

Now Avraham was old, well on in years. (24:1)

Did Avraham *Avinu* suddenly become old? The *Midrash Tanchuma* teaches that when Sarah *Imeinu* died, Avraham began to age. **Horav Mordechai Eliyahu, zl**, explains that as long as Sarah stood by the Patriarch's side, he did not sense that he had aged. She encouraged and spurred him to continue his holy work. When his life's companion, his major source of inspiration, was taken from him, Avraham no longer had by his side that spiritual force that motivated him to maintain his youthful endeavors.

The *Rishon L'Tzion* adds that this unique ability to galvanize the individual to aspire for greater success and achievement is one of the character traits that Sarah imbued in her descendants – both male and female. The inspiration to achieve greater heights, to climb the mountain of success, is ingrained in the Jewish psyche from our Matriarch. While it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to aspire to Sarah's personal greatness, nothing prevents us from being "like" Sarah.

Horav Aryeh Levine, zl, was known as the *Tzaddik* of Yerushalayim. When one reads his biography, he gets a true glimpse into the "power behind the throne," the woman who was his *Rebbetzin*, the individual who took the least credit, but probably was the single most factor in catalyzing his incredible achievements. Indeed, whenever people would recall good deeds that he had carried out, he immediately would respond, "But what am I, considering the things she did? She was a great soul." *Rav* Aryeh was wont to say that all of his good qualities came to him from her strength: "If not for her, I could not possibly have withstood the days of hunger during the First World War. Her *bitachon*, trust in the Almighty, was greater than mine."

Perhaps the best description of this holy woman and her devotion to her husband are presented by *Rav* Aryeh himself in a letter of tribute he wrote following her passing: "My heart grieves, and my spirit mourns. For how shall I find consolation for my great misfortune, when my greatest treasure, my crowning glory, was taken from me?"

"My anguish is great, and my woe is awesome. Who could ever describe her devotion and goodness? Another like her is hardly to be found – so pure of spirit, with a heart as wide in generosity as the entrance to a palace, with a sensitivity of kindness and compassion that strove to give and help every step of the way. She had a cheerful smile for everyone, and spread out her compassion to reach each and every living being.

"She was all kindliness and compassion, all holiness. Her entire life was an unbroken, uninterrupted song of praise and service to G-d, the life-giver of the world. Every moment of her life was another stanza, another bar of melody in her song of eternity. But, above all, she watched her tongue, to a most extraordinary degree. Her pure, precious spirit returned to its place of origin on High, as clean and spotless as on the day it descended into the world, but more shining, sparkling and radiant, more grace-filled and pure.

“Old age brought her no cause for shame or disgrace. She never saw sin or evil in any man; she never brought pain to any heart. The spirit of G-d and the spirit of human beings were both pleased with her. Never did she grow haughty or raise her eyes in arrogance – not to the slightest extent. The downtrodden and the wretched were the friends she made. Let them always relate her deeds, chart her ways and make her qualities their own. She ever turned to those left forsaken in the corner, embittered in spirit, impoverished by need; and the poor and the needy turned to her for comfort – to that spirit as pure as the very essence of Heaven. To all those who sought and needed her, she did not leave anyone like her in the world.”