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Parshat Chaye Sarah 5770

ALUMNI EVENT: Chug at Darren Levin's apartment (495 W 186th Street, apt 1d) with HaRav Chizkiyahu Nebenzahl Shlita and Rav Natan Schwartz 10:20 Wednesday night, November 18.

Spotlight

Motzei Shabbat:

- Rav Yaacov Katz hosted a Melave Malke for Shana Bet. The students submitted questions beforehand. [Click here](#) for his discussion of some of the issues.

Sunday:

- Rav Aryeh Bina's Yahrzeit: Rav Aharon Bina made a siyum on Massechet Kiddushin, followed by his memories of his father and a suedet mitzva. [Click here](#) for the video.

Wednesday:

- Shana Bet began their day davening vatikin in the Beit Midrash, before boarding the buses for their trip to the north. Their first stop was in Nahariya where HaRav David Abuchatzaira Shlit"a spoke on the topic of serving Hashem even when not engaged in learning Torah. The Rav then met with each student, answered any questions they may have had, and gave them each a personalized bracha. They davened Mincha in Meron at the kever of Rav Shimon bar Yochai, before embarking on a hike to Tzfat through Nachal Amud.
- Shana Alef visited the Menachem Begin Center.

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Mini-Shabbaton with HaRav Chizkiyahu Nebenzahl

We are pleased to announce a mini-Shabbaton with HaRav Chizkiyahu Nebenzahl Shlit"א and Rav Chanan Bina on Shabbat Parshat Toldot (November 20th-21st). The Shabbaton will take place in Woodmere at the home of Ariel and Elizabeth Edelstein (541 Church Avenue). The tentative schedule is as follows:

Leil Shabbat:

- 4:10 pm: Mincha at the home of Ariel Edelstein, followed by Kabbalat Shabbat and Maariv.
- 5:15pm: Seudat Shabbat (limited space, please see below)
- 7:00pm: Oneg Shabbat

Shabbat Day:

- 2:00pm: Mincha at the Young Israel of Woodmere
- 2:45pm: Shiur/learning at the home of Ariel Edelstein
- 3:45pm: Seudah Shlishit
- 5:45pm: Maariv and Havdala

Please RSVP as soon as possible to Ariel Edelstein (arieledelstein@yahoo.com), indicating which part(s) of the Shabbaton you plan to attend (Dinner, Oneg, Shalosh Seudot). Space is limited and will be given on a first-come first-serve basis.

Note: Everyone will be responsible for arranging their own accommodations, including the Shabbat day meal.

UPDATE: All the available spots for the Leil Shabbat seuda **have been reserved**. People are still welcome to sign up for the Oneg and or Seuda Shlishit. **PLEASE SIGN UP SO THAT WE CAN PREPARE ACCORDINGLY.**

HaRav Nebenzahl on Parshat Chaye Sarah

HaRav Nebenzahl asks that his Divrei Torah are not read during Tefillah or the Rabbi's sermon

"Panic and Confusion - at the Expense of One's Soul"

"The righteous say little and do much, while the wicked say much and perform not even little" (Baba Metzia 87a). Avraham Avinu serves as Chazal's model for the behavior of the righteous, for he told the angels that he would bring them a morsel of bread and in the end he commanded his young lad to slaughter three calves for his guests (see Bereishit 18:4 and Rashi ibid. 7). The source for the wicked promising much and not even doing little is Ephron. Ephron promised Avraham the field and the cave free of charge: "I have given you the field, and as for the cave that is in it, I have given it



to you" (Bereishit 23:11), yet in the end he collected the exorbitant fee of four hundred silver shekels described by the Torah as "ovehr lasocher" (ibid. 16) - the most valuable shekels of the time (see Rashi ibid. and Bechorot 50a that each shekel was worth one hundred selah).

It seems to me that there are two ways in which to understand the idea that the evil person promises much and does not even do a little. Firstly, there are truly evil people who have no intention of keeping their word. In all likelihood Avraham, even while saying very little, had from the very beginning wished to provide his guests with a feast. By the same token, many promise the world without ever intending to fulfill their promise. A classic example of this is Lavan. He did not suddenly realize on the day of his daughter's wedding that it was improper for the younger daughter to get married before the older one, rather he had intended to deceive Yaakov all along and only to give him Rachel on condition that he work an additional seven years (see Baba Batra 123a that Rachel actually informed Yaakov of her father's intention).

