

# Cincinnati Torah תורה מסיני

Vol. IV, No. V

**Chayei Sarah**

BASED ON OHR GEDALYAHU AND TORAS HAPARASHA

## “Now, Just a Moment!”

THERE WAS ONCE A VERY ORDINARY TOWN, where very ordinary people lived and went about their lives in a very ordinary manner. They were born very ordinary and lived very ordinary lifespans—some expired younger, some expired older, but all in all, there was nothing extraordinary about how long they lived, in either direction.

So you can imagine a visitor’s surprise one day, when he passed through the cemetery and he noticed that each epitaph had a bizarre description.

HERE LIES CHAIM YANKEL  
WHO LIVED FOR 42 YEARS,  
6 MONTHS, AND 13 DAYS

HERE LIES SHPRINTZA RAIZEL  
WHO LIVED FOR 38 YEARS,  
1 MONTH, AND 29 DAYS

HERE LIES CHAYA HENYA  
WHO LIVED FOR 46 YEARS,  
3 MONTHS, AND A DAY

HERE LIES ARYEH LEIB  
WHO LIVED FOR 29 YEARS,  
11 MONTHS AND 7 DAYS

And on and on it went.

The visitor was left scratching his head. Why did the inscriptions need to list how long each person lived, and in such detail?

The most curious thing about it was that this was such a very ordinary town. There were plenty of folks here who were living to old age! Was there some

epidemic that had swept through the town, cutting people down in the prime of their lives?

One of the very ordinary town elders explained it to him.

In this very ordinary town they had a very unusual custom. From the day they were born, they would keep track of all the minutes that they spent serving Hashem. Every moment that they spent in prayer, in study, in doing good deeds, would be duly recorded.

When a person passed away, their figures would be tallied up so that they could know how long this person had actually lived—not existed, but actually *lived*. For only in moments spent performing the holy service of Hashem is a person truly “living!”

Hence, “Here lies Chaim Yankel, who lived for 42 years, six months, and thirteen days,” and so on.

This was, in fact, a very unusual town!

Avraham was old, coming on in his days... (24:1)

“Hashem knows the days of the complete, and their inheritance will be forever” (T’hillim 37:18), for Avraham was coming to Him with all of his days. (Midrash)

This is in contrast with most people who pass though—and pass from—this world, not all of whose time is spent in

the service of Hashem. Even though they may have lived seventy or eighty years, in reality they have only *lived* a fraction of the time allotted to them. The rest of their years fall under the description “his days pass by like a shadow” (T’hillim 144:4). There is really nothing to show for them, nor is there any “inheritance [that] will be forever” attached to their days.

On the other hand, we have both Avraham and Sarah. Avraham, as we’ve seen, was coming to Hashem with all of his days. And Sarah?

Rabbi Akiva once noticed his students dozing off. So he awakened them with the following: “What did Queen Esther see [in her merit] that she should rule over 127 provinces? [Here’s what she saw:] Let Esther, who was [a descendant] of Sarah, who lived 127 years, rule over 127 provinces. (Midrash Rabbah 58:3)

Why did Rabbi Akiva choose this, of all Torah tidbits, to snap his students to attention? What message lay within?

Furthermore, what is the connection between these two seemingly unrelated things—Sarah’s years and Esther’s provinces?

*Chidushei haRim* finds a deep message in this midrash.

Esther ruled over a kingdom made up of 127 provinces. Each province was made up of many smaller districts. Each district was made up of cities and towns. Each city and town was made up of neighborhoods. Each neighborhood had many streets and alleyways, on

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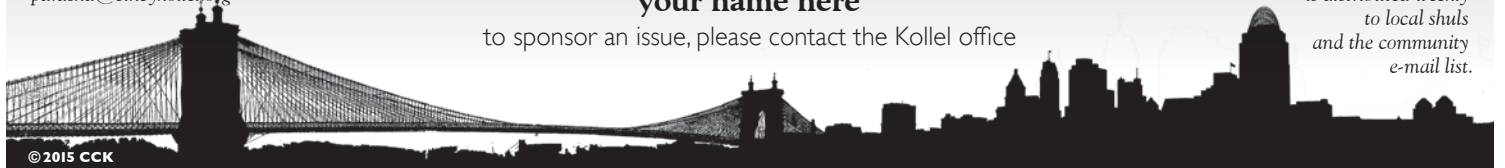
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**“Now, Just a Moment!”** CONT'D

which there were multiple courtyards. Each courtyard was surrounded by a few houses. Esther’s huge kingdom was actually an aggregate of many, many houses.

Had just one of those houses declared independence, she would not have ruled over the complete kingdom.

So why did she merit to rule over a complete kingdom? Because her matriarch, Sarah, had ruled over her life in a complete manner. Her lifetime of 127 years was completely devoted to Hashem. She lived each year—each month, each week, each day, each hour, each minute—utterly focused on her holy task. And had even a minute been wasted, the Torah could not claim that she lived 127 years!

But the Torah does declare:


Sarah’s life was, one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years; this was Sarah’s lifetime. (23:1)

Rabbi Akiva’s message to his sleepy pupils was that they shouldn’t think that if they doze off for just a moment it’s no big deal—that, after all, what is a moment in the big scheme of things? Life is long!

No! Each moment is tremendously precious! A person’s lifetime is made up of many, many such “insignificant” moments, and once a moment is squandered, that lifetime is, by definition, cut short.

“Here lies Chaya Henya, who lived for 46 years, three months, and a day.”

“Here lies Aryeh Leib, who lived for 29 years, eleven months and seven days.”

This was, actually, a very ordinary town... 

# At the Kollel

## Chavrusos are available

for private and group learning—  
speak to Rabbi Chaim Heinemann!

weekdays: noon–1  
Sunday–Thursday: 8–9:45

## Minyanim for Standard Time

### Shacharis

Sunday .....8:15 AM  
Monday–Friday .....7:20 AM

### Mincha

Sunday *thru January* .....1:15 PM  
Mon.–Thurs. *thru January* .....2:35 PM  
Sunday–Thurs., *Feb.–Mar.* .....5:45 PM  
Shabbos .....2:45 PM

### Ma’ariv

#### In the Beis Midrash:

Sunday–Wednesday .....9:45 PM  
Thursday .....10 PM

## Every Day

### “Dirshu” Gemara Shiur

(Maseches B’choros)  
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....  
Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM  
Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

### Kollel Yisgaber K’ari (amud-a-day of Mishnah B’rurah)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann .....  
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

### Kitzur Shuchan Aruch

Live video conference!  
Rabbi Dani Schon.....  
Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

### Daf Yomi

Rabbi Meir Minster.....  
Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM  
Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

### Nightly Halacha Chabura

Rabbi Dani Schon  
& Binyamin Teitelbaum .....  
Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

## Sunday *Free brunch!*

### America Runs on Torah

(Jewish Law & Parasha)  
Rabbi Dani Schon  
and Yisroel Kaufman..... 10 AM  
*Grand Deluxe breakfast served*

### Shivti

(Self-contained learning, geared  
toward practical halacha) 10–noon A

## Tuesday

### Partners in Torah at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

## Wednesday

### Torah Treasures for Seniors at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 10:30–11:15 AM





### Downtown Lunch-n- Learn at Strauss & Troy

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 12–1 PM

## Thursday

### Halacha based on the parasha

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM  
*Homemade refreshments served.*

**KEY:**  Beginners  
 Intermediate  
 Advanced  
 for men and women