

Always Listen to Sarah

Two parshas, one ballot, and the voice that sees further. Written for Shabbat Lech Lecha, 24 October 2026, ahead of Election Day, Tuesday 27 October 2026.

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Jerusalem · Saturday 24 October 2026 · Motzei Shabbat Lech Lecha, ahead of Election Day

Full disclosure up front, because that's how I was raised: on Tuesday, 27 October 2026, I'm voting for the Religious Zionist Party. This piece isn't a pitch for any party, but you deserve to know where I stand.

On Friday morning, 23 October 2026, I posted a short line on X: "I will say this week's and next week's Parshas are the best to have before and during these elections!!! Clue: always listen to Sarah!!!"

A clue is only worth something if you follow it. So let's follow it.

Three minutes later, at 08:31 that same morning, I caught something I hadn't planned and posted: "I just realized the double meaning..." (https://x.com/ALThorne_Toren/status/2113503513145754076). I'd written "always listen to Sarah" in a thread about the Prime Minister, and of course there's another Sarah in that sentence: Sarah Netanyahu. I'll leave that one with a smile and a wink. Any husband who has heard some version of "listen to your wife" at his own kitchen table knows the line works on more than one level. But the Sarah I want to talk about is the one in Lech Lecha and Vayera, and she has something to teach every one of us before Tuesday.

Two verses, one instruction

This past Shabbat, 24 October 2026, we read Lech Lecha. In the middle of the parsha, after years of waiting for a child who has not come, Sarai makes a hard proposal, and the Torah records Avram's response in four words: וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרָי, "and Avram listened to the voice of Sarai" (Bereishit 16:2).

This coming Shabbat, 31 October 2026, we read Vayera. The household is in crisis again, this time over Yishmael and Yitzchak. Avraham is pained. And G-d Himself settles the question: כֹּל כְּקוֹל שָׂרָה תִּשְׁמָע, "whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her voice" (Bereishit 21:12). The verse gives the reason in the same breath: כִּי בְיִצְחָק יִקְרָא לָהּ זֶרַע, "for through Yitzchak shall your seed be called."

The same root, שמע, and the same object, her קול, her voice, frame the week before the election and the week of it. Where I grew up in Pittsburgh, we'd call that the Torah putting the play on the board twice. You don't need a third read.

What kind of voice?

The Sages did not read "the voice of Sarai" as a household preference that Avram humored. Bereishit Rabbah 45:2 quotes Rabbi Yosei: לְקוֹל רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ, "to the voice of the holy spirit," comparing it to Shmuel's words to Shaul, "now listen to the voice of the words of ה'" (Shmuel I 15:1). Rashi brings the same reading on 16:2: לְרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ שָׁבָה, "to the holy spirit that was in her."

On 21:12 Rashi goes further: לְמַדְנוּ שֶׁהָיָה אֲבִרְהָם טָפֵל לְשָׂרָה בְּנִבְיאוֹת, "we learn that Avraham was secondary to Sarah in prophecy" (citing Shemot Rabbah 1:1). The Gemara in Megillah 14a counts Sarah first among the seven prophetesses of Israel. It identifies her with Yiskah (Bereishit 11:29), "for she saw (סָכְתָה) by the holy spirit," and proves it from our verse: "whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her voice."

So the clue is not "do what you're told." It is: there is a voice that sees further down the road than you do, and the founder of our people was commanded to hear it.

Listening is not surrender

Here's the Pittsburgh in me: I don't trust any lesson that only runs one way. The Torah doesn't either.

The Ramban on 16:2 notices that the verse doesn't say Avram "did so." It says he *listened*. Even though Avram badly wanted children, the Ramban writes, he did nothing without Sarai's permission. Authority in that tent ran through consent, not around it.

But the same Ramban, four verses later, does not flinch. When Sarai deals harshly with Hagar, he writes: וְגַם אֲבִרְהָם בְּהִנְיחוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן, "our mother sinned in this affliction, and Avraham too, by allowing it" (Ramban on Bereishit 16:6). Listening to the right voice does not exempt anyone from what comes after. The Ramban even connects the long tail of that moment to what Yishmael's descendants would later do to Avraham's and Sarah's.

