

Sources for Podcast on Parshat Vayigash: Serah Bat Asher Nechama Goldman Barash for Elmad

1. Genesis Chapter 46

8 And these are the names of the children of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's first-born. [...] 15 These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore unto Jacob in Paddan-aram, with his daughter Dinah; all the souls of his sons and his daughters were thirty and three. 16 And the sons of Gad: Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli. 17 And the sons of Asher: Imnah, and Ishvah, and Ishvi, and Beriah, and **Serah their sister**; and the sons of Beriah: Heber, and Malchiel.

2. [Numbers 26:44-47](#)

(44) The descendants of Asher according to their families: of Imnah, the family of the Imnites; of Ishvi, the family of the Ishvites; of Beriah, the family of the Beriites. (45) Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites; of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites. (46) **And the name of the daughter of Asher was Serach.** (47) These are the families of the sons of Asher according to those that were numbered of them, fifty and three thousand and four hundred.

3. **Midrash HaGadol, Genesis 45:26**, (Trans. By Avivah Zornberg in her book Genesis, the Beginning of Desire, p.281).

[The brothers said:] If we tell him right away, "Joseph is alive!" perhaps he will have a stroke [lit., his soul will fly away]. What did they do? They said to Serach, daughter of Asher, "Tell our father Jacob that Joseph is alive, and he is in Egypt." What did she do? She waited till he was standing in prayer, and then said in a tone of wonder, "Joseph is in Egypt / There have been born on his knees / Menasseh and Ephraim" [three rhyming lines].

“ יוסף במצרים / יולדו לו על ברכים / מנשה ואפרים ”

His heart failed while he was standing in prayer. When he finished his prayer, he saw the wagons: immediately the spirit of Jacob came back to life.

4. **Sefer Hayashar, Vayigash (13th century CE Europe)**

And so they went until they came near their homes and they found Serach Bat Asher coming towards them, and the girl was very good and wise and knows how to play the violin. They called out to her, she came and kissed them and they gave her a violin and said: "Come before our father, sit and play the violin and tell him these things". So she was ordered to go home, take the violin

and hurry and sit before Yaakov. She played well and gently said: "My uncle Joseph is alive and governs all of Egypt. He is not dead".

She continued to play and repeat what she had said. And Yaakov heard her and was pleased. And when he heard her twice and three times he felt happy and Ruach Elokim was upon him and he knew she spoke the truth. And Yaakov blessed Serach for telling him and he said to her: "My daughter, death will not conquer you forever for you brought my spirit alive. Please speak again for your words make me happy".

5. Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer 48

Rabbi Eliezer says there are five letters that are doubled in the Torah, and all of them contain the secret of redemption...*kaf-kaf...mem-mem...nun-nun...pei-pei...and tzadi-tzadi...* through which our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt, as it says, "*pakod pakadeti etkhem*" (I have taken note of you, Ex.3:16)...These letters (*pei-pei*) were delivered solely to our father Abraham. Our father Abraham delivered them to Isaac, and Isaac [delivered them] to Jacob, and Jacob delivered the mystery of the Redemption to Joseph, as it is said, "But God will surely take notice of you (*pakod yifkod etchem*)" (Gen. 50:24). Joseph his son delivered the secret of the Redemption to his brothers. **Asher, the son of Jacob, delivered the mystery of the Redemption to Serach, his daughter.**

6. Mechilta R' Yishmael, Beshalach (end of 4th CE)

In Exodus it is written: And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him (Exodus 13 19) The Mechilta Rabbi Yishmael on Beshalach asks: How did Moshe know where Joseph was buried? Serach Bat Asher remained from that generation and she showed him Joseph's burial place. She said: "This is where they put him. The Egyptians made him a metal casket and sunk him in the Nile".

7. B. Talmud Sota 13a

It is related that Serach, daughter of Asher, was a survivor of that generation. Moses went to her and asked, -Dost thou know where Joseph is buried?" She answered him, -The Egyptians made a metal coffin for him which they fixed in the river Nile so that its waters should be blessed." Moses went and took a tablet of gold on which he engraved the Tetragrammaton, threw it into the Nile, stood on the bank of the Nile and exclaimed, -Joseph, Joseph! The time has arrived which the Holy One, blessed be He swore, -I will deliver you, and the oath which thou didst impose upon the Israelite has reached [the time of fulfillment]." Immediately Joseph's coffin floated [on the surface of the water].

8. Tibat Markeh, Samaritan writings 4th CE)

Serach the daughter of Asher went hurrying out to them. -There is nothing evil in your S Behold, I will reveal to you what this secret is." At once they surrounded her and brought her to the great prophet Moses and she stood before him . . . [saying] -Hear from me this thing that you seek: Praise to those who remembered my bed [Joseph], though you have forgotten him. For had not the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire stood still, you would have departed and he would have been left in Egypt. I remember the day that he died and he caused the whole people to

swear that they would bring his bones up from here with them." The great prophet Moses said to her, -Worthy are you Serah, wisest of women. From this day on will your greatness be told". . . Serah went with all the tribe of Ephraim around her, and Moses and Aaron went after them, until she came to the place where he was hidden (Ben-Hayyim, *Tibat Markeh*).

9. Soloveitchik in a eulogy for R. Chaim Heller ("Pleitat Sofreihem" in *Divrei Hagut ve'Ha'aracha*)

Why was it crucial that Serach play a role in the redemption? The generation of the exodus witnessed signs and wonders on an unprecedented scale. Such excitement could easily lead to a sense that their generation represents true religious greatness and that nothing that came beforehand really matters. Yet this conclusion is false. Every generation, irrespective of its accomplishments, needs to turn to its elders for counsel and wisdom. The living example of someone who knew Yaakov Avinu was an invaluable resource for the generation of redemption. For the same reason, the blessing in the Amida refers to the remnants of the scribes rather than simply the scribes We want not only wise individuals but also those with memories of previous generation.

10. *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*

Then, from the teacher's seat R. Johanan sought to explain just how the waters of the Red Sea became a wall for Israel. Even as R. Johanan was explaining that the wall of the water looked like a lattice, Serah, daughter of Asher, appeared and said: -I was there. I was there, and the water was not as a net, but as transparent windows" (*Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 11:13).