

Chayei Sarah

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Hilula

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of Rechovot

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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"a



MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

The Transient Nature of This World

"Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah's life"
(Bereishit 23:1)

It is interesting to note why this Parsha is called after Sarah's name and not after someone else's name, for example, Eliezer who showed self-sacrifice in fulfilling Avraham's command when going to search for a wife for Yitzchak.

Chazal say on the verse (Bereishit 12:5), "and the souls they made in Charan", that "the souls" refers to those whom they had converted to faith in Hashem, for Avraham converted the men and Sarah the women. With siyata dishmaya I would like to suggest that the word 'גר', alien, which also means convert, contains great significance. It suggests a wanderer who does not have a permanent place of residence. He is a temporary dweller and not a permanent resident. As the verse says (Shemot 18:3), "I was a sojourner (גר) in a strange land". The implication is that the unlearned person assumes that This World is the purpose and believes that he will live here forever, as a permanent resident. Therefore, he tries to set himself up comfortably, with wealth and honor so that he should enjoy a happy and good life. All because of the mistaken perception that This World has permanence. So he invests his maximum efforts in this permanence, to live it out in the best possible way. Avraham Avinu and his wife Sarah stand in direct contrast to this outlook and explain to all mankind that they are mistaken, for This World is not permanent but temporary, as it says (Tehillim 90:10), "The days of our years among them are seventy years, and if with might, eighty years". Since this is so, man's days are like a fleeting shadow, so why invest great effort in this passing world in which we are compared to sojourners and are not permanent residents.

This is how Avraham and Sarah a"h opened the eyes of their generation and enhanced their intelligence so that they should arrive at the correct outlook towards life in This World. They showed them the correct path and explained that This World is not the desired goal, but serves as a means for achieving the true goal which is Torah and mitzvot. This is the way to merit a true acquisition in The World to Come, which is the World of Truth and Eternity.

This is why the verse refers to the deeds of Avraham and Sarah as "the souls they made in Charan". How can one make souls? Avraham and Sarah made and created new people. They caused a revolution inside the person, in their inner being. Chazal express this idea by saying (Yevamot 22a), "One who converts is likened to a newborn baby", for he becomes a new person with different perceptions and values.

In fact, Avraham was perfectly capable of living in a beautiful home and leading a wealthy lifestyle, for we are told (Bereishit 13:2), "Now Avraham was very laden

with livestock, silver, and gold". However, he wished to impart to his offspring that This World is a temporary world and it is a pity for a person to invest all his energy and efforts in something transient. That is why he chose a temporary tent for his dwelling place.

This is also how many of our Gedolim lived their lives. They achieved their Torah and greatness only in the merit of leaving their houses behind and exiling themselves to a place of Torah. Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto Hagadol zya"a, Rabbeinu Shlomo Pinto zya"a together with his brother-in-law, Rabbi Khalifa Malka zya"a, author of 'Kav V'Naki', were examples of this ideal. All these great personalities merited enormous greatness and holiness, and achieved lofty levels above regular human insight, in the merit of a clear understanding that This World is temporary. They felt that it was worthwhile to go into exile and suffer for the sake of attaining the Holy Torah.

This is the meaning of the verse, "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years". Throughout her life, Sarah 'made Torah souls' and brought them under the wings of the Shechina by explaining to them that they are only temporary residents in this transitory world. This is how Sarah Imeinu a"h influenced her generation. The verse talks about 'חיי שרה', Sarah's lifetime. The word 'חיי' (8+10+10), lifetime, has the same numerical value as 'בכח' (20+8), strength, for Sarah invested all her strength and energy throughout her life in instilling the truth in mankind, so that all should understand and know that they are aliens in this land. She would ignite them with a holy flame to serve Hashem, the G-d of Israel.

Now we understand why this Parsha is called specifically after Sarah, 'Chayei Sarah', for this teaches us that although Sarah passed away, her way of life has been passed on to us and is studied from generation to generation, with her offspring continuing in her ways and holding on to her good deeds and mitzvot. That is how she lives on and exists deep inside us.

