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# א ביסל תורה!

The Maimonides School Parsha Newsletter

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חיי שרה

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## The Impact of אמונה

By Ben Zilber

This week's פרשה starts out with the passing of שרה at the age of 127. אברהם mourns her and then purchases a burial place for her, מערת המכפלה. אברהם sends his slave, אליעזר, with many gifts in order to find a wife for יצחק. אליעזר asked ה' for a sign that when he is at the well, he will ask a woman for water to drink and any woman that offers his camels a drink too will be destined to be the wife of יצחק. רבקה passed this test and tells לבן. When לבן sees אליעזר, he gets excited seeing אליעזר's wealth and invites him into his parents house. רבקה then goes back with אליעזר and later marries יצחק.

And שרה, וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעֵי שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה: The opening פסוק of the פרשה says, שרה lived one hundred years and twenty years and 7 years, the years of live of שרה. There is a famous question on this brought down by רש"י. רש"י asks why the word "years" is repeated at the end of the פסוק without a number. רש"י answers that this shows that all of the years of שרה were equally good.

This רש"י begs an important question. שרה had a difficult life, she was captured by אבימלך and פרעה, and was barren until the age of 99. How could it be possible that all of her years were equally good? From here we learn from שרה how to have true אמונה in ה'. שרה understood that every moment of every day she was doing ה' will and whether it could be viewed as a "bad" situation or a great one it was irrelevant to her because she was doing the right thing.

In גמרא מסכת תענית there is a story of a תנא who was known as "נחום איש גמזו". He was known to always be positive and was called "איש גמזו" because he would always say "גם זו לטובה", (this is also for the best). נחום was once asked to deliver a box of gems to the king of Rome. On his journey he slept in an inn, and thieves emptied his box of gems and filled it up with sand, once he realized what happened he said, "גם זו לטובה". When נחום arrived at the palace he presented the gift. The king became angry and wanted to kill the Jewish population, since he felt that נחום had disrespected him. Suddenly, אליהו הנביא appeared to him looking like the king's advisors and said, "Perhaps this is the same type of sand which אברהם used during his war against the king's sand that turned into ammunition." At the time the king was at war with a country he couldn't defeat, and miraculously, he was able to conquer them with the sand. The king was amazed, and gave נחום many valuable stones and gems.

This story helps us understand שרה's values. שרה having a "good day" while barren, or in captivity, came from true אמונה in ה' and following in His ways. Noticing ה' in our daily lives is the key to strengthening our belief in ה', and living happier and more meaningful lives.

# Lessons From How אברהם Mourned שרה

By Ephraim Fischer

In the beginning of this week's פרשה, the פסוקים say that, "וַיְבֹא אַבְרָהָם לְסַפֵּד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבַכְתָּהּ", that אברהם went to eulogize שרה and weep over her. רב משה פיינשטיין comments on this, asking why אברהם would first eulogize her and then cry over her? The גמרא explicitly states the order in which you mourn: You take three days to weep, seven days to eulogize, and thirty days not to shave or cut your hair. Why would אברהם first eulogize, and then cry?

רב משה answers this by saying that through eulogy, you cry even more. You retell all of the stories and great things that they did in their lives, and this makes people realize how much of a loss is happening. In a world full of righteous people, we would already know the momentous loss that occurs when a צדיק dies. However, אברהם wasn't living in an ideal world; אברהם was living among the בני חת, a different nation. This nation didn't realize the true magnitude of the loss that this death was. Therefore אברהם had to eulogize to them before he wept over שרה to show them how big of a death this was, and to make them weep too.

רב משה gives another commentary which shows the true magnitude of שרה's death. In the first פסוק of this week's פרשה, it says, "וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעָה שָׁנִים", that שרה lived one hundred years and twenty years and seven years. Rashi comments on this, saying that the reason why it says each number of years individually is to show that at one hundred years old, she was like twenty years old in terms of עבירות, and when she was twenty years old, she was like seven years old in beauty. רב משה asks on this, why was it considered praiseworthy that at twenty, her beauty was like she was seven? Beauty is typically considered vain in תנ"ך! He answers that שרה's beauty didn't make other men desire her. Rather, שרה's beauty would inspire men to follow ה' and do מצוות. This is why the beauty was the beauty of a seven year old: A seven year old has no sins. People looked at שרה and saw someone pure, someone with no sins.

One may ask, "Why is it so important that this other nation mourn over שרה? If they aren't related to her, why should they also mourn?" The answer to this can be found in the גמרא in שבת. In this גמרא, it says that you have to tear your clothes and mourn over an "אדם כשר", a Kosher person. This is explained by the שולחן ערוך to mean someone who isn't suspected of any wrongdoings, someone who has a good reputation, someone who would never pass up on a מצווה, et cetera. By שרה's traits which were just listed above, it seems like שרה would meet these requirements. Therefore, the whole town should have to mourn שרה. This is not necessarily because אברהם is trying to make the whole town follow Jewish law; Rather, it is because this גמרא is teaching us an important lesson about respect. A righteous person brings great beauty and prosperity wherever they go (See "בראשית כח:"). They help us a tremendous amount in our lifetimes, even if we have never met them. Therefore, we should have a high level of respect for them during and after their lives.

There are many lessons that we can learn from אברהם's mourning of שרה. I think the main takeaway is that he wasn't just thinking about himself. He was thinking about the people around him. The time of mourning is supposed to be about yourself, with everybody else comforting you. However, אברהם first made sure everyone else knew what loss they were experiencing before going through his own grieving. Even at times where it's easy to just think about yourself and forget everyone around you, we should act like אברהם and put others first.

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