The Gemara draws the line too. In Bava Metzia 59a, Rav warns against following a wife's counsel, and Rav Pappa answers with the folk saying: "If your wife is short, bend down and whisper to her." The Gemara resolves it by distinguishing kinds of matters. Counsel has a domain, and wisdom is knowing which voice governs which question.

So "always listen to Sarah" is not a slogan for handing over your judgment. It means: before you act on something that shapes the future of the house, stop and hear the voice that is guarding its continuity. Then own your decision.

Through whom will the covenant be carried?

Notice what Sarah was actually arguing about in Vayera. It wasn't comfort or the mood in the tent. It was inheritance: who carries the covenant forward. G-d's answer, "through Yitzchak," is a statement about the long line, not the near term.

That's the question I want on the table in a ballot week. Not "who makes me angriest" or "who wins the news cycle," but: which choices protect the covenantal line of this people, our children, our Torah, our Land, our ability to govern ourselves without being dominated? Sarah's voice is the one that keeps asking it when the rest of the camp is shouting about something else.

The patriarch under the law

In my monograph *Covenantal Republicanism – Sources – The Jurisprudence of Non-Domination*, I argue that the covenant moves law from *gavra*, the will of a person in authority, to *cheftza*, an objective order that binds the ruler as much as the ruled (Section III, "The Jurisprudence of Cheftza vs. Gavra"). Bereishit 21:12 is an early, intimate case of exactly that. Avraham is the head

of the household and the father of nations, and G-d tells him that his own preference does not settle the matter. The covenant's continuity does.

The same monograph (Section VI.3, "Character as Infrastructure") argues that real authority produces *bitul*, humility, rather than arrogance, so that power is experienced "not as an instrument of domination, but as a sacred trust." A man big enough to found a people was also big enough to listen. And Section I defines freedom as non-domination: no one's standing should depend on another's arbitrary will. The Ramban's Avram, who would not act without Sarai's consent, lives that out under his own roof.

On Tuesday every one of us gets a קול of our own. The ballot is a voice. Use it the way Avraham was taught to: listen first, especially to the quiet voice at home that is thinking about the grandchildren. Then decide like someone who will answer for it.

A word before Tuesday

From Jerusalem, written on Friday, 23 October 2026, with the Shabbat candles not far off, here's my clue spelled out:

Listen to the voice that sees further. Respect consent inside your own house. Don't let a good voice become an excuse for a harsh deed. And ask, before you drop your envelope into the box: through whom will this covenant be carried?

Shavua tov, and may ה' grant this people wisdom on 27 October 2026.

Sources

- Bereishit 16:2 and Bereishit 21:12 (Hebrew text: Miqra according to the Masorah, via Sefaria).
- Bereishit 11:29.
- Shmuel I 15:1 (as cited in Bereishit Rabbah 45:2).
- Rashi on Bereishit 16:2 and on Bereishit 21:12.
- Ramban on Bereishit 16:2 and on Bereishit 16:6.
- Bereishit Rabbah 45:2.
- Shemot Rabbah 1:1 (as cited by Rashi on Bereishit 21:12).
- Talmud Bavli, Megillah 14a (the seven prophetesses; Sarah as Yiskah).
- Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 59a (a wife's counsel and its domain).
- Aryeh Leib Thorne-Toren, *Covenantal Republicanism – Sources – The Jurisprudence of Non-Domination*, Sections I, III and VI.3.
- Aryeh Leib Thorne-Toren (@ALThorne_Toren), posts on X, 23 October 2026, 08:28 IDT (https://x.com/ALThorne_Toren/status/2113502889314292002) and 08:31 IDT (https://x.com/ALThorne_Toren/status/2113503513145754076)
- Election date: Central Elections Committee and Ministry of Interior (gov.il), 26th Knesset election, Tuesday 27 October 2026.

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