



The Crowd Dozed Off while Rabbi Akiva Was Expounding Rabbi Akiva Aroused the People by Explaining the Fascinating Connection between Esther HaMalkah and Sarah Imeinu

This week's parsha is Chayei Sarah. It is with great pleasure that we will focus on an intriguing passage in the Midrash (B.R. 58, 3): **Once while Rabbi Akiva was sitting and lecturing, the audience (his students) was falling asleep. To arouse them, he said: How could Esther rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces? Rather, Esther, a descendant of Sarah who lived to one hundred and twenty-seven, would come to rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.** The commentaries struggle to explain why Rabbi Akiva chose to arouse his audience by presenting the connection between Sarah Imeinu, who lived 127 years, and Esther HaMalkah, who ruled over 127 provinces.

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by reviewing the opening passuk of this week's parsha (Bereishis 23, 1): **"ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים שני חיי שרה"—Sarah's lifetime spanned one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years; these were the years of Sarah's life.** In the following passuk, on the words **"לספור לשרה ולבכותה"**—**to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her**—Rashi comments: **Sarah's death is juxtaposed to Akeidas Yitzchak, because on account of the news of the Akeidah, that her son was prepared for slaughter and was nearly slaughtered, her soul left her, and she died.**

The commentaries find this baffling. After all, Sarah Imeinu was a consummate tzaddikah, as attested to by Rashi in the name of the Midrash: **When she was one hundred years old, she was like twenty years old with regards to sin; just like someone twenty years old is considered to be without sin, since she is not liable to punishment; so,**

too, (Sarah, when she was) one hundred years old was without sin. Furthermore, we learn from Rashi's comment on the passuk (ibid. 21, 12) that HKB"H instructed Avraham to heed whatever Sarah told him, because her level of nevuah was superior to his. Seen in this light, it seems unlikely that the neshamah of Sarah Imeinu would have left her suddenly due to her distress over the news of the Akeidah. She must have surely perceived via her "ruach hakodesh" that Avraham was merely complying with the instructions of HKB"H to bind Yitzchak.

Sensing this difficulty, the holy Maggid of Kozhnitz, zy"a, explains the matter differently in Avodas Yisrael. Due to her extreme level of kedushah, Sarah Imeinu longed to join her son Yitzchak in his "mesiras nefesh"—willingness to sacrifice himself to glorify the name of Heaven. So, just like Yitzchak allowed himself to be bound like a korban and placed atop the mizbeiach, HKB"H acquiesced to her strong desire and allowed her neshamah to fly away at the time of the Akeidah. This also concurs magnificently with the commentary of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. He points out that the parsha opens with the words **"ויהיו חיי שרה"**; it then specifies that her life spanned 127 years; then the passuk concludes by repeating that **"these were the years of Sarah's life."** He deduces from this sequence that Sarah had already completed and lived out the years that had been allotted to her by Heaven. The Akeidah was merely the incentive for her neshamah to leave her at that moment; and as we learn from the Avodas Yisrael, HKB"H fulfilled her wish to end her life by participating in her son's "mesiras nefesh."

**Avraham Sacrificed His Life for Torah She'b'chsav
Yitzchak Sacrificed His Life for Torah She'b'al Peh**

I would like to propose a fantastic explanation concerning Sarah Imeinu's burning desire to join her son's "mesiras nefesh" at the time of the Akeidah. Let us refer to a fascinating idea from the incredible teachings of the Chasam Sofer, zy"a, in Torah Moshe (Vayeira). From the perspective of Avraham Avinu, the ordeal of Akeidas Yitzchak could be categorized as Torah she'b'chsav, since he received his instructions directly from HKB"H (ibid. 22, 2): "קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת את יצחק: please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchak, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him up there as an olah-offering . . .

