



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Chayei Sara

October 29, 2021

A Taste of Torah

Live It Up!

by Rabbi Yisrael Kellner

The opening verse of this week's parsha begins, "Sara's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years; the years of Sara's life." (Chayei Sara 23:1) The end of the verse, "the years of Sara's life," seems superfluous, as the beginning of the verse already stated it is discussing Sara's lifetime. Rashi explains that all of Sara's years were equally good in her eyes, and the Torah wants to emphasize that all her years with all the experiences, whether difficult or pleasant, were all "good," and so the Torah breaks up the years and then unites them together at the end.

One may wonder how this can be true. After all, Sara had many hardships in her life, such as being kidnapped twice by kings, not having children until the age of ninety, and the difficulties she encountered with her maidservant Hagar and her son Yishmael.

The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin; 1816-1893) explains that the term "to live" refers not only to life in the literal sense; it can sometimes refer to happiness, a life full with joy. He continues that our Sages say that Sara was on a higher level of receiving Divine inspiration and prophecy than Avraham. The Netziv wonders how that can be, as the Torah records G-d speaking to Avraham many times in the Torah, but with Sara just once, which would indicate that Avraham was the greater prophet.

The Netziv explains that our Sages teach that Divine inspiration and prophecy is dependent on one's level of happiness. The Medrash teaches that Sara didn't need a promise from G-d that she would have children; Sara believed in G-d's infinite kindness and was confident, even without a promise, that she would be granted a child. Avraham, on the other hand, needed to rely upon a

promise from G-d.

Therefore, explains the Netziv, it must be that Sara was on a higher level of happiness than Avraham, because someone who believes so strongly in G-d's kindness will never be in a state of sadness. This elevated level of happiness would thus earn her a higher degree of prophecy than Avraham's. The Torah therefore emphasizes "the years of Sara's life" to teach that Sara lived a happy, joyful and elevated life; in short, Sara "lived it up"!

A true *ba'al bitachon* (one who trusts in G-d) lives it up in life, because in every circumstance he has a loving, caring relationship with G-d, in Whom he places his trust. Such a person is hopeful and positive, and in the event that something will happen not to his liking, he knows with firm belief that it was orchestrated by G-d, with Whom he has a loving relationship.

Furthermore, a *ba'al bitachon* knows that there are no human beings that can affect him in any way or form because, ultimately, only G-d is in charge and nothing can happen without His decree. He isn't afraid of anyone and doesn't harbor resentment to anyone who has harmed him, since it wasn't their doing. A *ba'al bitachon* isn't affected when others aren't happy with him, because he values his relationship with G-d more than anything else, and he views other people as mere powerless puppets in his life.

With this idea we can understand a perplexing Medrash. The Medrash relates that Rabbi Akiva was once teaching Torah, and the audience was dozing off. In order to rouse them, he asked, "How did Queen Esther merit to rule over 127 provinces? Let Esther, a descendant of Sara - who lived for 127 years -, come and rule over 127 provinces."

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Stories for the Soul

The Right Questions

A man once came to Rabbi Shmuel Rozovsky (1913-1979), the *rosh yeshiva* (dean) of Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, regarding a boy in the yeshiva who had been proposed as a match for his daughter.

He asked the *rosh yeshiva* how many hours a day the boy learned; was he punctual and did he spend his time diligently. Did he come to prayers on time and did he actively participate in the lectures. Did he ask relevant questions and did he understand the answers.

After receiving a favorable report, the father thanked Rabbi Rozovsky for his time and began to leave. Rabbi Rozovsky asked the father, "Until now you asked me questions; do you mind if I ask you a few questions?" The father agreed.

"You seem happy with the information I gave you about this boy. You obviously think that all your daughter needs to know is whether he arrives to his study sessions on time and if he knows how to learn Torah. But perhaps your daughter would like to know if he is a *mentch*.