The fact that Avraham converted the men and Sarah the women was a great accomplishment, for many times marital harmony is shaken when one partner decides to become more religious. Sometimes, with Hashem's kindness, the husband merits discovering the truth, but his wife has still not merited this revelation. This gives rise to differences of opinion between them, which necessitates large doses of caution and patience. And conversely, the wife might have merited Heavenly illumination in discovering religion, but her husband is still far from ready for change. The holy Avraham and Sarah a"h were aware of this problem, therefore while Avraham would convert the husband and sons, at the same time Sarah would influence the wife and daughters and instill in them pure Yirat Shamayim so that the entire family recognized the Creator and served Him wholeheartedly.



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Faith is Infectious

I once had occasion to speak with a top doctor who is a well-known specialist in his field. During the course of our conversation, I touched upon the Torah's opinion of various scientific matters. Out of habit, I punctuated my words with phrases like "Baruch Hashem" and "B'ezrat Hashem".

The doctor was extremely impressed with what I said, some of which he was hearing for the very first time. He was obviously moved by the proofs I provided, which are all quoted in our holy sefarim.

Moreover, my mentioning Hashem's Name time and again brought him to a keener awareness of my unequivocal belief in Him. He averred that although he has Jewish roots, he has no faith in a Creator.

This was his affirmation. But his face showed a different picture. In all innocence, I truly believed that the doctor would change his mind. But his Yetzer Hara got the better of him. Although he clearly saw the truth of Torah in opposition to the emptiness of science, he stood his ground and did not admit his mistakes.

I did not succeed in returning him to the correct path, but the very fact that he conceded to having Jewish roots, which he had originally denied, demonstrated the spark of Judaism which had been ignited in his soul.

Baruch Hashem, from time to time, I observe changes for the positive in his behavior, although the road to complete repentance is still long.

Today, the good doctor is proud of his Jewish roots. He shows interest in the Jewish holidays and is making strides in recognizing his Creator. I do not doubt that Hashem will implant wisdom in his heart and open his eyes so that he will one day return completely to his Maker.

The Haftarah

"King David was old, advanced in years" (Melachim I, 1)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah says, "King David was old, advanced in years", while we are told in the Parsha, "Now Avraham was old, well on in years". The Haftarah also speaks about David handing over the kingship to his son Shlomo before his death, similar to the topic in the Parsha which tells us that Avraham gave all that he had to his son Yitzchak.

Guard Your Tongue

Another's Attributes

A common example of a comment that has a negative connotation is saying that so and so has bad middot. For example, it is forbidden to say about someone that he is easily angered, stingy, or arrogant etc.

In prevalent situations where the expression 'average' has a negative connotation, this comment will also be considered as lashon hara.

According to the halacha mentioned last week, explaining that everything is relative to the level of the person being spoken about, to say about someone who is known for his generosity that in truth he does not give more than the average person, is definitely considered as lashon hara.



In Our Father's Path

Even for a Consideration of a Million Shekel, I will not Intervene

In the initial meeting between the deceitful Lavan and Eliezer servant of Avraham, the verse describes what drew Lavan towards him, "And Lavan ran to the man... For upon seeing the nose ring, and the bracelets" (Bereishit 24:29-30). Rashi explains, "Why and for what did he run? For upon seeing the nose ring, he said, this person is rich, and he desired the money".

This is the behavior of those who follow their lusts. All their dealings and desires are saturated with lust and a craving for money that is earned in a dishonest way. This stands in direct contrast to the Chosen People who study Torah, for they have no desire to benefit from money that is not acquired honestly and which does not bring happiness to man.

"All the ways of Hashem are kindness and truth" (Tehillim 25:10). The Alter of Slabodka zt"l, who was the grandfather of Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, would often quote this verse which demonstrates that the attributes of kindness and truth are not separate attributes, but are rather one and the same. This is also expressed in the verse, "Grant truth to Ya'akov, kindness to Avraham", for the two attributes are one. Only chesed that stems from the attribute of truth is fitting to be called chesed. Chesed that contradicts the truth is not kindness, but the opposite.

Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l was a personality who was entirely chesed, giving and imparting to others. He recoiled from anything that even smelt of lacking truth. He cleaved so strongly to the truth that when he heard something untrue, he did not have to say that it wasn't the truth, one could see it clearly written on his face.