If a Jew were to promise with no intention of fulfilling, even if from a litigation standpoint he would not be liable, he has violated several Torah prohibitions - among them "onaa", "hin tzedek", and "gnevat daat". There are instances in which he may not have violated the prohibition but has not fulfilled the positive commandment of being honest. As an example let us cite the following halacha quoted by the Ramma (Chosen Mishpat 332:4): If an employer hires a worker and the payment agreed upon is a particular object, the halacha permits the employer to give him the monetary equivalent of that object. The reasoning behind this halacha is that the worker did not formally acquire the object prior to the start of his employment, thus he did not have any rights to it. It would appear that if the employer had no intention of giving his worker this object (which he preferred over the cash equivalent), he has violated the Torah prohibitions of "onaa" and "hin tzedek". Chazal comment on the Mitzvah of "hin tzedek" that "your 'hein' - 'yes' must be honest" (Baba Metzia 49a). In this instance, from a monetary perspective the employer has done nothing wrong.

The prohibition of "genevat daat", Chazal tell us applies even in dealings with a non-Jew. An example of "genevat daat" would be if a person were to invite another to have lunch in his house, and a while later say to him "Oh no! I forgot tomorrow is Asara B'Tevet, how unfortunate that you cannot be my guest for lunch!". If the person knew all along that they would be unable to meet for lunch but extended the invitation to give the impression of being friendly, he has violated the prohibition of "genevat daat". The Torah is not interested in this type of "cleverness", which is mere deception.

There is yet another way to understand Chazal's statement that the evil promise much and do not even do little. Many people who promise a lot really do intend to keep their word, it is only in the end that they do not stand up to their initial promise and do not even do little. The end result is a total retraction from what they had intended. An example of this, is the behavior of Orpah. Ruth and Orpah both accompanied Naomi, at which time their mother-in-law Naomi insisted that they each return to their birthplace. We read of both of their responses: "and they said to her, 'no, we will return with you to your people'" (Ruth 1:10). Naomi's persistence convinces Orpah to return, at which time she kisses her mother-in-law and bids her farewell. Orpah had every intention of converting and returning with Naomi as Ruth did. What was it that Ruth did that made her successful in her quest to follow Hashem and the Jewish nation despite Naomi's persistence to the contrary, while Orpah could not stand up to Naomi's arguments? The difference

was that Ruth acted immediately upon her spiritual awakening to make it a permanent part of her life. Orpah also felt a spark of holiness, yet she did not follow through with that which was required to effect a permanent change in her level of spirituality.

Chazal, in fact tell us (Ruth Rabba 2:20) that the very night following Orpah's having parted from Naomi she had descended to depths of depravity, and it was from her that descended Goliath who cursed the ways of Hashem and His savior. What could account for such a sharp decline? It was because of her awakening that she fell. She had aroused forces within herself that had great potential, once those forces were not utilized they had the power to bring her down. Chazal tell us "as a reward for the four tears which Orpah dropped upon her mother-in-law, she merited that four mighty warriors should issue from her" (Sotah 42b). Although these four mighty warriors that descended from her in the end fought against Hashem, it does appear that she was blessed with them as a reward for her sincerity.

The Sabba M'Slobodka describes the behavior of Esav in a similar manner. The Torah describes Esav as one "who knows trapping" (Bereishit 25:27). Chazal tell us that he would "ensnare and deceive his father with his mouth, he would ask him 'Father, how do we tithe salt and straw?'" The Sabba from Slobodka zt"l explains that Esav's question was very sincere and not a mockery of the Mitzvot. Esav experienced moments of true spiritual elevation that placed him on an even higher plane than Yaakov. We see that Esav desired to removed tithes even where it was not demanded. Esav's mistake was that he did not follow through with what is required to insure remaining on that level. The result was that Esav fell from these incredible heights down to the depths of evil. Yaakov, on the other hand, was "a ladder set earthward and its top reaches heavenward" (Bereishit 28:12) - Yaakov was constantly climbing. Esav may have had moments of desire to surpass Yaakov, but "the heart of the wicked is minute" (Mishle 10:20). In just a short period of time he would backslide - not only did Esav not remove tithes from salt and straw he did not even do so where it was required. The power of the awakening he experienced led to his life of deceit. The deceit in his case, was not in his questions - but in the fact that he did not do what was necessary to retain those spiritual achievements he attained in his moments of awakening.

It is possible that Ephron fell under this latter category of "the wicked promise much and perform not even little". Ephron may have intended to give the field and the cave to Avraham Avinu free of charge. He may have thought to himself that here was a golden opportunity to do chesed with the man who has devoted his life to spreading the word of chesed, and to his wife who lived her entire life in a righteous manner. Ephron was well aware of Avraham's teachings (even if he did not attend Avraham's discourses, he surely heard about them from the neighbors), he certainly knew the great advantages acts chesed offered. Despite Ephron's great opportunity: "the heart of the wicked is minute", once payment was offered all his intentions fell by the wayside.

