

"And the life of Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years; the years of Sarah's life." (21:1)

Horav S. R. Hirsch z.l., notes that this is the only place in *Tanach* in which the *Torah* records a woman's age. There are two peculiarities in the text. After stating "vra hhj uhvhu" - *and the life of Sarah* - rather than "vra hhj hba" *the years of Sarah's life*, the *Torah* finds it necessary to repeat this information at the end of the *pasuk*! Indeed, the simple textual interpretation is not that Sarah lived 127 years, but that she lived one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years. *Chazal* have duly noted that Sarah's life was divided into three periods which reflect the entire span of human life: the age of childhood, the time of maturing youth, and completed old age.

Chazal state that one who has perfectly matured maintains the ability to transmit the crowning quality of each age into the next stage of life. Hence, the term "ohnhc tc" literally translated as "*he walks in his days*," means that his days are not complete. He takes all of the moral and spiritual acquisitions, of his past days and carries them into the next stage of his natural life. He does not allow any of his past attainments to whither away. Instead he transports them into the future. His future is built upon the achievements of his past. Sarah took the beauty of childhood with her into maturing womanhood and the innocence of the twenty year old girl with her into the grave. This view which *Chazal* presented contrasts sharply with that expounded by contemporary society. *Chazal* seek beauty not in the maturing woman, but in the child; innocence not in the child, but in the maturing adult. We speak of "childish innocence." It would be truly sad if childhood would be enviable because of its innocence. Innocence presupposes the possibility of guilt. Only one who has matured into adulthood, confronting the struggle of his passions and managing to conquer them, is fit to be crowned with the wreath of innocence!

These years are, therefore, referred to as "vra hhj" *the life of Sarah*. She "lived" in all of them. Her entire 127 years of existence was a life of cheer, importance and satisfaction. She did not regret any part of it. Nonetheless, the *Torah* concludes with the term vra hhj hba *the years of Sarah's life*; these were but years out of the actual life of Sarah, only one part of her life. Life is not to be measured by the span of time allotted to us to live here, but by the whole physical and spiritual existence granted to us by the Almighty. As *Chazal* state, "*The righteous ones live on after death, as they go to ever progressing development in an unlimited future.*"