



## Parshat Chayei Sarah

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

Editor: Sam. Eisikovits

[eisikovits1@gmail.com](mailto:eisikovits1@gmail.com)

# Attitude & Expectations Are the Secret to Happiness & Contentment

Parshas [Chayei Sarah](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

In Parshas Chayei Sarah, the pasuk says “*v’Hashem beirach es Avraham bakol*” (And Hashem blessed Avraham with everything) (Bereshis 24:1). Rashi comments that the word *bakol* (*beis-chaf-lamed*) is numerically equivalent to the word Ben (*beis-nun*). The letters in each word add up to the number 52. The *pasuk* thus alludes to the fact that Hashem blessed Avraham with a son (*ben*). Rashi says very early on in his Chumash commentary (Bereshis 3:8) “And I have come only to provide the simple Scriptural interpretation (*p’shuto shel Mikra*).” Rashi notes that there are dozens of Medrashim which provide more homiletic readings of Chumash, but he views the job of his commentary to keep it simple and provide the most straightforward reading of the *pesukim* (the “*pashuta p’shat*”).

*Gematriya* is a legitimate mode of Torah explication, but Gematrias are not usually considered “*p’shat*” (Avos 3:18). The question over here is what motivated Rashi to abandon the *p’shuto shel Mikra* of this *pasuk* and replace it with a *Gematria*? The Radak, who is another commentary that sticks to the simple reading of the Chumash, in fact, interprets the *pasuk* in a way that seems closer to its simple reading: Avraham Avinu had everything and the only thing left for him to do now was to find the proper match for his son Yitzchak. This is the *p’shuto shel Mikra* which introduces us to the rest of the *parsha*.

What forced Rashi, the ‘*pashtan*,’ to explain this *pasuk* with a *Gematria*, when the *p’shuto shel Mikra* is very obvious?

I found an approach to this question in the writings of the Tolner Rebbe. The following is not exactly what he said, but it is the gist of what he said, at least the way I understand it:

Rashi is answering a question over here. The *pasuk* states that Avraham is now an old man, he had been blessed with a wonderful life – he had everything! Over the last several weeks, we learned the parshiyos of Lech Lecha and VaYera. Would you consider Avraham Avinu’s life an idyllic, wonderful, peaceful life – such that the *pasuk* can now say at the end of his days that *Hashem* blessed him with “everything?”

Let us just list, for instance, aspects of this wonderful life that Avraham Avinu had:

#1 When he was in Ur Kasdim, he was accused of heresy and thrown into a fiery furnace

#2 He experienced the “Ten Tests” (Avos 5:3) of which Chazal speak

#3 He dealt with a wife who was childless until age 90 at which time Avraham was already 100 years old, infertility being one of the most painful of life’s experiences

#4 He dealt with the domestic trauma of Sarah doing battle with Hagar, and needing to very reluctantly banish Hagar from his household

#5 When Hagar finally gives Avraham a son, it is a son who is perhaps the first “off the *Derech* kid” in Jewish history

#6 Sarah is captured when Avraham went down to Mitzrayim

#7 Sarah is again captured when Avraham went down to Eretz Plishtim

#8 He successfully passed his tenth and final test – the *Akeidas Yitzchak* – and he returned home to find his beloved wife dead

Does this list really indicate “And *Hashem* blessed Avraham with ‘everything?’” Is that a wonderful life? It is a life of one trouble after another!

Rashi is answering this question. Rashi is explaining how Avraham Avinu was able to cope with all of this. What was his secret that he never gave up and he never became depressed? The answer is that Avraham Avinu possessed the quality that assures happiness in life. It is a quality that we saw previously in Parshas Lech Lecha: When *HaKodosh Baruch Hu* tells Avraham that he is going to have a son (Yitzchak), Avraham responds (according to Rashi there): "*Halevai* that Yishmael should live. I am unworthy to receive such a great reward as this!" (Bereshis 17:18)

This is the key to Avraham Avinu's success. He does not expect anything from Heaven. Everything is considered a gift. There are only two types of people in the world – those who say "*Aynee k'dai*" (I am unworthy of this) and those who say "*Zeh magiyah li*" (I deserve this!).