In stark contrast, from Yitzchak's perspective, the Akeidah could be categorized as Torah she'b'al peh. After all, he did not receive the directive directly from HKB"H but rather from his father, Avraham, who related it to him in the name of Hashem. Nevertheless, he complied with his father's directive, since his father was a navi and emissary of Hashem. As such, we can categorize Yitzchak's role as a willingness to sacrifice his life for the sake of Torah she'b'al peh—the teachings and guidelines implemented by Torah scholars in every generation. Here is a translation of his sacred words:

We can suggest that the force of Yitzchak surpassed that of Avraham. For, Avraham was a navi himself and heard (the command) directly from the mouth of HKB"H. Yitzchak, however, was willing to sacrifice his life, because he believed (heeded) his father, because he already had the status of a navi of Hashem. Therefore, he complied, even if it meant transgressing a precept of the Torah regarding slaughter before Hashem. Thus, it turns out that just like Avraham Avinu, a"h, supported the belief in Torah she'b'chsav; similarly, Yitzchak Avinu supported the belief in Torah she'b'al peh, without questioning the words of prophets or sages.

It pleases me greatly to share with my esteemed readership a pertinent idea I found in the Chochmas HaTorah (Lech Lecha) authored by the brilliant Rabbi Shlomo Kluger, ztz"l. When Sarah was abducted and taken to Pharaoh, it says (ibid. 12, 17): "וינגע ה' את פרעה נגעים גדולים ואת ביתו על דבר: Hashem afflicted Pharaoh along with his

household with severe plagues because of the matter of Sarai, the wife of Avram. Our blessed sages expound in the Midrash (B.R. 41, 2):

"וּכְלֹ אֹתוֹ הַלֵּילָה הִיתָה שְׂרָה שְׂטוּחָה עַל פְּנֵיהָ וְאוֹמֵרֶת, רַבּוֹן הָעוֹלָמִים אֲבֵרָהֶם יֵצֵא בְּהַבְּטָחָה וְאֲנִי יֵצֵאתִי בְּאִמוּנָה; אֲבֵרָהֶם יֵצֵא חוּץ לְסִירָה וְאֲנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַסִּירָה. אָמַר לָהּ הַקַּב"ה, כֹּל מָה שְׂאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה בְּשִׁבְלֶךָ אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה, וְהַכֹּל אוֹמְרִים עַל דְּבַר שְׂרֵי אֶשֶׁת אֲבֵרָם."

That entire night, Sarah lay prone on her face saying (lamenting): Master of the Universe, Avraham left (his father's house in Charan) based on the promise (that You would make him into a great nation and would bless him). I, too, left with emunah (trusting and believing in what Avraham conveyed to me in G-d's name, even though I did not hear it directly). Avraham stands outside the prison, but I am inside the prison (with Pharaoh, against my will, like a prisoner). HKB"H said to her: Everything I am doing (the afflictions I am bringing on Pharaoh), I am doing for you. And everyone will say it is on account of Sarai, the wife of Avram (that I performed these miraculous feats).

Rabbi Shlomo Kluger expands on the chiddush of the Chasam Sofer presented above that vis-a-vis Avraham, Akeidas Yitzchak could be categorized as Torah she'b'chsav, while vis-a-vis Yitzchak, it could be categorized as Torah she'b'al peh. He says that the same can be said of Sarah Imeinu. She was not instructed directly by HKB"H to leave her home and was not promised directly that she would be the recipient of all the Berachos. She trusted what Avraham related to her in the name of Hashem; her actions were a form of Torah she'b'al peh. This is the significance of HKB"H's remark to Sarah at the end of the Midrash: "Everything I am doing, I am doing for you. And everyone will say it is on account of Sarai, the wife of Avram." He emphasized to her the greatness and power of her emunah, which is the greatness and power of Torah she'b'al peh.

Thus, we learn a phenomenal fact concerning the amazing relationship between Sarah Imeinu and Yitzchak Avinu. Avraham and Sarah merited giving birth to Yitzchak, defying the laws of nature, solely because they heeded Hashem's command to go from Charan to Eretz Yisrael. In that merit, HKB"H promised Avraham (ibid. 12, 2): "And I will make of you a great nation." In keeping with our current discussion,

Sarah's merit and virtue was that she trusted what she was told by Avraham, in the sense of Torah she'b'al peh. Likewise, Yitzchak, who was born in the merit of that emunah, his role at the Akeidah is categorized as Torah she'b'al peh, as we learned from the Chasam Sofer.