Chazal (Bereishit Rabba 58:9) describe Ephron in terms of "Nivhal lahon ish ra ayin velo yeida ki cheser yevoenu" "One overeager for wealth has an evil eye; he does not know that want may befall him" (Mishle 28:22) - "one overeager for wealth has an evil eye" refers to Ephron, and "he does not know that want may befall him" refers to his being punished by having his name recorded in the Torah with the letter "vav" missing. (There are those who point out that "evil eye" - "ra ayin" and the name Ephron spelled without the "vav" have the numerical value of four hundred corresponding to the four hundred shekel payment Ephron extracted

from Avraham. It was due to the four hundred shekels taken from Avraham by this "ra ayin" (value four hundred) that the Torah recorded his name without a "vav" (value four hundred).

In addition to meaning "overeager", "nivhal lahon" implies acting in haste, in confusion. When Ephron heard of the potential profit to be made here, he acted in haste and his whole mindset became one of great confusion. Do I stand to make big money? That takes precedence over all considerations! Who knows what reward was awaiting Ephron had he truly acted with chesed towards Avraham and Sarah, and given them the field and the cave free of charge as he had initially promised? This act of chesed could have been his ticket to the next world. Even if he was not worthy of this, he would have earned far more than four hundred silver shekels in this world. When Ephron, however, heard the clink of money, he forgot all about the chesed he had intended to perform with Avraham. The end result was that not only did he not profit but he lost a letter of his name from the Torah.

Does Ephron really care whether his name is spelled with or without a "vav"? He probably did not understand a word of "loshon hakodesh" anyway! We must realize that a share in the holy Torah is a share in an eternity. He could have had another letter of this eternal Torah. In truth, not only did he lose a "vav" but there could have been an entire section of the Torah devoted to the chesed he performed with Avraham and Sarah. There are many righteous people such as Yitro who are credited with entire sections of the Torah, Ephron had the opportunity to be among them with the Torah testifying to his greatness. Instead the Torah testifies to his great evil - that he promises much and performs not even little. This is then the great "want" that befell him.

When the Chafetz Chaim used to speak about the importance of charity, he would relate the story of wealthy individuals from a small town who did not wish to donate of their wealth and their miserliness was recorded for posterity. He was referring to the rich people from the town of Tekoa (presumably the Tekoa in Yehuda as recorded in Divrei Hayamim II 11:6, and not the one in the Galilee). When the wall surrounding Jerusalem was erected during the days of Nehemiah, funds were solicited to help defray the costs. Among those who donated were the residents of Tekoa, all with the exception of: "their dignitaries did not put their necks to the labor of their L-rd" [11] (Nehemiah 3:8). The pasuk details all those who donated towards this holy endeavor, and the wealthy residents of Tekoa will be forever recorded as having refused to help out.

We no longer have a prophet to record what takes place today, but our actions are inscribed in Heaven - those who help out and those who refuse to get involved in areas of tzdikka and other acts of chesed will be forever recorded. Had Ephron merited, an entire portion would have written describing the tzaddik Ephron's chesed with Avraham and Sarah. Since he did not act properly, an entire section of the Torah is devoted to his evil act. Had Orpah stubbornly remained with Naomi, perhaps she would have been the matriarch of the house of David and the Messiah, perhaps it would have been her descendants who would have built the Beit Hamikdash and authored parts of Tanach. It was Ruth's insistence on following her mother-in-law to the nation of Hashem that merited for her this great reward. It was because of Ruth that the halacha became publicized that the prohibition against marrying a descendant of Moav was limited to the male descendants and not the females. Orpah, or at the very least Orpah and Ruth together, could both have achieved all this.

One of the Hoshanot recited by Ashkenazim on Hoshana Rabba begins with

"adama me-erer" "ground from accursedness". The prayer lists in alphabetical order what we wish Hashem to save from what. For example "the ground from accursedness", "the grain from scorch", and "the vineyard from worms". One of the items enumerated is "save our soul from panic". My Rebbe HaRav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l explained that panic is something the soul needs to be saved from. The panic referred to here is acting in haste such that one's thoughts are now in disarray. Had Ephron's actions been well thought out, he would have realized that there was much more to be gained from acts of chesed with Avraham and Sarah, than the four hundred silver shekels he received, no matter how valuable. The sound of money cause Ephron to act in a state of confusion and thus give up his soul for eternity.

