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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת חיי שרה

וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה. (בראשית כג, א)
Soroh's lifetime was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years; the years of Soroh's life.

(Bereishis 23:1)

In this week's *Sidrah*, we learn about the death of Soroh Imeinu and the fact that she lived for one hundred and twenty-seven years. Rashi explains that the word *שָׁנָה*, *years*, is repeated after each category (hundreds, tens, and units) to convey that each term should be interpreted independently. At the age of one hundred, she was like a twenty-year-old with relation to sin; just as she was sinless at the age of twenty - having just reached the age when one becomes subject to Heavenly punishment – she remained sinless at the age of one hundred. Additionally, at the age of twenty, she was considered as beautiful as a seven-year-old.

The *possuk* concludes with the phrase *שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה*, *the years of Soroh's life*. Rashi explains that this phrase is repeated to teach that *כולן שָׁוין לְטוֹבָה* - all the years of Soroh's life were equally good. However, the Meforshim question the meaning of this statement. If we are referring to sin and beauty, the *possuk* has already addressed this. In what way are we comparing all the years of her life?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains that the *possuk* here describes a unique virtue of Soroh: living a life of *bitachon* under all circumstances. Indeed, Soroh experienced many difficult years throughout her life, enduring years of childlessness until she was ninety. She also experienced the famine that forced her and Avrohom to leave Eretz Yisroel, along with the debasing incidents involving Pharaoh and Avimelech, which certainly do not qualify as "good times." Rather, the *possuk* teaches us that Soroh confronted these trials with remarkable *bitachon*. All her years were *שָׁוין לְטוֹבָה* since she embraced the difficult moments with the same love and acceptance as when she was blessed with a child.

The Chovos HaLevavos (*Sh. HaBitachon* introduction) writes that a person who has achieved *bitachon* in Hashem, experiences joy in every situation, even in challenging ones. This is because they trust that everything Hashem does is for their best, even if it may not be immediately apparent. This concept is akin to a loving mother who tends to her child, washing, cleaning, and diapering the baby, even against the child's will, as it is ultimately in the child's best interest. Dovid HaMelech expressed this idea when he said in Tehillim (131:2): *אָם לֹא שָׁוִיתִי וְדוֹמַמְתִּי נֶפְשִׁי, כְּגִמְלַל עָלַי אִמּוֹ, כְּגִמְלַל עָלַי נֶפְשִׁי: (131:2)* *I swear that I stilled and silenced my soul, like a suckling child at the side of his mother, like the suckling child is to me my soul.* Dovid voiced his approach when faced with troubles and challenges. He chose to remain silent and did not complain because he recognised that *קַל מֵה דַעְבִּיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עֲבִיד* - all that Hashem does is for the good. Even during difficult times, he maintained his trust in Hashem, just as a suckling feels secure, believing that everything their mother does is in their best interest and that she will continue to provide for their needs.

Soroh lived with this ideal that guided her throughout her life, leading her to experience happiness throughout her life. Her guiding motto, regardless of her circumstances, was “this too is for the good.” With her strong *bitachon*, she trusted that all the events in her life were orchestrated by Hashem, who, like a mother caring for her child, had her best interests in mind. In this way, the incredible joy she felt upon finally giving birth to Yitzchok was a feeling found by her throughout her life.

We find another example of the lesson that *כָּל מֵה דְעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד* elsewhere in these week's *Sidrah*. In the account of Eliezer's mission to find a wife for Yitzchok, there are two instances where Eliezer bows to Hashem in gratitude. Firstly, after his *tefillos* are answered with Rivkah appearing just as he requested, Eliezer bows to Hashem (24:26). Secondly, after Lovon and Besuel consent to the match, the *posuk* (24:52) notes that Eliezer again bows to Hashem. Rashi, after the second instance of Eliezer bowing, comments: *מִכָּאן שֶׁמוֹדִים עַל בְּשׂוּרָה טוֹבָה* - from here we see that we give thanks over good tidings. It's interesting to note that Rashi chose to draw this lesson only from the second instance of Eliezer bowing. Why is this lesson not derived from the first instance of Eliezer bowing?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains that the novel lesson of "giving thanks over good tidings" cannot be learned from Eliezer's first bow. In that case, the obligation to express gratitude was clear. When Eliezer bowed initially, there was no doubt about the goodness he had received, and he was surely obligated to show gratitude. He recognised that witnessing the acceptance of his *tefillah* and the fulfilment of his request was the greatest goodness possible, highlighting Hashem's interest in him. As Rabbeinu Yonah (*Sharei Teshuvah* 1:42) explains, the greatest sign that a person is desired by Hashem is when their *tefillos* are answered. When Eliezer experienced this incredible display of love and attention from Hashem, he inevitably felt compelled to bow, as he had received undeniable goodness.

However, in the second instance, he only attained something that *seemed* to be good. Whenever something positive happens or one receives good news, it is often difficult to know for certain whether it truly is good, as the outcome of events is unknown. Accordingly, when consent was given for Rivkah to be a match for Yitzchok, it appeared good, but Eliezer could not know for sure that this approval would materialise.

Rashi teaches us through the example of Eliezer bowing in gratitude for the good news, that we have an obligation to thank Hashem, even for things that merely seem good. We must believe *כָּל מֵה דְעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד*, and express gratitude even for situations that aren't guaranteed to be beneficial, as long as they give the impression of being so. Thus, the lesson taught by Rashi to give thanks even when granted "apparent goodness," could only be inferred from the second instance of Eliezer bowing.

Let us learn from Soroh Imeinu that we should live our lives with complete *bitachon* in Hashem. With sincere trust and belief that everything Hashem does is for our ultimate good, we can experience a sense of security like that of a child with its mother. Even when confronted with challenging situations, recognising that “this too is for the good” can help us lead lives filled with gratitude and joy!

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