"הנה באהל" Alludes Magnificently to Torah She'b'al Peh

Along these lines, we can propose a fantastic interpretation related to the good tidings the malachim brought Avraham and Sarah regarding the birth of their son Yitzchak (ibid. 18, 9): "ויאמרו אליו איה שרה אשתך ויאמר הנה באהל, ויאמר שוב אשוב אליך": **"they asked him, 'Where is Sarah, your wife?' He replied, 'She is here in the tent.' And he said, 'I will surely return to you at this time next year, and behold, Sarah, your wife, will have a son.'** It is curious that the malachim initially inquire as to Sarah's whereabouts, and only after Avraham informs them that she is in the tent do they announce the birth of Yitzchak.

Let us propose an explanation based on our current discussion. As explained in the Midrash, Yitzchak was born in the merit of Avraham's emunah in the promise made to him by HKB"H that if he left Charan and went to Eretz Yisrael, He **"would make him into a great nation."** Therefore, before presenting their tidings, they inquired: **"Where is Sarah, your wife?"** They wished to ascertain her spiritual level: Does she have the same degree of emunah in the promise made by HKB"H that would merit the birth of Yitzchak?

Avraham wisely responded: **"הנה באהל"—she is here in the tent.** With these words Avraham alluded to the malachim that Sarah is associated with Torah she'b'al peh, which is comprised of 60 masechtos. We learn this from the exposition in the Midrash Rabbah on the passuk (Shir HaShirim 6, 8): **"ששים המה מלכות, אלו ששים מסכתות של הלכות"—"there are sixty queens," they are the sixty masechtos of halachos—i.e., sixty total masechtos of Mishnayos.** Explaining the Mishnayos, there are 36 masechtos of Gemara in Talmud Bavli. This is explained at length in the Responsa of Mahari Assad (O.C. 1). We find a source for this reckoning in the Derashos Chasam Sofer. Based on these numbers, he explains elegantly why the sages of the Talmud chose to conclude the Talmud Bavli with the following teaching (Niddah 73a): **תנא דבי אליהו כל השונה**

הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא, שנאמר הליכות עולם לו, אלו תקרי הליכות אלא הלכות. **The Academy of Eliyahu taught: He who studies Torah laws ("halachos") every day is assured that he will be in Olam HaBa, as it states (Chabakuk 3, 6): "The ways of the world are His"—do not read "ways" ("הליכות") but "laws" ("הלכות").** They expound on the passuk: **"הליכות עולם לו"—if a person completes all ל"ו (36) masechtos, he is rewarded with "the ways of the world,"** assuring him a place in Olam HaBa.

With this in mind, let us interpret Avraham Avinu's reply to the malachim. They inquired: **"Where is Sarah, your wife?"—wishing to ascertain the "madreigah"—the level—of her emunah in the promise and assurance HKB"H had made to Avraham: "I will make you into a great nation."** To which Avraham responded: **"הנה באהל"**. Now, the gematria of the word הנה is 60, alluding to the 60 masechtos that comprise Torah she'b'al peh. The gematria of the word אהל is 36, alluding to the 36 masechtos of Talmud Bavli. This teaches us that Sarah's level of emunah was greater than Avraham's. For, she did not hear the promise directly from HKB"H; she merely heard it from Avraham, who heard it directly from HKB"H. Hence, her emunah is categorized as Torah she'b'al peh.

Therefore, when the malach bringing the news of Yitzchak's birth understood that Sarah was on the exalted "madreigah" of Torah she'b'al peh, he delivered his message: **"I will surely return to you at this time next year, and behold, Sarah, your wife, will have a son."** Furthermore, the malach specifically said: **"Behold, Sarah, your wife, will have a son."** He was intimating that she would give birth to a son who would share her quality of Torah she'b'al peh. This became evident at Akeidas Yitzchak, when Yitzchak was willing to sacrifice his life based on what he had heard from his father—exemplifying Torah she'b'al peh.

We can now rejoice, because this illuminates for us the words of the Midrash cited by Rashi: **Sarah's death is juxtaposed to Akeidas Yitzchak, because on account of the news of the Akeidah, that her son was prepared for slaughter and was nearly slaughtered, her soul left her (flew away), and she died.** Sarah Imeinu already knew from the news delivered by the malach that her son possessed the quality of Torah she'b'al peh. Hence, she longed to see her son, Yitzchak, demonstrate this quality with his **"mesiras nefesh."**

So, when she was informed “of the news of the Akeidah, that her son was prepared for slaughter”—that Yitzchak was prepared to sacrifice his life based solely on the word of Avraham—an example of Torah she’b’al peh—she (who also personified Torah she’b’al peh) longed to join him. And seeing as she had already lived out the years allotted her in Olam HaZeh, as per the commentary of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh, she sacrificed her life at the same time as Yitzchak sacrificed his life, for the sake of Torah she’b’al peh.

