

## Dvar Torah for Parashat Haye Sarah 5773

by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Dear Friends,

Please enjoy the following Dvar Torah. As always I welcome your comments and thoughts.

We understand a man's role in Jewish life – a man is obligated to engage in regular Talmud Torah (Torah study) and Tefillah B'tzibur (communal Tefillah) as well as a wide variety of other Mitzvot. A woman's role in Jewish life, however, is a bit challenging to pinpoint and identify. A beautiful Rashi (Bereishit 24:67) sheds much light on this very important issue.

Rashi (citing Hazal, Bereishit Rabbah 60:17) notes that when Rivkah Imeinu married Yitzhak Avinu and entered the family home, three phenomena returned that were missing since Sarah Imeinu's departure from this world. Rashi states: "Throughout Sarah's life there was a candle lit from Erev Shabbat to the next Erev Shabbat, there was Bracha in the dough and a cloud was suspended on the top of the family tent. This terminated when Sarah died and returned when Rivkah entered the home".

What is the significance of the candle, dough and cloud? In order to understand we must look elsewhere in the Torah for where these three items appear together. A direct parallel exists in the context of the Beit HaMikdash. In the Kodesh (also known as the "Heichal") there are three items, the Menorah, the Shulhan (table) upon which are placed the special breads known as Lehem HaPanim and a small Mizbei'ach upon which the Ketoret (incense) is offered. The Ketoret is described as creating a cloud (Anan Haketoret, Vayikra 16:13). Thus the candle, bread and cloud of Sarah and Rivkah parallel the Menorah, Shulhan and Ketoret of the Beit Hamikdash.

The essence of the Beit Hamikdash as stated in the Ramban's introduction to Parashat Terumah is a Makom HaShechinah, a place for Hashem to "reside", in other words a permanent Har Sinai. Accordingly, the Midrash cited by Rashi teaches the extraordinary lesson that Sarah and Rivkah transformed their tent into a Makom HaShechinah, similar to the Beit HaMikdash. It is remarkable that in the absence of Sarah Imeinu, Avraham Avinu and Yitzhak Avinu were incapable of elevating their homes into a Makom HaShechinah. Rashi/Hazal teach that a man, no matter how righteous he is, cannot create the special place we know as a Jewish home, a place where Hashem becomes part of our family. It takes a Jewish woman to add that intangible element to our homes to create that special glow and warmth of Shabbat, Yom Tov and even everyday.

Even if men regularly study Torah and attend Tefillah B'Tzibur, they are simply incapable of transforming a Jewish home into a Makom Hashechinah, an abode for Hashem. We men owe a special Hakarat HaTov to our wives, daughters, mothers, sisters, grandmothers and aunts who elevate our homes into a special place of spirituality. May we all merit, as did Yitzhak and Rivkah, to witness the continuation of the tradition

from Sarah Imeinu and Rivkah Imeinu and experience the transformation of our homes into a Makom Hashechinah.

Warmest Regards,  
Rabbi Jachter