The following story is recorded in the sefer 'Bechol Nafshecha', that describes the lifetime of Rabbi Nosson Tzvi: He was once asked to sign a document that could have greatly assisted the Yeshiva in obtaining funds. The document was G-d forbid not false, but was also not the entire truth. Upholding his attribute of truth, R' Nosson Tzvi was determined not to sign this document on any account. Once, the Yeshiva received a budget of a million shekel from one of the government offices, a budget that was arranged by one of the askanim who toiled for an entire year to obtain it. But when it became clear to R' Nosson Tzvi that there was some small sophistry in one of the declarations, he firmly refused to take the money.

The Gaon Rabbi Tzvi Partzovitch related that once the father of one of the talmidim donated the large sum of half a million shekels to the Yeshiva, conditional on a modest stipulation concerning his son, a student in the Yeshiva. One of the Roshei Yeshiva, who was accountable for this bachur, was given the responsibility of adhering to this request. R' Nosson Tzvi was approached and asked to encourage that particular Rosh Yeshiva to agree and fulfill the parents' request, for the benefit of the Yeshiva.

However, the Rosh Yeshiva responded decidedly: "I gave him this role and I will not intervene in his decision in the slightest, even if it involves a consideration of half a million shekels. Even for a million shekels I will not get involved".

By nature, R' Nosson Tzvi enjoyed hearing different opinions concerning matters with which he was involved, in line with, "Salvation lies in much counsel" (Mishlei 11:14). However, at the end of the day, after a precise reckoning of all the different opinions, he then decided what and how to act in line with the truth, and then he would abide by his opinion like a firm rock. Opposing opinions and irate individuals he accepted with understanding and a smile, even trying to appease them, but he would not budge from the truth.



Pearls of the Parsha

Timing Death for Involvement in a Mitzvah

"Sarah died in Kiryat-arba which is Chevron in the land of Cana'an" (Bereishit 23:2)

Rashi writes, "The section of Sarah's death is adjacent to the section of the Akeidah to indicate that due to the news of the Akeidah that her son was about to be slaughtered, her soul flew out of her and she died."

The Gaon Rabbi Chaim Kanievisky shlita, in his sefer 'Taama Dikra' asks, how is it possible that Sarah died because of the Akeidah since we are told, "Those on the way to perform a mitzvah are not harmed"? The question grows stronger in light of the Gemarah (Shabbat 118b) that quotes Rabbi Yosi who said, "May my lot be with those who die while on the way to a mitzvah". The obvious question is, how is it possible to die on the way to performing a mitzvah if a different Chazal tells us that those on the way to perform a mitzvah are not harmed?

These questions can be reconciled with an important foundation. By saying "Those on the way to perform a mitzvah are not harmed", Chazal mean to say that they will not come to any harm as a result of performing this mitzvah. However, if it has already been decreed by Heaven that on a certain day so and so will end his life in This World, then on the contrary, it is considered a merit to die while engaged in a mitzvah. This is considered as dying 'Al Kiddush Hashem', in sanctification of G-d's Name. This is the meaning of the Tana's words, "May my lot be with those who die while on the way to a mitzvah". He wished that Hashem should bring it about that on the day he is supposed to die he should be in the midst of performing a mitzvah or even on the way to perform it so that he will merit passing away while engaged in a mitzvah matter.

Here too, it was predetermined that Sarah would live for one hundred and twenty-seven years. Now that her time had come, she merited dying on hearing the news of the mitzvah.

Exerting Effort in a Mitzvah Gives Hashem Spiritual Pleasure

"The servant ran towards her" (Bereishit 24:17)

Rashi: "Because he saw that the waters rose towards her". The Ramban expounds that this is learnt from the fact that later on, it says "and she drew for all his camels" (ibid 20), whereas in the previous verse (ibid 16), the expression of 'drawing' is not used, rather it says "She filled her jug and ascended". Since the waters rose towards

her, she had no need to draw.

In truth, this itself is puzzling. Why did the waters not rise towards her the second time?

The sefer 'Kedushat Levi' answers that the first time she required water for her own needs, therefore the waters rose towards her so that she wouldn't have to bother herself. But the second time she wished to perform an act of kindness by drawing water for Eliezer's camels, and this time the waters did not rise up towards her.

Why was this? Because when a person performs a mitzvah, Hashem prefers that the person should carry out the act and not that the mitzvah should come about through a miracle, for from every small amount of effort expended in doing a mitzvah, Hashem has great spiritual pleasure. This is the reason why a miracle was not performed for her the second time she drew water.

