

א ביסל תורה

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How Should One View Any Ramifications of Doing מצוות?

By Ariella Askarinam '28

The פרשה begins with וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים "And it was שרה's lifespan, 100 years and 20 years and 7 years, the years of שרה's life" (בראשית כ"ג:א). What is the תורה trying to teach by telling us how old שרה lived?

רש"י, quoting a מדרש in the very next פסוק, says that שרה died after the שטן told her about יצחק and how her only child יצחק had nearly died.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, in אמת ליעקב, explains that the תורה repeats the phrase "חיי שרה" - "the years of שרה's life," to teach us that שרה lived the years that she was meant to live and that although she died after hearing about the עקידה, she did not die as a result of the עקידה. It was her time to die anyway. The תורה emphasizes that following ה' command will never harm a person and that you never lose out from doing a מצוה!

Sometimes though, it can be hard not to feel as though you have missed out when choosing to do a מצוה seems to present a difficulty. This is often a trick of the שטן, as I will now explain.

In the second פסוק of this week's פרשה, the תורה writes that אברהם came to eulogize שרה and to cry over her. However, the letter 'כ' in the word "ולבכתה" "to cry over her" (בראשית כ"ג:ב), is smaller than the other letters. The בעל הטורים writes that the small 'כ' teaches us that אברהם held back his crying and did not cry as much as he usually would have. He held some of his

grief inside and did not openly express it, since שרה died at an old age and she lived a full life. The קהלת, by Rabbi Yitzchak Reitbord (Vilna 1900), says that אברהם held back his tears so that it would not seem as though he regretted doing the עקידה, since שרה died right after hearing about it. The גמרא in מ: says that regret has the power to erase our actions. It can erase our sins, as part of the תשובה process, but can also cause a person to lose the reward they were to have gotten from a מצוה!

The שטן had tried very hard to stop אברהם from doing the עקידה. The מדרש says that the שטן turned himself into a river to prevent them from going, but אברהם jumped in and continued. When the שטן failed to stop the עקידה from happening, the שטן switched tactics and tried to get אברהם to regret the עקידה after the fact, by causing him to connect and associate the עקידה with שרה's death. אברהם, therefore, held back his tears for שרה so that it would not seem like he was regretting the עקידה, as the tiny letter 'כ' shows.

The lesson that we can learn from אברהם in this week's פרשה is not only to try our best to do all of the מצוות, even those that are hard for us to do, but also to feel proud and confident in our choice to do מצוות, and to never regret them and risk losing them. There may be influences that try to stop us from doing מצוות, or there may be times when we initially feel as though we have lost out on a fun opportunity, as a result of a choice that we made to do a good deed, but at the end of the day, no one can take away your מצוות. As long as we are proud and joyful of our choice to do them, they are yours forever. May all be able to fulfill the מצוות without any regret!

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'ה's Everlasting Promise

By Azriel Vidan '26

Before אליעזר's journey, in search for a suitable wife for יצחק, אברהם makes him swear that he will not take a wife for יצחק and that he won't take יצחק out of ארץ כנען (Israel). To initiate this covenant, אליעזר places his hand under אברהם's thigh. רש"י quotes the גמרא on שבועות לה: as an explanation for this phenomenon (בראשית כ"ד:ב). The גמרא, there, says that to make a שבועה (an oath) one must hold in his hand a "חפץ של מצוה" "a object." The examples it brings as "objects" are תפילין and ספר תורה. Therefore, אליעזר had to hold onto אברהם to take the oath.

The beautiful message in this רש"י is very easy to overlook. He is indirectly telling us that as we do our beloved מצוות we are establishing our love with 'ה. We are strengthening and reinforcing our bond with the ריבונו של עולם. With our desire to fulfill His Will and delve into the depths of the תורה, we are telling 'ה that we appreciate His protection and benevolence. However, when we break His commandments and fail to perform his מצוות, He sends down harsh punishments. The גמרא in ברכות סג: quotes the "עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך" פסוק (תהלים קיט:קכו) "תורה 'ה". It then interprets "עת לעשות לה'" as a time when 'ה brings sorrow and anguish to the world is "הפרו תורתך" - a time when בני ישראל are breaking the תורה. Meaning, when we fail to accomplish our main goal of serving the Creator and act with frivolity, He relays to us His extreme disappointment. When we fail to uphold our end of the covenant, הקדוש ברוך הוא afflicts us, pleading with us to repent.

Fortunately, 'ה is slow to anger, compassionate, and forgiving, so He never withdraws from His side of the bargain. He constantly reminds us that even when we

sin, even when we do the most horrible עבירות, He still seeks a relationship with us and always looks for repentance. Similarly, the גמרא in קידושין לו states that no matter what we do, regardless of how much we transgress, we will always be 'ה's children. 'ה will never forsake us, abandon us, or give up on us, He will love and cherish His children unconditionally, even when we disgrace, disrespect, and degrade Him. This is seen in 'ה's covenant with אברהם at the בתרים בין ברית and the multiple promises He graciously makes with the אבות. As we repeat every day in the שמונה עשרה, "וזכר, שמונה עשרה, "and He remembers the "חסדי אבות" "and He remembers the "חסדי" of our forefathers." Rabbi Jaffe explains that "חסדי" in this context, means the covenant, the everlasting compact to protect, care, and watch over Bnei Yisrael forever. Additionally, the גמרא in ע: says that even though בני ישראל mostly act like a "נמר," "a leopard," they will always be before me as "כרובים" - one of the most cherished and holiest objects in the בית המקדש. The אלושיך הקדוש בן יהוידע quotes the גמרא as follows: the spots on a leopard represent the sins of בני ישראל. However, these are no ordinary transgressions, these sins are the ones that are completely engraved onto a person's heart and mind. They have become so regular and so normal to him, to the point where they have become his natural tendencies and he no longer gives them a second thought. These horrible עבירות, just like the spots on a leopard, are impossible to remove. Therefore, the בן יהוידע explains, that even when בני ישראל has reached this unfathomable level of evil and corruption, 'ה will never spurn and reject us. We are His, now and forever, and this undeniable fact will never change.



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