This is expressed by a Medrash: Rav Levi and Rav Chanina say – On every breath a person takes, he should praise his Creator, as it is written (a play on words) "*Kol haneshama te'hallel K-ah*" (Every soul (i.e., each breath) should praise G-d) (Tehillim 150:6). Have any of us ever thought to say "Ah! Thank G-d that I can breathe?" Unless a person has asthma, pneumonia or some type of other terrible lung disease, *chas v'shalom*, a person does not think about rejoicing over the fact that "I can breathe, I can see, I can walk." We may all say the morning blessings that express gratitude for our basic necessities in life, but who mentally thanks the *Ribono shel Olam* for all of that? We take it for granted.

"I need to be alive. I need to be healthy. I need to see. I need to be able to walk. I need to be able to do everything." Now, what are You going to do for me? The rest is a given.

A person that has that first attitude (I am unworthy of this) can experience all the trials and tribulations that Avraham Avinu

experienced and still feel "*V'Hashem beirach es Avraham ba'kol*" (and G-d blessed Avraham with everything). Rashi says that "*ba'kol*" in *Gematria* equals "*ben*" (son). Avraham says "You gave me a son named Yitzchak? Now I have everything. I don't need anything else. Even Yishmael was enough for me. Now I have a Yitzchak as well! That is literally 'everything' (*ba'kol*).

This is why Rashi invokes the *Gematria* here. Rashi is trying to explain how the *pasuk* can make the statement that Hashem blessed Avraham with everything when we know that Avraham had a life full of trials and tribulations. The answer is that this was Avraham's perspective on life – "I have a son? What more do I need!"

When Avraham Avinu dies, the Torah states:

"And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, an old man and content..." (Bereshis 25:8). This is the eulogy that the *Ribono shel Olam* says on Avraham Avinu. It is the epitaph on his tombstone. It does not say "Avraham Avinu the *Ba'al Chessed*." It does not say "Avraham Avinu who was willing to sacrifice his son." The greatest thing that *Hashem* says about Avraham Avinu is that he died at a ripe old age full and satisfied with his life. He had no unmet wants in the world. This was his attribute in life: "I am unworthy."

We are not Avraham Avinus. We don't go through life repeating the mantra "*Aynee k'dai; Aynee k'dai*." But the closer we can get to the attitude of "*Aynee k'dai*" and the further we can get from the attitude of "*Magiya li*," the happier we will be. That should be our goal. That is our mission – to become "*Aynee k'dai*" people. Then we will be happy people.

# Sarah Had It All Together – Throughout Her Life

Parshas [Chayei Sarah](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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 chaye 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 L-rd 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.

## Where miracles are not enough

Written by d fine

When Eliezer goes to find a wife for Yitzchak, he devises a test by which, he asks HaShem, he will use to select the appropriate match. It will be the woman who gives both him and his camels to drink. Fine. The pasuk then reports that Eliezer saw Rivkah coming out towards the well and he ran (24;17) to greet her. Why did he run to her?

Rashi says that it was because he saw that the water miraculously rose up to Rivkah. However, Eliezer still continues on with his test, and only makes up

his mind that Rivkah is the one for Yitzchak after she indeed does give his camels to drink too. The question is why did Eliezer not scrap the test after having seen this miracle; wasn't that enough to show that Rivkah was spiritually worthy?

The answer is that miracles might happen to people who are not necessarily spiritually worthy (Rav Chaim Volozhin), and it certainly would not have told us if Rivkah and Yitzchak matched each other. Rather than relying on this miracle, Eliezer made sure to do his research and make sure that Rivkah was indeed a woman of chesed. This is a lesson to all people dating that hashgachah pratis is nice and there are many great stories about how people found their bashert, but one cannot rely on a miraculous meeting to assume that you match each other – you need to make sure your characters and spiritual levels match. Just like Eliezer did not rely on the miracle he witnessed.

[Adapted mostly from Rav Bernstein zt'l]

## **Why is Eliezer's name not mentioned in his moment of glory?**

Written by D Fine

If you asked Eliezer, Avraham's servant, what his proudest moment in life was, he probably would have told you at length the story about how he went to find a wife for Yitzchak. However, throughout this entire episode Eliezer's name is not mentioned once; he is referred to as 'the servant' (and occasionally 'the man'). Why is his name omitted from his greatest achievement in life?

