

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

The final phrase of this *pasuk*, "*the years of Sarah's life*," seems superfluous. The commentators suggest a number of explanations for this apparent redundancy. *Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, z.l.*, offers a novel explanation which is noteworthy. The *Midrash* states that the *Satan* frightened Sarah to death with images of the *Akeidah*. The shock of the sacrifice of her only child was too much for this elderly mother to bear.

The *Midrash* seems to imply that Sarah would have continued to live had she remained unaware of the *Akeidah*. This, however, would have been a great *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name, since it would have belittled Sarah's level of *emunah* in the Almighty. Consequently, the *Torah* reiterates the phrase, "*the years of Sarah's life*," in order to teach us that these are the exact number of years originally allotted to Sarah *Imeinu*. She was destined to live one hundred and twenty seven years. The *Satan*, however, used the pretext of the *Akeidah* as a means to shorten her life.

Often after a person passes on, we question the obvious: What could we have done differently that would have effected a more positive outcome? We try to place the onus of guilt for a person's premature demise upon any available source. We blame ourselves for things we could have and should have done. Although it is natural, this feeling definitely does not reflect the *Torah* orientation.

This writer once heard a *Midrash* which is appropriate to consider. When the *Malach Ha'Ma'ves*, Angel of Death, was created, he complained bitterly to Hashem regarding his role. He did not want to be the angel whom everyone would curse, "Why should I be designated as the 'evil' angel whose mission it is to carry out this most odious task?" Hashem responded to the *Malach Ha'Ma'ves*, telling him, "Do not be concerned, for you will never be blamed. People will always fault an accident or illness as the cause of death. They will never reflect upon the actual cause; the *Malach Ha'Ma'ves*." Regrettably, we all reflect the same sentiment. We fail to recognize that there is a *Ribbono Shel Olam* who directs every single aspect of this world. He is the one to whom we should be *mispalel*, pray, in the hope that whatever decree He has ordered might be averted.