TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



חיי שרה

לעילוי נשמת



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Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")



Bolt of Lightning

Most of this week's parashah is devoted to Eliezer's journey to find a wife for Yitzchak.

The Midrash Rabbah quotes the verse (Yeshayah 50:10), "*Who among you fears Hashem, listening to the voice of His servant? Though he may have walked in darkness with no light for himself, let him trust in the Name of Hashem, and lean upon his Elokim.*" The Midrash comments: "*Who among you fears Hashem*"-this refers

to Eliezer. "Listening to the voice of His servant"–Eliezer listened to Avraham, G-d's servant. "Though he may have walked in darkness"–when he went to bring Rivka. "With no light for himself"–but Hashem lit the way with bolts of lightning. "Let him trust in the Name of Hashem, and lean upon his Elokim"–therefore he said (Bereishit 24:12), "Hashem, Elokim of my master Avraham, may You so arrange it for me this day." [Until here from the Midrash]

R' David Cohen z"l (1887-1972; instructor at Yeshivat Merkaz Ha'Rav; known as the "Nazir") asks: Where does the Torah say that Eliezer traveled in the dark or during a lightning storm? He explains:

There is a dispute between the early halachic authorities, **Rambam z"l and Ra'avad z"l**, whether Eliezer's reliance on a sign–whether the girl would offer to give water to Eliezer's camels–was halachically proper or was improper (as it would be improper for a person to cancel a journey because a black cat crossed his path). However, writes R' Cohen, this Midrash is teaching that Eliezer actually placed his trust in Hashem, and the "sign" which he set up was intended as no more than a momentary flash of light, a bolt of lightning in an otherwise pitch black "night," to give him comfort that he was on the right path.

Indeed, R' Cohen writes, shidduchim is always like that. Every couple is in the dark about what to look for and whether they are meant for each other. From time-to-time, a "bolt of lightning" will light the darkness to show the parties that they are on the right path. Still, in the final analysis, one must rely on Hashem.

"Everything a person does should have one intention, that Hashem should favor him. He should do only what Hashem wants him to do and because of that Hashem will be pleased with him." ~ R' Avigdor Miller zt"l

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה

Rashi says: **כֻּלָּן שָׁוִין לְטוֹבָה: שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה *the years of the life of Sarah: All of them equally good.***

The gematria of "**וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה**"/"*Sarah's lifetime was*" equals the gematria of "**כולן הם שוין לטובה**"/"They were all equal in their goodness." (Toras Hachida)

וְהָיָה הַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַטִּי־נָא כַדֵּךְ וְאֶשְׁתֶּה וְאָמְרָה שְׁתֵּה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה אֹתָהּ הֹכַחְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק *"It shall be the maiden to whom I say, 'Please tip over your jug so I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,' — she is the one You will have proven is for Your servant, for Yitzchak ...'" (24:14)*



R' Yosef Yozel Horowitz z"l (1847-1919; **the Alter of Novardok**) asks: Why was giving Eliezer and his camels water proof that Rivka was suitable for Yitzchak? Maybe she did it because she was embarrassed to refuse or in order to obtain honor. Moreover, even if she did it as a genuine Chessed, why would the fact that she had one good trait "prove" she was suitable for Yitzchak?

The Alter explains: Whether someone is a person who works on perfecting himself or is not such a person can be discerned from how he carries out a task that is requested of him. Someone who works on himself will not be satisfied with the bare minimum; he or she will always want to complete the task to the greatest extent possible.

Here, the Alter notes, Eliezer requested (24:17), **הַגְמִיאֵינִי נָא מְעַט־** **מַיִם מִכַּדֵּךְ** "***Let me sip, if you please, a little water from your jug***." "Sip," implies a small drink. "From your jug," implies, "Don't go out of your way for me." Rivka, however, was not satisfied with doing a small favor. She wanted to do a complete Chessed.

In addition, the Alter writes, Rivka's Middah of Chessed was an indication of her character as a whole because Middot / character traits do not operate in isolation. A person's traits influence each other. When someone works on improving one trait, his other traits improve through a chain reaction. On the other hand, if a person allows one of his traits to deteriorate, his other traits will follow in a downward spiral.

This lesson has a practical application, the Alter notes. Sometimes a person sees himself as needing improvement in so many areas that he doesn't know where to start. As a result, he does nothing to improve himself. The answer to this dilemma is that it doesn't matter which trait a person starts with. Improving in any one area is bound to have a positive spill-over effect.

Letters from Our Sages



In connection with our parashah, the first to mention the practice of burying the dead, we present the tzava'ah / will of **R' Moshe Shick z"l** (**Maharam Shick**; 1807-1879; rabbi and rosh yeshiva of Khust, Hungary).

This letter is the first of at least three surviving wills that Maharam Shick wrote in his last years. It appears in Igrot Maharam Shick No. 148.

Since no man knows when his time will come, therefore, I am instructing my household remaining after me. I request forgiveness from the members of my household and from my congregants and from all of the Jewish People if, G-d forbid, I slighted their honor. I forgive anyone who sinned against me, whether unintentionally or intentionally, and I forgive anyone who took anything of value from my home. I request that others forgive me if I took anything from them unknowingly. If anyone comes with a claim against me, pay him from my assets as seen fit by the moreh [usually referring to a halachic authority], even if not required by the letter of the law.

In my trunk, there is earth from Eretz Yisrael. Place some of this on my mouth, the place of the brit milah, and my eyes. Those who handle my body should have immersed in a mikvah the same day, as is fitting and is the custom. You should pay the chevra kadishah for my plot. I hereby submit my nefesh, ruach and neshamah [the parts of the soul] to Hashem, may He be Blessed. May the Merciful One atone for sins etc., and may my death be an atonement for all of my sins. May He conceal me under His wings, etc. and may You hear my prayer.

These are the words of this writer and supplicant, here, Khust, on the day when "ki tov" was doubled [i.e., Tuesday] of the week of "You are all standing today before Hashem" [i.e., Parashat Nitzavim], in the year 5635 [1875].

[Signed] Moshe Shick of Brezova

I also ask my students, wherever they are, to study mishnayot for my sake and to recite the prayer written for this purpose, and may Hashem lengthen their days and years.

[Signed] The foregoing.

Every single time you have some pleasure, even a very slight one such as gaining a small profit, feel grateful to the Almighty.

Every day we have numerous such occasions which are easily overlooked. They are lessons to teach awareness of the Almighty's Divine Providence. ~ Hashlomas Hamidos

וְיִצְחָק בָּא מִבּוֹא בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב. וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עָרֶב "***Yitzchak came from having gone to Beer-lachai-ro'ee, for he dwelt in the south country. Yitzchak went out to supplicate in the field towards evening*** ..." (24:62-63)

Why does the Torah tell us that Yitzchak came from the be'er / well?

R' Yekutiel Yehuda Teitelbaum z"l (1808-1883; rabbi of Sighet, Hungary) explains:

Our Sages say that the second verse quoted above alludes to the fact that Yitzchak instituted the prayer of minchah. By telling us that he came from the well, the Torah is alluding to the chassidic custom of immersing in a mikvah before prayer. (Quoted in Heichal Ha'Besht, Vol. 14, p.61)

Elsewhere in the Torah . . .

אַשְׁרֵי תְמִימֵי־דֶרֶךְ הַהֹלְכִים בְּתוֹרַת ה' "***Happy are those whose way is perfect, who walk with the Torah of Hashem***." (Tehilim 119:1)

R' Shmuel d'Ouzida z"l (Tzefat, Eretz Yisrael; late 1500s) writes: A person is expected to perform mitzvot and to learn Torah.

"*Praiseworthy are those whose way is perfect*," refers to performing good deeds, while "*who walk with the Torah of Hashem*," refers to studying Torah.

There is a difference between these two activities, however. In order to achieve happiness through performing mitzvot, one must do them completely and perfectly. Not so Torah study, which brings happiness even along the way. - This is alluded to by the phrase "*the Torah of Hashem*," for after a person has finished studying a unit of Torah, it is called "*his Torah*." (Peirush Mi'ktav Yad)

From the haftarah . . .

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַיְכַסֻּהוּ בַּבְּגָדִים וְלֹא יִחַם לוֹ "King David was old, advanced in years; they covered him with garments, but he did not become warm." *(Melachim I 1:1)*



Chazal explain that King David could not stay warm because he had once cut off the corner of King Shaul's garment. Since he had shown disrespect for clothing, they did not serve him.

How King David came to cut off a corner of King Shaul's garment is related in Shmuel I, chapter 24. King Shaul was chasing David, hoping to kill him, and, unbeknownst to the King, David was cornered in a cave. Shmuel I, chapter 24, verses 4-5 relate, "So David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Shaul's robe. Afterwards, however, David's conscience troubled him for having cut of the corner of Shaul's garment."

Why did David's conscience trouble him? The midrash explains that David felt guilty for depriving Shaul of the mitzvah of tzitzit. (After David cut off one corner, Shaul's garment no longer had four corners, and was exempt from tzitzit.)

R' Baruch Ezrachi zt'l comments: This is a lesson regarding the sensitivity that a person should feel towards mitzvot. Tzitzit, of all mitzvot, is not mandatory. If a man is wearing a four-cornered garment, he must wear tzitzit. According to Torah law, however, no man is obligated to wear a four-cornered garment.

Moreover, under what circumstances did David tear King Shaul's coat? David had every right to kill King Shaul in self-defence, yet he touched only the king's garment, in order to show his good faith.

Despite this, he later felt great pangs of conscience for depriving another Jew of the chance to perform a mitzvah. -Birkat Mordechai

Regarding the wearing of tzitzit . . .

R' Yosef Karo z"l (1488-1575) writes: One who is not wearing a four-cornered garment is not obligated in the mitzvah of tzitzit. Nevertheless, it is proper for every man to take care to wear a tallit kattan all day long so that he will remember G-d's commands at every moment. Each set of tzitzit has five knots, corresponding to the five books of the Torah. The tzitzit are on the garment's four corners so that a person will remember the Torah no matter in which of the four directions he turns.

When one looks at the two tzitzit in front of him, he sees ten knots, reminiscent of the ten sefirot. Also, each corner has eight strings. The 16 strings together with the ten knots total 26, the gematria of Hashem's Name.

The punishment of one who disregards the mitzvah of tzitzit is great, and of him it is written (Iyov 38:13), "To grasp the corners of the earth [alluding to the corners of the garment], and shake the wicked from it." One who is meticulous regarding the mitzvah of tzitzit will merit to see the "face" of the Shechinah. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 24:1, 5 & 6)

R' Mordechai Schwab z"l (rosh yeshiva of Mesivta Bais Shraga in Monsey; brother of **R' Shimon Schwab z"l**) used to wear his suits until they were so worn that they could not be used again. When he disposed of a suit, he would fold it neatly, and he would say to it, "Thank you! You have served me well." - Afterward, he would place the suit carefully in a plastic bag and seal the bag before placing the whole package in the garbage – exactly the way one disposes of shaimos / pages containing words of Torah.



וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁתֵּה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה "***She said, "Drink, and I will even water your camels."*** *(24:46)*

וַיִּתֶּן תֶּבֶן וּמִסְפּוֹא לַגְּמַלִּים... וַיּוּשֶׂם לְפָנָיו לֶאֱכֹל "***He gave straw and feed for the camels ... Food was set before him."*** (24:32-33)

R' Yehuda He'chassid z"l (1150-1217) writes: If one is faced with a thirsty person and a thirsty animal, the person should be given to drink first. This is learned from the first verse above. We read similarly (Bemidbar 20:8), "You shall give drink to the assembly and to their animals."

However, continues R' Yehuda, when it comes to food, the order is the reverse, as we read in the second and third verses above. It also is written (Devarim 11:15), "I shall provide grass in your field for your cattle and [then] you will eat." (Sefer Ha'chassidim No. 531)

What is the reason for this distinction?

