

Sarah Imanu was called by Chazal one of the four most beautiful women who ever lived.

The Parsha opens when HASHEM tells Avram to leave Charan and go to the land of Canaan. When Avram arrives, there is a famine in the land and he is forced to go down to Egypt. Along the way, he notices his wife and says: "Behold, now I know that you are a beautiful woman".

Rashi, in the name of the Medrash, explains that up until this point Avrohom Avinu didn't notice his wife's physical appearance. Because they were traveling, the situation caused him to become aware of it, and he now recognized that she was a beautiful woman.

This Rashi is difficult to understand since we know that HASHEM gave beauty to women so that they find favor in their husbands' eyes. To allow a couple to bond together as one unit, HASHEM created many features. One of these is a woman's beauty -- a husband notices her appearance, it enters his heart, and increases the love and attraction he feels towards to her. In fact, a man is not allowed to marry a woman without first seeing her, for "when he sees her, she may be ugly in his eyes." The Torah approach to a successful marriage is not to ignore the physical, but rather to understand that it is a tool to be used for greater devotion and attachment of husband to wife. So how is it that Avrohom wasn't even aware of whether his wife was attractive or not?

The answer to this question seems to be that because of the great level of spirituality they were both on, matters of physi-

The Greatness of the Avos

ויהי כאשר הקריב לבוא מצרימה
ויאמר אל שרי אשתו הנה נא
ידעתי כי אשה יפת מראה את:
ספר בראשית פרק יב

יא הנה נא ידעתי - מ"א עד עכשיו
לא הכיר בה מתוך צניעות שבשניהם
ועכשיו הכיר בה ע"י מעשה
רש"י על בראשית פרק יב פסוק יא

Now I know- The Medrash teaches us that till now he didn't recognize her because of the modesty of both of them. Now, through an action, he recognized her.

cal beauty were irrelevant. Apparently Avram was on the level of loving his wife Sari, totally and completely for her inner beauty- for who she was as a person. The external wouldn't have helped or hurt. If her physical beauty would have added a dimension to the love and devotion that he felt towards her, we have to assume that he would have used it as such. Rather, it was something that wouldn't have added to his already-powerful bond and attraction towards her.

What we see from this is an amazing illustration of the great spiritual planes the Avos were on. To Avrohom and Sarah, it wasn't that the physical took a back seat; it was irrelevant; it didn't weigh in at all. They lived on such a pure level that they bonded as a couple with a complete and utter devotion without any need of the physical drives that HASHEM put into mankind to create that bond.

A recent example of this concept is from the book, A Tzaddik in Our Times. Not long after Reb Aryeh Levin lost his wife, he was seen on Purim day holding a picture of her. Someone commented, "One isn't supposed to be sad on Purim." Reb Aryeh answered, "Holding this picture only brings me joy." And he went on to say, "The more that time passes, the less I remember what she looked like, yet the more that I remember who she was, and what she did."

It is important to remember that in our own lives and marriages, the physical elements are important. A wife should do her best to make herself attractive to her husband, and a husband should do his best to make himself attractive to his wife. These are tools that HASHEM has given us to help create a powerful attachment that withstands time and the travails of life. The end goal isn't the physical, but it is a key element and driving force in a successful marriage and Torah home.

For more on this topic please listen to Shmuz #99, "Men are From Mars."

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