With You or Before You?

"He will send His angel before you" (Bereishit 24:7)

When Eliezer related to Betu'el and Lavan the events of the story, he changed Avraham's assurance that "He will send His angel before you" to "He will send His angel with you" (ibid 40).

What is the reason for this?

The sefer 'Machshava Techila' explains that when the angel walks ahead, in front of someone, he takes care to straighten the path and remove any stumbling blocks or hindrances. But when the angel walks together with the person, even if the angel intercepts any mishap in a miraculous fashion, the person will still need to wait until the angel accomplishes this.

Avraham prayed for Eliezer that his way should be successful. He did not suffice with the angel walking together with Eliezer, but that the angel should walk ahead of him and remove any stumbling block, so that Eliezer could arrive with 'kefitzat haderech', without any problems.

Avraham teaches us that when we pray for Hashem's salvation, we should ask for the highest level. For example, rather than praying that an operation be successful, we should ask that Heaven send a complete recovery without requiring the intervention of doctors and medication.

Eliezer, on the other hand, teaches us a chapter in humility. He relates that Avraham prayed that Hashem should send an angel to walk with him. It does not enter his mind to relate that the angel, in reality, went before him, the higher level.

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



The Legacy Lives On for Eternity

The verse says about Rivkah (Bereishit 24:67), "And Yitzchak brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother...and thus Yitzchak was consoled after his mother". Rashi writes, "For as long as Sarah was alive, three miracles were present in her tent. A lamp burned from one Erev Shabbat to the next, her dough was blessed, and a cloud hung over her tent. These miracles ceased with Sarah's death but when Rivkah entered the tent they resumed".

This means that when Yitzchak saw that Sarah's good deeds were being continued in this world, by Rivkah following the same path that Sarah Imeinu had outlined, immediately "Yitzchak was consoled after his mother". Seeing that Sarah's legacy was still alive meant that his mother had not really passed away, for although her body was buried in the ground, her middot and good deeds were being maintained by his wife Rivkah, and this is in fact what comforted him.

This is why it says (Bereishit 23:2), "Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her". A careful look shows us that the word 'לבכותה', to bewail her, is written in the Torah with a small 'כ'. Chazal explain that the reason is that Avraham did not cry excessively over Sarah's death. In light of the above explanation, this could be because he did not feel that she had truly passed away.

The relationship that he had with Sarah while she was alive still lived on. He felt that Sarah's power that assisted him in bringing people closer to our Father in Heaven, continued to beat inside him and have an effect. Since her good deeds and lofty conduct were enduring, it was unnecessary to cry excessively over her death. It is still possible to call her 'Chayei Sarah', 'Sara's lifetime' for she is alive and enduring through her good deeds.

This strength continues to pulsate from generation to generation and is buried inside every Jew. Succeeding in overcoming life's challenges and sanctifying G-d's Name in the world despite the inherent difficulties, shows that these powers are deeply ingrained inside us. It therefore follows that Avraham and Sarah are still alive today, for their pure way of life is implanted in their descendants for all generations. As it says (Avot 2:2), "the merit of their forefathers aids them and their righteousness endures forever". Although the Avot have passed away, their Torah and legacy remain for eternity.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

When Eliezer servant of Avraham Avinu a"h expresses praise and thanks to Hashem for not withholding His kindness and for guiding him on the correct path, he uses the expression that is so prevalent among us, "baruch Hashem". "He said, 'Blessed is Hashem, G-d of my master Avraham, Who has not withheld His kindness and truth from my master'" (Bereishit 24:27). In order to focus on this inner recognition and highlight the way we must praise and laud Hashem Yitbarach at every step of our way in life, we will relate a story told by Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi Aryeh Shechter zt"l, in his sefer 'Aryeh Sha'ag':

"Two weeks before the passing of Maran the Chazon Ish zt"l, he sent me to the Mir yeshiva in Yerushalayim, to study under one of his exceptional talmidim, an outstanding Talmid Chacham called Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Landau zt"l, who was exceedingly great and modest.

Several years later Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua became sick and I accompanied him to America for medical treatment. As a result of his illness, he had a tendency to become dehydrated quickly, which made it necessary for him to frequently drink large amounts. Wherever we went, I took along two bottles of orange juice, so that he could drink whenever necessary.