During the Miraculous Events of Purim Yisrael Accepted the Torah with Ahavah in the Merit of Esther

Let us continue our sacred pilgrimage by explaining the lesson taught by Rabbi Akiva: **How could Esther rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces? Rather, Esther, a descendant of Sarah who lived to one hundred and twenty-seven, would come to rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.** To begin with, we will refer to what our sages expounded in the Gemara (Shabbas 88a) in relation to a passuk depicting Matan Torah (Shemos 19, 17):

”ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר, אמר רבי אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא, מלמד שכפה הקב”ה עליהם את ההר כגניגית ואמר להם, אם אתם מקבלים התורה מוטב, ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם. אמר רבי אחא בר יעקב מכאן מודעא רבה לאורייתא. אמר רבא, אף על פי כן הדור קבלוה בימי אחשורוש, דכתיב קימו וקבלו היהודים, קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר.”

“They stood beneath the mountain”: Rav Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: This teaches that HKB”H held the mountain over them like an upturned barrel. Then He said to them: “If you accept the Torah, fine; but if not, your burial will be there.” Rav Acha bar Yaakov said: From here stem strong grounds for a notification of coercion regarding the acceptance of the Torah. [Rashi explains: If they are accused in the heavenly court of not having fulfilled what they had accepted upon themselves, they can claim that they accepted it under duress.] **Rava said: Nevertheless, they accepted it during the times of Achashverosh, as it is written (Esther 9, 27): “The Jews fulfilled and accepted”—they fulfilled that which they had already accepted.**

Tosafos pose an obvious question (ibid.): Why was it necessary to coerce Yisrael into accepting the Torah in this threatening manner? Hadn’t they already demonstrated

their willingness and eagerness to accept the Torah with the proclamation (ibid. 24, 7) “**na’aseh v’nishma**”—**we will do, and we will hear?! The Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 3) provides us with an answer. What they accepted willingly and enthusiastically was only Torah she’b’chsav. They were unwilling, however, to commit to Torah she’b’al peh, which is more demanding, more difficult to comprehend, and possesses many stringencies. Hence, it was necessary for HKB”H to hold the mountain over their heads in a threatening manner, so they would also accept the Torah she’b’al peh.**

The great Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen, zy”a, in Pri Tzaddik (Purim 2), proves from here that Rava’s statement: **“Nevertheless, they accepted it during the times of Achashverosh”** refers to Torah she’b’al peh; that is what Yisrael were coerced to accept at Har Sinai. At the time of the Purim miracle, however, they accepted it willingly, with ahavah.

The Heavens Were Created with Torah She’b’chsav the Earth Was Created with Torah She’b’al Peh

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation as to why Esther was privileged to rule over 127 provinces. Let us refer to the opening passuk of Megillas Esther (Esther 1, 1): **“ויהי בימי אחשורוש הוא אחשורוש המולך מהודו ועד כוש מאה ועשרים ושבע מדינות.”** **And it came to pass in the times of Achashveirosh; he is the Achashveirosh who reigned from Hodu to Cush, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.** The Gemara (Megillah 11a) teaches us that Achashveirosh reigned over the entire world, from one end to the other; this implies that the entire world is divided up into 127 provinces.

Furthermore, our sacred sefarim teach us that the heavens were created with Torah she’b’chsav, while the earth was created with Torah she’b’al peh. For instance, the Sefas Emes (Bereishis 5664) writes that the word “**בראשית**” alludes to **ב’ (2) “Reishiss,”** to Torah she’b’chsav and Torah she’b’al peh, which are both called **“Reishis.”** The heavens were created with Torah she’b’chsav; the earth was created with Torah she’b’al peh; this is their interpretation of the first passuk in the Torah.