R' Ephraim Zalman Margaliot z"l (Poland; 1761-1828) explains that one never knows whether the only merit by which he is kept alive is that he cares for animals. Accordingly, one must feed his animals before he feeds himself. On the other hand, one who does not drink when he is thirsty may be endangering his life. Therefore, one should drink before he gives drinks to his animals. (Yad Ephraim, O.C. 167)

"Try to keep your prayers fresh. If you repeat the same words again and again, they lose their meaning – a prayer grows stale." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l

וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל "***Hashem blessed Avraham with everything.***" (24:1)

R' Moshe Sternbuch shlita writes: This means that Avraham viewed everything that he had as a blessing. Many people have lots of belongings, but they are not happy with what they have. Some feel that they do not have enough wealth, while others feel that the specific types of wealth they have are not bringing them happiness. Avraham did not have these feelings; he was content with everything he had.

King David wrote (Tehilim 34:11), וְדֹרְשֵׁי ה' לֹא־יַחְסְרוּ כָל־טוֹב "***Those who fear Hashem will not lack anything good***." The verse does not say that the righteous will possess everything, R' Sternbuch observes (citing **R' Yishayah Horowitz, the Shelah Hakadosh**). Rather, King David teaches that the righteous will not feel that anything is lacking because they will be content with what they have. (Ta'am Va'daat)

וְהַנַּעֲרָה טֹבַת מַרְאֶה מְאֹד.. וַתֵּרֶד הָעַיְנָה וַתְּמַלֵּא כַדָּהּ וַתָּעַל. וַיָּרָץ הָעֶבֶד לִקְרָאתָהּ

"Now the maiden was very fair to look upon . . . She descended to the spring, filled her jug and ascended. The slave [Eliezer] ran towards her . . ." (24:16-17)

R' Avigdor Tzarfati z"l (France; 13th century) writes: Eliezer made up his mind about the girl (Rivka) immediately. From here we learn that it is sufficient when evaluating a Shidduch / match to know that the girl is healthy [Rivka filled the jug and carried it up from the well] and has good Middot. - It does not matter if her family is not particularly fine, as Rivka's was not; provided, of course, that the family is not one with which a match is prohibited or discouraged by Halachah. (Peirushim U'pesakim Le'rabbeinu Avigdor Tzarfati)

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים *'Now Abraham was old, well on in days.'* (24:1)

The gemara (Yoma 28b) cites this verse as proof that Avraham conducted a yeshiva where he taught Torah. Where is this alluded to in our verse?

R' Shlomo Halberstam z"l (the "**Bobover Rebbe**"; died 2000) explains: The word "**יָמִים** / days" is interesting in that the gematria of its hidden part is equal to the gematria of its revealed part. In other words, if the name of each of the letters in yamim were spelled out [yud = yud (10), vav (6), dalet (4); mem = mem (40), mem (40); etc.], the sum of the first letters would equal the sum of the other letters [10 = 6+4; 40 =40, etc.].

Why is this significant? It alludes to the fact that Avraham's "revealed days" – his Olam Hazeh / This World – was equal to his "hidden days" – his Olam Haba / World-to-Come.

How so? The gemara (Sanhedrin 92a) states that one who teaches Torah in this world will merit to teach Torah in the World-to-Come. Avraham's Olam Hazeh and his Olam Haba were equal because he taught Torah. And this fact is alluded to in our verse. (Kerem Shlomo Vol. III)

From the Haftarah . . .

וַתִּקֹּד בַּת־שֶׁבַע וַתִּשְׁתַּחוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ *"Bat Sheva bowed and prostrated herself to the king . . ." (1:16)*

R' Gamliel HaKohen Rabinowitz shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Sha'ar Ha'shamayim in Yerushalayim) explains: Perhaps the reason Bat Sheva bowed down to her husband, King David, before pleading on behalf of her son Shlomo was to demonstrate that she accepted David as her king no matter what answer he would give her.

There is an important lesson here for us, R' Rabinowitz continues: When we come before our King, Hashem, with our requests–whether

for our children's needs, wealth, health, Shidduchim / matches, Shalom Bayit / domestic harmony, or Nachas from our children–we must take care that our prayers are said with proper humility and subjugation to Hashem. It must be clear that we have requests, but not, G-d forbid, demands or complaints.

While we are not permitted to bow down physically, except at the places in Davening where our Sages have told us to do so, we can and should "bow" in our hearts throughout our prayers, R' Rabinowitz concludes.

וַיָּרָץ הָעֶבֶד לִקְרָאתָהּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַגְמִיאִינִי נָא מְעַט־מַיִם מִכַּדֵּךְ ***"The servant ran towards her and said, 'Let me sip, if you please, a little water from your jug'." (24:17)***



Rashi explains: Eliezer ran towards her "because he saw that the waters rose in the well when she approached it."

R' Shlomo Goldman z"l (1869-1945; Zvhiller Rebbe) observes: Even after Eliezer saw the waters in the well rise miraculously to meet Rivka, he still tested her character by requesting, "Let me sip . . ." This teaches us that, when choosing a spouse, it is more important to focus on good Middot / character traits than on miraculous signs. (*Yesod Tzaddik*)

R' Yitzchak of Volozhin z"l

R' Yitzchak was the son of, and successor to, **R' Chaim of Volozhin**, founder and head of the yeshiva of Volozhin. He was born in 5540 (1879/80) and died in 5609 (1848/9).

In addition to his duties as rabbi and rosh yeshiva, R' Yitzchak was a leading spokesman for Jewish causes. It is said that he won the respect of the Russian Czar through the following discussion:

The Czar asked R' Yitzchak, "I know that the Jews pray for my welfare on every Shabbat, and I even asked a Jew to translate the prayer for me. However, now I have learned that the Jews in every country recite the identical prayer for their own ruler. If the Jews in my kingdom pray for my success and the Jews in my rival's kingdom pray for his success, what will be the outcome?"

R' Yitzchak replied with a smile, "Since your majesty had the prayer translated, you certainly noticed that it refers to G-d as 'The One Who makes a path in the sea and a lane in the fierce waters.' Why?

"The answer is as follows: A ship that wishes to travel westward needs an east wind to blow. On the other hand, a ship which must travel eastward needs a west wind. How can both ships be satisfied?

"Hashem's greatness is that He can satisfy both! So, too, we pray for your success while our brothers in other lands pray for the success of their king, and Hashem's greatness is such that He can answer both prayers."

On another occasion, R' Yitzchak presented himself to a Russian official wearing his Shabbat clothes. The official taunted him, "Doesn't Mishlei (25:6) say, 'Do not beautify yourself before the king'? Furthermore, doesn't the Talmud (Chagigah 9b) say, 'Poverty looks nice on Jews'?"

R' Yitzchak responded, "One of your questions answers the other. Poverty looks nice on the Jews, but when I come before the king, I

may not beautify myself. Therefore, I have removed my poverty and dressed up in fine clothes."

R' Yitzchak was known for avoiding lashon hara and never speaking ill of another person. Once, when he had no choice but to say that someone had lied, he refused to say it directly. He said, "This person has a phenomenal memory. Some people remember things that happened ten years ago. Others can remember things that happened fifty years ago. This man's memory is so phenomenal that he can remember things that never happened."

R' Yitzchak's works include Mili D'Avot on Pirkei Avot and a Torah commentary entitled Peh Kadosh. Among his sons in law was **R' Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (the "Netziv")**. (Gedolei Hadorot)

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כִּלּוּ הַגְּמַלִּים לִשְׁתּוֹת וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ נֶזֶם זָהָב בֶּקַע מִשְׁקָלוֹ וּשְׁנֵי צְמִידִים עַל־יָדֶיהָ עֲשָׂרָה זָהָב מִשְׁקָלָם ***"It was, when the camels had finished drinking, the man took a golden nose ring, its weight was a Beka, and two bracelets on her arms, ten gold shekels was their weight." (24:22)***

Why did Eliezer wait until the camels had finished drinking before giving Rivka these gifts?

R' Shimshon Dovid Pincus z"l (1944-2001; rabbi of Ofakim, Israel) answers: Eliezer waited to see whether, after performing an incredible act of kindness, Rivka would wait for payment, or at least a compliment. But she did not; she turned around to leave as if she had done nothing remarkable. Then Eliezer knew that she was truly remarkable, so he gave her the gifts. (*Tiferet Shimshon*)

"All new beginnings require that you unlock a new door." R' Nachman of Breslev zt"l

אֲדֹנִי שְׁמָעֵנִי אֶרֶץ אַרְבַּע מֵאֹת שֶׁקֶל־כֶּסֶף בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ מַה־הִוא וְאֶת־מֵתְךָ קְבֹר

"My lord, heed me! Land worth four hundred silver Shekels; between me and you — what is it? Bury your dead." (23:15)



Our Sages say that Efron demanded an exorbitant price for the Me'arat Ha'machpelah.

R' Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky z"l (1899-1985; known as the **Steipler Gaon**) writes: We read about Yaakov Avinu (Bereishit 33:19), **וַיִּקֶן אֶת־חֶלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר נָטָה־שָּׁם אָהֳלֹו מִיַּד בְּנֵי־חֲמֹור אֲבִי שְׁכֶם בְּמֵאָה קְשִׂיטָה** "***He bought the parcel of land upon which he pitched his tent from the children of Chamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred Kesitah.***"

One hundred Kesitah equals five Shekalim. Since the Torah uses the word "field" both in our Parashah and in Yaakov's case without defining the size of the field, we can presume that they were of approximately equal size. Nevertheless, Efron demanded 400 Shekel for his field – ***eighty times*** more than Yaakov would later pay for a field! (*Birkat Peretz*)

"A pleasure seeker mistakenly thinks that the only way he can be happy is by successfully gaining everything he desires. The opposite is true.

The only way to have a guarantee of happiness is to learn that you can be happy even though you are not able to acquire everything you desire." ~ R' Zelig Pliskin

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה "***Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years*** ..." (23:1)

R' Yehoshua ibn Shuiv z"l (Spain; early 14th century) observes: Sarah lived for 37 years after Yitzchak was born, and these were no doubt the happiest years of her life.

This is alluded to in the verse: "וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה," which could be translated: "Sarah's lifetime was 'וַיִּהְיוּ'."

The gematria of the word "וַיִּהְיוּ" (vav-yud-heh-yud-vav) is 37, alluding to the prime years of Sarah's life. (Derashot R' Yehoshua ibn Shuiv)

גֵּר־וְתוֹשָׁב אָנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תְּנוּ לִי אֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָה מֵתִי מִלְּפָנָי '***I am an alien and a resident among you; grant me an estate for a burial site with you, that I may bury my dead from before me***.'

וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי־חֵת אֶת־אַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לוֹ. שְׁמָעֵנוּ אֲדֹנִי נְשִׂיא אֱלֹקים אַתָּה בְּתוֹכֵנוּ

"***The children of Chet answered Avraham, saying to him, `Hear us, my lord – You are a prince of G-d in our midst'***." (23:4-6)

R' Meir of Premishlan z"l (Galicia; early 19th century) exclaims: Could it be that the evil Canaanites would honour Avraham thus!? Rather, their intention was as follows:- It was well known that Hashem had decreed 400 years of wandering upon Avraham's family. Avraham wanted his own lifetime to count toward those 400 years; therefore he said, "***I am an alien among you***." But the Canaanites did not want to give Avraham that satisfaction. "No!" they said. "You are a prince among us." (Divrei Meir)

"Worry comes from a lack of emuna." ~ R' Eliyahu Meir Bloch

Me'arat Ha'machpelah



At the beginning of our Parashah, we read how Avraham bargained with Ephron over Me'arat Ha'machpelah. Ephron said he would give the burial cave to Avraham for free, but the latter insisted on paying for it. Why did Avraham insist on paying for Me'arat Ha'machpelah?

R' Nosson Sternhartz z"l (1780-1845; foremost student of **R' Nachman of Breslov z"l**) explains: Precisely because Me'arat Ha'machpelah is such a holy place, it was surrounded by forces of impurity as long as Ephron owned it. [It is a prerequisite to man's having free will that the forces of purity and impurity in the world be approximately equal.]

