

The Jewish Weekly

A War Story from My Colleague at Ascent - Oct. 2023

By Rabbi Arbel Zechariah

I am 42 years old and married. I work for 'Ascent of Safed.' (Tsfat) I have been a part of Ascent's IDF educational department for 18 years. Besides giving talks, I play three musical instruments and conduct guided tours and Bar/Bat Mitzvahs in the Old City of Safed.

Last Thursday morning [Oct. 19], my wife was at work and my house was like a battle zone. The war had closed the daycare centers and schools for my six children, and I was losing the battle.

Then I got the call. "Arbel, one of our soldiers is getting married in two hours."

"The bride is simply not willing to postpone her wedding to the man of her dreams. Even if it means giving up the exquisite wedding party she had planned for over a year and limiting her guest list to immediate family and friends."

"We need you to make this wedding a blast!" said Rabbi Ari Brod, the manager of Ascent's Army Division.

"After the wedding, continue with the original plan to visit three bases on the Northern border to lift the spirits of soldiers who will be spending another Shabbat away from home."

With G-d's help, I found a babysitter (not simple in these days of tension) and sped to Ascent. Yosef and Tal, the two other musicians, were already there and we loaded the sound equipment into my eight person MPV (Multi Purpose Vehicle).

Before racing to the wedding, an hour's drive away, every millimeter of remaining space in the car was stuffed with challah rolls, wine and other Shabbat essentials for soldiers at border outposts. (Ascent distributed over 13,000 challah rolls last Shabbat and 10,000 the week before).

With well over 100,000 of our finest soldiers protecting the border, the IDF was unable to supply all of the troops with all of their physical needs. We at Ascent took on to help fill the lack.

Just close your eyes and imagine. As we drive up, the bride and groom, Ma'ayan and Chaim, who had arrived shortly before for the chupah (wedding canopy), are being serenaded by over 400 Golani (infantry) soldiers singing Am Yisrael Chai! ('The Nation Of Israel Lives.')



Illustration picture of a wedding on an army base

Without any notice, one of Israel's top recording artists, also called up with the other 360,000 reservists, Idan Amedi, surprised the entire crowd and brought the bride to tears by singing under the chupah as we three accompanied him.

Idan had to rush back to his base of Combat Engineers, so we continued alone.

The soldiers erupted in wild dancing as they joined us, singing [in Hebrew] "We are believers, the sons of believers, and have no one to rely on other than our Father in Heaven".

Their dancing was so intense that it melted away almost two weeks of tension! Ma'ayan and Chaim were overwhelmed with joy.

* * *

After 40 minutes of nonstop dancing and singing, the base commander called out to us, "Cut the music now. Our unit is being called to the border!"

One more song and the soldiers boarded buses to their mission and we were off to the next base.

To protect the soldiers, the IDF did not tell us where our next gig was. Rather, we were met by a jeep at a junction on the way to Nahariya and they escorted us to the base.

Just as we started playing, the air raid sirens shrieked.

Into the bomb shelter with 200 soldiers - our captive audience! - as the doors were bolted shut.

As the bombing became louder and more frequent, the singing intensified. More and more soldiers singing songs of hope, prayer, and yearning for victory and peace that shattered the gates of Heaven and exploded into a joy-filled dance. Bomb shelters have great acoustics!

We came to give them strength, but they ended up strengthening us!

An hour and a half of bombing passed in minutes. With the all-clear siren we rushed out, late for our next concert.

We were already packed and in the car, when a bus of religious soldiers returned from a mission. Seeing our guitars and drums, they implored us to stay and pray the afternoon prayers with them before the sun set, and then play one song to lift their spirits.

It Once Happened...

One song led to another and we probably sang another four or five before the jeep escorting us to the next base forced us to depart.

After another 35-minute drive we arrived at a checkpoint where we were told that the situation had heated up. Too dangerous to continue.

When the road finally opened, we received word that the unit we were going to play for had been mobilized; we would have to move on to the final scheduled show.

After 20 more minutes of driving, we were once again stopped at a roadblock. The soldiers said that we would have to wait for things to calm down before we could proceed.

It was dark, we were exhausted, and our wives were demanding we come home. Not only were they afraid for us, they needed help with the children and the preparations for Shabbat.

The young corporal escorting us pleaded with us to continue on. Nevertheless, the demands of our wives prevailed and we started our return to Tsfat.

A minute later the young corporal was on the phone again. The roads had been opened and he begged us to return.

Our hearts told us we could not let down 150 soldiers and then a small miracle occurred: our wives gave us another hour for the cause!


As before, the soldiers did not want us to stop playing or singing. We give them an island of stability and sanity in a world that has gone insane. With G-d's help, we fuel them with hope and strength, and they want to get as much as they can before going back to the grind of war.

When I arrived home at close to 11 pm, I spent a half hour with my kids who had stayed up late to see their Abba and then... I got the call.

"Arbel!" Ari said, "Tomorrow the IDF needs us to do 17 concerts before Shabbat. I need you to help arrange 5 teams to tackle this mission."

My wife and I were speechless. We had prepared nothing for Shabbat. But what could we say? Israel needs us!

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.



Shabbat Times - Parshat Chayei Sarah

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:07	5:21	6:00
Tel Aviv	4:22	5:22	5:56
Haifa	4:12	5:20	5:57
Be'er Sheva	4:26	5:24	6:00



The Son-in-Law's Marriage Advice

By Rabbi Nissan Mindel

In the year 1648 the Jewish people were overtaken by terrible and overwhelming tragedy. In that black year the Ukrainian Cossack Bogdan Chmielnicki and his vicious hordes rampaged through the countryside murdering and pillaging the unfortunate Jewish villages in their wake.