The Gemara (Brachot 20a) relates that Rav Pappa asked why the earlier generations merited such great miracles while his generation did not. As an example he mentioned that all that Rav Yehuda needed to do was to remove one shoe during a fast (one that was declared for the purpose of beseeching Hashem for rain), and rain would immediately fall. We (Rav Pappa's generation), on the other hand can shout and cry out to Hashem without any response. Rav Pappa even pointed out that the level of learning in his generation was higher than that of Rav Yehuda's (see the Gemara for an elaboration). Abaye's response to Rav Pappa was: "The earlier generations sacrificed themselves to sanctify Hashem's Name, we do not sacrifice ourselves to sanctify Hashem's Name" (Brachot 20a).

The Gemara cites the following example of the self-sacrifice of Rav Yehuda's generation: Rav Adda bar Ahava (a contemporary of Rav Yehuda) once passed by a woman dressed in a "karbalta" (some interpret this to refer to a red garment not appropriate for a modest Jewish woman, and some explain that the garment was known to contain shaatnez). Rav Adda assuming the woman to be Jewish, arose and tore the garment off her. Upon realizing that she was not a Jewess, he apologized and reimbursed her for all expenses incurred. Abaye claimed, that acts such as this one typified Rav Yehuda's generation and thus they were deserving of miracles. In our generation, said Abaye, we do not take Hashem's word as seriously and thus do not merit such miracles. My Rebbe HaRav Chaim Shmuelevitz (Sichot Mussar 5733 #15) wondered where the self-sacrifice was in this incident. Did he actually risk his life? Was he afraid of being killed? In fact he did not even expect to have to pay any money, for he thought the woman to be Jewish. R' Chaim answered that the "messirut nefesh" here manifested itself in the fact that he acted in a panicked and confused manner - with haste. This type of behavior which literally "harms the soul" has led to the downfall of many great people (Reuven, for example, lost the kehuna and the kingdom for having acted in haste - see Rashi Bereishit 49:3-4). Rav Adda was not phased by this danger to his soul, and elected to act in haste for Hashem's honor. For a person to act properly, he needs to be settled and think through what needs to be done. Rav Adda bar Ahava risked his soul and acted in a dangerous manner for the sake of a Kiddush Hashem. Ephron on the other hand sacrificed everything for money - he acted in haste and confusion in order to satisfy his tremendous desire for wealth. His panic and confusion in fact lead to his soul being lost.

Chazal use the expression panic ("behala") in describing the decision of the tribes of Gad and Reuven to remain on the other side of the Jordan. The reason they gave was that it was a better place to raise their cattle. Chazal describe their behavior with the following pasuk: "a land which was taken hastily ("mevohelet") at first, will not be blessed later" (Mishle 20:21). Their decision to settle where they did was made in haste and confusion. It is true that the other side of the Jordan had much to offer, but it cannot compare to residing in the Land of Israel,

in proximity to the Beit Hamikdash and the Sanhedrin. They had the opportunity to live near the place from which Torah and halachic rulings emanate. Had they not acted in such haste, they would have realized that the advantages they could have gained far outweigh any gains in the raising of their sheep. Moshe tried very hard to convince them of the error in their decision, with a long lecture as recorded not only in Parshat Matot but in Parshat Devarim and the beginning of Vaetchanan as well. It was only when Moshe realized that he would be unable to sway them that he provided them with three cities of refuge, as it says: "then Moshe set aside three cities on the bank of the Jordan" [15] (Devarim 4:41).

The act of designating cities of refuge on the other side of the Jordan also alluded to what could result from a decision made in such confusion and disarray. Chazal wonder why it was that in the Land of Israel three cities of refuge were designated for nine and a half tribes, while the same number was instituted for the remaining two and a half tribes who were destined to remain across the Jordan. Chazal explain (Makkot 9b) that in Gilad (across the Jordan) there were many murderers. Moshe was informing these two and a half tribes that he was providing them with a much greater area of refuge per capita because they were going to have many more murderers. We can assume that this was a result of their insistence on remaining a great distance from the Torah centers and the Sanhedrin. The people of Gad and Reuven are still not convinced and they therefore give preference to their sheep over settling near the Beit Hamikdash and the Sanhedrin.

Moshe did point out something in favor of the members of the tribe of Gad. Immediately preceding his death, Moshe praised them as having settled where they did: "he chose the first portion for himself for that is where the lawgiver's plot is hidden" (Devarim 33:21) - they chose to settle the lands of Sichon and Og for that was the beginning of the conquering of the land, and that was to be the ultimate burial place of Moshe Rabenu (Rashi ibid.). Presumably Moshe did not intend to justify their actions, only to find a point in their favor - unquestionably they should have opted for the sanctity of the Land and the center of Torah rather than worry about their sheep. The problem was that their decision was "mevochal" - made in a state of haste and confusion rather than with peace of mind.

