

LAMPLIGHTER

21 Cheshvan
Chayei Sarah

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The name of this week's Torah reading is Chayei Sara, literally the "life of Sara." As explained by Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidism, the Hebrew name of a particular object or creation is what gives it its vitality and sustains it. Thus we must conclude that the entire Torah portion is somehow connected with the "life of Sara."

This, however, appears difficult to understand at first glance. Only the first verse of the Torah portion relates to Sara's life, whereas the rest of it speaks of seemingly unrelated matters: the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, and the passing of Abraham. Why then is the entire portion known as Chayei Sara?

The answer is that in truth, all of the events related in Chayei Sara - the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, as well as the passing of Abraham - express the sum and substance of our Matriarch Sara's life.

Concerning the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, the Torah tells us, "And Isaac brought her into the tent of Sara his mother, and took Rebecca, and she became his wife." When did Isaac agree to marry Rebecca? Only after he brought her into his mother's tent, and the miracles that used to occur during Sara's lifetime resumed.

Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator, explains that there were three specific miracles: 1) the Shabbat candles Sara kindled burned from one Friday afternoon till the next; 2) the dough she kneaded was specially blessed, and; 3) a cloud of holiness hovered over her tent. After Sara's death these miracles ceased; in the merit of Rebecca, they returned.

This occurred three years after Sara passed away, yet we see in these miracles a continuation of her life.

A similar connection exists to the passing of our forefather Abraham. The Torah states, "His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him." Isaac is mentioned before Ishmael, for by the time Abraham died, Ishmael had already repented. By giving his younger brother precedence, Ishmael demonstrated that the birth-right rightly belonged to him.

This development was in the sole merit of Sara, who when she saw that Ishmael was "mocking," i.e., not behaving properly, demanded that Abraham "cast him out...for he will not be heir." Sara's intent was for Ishmael to return to G-d in repentance, which indeed subsequently occurred. Many years later, after Sara was no longer alive, Ishmael allowed his younger brother to lead the way, again an expression of the continuation of Sara's life.

The entire Torah portion is therefore known as Chayei Sara, as all of the events it relates are connected to Sara's life.

A Life of One Day at a Time

By Rabbi Ben A.

"Abraham was old, come along in days"-Genesis 24:1.

This week's Torah reading describes Abraham as being "old, come along in days." What is the difference between the two? If one has already been told that Abraham was old, why is it necessary to add that he also lived many days?

The answer is that to be "old" means to have lived a long time, but says nothing about how one spent his time. To "come along in days" describes the manner in which a person's life was lived. Abraham did not merely pass through life, racking up the years. His years were made up of much smaller units of time-days. He lived with the knowledge that there will never again be a time like this time right now. He had a sensitivity to the significance of each moment, and succeeded in actualizing whatever unique opportunities presented themselves. If I live my life right, then I am not just "x" amount of years old. I am the product of days, hours and minutes lived to their fullest G-dly potential.

There are some who push through life just trying to get from one day to the next. There are others who say that every moment is to be savoured, not just endured. Abraham's attitude surpassed both of these. He saw every moment as something to be put to use. Even the smallest unit of time is a distinct creation never to be replicated again. Today's work is not tomorrow's. The call of the hour is not that of the next.

When those of us in recovery speak about taking sobriety "one-day-at-a-time," we don't just mean breaking up time into manageable chunks. We mean that to stay sober, we need to stay in the moment. We have to be in the now; we need to know that we were brought to this place and time at this very second to serve a purpose and be of use to our fellow and our Creator. We need to be aware that we are being given a gift that will never be precisely replicated.

When we were drinking or drugging, the past dogged us with remorse and resentment; the future loomed before us with fear and dread. The present was barely tolerated or frittered away with procrastination. As sober people in recovery, we still have difficulty relating to time. But sober living, and the kind of spiritual awareness that it demands from us, have helped us to learn how to look with keen eyes at the opportunities for service brought by each moment.

Whereas aging takes no special effort or insight, truly living means to "come along" in days, hours, minutes and seconds-all put to good use in our service to man and G-d.