Avraham wished to elevate the cave to its appropriate level of holiness (see Rashi to 23:17). However, this required that he pay for the cave, since holiness cannot be attained for nothing. For the same reason, King David refused to accept the site of the Bet Hamikdash from its then-owner as a gift; he insisted on buying it. And, for the same reason, the **Zohar** teaches that a person should make a point to purchase Mitzvot. (Likkutei Halachot: Hil. Matanah 4:4, 11)

R' Yisrael Meir Kagan z"l (**the Chafetz Chaim**; died 1933) writes similarly: The Zohar teaches, "One who wants to engage in a Mitzvah, and to engage with the Holy One Blessed is He, should not seek to do so for free. Rather, he should expend his resources to the extent of his ability."

Therefore, the Chafetz Chaim continues, it is wrong for people to form a breakaway Minyan where Aliyot are given away for free, rather than participate in the auction taking place in their Shul.

Indeed, on a practical level, when one pays for an Aliyah, he effectively performs multiple Mitzvot–not only reciting a blessing over the Torah, but also lighting or heating the Shul through his donation. (Ahavat Chessed II ch.16)

וַיַּ֤עַן לָבָן֙ וּבְתוּאֵ֔ל וַיֹּאמְר֖וּ מֵיְהוָ֣ה יָצָ֑א לֹא נוּכַ֤ל דַּבֵּר֙ אֵלֶ֣יךָ רַ֔ע אוֹ־טֽוֹב

"Lavan and Betuel answered and said, 'The matter originated from Hashem! We can say to you neither bad nor good'." (24:50)

R' David Holzer shlita (Miami Beach, Florida) asks: How was Eliezer able to convince two non-believers that what occurred was miraculous?

He answers: Eliezer did two things. First, he said (verse 33), **לֹ֣א אֹכַ֔ל עַ֚ד אִם־דִּבַּ֣רְתִּי דְבָרָ֔י** - "***I will not eat until I have spoken my piece***." This showed Lavan and Betuel that something so incredible had happened to Eliezer that he had lost interest in any pleasure other than re-telling his story.

Second, he began his story by saying (verse 34), **עֶ֥בֶד אַבְרָהָ֖ם אָנֹֽכִי** - "***I am Avraham's slave***." This showed that he sought no personal glory from telling his story.

R' Holzer adds: This explains the structure of the Pesach Seder. We read the Haggadah before the meal to impress upon our children how incredible the story of the Exodus is. Also, we begin with our "disgrace" ("Originally, our ancestors were idolaters") to emphasize that the glory in the story of the Exodus is not ours, but Hashem's alone. (Va'yosef David)

"If a friendship contributes to your growth, keep it. If it does the opposite, drop it." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l

וַיֹּאמֶר אָחִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ תֵּשֶׁב הַנַּעֲרָה אִתָּנוּ יָמִים אֹו עָשֹׂור אַחַר תֵּלֵךְ ***"Her brother and mother said, 'Let the maiden remain with us a year or ten [months]; then she will go.'***

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אַל־תְּאַחֲרוּ אֹתִי ***"[Eliezer] said to them, 'Do not delay me . . . .'*** **וַיֹּאמְרוּ נִקְרָא לַנַּעֲרָה וְנִשְׁאֲלָה אֶת־פִּיהָ** ***"They said, 'Let us call the maiden and ask her decision.'***

וַיִּקְרְאוּ לְרִבְקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ הֲתֵלְכִי עִם־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלֵךְ ***They called Rivka and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' And she said, 'I will go'." (24:55-58)***

R' Avraham Katz (Prague; 17th century) writes in Yalkut Reuveni: "In the merit of Rivka's saying, 'I will go,' Bnei Yisrael left Egypt."

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869) explains: The Gemara (Ketubot 57b) learns from our verse that a bride is entitled to twelve months to prepare for marriage. [The Gemara is referring to the practice in Talmudic times that the two parts of the wedding ceremony–Erusin / giving the ring or other item of value and Nisuin / entering the Chuppah–were performed one year apart. After Erusin, the couple was legally married, but did not live together.

Today, we perform both parts of the marriage at once.] After Eliezer gave Erusin gifts to Rivka as Yitzchak's agent, Rivka was entitled to wait a year before completing the marriage ceremony. Nevertheless, she chose to forego that waiting period.

Bnei Yisrael should have been in Egypt 400 years, but in the merit of Rivka's not waiting, Hashem took them out early. (Chochmat Ha'Torah)

Everything is going to be ok in the end. If it is not ok, it is not the end.

From the Haftarah . . .

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַיְכַסֻּהוּ בַּבְּגָדִים וְלֹא יִחַם לוֹ *"King David was old, advanced in years; they covered him with garments, but he did not become warm."* (Melachim I 1:1)



The Gemara (Berachot 62b) teaches: If one mistreats clothing, he will, in the end, have no pleasure from them." We learn this from the fact that King David's clothes could not keep him warm, which was a punishment for the fact that, years earlier, he had torn off a corner of King Shaul's garment (see Shmuel I ch.24).

Many ask: Wasn't David's tearing Shaul's garment an act of self-defense? Why is he faulted?

R' Avigdor Miller z"l (1908-2001; rabbi, educator and author; considered one of the first American-born "Gedolim") explains: Before Adam and Chava ate from the Etz Ha'da'at, they had no Yetzer Ha'ra and, therefore, did not need to cover their bodies. Immediately after their sin, they made themselves garments out of fig leaves. Shortly afterward, Hashem gave them leather garments to wear.

What was wrong with the clothing they had made for themselves? R' Miller asks.

He answers: Hashem was teaching them a lesson. One purpose of clothing is modesty. For that, fig leaves would have been adequate. However, clothing also has a higher purpose: to remind man that he is special. Animals do not wear clothing. People do wear clothing, because people are not animals.

This, continues R' Miller, is the meaning of the Gemara (Shabbat 113a; Sanhedrin 94a) that relates that Rabbi Yochanan called his clothes, "That which makes me honorable." He did not mean that his clothes gave him honor in the eyes of other people. Rather, he meant that his clothes remind him of his own status as a human being.

In short, R' Miller concludes, clothing is a reflection of the fact that man, unlike animals, was created in G-d's "image." If one truly takes that to heart, truly appreciates man's uniqueness and the lofty lesson that his clothes represent, he would be incapable of tearing clothing, even in self-defence. (Torat Avigdor Vol. I p.36)

Most of this week's Parashah is devoted to describing, not once, but twice, how Eliezer traveled to Charan and found a wife for Yitzchak. First, the events are described as they happen, then they are described as Eliezer retells them.

In retelling his story, Eliezer says (24:42), **וָאָבֹא הַיּוֹם אֶל־הָעָיִן** - "***I came today to the spring . . .***"

Rashi z"l comments: **הַיּוֹם יָצָאתִי וְהַיּוֹם בָּאתִי, מִכָּאן שֶׁקִּפְּצָה לוֹ הָאָרֶץ** "***Today I started on my journey and today I arrived here, from which we may infer that the earth contracted for him.***" Rashi continues: **יָפָה שִׂיחָתָן שֶׁל עַבְדֵי אָבוֹת לִפְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם מִתּוֹרָתָן שֶׁל בָּנִים, שֶׁהֲרֵי פָּרָשָׁה שֶׁל אֱלִיעֶזֶר כְּפוּלָה בַּתּוֹרָה וְהַרְבֵּה גּוּפֵי תּוֹרָה לֹא נִתְּנוּ אֶלָּא בְּרֶמְיָזָה** -"***The mundane conversation of the Patriarchs' servants is more pleasing to G-d than the Torah of their children, for the story of Eliezer is repeated in the Torah while many important halachot are derived only from hints in the Text.***"

Why is the Torah written that way? Furthermore, what is the connection between the two parts of Rashi's comment?

R' Moshe Teitelbaum z"l (1914-2006; Satmar Rebbe) explains:

R' Moshe Sofer z"l (1762–1839; **the Chatam Sofer**) writes that the Torah's elaboration on the activities of the Patriarchs' servants and descendants–for example, here, or the five times the construction of the Mishkan is described, or the 12 times the sacrifices brought by the Princes in Parashat Nasso are detailed–is an expression of Hashem's humility. From it, we should learn to prioritize His teachings the same way He prioritizes our activities.

One might, however, have come to the opposite conclusion, says R' Teitelbaum, i.e., that the Torah gives short shrift to many Mitzvot because they are not important; therefore, we should give them short shrift as well. Therefore, Rashi connects this lesson with the lesson about Eliezer's miraculously short journey.

Our Sages say that Eliezer was a Rosh Yeshiva. The reason his journey was shortened was to minimize his time away from the study hall – proof of the importance of Torah study. (Beirach Moshe)

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה "*Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years*

Rashi explains the words "the years of Sarah's life" to mean that they were all equally good - **כֻּלָּן שָׁוִין לְטוֹבָה**. But weren't the majority of Sarah's years filled with hardships – longing for children, living in exile, imprisonment at the hands of Pharaoh and Avimelech? How could all of her years have been equally good?

The answer, of course, is that during her entire life, concerning everything that was seemingly bad, Sarah would always say, "This, too, is for the best." She saw Hashem's kindness in everything. We must emulate her and do the same. ~ **Rav Zusha of Anipoli zt"l**

Don't allow the fear of "What if?" to ruin the joy of "What is."

וַיַּעַן לָבָן וּבְתוּאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵה' יָצָא הַדָּבָר לֹא נוּכַל דַּבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ רַע אוֹ טוֹב "*Then Lavan and Betu'el answered and said, 'The matter stemmed from Hashem! We can say to you neither bad nor good'.*" *(24:50)*

Rashi z"l explains their words as follows: **לְמָאֵן בַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה לֹא עַל יְדֵי תְּשׁוּבַת דָּבָר רַע וְלֹא עַל יְדֵי תְּשׁוּבַת דָּבָר הָגוּן, וְנִכָּר שֶׁמֵּה' יָצָא הַדָּבָר, לְפִי דְּבָרֶיךָ שֶׁזִּמְּנָהּ לְךָ** "*We cannot refuse this proposition [that Rivka marry Yitzchak], neither arbitrarily, nor with logical arguments. It is evident that the matter comes from Hashem, since, according to your words, He brought her and you together.*"

The Gemara (Mo'ed Kattan 18b) derives from here that Hashem matches a wife with a husband.

Asks **R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l** (1914-2005): Doesn't everything come from Hashem?

He answers: The Gemara means that, in the case of Shidduchim / matches, Hashem's direct involvement is more obvious than in other areas of life, so much so that the match obviously is G-d's Will. (Shiurei Chumash)

הִנֵּה־רִבְקָה לְפָנֶיךָ קַח וָלֵךְ וּתְהִי אִשָּׁה לְבֶן־אֲדֹנֶיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה'. וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם אֶת־דִּבְרֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה לַה' "'*Here, Rivka is before you; take her and go, and let her be a wife to your master's son as Hashem has spoken.' It was, when Avraham's servant heard their words, he prostrated himself to the ground to Hashem.*" *(24:51-52)*

Rashi writes: **מִכָּאן שֶׁמּוֹדִים עַל בְּשׂוֹרָה טוֹבָה** "*From this we learn that we should thank G-d for good news.*"

R' Leib Mintzberg shlita (rabbi of the Khal Adat Yerushalayim community in Bet Shemesh, Israel and rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Ha'masmidim) writes: Earlier in the account of Eliezer's journey to find a wife for Yitzchak, we read (24:26-27), "*So the man [Eliezer] bowed low and prostrated himself to Hashem. He said, 'Blessed*

is Hashem, Elokim of my master Avraham, Who has not withheld His kindness and truth from my master. As for me, Hashem has guided me on the way to the house of my master's brothers'."

Why, then, does Rashi wait until our verse to teach that one should thank G-d for good news? Also, why in our verse does Eliezer prostrate himself to the ground, while in the earlier verse he does not?

