

A Happy Life

“And Sara lived one hundred years and twenty years and seven years; the years of Sara’s life” (Bereshis 23:1). The Ha’amek Davar zt”l finds this verse puzzling. Why is the word “chayei” (life of [Sara]) mentioned twice? The word “chaim” (life) has two meanings. A person is alive as long as his soul is in his body. When his soul leaves, he dies. Life has another meaning to it: happiness. Not the fleeting happiness of fulfillment of desires; rather, the deep happiness that flows from strong *emunah* (faith) and *bitachon* (trust) in Hashem. Sara’s 127 years of “life” were all years of happiness based on her unshakable *emunah* and *bitachon*. This was quite an accomplishment, considering the hardships she endured. She was childless until age 90. She and her husband were constantly tested with life-threatening situations. Yet, she lived a totally spiritual life of true happiness, cleaving to Hashem.

Kinderlach . . .
What makes us truly happy? Ice cream? We feel good while we are eating it. But that is not true happiness. Riding a bicycle? That is also a thrill, but it passes. Getting a big hug from Imma? What could be better than that? Trusting Hashem. Knowing that He is always taking care of us. Not being afraid of anyone or anything except Him. That gives a person a solid inner happiness that cannot be shaken by anything. Sara Immenu had 127 years of happiness. Follow in her footsteps and enjoy a happy life.

Everything

“And Avraham was old; he came with his days. And Hashem blessed Avraham with everything” (Bereshis 24:1). Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch elucidates this verse with a beautiful explanation. “Avraham was *zaken* (old).” The Gemora (Kiddushin 32b) describes a *zaken* as one who has acquired (Torah) wisdom. During his days on this earth, the *zaken* conquers two worlds. He masters the Torah wisdom of this world, which earns him an exalted position in the world to come. “He came with his days.” He utilized his days to bring holiness into the world. They escorted him into the next world.

“And Hashem blessed Avraham *bakol* (with everything).” The root word “*kol*” is also used by Yitzchak and Yaakov to thank Hashem. Yitzchak said, “And I ate *mikol* (from everything)” (Bereshis 27:33). Yaakov said, “And I have *kol* (everything).” These three expressions describe the lives of our holy forefathers. Avraham’s life was one of constant success, both in *ruchnius* (spiritual elevation) and *gashmius* (wealth). He was viewed as the “Prince of *Elokim* (G-d)” among the nations. “*Bakol*” - every one of his endeavors was blessed.

“One who observes a mitzvah will know no evil” (Koheles 8:5). Yitzchak viewed everything in his life as a mitzvah. Therefore, he experienced no evil. Even hardships were viewed by him as an opportunity for growth. He ate “*mikol*”. He gained from every life experience.

Yaakov’s life was one of giving. He endured constant exile and hardship. Eisav, Lavan, the disappearance of Yosef, all tormented him. Yet he never aspired to take anything for himself. His only concern was for others. He had “*kol*”. He never felt a lack because he never expected anything.

Our three holy forefathers. Outwardly they led very different lives. Yet inwardly they were all happily satisfied with the life that Hashem gave them.

Kinderlach...
What will you be later in life? Rich or poor? Strong or weak? Sociable or quiet? Will you have many children or few? No one knows. Hashem will decide these things. We have only to be happy with Hashem’s decisions. Hashem blessed Avraham with success in everything. He was happy with Hashem’s blessings. Yitzchak was happy with the opportunity to grow from everything. Yaakov was happy because he had everything he needed to give to others. Kinderlach, our Avos HaKedoshim (Holy Forefathers) taught us how to live life. Be happy with everything Hashem gives you.

Who’s In Charge Here?
“He ruled over all that was his”

(Bereshis 24:2). This verse is referring to Eliezer, Avraham Avinu’s senior servant, who was entrusted with running his entire household. Avraham sent him to find a wife for Yitzchak. Perhaps someone would try to bribe Eliezer to accept an unsuitable woman as a wife. Avraham was not concerned. Eliezer was so trustworthy, that he surely would not take a bribe for an unsuitable woman. The Keli Yakar zt”l explains that Eliezer also ruled over all of his own possessions. Sometimes a person’s belongings can rule over him. They take so much time and care, that the person is not free to pursue important things. Worse than that, one can get caught up in acquiring things. The desire for money can overtake him. There is no end to this, and he will have time for nothing. Eliezer ruled over his property, it did not rule over him. He kept it in perspective. He was happy with his lot. He had no desire for money that was not his. Therefore, he was not subject to bribery.

Kinderlach . . .
Possessions can help you or hurt you. It depends upon how you use them. You should only ask for what you need. More is not better. As the Mishna says (Pirkei Avos 2:8), “More property means more worries.” Only use what you need and only use it when you need it. Modern technology can be a great tool. However, it can also eat up lots of time and ruin your peace of mind. You must control it, and not let it control you. Be like Eliezer. Rule your things. Do not let them rule you.

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