Slice of LIFE

The Living Orphan

A child's memories from life in Soviet Russia as told to Avraham Elya Plotkin

Reminiscing about the years of my youth in the Soviet Union in the early twentieth century brings back fractured memories and complicated images. Amongst them, however, there are some complete pictures and figures that are engraved deep, deep in my psyche.

I remember that long, cold, dark night, when I awoke to the sound of sobbing. Mother was standing, crying hysterically as she waved her hands in the air. Father was standing half-dressed, scared to death.

Three young people dressed in uniform were milling around the room, searching the closets and the beds and looking at the walls. I watched as they approached the bookcase and examined each book, page by page.

I wondered: What are they looking for? What do they need?

And then I saw that they found what they were looking for. They found a few handwritten pieces of paper and a picture of the Rebbe [Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe-ed.].

One pointed to the other, "This is Schneersohn!"

They then commanded Father to dress and come with them. Father came to my small bed, bent down and gave me a kiss, long and painful. Tears - big ones, hot ones, blazing ones - rolled off his cheek and onto my forehead.

He then looked at Mother with fire and love in his eyes. He kissed the mezuzah on the doorway and disappeared into the dark of night.

Only when the door closed did my childish mind grasp how great our tragedy was.

Mother began to sob, "Oy vey!"

She fainted.

The neighbours came and revived her. They tried to console her.

I once heard Mother tell the neighbours that on that night, "they" also took another fifty married men and several students, all of them Lubavitcher chassidim, friends and students of Father.

This was a communal tragedy; but that did not lessen Mother's pain.

Now, day after day, she would run around the streets. She would go wherever possible, to beg, to protest and to cry, while I was left at home alone, like an orphan.

My young soul was anxious. I held back my tears.

I felt as if a thief stole, without mercy, the beauty of life. He stole my happiness, my childhood.

It was only a short while ago that Father would spend days with me, playing and

singing. He would run to me, give me a hug and kiss me without end.

He would tell me stories. Extraordinary stories from the Torah and Talmud.

I was already studying the Torah with Rashi's commentary. But Father would insist on teaching me lofty concepts that I did not completely understand. He spoke about G d, about Jews and the Torah.

Mother would say to Father, "Gevald what are you doing? a child as young as our Sholomke, you speak of such subjects? His mind is still tender; he cannot understand it."

"If I was able to," Father would say, "I would inject the entire Torah into his brain; who knows what tomorrow will bring?"

I remember that Father would go out into the dark winter nights and disappear for a few hours. He would return very tired, but always in joyous spirits.

One time he took me with him. We travelled on a trolley and then by foot. We walked through side streets until we came to an apartment complex.

We passed through a long-neglected courtyard and through three doorways, and then trekked up the staircase to the fifth floor. We entered a large room with horrible lighting and a large uncovered table in the middle.

In the room were three dozen lads, in their early teens. They all had the same look on their face. Their eyes held constant fear. They were scared of the unknown.

Between themselves, they were friendly, as if they were all part of a large family.

When they saw me, they said excitedly, "Sholomke is here!"

"Your father says that you have a good head," one called out.

Another said, "Don't worry, Sholomke, do not let your spirit fall. By the time you grow up, the world will be normal again."

They all took out their books. They studied Chabad philosophy; while I sat there wondering what wasn't normal about the current world.

The hours went by. The students got into heated discussions as they discussed the intricacies of the teachings. Then, one by one, they filed out, in intervals of a few minutes.

Everything about that evening fascinated me.

The secretiveness and the hiding spot where the boys gathered. The poverty in the home. The friendliness they had for each other. Their confidence, despite the fear.

Watching them study had a great effect on me. Their studying was filled with enthusiasm, Father's love for them and theirs for Father.

After that, I never met with them again, because a short while later, they took Father away.

A few months after Father was taken away, his sister's husband, Uncle Moshe, came to town. He was a tall and thin man, and although elderly, very strong. In his steps you heard confidence and assurance.

After talking with Mother for a while, they decided that I was to go live with Uncle Moshe in his city.

The parting was heart-wrenching.

All three of us cried. After Uncle dried his eyes, I burst into tears, "Mother, I don't want to go. I want to live with you."

"My child, what kind of life awaits you here? Who will study with you here? Soon, with G d's help, Father will return home, and you will be able to return to a normal life."

We hugged and kissed again.

