



Chayei Sarah — Precision in Providence & the Power of Tests

This shiur explores the Torah's purposeful juxtapositions in Chayei Sarah: how the death of Sarah Imeinu is placed near the Akeidah, why Rivka's birth appears as an epilogue to that event, and what this teaches about Divine precision. Rabbi Farhi addresses the classic question: if shluhei mitzvah einan nizokin—agents of a mitzvah are not harmed—how could news of the Akeidah be associated with Sarah's passing? The answer reframes our understanding of life's trials: when Hashem tests a person, He also grants the koach—the inner capacity—to endure that very test. Abraham received the strength for his trial; Sarah, whose role was different, did not need that same allocation and passed away precisely at her ordained time—yet in a way that elevated her life in holiness. The shiur concludes with three practical lessons for resilience, perspective, and courage.

Why These Stories Sit Side by Side

Chazal often ask, *Lamah nismekhah...*?—why does the Torah place one passage next to another? In Chayei Sarah, the placement is striking: the Torah records the birth of Rivka immediately after the Akeidah and before Sarah's passing. That birth functions as the epilogue to the Akeidah: Abraham, realizing Yitzchak nearly died unmarried, is moved to secure his future—leading to Rivka's emergence at precisely the right moment. This framing teaches that the Torah's order is a lesson in itself: Hashem arranges events with exquisite precision, not accident.

"Every thread is placed with intention—Rivka's birth is part of the Akeidah's story."

The Midrash: How Could Sarah Die from the News?

The Midrash states that Sarah's soul departed upon hearing about the Akeidah. Yet our Sages also teach that shluhei mitzvah einan nizokin—agents performing a mitzvah are not harmed in the course of that mitzvah. How do we reconcile these ideas with such a towering mitzvah?

The resolution offered by the commentaries is that no harm comes from the mitzvah itself. If a person passes while engaged in a mitzvah, it was their appointed time—and passing in the context of a mitzvah actually elevates the moment. Sarah's years were complete. Her passing coincided with the Akeidah's news so that even her death would be bound to holiness, not because the mitzvah caused harm.

"No harm comes from a mitzvah; when the time arrives, even the passing can be sanctified by it."

Why Sarah Wasn't Told in Advance

If Sarah was the greater prophet, why didn't Hashem inform her? One approach: Abraham's test was to hear only Hashem's voice in a moment of deep inner contradiction—the command to offer Yitzchak vs. the promise of continuity through Yitzchak. Sarah's *gevurah*—her fearless clarity—would have urged Abraham forward. That human encouragement would have diluted the singularity of the trial described as “because you listened to My voice.” By shielding Sarah from advance knowledge, Hashem preserved the purity of Abraham's challenge.

The Deepest Lesson: Strength Comes with the Test

A core teaching of the shiur: when Hashem sends a *nisayon*, He also sends the capacity to meet it. Abraham received the koach for the Akeidah. Sarah did not need that allocation, because this was not her personal test at that moment. Her years were complete, and her passing became intertwined with a mitzvah's holiness.

“You say, ‘I can't handle this.’ That was the old you talking—the test arrives with a new you.”

Three Practical Lessons

1. Passing in Holiness: If someone leaves this world while engaged in a mitzvah, we recognize the honor Hashem bestowed—elevating even that moment.
2. Precision, Not Accident: The timing and texture of our challenges are tailored—Hashem threads the needle with intention.
3. The New You: With each challenge, Hashem gifts a new set of strengths. Don't measure tomorrow's trial with yesterday's capacities.

Key Sources (mentioned/conceptual)

- Chayei Sarah — juxtaposition with the Akeidah and the report of Rivka's birth
- Chazal's method of juxtaposition: “Lamah nismekhah...?”
- Principle: Shluchei mitzvah einan nizokin (agents of a mitzvah are protected)
- “Shema bekolah” — the instruction to heed Sarah's voice, in its proper context

Questions for Discussion

- What does the placement of Rivka's birth teach about Divine timing?
- How do we reconcile “no harm from a mitzvah” with real-life tragedies?
- In what ways does Hashem customarily fit the tests we receive?
- Why was it essential that Abraham hear only Hashem's voice in the Akeidah?
- Have you ever discovered 'new you' strengths that only appeared once the challenge arrived?
- How can we support others who are receiving a test we ourselves haven't faced?

Closing Blessing

May Hashem grant us the clarity to see His precision, the courage to embrace our new strengths, and the merit that every step we take in mitzvot is elevated and protected. Shavua tov.

Dedications (as mentioned in the video)

This learning is dedicated in honor of families celebrating smachot and in loving memory of those whose neshamot should have an aliyah. May the words of Torah be a source of comfort and blessing.

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