

“THE HEART’S UNFORMED QUESTIONS”

After the death of Sarah, Abraham sends his servant to find a wife for Isaac. Does Isaac believe he needs a wife? The Torah does not tell us.

When Rebecca becomes his wife, Isaac is comforted for the loss of his mother and begins a new life. Only now, perhaps, does he realize that Rebecca was the missing piece of his life. In his last novel, “Shira” Agnon writes: “More than surprises or miracles, the heart needs answers to unformed questions.”

We carry in our hearts crucial questions, missing pieces, voids in the soul that become apparent only when they are filled. A Jew visits Israel and suddenly feels at home yet never have recognized the lack of home before. The Torah shows us a new light where we never realized there was darkness. Unformed questions become real when the answers appear.

Was Jacob searching for angels? Was Moses seeking God? Perhaps it was the unformed question, the inchoate yearning that guided their lives. Each of us is missing something that we cannot express but whose absence we feel. Tradition does not only answer questions, it gives us the questions that wait silently in our souls.