Mother accompanied us to the train. There, we piled into a small cabin. I watched as mother stood outside, watching the departing train.

Her hands were open. The look on her face expressed her unspoken feelings: "What have I done? My most precious... my only consolation... I have sent to the unknown."

Life with my aunt and uncle was not bad. Uncle was a carpenter and earned a good livelihood. They had no children.

I was sent to study under the supervision of Asher the teacher.

Uncle Moshe would tell the teacher, "Remember that he is not just another pupil; he is the son of Shmuel, your childhood friend, may he return soon. And when he will see that his son is educated in the ways of Torah, his happiness will know no end."

One day, Uncle said to me, "I think that it is a good idea for you to go study in a yeshivah, a place of advanced Torah learning. Here you have no friends. There you will have friends."

Shortly thereafter, he took me to the school. There were thirty young students and some older ones. The teacher was a great scholar.

As students in an underground Jewish school under Soviet rule, we were forced to move every few days from one home to another. Our teacher never managed to deliver an entire lecture series in one location.

We studied and travelled. Nevertheless, under these difficult circumstances we all gained great Talmudic knowledge.

We also learned Chabad philosophy, which revealed a new dimension to life. We recognized a new world, G dly and splendid. We viewed reality differently.

Our thirst for learning was great. There was no need to force us to study; we just wanted more and more.

Since my father was taken, they have called me the "living orphan." As a child, I never understood-are other orphans not living?

Today I understand; I am indeed a unique orphan. Even to say the Kaddish prayer once, to pour out my soul, I cannot, for I do not know which day to say it on.

But I know that there is something deeper that connects me to my father. There is something much greater than what any letter or telephone call could do.

There is a soul connection.

It is the Jewish practice I strive to maintain that connects us.

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ISSUE 1009

MOSHIACH MATTERS

During the seven days of festivities following the wedding of Rabbi Sholom Dovber (to become known as the Rebbe Rashab, fifth Chabad Rebbe), the Chasidim celebrated with indescribable joy. On one of those days, his father the Rebbe Maharash sat at his window and watched them dancing in the garden in dozens of circles.

Turning to the two chasidim who stood next to him, he said: "See, my children, how chasidim are glad in the joy of a mitzva (commandment). This is how Jews will dance in the streets when Moshiach comes!" (Likkutei Dibburim)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

12 Cheshvan, 5711 [1950]

...With regard to your question concerning the shidduch [marriage prospect] for your sister-in-law with a bachelor of about 35 years, I would suggest that inquiries be made to find out why he did not marry before, and if the reasons are such that do not affect a Jewish home, it would be advisable for the two people to get better acquainted and ascertain what mutual attractions they have.

I was very pleased to read in your letter that your son desires to study for semichah [rabbinic ordination] and that the Rosh Yeshiva [dean of the yeshiva] regards him as fitting for it. I was also glad to hear that he devotes time to strengthening Yiddishkeit [Judaism] among the youth. I am sure you will encourage him to continue along this course and will help him achieve his ambition.

As to the question of a shidduch for your son, about which you write that you are afraid to do anything in this matter, not knowing if it would be suitable, the Torah teaches us not to rely on miracles where things can and ought to be approached in natural ways and means. However, while doing so it is necessary to bear in mind that these so-called "natural" ways and means are also miracles ordained by G-d, especially in the case of marriage, as it is said in Proverbs: An intelligent wife is a gift from G-d. At any rate, an attempt should be made in the usual way, and G-d will certainly lead it in such a way as to ensure a suitable and fitting wife for your son.

As to your apology for troubling me and your question whether you can do anything in return, this matter cannot be termed "trouble." You may have heard the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov as to how the three loves - love of G-d, love of Israel, and love of the Torah - are one, and a means to "Thou shalt love G-d thy G-d" is "Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself." There is no question of trouble here at all. May G-d grant that every one of us, including you, do all you and every one of us can to help others.

