חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

PIASECZNO · CHAYEI SARA, ESH KODESH

Why Sarah's death at hearing of the Akedah was not a failure

Esh Kodesh

Sarah's death upon hearing of the Akedah was not a failure but an act of advocacy for Israel: by letting her pure soul depart under the weight of that suffering, she demonstrated before Hashem that even the greatest tzaddik (righteous person) cannot endure excessive suffering, and that this too was for Israel's sake. This is why the Torah affirms that all her years, including her final moment, were equally good, teaching that suffering must come in a measure the soul can bear, and that Hashem should have mercy and bring swift salvation instead. AI SUMMARY

"And the life of Sarah was... years... these were the years of the life of Sarah" (Bereishit 23:1). Rashi explains that the repetition of "years" in each clause indicates that at twenty she was without sin, as she was at one hundred. This phrase, "the years of the life of Sarah," highlights that all her years were equally good. We must understand what this teaches us, for it seems that no other righteous woman in the Torah is described with such greatness. Furthermore, it is puzzling that even though the Torah later uses similar wording regarding Avraham Avinu and Rashi also comments that he was without sin, it does not repeat the phrase "the years of Avraham" to emphasize that all his years were equally good.

The holy books, specifically in the work Ma'or VaShemesh at the beginning of Parashat Va'era by the holy Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, explain the Talmudic statement that "the covenant was established through salt" and "the covenant was established through suffering." Just as salt preserves meat when used in the right measure but becomes unbearable when overused, so too suffering must be balanced to be bearable and mixed with mercy.Rashi comments that Sarah's death is juxtaposed with the Binding of Isaac because upon hearing about it, her soul departed from her body, and she died. The faithful shepherd, Moshe Rabbeinu, juxtaposed Sarah's death with the Akedah to advocate on our behalf, illustrating that excessive suffering can cause even the greatest soul, like Sarah's, to leave the body. If Sarah, who was as pure at one hundred as she was at twenty, and whose years were all equally good, could not withstand such intense suffering, how much more so can we not endure.

Additionally, it can be said that Sarah herself internalized the Akedah to such a degree that it caused her soul to depart—also for the sake of Israel. She showed Hashem that Israel cannot withstand excessive suffering. Even those who survive severe suffering often have their strength, spirit, and minds diminished. There is little difference between partial death and total death in such cases.

This explains why the Torah emphasizes "the years of the life of Sarah." It might seem that Sarah failed compared to her previous years by allowing the Akedah to affect her so deeply. However, since she did so for the sake of Israel, the Torah affirms that all her years, including those affected by the Akedah, were equally good. May Hashem have

mercy on us, all of Israel, and quickly bring salvation, both spiritually and physically, with revealed kindnesses.

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