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maskil Le'David The Transient Nature of This World

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

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

Chazal explain the verse (*Bereishit* 12:5), "And the souls they made in Charan," as follows: "the souls" refers to those who Avraham and Sara converted to faith in Hashem; Avraham converted the men and Sara the women. With *siyata D'Shmaya* I would like to suggest that the word "גר" – alien (which also means convert) – contains great significance. It insinuates a wanderer; a temporary dweller as opposed to a permanent resident. As the verse says (*Shemot* 18:3), "I was a sojourner (גר) in a strange land." An uneducated person assumes that This World is the ultimate goal and thinks he will reside here indefinitely, as if a permanent inhabitant. He therefore tries to set himself up comfortably with wealth and honor so he can enjoy a happy, good life. He is making a grave error; he thinks that This World is permanent. He invests maximum efforts in this "permanence", living it up in the best way possible. Avraham Avinu and his wife Sara stood in direct contrast to this outlook and explained to all mankind that they are mistaken: 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." Man's days are like a fleeting shadow, so why invest great effort in this transient world where we are merely sojourners and are not permanent residents?

Avraham and Sara enlightened their generation and enhanced their understanding, teaching 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 true acquisition in The World to Come, the World of Truth and Eternity.

This is why the verse refers to the deeds of Avraham and Sara as "the souls they made in Charan." How can one make souls? Avraham and Sara 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. 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 temporary; what a pity for someone to invest all his energy and efforts in something transient! That is why he chose a temporary tent as 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 zy"ta, Rabbeinu Shlomo Pinto zy"ta, together with his brother-in-law Rabbi Khalifa Malka zy"ta, author of *Kav V'Naki*, were all examples of this ideal. All of these great personalities merited enormous greatness and holiness and achieved lofty levels that simple humans cannot fathom, in the merit of a clear understanding that This World is temporary. They felt it was worth it for them to go into exile and suffer for the sake of attaining the Holy Torah.

This is the meaning of the verse, "Sara's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years." Throughout her life, Sara "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. Many people, when faced with the truth and confronted with the final Day of Judgement, will reflect deeply in their souls and repent. This is how Sara Imeinu influenced her generation. The verse talks about "חיי שרה" – Sara's lifetime. The word "חיי" (lifetime) has the same numerical value as "כח" (strength) for Sara invested all her strength and energy throughout her life in instilling the truth in mankind.

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24 Cheshvan 5786
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Chayei Sara

Shabbat Mevorchim



Hilula

24 Cheshvan
Rabbi Avraham Azoulai,
author of *Chessed L'Avraham*

25 Cheshvan
Rabbi Mordechai Rokeach
of Bilgoray

26 Cheshvan
Rabbi Eliyahu Abba Shaul

27 Cheshvan
Rabbi Moshe Natan Neta
Tzinvirt

28 Cheshvan
Rabbeinu Yona Hachassid
of Gironde

29 Cheshvan
Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch
of Riminov

1 Kislev
Rabbi Ephraim Ankawa





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Giving Pleasure to Hashem

“The servant ran towards her” (*Bereishit* 24:17).

Rashi explains, “Because he saw that the waters rose towards her.” The Ramban expounds that Rashi bases his explanation on the words later on, “And she drew for all his camels” (*Bereishit* 24:20). In the previous verse (*Bereishit* 24:16), 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.

This 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? Because when a person performs a mitzvah, Hashem prefers that the person carry out the act and not that the mitzvah come about through a miracle. This is because from every small amount of effort expended while doing a mitzvah, Hashem has great spiritual pleasure, and a miracle would have diminished that pleasure.

With You or Before You?

“He will send His angel before you” (*Bereishit* 24:7).

When Eliezer related the events of the story to Betu’el and Lavan, he changed the wording of Avraham’s assurance from “He will send His angel *before* you” to “He will send His angel *with* you” (*Bereishit* 24:40).

Why did he do this? The *sefer Machshava Techila* explains that when an 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 need to wait until the angel accomplishes this.

Avraham prayed for Eliezer that his way should be successful. He did not suffice with requesting that the angel walk together with Eliezer, but prayed for the angel to 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 degree of salvation. 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 related that Avraham prayed that Hashem send an angel to walk *with* him. It did not enter his mind to relate that the angel went *before* him.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Not swayed by a Million Shekels

In the initial meeting between the deceitful Lavan and Eliezer servant of Avraham, the verse describes what drew Lavan to 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 desires. All their dealings and desires are saturated with lust and a craving for money 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 not acquired honestly which brings no 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 rather one and the same. This is also expressed in the verse, “Grant truth to Yaakov, kindness to Avraham,” for the two attributes are one. Only chessed stemming from truth can be called chessed. Chessed that contradicts the truth is not kindness, but the opposite.

Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel *zt”l* was a personality who was entirely chessed, giving and imparting to others. He recoiled from anything with the slightest trace of falsehood. He cleaved so strongly to the truth that when he heard an untruth he did not need to comment, his feelings were clearly written all over his expression.

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 not, G-d forbid, 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 labored for an entire year to obtain it. But when it became clear to R’ Nosson Tzvi that there was some small dishonesty in one of the declarations, he firmly refused to take the money.

