

Chasing Youth

"And the years of Sara's life were a hundred years and twenty years and seven years"



Gen. 23: 1-2

And the years of Sara's life were a hundred years and twenty years and seven years old; these were the years of the life of Sara. And Sara died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hebron in the land of Canaan and Abraham came to mourn for Sara, and to weep for her.

Rashi (Gen. 23:1)

And the years of Sara's life were a hundred years and twenty years and seven years--The reason the word "years" is written after every number is to inform you that every number has its own message. When Sara was 100 years-old, she was like a 27-year-old regarding sin, just like a person of 20 has not sinned-- for one is not liable for punishment (by the Heavenly court below the age of twenty)—likewise when she 100-years-old she was without sin. And when she was twenty, she was like a seven-year-old with regard to beauty.

Likkutei Sichot vol 5, p. 93

Sara retained the youthful beauty that she had regained before conceiving Isaac until her last days and she died completely righteous untainted by sin. The body is subject to the effects of time and environment. The soul, on the other hand, being a G-dly entity is immune to this. In Sara's case, the energy of her soul so totally permeated her body that it, like her soul, became timeless. Her beauty remained unmarred, immune to life's tribulations and the passage of time. The perfection of her physical beauty was a manifestation of her spiritual perfection.

Rashi (Gen. 23:1)

These were the years of the life of Sara—Each of her years were consistently perfect and equal in righteousness.

Talmud (Baba Kama 97b)

The coin of Abraham had the images of an old man and woman on one side and the images of a young boy and girl on the other side.

Midrash Rabba, Lech Lecha

When G-d promised Abraham, 'Ve'agadla shemecha' (Gen. 12:2). that He would make Abraham's name great, this means that Abraham would become famous and a coin would be minted in his honor.

Eitz Yosef

The young boy and girl on the coin represented Abraham and Sara who miraculously experienced renewed youthfulness.

Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik (*Abraham's Journey* p.184-199)

Sara was at one and the same time seven, twenty and a hundred years old. She was simultaneously very old and very young, representing the aged the adult, and the child...Sara at twenty was mature and fully developed both intellectually and emotionally; she was energetic bold and daring. Yet the adult in Sara did not destroy the child. Maturity did not do away with childhood. In the deep recesses of her personality, no matter how developed, no matter how capable and brilliant, no matter how attractive and ingenious, always resided an innocent child. The adult might have reached the highest peak of intellectual greatness or growth...yet all that did not interfere with the secret presence of a child in Sara. Notwithstanding the maturation of her natural wisdom, she retained within her the young girl. She acted like a mature, wise, experience-rich old woman, but in times of need and crisis the young, bold, courageous girl came to the fore and took over.

Abraham was an intellectual giant, a genius of frightening stature. His judgment was mature and ripe. He was not a child, yet he was capable of transforming himself into a child and accepting the Almighty's command to suspend his judgment and his humanity to do something inhuman [the sacrifice of Isaac, when G-d so commanded].

Kiddushin 32b

Zakein, elder, hints to *ze kana chochma*, this one has acquired wisdom.

Sara's Names

	YOUTH:	ELDER:
Represents:	newness, inquisitiveness and curiosity	passage of time, wisdom gained through life's experiences, opportunities lost
Qualities:	unconditional commitment, trust, exposure of one's vulnerability, putting aside one's independence, willingness to try new, defy the regular path without thought of consequence	independent thinking, set ways, confidence in one's abilities to understand and discriminate, ability to conceptualize and infer
Spiritual work using these qualities:	Faith=self negation, suspension of judgement, surrender of body and mind	Torah study=intellectual toil and growth, expand capacity for analyzing, judging and inferring

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זה קנה חכמה

Zaken= Elder=This One Acquired Wisdom

Let's Review:



- The Torah repeats the word "years" in the phrase that Sara was 100 years, 20 years and 7 years to equate Sara's perfection in all three of these distinct periods of her life. Rashi explains that when she was 100 she was sinless as at 20 and as beautiful as a 7-year-old.
- Sara's ability to unite her body and soul to work in total harmony had a lasting effect on her body and she retained her youthful beauty regained before Yitzchak, Isaac's conception.
- Sara's every achievement built upon and perfected her previous accomplishment. In this way her all her years were used to prepare her for the next goal and thus all became equally perfect.
- Sara and Abraham were able to meld the benefits of youth and maturity. The adult in them never destroyed the child.
- The adult part of them grew in wisdom, confidence and independent thinking. The youth in them retained their youthful wonder of this world and their unshakable faith in fulfilling the will of their Creator even when they couldn't comprehend it.

Something to Think About:

How do you infuse youthful wonder into your mature and wise outlook?

What role does faith play in your life?

How important is continuous personal growth to you?

Video: www.chabad.org/2111872