

"And Sarah's life was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years." (23:1)

The *Midrash* cites an ambiguous statement attributed to Rabbi Akiva. Noticing his students dozing during a lesson, he asked, "How did Esther come to rule over 127 provinces? Let the 'daughter' of Sarah who lived 127 years come and rule over 127 provinces!" Obviously, the profound message of this statement was meant to arouse his sleepy audience. What was the underlying message?

The *Chidushei Ha'Rim* explains that Rabbi Akiva wished to teach his students the value of time. Esther *Ha'malkah* merited to reign over an entire province for each year during which her ancestor, Sarah, devoted herself to spiritual endeavor. Each province encompassed many districts and neighborhoods; each neighborhood contained many streets. In order to govern each street of a given province, Sarah *Imeinu* would have had to utilize every minute of her precious time. Her effectiveness in each community was commensurate to the time she had spent in spiritual devotion. Thus, Rabbi Akiva's students were admonished for sleeping away the valuable time which represented their opportunity for spiritual development. Esther reigned over all of the provinces because Sarah was completely devoted all of the time!