This explains very nicely why HKB”H had to coerce Yisrael into accepting Torah she’b’al peh by holding the mountain over their heads like a barrel and threatening them: **“If you accept the Torah, fine; but if not, your burial will be there.”** Since the earth was created with Torah she’b’al peh, it could

not continue to exist without the study of Torah she'b'al peh. Hence, if they refused to accept Torah she'b'al peh, inevitably **“your burial will be there,”** because the entire world would cease to exist; it would be destroyed.

We can now begin to appreciate the magnificent elucidation of Rabbi Akiva. In what merit did Esther reign over the entire world? **Esther, a descendant of Sarah who lived to one hundred and twenty-seven, would come to rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.** Let us explain. HKB”H arranged for Sarah to live 127 years corresponding to the world that is divided up into 127 provinces. This alluded to the fact that in the merit of Sarah Imeinu, who was a pillar of Torah she'b'al peh, the world endured. Therefore, Esther, her descendant, was privileged to reign over 127 provinces, the entire world, to pave the way for the miracle of Purim, when Yisrael accepted Torah she'b'al peh with ahavah in appreciation of their miraculous salvation.

The Neshamah of Rabbi Akiva Came from Sisera

In this manner, we can clarify Rabbi Akiva’s profound intent. He aroused the audience by pointing out the amazing connection between Sarah Imeinu and her descendant Esther HaMalkah. First, however, we must explain why of all the women of Yisrael, who were all descendants of Sarah Imeinu, Esther, specifically, was privileged to reign over 127 provinces to reveal the importance of Torah she'b'al peh.

Now, as we know, Rabbi Akiva descended from converts. The source for this fact is found in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 96b): **“מבני בניו של סיסרא למדו תורה בירושלים—the descendants of Sisera learned Torah in Yerushalayim.** The Dikdukei Sofrim brings an alternate version of this Gemara: **“מבני בניו של סיסרא למדו תורה בירושלים, והוא רבי עקיבא—the descendants of Sisera learned Torah in Yerushalayim, namely Rabbi Akiva.** A similar version is brought down by the Ran (Berachos 27b).

The Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (88) writes that Rabbi Akiva came from the union of Sisera and Yael. As we learn in the Navi (Shoftim 4, 18), Yael enticed Sisera to come to her in an act described as **“aveirah l’shma”—**a transgression performed for a noble purpose. When he fell asleep in her tent, she killed him, thereby saving the people of Yisrael. We find the following pertinent elucidation in the Gemara (Horayos

10b): **גדולה עבירה לשמה ממצוה שלא לשמה, שנאמר תבורך מנשים יעל—**אשת חבר הקיני [מנשים באהל תבורך], מאן נינהו נשים באהל, שרה רבקה רחל. **An aveirah committed with good intent (l’shma) is greater than a mitzvah performed for ulterior motives, as it is stated (ibid. 5, 24): “Blessed by women is Yael, the wife of Chever HaKeini . . . By women in the tent will she be blessed.” Who are the “women in the tent”? Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah.**

The Megaleh Amukos adds a fantastic allusion in relation to the passuk (ibid. 16): **“ויפול כל מחנה סיסרא לפי חרב לא נשאר עד אחד—the entire camp of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left.** The plain meaning of the passuk is that everyone was killed except for one; after all, Sisera survived. However, the passuk can be interpreted as alluding to the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva that was concealed within Sisera and was released. Hence, the passuk emphasizes: **“לא נשאר”—**but one did remain, Rabbi Akiva, whose neshamah departed while he uttered the word **“אחד”.** As the Gemara describes (Berachos 61b): **היה מאריך באחד עד שיצתה נשמתו—he (Rabbi Akiva) was drawing out the word “אחד”, until his neshamah departed with “אחד”. A heavenly voice went out and proclaimed: “Praiseworthy are you Rabbi Akiva that your neshamah departed as you uttered “אחד”.**

