***Points to Ponder – Chayeii Sarah 5774***

**“And Sarah’s days were 127, the years of Sarah’s life” (23:1**) - The Midrash (58:1) comments that the Possuk in Tehillim (37:18) “Yoeya Hashem Yimei Timimim refers to Sarah Imeinu whose whole life was Tamim – wholesome. **Rav Yehuda Amital ztl.** once noted that Sarah’s life was not unique. Textually we do not find her doing extraordinary things. One need not lead a revolution in order to be deserving of praise in Hashem’s eyes. One needs to act wholesomely in his or her Avodas Hashem with sincerity.

**“I am a stranger and a resident among you, give me a place to bury my departed (23:4)** – **Maran Harav Schachter Shlita** once explained the reason Jews insist on designating and maintaining a separate place for burial. He cited **Rav Chaim of Volozhin** who noted the difference between Tashmishei Mitzva (which although must be accorded respect can be discarded respectfully) and Tashmishei Kedusha (which need to be “put into Sheimos” and buried appropriately). Rav Chaim Volozhiner explained that things that contained Torah may NOT be simply discarded and thus need to be buried. Therefore, even a Bayis of Tefillin that merely contains the Shin of Torah, must be treated as Tashmishei Kedusha like Mezuzah and Tefillin as well. The body of a Jew whose life was filled with Torah, must qualify as a Tashmish Kedusha and needs a separate Geniza – hence the Jewish cemetery.

**“And he bowed down to the nation of the land to the children of Chet” (23:7)**- The **Seforno** notes that Avraham bowed to the heads of state as they represented the people. Thus, Avraham bowed to them out of respect. However, the Midrash (58:6) clearly notes that Avraham was bowing to Hashem in thanks. How does one clear the discrepancy? **Rav Dovid Kviat (Sukkas Dovid) ztl**. notes that there is no contradiction. It looked like he was bowing to them in a display of respect but really it was the Shechinah that he was bowing to. Rav Dovid Kviat compares this to an old story that they tell about Aristotle who was known not to bow before anyone he considered beneath his “station.” One day a student saw him bowing before a wealthy – but boorish – individual. Asking Aristotle why he bowed before the boor, Aristotle responded, “I am not bowing before him. I am trying to talk into his ear. Unfortunately his ear is so low it is on the ground, and so it is there that I must bend to speak.”

**“Hashem blessed Avaham BaKol “ (24:1)** – Really? The tests, the loss of his wife twice to kings and later to Hashem ? the challenge of childlessness? The sending away of Yishmael? This is Bakol? **Rav Moshe Nechemia Kornitzer ztl.** noted that the Midrash says Bakol means he had a stone around his neck that when he wore it and anyone gazed at him, that person was healed. How? It wasn’t the power of the stone, it was the power of Avraham to see and raise the best in everyone. When one’s outlook is so positive it isn’t hard to see how s/he sees everything as a blessing!

**“And the Eved ran up to greet her (24:17)** – Rashi asks what it was that made Eliezer run up to Rivka. Rashi answers that he saw a miracle, that as she approached the well, the waters rose to greet her. **Rav Elazar Shach ztl.** asks that if he saw such a miracle, why did he need to test her Middos? Why was the miracle not sufficient? Rav Shach answers that we learn from here that one can perform miracles and still be a destructive individual based on negative Middos. Good Middos are not necessarily guaranteed just because one performs miracles (or is smart, brilliant etc.) <A similar comment is offered in respect to why Yitzchak still needed to bring her to his mother’s tent even after discussing the Eved’s miraculous trip and return.>

**The words of the Servants of the forefathers (Rashi 24:42)** – The Torah elongates the story of Rivkah’s finding, first telling the story and then retelling it through the eyes of Eliezer. Why? **HaRav Yisroel Belsky Shlita** once noted that in fact, the story is repeated 4 times – twice relating the Tefilla (at the well and again in Besuel’s home) and then the unfolding of the result of the Tefilla (at the well and again in the house). Rav Belsky explains that marriage requires a 4 step process of analysis –to see if both the potential bride and potential groom accurately understand themselves and the roles that the others play in their lives. In the end, it is the couple that needs to decide if they are headed in the same direction and if they can make the Shidduch “go.”

**Avraham died at a ripe old age (25:8)** – The Gemara (Bava Basra 91a) notes that on the day that Avraham died, the world leaders declared, “Woe onto the world that has lost its leader and the ship that has lost its captain.” What was to be added in their declaration comparing Avraham to a ship’s captain? **Rav Avraham Yaakov Neimeric (Eishel Avraham Bava Basra)** explains that when a world loses a leader, another is destined to come quickly – V’zarach HaShemesh U’Ba HaShemesh. However, when a ship loses its captain at sea, a new captain doesn’t arrive as fast and who then rises to the top in the moments of freight and transition?

**Haftorah: “My master the king, Dovid should live forever” (Melachim I: 1:31)** – It seems strange that after the whole succession process is clarified and Shlomo cleared and appointed to replace Dovid HaMelech, that Batsheva should give a Beracha that in effect undid the rest of the Haftorah. Why state that Dovid should live forever, if it was clear he would not? **Rav Shlomo Kluger (Sheima Shlomo)** explains her intention based on a Gemara in Bava Basra (116a) which notes that when one leaves a child who follows in his footsteps it is as if the senior did not die. The proof is from Dovid. Rav Shlomo Kluger explains that when the process was finally clarified, it was evident that Dovid would not die. His ideals and lessons would live on, long after he departed the world.