

# SARAH HAD IT ALL TOGETHER – THROUGHOUT HER LIFE

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

## Parshas Chayei Sarah

### Sarah Had It All Together - Throughout Her Life

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #700, More Mincha Insights. Good Shabbos!*

Rather than simply stating that Sara our Matriarch died at the age of 127, the Torah says that Sarah lived 100 years and 20 years and 7 years. Rashi on this pasuk [verse] states that she was as free from sin at 100 as she was at 20 (there is no liability for divine punishment until 20) and she was as beautiful at age 20 as at age 7. The pasuk concludes "shnei chayei Sarah" - these are the years of the Matriarch Sarah. Here Rashi comments - all equally good (kulan shavim l'Tova).

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt"l, commented that a person goes through different stages of life - infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and old age. In general, when we finish one stage of life and move onto the next stage, we leave the earlier stage behind. We may have fond memories, but that period of our life is closed. When a person is 100 years old, they have already acquired great wisdom, wisdom that only comes with life's experience. At 20, a person is in the stage when they are full of energy, vitality, and idealism. The age of 7 represents an age of innocence and purity.

Rav Soloveitchik said that Chazal are trying to tell us that regardless of how old Sarah was at any point in her life, Sarah had within her the attributes of a seven year old (purity and innocence), the attributes of a twenty year old (vitality and idealism) and the attributes of a 100 year old (wisdom and experience).

Seven year olds have a wonderful and pure understanding of the Ribono shel Olam. G-d is a reality to them. When you want something, you ask Hashem for it and most of the time, you are answered. Their prayers are pure. Unfortunately, most of us no longer have that innocence when we daven. We have already become jaded by the vagaries of life in this world. The 20 year old is full of idealism and the 100 year old is full of wisdom.

"They were all equally good" means that when Sarah was 45, she had the purity and innocence of a 7

year old - her belief in the Almighty was real and untainted. At that same age (and at every other age), she had the youthful idealism and energy of a 20 year old. Throughout her life, she was wise beyond her years - even in her youth and even in her middle age, she had the wisdom of an old lady. She never left behind the stages of life that she "outgrew", but rather took the positive attributes of each stage in life along with her while she aged.

### **Seeing The Silver Lining Of A Challenging Situation: A Great Accomplishment**

The Ramba"n writes that the Torah elaborates on all the details of Avraham's purchase of the burial plot for Sarah "In order to inform us of the mercies of G-d (Chasdei Hashem) with Avraham, who became a Prince of the L-rd in the land into which he came to live." The Chitites treated Avraham with great respect and were honored to give his family a prime burial spot in the finest part of their territory. The entire populace gave him the title Adoni [master] such that yet in his lifetime we witness fulfillment of the blessing "I will Bless you and I will make your name great". [Bereishis 12:2]

The Ramba"n continues in the very same paragraph: And our Rabbis say that this was one of Avraham's tests - that he sought a burial place for his own wife in the land that he was promised by G-d and yet he was not able to acquire the land until he purchased it at a great price with great effort. He did not question G-d about this and thus passed his final nisayon [test].

Are these two comments of the Ramba"n not self-contradictory? The Ramba"n begins the comment by saying that the parsha is written to tell us that the story illustrates the great respect everyone had for Avraham. But then the Ramba"n says that the parsha documents a test that Avraham endured - expending great effort and great expense to find a burial spot for his wife!

Furthermore, how can there be another "test" after the test at the end of last week's parsha - the nisayon of Akeidas Yitzchak [the binding of Yitzchak]? The events in this week's parsha may be upsetting and difficult, but as a test, they are very anti-climactic. Is this an appropriate climax to the tests that Avraham endured during his life of devotion to the Almighty?

Rav Simcha Zissel Brody says that there is no contradiction in the Ramba"n and in fact the Ramba"n coming to answer this very question of why the purchase of a burial plot was considered a "test".

The tests presented contradictions to Avraham.

Avraham was told to go to the Land of Canaan and good things would happen to him. But as soon as Avraham arrived, "there was a famine in the land". This was an apparent contradiction to G-d's promise.

G-d told Avraham he would have a son who would be the founder of the Jewish people. Then G-d told Avraham to take the son and slaughter him. This was an apparent contradiction to G-d's promise.

The burial of Sarah contains that element as well. Avraham was promised that the entire land would

be his and now he has difficulty even buying a plot for his beloved wife. This too is a contradiction. However, this test has an added element. The test was whether, while undergoing stress and distress of nisyanos, Avraham would also simultaneously be able to perceive the great mercies and kindnesses that G-d had wrought for him.

There are 3 ways that a person can handle life's tragedies. He can suffer troubles and tragedy and then throw away religion. Alternatively, he can suffer these fates and stoically accept it all as punishment. Finally, he can see the trouble and tragedy, but even within the tragedy, he is able to see the Mercy. This is the ultimate test of a human being's faith.

This is why the test of Sarah's burial was even greater than the previous tests. It contained the element of contradiction that was also present in the previous nisyanos, but it also contained another element. It contained the challenge to be impressed by the way the Bnei Ches treated him (even while they were giving him a hard time) and the challenge to recognize the Divine Providence which allowed him to be valued and treated as a "Prince of the Land in their midst."

Seeing the Chessed and the Favors of G-d while in the midst of one's troubles is a tremendous attribute and indeed amounted to the pinnacle of Avraham's spiritual accomplishments.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Chaye Sarah are provided below:

Tape # 030 - The Shadchan in Halacha  
Tape # 072 - Superstition in Halacha  
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Tape # 214 - Pilegesh: An Alternative to Marriage?  
Tape # 258 - Intrusion on Another's Shidduch  
Tape # 304 - The "Mazik" of a Child: Is He Responsible?  
Tape # 348 - Determining the Salary of the Shadchan  
Tape # 392 - Purchasing a Burial Plot  
Tape # 436 - Daughters: Shidduchim & Parental Wishes  
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