

THE
SWEETNESS OF SHABBOS

מתיקות השבת

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Based on the lectures of the Rosh Yeshiva, **Hagoon Harav Menachem Boruch Yaveh shlit"א** talmid of Posek Hador Harav Shmuel Vosner ztz"l

ELIEZER'S ORDINARY CONVERSATION...

This week's *parsha* begins with the amount of years Sarah Imeinu lived – *וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה* "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years..." Rashi explains the reason why the Torah says the word 'years' separately for every term – "To tell you that each term must be explained by itself: at the age of one hundred she was as a woman of twenty in regard to sins – just as at the age of twenty she is regarded as having never sinned, since she was not yet subject to punishment, so too, when she was one hundred years old she was sinless. And when she was twenty, she was as beautiful as when she was seven."

This teaches us how humble Sarah always felt, regarding herself as a young girl even in her old age. Also, her loyalty to Avraham was always rejuvenated just as a young wife at the beginning of her marriage. Likewise, many times a person gets used to wonders and miracles that happened to him at a young age, so he is no more impressed by them; yet Sarah always remembered how Hashem cared for her ever since she was born, and never tired of appreciating those wonders, and always kept thanking Hashem for protecting her all through her childhood and adolescence that no harm came her way.

King Over One's Years...

The Midrash says (Bereishis Rabbah 58),

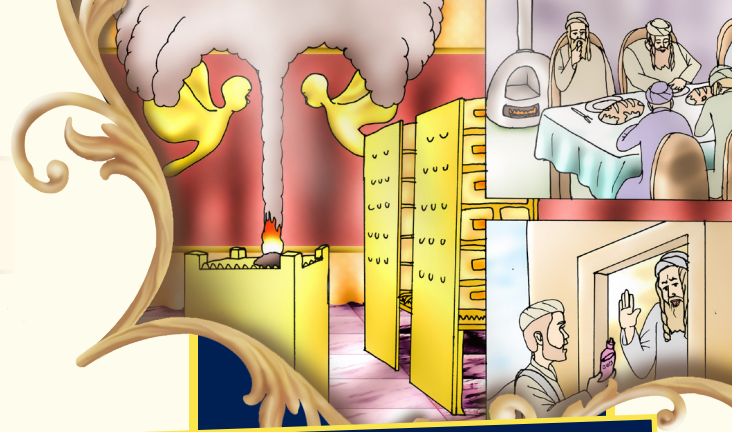
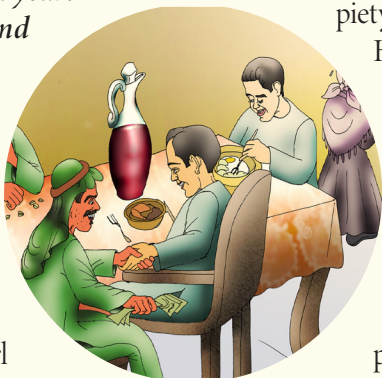
"Rabbi Akiva was once sitting and lecturing, and his students were falling asleep. To arouse them, he said: How could Esther rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces? It should be that Esther, a descendant of Sarah who lived one hundred and twenty-seven, to rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces."

What is the connection between the two? Sarah Imeinu lived every year of her life to its fullest, utilizing the qualities she had acquired in those years – piety, fear of Hashem, love of

Hashem, excitement for Hashem and the *mitzvos*. She also remembered Hashem's wonders of those specific years, appreciating them all her life. For instance, as an infant Hashem protected her from falling from high places and gave

her parents who gave her food and took care of her. She was never tired of looking at kindnesses the same way she experienced them the first time, which means she lived and remembered every year to its minute details, just like a king who rules over every city and neighborhood in his country to the last detail.

Another quality Sarah had was that she remembered her youth, and thus understood the hearts of the young. She knew their desires and inclinations, and how to talk them out of the bad things and bring them closer to Hashem. For that, Hashem made Sarah young and

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MY STORY!

**Cold Water
on a Tired Soul...**

This past summer, on a very hot day, I was riding on a bus when I suddenly felt terribly thirsty. I tried my luck asking people around me if they had extra water for me, but none did. So, I went to the bus driver to see if by any chance he had water. To my surprise, the driver who appeared like a simple Yid answered pleasantly, "Actually, I always keep a small bottle of water with me just for that.

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Though my own water is about to finish, but how can I turn down a thirsty Yid?!"

