

Sarai said to Avram, “The outrage against me is due to You!” (16:5)

A perfunctory reading of the *pesukim*, which details Sarah *Imeinu's* relinquishing her maidservant, Hagar, to Avraham *Avinu* for the purpose of establishing posterity, followed by her dismissing Hagar from her home, when her insolence became too much to overlook, is misguided. So much depth is contained in these *parshiyos*, with every action of the *Avos* and *Imahos*, Patriarchs and Matriarchs, steeped in the highest esoteric meanings and secrets, that one is impelled to study every word, every lesson, every nuance, in order to simply scratch the surface of the narrative.

Let us focus on one lesson as seen through the eyes of *Horav Tzvi Kushelevsky, Shlita*. Sarah saw that having her own biological offspring was not likely to become a reality. Thus, she gave Hagar to Avraham for the purpose of producing a child. That child was Yishmael. When Sarah saw that her esteem was diminished in Hagar's eyes, she decided that the time for Hagar's tenure as her maidservant had come to an abrupt end. She terminated Hagar and complained to Avraham, demanding justice for herself. It is difficult to accept that Sarah was so obsessed with demanding her maidservant's honor that she would ask her to leave because of it.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that this is absolutely not true. Sarah's objective was noble, her intentions laudatory. She was attempting to save this child's (who would eventually be born to Hagar) identity, and, thus, her husband's progeny. She was acutely aware that Hashem had promised Avraham descendants, and that these descendants would come through her. Only then would these descendants be called *zera Avraham*, because they would perpetuate his legacy.

But Sarah could not have a child. There are two ways of “begetting” children: one is to bear a child; the other way is to raise a child. It was Sarah's hope that the child born to Avraham and Hagar would be raised by Sarah and infused with her *middos* and spiritual ascendance. To achieve this, it was crucial that Hagar, who would be the child's biological mother, would realize, acknowledge and appreciate the need for Sarah to raise her child. Hagar might have been a decent woman, but Sarah was a queen, an aristocrat. She was better suited for this task.

Once it became apparent that Hagar had lost her respect for Sarah and was no longer subservient to her, the plan for Sarah to successfully imbue Hagar's child with her refined *middos*, character traits, and fear of G-d was no longer tenable. As such, this child would not be called Avraham's child. It was necessary to demand the honor of her husband in order to retain his child.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* views this incident as the Torah's first lesson in parenting. Welcoming a child into the world is just the beginning of the educational process. The connection between parent and child is what concretizes continuity from one generation to the next, thereby establishing the parents' enduring legacy. This can only occur when children are inculcated with the correct, upstanding and genuine values that are part and parcel of a Torah education. Without this

connection and the instilling of values, one might end up with a Yishmael.