R' Mintzberg explains: In the earlier verses, Eliezer was not expressing thanks. Indeed, he could not express thanks because he had only just met Rivka; he did not yet know if her family would agree that she should marry Yitzchak.

Rather, his reaction there was an expression of wonder at Hashem's Hashgachah Peratit, that he brought Eliezer to exactly the time and place where Avraham's relative was drawing water from the well.

His blessing there was a statement of praise of Hashem, not a statement of thanksgiving. Only now, when his mission was successful, could he give thanks. That, also, is why he bowed more deeply now than in the earlier verse. (Ben Melech)

"Think positive and the result will be positive. An optimistic thought has the strength to rescind a heavenly decree." ~ Adapted from the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l

"The rest we have on Shabbos is not merely rest from work on that day alone. Rather, it has the ability to give us peace of mind all the days of the week." ~ R' Eliyahu Mei Bloch zt"l in Shiurai Daas.

וְהָיָה הַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַטִּי־נָא כַדֵּךְ וְאֶשְׁתֶּה וְאָמְרָה שְׁתֵּה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה אֹתָהּ הוֹכַחְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק וּבָהּ אֵדַע כִּי־עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עִם־אֲדֹנִי

"Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, `Please tip over your jug so I may drink,' and who replies, `Drink, and I will even water your camels,' her will You have designated for Your servant, for Yitzchak; and may I know through her that You have done kindness with my master." (24:14)

Rashi explains: **רְאוּיָה הִיא לוֹ שֶׁתְּהֵא גּוֹמֶלֶת חֲסָדִים, וּכְדַאי לִכָּנֵס בְּבֵיתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם** "***She is fit for him since she will be charitable and will therefore be worthy of admission into the house of Avraham.***"

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (preeminent educator and mussar figure in Israel; died 2005) writes: What we learn from Eliezer's request and from Rashi's explanation is that the measure of chessed is the quantity in which it is done.

Precisely because Rivka not only fulfilled Eliezer's request but went beyond it, she proved that she was worthy of entering Avraham's household.

Many people say, "I am willing to do chessed, but only up to a point." The ideal practice of chessed, however, knows no limits.

The story is told of a rabbi [some say it was **R' Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor z"l** of 19th century Kovno, Lithuania] who was asked by a congregant: "May I use milk for the Four Cups at the Seder since I have no money for wine?" "No!" answered the rabbi, and he gave the questioner a large sum of money to buy provisions for the holiday.

"Why did you give him such a large donation?" other congregants asked the rabbi. "Wine does not cost that much!"

"Because" replied the rabbi, "if the questioner intended to use milk for the Four Cups, it is apparent that he is lacking not only wine, but also meat." That, says R' Wolbe, is chessed – recognizing how great others' needs are and following through.

In truth, if we only recognized others' needs, we could perform unlimited chessed. How so? Because chessed is performed not only with one's money and other tangible things. Smiling, saying a kind word, and giving encouragement are all forms of chessed.

There is no limit to the "small" acts of kindness that we could perform if we would only recognize that others need our kindness. (Alei Shur Vol. I, p. 93)

The Weekly Vort

● **הקרה נא לפני היום – *may You so arrange it for me this day*** (24:12).

Eliezer, servant of Avraham, asked Hashem that Yitzchak's pre-destined wife be shown to him by way of the following test: Eliezer would stand by the city's well and ask one of the girls to allow him to drink from her water jug. The girl who would give him to drink, and also give his camels to drink, would be Yitzchak's wife.

In his prayer to Hashem, Eliezer uses the word **הקרה** , *arrange*, which is related to **מקרה** , *a chance occurrence*. But the meeting between Eliezer and Rivkah was anything but chance. Why is this term used here?

R' Shamshon Raphael Hirsch explains that the root **קרה**, *occur*, is related to **קרא**, *call*. A Jew must know that nothing in life is a matter of coincidence. Everything that happens is from Hashem. The meeting between Eliezer and Rivkah, which seems to be a *chance* occurrence, is a *calling* from Hashem. (**Shabbos Stories**)

"Be in awe of only one: G-d - Fear only one: yourself ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l.

● Eliezer bowed to Hashem twice – once when he realized that his mission was successful, and again when Lavan and Besuel agreed to the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivkah. About the first instance, the Torah states **ויקד האיש וישתחו לה'**, *the man [Eliezer] prostrated himself unto Hashem.* In the second instance it states **וישתחו ארצה לה'** - *[Eliezer] prostrated himself to the ground unto Hashem*, adding the phrase **ארצה** , *to the ground*.

Why does the *pasuk* omit the words **ארצה** the first time?

The Meshech Chochmah states that Eliezer knew that one is prohibited from bowing down on an **אבן משכית**, *a kneeling stone*, a stone set aside for kneeling worship – a prohibition applicable even if the intent is to bow to Hashem.

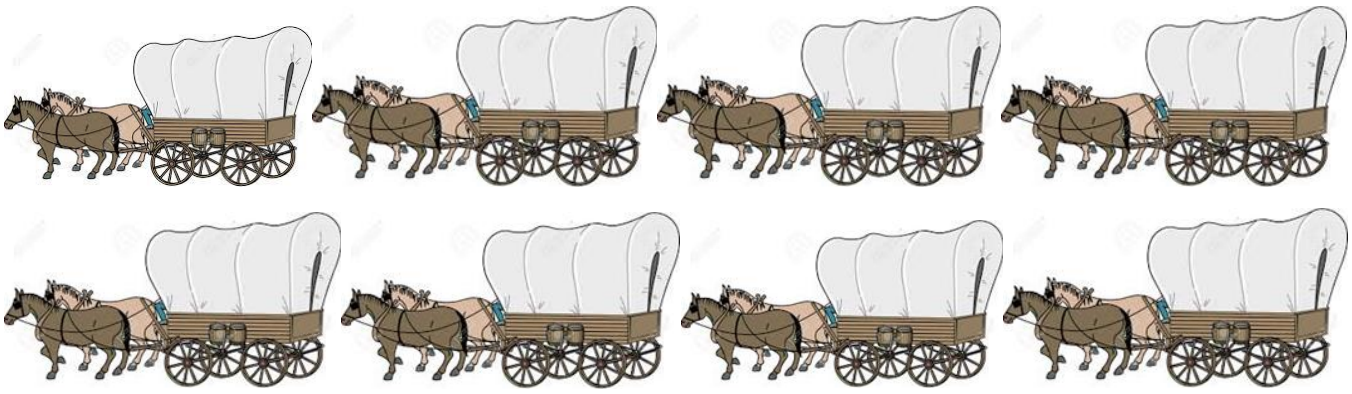
The first time Eliezer prostrated himself he was outside, next to the well. He had no reason to suspect that the stones there were set aside for kneeling and was thus able to prostrate himself to Hashem without concern.

However, when he was in the house of Lavan, he knew that Lavan possessed idols and had removed them just before his arrival. Eliezer thus made sure to prostrate himself on the earthen ground, and not on any stones.

The *pasuk* emphasizes this by saying he prostrated himself **ארצה לה'**, *to the ground, unto Hashem*. (**A Gut Vort**)

Many couples sought Rav Yisroel Belsky's help with shalom bayis. Rav Belsky once commented, "Couples must understand that marriage is not a business relationship. The husband asks me, 'Am I right?' The wife asks me, 'Am I right?' But does it help to be right if your spouse is miserable? The goal must be for both husband and wife to be happy."

Wagonloads of Sin



In the time of the **Chidah (R' Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai)** there lived a *talmid chochom* who suffered from terrible illness and pain. In despair, he decided to visit the Chidah and ask for a blessing.

When he entered the Chidah's *Beis Medrash*, he found the great man giving a shiur on a certain topic in the Gemara. Not wanting to disturb, he sat quietly in the back waiting until the Chidah finished.

His journey to the Chidah had been a long and tiring one, and in the warmth of the *Beis Medrash*, the *talmid chochom* fell into a deep sleep.

Suddenly he felt like he was dead. He was surrounded by his family and friends who were escorting him to his final resting place. They eulogized him, they asked his forgiveness, and then they turned back to their homes, and he was left alone.

The quiet of the grave was soon broken as an angel came to escort him to the Heavenly Court for judgment. It's a long way from this world to the next, and the *talmid chochom* found it exhausting as he walked with the angel. When the angel said it would take two days of walking to reach, the *talmid chochom* was shocked, "Two days? I'm exhausted. I can't walk much farther."

As they were speaking, he heard the sound of a carriage approaching. He looked up hopefully, but saw it was sagging beneath the weight of its heavy load – a huge trunk.

The *talmid chochom* asked the driver, "Could I possibly get a ride with you?" The driver laughed, "Do you have any idea what is in the trunk? It's filled with your sins. Tell me, do you really want to ride with the sins that will implicate you?"

The man stared in horrified disbelief. Could this really contain his sins? Impossible! He hadn't committed so many sins in his lifetime! Again, the driver laughed, "This? This is nothing! There wasn't enough room in my carriage for all your sins; there are dozens more coming after me!"

The *talmid chochom* saw that, indeed, more carriages were following on the road. As each of them passed he asked the driver what load he was carrying, and with a sinking heart, he heard the same answer – they were each carrying his sins.

Finally, the dismal convoy came to an end. Only one more coach drove up, a small one bearing an undersized trunk. Almost in despair, the *talmid chochom* asked the driver what he was carrying. "Oh, this small trunk? It contains your *mitzvos*."

The verdict seemed to be a foregone conclusion. On one side, stacked so high you couldn't even see the top, were the boxes of sins; on the other side the pitifully small box that held the *mitzvos*.

A voice intoned, "He shall be brought to *Gehinnom*." Two demons immediately appeared at the man's side to bring him to where he would carry out his dreaded sentence. - Before they could move, an angel dressed in gleaming white appeared, "Where are you taking him?" he demanded. The demons replied, "To *Gehinnom*."

The angel turned to the judges of the Heavenly Tribunal. "Have you taken into consideration the terrible suffering this man went through in the physical world?" - The judges began to leaf through the book of the man's life. Seeing the suffering he'd undergone; they ordered that half of the sin-filled crates be discarded. "And what about the illnesses? Have you considered them?" Again, the judges

looked through the book, and again they reduced the number of crates. "And what about the problems with his family?" More crates disappeared. "And his financial troubles?"

By this time the scale was almost equal. But the sins still weighed heavy. The angel looked at the scale and asked the judge. "Are there more *yissurim*, perhaps, a bit more suffering?" - The man watched in disbelief. He could no longer control himself. "More suffering!" the man screamed, "More suffering! Can't I have just a little more suffering?"

And then he awoke. He wasn't dead. He wasn't in the grave. He wasn't facing the Heavenly Court. He was in the *Beis Medrash* of the Chidah, who was just finishing up his *shiur*.

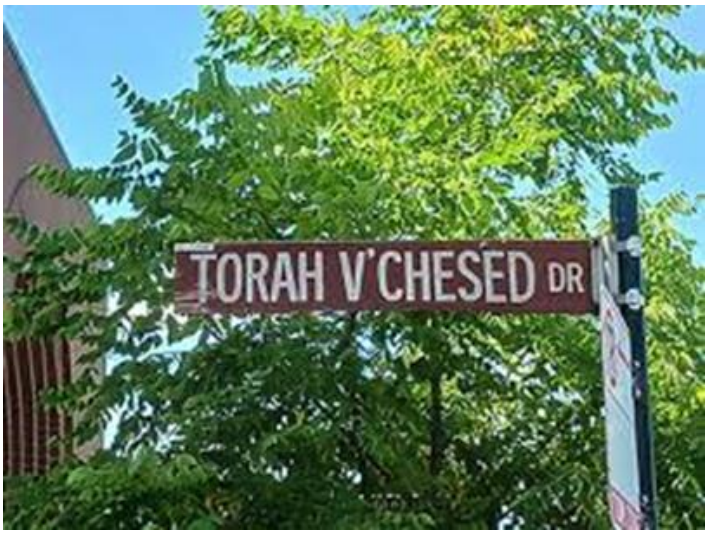
The Chidah saw the stranger and courteously asked him what he could do to help him. The *talmid chochom* told him fervently, "I don't need any help. I have everything I need – and I accept it all with love." ***[This story was relayed by R' Ovadiah Hadayah, a mekubal and Chief Rav of Pesach Tikva]*** (**Stories of Spirit and Faith**)

"We should be as careful of our actions in life just as a person playing chess thinks carefully before making any move. Always weigh what you are planning to do to see if you might have cause to regret your move." ~ R' Bunim of Peshischa

Early one morning, the Rebbe of Radishitz zt"l said "A special guest has arrived today. It's his first visit. He won't come again, so I want to honour him properly. The guest is 'Today.' - It came today, and it will never come back…" because time wasted is gone forever.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Essential Duo



Each of us needs to have Torah and Chessed. Possessing just one isn't sufficient. The Gemara tells us that **תורה תחלתה גמילות חסדים וסופה גמילות חסדים** - the beginning and end of Torah is performance of kindness, as the Torah begins with Hashem clothing Adam and his wife and concludes with the burial of Moshe.

