

ParShaT *VaYaYRaH* – One Pager Series

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Rashi #1: Biblical Text Gn21-01: [Background: Sarah is taken as wife by Avimelech when Abraham claimed she was a sister not a wife; God punished Avimelech; Avimelech returned Sarah and Abraham's prayers cured Avimelech's household; Avimelech's wives gave birth; the text continues:]

- i) God **had** visited Sarah as He discussed
- ii) God did to Sarah as he said [Sarah gave birth]

Rashi Text #1A: God **had** already done this prior to the Avimelech incident; the juxtaposition (paragraph sequence) of *Abraham's prayers curing Avimelech* (birth of his wives), *God had remembered Sarah* (with her birth), shows the efficacy of prayer: Prayer for other's well-being (Avimelech's wives should give birth) result in your own prayers for wellbeing being answered (Abraham's wife Sarah gave birth)

Rashi Text #1B: Clause i) refers to God's discussion in Gn17:15-16 (using the word discuss) that Sarah would give birth to a child while Clause ii) refers to God's saying in Gn15-04:05 (using the word say) that Sarah's son would inherit the Abrahamitic legacy.

Rashiyomi explanation #1A: We use the Grammar method here twice. According to Rashi, in biblical Hebrew, past conjugation (*pakad*) should be translated as the *past perfect*, *God had already remembered Sarah*; the paragraph sequence method (since this paragraph is out of sequence) now explains that the juxtaposition of the two paragraphs - #1) Abraham praying for Avimelech's wives to give birth, #2) Abraham's own wife giving birth – indicates attributes of prayer, that prayer for someone else (Avimelech's wives had children) is also efficacious for oneself (Abraham's wife had child).

Rashiyomi explanation #1B: We use the Parallelism method here and in fact use Kugel's idea of parallelism as indicating climax. Not only did God remember Sarah and give her a child as he promised in Gn17, but he also did for that child what he promised in Gn15, that that child would be the inheritor of the Abrahamitic destiny. The reading of Gn21-01 as indicating *birth-inheritance* is based on parallelistic climax.

Rashi #2: Biblical Text Gn21-07: [Background: Sarah just gave birth to a child at 90. In praise of God she says] Who would have uttered this (event) about Abraham

Rashi text: The word utter is unusual; perhaps more natural would be "Who would have said this about Abraham" or "Who would have expressed this." The word utter is therefore a pun, pointing to the miracle in Sarah's utterus.

Rashiyomi explanation: The pun is a Rashi *form*; it is not the real reason; it helps one remember the commentary. The true explanation (Rav Hirsch) is derived from plant terms being used to describe spoken language: *Fruit bearing trees*, refers to *fruitful advice* (*aytz-ayzah*); a *branch* refers to a *speech or story* (*Amir-amar*); hence *leaf* refers to single word utterances (*millel, milah*). Rav Hirsch notes that *utter* is a sign of emotional shock (good or bad); it occurs frequently in Job's narratives since he was in a state of shock on his misfortune; here it captures the emotional shock of Sarah at giving birth.