The people of Reuven and Gad were certainly great people, among them many leaders and heads of Sanhedrin. We are only permitted to speak this way of them because this is as it appears in Chazal - given our limited ability to understand we are told that they gave preference to their livelihood over more important considerations. We can readily see their misplaced priorities in their promise to Moshe Rabenu that they will lead the way in the fight for the capture of the Land of Israel: "Pens for the flock shall we build here for our livestock and cities for our small children" (Bamidbar 32:16). Chazal point out (Bamidbar Rabba 22:9) that by mentioning their livestock before the children, they have taken a primary concern and made it secondary, and made a secondary concern primary. Moshe's response is in fact a rebuke: "build for yourselves cities for your small children and pens for your flock" [18] (ibid. 24) - how can you place the flock above your children? Their promise should have been phrased beginning with the children and then mentioning the sheep. Had Gad and Reuven been asked whether the children are more important than the flock they certainly would have responded correctly. They know that one cannot violate the Shabbat to raise sheep, whereas to save the life of a child they are required to. The problem was that they acted in a state of confusion - the moment the prospect of wealth came up they had lost all sense of priorities.

Chazal tell us that they were punished for this lack of priorities: "a land which was

taken hastily ("mevohelet") at first, will not be blessed later". What eventually happened was that they were exiled a few years prior to Sanherib's exiling the remainder of the ten tribes (see Rashi Mishle 20:21). This resulted from their having elected to reside near the other nations rather than close to the Sanhedrin, thus they were first to be negatively influenced by the outside culture. There certainly were prophets and tzaddikim among them, yet in a general sense they acted in confusion and disarray without a clear mind and thus they were the first to be exiled.

We all need to reflect on this - when we daven, do we realize that we are standing before the King of kings Who has the power of life and death in His hands? Today's situation certainly cries out for prayer, the problem is that we are confused - so many other thoughts occupy our minds. R' Yehuda HaLevi said: "my heart is in the east (Israel) but I myself am at the end of the west". Many can fulfill this adage as: "I am at the WESTern Wall, but my heart is in the eastern bank (Bank Mizrahi)!" - confused by wealth. This attitude can only come from one whose thoughts are in a state of confusion causing harm to his soul. Ephron lost his entire world, the tribes of Gad and Reuven were exiled. We must therefore do our utmost to insure that our inheritance not be one of confusion, that our prayers be orderly. We must pour our hearts out to Hashem and not daven out of haste and confusion. Haste to honor Hashem is fine, panic resulting from our current situation is also fine, but the prayer itself should be orderly.

People today are searching for "segulot" to aid us in the current situation. One "segula" mentioned in Chazal is: "Whoever responds 'Amen: may His great Name be blessed' with all his might, the evil decree in judgment against him is torn up" (Shabbat 119b). There are two interpretations of "with all his might" - a) to shout it out loud, and b) to recite it with all the kavana and concentration one is able to muster. In practice, both interpretations are required - this is a sure "segula" for nullifying of the evil decrees against us.

The Kohen who was anointed for purposes of war would speak to the people: "Shma Yisrael atem krevim hayom lamilchama" "Hear O Israel, you are coming near to the battle against your enemies" (Devarim 20:3). Chazal ask why it is that he prefaced his remarks with the words "Shma Yisrael". They tell us that even if the only merit the Jewish people had is that they were strict about reciting the Shma then it is worthwhile to save them (see Rashi ibid.). Those who fight on the front lines must take great care to recite the Shma morning and evening. My Rebbe HaRav Gedaliah Eisenman once said that even if the soldiers do not recite the Shma, those of us remaining behind must. We may not be currently serving in the army, but our "Shma Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hahsem Echad" can aid those on the battlefield.

Regarding our enemy we cannot say "some with chariots and some with horses, but we in the Name of Hashem our G-d call out" (Tehillim 20:8), for they also call out in the name of their god ("Allah Achbar"). We should at least not be less than them, we must and call out in the Name of Hashem - our G-d. May we merit that Hashem help us overcome our adversaries and peace should spread throughout the Land - not peace Camp David style but peace from our father in Heaven. This may explain why in the Kaddish it is not sufficient to say "yehei shlama rabba" "may there be an abundant peace, but also "oseh shalom biMromva HU yaase shalom" "He Who makes peace in His heights, may HE make peace". We are not looking for just any peace, but a peace from the One Who brings peace in the Heavens, so that if that happens we will truly merit life and salvation for the entire Jewish nation. Amen.