Here are some allusions to possessing Torah and Chessed:

- The Gematria of **גמילות חסדים** is 611, the same as **תורה**.
- The term **תורת חסד** hints that we should possess Torah along with Chessed.
- In the Parsha of Matan Torah, Parshas Yisro, we have 72 Pesukim. This is the numerical value of the word **חסד**, again indicating that we need Chessed and Torah.

The following are some teachings that discuss Torah and Chessed.

a) R' Elazar told his students that to be spared from the **חבלי משיח**, pangs of Moshiach, one should occupy himself in the study of Torah and acts of kindness (Chessed).

b) The Gemara relates that Rabba who engaged in Torah lived for 40 years whereas Abaye who engaged in Torah and acts of kindness lived until 60.



c) Whoever engages in Torah study and bestowing kindness merits glory and wealth.

d) When we engage in studying Torah and perform acts of Chessed, the Yetzer Hara is given over to us.

What are ways to improve with Chessed? Chessed may include helping another with learning Torah, giving encouragement, opening a Gemach or even just smiling to someone.





How much mussar is a person required to learn every day? And what kind of mussar is best to learn?

How much mussar depends on who you are. If you are a talmid in a yeshiva, then you must keep the sedorim of the yeshiva. You cannot go off someplace by yourself and be a failure in what the yeshiva requires of you. However, there is time. There is enough time to learn mussar. There's time bein hasdorim. There's time Friday afternoon. When the yeshiva disperses you can still sit and learn mussar; there is time.

Now, how much time should you allot in your spare time also depends on who you are. But this I can tell you. That if you invest time in mussar, you're investing in your future. You're not giving away time, you're gaining greatness! Mussar means to develop your mind in the model of the great truths of the Torah in an abstract form - in the form that's most useful for people who like to think.

Now what kind of mussar? I would say that at the beginning you should spend more time on Mesillas Yesharim, and on the Rambam - his Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah, Hilchos Teshuva and Hilchos Dei'os. Also, Rabbeinu Yonah Shaarei Teshuva and Chovos Halevovos. Other seforim could come later. But these that I just mentioned, I think should be the fundamental reform to study.



Is it okay for me to play pool, whether at the pool hall or at home?

If you go to the Billiards, then you have to know that it says in Tehillim **אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמָד וּבְמוֹשַׁב לֵצִים לֹא יָשָׁב** - "*Praiseworthy is the man who did not walk after the advice of the wicked, and on the path of the sinners he did not stand, and in the company of scoffers he did not sit*" (Tehillim 1:1).

A place of leitzim is no place for a Jew to be. A billiards hall is a place of scoffers. People who spend their free time playing billiards are scoffing at the purpose of life. Even though you're just going for enjoyment, let's say. You don't mean any harm. Still, if you're standing among leitzim then you must know that you're becoming a leitz. You can't help it. You are what your environment is. - Remember what I'm telling you now – you are what your environment is!

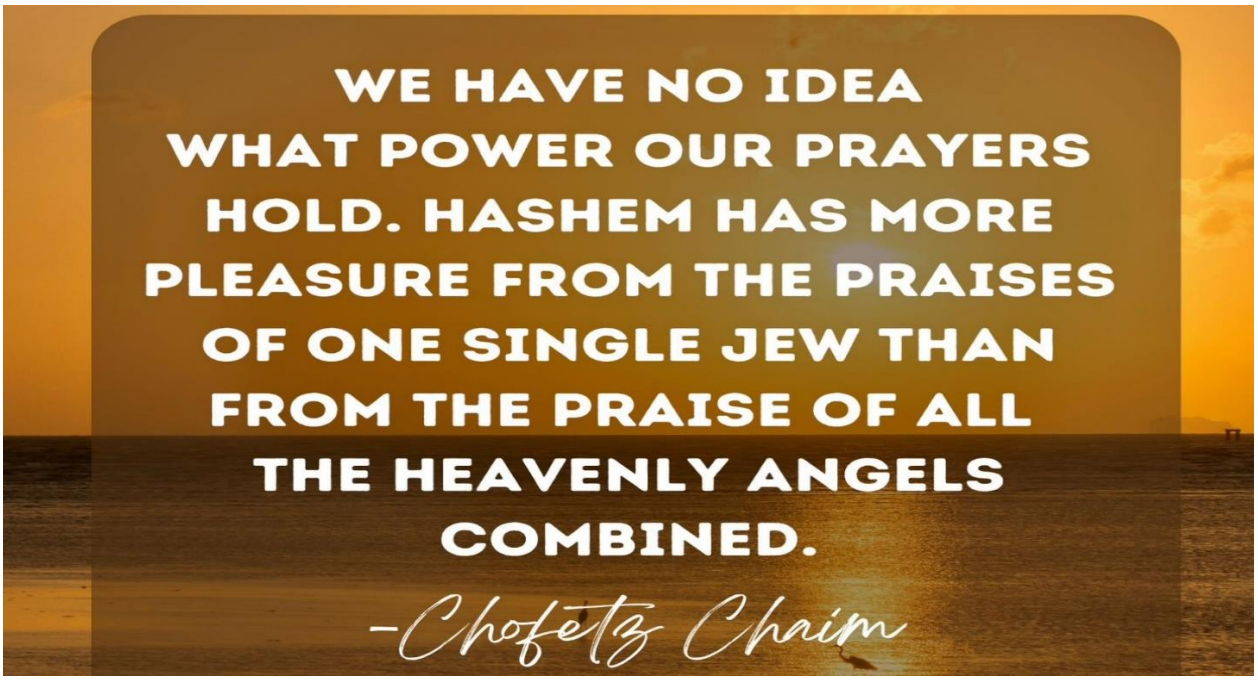
Now, if you do it because it's parnassah, you can't help it. Let's say you're a plumber and you were hired to fix the toilet in the Billiards.

OK, what can you do already?! You'll have to pass through. But if you choose to go there, then Hashem says, "*You are identified by the environment that you choose.*"

Absolutely, it's wrong to go to the Billiards! Now, you want to play billiards at home? Why play billiards? There are other, better things you can do. But you want to play billiards? OK, could be. But what about utilizing the time for something worthwhile?

I would say, better take a walk. You can't take a walk? You can't walk at night because it's dangerous to walk on the street? So you walk in your apartment back and forth. Open the windows in your house so you'll have fresh air coming in, walk back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. It's good exercise. It's much better exercise than playing billiards.

Playing billiards means that you are imitating the gentiles. Why are you imitating the gentiles?! Get exercise instead. Your feet are moving when you're walking and your whole body is exercising. It's much healthier for you if you walk around in the house back and forth. Much better than playing billiards.





Why is it that out of all animals, it's monkeys that resemble man most?

And the answer is that if you make a blood analysis, you'll discover that there are some animals whose blood resembles human blood more than monkeys' blood does. A monkey has no more intelligence than a dog. In fact, the porpoise – it's a marine mammal – can learn more tricks than a monkey.

We shouldn't be deceived by the fact that a monkey in a certain manner resembles a human being. In intelligence, he is no better than other animals. The fact is that in circuses they have trained porpoises to come out of the water and balance balls on their nose. They leap over certain hurdles, and they can do tricks – remarkable things they've been taught to do and they're considered intelligent marine mammals, if animals could be called intelligent. But monkeys, no matter how much you try, you'll never teach them to do what a human being has to do. Even what a seven-year-old boy or a three-year-old boy can do, a monkey will never learn to do.

Of course, there's a big ballyhoo in the magazines. They say monkeys have been trained to do this and they're making progress and soon who knows what's going to happen?! I'll tell you what's going to happen. Thousands of years will pass by, and they'll still be plain monkeys. And why they resemble human beings? Well, resemblance doesn't mean anything.

We shouldn't allow ourselves to be deceived by the claims of evolutionists. This has nothing to do with evolution.



How can we stop people from talking during chazaras hashatz and kriyas haTorah?

And the answer is that you must read to them what is written in the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch. It says kol hasach sicha beteila b'soch chazaras hashatz, anybody who talks unnecessary talk – now unnecessary talk means, if it's something that's dangerous, so you have to tell someone watch out. Otherwise, you don't talk. And if you do talk then, harei zeh chotei, he's a sinner, v'goarin bo, and you have to scold him.

All around that's how it should be; if you see somebody talking everybody should start shouting "Sha! Sha! Sha!" All around. V'gadol avono m'niso, his sin is too big to forgive. That's a terrible thing to say. His sin is too big to forgive because it's a sin of chillul Hashem.

If everybody is standing or sitting in shul and the shatz, the leader, is speaking for them to Hakodosh Baruch Hu, and this '*nincompoop*', this empty head, this letz, turns to his neighbor to exchange idle conversation, it means that he is negating everything that goes on. Nothing is worth anything in comparison to his little unimportant desires. And so it's chillul Hashem; he's profaning the glory of Hashem. Gadol avono m'niso! That sin can never be forgiven.

Even if you want to do teshuva you cannot repent from chillul Hashem. And you have to say it over and over in the ears of the people. - Now don't say "Don't be melamed chova on the Am Yisrael", because the Shulchan Aruch says that, the Tur says that. So what you're saying is "Don't teach Tur to the people."

People must be told! You have to throw it in their teeth again and again, until finally some people will listen.



וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁתֵּה אֲדֹנִי *She said, drink, my lord*. (24:18)

Eliezer asked Rivkah (Imeinu) if she had water to spare. The young girl's actions, her outstanding chesed, kindness, in not only providing for Eliezer, but also for his camels, indicated the type of person she was. In addition, she did not tarry in carrying out his request. As soon as Eliezer asked her for water, she immediately ran to do his bidding.

These two aspects of Rivkah's character are evident. Another one of her attributes is often overlooked, but should be underscored: ***derech eretz***, manners, respect, human decency. This, explains **Horav Yitzchak Yaakov Ruderman, zl,** is to be gleaned from the word אֲדֹנִי, my lord/master. Rivkah did not know Eliezer, yet she addressed him with respect. This was probably the way in which she spoke to everyone.

Indeed, acting with derech eretz is the foundation upon which our Torah stands. Regardless of the person who stands before us, we must always address him or her respectfully.

Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, zl, Rav of Vilna and pre-World War II gadol ha'dor, preeminent leader of European Torah Jewry, would greet and treat anyone who passed his door with the utmost care and respect.

"Hashem helps the moment a person doesn't see any natural means for his salvation." ~ The Chazon Ish.

וְהָיָה הַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַטִּי־נָא כַדֵּךְ וְאֶשְׁתֶּה וְאָמְרָה שְׁתֵּה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה אֹתָהּ הוֹכַחְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ - ***Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, "Please tip over your jug so I may drink," and who replies, "Drink, and I will water your camels," her will You have designated for Your servant***. (24:14)

אֹתָהּ הוֹכַחְתָּ, "***He will You have designated***": *She is fitting for Yitzchak Avinu due to her performance of acts of lovingkindness. Such a girl is worthy of entering the home of Avraham Avinu, the Patriarch who personified gemillas chesed, acts of lovingkindness.*



While offering to give water also for the camels was certainly an act of thoughtfulness and chesed, was that all it was?

