מדרש

Midrash

ON GENESIS 23:1

God never leaves the world without a righteous leader

Bereshit Rabbah 58:2

Before the sun of one tzaddik (righteous person) sets, the Holy One blessed be He causes the sun of a comparable tzaddik to rise, so that the world is never without a righteous leader to guide it. This pattern is traced through Moshe and Yehoshua, Eli and Shmuel, and the generations of sages, down to Sarah and Rivkah, whose birth is announced just before Sarah's death is recorded. The teaching offers comfort that divine providence ensures continuity of righteous leadership across generations, even as individual leaders pass from the world. AI SUMMARY

"The sun rises and the sun sets" (Ecclesiastes 1:5) – Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: Do we not know that the sun rises and the sun sets? The meaning is, however, that before the Holy One blessed be He causes the sun of a righteous person to set, he causes the sun of his righteous counterpart to rise.

The day that Rabbi Akiva died, Rabbeinu [Yehuda HaNasi] was born, and they applied this verse in his regard: "The sun rises and the sun sets." On the day that Rabbeinu died, Rav Ada bar Ahava was born, and they applied this verse in his regard: "The sun rises and the sun sets." On the day that Rav Ada bar Ahava died, Rabbi Avun was born, and they applied this verse in his regard: "The sun rises and the sun sets." On the day that Rabbi Avun died, his son Rabbi Avun was born. On the day that Rabbi Avun died, Abba Hoshaya of Teriya was born. On the day Abba Hoshaya died, Rabbi Hoshaya was born, and they applied this verse in his regard: "The sun rises and the sun sets."

Before He caused Moses' sun to set, He caused Joshua's sun to rise, as it is stated: "The Lord said to Moses: Take you Joshua, the son of Nun [...and lay your hands upon him]" (Numbers 27:18). Before Joshua's sun set, the sun of Otniel ben Kenaz rose, as it is stated: "Otniel son of Kenaz...captured it" (Joshua 15:17). Before Eli's sun set, Samuel's sun rose: "The lamp of God was not yet extinguished, and Samuel was lying in the Sanctuary of the Lord" (I Samuel 3:3). Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Like a calf without blemish.

Before the Holy One blessed be He caused Sarah's sun to set, Rebecca's sun rose. First, "behold, Milka, she too has borne children" (Genesis 22:20), and only then: "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years...."