The gaon Rabbi Tzvi Partzovitch related how once the father of a talmid donated the large sum of half a million shekels to the Yeshiva, conditional on a modest stipulation concerning his son who was 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 to encourage that Rosh Yeshiva to agree to fulfil the parent’s request, for the benefit of the Yeshiva. However, R’ Nosson Tzvi responded decidedly: “I gave him his responsibility 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 viewpoints concerning matters which he was involved in, in line with, “Salvation lies in much counsel” (*Mishlei* 11:14). However, at the end of the day, after weighing all the different opinions, *he* decided what and how to act according to the truth, and he would stick to his decision firmly. He listened to opposing opinions and irate individuals with understanding and a smile, even trying to appease them, but he would never budge from the truth.



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, 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. Truthfully, I believed the doctor could change his mind, but his *yetzer hara* was getting the better of him. Although he clearly saw the truth of Torah as opposed to the secular viewpoint of science, he stood his ground firmly and refused to acknowledge his mistakes.

At that point 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 that the spark of Judaism had been ignited in his soul.

Baruch Hashem, from time to time, I observed positive changes in his behavior, although the road to complete repentance was 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 have no doubt that Hashem will implant wisdom in his heart and open his eyes so that he will one day return completely to his Maker.

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She wanted all of them to understand that we are all "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 Sara, "Chayei Sara": this teaches us that although Sara 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. She lives on and exists deep inside us.

The fact that Avraham converted the men and Sara 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, a husband merits discovering the truth, but his wife has yet to merit this revelation on the same level. This gives rise to differences of opinion between them, which necessitates large doses of caution and patience. And conversely, a wife might have merited Heavenly illumination in discovering religion, while her husband seems far from ready for change. The holy Avraham and Sara were aware of this problem. Therefore while Avraham would convert the husband and sons, at the same time Sara 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.



FROM THE TREASURY

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

Her Legacy Lives On for Eternity

The verse says about Rivka (*Bereishit* 24:67), "And Yitzchak brought her into the tent of Sara his mother...and thus Yitzchak was consoled after his mother." Rashi writes, "For as long as Sara 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 Sara's death but when Rivka entered the tent they resumed."

This means that when Yitzchak saw Sara's good deeds being continued in This World by Rivka following Sara Imeinu's path, immediately "Yitzchak was consoled after his mother." Seeing that Sara'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 upheld by his wife Rivka, and this comforted him.

This is why it says (*Bereishit* 23:2), "Avraham came to eulogize Sara and to bewail her." A careful look shows us that the word "לבכורה" (to bewail her) is written in the Torah with a small "כ". The reason for this, *Chazal* explain, is because Avraham did not cry excessively over Sara's passing. Perhaps according to the above explanation, he did not cry excessively because he did not feel that she had truly passed away.

The relationship that he had with Sara while she was alive still lived on. He felt that Sara's strength that assisted him in bringing people closer to our Father in Heaven, persisted within him and was still influential. Her good deeds and lofty conduct endured, so it was unnecessary to cry excessively over her passing. It is possible to still refer to "*Chayei Sara*" (Sara's lifetime) for she lives on through her good deeds.

This strength continues to pulsate from generation to generation and is embedded within every Jew. When we succeed in overcoming life's challenges and sanctifying G-d's Name in the world despite the inherent difficulties, we utilize this strength that is ingrained deeply within us. It therefore follows that Avraham and Sara 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 on,
their Torah and legacy remain
for eternity.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Baruch Hashem!



When Eliezer, servant of Avraham Avinu, expressed praise and thanks to Hashem for guiding him on the correct path and for not withholding His kindness, he used an expression so prevalent among us today – “*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 how we must praise Hashem Yitbarach every step of our 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* 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 dehydrate quickly, which made it necessary for him to frequently drink large quantities. 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 series 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 seats would become available.

“Ahead of us on the waiting list were another twenty-seven people. By the look of it, it did not seem there was any chance of us returning to Eretz Yisrael before Shabbat, but Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua did not give up; we continued to wait in the airport.

“In those days, sick people and their attendant were given a discount by El Al; accordingly 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 still was unable to guarantee any 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, this unsympathetic clerk suddenly 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 completely lacks compassion; there is nothing to discuss 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 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 with that we were ushered onto the plane.

“After hours of running around, expending effort with nerve-wracking uncertainty, I finally allowed myself to sprawl out in my 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 occupied with a problem concerning the plane doors. Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua felt that disturbing them would cause a *chilul Hashem*. I considered drinking straight from the bottle, but the Rav was against this idea too, for this could also be a *chilul Hashem*.

“Some time passed, and finally the fault was rectified; 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 to quench your thirst. First of all, He created people and gave them strength to work the ground, plant the orange trees, water them and help them grow for several years until they bear fruit. However, once the trees produce fruit, the work has not yet finished. It is now necessary to bring other people to pick the fruit. After the picking, one needs drivers and trucks 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 are required for making the bottles to contain 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, instilling them with the wisdom and ability to produce all these wonderful things, all just so that we can drink a cup of refreshing juice and quench our thirst...’

“And Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua was not yet finished. For several long minutes he continued pointing out 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 we must feel towards Hashem for the enormous kindness He does with us each and every moment!’

“‘Blessed is He Who provides me my every need.’”