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, observes that there was another factor – something about the manner in which she carried out her act of kindness. The Torah states, וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁתֵּה אֲדֹנִי וַתְּמַהֵר וַתֹּרֶד כַּדָּהּ - "***And she said, 'Drink, my master' and she quickly lowered her jug***" (ibid 24:18).

Rav Sholom asks: What is the difference between lowering the pail in the natural manner and lowering it quickly? Obviously, if the Torah chose to immortalize the word, וַתְּמַהֵר, "***And she quickly***" (lowered the pail), it indicates that the alacrity with which Rivkah (Imeinu) carried out her kindness was noteworthy and made all of the difference in the world. Her promptness elevated an act of kindness to such a sphere of sanctity that it was forever perpetuated in the Torah.

Rav Sholom goes so far as to assert that the barometer for determining whether an act of chesed is motivated by one's good heart is alacrity. When one cares, he acts quickly. It is not the act that shows, but the attitude that accompanies it which demonstrates one's purity of heart.

The time differential between lowering the pail quickly versus normally is probably a second or two – but those two seconds demonstrate that the act of chesed is heartfelt!

We perform favours for people. We perform acts of chesed. Some of us go to great lengths to help others – to lend money, spend time, give advice, be there in a time of need – whether real or imagined – but how are these wonderful acts executed? Are they performed begrudgingly, because we must, or because we want to? That is a question which is answered in the manner in which we carry out our kindness.

A ben Torah was having difficulty in finding his mate due to a not-so-simple demand that was non-negotiable. He had an elderly mother to whom he was extremely attached. He attended to her many needs and was always present to see to it that her twilight years were not spent in solitude. Any girl whom he would marry would have to move into his mother's apartment with him.

Understandably, it would take a special young woman to accept such a lifestyle from the onset of her marriage. Concerned relatives of this bachur, young man, approached **Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zl**, for advice. Perhaps he could speak to the bachur and explain to him that no girl in her right mind would initially enter into matrimony under such trying conditions. To expect so much from a young woman was unrealistic.

Imagine their surprise when Rav Shlomo Zalmen agreed with the bachur!

The primary criterion for a girl to qualify as a spouse with whom to share a Torah life and build a Torah home is gemillas chesed. A spouse who lacks the sensitivity for her husband's aged mother is deficient in her middah, attribute, of chesed. - The gadol hador had spoken. He left no room for discussion.

A few months passed, and the bachur met his bashert. He became engaged to a special young woman who was willing to move in with his mother and assist in her care.

Upon hearing the wonderful news, Rav Shlomo Zalmen sent for the chosson. Rav Shlomo Zalmen wished him all the best, then said, "When you were looking for a spouse and the question was for what qualities in a girl should one seek, I said that priority number one was gemillas chesed. Now that you have found a special kallah, it is my wish to inform you that it is incumbent upon you to move your mother into a senior citizens home that will provide for her needs on a constant basis. Your new kallah should not be relegated to carry such a load. While she has demonstrated her attribute of chesed by her willingness to accept upon herself to share with you in assisting your mother, it is nonetheless your primary responsibility – not that of your wife.



וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל ***Now Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem had blessed him with everything***. (24:1)

We think of life as measured by years: a long life is one during which one has lived many years; a short life is defined the opposite way.

Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, derives from the above pasuk that we should measure life by days – complete days. He quotes the **Zohar HaKadosh**, who teaches that at the beginning of each day, a person's forthcoming "day" asks him, "What will it be today?" What type of day will you have? Will you stand up to the challenges and tests

prepared for you by the yetzer hora, evil inclination? Will your yetzer tov, good inclination, rally and give you the resolution and fortitude to overcome, to triumph?

Hence, when a person (at the end of his "one hundred and twenty years") stands before the Heavenly Tribunal and claims success for a life well lived, he might be shocked to realize how many deficient days he has had. He will be mortified to confront the reality that he has not lived such a long life after all. In fact, when he tallies up the sum total of his complete days, he will be saddened to note that he has had a very short lifespan.

Avraham Avinu lived a life of perfection, in which every moment of every day was used constructively. Thus, he was **בָּא בַּיָּמִים**, "came with all of his day."

How does one merit to live such a life? What is the key component that one should employ? What perspective should one maintain in order to live every day to its fullest?

I think the answer lies in the concluding words of the pasuk: **וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל**, "*And Hashem blessed Avraham with everything*." When a person acknowledges that everything in life is a blessing from Hashem -- **בַּכֹּל** – everything -- the good and (what seems to be) the bad are all part of Hashem's blessing, then the person's perspective on his day – the various events, incidents, challenges – highs and lows – are all accepted as having been Heavenly decreed. Such a person goes about his day with complete equanimity, with total faith in Hashem. Thus, every day is complete – no ups and downs. Everything is up, since it emanates from Hashem. His entire life is lived to fulfill the ratzon, will, of Hashem.

Coincidence is a word that should be erased from the lexicon of the observant Jew. Coincidence and chance are two words that are heretical. Nothing happens "under the Heavens." Without Hashem's decree, nothing would happen – period.

Prior to the **Satmar Rebbe's** chuppah, his father, the saintly **Kedushas Yom Tov** asked him, "Do you know why the chuppah, wedding canopy, takes place beneath the stars, outside (preferably) and not in a building?

It is to remind the chosson and kallah to look up to Heaven and rely solely on Heaven. It would be a grave error to place one's trust in his father/father-in-law or the dowry one has been promised." It is Heaven – and only Heaven -- upon whom we should place our trust."

ברך עלינו... את השנה הזאת ***Bless upon us… this year.***

While a person's prosperity is decided on an annual basis, we pray for prosperity on a daily basis. Our allotment can be withheld due to sins on our part. Hashem reviews our behaviour during the year.

For instance, if on Rosh Hashanah it had been decided that we should be blessed with good fortune, and, during the course of the year, we prove ourselves unworthy of such a fortuitous blessing – it might be reversed. Hashem grants us funds for a purpose. Obviously, our family takes precedence, but prior to living luxuriously and sustaining ourselves to the point of gluttony, we should think of others who are in need – who would suffice with just the simple things in life.

Furthermore, the **Baal Shem Tov** teaches that, on a daily basis, Hashem decides the amount of pleasure and satisfaction each of us will derive from our present possessions. - This is certainly a reason to pray. Just because we have, does not mean that we will keep it, and, even if we keep it, if we do not pray, we might not enjoy it. All too often we take things for granted. We must not fail to acknowledge that everything that we have is a gift – a special gift – for a special purpose.

וְאוּלַי לֹא תֵלֵךְ הָאִשָּׁה אַחֲרָי ***Perhaps the woman will not follow me?*** (24:39)

Rashi explains that Eliezer had a daughter whom he would have liked to see married to Yitzchak Avinu. Thus, he had a vested interest in the success or failure of his mission. Failure meant that Yitzchak might become his son-in-law. This could create pressure on even the most objective mind.

The commentators wonder why, specifically at this point, when the shidduch has been successfully concluded, that Rashi mentions Eliezer's personal negios, vested interests, rather than doing so earlier, when Avraham Avinu had originally sent him on the mission.

The accepted explanation rendered by the Rishonim is that Eliezer was well aware that, being from Canaan, he was considered an arur, cursed, and an arur cannot marry with Avraham Avinu's seed, who is a baruch, blessed. It was after Lavan referred to Eliezer as a baruch, that Eliezer felt that he could possibly enter into matrimony with Avraham.

The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, offers a powerful insight. As long as Eliezer had a vested interest, he did not realize that his decision was impaired by his personal agenda. We are blinded by our special concerns to the point that we believe that we are acting in good faith, all the while unaware that everything we do is impugned by our personal stake in the matter.

Eliezer was influenced by his own interests, thus unable to discern that he would have been quite pleased if Rivkah's family would have refused the match. Only later did he sense his misgivings, because he was no longer nogea b'davar.

"You are not stuck with this impulse or that. You were given free will. Use it." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe.

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים ***Now Avraham was old, well on in years***. (24:1)

Did Avraham Avinu suddenly become old? - The Midrash Tanchuma teaches that when Sarah Imeinu died, Avraham began to age.



Horav Mordechai Eliyahu, zl, explains that so long as Sarah stood by the Patriarch's side, he did not sense that he had aged. She encouraged and spurred him to continue his holy work. When his life's companion, his major source of inspiration, was taken from him, Avraham no longer had by his side that spiritual force that motivated him to maintain his youthful endeavors.

The Rishon L'Tzion adds that this unique ability to galvanize the individual to aspire for greater success and achievement is one of the character traits that Sarah imbued in her descendants – both male and female.

The inspiration to achieve greater heights, to climb the mountain of success, is ingrained in the Jewish psyche from our Matriarch. While it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to aspire to Sarah's personal greatness, nothing prevents us from being "like" Sarah.

Horav Aryeh Levine, zl, was known as the Tzaddik of Yerushalayim. When one reads his biography, he gets a true glimpse into the "power behind the throne," the woman who was his Rebbetzin, the individual who took the least credit, but probably was the single most factor in catalyzing his incredible achievements. Indeed, whenever people would recall good deeds that he had carried out, he immediately would respond, "But what am I, considering the things she did? She was a great soul."

Rav Aryeh was wont to say that all of his good qualities came to him from her strength: "If not for her, I could not possibly have

withstood the days of hunger during the First World War. Her bitachon, trust in the Almighty, was greater than mine."

Perhaps the best description of this holy woman and her devotion to her husband are presented by Rav Aryeh himself in a letter of tribute he wrote following her passing:

"My heart grieves, and my spirit mourns. For how shall I find consolation for my great misfortune, when my greatest treasure, my crowning glory, was taken from me? "My anguish is great, and my woe is awesome. Who could ever describe her devotion and goodness?

Another like her is hardly to be found – so pure of spirit, with a heart as wide in generosity as the entrance to a palace, with a sensitivity of kindness and compassion that strove to give and help every step of the way. She had a cheerful smile for everyone and spread out her compassion to reach each and every living being.

"She was all kindliness and compassion, all holiness. Her entire life was an unbroken, uninterrupted song of praise and service to G-d, the life-giver of the world. Every moment of her life was another stanza, another bar of melody in her song of eternity. But, above all, she watched her tongue, to a most extraordinary degree. Her pure, precious spirit returned to its place of origin on High, as clean and spotless as on the day it descended into the world, but more shining, sparkling and radiant, more grace-filled and pure.

"Old age brought her no cause for shame or disgrace. She never saw sin or evil in any man; she never brought pain to any heart. The spirit of G-d and the spirit of human beings were both pleased with her. Never did she grow haughty or raise her eyes in arrogance – not to the slightest extent. The downtrodden and the wretched were the friends she made. Let them always relate her deeds, chart her ways and make her qualities their own. She ever turned to those left forsaken in the corner, embittered in spirit, impoverished by need; and the poor and the needy turned to her for comfort – to that spirit as pure as the very essence of Heaven. To all those who sought and needed her, she did not leave anyone like her in the world."

וַיָּרָץ הָעֶבֶד לִקְרָאתָהּ *The servant ran towards her.* (24:17)



Rashi says that Eliezer ran towards Rivkah when he saw the water rising towards her. Clearly, this was an outstanding display of the supernatural. Rivkah must have been an impressive woman to have merited such "reverence."

If this is the case, why did Eliezer feel the need to test her to see how she would react when he asked for water for his camels? What greater indication of her suitability for Yitzchak Avinu did he need than seeing nature altered for her?

The well-known explanation, attributed to **Horav Yechezkel, zl, m'Kozmir**, is that a person is judged according to his middos tovos, positive character traits, not his ability to perform miracles. Delving in the supernatural is not an accurate measure of a man, since it says nothing about his middos. - This explains why Eliezer sought a girl who embodied the middah of chesed, kindness. - What about emunah, faith, in Hashem? Surely, this must play a critical role in developing one's spiritual character.

Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl, teaches us a compelling lesson concerning the middah of chesed. Someone who instinctively performs chesed also recognizes when he is the beneficiary of someone else's kindness. Such a person feels a sense of hakoras hatov, gratitude; thus, he will have a desire to repay the kindness that he has received.

Eliezer understood that a girl who possesses such a powerful middah of chesed would ostensibly appreciate everything that Hashem does for her and would naturally gravitate to serving the Almighty.

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים ***Now Avraham was old, well on in years***. (24:1)

The word **זָקֵן**, old, implies that the individual has lived an increased number of days. Likewise, **בָּא בַּיָּמִים**, well on in years, indicates that we are not talking about a young person. Zakein and ba ba'yamim are redundant to one another. Why are they both used in the same pasuk?

Chazal explain that some people have experienced physical longevity, ziknah, but their days are incomplete. Likewise, there are those who age prematurely, although their length of days are actually short. Avraham Avinu's ziknah, old age, was the result of a full life, well-lived in the service of the Almighty.

The Shlah HaKodesh, zl, derives a profound lesson from the coupling of zakein with ba ba'yamim.

Avraham Avinu teaches us that one should make sure that he experiences positive achievement every day of his life. Otherwise, that day is rendered lifeless. In order that a day of life be considered a "living" day, it is necessary for one to infuse that day with life by doing something positive and good.

וַיִּגְוַע וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם בְּשֵׂיבָה טוֹבָה זָקֵן וְשָׂבֵעַ ***And Avraham expired and died at a good old age***. (25:8)

The Talmud Bava Basra 91a, relates that, on the day of Avraham Avinu's passing, the leaders of the world lamented his death with the following eulogy. "*Woe to the world which lost its manhig, leader/guide; woe to the ship that lost its kavarnit, captain.*"

In his Derech Tamim, **Horav Avraham, Rav of Berezdiv**, Western Ukraine, explains the meaning of what appears to be a double eulogy. Avraham was the manhig, leader, of the world. He guided and cared for each individual person, his needs: physical, material and spiritual. He saw to it that no one infringed on his fellowman. Whatever property belonged to a person – stayed that way. He cared for the

"little guy," as well as the most powerful, influential individual. Second, as the primary expounder of the monotheistic belief, he was Hashem's number one proponent in the world. He preached belief in the Creator of Heaven and earth; maintaining that the G-d of Creation was also the G-d of history.

He was ship's captain. Life in the world was like a journey across the sea in a turbulent storm. The winds are pushing the ship to and fro, with the possibility of capsizing very real.



A captain guides the ship and disciplines its sailors. He knows when to turn right and when to veer left. A leader must, likewise, know when to say yes and when to say no.

The journey of life can allegorically be compared to someone standing on a thin, long board in the sea during a great storm. He must balance himself perfectly, since any sway to the left or right will cause him to fall and drown. Without help to balance himself, he stands little chance of survival.

We go through life balancing ourselves on that thin board. One wrong move, and we drown in the sea of contemporary society with its bankrupt morals and misplaced sense of ethics. We need a strong captain, someone to tell us, to guide us, without whom we do not stand a chance of survival.

This is what Avraham was to the world. This is what every gadol, Torah leader, is to the Jewish world.

To supplement the above, **K'Motzei Shalal Rav**, quotes the **Eshel Avraham**, who goes one step further. When the world loses its leader – it is not the end of the world. Other leaders will step into place and take over. Indeed, before the "sun" of one leader sets, the "sun" of the next leader is already beginning to shine, but "woe" to the ship that has lost its captain. - When the ship is at sea in the midst of a storm – who will be the captain's replacement?



וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה ***Sarah's life was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years***. (23:1)

The Torah informs us that Sarah Imeinu lived to be one hundred and twenty-seven years old. We are now aware of the Matriarch's longevity, but what about her life? Very little is recorded concerning her actual life, what happened, what she did, what type of person she was?: simple questions whose answers would characterize the first Matriarch.

We have some idea concerning her outreach activities. Chazal teach that Sarah converted the women, while Avraham Avinu converted the men. They derive this from the pasuk, וְאֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְחָרָן, "***And the souls which they made in Charan***" (Bereishis 12:5).

Sarah taught monotheism alongside Avraham. Together, they succeeded in reaching out to the pagan population. This is taught to us by Chazal. The Torah, however, does not elaborate about Sarah. Why are we not accorded a better perspective on the life and personality of this elusive Matriarch?

one hundred and twenty-seven years is a long time. Certainly, Sarah accomplished much during her life that would serve as a worthy inspiration to her descendants.

Apparently, Sarah Imeinu's concealment from the public eye is her greatest virtue and most "prominent" quality. When the angels who visited Avraham inquired concerning Sarah's whereabouts, אַיֵּה שָׂרָה

אִשְׁתֶּךָ, "*Where is Sarah, your wife?*" the Patriarch had replied, הִנֵּה בָאֹהֶל, "*Behold! She is in the tent!*" (Bereishis 18:9). Rashi comments, צְנוּעָה הִיא, "*Sarah is a private person.*"

Avraham was not simply informing them of Sarah's present location, but rather, he was intimating a powerful and penetrating characterization of his wife: "She is in the tent! Sarah is a private person!" Sarah was modeling for her daughters throughout the future generations regarding the role of a bas Yisrael.

The most fitting description of a Jewish girl/woman is: הִנֵּה בָאֹהֶל – "***She is in the tent***." This does not mean, of course that the Jewish woman must remain sequestered in the home, locked up in the kitchen – as many secularists and modernists would have you think the Torah is suggesting. This description does not imply inferiority, since we know that Sarah was superior to Avraham in nevuah, prophecy.

David Hamelech writes in Tehillim 45:14, כָּל־כְּבוּדָּה בַת־מֶלֶךְ פְּנִימָה, "***The entire glory of the daughter of the King lies on the inside***."

This pasuk tells it all. A Jewish girl/woman is a bas melech, daughter of the King; hence, she is different than her non-Jewish female counterpart. The Jewish woman neither needs, nor is it appropriate for her, to be involved on the public stage, in the spotlight, calling attention to herself. It is not something that she craves, because she is the daughter of the King. She is above it.

Furthermore, David Hamelech is not only addressing the private nature of the female role, but he is also issuing a statement concerning the religious experience in general: it does not have to be filled with marching bands and advertisements, calling attention to one's religious service. The religious experience is designed to be between man and G-d.

While the concept of tznius applies to both men and women, the private sphere should be the dominant area of a woman's life. Thus,

we know very little concerning the life of Sarah Imeinu. After all, she was a tzenuah!

Women throughout the generations have always been defined and presented as figures of great moral strength – especially during periods of crisis. After Sarah passed away, no one was able to fill her shoes until Yitzchak Avinu married Rivkah Imeinu and brought her to his mother's tent. Immediately, the daughter-in-law revived the spiritual atmosphere that had been missing since Sarah's passing.

Rivkah assumed the role of Matriarch. She was the one who saw through the ruse of Eisav. She perceived his malevolent nature. Her moral courage helped Yaakov to retrieve the blessings, thereby preserving the future of Klal Yisrael.

Tanach constantly reiterates this idea, and Chazal underscore it. It was the women who refused to participate in the creation of the Golden Calf, and it has been the nashim tzidkanios, righteous woman of every generation, who have given the Jewish People their moral strength to survive and triumph over the vicissitudes that we face individually and collectively as a nation.

In a shmuess, ethical discourse, on the religious function of a bas Yisrael, **Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl**, focuses on a practical question: How do we determine the gadlus, greatness, of a woman? We hear of gadlus ba'Torah, distinction in Torah erudition; likewise, we are aware of gadlus in chesed, kindness. There are individuals who stand out in areas of philanthropy, but what defines a woman's gadlus?

The Chafetz Chaim was a gadol; so was the **Chazon Ish**. Does this mean that their wives were also distinguished? At first, Rav Shimshon posits that the term gadlus applies to men. Since the areas of women's involvement are limited, they are all great! After hearing, however that the **Gaon, zl, m'Vilna**, had etched on his late wife's monument: ***Lo hinichah acharehah k'mosah, "She left over none***

other like her," we understand that apparently there is a concept of gadlus of a woman.

Now that we know of this concept – how does one earn the distinction? Let us face it. Men are in the public eye. Therefore, others view and scrutinize their actions. Thus, they have the ability to inspire others. What does the average person observe concerning a woman's avodas ha'kodesh, service to the Almighty?

Imagine entering the home of the Gaon m'Vilna to find the sage in his study, deeply engrossed in a most difficult sugya, topic, in the Talmud. One observation is enough to tell us that we are privy to greatness. The Gaon's encyclopedic knowledge, brilliant mind, and exceptional diligence are all evident.

Now, we pass through the house in search of the rebbetzin. She is in the kitchen preparing the Shabbos meal. To paraphrase Rav Shimshon, "Is her kugel better than anyone else's?" What determined the gadlus of the Gaon's wife?

Clearly, if the Gaon made such a statement concerning his wife, it was true. Since her virtue was not prominent, however, how should we, who did not see or hear, define her area of distinction?

This question applies to all women. Since tznius is their salient characteristic, how are we able to determine their gadlus?

Rav Shimshon quotes David Hamelech's description of a tzaddik and applies it appropriately to his female counterpart. The Psalmist says צַדִּיק כַּתָּמָר יִפְרָח, "***A righteous man will flourish like a date palm.***" (Tehillim 92:13).

The nature of a date palm is unlike that of other trees. It has a feature that is possibly due to its unusual height. Commensurate with the tree's height above ground are its roots below ground. In other words, if the tree is fifty feet high, its roots will spread fifty feet underground! A similar idea may be applied to man and woman in their contrasting roles. They both ascribe to a concept of gadlus

– but in different areas. The man distinguishes himself in the public arena, while the woman individualizes herself in an area hidden from the public eye.

Tzaddikim are compared to the date palm because its unusual height elevates it above all others. Thus, it may be detected from a distance. The righteous person stands out above the common man. He distinguishes himself in scholarship, piety, virtue and acts of loving-kindness. The woman does all of these, but her behaviour is not brought to anyone's attention. Her distinction is privacy. This is her greatness.

The Gaon m'Vilna was great. His wife was also great. His distinction was noticed by all, while her virtue was recognized only by those who had a discerning eye. When the Gaon said, "*She left no one to replace her*," he was reflecting his personal knowledge.

When we observe the awesome majestic height of a skyscraper, we seldom consider the depth of its foundation. Without a foundation that is very deep and extremely solid, the formidable structure would topple. Regrettably, no one takes notice of the foundation. They take it for granted. Undeniably, this reflects superficial shortsightedness, since the foundation is (at least) equally important.

Women are the foundation of Klal Yisrael. The proof: matrilineal lineage. A Jew's pedigree is determined according to his mother. She is the origin of his Yiddishkeit. She remains inconspicuous by nature. She does not need the public arena, because she is the daughter of the King.

Don't Leave! – "If I leave the Torah for one day, the Torah will leave me for two days." ~ The Chafetz Chaim on Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabbah 5:11

וְלָקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לִבְנִי לְיִצְחָק "***And take a wife for my son, for Yitzchak.***" (24:4)

Sixty-six pesukim are devoted to the search and eventual discovery of a wife for Yitzchak. This clearly underscores the significance of the institution of marriage and clarifies the qualities one should seek in choosing a mate.

In response to the overriding importance and often misunderstood nature of this subject, we will cite some ideas and advice from the gedolei Yisrael, Torah leaders, of previous generations.

In Choreb, **Horav S.R. Hirsch, z.l.**, speaks to the young man in search of his life's partner: "***When you choose a wife, remember that she is to be your companion in life, in building your home, in performing your life's task. You should choose accordingly. Wealth, physical beauty or brilliance of mind should not be the determining factors in your decision. Rather, you should seek a young woman who exemplifies richness of heart, beauty of character and common sense and intelligence. If you need money to set up your house and it is offered freely – take it. Woe to you and to your future household, however, if you are guided only by considerations of money.***

Study well the character of your future wife. Since character is revealed only by contact with real life, and since the young woman comes into contact with real life only with marriage, look well at her family who have already established its character in real life.