HaRav Yaacov Katz Answers

I would like to begin by saying that I am very impressed with the level of the questions I have been presented with - whether to concentrate on *iyun* vs. *bekiut*, how many times to review a *daf* of Gemara, and many other questions relating to *avodat Hashem*. You should feel good about yourselves that this is what concerns you. I don't believe I am equipped to answer many of these questions, but there is one question which I particularly enjoyed and I believe a discussion of the topic will help answer many of the other questions.



One of the *talmidim* wishes to know: "What is the most important thing in life?" That is an excellent question. I would say that the most important thing in life is to live! Now we need to define what it means to live. During the entire *aseret yemei tshuva*, beginning with Rosh Hashana and ending with Yom Kippur we beseech Hashem to give us life: "*kotvenu besefer hachayim*" "inscribe us in the Book of Life". We ask Hashem for life, for He is "Elokim Chayim" "the Living G-d". It is possible for a person to be physically present in this world yet not to be alive - he can spend his life traveling around from one place to another yet for all intents and purposes he is dead.

How does a person live? First and foremost to be alive means to live with a sense of joy and satisfaction. A person devoid of any form of spirituality cannot possibly be truly happy. You may argue with me but I can guarantee you one hundred percent that such a person is not happy. Let us look at those people whom society may consider as having "made it". Is the President of the United States happy? Look at the difficulties he is having now, with public opinion and all the negative press that he is getting. He is worried about his image and about having to act in a certain way before this person and making the correct impression on that person. A person who is truly happy is not concerned with what others think of him.

This past week we observed the *yahrzeit* of HaRav Shach. You certainly did not know him, many of you may not even have heard of him, but I was his *talmid* for several years. The following story demonstrates what he considered a happy person. HaRav Shach was once discussing the proper way a man should relate to his wife. He asked what the Gemara means when it instructs us to "honor her like himself and love her more than himself". He explained that this means learning to give in, to be *mevater*, even if the husband is convinced that he is in the right. Does it really matter what you think, is it not more important to make the other person happy? Yet HaRav Shach added that he is convinced that a person who gives in to his wife's needs will not be rewarded for this in the Next World! How can this be? If it is of such importance, why should he not be rewarded for doing so? HaRav Shach explained that the joy that comes with making another person happy is so great that he has already received his full reward in this world.

Only a person who truly lives in this world can even begin to understand what we are saying. Someone who just wishes to grab more and more for himself - more money, more honor, and more worldly pleasures - is constantly looking over his shoulder at what the next person has and cannot help but harbor feelings of jealousy. A person who feels no satisfaction but is always looking for more can never be happy. Chazal tell us "*yesh lo maneh rotzeh matayim*" - a person who

has one hundred wants two hundred. Presumably if he has two hundred then he wants four hundred. This means that the wealthier he is, the less happy he is. A person who has one thousand shekels is only lacking another thousand, while a person with 500 million dollars is lacking 500 million dollars. Such a person is truly unfortunate.

In this week's *parsha*, the Torah describes Avraham Avinu at the end of his days as being "*zaken vesave-a*". We find a similar expression at the end of Yitzchak Avinu's life as well as David HaMelech's. The word *save-a* generally connotes satisfaction - satisfied with what - did he spend his life eating pizza until he was satiated? This cannot be the case because in no time at all he would have been hungry again. Satisfaction implies being content, having no need for any more. Why was he so happy? Because he had truly lived his life. A person can close himself in a room for a month and still be happy. Why is he happy? He has the Torah, he has his faith, and he knows that Hashem is there with him. Even if he has no books from which to learn, the knowledge that Hashem is with him and that he is living his life accordingly brings him joy and satisfaction.

A person who spends his life pursuing wealth and honor is not living - he has nothing. Hashem gave us the Torah in order that we should live, He does not need our mitzvot, He provides us with the tools required to live our lives in this world. This is the great *chesed* with which He created the world - *olam chesed yibane* - the world is built on *chesed*. Were He to simply provide us with a place in this world and the Next World, we would be lacking that feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. Hashem placed us in this world and instructed us to battle the temptations of this world, and when we will succeed He promises us His *chesed* for eternity.

What a good feeling it is to overpower your tendency to become angry in a particular situation. Imagine if you thought of going to sleep and said to yourself - not now, I have so much more to learn. I am not advocating that a person always stays up to learn rather than go to sleep, I am only saying that having done so can leave one with an incredibly good feeling. Did you ever perform an act of *chesed* when there was no one else watching? Did all these things not give you a good feeling about yourself? This is satisfaction, this is true joy. Don't you get satisfaction when you fulfill the mitzvah of *kibbud av va'em*? You say to yourself "my parents do so much for me, are they not deserving of my honor?" This is what it means to live. A person who is constantly searching for more and more of this world can never feel this sense of joy.