However, since you have offered to do something in return, and everything is connected with Divine Providence, I am enclosing herewith a copy of the Talk of Shabbos Bereishis. I call your attention to pars. 21 and 22, where you will find some suggestions as to what you could do to strengthen Torah and Yiddishkeit [Judaism]. As to what this would mean to me - I refer you to the Rambam [Maimonides] (Hilchos Teshuvah, ch. 3:4) where he states that "Everyone should regard the world on the basis that the good and bad deeds are equally balanced. Thus, through a bad deed one tips the scale of the bad side, G-d forbid, and through a good deed one tips the scale on the good side." Therefore, if you follow the suggestions in the above-mentioned paragraphs, you will increase the merits of the entire world, thus benefiting me also.

It would interest me to know what "fixed times" you have for the study of the Torah in general, and no doubt for the study of Chassidus also.

As already mentioned, you need not hesitate in writing to me at any time, but you must be patient if my reply is delayed because of pressure of work.

I hope to hear good news from you.

CUSTOMS CORNER

THE AMIDA (SHMONE ESREI)

The Amida [shmone esrei] was instituted by the Men of the Great Assembly (who lived at the end of the 2nd temple era), because they saw that Jews were scattered in many different countries and were forgetting the prayers. Originally it was 18 blessings [shmone esrei means 18], then a 19th prayer was added to get rid of wicked people who would inform to the government.

There are many laws involved in regards to the Amida, here are a few:

1. We take 3 steps back before the Amida and then 3 steps forward, and then again at the end of the Amida. These steps are foot length (toes against the heel).
2. Before the Amida we face upwards for a moment to focus our heart to Hashem.
3. While in midst of the Amida it is forbidden to talk or even to signal in any way.
4. One must concentrate on the meaning of the words he is saying, especially in the 1st 3 blessings (the blessings of praising).

A WORD

from the Director

In this week's Torah portion, Chayei Sara, we read of Sara's passing and Abraham's subsequent purchase of the Cave of Machpela as the place for her burial.

In addition to G-d's promise to Abraham that his descendants would eternally inherit the Land of Canaan (which included the land of the ten nations who lived there: Keini, Kenizi, Kadmoni, etc.) Avraham desired to actually purchase outright a portion of the land. The opportunity presented itself with Sara's passing when it was necessary to have a proper burial place for her. Abraham knew that the Cave of Machpela, located in Hebron, was the place where Adam and Eve had been buried, and chose to purchase the field in which that cave was located for his family.

Abraham's purchase of the field containing the Cave of Machpelah represents the beginning of the general redemption of all Jews.

Our commentators explain that with the 400 silver shekels that Abraham paid, he purchased one square cubit of the Land of Israel for every one of the 600,000 root-souls of the Jewish people.

May we very soon merit not only the beginning of the Redemption of the Jewish people but the complete Redemption, when the entire Land of Israel will be in the possession of its rightful heirs - according to G-d and the Torah - in the Messianic Era.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED

Once...

The Witnessing Tree
By Yerachmiel Tilles

The wheel of fortune had taken a downturn for a once-wealthy Jew who lived in the Moroccan city of Rabat. He was forced to leave home and wander from city to city and town to town, in search of an appropriate business opportunity that would enable him to support the large extended family that had come to depend on him.

He experienced many difficulties, yet he maintained his faith in the One that provides all. Finally, after several failed attempts, he succeeded in amassing a significant amount of money. Now he would be able to return home.

On the way, he passed through the town of Sali, which is not far from Rabat. As it was already fairly late on Friday, he figured he had better remain in Sali for Shabbat. A good friend from his youth whom he had not seen in many years lived there, and he knew he would find a warm welcome at his house.

Indeed, as soon as his friend saw him, he insisted that his surprise guest remain for Shabbat. The weary traveller accepted the invitation happily. Before candle lighting, he gave his money pouch to his host for safekeeping, so that he wouldn't have to worry about it during the Day of Rest.

By Saturday night, the traveller was anxious to reach home. Immediately after Havdalah, he requested his money pouch back from his friend.

"What are you talking about?" denied his host. "You never left any money with me."

The stunned guest could not believe his ears. He almost fainted. When he recovered his senses, he begged his friend to return to him the money for which he had laboured so long and hard, and which was critical to his family's survival.

The host was beside himself with indignation. "You have some nerve!" he shouted. "Aren't you embarrassed? You slept in my house, you ate at my table, and now you dare to hurl at me these false accusations!"