A young girl was living in a small Polish village together with her widowed mother and small brothers and sisters at the time of great upheaval. When word spread of the approach of the murderers, the Jews fled wherever they could; this girl was separated from her family. She wandered the countryside with a group of destitute Jews, begging for food.

After some weeks of wandering, the group of refugees came to Vilna where they found a community shelter. The wife of the shelter manager took a special liking to the girl and offered to help her establish herself in Vilna, reasoning that in a large city, she would more easily find her family.

The girl, for her part, was grateful for the woman's friendship, and when she was offered a job in a Jewish house, she accepted happily. "My son-in-law," explained the lady of the house, "is a great Torah scholar and studies every night until midnight, at which time he is served his dinner. Up until now my daughter and I have had the honor of serving him, but it is difficult for us to keep such late hours and also manage the house during the day. You will have the duty and privilege of serving my son-in-law." The girl accepted the job happily.

The first night as she sat outside the door of the scholar, listening to the haunting sing-song melodies of the Talmud, the girl was transported back many years. It was as if she was listening to her father's voice rehearsing the ancient texts in just the same melodious voice. With these memories filling her mind, tears suddenly began to flow down her cheeks, as she sobbed quietly.

A moment later the door opened and in an annoyed tone of voice the young man said to her, "Please stop that noise. You are disturbing my concentration." Frightened to lose her job, the girl was quieted at once.

The following night as she sat by the closed door listening to the ancient melodies, the girl was again moved to tears, and she couldn't control her weeping. When the young scholar opened the

door, he saw at once that something serious was grieving the girl. His patient questions yielded from the girl an account of her sad tale. She told him about her beloved father, Meir who had passed away many years ago and about her mother and siblings lost in the terrible upheaval. She also told him about her older brother who had been sent away to study after his barmitzvah and whom she had never seen again.

The young man, Rabbi Shabetai Cohen, (later known as the ShAch), quickly realized that he knew the girl's family and the whereabouts of one of her relatives, for he, in fact, was her long-lost brother. He did not disclose this information to her, though, for he had his reasons for withholding that wonderful news. Meanwhile, things continued as before, except that Rabbi Shabetai requested that the girl be relieved of her duties, remaining in the house with the status of a family-member.

About half a year later, the lady of the house took ill and the girl took upon herself the care of the invalid as well as assuming most of the household responsibilities. The illness was a prolonged one, and finally the lady passed away, deeply mourned by the whole family.

Not too long passed before matchmakers approached the wealthy widower with suggestions of matches. Uncertain about what to do, the widower consulted his learned son-in-law. Rabbi Shabetai replied that he should postpone any action in the matter, and should wait another year.

After a year passed the marriage brokers returned, and the widower consulted his son-in-law again. This time he offered this advice: "Disregard all the suggestions of the matchmakers, for the best and most suitable match is right here, the young woman you have 'adopted' into your family. Set the earliest possible date for the marriage. After the chupah I will tell you the true identity of the girl."

The young woman was happy and honored to accept the proposal, and the marriage was celebrated joyously. Rabbi Shabetai now revealed to his father-in-law that his bride was none other than his own long-lost sister. He added: "As a wedding gift, I promise that you will be blessed with a son. You will name him Meir, after my saintly father, and he will enlighten the Jewish world with his Torah knowledge and wisdom."

This indeed came to pass.

Reprinted from an email of L'Chaim Weekly.



How can anyone have two lives on earth?

Parshat Chayei Sara commences as follows: "יהיו חיי שרה - מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע - And the life of Sarah was," "מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע - א hundred years and twenty years and seven years," (i.e. a total of a hundred and twenty seven years) "שני חיי שרה - the years of the life of Sarah."

The last three words seem to be totally redundant. Are they not included in everything that precedes them?

In a wonderful sefer, Doreish Lifrakim by Rav Mordechai Rubenstein, which is a commentary on Pirkei Avot, the introduction explains that the word 'שני' can mean two things: it can mean 'the years of' and it can also mean 'two'. Therefore, "שני חיי שרה" does not only mean, "the years of the life of Sarah." It could mean, "Sarah had two lives!"

Therefore these words are not redundant.

Rav Rubenstein explains that for the vast majority of people on earth, we're actually only active and properly alive for two thirds of our lives. That's because we're asleep for the other third.

With regards to Sarah, however, when she went to sleep it wasn't because she loved to take it easy and was looking forward to having that rest. Rather, every moment of rest was an investment in the next day when she would be able to be active and alert, to perform as much chessed as possible, because Sara spent her life performing kindnesses for others.

In this way, Sarah lived two separate lives – the time when she was awake and also the time when she was asleep, because that was not wasted time; it was time when she energized herself and prepared herself to do great things. All of Sarah's 127 years were used for good causes; were used constructively. Even when she was asleep, she was using every precious moment for a good purpose.

From her we can learn how critically important it is to utilize every precious moment we have, and even when we rest, let's use that as an investment in all the future productive activities that we will achieve.

So let's follow in one aspect of Sarah's life, the chessed part and let's pray with all our hearts for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, Police officers, medical professionals, Firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

Although none of the 613 mitzvot are counted from Chayei Sarah, we learn about burial of the dead, and funeral practices such as eulogizing the dead. We also find lessons relating to marriage in this Parshah.

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 105
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1402
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5314

HAFTORA: Melachim I 1:1-31

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Kislev
Rosh Chodesh – Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023

חיי שרה
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