This idea can help answer many questions. One *bochur* wrote: "I believe in Hashem but not as much as I should." I can honestly say the same thing about myself. This is because there is no end to belief - it is a growth process that lasts a lifetime. It was only when he was well into his life that the Torah writes about Avraham Avinu "he believed in Hashem" (Bereishit 15:6) and that Hashem says to him "for now I know that you are a G-d fearing man" (Bereishit 22:12). *Emunah*, belief, faith, is a ladder which we are constantly climbing.

I would like to add a general comment that relates to several of the questions presented here. Someone asked how he can advance in *bekiut* or *iyun*, what should he focus on in learning? These are good questions and the answer is different for each person. I would like to point out that learning Torah is vastly different from learning other disciplines. For example, what would be if a person wished to become a doctor and then spent the next six years studying yet he suddenly found himself regretting his choice of profession? He would consider the

past six years as having been wasted. Why? Because the entire purpose of his studies was to become a doctor, and if he has not achieved that result then there was in effect no purpose to all the time spent studying. This is not the case when it comes to *avodat Hashem*. There is no goal to reach, because it is endless. Can I possibly hope to master the entire Torah? Have I otherwise wasted my time? Certainly not! Learning Torah is also a ladder that we are constantly ascending, every step we take has a purpose. Our goal is not to reach the pinnacle of becoming a doctor, rather every step of the way is another goal in itself.

How one can put this into practice depends on his background, his strengths, and even his mood at that particular moment. You may find yourself in a mood for some deep *iyun* in the morning and suddenly in the afternoon you may decide you prefer to learn *halacha*. The main goal is to constantly grow. If a person spends five hours delving into a *sugya* and does not emerge with a clear understanding, has he wasted his time? Certainly not! He should feel elated, overjoyed that he has followed Hashem's will of devoting so much time and energy to learning Torah. What was it all worth, he may ask himself, I am as confused as I was five hours ago. That is true, but that is not what matters. You have fought a battle and you won, you have devoted your time to serving Hashem. Certainly you would feel even better if you understood the *sugya* better, but you have not lost anything, not a moment has been wasted.

As a group you have submitted many questions and you should feel immense satisfaction at the nature of your questions - that you want to know how to maximize your *avodat Hashem*. You are doing precisely what is demanded of you at this moment and this should leave you with a good feeling - you are alive! Certainly you should be striving to find solutions to these questions. I may not be able to answer them, but there are answers, some of which are subjective and some of which are objective. One young man wants to know whether he should remain in *Eretz Yisrael* or go back to his parents. How does *kibbud av va'em* figure in this? What about learning Torah? What about the importance of remaining in *Eretz Yisrael*? Perhaps if a person would be able to learn in *chutz la'aretz* and all he would be lacking is to be physically present in *Eretz HaKodesh* (I am not belittling this), then he should remain there, or perhaps he can learn in *Eretz Yisrael* and fulfill *kibbud av va'em* by speaking to his parents often on the telephone or traveling to see them every once in a while. The answer to this, like many others, is not black and white.

How to learn and what to learn also does not have a clear-cut answer. Should a person learn only Gemara or should he spend time learning Tanach? The Torah is so vast that if our learning was contingent on how much we have mastered we would have given up long ago. How many subjects can a person truly master? Nevertheless we must feel joy and satisfaction that we are fulfilling our life's obligation. This applies even to someone who is not full-time in Yeshiva and is working for a living.

I would like to add that what is most important is to keep on growing in *emunah*. A person may feel his level is not what it should be, that is fine he can work on himself. We should at least think - what does it mean to be a Jew, what is *Eretz Yisrael*, what is Yerushalayim. The fact that the Jewish people have survived for so many generations and that so many have sacrificed their selves is sufficient proof of Hashem's existence. I am not referring only to those who have given up their lives, but even to those who have sacrificed themselves to live a Torah lifestyle. We must not forget that we are in the period immediately preceding the arrival of *moshiach*, the *nisyonot* are immense, but don't worry he will arrive very soon. Our

task is to live and to grow in *avodat Hashem*.

Staff Dvar Torah by Rav Aryeh Varon, Shana Bet Rebbe

Our *parsha* opens with the *pasuk*: "Sarah's lifetime was 100 years, 20 years, and 7 years, *The years of Sarah's life*."

