



# Ohr Somayach Light Lines

Published by OHR SOMAYACH INTERNATIONAL • Israel

27 Cheshvan 5760 • November 6, 1999 • Parshat Chayei Sara • No. 59

## Light Insight

### *Filled to the Brim*

*“And these are the days of the years of the life of Abraham which he lived...”*  
(Genesis 27:7)

Some people’s days are as full as years, while the years of others could be packed into days.

In a certain village, the graveyard seemed to contain only tragically young occupants. On one gravestone the age read ‘Twenty years and fifty days,’ on another ‘Thirty years and twenty days,’ and so forth. All who entered the graveyard were astonished. Why was it that these people had died so tragically young? It turned out in this particular village, the custom was to inscribe on the gravestones only the number of years and days which had been used totally to their full potential. It was for this reason that even those who had lived to a

ripe old age, had, in terms of the utilization of their lives, died ‘tragically young.’

When the Torah records the life of Abraham, it says “these are the days of the years...” It would have been sufficient either to say “these are the days,” or “these are the years.” The seeming redundancy is to teach us that not a day in the life of Abraham our Forefather was lived at less than its maximum potential. Every year was filled to the brim with its days.

### *Youth and the Young*

*“Sarah’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years.”* (Genesis 23:1)

“Youth is wasted on the young,” runs the old adage. When a person is young they are blessed with alacrity of mind and body, but they are also beset by the insecurities of youth and its immaturity.

When a person grows older, experience brings a perspective to life which can lead to wisdom. However, the strength of an older person’s physical frame is not what it was in their youth.

Abraham’s wife Sarah, however, was blessed with total emotional and spiritual maturity as a girl, and even as an old woman she retained her physical stamina and agility of mind.

“Sarah’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years.” The verse seems to use the word “years” in a redundant fashion. More economically, the Torah could have written “Sarah’s lifetime was one hundred and twenty seven years.” Rashi tells us that the repetition of the word “years” is to convey that each phase in Sarah’s life was equal. When she was one hundred, she was as if she was still twenty; meaning, when she was one hundred she still had all the advantages of youth. And even when she was twenty, she had the wisdom of an aged person.

*The Ohr Somayach International  
Twenty Seventh Anniversary Dinner  
Wednesday, November 17, 1999  
at the Pierre Hotel, New York*

*For reservations contact Ohr Somayach International  
at 718-677-6200 or 888-647-5666*

*Honoring*

*— Judy & Paul Konigsberg  
— Barbara & Paul Seidenberg*

*Peter Madoff — Seymour W. Zises  
Dinner Chairmen*

## ETHICS of the FATHERS

### *Father, Son and Brother*

*“Be extremely respectful to your superior, pleasant towards your inferior and receive every man with joy.”*

In the occurrence of normal human interaction, our encounters can be divided up into three groups: We interact with others who are considered of a “higher status,” for example an employer, a public

official, or an elder; of a “lower status,” such as a subordinate or a youth; or a peer, of a roughly equal status. To be beloved by all, one must remember the following advice of our Sages:

- Treat a superior with the respect he deserves and he will love you like a son.
- Treat an inferior with courtesy and dignity, and he will love you like a father.
- Welcome your peer with joy and he will love you like a brother.

---

## Response Line

---

*Benjamin Altman wrote:*

*I was told about some kind of custom people have regarding eating the ends of bread. The basic reasoning being that eating the end causes forgetfulness. I found no source for this and when I asked someone about this he showed me a footnote in a book that quoted a renowned rabbi as saying that he has always done it (avoided eating the ends) but that there is no clear source for it. So, should one avoid eating ends of bread?*

Dear Benjamin,

The Talmud lists ten things which are detrimental to one’s understanding of the Torah. One of them is eating bread not completely baked. This can be understood as follows:

Someone who rushes to eat the bread before it is fully baked will approach Torah study with the same lack of patience. He’ll rush through each subject without taking time to clarify the details and reasons. The result will be an unsatisfying, ‘half-baked’ grasp of the matter.

poor to afford their own oven, and townspeople would bring their dough to a large communal oven to bake. In order to conserve space, they placed the doughs end to end, and often the bread stuck together. As a result the end part was not well-baked and therefore not eaten.

Bakeries today often bake in the same way, and you can see where the loaves were pulled apart. It would follow, then, that the side should not be eaten. The reality is that both the ends and the sides are almost always completely baked, and there’s no need to protest if someone eats them.

*Jeff Marder wrote:*

*Recently I cleaned out the garage, and I found lumber that was once used to build our Sukkah. I no longer use this wood. May I burn these boards?*

Dear Jeff,

In general, ‘mitzvah objects’ may be disposed of when you’re done with them. Nevertheless, they

The custom to avoid bread-ends apparently started in the days when people were too

should be treated with dignity — they shouldn’t be stepped on or thrown in the garbage.

Burning, however, is not considered a disgrace to a mitzvah. So burning *sukkah* wood — the walls and the roof — is a perfect way to dispose of it. Just be careful.

There are a number of exceptions to this rule — e.g., Torah scrolls, *tefillin* and *mezuzot*. They have special sanctity and should not be burned. Rather they should be buried.

Ideally, once you use an object for a mitzvah you should try to use it for another mitzvah. So use your *sukkah* wood to burn your *chametz*.

Here’s a true story that’s hard to imagine happening anywhere else but in Israel. I once passed a garbage truck moving slowly down the street. The garbage man standing in back of the truck was trying to get my attention. I noticed he was holding something long and black in his outstretched arm, and he was motioning for me to take it. “Burnt spaghetti?” I wondered. I reached out and took it. It was a *tefillin* strap. “This shouldn’t be in the garbage,” said the garbage man. “You’ll know what to do with it...”