
א ביסל תורה!

The Maimonides School Parsha Newsletter

כ"ו חשון תשפ"ד-11/10/2023

חיי שרה

abisltorah.wordpress.com

חיי שרה The Hidden Messages of

By Menshi Trachtenberg

In the first פסוק of שרה's age, we are told "מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים חיי שרה". Why does the תורה describe שרה's age as 100 years and 20 years and seven years? In normal Hebrew that doesn't make sense, it should be "מאה עשרים ושבע שנים". רש"י says that there is a significance for each number being separate. At the age 100 she never sinned, like at the age 20 and at age twenty she was as beautiful as age 7.

Later on in the פרשה, אברהם tells אליעזר to go find his son, יצחק, a wife. אליעזר leaves and ends up in the house of בתואל where he tries to convince the family to let him take רבקה back with him as a wife for יצחק. While in בתואל's house, אליעזר, tells לבן and his family that he cannot eat until he has spoken. This is interesting, why does he first need to talk and only then he can eat? One answer to this question can be found in בראשית רבה. The בראשית רבה says that the reason that he needed to talk before eating is because there was poison in his food. An angel switched his plate with בתואל's plate, so he needed to get permission to take רבקה before לבן would have to sit שבעה for his father. Furthermore in "וַיִּמְגְּדוּתָּן לְאֶחָיָהּ וּלְאִמָּהּ" it says "and presents were given to the brother and father", but not to the father, בתואל? Why not the father? בראשית רבה answers that this is because בתואל wasn't alive. The reason he wasn't alive was because he had eaten the poison. ה' knew that בתואל would cause problems for the marriage. As such ה' helped אליעזר by causing those problems not to have the possibility of occurring. The morning after אליעזר's meal with the family, לבן was tried to convince him to stay additional nights, but אליעזר told him that he needed to return to אברהם. The decision was then made by לבן that רבקה would decide if they should stay or go, thinking that רבקה would choose to stay. However, רבקה wanted to leave and so אליעזר left.

Finally, near the end of the פרשה, אברהם takes a new wife named קטורה, whom some פרשנים say is really הגר. Why would אברהם get married again at the age of 140? The simple reason for this is that he wanted to fulfill the mitzvah of פרו ורבו. Another question is, if it really was הגר, then why did אברהם wait until שרה died and for יצחק to get married before remarrying? The reason he would wait for שרה to die was out of respect of שרה, who disliked הגר and had sent הגר away. The sages teach us that the reason אברהם waited for יצחק to get married is because if a person had a spouse that passed away, and they have children of marriageable age, then they should first help their children settle down with a family before they take a new wife and therefore אברהם waited.

We can learn from this פרשה to not take everything as face value and to always look for the deeper meaning in the things we read, especially in the תורה.

תשובה Tremendous הגר

By Avishag Saltzman

This week's פרשה starts off with the death of שרה, and ends, in the beginning of the sixth Aliyah, saying that קטורה took אברהם as a third wife. There is nothing unusual about this except רש"י says that קטורה was actually הגר, and אברהם remarried her. He says the reason for her new name was given because her deeds were as beautiful as קטרת (incense). This is strange because in last week's פרשה, when אברהם sent הגר and her son, ישמעאל away, the פסוק said ותתע במדבר רש"י. ותלך ותתע במדבר רש"י says that 'תתע' meant going back to the עבודה זרה of her father's house. This is a contradiction between what רש"י says, either she was an idol worshiper, or her deeds were as beautiful as קטרת. What happened between these two רש"י's was the miracle of the well. When ישמעאל was on the verge of death, הגר cried out to ה', asking him to not witness her son's death; as a response, ה' sent מלאך down to give her a well, saving her son. From being an idol worshiper, an act of חסד turned הגר all the way around, into a virtuous woman, worthy of marrying אבינו אברהם a second time.

We can learn two things from this. Firstly, an act of kindness can go a long way, you never know whether you will be someone's redemption. This shows us the power of חסד is not only making someone feel good, but could change someone's perspective on faith completely. The second thing we can learn from this is the power of תשובה. In פרק ל, פסוק י"ד, דברים, it says: לעשותו "בלבבך" referring to תשובה. It says that the תשובה is very close to us, to do with our mouth and heart and actions. We should never think that our sin that we committed is so bad, that תשובה won't help. עבודה זרה is one of the three עבירות that it is better to die than commit. It is so bad that it is mentioned 48 times in the תורה. You might think that after a sin like עבודה זרה, there is no way הגר could have done full תשובה, but not only did she do full תשובה, she turned into such a righteous woman that אברהם married her again! Seeing how הגר, committing one of the worst sins, can do תשובה and be compared to קטרת, can teach us that no matter how horrible your sin is, תשובה is always accessible, and ה' is always willing to forgive.

Editors: Binyamin Orkaby and Ephraim Fischer
Faculty Advisor: Rabbi Jaffe



Write a Dvar Torah for תורה א ביסל



Receive תורה א ביסל on WhatsApp