

## Was Abraham the First Feminist?

"And Sarai, his wife"

### The Lubavitcher Rebbe

*Towards a Meaningful Life, Ch. 21*

All human beings, men and woman were created for the same purpose to fuse body and soul in order to make themselves and their world a better and holier place. The difference lies only in the different tools each has been given to fulfill their common goal.



### Genesis Chapter 12

"And there was a famine in the land and Abram went **down** to Egypt to sojourn there for the famine was severe in the land.

"And it came to pass when he came near to enter to Egypt **that he said to Sarai, his wife...**

"And it came to pass that when Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that **the woman** was very beautiful. The princes of Pharaoh also saw **her** and praised **her** for Pharaoh, and **the woman** was taken to Pharaoh's palace. And he treated Abram well for **her** sake....

"And G-d plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues **because of the matter of Sarai, Abram's wife....**

"And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him and they sent him away **and his wife** and all that he had....

"And Abram went **up** from Egypt."

### Rashi 11:29-30

Yiska refers to Sara, since she gazes with divine spirit, and everyone gazes at her beauty." (Alternatively, Yiska from the root nesichus, refers to her authority and parallels her other name, Sara.)

### Malbim 17:15

The name Yiska (the name that alluded to her prophetic spirit) was her primary name. Sarai (the name associated with her Abrahamitic mission and used from the time of her marriage) was given to her by Abraham: "Sarasi sheli, my princess and superior."

## Sara's Names

NAME:	ORIGIN:	MEANING:	APPLICATION:
<b>1) Yiska</b>	primary name	a) gaze (socha) b) rulership (nesichut)	a) Was gazed at for her beauty b) authority as a spritual being
<b>2) Sarai</b>	called by Abraham	my princess and superior (sherira)	superiority in spirtual capabilities

## How Sara Was Viewed

<b>1) Egyptians</b>	<b>physical being</b>	"When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptian saw <b>the woman</b> " (Gen 12:14) "The princes of Pharaoh also saw <b>her</b> and praised <b>her</b> to Pharaoh, and <b>the woman</b> was taken into Pharaoh's house" (Gen. 12:15).
<b>2) Abraham</b>	<b>spiritual being</b>	"Abram took <b>Sarai, his wife</b> ...and they went forth to go to the land of Canaan." (Gen. 12:5). "And it came to pass when he came near to enter to Egypt that he said to <b>Sarai, his wife</b> " (Gen. 12:11)
<b>3) G-d</b>	<b>spiritual being</b>	"And G-d plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues <b>because of the matter of Sarai, Abram's wife</b> ..." (Gen. 12:17)

## Let's Review:



- Yiska means gaze. Sara was originally called this since 1) she had the ability to gaze with Divine inspiration, or, 2) people gazed and stared at her extraordinary beauty
- Abraham gave Sara the name Sarai, which means princess or superior. He was alluding to her spiritual abilities which were superior to his own.
- In naming her so, Abraham was teaching those around him to look at her as an entire being, with superior spiritual capabilities.
- When Abraham was in Canaan, Sara is referred to as Sara, wife of Abraham. But in Egypt, Sara's name is omitted. She becomes an anonymous woman. The Egyptians saw only her external beauty and not her enormous spiritual capabilities.
- When G-d comes to save Sara from Pharaoh, it refers to G-d's punishing the Egyptian, on account of "devar Sara", the matter of taking Sara, this superior spiritual being and reducing her to a mere physical being.

## Something to Think About:

- What image of womanhood does modern media project?
- How do you view a human being? Do you see only an external body or do you see beyond to their soul?

Video: [www.chabad.org/2084925](http://www.chabad.org/2084925)