"It seems to me that you ought to be asking, 'Is he pleasant to be around? How does he behave at mealtimes? Does he occasionally go into the kitchen to thank the staff for preparing the food? Does he get up and fill the empty water pitcher, or wait for someone else to do it? When he arrives in his room after a late-night learning session, does he do so quietly so as not to wake up his roommates? Does he make his bed and keep his things neat?

"I think," continued Rabbi Rozovsky,

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Kollel Happenings

HACHNASAS SEFER TORAH ON NOVEMBER 7TH

Join the Kollel in celebrating the completion and inauguration of the Aragon-Sperber-Singer Torah scroll, which will be housed in the West Denver Kollel Torah Center. The event will take place on Sunday, November 7th, with the final letters being written at 12:30 pm at the Ethel A. Beren Auditorium, followed by a celebratory procession to the Torah Center at approximately 1:15 pm. Acclaimed singer Joey Newcomb will join in the festivities.

MEET YOU IN THE MIDDLE: LITIGATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION AT NOV 3 T4T ON ZOOM

Join Abraham Z. Melamed, Esq., Mediator at Melamed Mediation, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they negotiate the ins and outs of conflict resolution on Wednesday, Nov. 3 at 7:30 pm via Zoom. Visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org for details and Zoom info.

AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON CONTINUES

The Kollel's Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and raffle. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: Two adult Jewish males have a similar, though not identical, uncertainty regarding their recitation of *Birkas Hamazon* on an ordinary weekday, yet one must repeat *Birkas Hamazon* while the other does not. How is this possible?

Answer: Both men are uncertain if they recited the blessings of *Birkas Hamazon*. However, one is uncertain about whether he recited *Birkas Hamazon* at all, and so

he repeats the entire *Birkas Hamazon*, since it is a Scriptural obligation. The other man, however, is uncertain only regarding the fourth blessing, which is of Rabbinic origin, and so it is not repeated. (The first man recites the fourth blessing along with the first three.)

This week's question: How is it possible for one to recite *hamotzi* on bread and eat a large amount of it within a short time, but not recite *Birkas Hamazon* afterwards?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XXIII

In 1923, the first *Knessia Gedola*, or Great Assembly, was held in Vienna. This great gathering of *Agudas Yisrael* was attended by 600 delegates. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, better known as the Chofetz Chaim, attended the event.

(The now-famous video of the Chofetz Chaim was taken at this great gathering.) Also present were many members of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah*, *Agudas Yisrael's* council of the leading Torah sages of the era.

Stories for the Soul

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"that you need to check these things out. If he comes home and doesn't like the food your daughter worked hard to prepare, his face will crumple in obvious dissatisfaction. Will your daughter then be happy that her father checked the boy out with the *rosh yeshiva* who told him that he is familiar with much of the Talmud? Will your daughter say,

"It's true that he has no manners and no social skills, but I respect him anyway because he knows the intricacies of the difficult sections of the Torah?"

In this week's parsha, the Torah details the search for a wife for Yitzchak, and makes clear that sterling character was the most important factor for a suitable match.

A Taste of Torah

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What is the connection between Sara's lifespan and Esther's rule, what merit is there in Sara's 127 years, and how did Rabbi Akiva hope to awaken his listeners with this idea?

Based on this discussion, we can explain that Sara "ruled" over her years, as her life experiences didn't in any way affect her or change her state of mind. Sara was in charge of her very being and feelings, so much so that in every situation, she was full of happiness. This accomplishment was why her descendent Esther merited to

rule over 127 provinces, one province for every year over which Sara "ruled." And it is with this idea that Rabbi Akiva wished to rouse his listeners, for he wished to convey that their tired state should not get the better of them; rather, they should take charge and rule over their circumstances.

We, too, have the choice between letting life dictate our emotional state, or placing our trust in Hashem and not allowing anything to interfere with our confidence and happiness that Hashem is taking care of everything.

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