

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

The word *zakein*, old, implies that the individual has lived an increased number of days. Likewise, *ba ba'yamim*, well on in years, indicates that we are not talking about a young person. *Zakein* and *ba ba'yamim* are redundant to one another. Why are they both used in the same *pasuk*? *Chazal* explain that some people have experienced physical longevity, *ziknah*, but their days are incomplete. Likewise, there are those who age prematurely, although their length of days are actually short. Avraham *Avinu's* *ziknah*, old age, was the result of a full life, well-lived in the service of the Almighty.

The **Shlah HaKodesh, zl**, derives a profound lesson from the coupling of *zakein* with *ba ba'yamim*. Avraham *Avinu* teaches us that one should make sure that he experiences positive achievement every day of his life. Otherwise, that day is rendered lifeless. In order that a day of life be considered a "living" day, it is necessary for one to infuse that day with life by doing something positive and good.

Shlomo *HaMelech* says in *Mishlei* 10:27, *V'yiraas Hashem tosif yamim*, "And the fear of G-d adds days," meaning that on a day in which a person acts positively, he injects that day with life. In contrast, *u'shenos reshaim tiktzarenah*, "the years of the wicked will be shortened," meaning that even if a wicked person has a lengthy stay on this world, it will ultimately be shortened, because his many days are rendered incomplete.

Avraham was *ba ba'yamim*, with each day being added as a day of life infused with his many positive activities. His life was full, because every day was well-lived. We wonder why it is only concerning Avraham that emphasis is placed upon his "days," Was he any different than any of the other Patriarchs whose lives were all infused with daily goodness? **Horav Yisrael Chaim Prager, zl**, *Mashgiach Ruchani* of *Yeshivas Novominsk*, explains that, concerning the counting of days, Avraham was truly different from the others. He quotes the *Midrash Rabbah*, "Rabbi Nechemiah says, *Lech Lecha*, 'Go to yourself,' is actually a command concerning the 'goings,' (Thus the *lecha*, yourself, is translated as 'go.' The *pasuk* would be read as *lech, lech* – 'go twice'). This is a reference to two commands: one from Aram Naharaim/ Aram Nachor (which was actually Uhr Kasdim, where Avraham was thrown into the fiery cauldron); the second refers to the five years which Avraham spent in Charan following the *Bris Bein HaBesarim*, the Covenant of the Parts (which was essentially when Avraham had his seminal dialogue with Hashem concerning his and his descendants future)."

Chazal teach us that Hashem directed Avraham to leave Aram Naharaim, but instructed him to tarry in Charan for five years, after which he went to *Eretz Yisrael* at the age of seventy-five. The *Midrash* uses a vernacular in describing Avraham's trip from Charan to *Eretz Yisrael* as: *She'hifricho mi Bein HaBesarim v'havio l'Charan*, "He (Hashem) flew him from *Bein HaBesarim* and brought him to Charan." Why "fly" him? *Chazal* explain that, following the Covenant, Avraham expressed concern for the earlier years of his life, when he had participated in the "family" worship

that had prevailed in his home. Hashem made the sins of Avraham's youth disappear, sort of "fly away." This is what is meant when *Chazal* say that Hashem flew Avraham to *Eretz Yisrael*.

We see from the *Midrash* that our Patriarch was very anxious concerning his past, the earlier years of his life when his "days" were far from perfect. Therefore, the Torah makes a point of underscoring Avraham's length of days, that each and every one achieved perfection. Once he committed his belief to Hashem, his past was expunged and his days cleansed, so that all of his one hundred and seventy-five years were considered to be pristine and complete.

This *Midrash* is an eye-opener. Many recently-returned *baalei teshuva* worry about their less than perfect pasts. Are they to be ignored? Does one walk around with a life-long guilt trip just because he was not born into an observant family? Avraham *Avinu* had similar concerns, which Hashem allayed. While we are not Avraham *Avinu*, sincerity does go a long way. If the present is stable, one should have very little to worry about the past. It is only when one hinges on the past, with it returning to haunt him every time the present does not reach his expectations, that one must be concerned – not only about the past; apparently, his present is shaky as well.