In this manner, he goes on to interpret what Sisera instructs Yael (ibid. 4, 20): **«והיה אם איש יבוא ושאלך ואמר היש פה—and it shall be that if any man will come and ask you and say, “Is anyone here?” You shall say, “No!”** Unwittingly, Sisera’s words were prophetic. He was saying that it is necessary to take the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva out of him. Just like Moshe Rabeinu gave Yisrael Torah she'b'chsav; similarly, Rabbi Akiva merited arranging all of Torah she'b'al peh for Yisrael. In the words of the Gemara (Megillah 2a): **«זו דברי רבי עקיבא סתימתאה—this is the opinion of Rabbi Akiva, the anonymous one.** Rashi provides the following clarification: **כל הסתומין תלמידיו היו, כדאמר בסנהדרין סתם משנה רבי מאיר, סתם תוספתא רבי נחמיה, סתם ספרא רבי יהודה, וכולהו סתימתאי—all of the rulings stated anonymously represent the opinions of his students, as it is recorded in Sanhedrin (86a): The anonymous Mishnah is Rabbi Meir; the anonymous Tosefta is Rabbi Nechemiah; the anonymous Sifra is Rabbi Yehudah. All of the anonymous rulings accord with Rabbi Akiva.** In other words, all of Torah she'b'al peh is attributable to Rabbi Akiva; he arranged

it and passed it on to his students. Perhaps this explains why Torah she'b'chsav is in "lashon hakodesh," and Torah she'b'al peh is in Aramaic.

This then is the deeper meaning of Sisera's remark to Yael: «והיה אם איש יבוא ושאלך ואמר היש פה איש». The gematria of the words «ש פה» (310+85=395) equals «רב» (212+183=395). In other words, if anyone asks you if the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva is here «ואמרת אין». Now, the word «אין» has two opposite meanings. In Hebrew, it means "no"—he is not here. In Aramaic, on the other hand, it means "yes"—he is here. For, in reality, as per the Aramaic meaning, the language in which Torah she'b'al peh (that Rabbi Akiva arranged) was written, his neshamah was present, concealed in Sisera. We can add another pertinent allusion: **Rabbi Akiva** is alluded to by the gematria of «ש פה» to indicate the presence (ש) of Torah she'b'al peh.

Esther a Gilgul of Yael Rescued Torah She'b'al Peh

We can now begin to glimpse the wondrous ways of Hashem, the Grand Orchestrator of all things. Let us refer to the writings of the Bnei Yissaschar (Adar 7, 7). He brings down in the name of the Chida, who writes in the name of the divine kabbalist Rabbi Chaim Vital, zy" a, that the wicked Haman was a gilgul—a reincarnation—of Sisera, and Esther HaMalkah was a gilgul of Yael. The Bnei Yissaschar writes that this is alluded to by Esther's remark to Mordechai (Esther 4, 16): «לך כנוס את כל היהודים הנמצאים בשושן וצומו עלי»—**go assemble all the Jews that are to be found in Shushan, and fast for me.** For, the word «על», meaning "for me," is an anagram of «ל».

Yael sacrificed herself by committing an "aveirah l'shma" to rescue Torah she'b'al peh—by extracting the neshamah

of Rabbi Akiva from Sisera. In similar fashion, her gilgul, Esther, placed her life in jeopardy by approaching King Achashveirosh without permission. Her bold, unselfish act led to the miracle of Purim which prompted Yisrael to accept Torah she'b'al peh out of ahavah.

This explains magnificently the incident with Rabbi Akiva. **Rabbi Akiva was lecturing**, teaching his students Torah she'b'al peh; "and his audience began to doze off," because Torah she'b'al peh is difficult to comprehend and studying it demands much effort. **He tried to arouse them**, so that they would understand the vital importance of Torah she'b'al peh, since the continued existence of the world depends on it. So, **he said, "How could Esther rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces?"** In other words, in what merit did she reign over the entire world? **It is because Esther was a descendant of Sarah who lived to one hundred and twenty-seven**, who was a pillar of Torah she'b'al peh that the entire world depends upon; **she would come to rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces**, to bring about the miracle of Purim, which led to Yisrael's acceptance of Torah she'b'al peh out of love.

In summary, we can see from what we have discussed how HKB"H orchestrated events to protect the neshamah of Rabbi Akiva, a lynchpin of Torah she'b'al peh. Yael courageously extracted his neshamah from the depths of the klipah. Subsequently, Yael reincarnated into Esther who was the key figure in the Purim miracle, which prompted Yisrael to accept Torah she'b'al peh with ahavah. We have learned that the continued existence of the world depends entirely on Torah she'b'al peh. Hence, Rabbi Akiva aroused his audience by admonishing them not to treat the study of Torah she'b'al peh lightly.

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