On Wednesday night Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua completed the serious of treatments. He strongly desired to return to Eretz Yisrael before Shabbat, but there were no vacancies on the next few flights. Our names were put on the waiting list and we made our way to the airport in the hope that something would come available.

Ahead of us on the waiting list were another twenty-seven people. On the face of it, it did not seem likely that there was a chance of us returning to Eretz Yisrael before Shabbat, but Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua did not give up and continued waiting in the airport.

In those days, sick people and their attendant were given a discount by El Al, so we received tickets at a ninety percent reduction of the price. I showed the clerk our special tickets and asked her to try and get

us a place in the next flight, explaining "If we were given such a considerable discount, it is easy to understand our situation." Indeed, she understood but was unable to help. "If two people from the flight do not arrive, you will get their places" she encouragingly offered.

Suddenly I noticed a different clerk who looked authoritative and decided to approach him. I explained our situation and asked for his help. But he showed himself to be a heartless and tough individual. When he saw the reduction on our tickets he immediately declared, "You paid only ten percent of the price, so even if people come after you they deserve to travel before you, for they have paid full price and you haven't!"

I tried to play on his emotions and explained that I was asking on behalf of someone who was extremely sick and that is why he should give us preference. But my words achieved the opposite effect.

"Sick?" He shouted, "Before you procure a letter of authorization from the hospital permitting him to fly, we will not allow him on the flight even if there is room!"

I immediately realized who we were up against and walked away. Suddenly I heard an announcement on the loudspeaker: "Rabbi Landau and Rabbi Shechter, proceed to check-in."

At the last minute, we had been given places. I sighed with relief but to my dismay, suddenly this unsympathetic clerk decided to intervene. "These are the people you are allowing on the flight?" he said to the clerk. He grabbed hold of our tickets and started walking away.

Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua began following him to beg him to allow us to fly, but I told him, "This person totally lacks compassion, there is nothing to talk about with him. Instead, let us stand for a moment and use the well-known segulah of concentrating on the thought, "There is none other than Him", and then with Hashem's help he will leave us alone.

He smiled, went over to a corner and focused his thoughts. After just a minute and a half, the clerk with whom I had originally spoken, came over and grabbed the tickets from the other clerk, shouting at him for mixing into a matter that does not concern him. And so we were ushered onto the plane.

After hours of running around, expending effort and nerve-racking uncertainty, I finally allowed myself to sprawl out on the seat. My mouth felt dry and parched. Wishing to wet my throat, I thought to myself, "If I am

so thirsty, who knows how Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua feels?!"

I had the bottles of juice with me but no cups. I wanted to ask the stewardesses but they were busy with a fault concerning the plane doors. Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua felt that disturbing them would cause a chilul Hashem. I thought about maybe drinking straight from the bottle, but the Rav was against this idea too, for this could also be a chilul Hashem.

Some time passed until the fault was rectified and the stewards were available to bring us cups. With dry lips and a hoarse throat, I poured a cup of juice for each of us from the refreshing drink. I was about to recite a blessing, when the Rav stopped me and said, "Wait a moment, let me teach you how one recites a blessing!"

When you are about to bless, you must contemplate how much kindness Hashem did so as to bring you this cup of juice with which you can quench your thirst. First of all, he created people and gave them the strength to work the ground, plant the orange trees, water them and help them grow for several years until they bear fruit. Once the tree produces fruit, the work has not yet finished. It is now necessary to bring people to pick the fruit. After the picking, one needs drivers and lorries to bring the fruit to the packing plant, where the factory requires workers to squeeze the oranges and produce the juice.

Additional workers and another factory is required for making the bottles in which to store the juice. And yet another factory to produce the cartons in which the bottles will be packed, and another factory to produce the cups with which we can drink the juice. This entire chain is carried out by people whom Hashem created and instilled in them the wisdom to produce all these wonderful things, just so that we can drink a cup of refreshing juice and quench our thirst...

Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua had not finished yet. For several long minutes, he continued pointing out several more details of Hashem's kindness. Only then did he finish and proclaim with excitement:

"And now I will show you how to make a blessing! When we recite "through Whose word everything came to be" we must think and thank for all these things that were performed with Hashem's kindness! How much appreciation must we feel towards Hashem for the enormous kindness that He does with us at each moment! Blessed is He Who has provided me with my every need".