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### FEMININE POWER

**T**HE GOAL OF CREATION IS THAT THIS PHYSICAL, PRACTICAL world should become a dwelling for the Divine, a domain in which real human beings express holiness in their daily lives. Jewish teaching tells us that women and girls have special power and responsibility in this process. The Sedra<sup>1</sup> speaks of two special women: Sarah and Rebecca.

The traditional name of the Sedra is “The Life of Sarah”. Although she passes away at the very beginning of the Sedra, the name “Life of Sarah” indicates that in some sense she continues to live. Her body was buried in Hebron, but the effect of her goodness and holiness did not cease<sup>2</sup>. She was equal with Abraham as founder of the Jewish people.

In fact, earlier in the Torah we learn that G-d instructed Abraham to follow Sarah’s advice even though this went contrary to his own feelings<sup>3</sup>. She was a full partner in the task to spread the idea that G-d is the Creator of the Universe and that G-d is One. While Abraham would teach men these profoundly spiritual ideas, Sarah would impart them to women<sup>4</sup>.

The Sages<sup>5</sup> tell us that Sarah had a deep spiritual power. Each week she would light a flame in honour of Shabbat, as women today light Shabbat candles. In a mysterious way, Sarah’s flame continued to burn, and gave light throughout the week. When she made dough

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for bread, there was a blessing of unexpected increase. Further, an unusual cloud over her tent, giving shade from the hot sun, hinted also at her feminine modesty and purity<sup>6</sup>. It is not surprising that millions of women through the ages have carried her name. Sarah lives in each one, and in every Jewish girl and woman.

The Sedra begins with Sarah and continues with the account of locating a suitable wife for her only offspring, Isaac. This was Rebecca. In the description of this young girl we see again an example of spiritual strength.

Rebecca was a member of the wider family of Abraham and Sarah. However, her parents, like those of Abraham, were idol worshippers. Rebecca saw the folly of this. She jumped at the chance to marry Isaac, despite her parents' attempt to slow down the proceedings. She would join the special clan of Abraham and Sarah, which would eventually become the Jewish people.

The Torah describes how she first saw her future husband Isaac. At that moment he was standing in solitary, meditative prayer. Later, when she joined him as his wife, moving into his tent, she too acquired the spiritual power that Sarah had shown. She too lit a flame for Shabbat, and it would last all week.

In fact, every Jewish woman and girl has a similar power. Each one has a unique role to play in making the world a dwelling for the Divine. That moment on Friday afternoon, before sunset, when the Shabbat candles are lit, reveals this potential. The flame may not be visible all week long, like that of Sarah and Rebecca, yet it has comparable effect. Every Jewish girl, from three years old, lights one candle, saying the blessing, while a married woman lights two. The Zohar tells us that these Shabbat candles bring peace to the world. Thus spiritual feminine energy is harnessed in order to bring us all closer to the goal of Creation.

1. Gen.23:1-25:18. 2. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p.146.  
3. Gen. 21:12. 4. See Rashi to Gen. 12:5. 5. See Rashi to Gen.24:67. 6. The Sages see the cloud as representing the waters of the Mikveh.

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*SEDRA CHAYEI SARA*

***JUST HOW FAST***

"Welcome" Ben said as he showed of his bedroom to his friend Michael, who had come to stay at his home for Shabbat.

"Hmm" Michael said as he looked around.

Ben's mother had been very happy that, at least for once, Ben's bedroom had been tidied up by Ben himself.

"Here is my new computer" Ben said proudly. "It has 4 Gig RAM and 500 Gig hard drive".

"It must be pretty fast" Michael said. "I bet you don't have to wait long for things to start up when you turn it on".

"My parents tell me that only twenty years ago most people didn't have a computer in their house" Michael said, "and today almost everyone has one and they are getting faster and faster".

"I wonder what people did on a Sunday afternoon," Ben said, "how was it back then without Pentium Three or Inter-Core processors?"

"Well" Michael said "if you think that's bad, let's go back one hundred years when most people didn't have cars and there were no planes".

“People must have been kind of stuck in one place” Ben said “they had no idea that things could be moving so quickly in just a few years”.

“But you know,” Michael said “not everything went so slow”.

“Why do you say that?” asked Ben.

“This week’s Sedra speaks about how Abraham’s right hand man Eliezer managed to make a trip that would normally take many days and he did it in just one day” Michael said.

“How did he do that?” asked Michael.

“He was going to find a wife for Isaac. Rashi’s commentary says that G-d helped him travel very fast. It was a kind of miracle. He set out on the journey, and then, suddenly, he had arrived.”

“So you mean he had a million Gig RAM journey”, said Michael.

“Yes,” said Ben. “And because of that quick journey, he was more quickly able to find Rebecca who would be a wife for Isaac.”

“I suppose” Michael said “the Gigs and RAMS and cars and planes are good things because they can help us do good things quicker, like Eliezer travelling to find a wife for Isaac”.

“Yes,” said Ben, “they are like our miracles today, helping us do good things”.

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