Why did the Torah add the concluding words "the years of Sarah's life"? Rashi explains that it teaches us that "all were equal in goodness".



One second please!! She was abducted twice, her husband thrown in a fiery furnace, Childless for 90 years, and Hashem *yerachim* on her brother and nieces. How can we say all of them were equal in goodness!

A few years ago I was at a Netiv picnic at Gan Sachar. Beautiful weather, great sports, and Uri and the *madrachim* were churning out steaks, burgers, wings, etc. at lightning speed. I was standing next to a boy waving a steak who yelled in disgust. "You call this a steak?" How can this boy be focused on such a small negative detail (I happened to think the steaks were delicious)? How does such a triviality negate an otherwise wonderful day!?!?!?

Rabosai, this is our nature! Few are the true *talmidim* (students) of Sarah Imeinu that look at everything in life as being good (especially when we think for a moment and realize that if it's all from Hashem then it must be for our good).

Rav Zusha, who lived in poverty and endured all sorts of suffering, was once asked how a person can possibly bless Hashem for the bad as well as for the good? He answered: You're asking the wrong person, my life has been nothing but good!!

Ashreinu Yisroel, that we have our *Avos* and *Imahos* to teach us proper attitudes on how to get the most out of our lives. May everything be *l'tova*.

Shabbat shalom,

Aryeh Varon

Visitor Log, Mazal Tov's, Tehillim List

Announcements from the Yeshiva

Rav Natan Schwartz will be in the New York area from November 13th until the 19th and Rav Dani Bader will be traveling to various parts of the United States from November 16th until the 25th. They would love to hear from you: (Rav Natan: 347-461-5665, Rav Dani: 646-713-6437).

We are proud to announce the publication of "A Beacon in the Night", HaRav Lipman Podolsky zt"l's insights into Chanukah. For a minimum donation of \$18 to the Podolsky Family Fund it will be mailed to your home or business. Click [here](#) to

donate.

Mazal Tov

Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh wishes a Mazal Tov to:

- Reuven Gaisin (5766-67) on his engagement to Shera Bracha Dinitz.
- Rav Dani (Staff) and Naama Bader on the birth of a bay girl, Gital Deena.
- Binyamin (5760-61) and Aviva Landa on the birth of a baby girl.

Visitors

The following people have visited/learned in the Yeshiva:

- Simon Berest (5751)

Tehillim List

The following members of our extended YNA family need our tefilot:

- Taube Yehudit bat Temma Gasia
- Yitzchak ben Shayna Ita
- Zev Eliezer ben Chaya Shayndel
- Rueven ben Tova Chaya
- Fruma bat Eeta
- Moshe Zanvel ben Breindel
- Sima Rivkah bat Eidel
- Leah bat Eidel
- Chaim Shmuel Moshe ben Golda
- Aryeh Rephael ben Sarah
- Chaya Sarah bat Fanya Luna
- Yitzchak ben Tova
- Fraida Rachel bat Sarah Milcha
- Lea bat Bracha
- Miriam Rivka bat Adina Leah
- Dina Sarah bat Shaindel Mira
- Tali bat D'vorah Bina
- Tobah Pessal bat Esther
- Lottie Adina bat Claudia
- Orly bat Yaerah
- Miriam Naomi bat Sarah
- Dov Eliyahu ben Mindel Hudis
- Rahamim ben Miriam
- Hinda bat Sara Leah
- Rivka Zelda bat Bracha
- Dovid Ben Miriam
- Yaackov Chaim Meir ben Miriam
- Avraham ben Leah
- Chaim Naftali Yaakov ben Shifra Shaulah
- Michael Yosef ben Tzipora
- Gidon Shlomo ben Esther
- Haya Rebecca Rivka bat Jeanne Yaffa
- Temima Adina bat Keren Ronit
- Avraham ben Meela
- Bracha Sara bat Rivka Zelda
- Ita Blima bat Malka Fraidel
- Eliyahu ben Victoria

- Chaya Malka bat Rachel Braindel
- Elnatan Meir ben Devorah Ze'eva
- Yahel Liam Gittel bat Rachel
- Shifra Sheulah bat Chana Sarah
- Dovid Chaim ben Brina
- Natan Zelig ben Leah
- Refoel Chaim Simcha Binyamin ben Devorah Aliza

[Send Us Your Announcements](#)

Please, if you have any smachot or chas v'shalom, less happy occasions, [let our office know](#) so we can keep everybody updated. Are you visiting Israel? - [let us know!](#) We'd love to host you for a shabbat meal, davening, a shiur and would love for you to stop by.

Shabbat Shalom,

HaRav Aharon Bina, Netiv Aryeh
Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh

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