The idea is that just the opposite is true. The word servant (eved) is the greatest accolade one can get when it is in reference to someone like Avraham Avinu. A servant is someone who is willing to blend into their master's wishes as opposed to having their own agenda. Eliezer's greatness lies in the fact that he was a true servant of Avraham Avinu – he believed in Avraham's philosophy and taught others too. Just as

Moshe's great accolade is that he is called 'eved HaShem' so too Eliezer's greatness is that he is 'eved Avraham.' And specifically on this mission to find a wife for Yitzchak, when Avraham was not with Eliezer and Eliezer could have used the trip to do things other than that which he was sent for, are we told that he was none other than Avraham's servant – he kept loyally to the task in hand.

## **Yitzchok and Rivka – A Strange First Date That Changed The Course of History**

Written by Benjamin A Rose

Rivka on her way to Eretz Yisroel met Yitzchok by chance while he was davening. This holy sight of the tzaddik davening intimidated her greatly, says the Netziv. She jumped off the camel and covered herself out of fear. The Netziv explains that this set the tone for her lifelong relationship with Yitzchok. Unlike the other Imahos like Sara and Rochel who were not shy about voicing their opinions to their spouses, Rivka was always intimidated by Yitzchok and did not dare verbalize any disagreement directly to Yitzchok.

This initial memory of the fear that Rivka had for Yitzchok was integral for the future, says the Netziv. Had Rivka been like the other Imahos she would not have been quiet as Eisav's deception captured his father's love and attention. She would have exposed Yitzchok to the truth about Eisav. Since it was important for the future of Klal Yisroel that Yaakov receive the Brachos from Yitzchok in the way he did, Hashem devised this chance meeting that left a lifelong impression on Rivka and helped shape the future.

We can learn from this that First impressions really are important not only on a physical level but the fact that Hashem may very well have made you think of your spouse in that way as to make sure that the future will all go according to His Divine plan!!

## Humor

1. A man & his wife visit Israel for their holiday. After a few days seeing all the sights, his wife suddenly collapses & dies of a heart attack.

At the morgue he gets 2 options with what to do with his wife's dead body.

The undertaker said for \$500 we can have her buried here in a coffin. Or the 2nd option is for \$2,000 we can have her cremated & you can take the ashes home with you.

The husband thinks about it & says: 'I will take the cremation option for my wife for \$2,000'.

The undertaker says: 'Fine, that will be done'.

'But tell me, why did you take the more expensive option for \$2,000, when you could have buried her here for only \$200'?

The husband said: 'Well, I heard a long time ago of someone who was buried in this same area

& rose from the ground 3 days later.

I just didn't want to take that chance'

2. A recently widowed woman is be-grieving her recently deceased husband. The mortician asked: "Ma'am, is there anything I can do for you?" The wife says: " My husband ALWAYS wanted to be buried in blue suit, and you have him in black."

The mortician says: "Well ma'am, you see,' black is all we have." It's traditional wear, for the dearly departed. It represents the loss, and emptiness we feel. But, I'll do what I can. The widow thanks the mortician and leaves.

The following Friday, the widow returns to the mortuary, to view her husband one last time before his funeral Saturday. The mortician directs her behind a drape and she sees her husband in a beautiful

blue suit. She was awed by what she saw. "Oh that's just lovely! However did you do it?"

The mortician replies: "Well after you left Wednesday,' they brought in another man, who was about the same size, weight, and flesh tone of your husband. His widow, was grieving the fact that her husband was wearing a blue suit, and that he wanted to be buried in a black suit."

"Well, after she left," It was just a matter of switching the heads."

3. It was late at night, clouds covered the moon, and a man staggering home from the bar decided to cut across a cemetery to reach his house. As he stumbled through the darkness, he tumbled into a freshly dug grave. He clawed at the soil, trying to haul himself out, but kept falling back.

As he stepped back to try again, a voice behind him said. "Save yourself the trouble. I've been trying the same thing for hours. You'll never get out."

He did.

4. This isn't a joke, it's a historical incident that makes me laugh.

William the Conqueror died in 1087. He was a large man for his time, tall and probably obese. His body was put in a coffin and moved around Normandy for a while, waiting for dignitaries to gather and decide where William's final resting place should be. He was to be buried under the floor of a church, as was common for kings and bishops back then.

Might I add that William died in late summer and techniques to preserve a body weren't advanced in those days.

So at the funeral, as they picked up William's coffin to lower it into the grave, the bottom fell out of the coffin, William's bloated body burst, and a hideous stench caused many of the lords and ladies in attendance to run from the chapel with hands over mouths.

That's the reason that all English monarchs since, including the late Elizabeth II, have been buried in lead coffins that won't fall apart.