructed her concerning what she had to say, and she hastened unto Jacob and she sat down before him. And she sang and she played beautifully upon the harp, and she sang in the sweetness of her voice: Joseph my uncle is alive, and he reigneth over all the land of Egypt; he is not dead. And she often repeated these words. And Jacob heard her words, and it pleased him greatly, and when he heard her sing it twice and three times, the heart of Jacob was possessed by joy, through the sweetness of her voice, and the spirit of God came over him, and he knew that all her words were true. And Jacob blessed Serah for singing these words before him, and he said: My daughter, may death never prevail against thee forever, for thou hast revived my spirit, only repeat thou this song once more before me, for thou hast caused me gladness with thy words. And she sang once more the same words, and Jacob listened, and he was pleased, and he rejoiced, and the spirit of God came over him. And while he was yet speaking with her, his sons came before him with horses and chariots and royal garments and servants running before them. And Jacob arose and went to meet them, and he saw his sons dressed in royal garments and all the good things that Joseph sent unto them. And they said unto him: Be thou informed that our brother Joseph lives, and that he ruleth over the whole land of Egypt, and it is he who hath spoken unto us all we have told unto thee. And Jacob heard all the words of his sons, and his heart fainted, for he believed them not until he saw all that Joseph had given unto them and all that Joseph had sent along with them, and all the signs he had spoken of unto them. And they unpacked all the things before him, and they displayed all that Joseph had sent, and they gave to every one of them what Joseph had sent him. And Jacob knew that they had spoken the truth, and rejoiced greatly because of his son.

3. Realization of the Divine Plan

Tamar Kadari, "Serah bat Asher," *Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*

The character of Serah, who accompanies the Israelites to Egypt and enters the land of Canaan with them, embodies the history of the people of Israel. Her character is linked with those of the people's leaders, and she expedites the realization of the Divine plan. This is her role when she convinces Jacob that Joseph still lives, thus resulting in his going down to Egypt; she continues in this task when she identifies Moses as the true redeemer of Israel, thus leading the people to heed him; and thus, when she helps Moses to find Joseph's bones, so as not to delay the Exodus from Egypt. Serah's appearance seemingly confirms that God's promises will be fulfilled and that the people of Israel will leave Egypt and come to and take possession of the Promised Land.