

## "And it was the life of Sarah." (23:1)

The *pasuk* in *Koheles 1:5* states, "And the sun rises and the sun sets". The simple meaning of this phrase emphasizes that it is the monotonous, routine course followed by the sun which ensures the orderly continuity of life on the earth. The *Midrash*, however, perceives deeper meaning in this phrase. It states that this verse uses the rising and setting of the sun to symbolically teach us that before the "sun" of one righteous individual is permitted to set, the "sun" of another righteous individual rises. For example, before Sarah passed on, Rivkah was born. This *Midrashic* statement is puzzling. It seems that in previous generations there were more and greater *tzaddikim*. Can we not expect as large a number of *tzaddikim* today who are on a comparable level with those of past generations? We may suggest that in every generation Hashem places pure souls on earth who have the potential to reach spiritual heights equivalent to those reached by our Patriarchs.

Due to the negative influences of our society, however, we lack a perception of the value of a proper *Torah* education. This prevents these souls from achieving their potential. Where are the mothers such as Chana, who brought her son, Shmuel *Ha'Navi*, at a young tender age to the Sanctuary so that he might devote his life to Hashem's service? In previous generations, these pure souls reached their potential because of the *mesiras nefesh* (self-sacrifice) and the devotion of righteous mothers and fathers who viewed *Torah* as the only value system. The greatest source of joy in the lives of these people was to see their son develop into a great *Torah* scholar. If we lack *tzaddikim* in our generation, it may be due to an inability on the part of society to cultivate those young, perfect souls.