I drank the entire bottle, feeling like it saved my life. Then, I thought about his response and felt embarrassed to the thought of the pure words of this kindhearted Jew, so I asked him about it, and here is his life story the way he told it to me:

"I was born in Germany as an only child to my Torah-observant parents. When I was five years old, my parents took me to the death camps, to show me what they went through. I was too young to understand what it was all about, so I turned to my mother and asked her to give me a ride on the wheelbarrow. At first, my mother ignored me, then she suddenly burst out crying. Finally, she got the words out and said to me, 'You want me to give you a ride with the same wagon they used for carrying my parents and siblings to the burning ovens?!"

"I was totally shocked, I have never heard anything from her about our past, and I thought this was just another antiques' museum. I was absolutely startled from what I found out, that I became suppressed into myself. I could not stop thinking about what my mother told me, envisioning all the time how my grandparents were taken on the wagon to be burned in the ovens. I stopped going to school, and just kept reading books about the horrible war.

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able to have a child even in her old age.

Avraham

Eulogizes Sarah's House...

Only Avraham Avinu was greater than Sarah, and thus was the only one who could eulogize her. "וַיְבֵא אֶבְרָהִם לְסֹפֵר לְשָׂרָה וְלִבְכַתְּהָ" *"Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her."* Let us understand, what was so special about Avraham Avinu's eulogy for Sarah, and why is the letter *kof* in the word "וְלִבְכַתְּהָ" written small in the Torah?

Without the letter *kof*, the word seems like - "וְלִבְיָתָהּ" he wept regarding "her house." Avraham eulogized Sarah for the house of chesed she built, which brought about the merit to have three wonderful miracles in the tent: The cloud that was constantly over the tent, the candle that burned from week to week, and the dough that rose more than usual. These wonders were not private miracles, they were for the benefit of the entire world, since Sarah always helped Avraham bring guests, to feed them and teach them Hashem's ways, while she did the same with women. She was like a 'minister' who oversees the whole world, to care for them and help them - which is the meaning of Sarah's name [Sarah

means minister].

The cloud that was above the tent was like the *ketores* in *Beis Hamikdash*, which would rise high and spread a good scent all over the world - filling everybody with much pleasure that would lead them to thank Hashem for their healthy breathing - just like Avraham Avinu taught in his own tent. The candle would burn from week to week like the menorah, to symbolize the great light that Avraham spread all around, with which he brought people closer to Hashem. And the dough rose like the *lechem hapanim* that would satisfy the *kohanim* after eating even a little bit of it - just like the food Avraham served his guests satisfied them, not only with physical bread but also with appreciation and gratitude to Hashem for the food.

Rav Chisda Cries

Over a House of Hospitality...

The Gemara tell us how Rav Chisda cried when he saw the ruins of a hospitable house (Brachos 58b): "*Ulla and Rav Chisda were once walking along the road. When they came upon the doorway of the house of Rav Chana bar Chanilai, Rav Chisda groaned and sighed. Ulla asked him: 'Why are you sighing; didn't Rav say,*

THE SWEETNESS OF SARAH'S WAYS...

Avraham Avinu cries over Sarah and eulogizes her in the ears of his son, Yitzchak, so that he should teach Sarah Imeinu's wonderful ways to his future wife, Rivka, to continue them in their own house.



sighing breaks half of one's body? ... Rav Chisda answered: How can I not sigh when we see this house, where there were sixty cooks during the day and sixty cooks at night who would cook for anyone in need... Four doors were open in all four directions, and anyone who entered hungry left satiated. Now that the house has fallen in ruins, how can I not sigh?!"

Rav Chisda cried over that house, because he knew it that was not only simple physical work that they did there; it was like the *lechem hapanim* in *Beis Hamikdash*, which taught the people how to be grateful to Hashem for the food they were served and its kindnesses. That was also Avraham's eulogy of Sarah, he cried for the house that was filled with passerby, not only with physical food but with spiritual food too, just as it was in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

The word "וְלִבְתָּהּ" without the letter *kof* can also be "וְלִבְתָּהּ", which means "to her daughter." Because this entire eulogy Avraham told in the ears of Yitzchak, so that he should teach it to his future wife, Rivka, who was going to be like a daughter to Sarah. Avraham Avinu wanted Yitzchak to teach Sarah's ways to his future wife, in order that she would continue the holy ways of her righteous mother-in-law.

Opening a Yeshiva on the Priceless Land...