The man soon realized there was no chance that this conniver would return the money of his own accord. He decided he had better go right away to make a claim at the Beit Din (rabbinical court).

The rabbi of Sali at the time was the famous "Ohr HaChaim," Rabbi Chaim Ibn Atar. The two men went to his house. Rabbi Chaim listened carefully to both sides. He then addressed the host: "This Jew is claiming money which he says he deposited with you before Shabbat eve. What do you say?"

"It never happened," the man answered. "This man is slandering me."

Rabbi Chaim turned to the guest. "Perhaps there was a witness at the time you say you handed your money to him?"

The dejected man now felt even worse. "No, there was no witness there. Just before Shabbat we sat under a tree. That is when I removed my pouch and gave it to him to hold for me until Saturday night."

"Under a tree? Very good!" cried out Rabbi Chaim excitedly. "Go back and summon that tree to be a witness on your behalf!"

The traveller was taken aback when it sunk in what the rabbi wanted him to do, but being well aware of Rabbi Chaim's reputation as a miracle-worker, he stood up and left the house, without questioning the great rabbi's instructions.

After just a few minutes, the Ohr HaChaim remarked that certainly the man has already reached the tree.

"What do you mean, Rabbi?" said the other man. "That tree is quite far from here."

Looking sternly into the man's eyes, Rabbi Chaim declared: "Give that poor innocent Jew his money back, right now!" Seeing the surprise on the man's face, the Rabbi stroked his beard and added: "If you didn't receive the money from him under that tree, how is it that you know where the tree is?"

The man turned pale. Without saying another word, he promptly returned the money that had been entrusted to him.

After he finally reached home, the merchant utilized most of his hard-earned savings for wise investments, and with G-d's help became wealthy again as he had been once before.

Biographical note:

Rabbi Chaim ben Moshe ibn Atar (1696-1743) is best known as the author of one of the most important and popular commentaries on the Torah: the *Ohr HaChaim*. He established a major yeshiva in Israel, after moving there from Morocco. The founder of the Chassidism, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, maintained that if he could join forces with Rabbi Chaim, together they could bring the Messiah (the Baal Shem Tov made several failed attempts to reach the Holy Land to this end). Rabbi Chaim is buried outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

The years of Sara were one hundred and twenty-seven years (Gen. 23:1)

Sara is the only woman in the Torah whose lifetime is explicitly recorded. This is because she is considered to be the mother of the entire Jewish people, as it states (Isaiah 51:2), "And to Sara who gave birth to you." (Zohar)

If you wish to deal kindly and truly with my master (Gen. 24:49)

Why did Eliezer have to "beg" Rebecca's father Betuel and her brother Laban to agree to allow her to marry Isaac if Abraham was such a wealthy man? Wasn't it obvious that Rebecca would be well taken care of if she married Isaac? Rather, the prophecy concerning Abraham's descendants - "And they will afflict them for four hundred years" - was already well known, and Betuel and Laban hesitated before subjecting Rebecca's unborn children to the Egyptian exile. However, when they realized that it was ordained by G-d, they gave their consent and declared, "We cannot speak to you bad or good." (Yalkut David)

And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac, but to the sons of the concubines...he gave gifts (Gen. 25:5-6)

Isaac is symbolic of holiness and the spiritual realm; the "sons of the concubines" stand for the physical and corporeal world. The Torah teaches that we must give "all" of ourselves - the lion's share of our time, energy and talents - to spiritual matters. Worldly matters, however, can be placated with "gifts"... (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 18 NOVEMBER 2011

BEGINS	ENDS
7:54MELBOURNE	8:57
7:43ADELAIDE	8:44
6:00BRISBANE	6:57
6:35DARWIN	7:27
6:00GOLD COAST	6:57
6:38PERTH	7:37
7:20SYDNEY	8:21
7:32CANBERRA	8:33
7:54LAUNCESTON	9:01
7:53AUCKLAND	8:55
8:03WELLINGTON	9:10
7:58HOBART	9:06
7:00BYRON BAY	7:57



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS CHAYEI SARAH
22 CHESHVAN • 19 NOVEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	7:54 PM
	MINCHA:	7:55 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8:40 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:30 AM
	MINCHA:	7:45 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	8:57 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:05 PM
	MAARIV:	8:55 PM