Only after Avraham Avinu had established the continuation of Sarah's noble ways, did he begin his search for a burial site for Sarah. He respected her greatly and searched only for a very special piece of land as befitting his loyal wife – even though she was not living anymore.

Avraham approached Efron and offered to buy the land that had *Me'aras Hamachpela* on it for its full price – "Let him grant it to me for its full price, in your midst, as an estate for a burial site." However, when Efron realized how important it was in the eyes of Avraham, he tried to lower its value and he offered the field with its cave for free, as if it is not worth much. Therefore, "Avraham bowed down before the members of the council," in order to show how precious this land is to him, and convince Efron that he was ready to spend any price he would request.

Finally, Efron accepted and said, "Land worth four hundred silver shekels, between me and you, what is it?" With that, Avraham Avinu made the "members of the council" value the plot as priceless, thinking that Efron lowered its value at the beginning only due to his and Avraham's great wealth, as "Four hundred silver shekels, what is it." With this, they would also learn to appreciate the greatness of the person who was going to be buried there, Sarah Imeinu.

Then, in order to commemorate Sarah and continue her ways, Avraham established a *yeshiva* above her grave, a place where people would come to learn about her ways; to appreciate the kindness she had done for them and to continue them also after

her death. Avraham also planted an orchard in the field, from which he would feed the passerby and teach them to thank Hashem for the food and for their health – thus continuing what Sarah had dedicated her life to.

Eliezer Overcomes His Insult...

Now, that Yitzchak learned about Sarah's wonderful ways, which his future wife was to continue – it was finally time to find the right woman for that. Here, the Torah tells us with great length and detail the entire story with Eliezer – how Avraham gives him exact instructions what to do; and how he makes him swear that he would try his best to find a girl from his own family in Charan, and only if none was found would he be exempt of the oath. Let us understand, what is so important about this story that it is written in such detail?!

We should all know that it was not easy for Eliezer to take this mission upon himself. He was very hopeful that after all the years of serving Avraham Avinu faithfully, he would finally get what he truly deserved, and Yitzchak would marry his own daughter. However, Avraham did not want that, and had even appointed Eliezer himself in charge of finding a different girl.

Eliezer pondered about it a lot, he had to swallow a serious insult when Avraham rejected the offer that his daughter should marry Yitzchak. Also, earlier, when he heard Avraham saying to Hashem, "What can You give me seeing that I go childless, and the steward of my house is the Damascus [Damesek] Eliezer?" To which Hashem answered, "That one will not inherit you..." Eliezer could have taken it as an insult, but he was wise enough to know that Avraham meant to his credit, that he was his loyal steward who would draw [*doleh*] and give drink [*mashke*] to others from his master's Torah, ['Damesek' is acronym for '*doleh umashkeh*'].

Eliezer Makes an Unreasonable Prayer...

That was Eliezer's greatness, that he always remained loyal to Avraham, overcoming his own emotions and completely ignoring his own wishes. Though he could have gone without any motivation, and return empty handed, claiming that he tried his best but did not find the right match – defending himself with the fact that Rivka came from a bad family – and Avraham would have had no choice but to take Eliezer's daughter, and how lucky would he have been. Yet, he filled his heart with love to Avraham even though it was hard for him, and he tried his best to fulfill his master's wish and find the right woman that would establish Am Yisrael.

Eliezer had even composed a special prayer that his mission should succeed, and Hashem accepted it. Hashem accepted his davening and responded kindly – even though it was an unreasonable prayer – because He saw Eliezer's true loyal heart to Avraham Avinu. Like the Gemara says (Taanis 4a), "Rabbi Yonasan said: Three people entreated Hashem in an unreasonable manner; to two of them Hashem responded kindly... Eliezer, servant of Avraham, made

specific conditions, which might have gone wrong if a lame or blind maiden would fit the conditions. Nevertheless, Hashem responded kindly and sent him Rivka right away – Rivka who was completely righteous and healthy.

This *parsha* is filled with true *emunas chachamim* of a loyal servant who always sought to appease his master and fulfil his commandments, therefore every move Eliezer did and every word he said are significant for us to learn from. The Torah even repeats this story again when Eliezer told Besuel about everything, because it shows us how Eliezer expressed his hope to Besuel that *“Perhaps the woman shall not wish to follow me to this land”* – and his own daughter would marry Yitzchak. Expressing this to Besuel and Lavan made them envious of Eliezer and convinced them to grab the wonderful opportunity before him – exclaiming, *“The matter stemmed from Hashem,”* as though they were longtime believers.

Dancing After Losing Out...?!

The Midrash says (Bereishis Rabbah 60:8), *“Rabbi Acha said: The ordinary conversation of the patriarchs’ servants is more pleasing to Hashem than even the Torah discourse of their children, for the chapter of Eliezer is repeated in the Torah, while many important principles of the Law are derived only from slight indications.”* Many principles are meant only for the *dayanim* and *poskim*, but the lessons that are learned from Eliezer’s simple conversation are significant for every simple Yid to learn true loyalty. It teaches us that only the righteous people are those who guide us on the right path of Hashem, and that we ought to follow every one of their commands with true *emunas chachamim*, without arousing any questions and disputes against them. Only that will make us truly loyal

to Hashem.

Therefore, Avraham Avinu sent Eliezer to this mission – in order that he should gain this quality, and Eliezer made well use of it. When he arrived at the well and his mission went perfectly, he *“Bowed low [like a dance] and prostrated himself to Hashem.”* He started dancing and bowing down to Hashem in gratitude for his master’s mission that was successful, and thanking Hashem for giving him Avraham Avinu as his guide.

Eliezer is Suspected of Wrongdoing...

Later on, we learn how Eliezer was truly faithful, not only to Avraham but to his son Yitzchak, as well, even as he himself raised Yitzchak on his knees, and taught him his father’s ways. When Eliezer came back together with Rivka, she asked him, *“Who is that man walking in the fields toward us?”* To which he replied, *“He is my master”* – even though Yitzchak was only his master’s son.

Then Avraham and Yitzchak still suspected him that he might have done something wrong to Rivka on the way (Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 109), yet Eliezer kept quiet and accepted the humiliation with full respect to his master. For that, Eliezer merited great things, like the Midrash says (Bereishis Rabbah 60:7): *“Eliezer who is Canaan, because he served that righteous [i.e. Avraham Avinu] faithfully, he merited to go out of the category of cursed to the category of blessed.”* He also merited to go up to Gan Eden alive, where he serves Avraham Avinu to this day. Like the Gemara says about Rabbi Bana’a who was marking burial caves: *“When he arrived at the cave of Avraham, he encountered Eliezer, servant of Avraham, who was standing before the entrance...”* (Bava Basra 58a).

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“Six years later, my father died after a short illness, and my mother died half a year after him. I was left completely alone in the world at the young age of eleven. I would stay over at friends’ houses, not stopping to think about taking revenge on the Nazis who made my life miserable.

“With time, I befriended bad guys on the street, who made fun of my Jewish look, until I decided to cut off my *peyos* and stop wearing a *yarmulke*. Those friends explained to me that it was not possible for me to take revenge on the Nazis. That made me terribly upset; after all the destruction they caused my family and my nation, there was nothing I could do in return. I felt completely wasted.

“Early one morning, as I was strolling around in a park, I looked up to the sky, remembering the old good times when my mother taught me that there is life after this world, a place where the righteous are rewarded, while the evil get their long-deserved retribution. Suddenly I felt happy, I knew that all those pure souls that went up to heaven *al kiddush Hashem* are getting their fair share. I suddenly realized there was nothing to be upset about.

“I started davening to Hashem, ‘Please help me out of the depths that I have fallen into, make me useful.’ Then I had an idea, I knew the only way I could take revenge on the Nazis was by behaving the opposite way of them, and I should try to help my fellow Jews to the best. The rest, I knew, I should leave for Hashem.

“That same afternoon, a good Jew offered to move together with me to Eretz Yisrael, and two weeks later we made Aliya. In Eretz Yisrael I began learning with him every day, Parsha, some Gemara and Chovos Halevavos, until he brought me back to my roots. This kindhearted man helped me later find my wife and a source for livelihood.

“Today I already have G-d fearing children and grandchildren, *baruch* Hashem. I teach them always to be grateful to Hashem for saving me from getting lost – both spiritually and physically. And ever since I am careful with my promise to take revenge on the Nazis – by helping a fellow Jew even when it might be at my own expense. That’s why I gave you the bottle of water even though I will stay a little thirsty.”

It was time for me to get off the bus, and I found it hard to separate from this wonderful bus driver and his amazing life story. I thanked him warmly for the water and for the lesson he taught me. At least I understood why Hashem made me thirsty, so that I could quench my *neshama* with *emuna* – like cold water on a tired soul – to believe in the power of prayer that comes from a humble heart.