One should seek a mate whose physical, moral and emotional well-being makes them suitable for enduring the hardships and burdens of maintaining a household."

In describing one's mate, Horav Hirsch uses the word "companion". In the Hebrew translation, the word which is used is chavrusah

ba'chaim, as in study-partner/comrade in life. This is a new twist on the husband/wife relationship.

In a partnership, two people share in a project – or in a piece of property – with each one undertaking to perform his share of the work or to take care of his share of the property.

A companion / comrade / chavrusah is different – he/she shares in every aspect of a given endeavour. A companion accompanies an individual throughout his trip. A comrade never leaves his friend's side. Two partners, however, do not necessarily have to maintain such a relationship in order to be partners. One's wife is his chavrusah in life – for life.

Horav Shulsinger, Shlita, writes that when his granddaughter was of age, he came to his rebbe, **Horav Yaakov Kanievsky, z.l.**, the Steipler Rav, to ask him the specific qualities which he should look for in a young man.

The Steipler told him to look for these things: hasmadah, diligence in Torah study; middos tovos, good character traits; and seichal ha'yashar, common sense.

Horav Shulsinger asked the Steipler, "Since the young man was a masmid, diligent in his Torah study, and apparently a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, would he not in any case possess good character traits?"

The Steipler said, "Let me explain to you. A masmid is one who has diligently studied in the yeshivah for a number of years. He rarely leaves his shtender, table upon which his books rest, for idle chatter. He takes his studies seriously. Indeed, he has incredible shalom bayis, domestic harmony, with his shtender. It never asks him for anything – not to take out the garbage, not to go shopping, not to wash the floor. Never once did the shtender appear upset or depressed. Never did he have to appease or console his shtender. Never did the shtender become ill so that he would have to minister

to its needs. Suddenly, he has to leave the yeshivah and his trusty shtender to move in and begin a new life (in conjunction with the yeshivah) with another person, who has feelings, emotions, and needs. For this, one must have exemplary middos, because his hasmadah has not prepared him for this."

Upon hearing this, Horav Shulsinger asked, "If this is the case, if middos are to be the determining factor, why does everybody exalt the Torah learning? We should demand perfection in middos as the deciding factor of a ben-Torah."

The Steipler said, "If one does not learn, he has the possibility of becoming a wild animal who plunders and kills. Only through diligence in Torah study does one stand the chance of breaking the yetzer hara's, evil inclination, grip. Only then can he reign over his spiritual dimension. Only then can he become a true baal-middos."

Horav E.M. Shach, z.l., sums it up in a letter to one of his students, in which he instructs him to seek a young woman who is a baalas middos, of a refined character, who exemplifies the middah of chesed, kindness, caring for others.

Indeed, as Horav Shach states, Eliezer did not decide to take Rivkah because of the water that rose to her. Miracles did not impress him; middos tovos determined who would be the next Matriarch.

If more people would follow this criterion, it would truly be a phenomenon.

"You can sell tiny slivers of wood and become extremely wealthy, because it isn't the profession that gives wealth, but Hashem's blessings. - The only condition is that you must enjoy this type of work. If you are happy with your business, Hashem can help you become wealthy from it." ~ R' Elimelech of Lizensk zt"l

וְהָיָה הַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַטִּי־נָא כַדֵּךְ וְאֶשְׁתֶּה וְאָמְרָה שְׁתֵּה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה אֹתָהּ הוֹכַחְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק וּבָהּ אֵדַע כִּי־עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עִם־אֲדֹנִי "***Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, "'Please tip over your jug so I may drink' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,' her will You have designated for Your servant, for Yitzchak.***" (24:14)

That is exactly what happened. Rivkah passed the litmus test for becoming Yitzchak's wife. She demonstrated that she possessed exemplary character traits. Her act of kindness towards Eliezer and his camels indicated that she was a baalas chesed, kind, sensitive, caring person.

We have to ask ourselves: Is this enough to be the wife of Yitzchak, the Olah Temimah, perfect sacrifice? Is chesed all that one needs in order to become the wife of the one who lay still at the Akeidah, willing and ready to forfeit his life because his father was commanded so by Hashem?

While chesed is a laudable character trait, what about the other middos, should they not also play a role in determining one's character?

Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, z.l., derives from here an important lesson in human behaviour: when one succeeds in refining and perfecting even one character trait and internalizing this middah into his psyche, it affects every other middah in his personality. The perfection spreads throughout his essential character. He becomes a different human being.

When Rivkah demonstrated her remarkable act of chesed, it was an indication that all of her middos were exemplary. She was now worthy of becoming the next Matriarch.

"***Then Lavan and Besuel answered and said, 'The matter stemmed from Hashem.'***" וַיַּ֤עַן לָבָן֙ וּבְתוּאֵ֔ל וַיֹּאמְר֖וּ מֵיְהוָ֣ה יָצָ֔א הַדָּבָ֑ר לֹא נוּכַ֥ל דַּבֵּ֛ר אֵלֶ֖יךָ רַ֥ע אוֹ־טֽוֹב (24:50)

Three words – "מֵיְהוָ֣ה יָצָ֔א הַדָּבָ֑ר," "***the matter stemmed from Hashem***." Even the wicked Lavan and Besuel saw what so many who demonstrate spiritual myopia refuse to acknowledge: Everything comes from Hashem; He is the source of all that occurs.

When we take note of what happens around us and how everything has transpired, how the various pieces of the puzzle many of us call life just "seem" to fit together, we will realize that it can only be attributed to Hashem's guiding Hand.

Stories abound which demonstrate the concept of "mei'Hashem yatza ha'davar." One that is especially intriguing is told by **Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita**, in his sefer, "Tuvcha Yabiu." The young man about whom the story is related says that only through Divine intervention could he have been where he was and, consequently, discovered what he did.

It happened by "chance" that this young man was davening in one of the "shtiblach," little shuls, in the Zichron Moshe section of Yerushalayim. This was actually the very first time that he had prayed in a shtibel. At the end of davening, he felt "something" pushing him to look in on a shiur, class, going on in one of the little rooms off the main shul. He did not know why, but for "some" reason he felt compelled to enter the room and look at the Talmud that they were studying.

The young man reiterated that such a practice was totally atypical for him. Suddenly, he noticed that there were notes written on the page of Talmud that they were studying. At the bottom of the notes was a signature – that of his own grandfather!

He was shocked. His grandfather was a great scholar, who had been killed during the Holocaust. To the best of everyone's knowledge, his

Shas, set of Talmud, upon which he had written copious notes had also been destroyed. The family was bitter about the loss of the Shas since the notes were said to be of great significance to the study of Talmud. Additionally, this was a link to the past, a link that would keep his grandfather's "lips speaking from the grave."

As soon as the class was over, he approached the man who was studying from the volume to inquire from where he had gotten it. The man explained that after the war, he met a man who gave him the entire Shas as a gift, on the condition that he would take it with him to Eretz Yisrael.

"I would be delighted to return the Shas to its rightful family," he said to the young man.

One can only begin to imagine the great joy felt by the family as everyone discovered that the personal Shas of the family's patriarch had been found. After careful perusal, it was discovered that while their grandfather had written notes on many pages, it was only on this specific page that they "happened" to be studying that he had affixed his name.

The "Mesabev kol ha'sibos, cause of all causes" had "arranged" that this young man had davened for the first time in a shtibel, which "happened" to be in Zichron Moshe, where they "happened" to be studying the specific Tractate and the specific page upon which his martyred grandfather had signed his name to his notes. On that day – that place – that Tractate – that page – "mei' Hashem yatza ha'davar"!

"Before a person gives up his portion in the next world for others, let's see if he is willing to forgo some of his share in this world for others." ~ The Alter of Novardok.

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה "***Sarah's lifetime was***…" (23:1)

Life is a gift, a precious gift from Hashem. In the Talmud Gittin 64a, Chazal teach us the signs for determining a young child's maturity level. If one gives a child a stone and he proceeds to throw it away, but he keeps a nut which he has been given, it indicates that his mind is beginning to develop.

If one gives him an object which he is prepared to return to its owner after a while, it is a clear sign that he is mature. In other words, the ability to distinguish between what is a gift and what is not; and the awareness that one must return the gift when it is demanded, are clear indications of a growing mind.

Horav Avraham Pam, z.l., explains that life is a gift, a gift which we return after a while. One who does not understand this idea behaves as if he will live forever, not caring that he has no purpose in life, acting like an immature child. On the other hand, even a young person is capable of understanding the transitory nature of life and appreciating the unique gift granted to him by the Almighty. Thus, this young person who values every minute of this precious gift, is, despite his age, a mature person. Furthermore, one who does not value and appreciate the gift of life repudiates his Benefactor.

The Chafetz Chaim, z.l., was a person who valued the gift of life. I recently heard that his nephew, **Horav Chaim Yitzchak Pupko, z.l.**, who served him for twelve years, once got up his nerve and asked the Chafetz Chaim, "How old is the uncle?" The Chafetz Chaim seemingly ignored the question.

A few moments later, the Chafetz Chaim took an envelope of coins and handed it to his nephew. "Here, take this," he said.

A moment went by, and the Chafetz Chaim asked, "Are you not going to count what I gave you?"

"No," he responded. "It is not proper to count a gift."

"You are right," countered the Chafetz Chaim. "Life is a gift from Hashem. It is not proper to count it."

What an incredible thought, but that is why he was the Chafetz Chaim. Life is a gift and must, therefore, be cherished. Every minute is special, every minute an opportunity that should not be wasted. Alas, some people realize this only when they have almost lost it.

We are here for a reason. Life is short. Let us live it to its fullest – by making every minute count through serving Hashem.

וְהָיָה הַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַטִּי־נָא כַדֵּךְ וְאֶשְׁתֶּה וְאָמְרָה שְׁתֵּה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה אֹתָהּ הוֹכַחְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק וּבָהּ אֵדַע כִּי־עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עִם־אֲדֹנִי "***Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, "'Please tip over your jug so I may drink' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,' her will You have designated for Your servant, for Yitzchak.***" (24:14)



The Bais HaLevi submits that Eliezer tested Rivkah in two areas. First, he sought to ascertain if she was a gomeles chesed, one who performs kindness, by giving drink to someone whom she did not know. Of special interest to Eliezer was the fact that she did not have a cup for him. He would have to drink directly from the pitcher. She did not know if he had germs that would contaminate her pitcher. Would she still offer him to drink, or not?

Second, and of extreme significance, is what she would do after Eliezer drank from the pitcher. What would she do with her left-over water? Would she spill it out, thereby embarrassing the man to whom she had given water; or would she take the pitcher home and

share the water with her family, who might become ill as a result of drinking "contaminated" water?

The optimum for which he could hope was what ultimately occurred. She demonstrated her kindness by extending the pitcher to Eliezer. She also showed common sense when she took the left-over water and poured it for the camels.



The Bais HaLevi alludes to a very important principle, one that we often seem to ignore. Middos tovos, good character traits, such as pursuing chesed, going out of one's way to help another, are all wonderful and essential for one's spiritual development, but they should go hand in hand with seichel, common sense.

One who has no seichel will accomplish very little with his chesed. Sooner or later, he will do something foolish or hurt the feelings of the person he is trying to help. He means well, he wants to help, but he regrettably does not know how.

Common sense is a prerequisite for success. Seichel is more than a good idea; without it, one is lost!

The 3 Horses

A wagoner complained to the Chofetz Chaim that in a short time, three horses that provided his livelihood died. - The Chofetz Chaim was shaken to hear such words. "G-d forbid! Do you hear what you are saying? Is it the horses that provide you with a livelihood? It is Hashem who supports and sustains all!"

בָּרוּךְ ה' ... אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָזַב חַסְדּוֹ וַאֲמִתּוֹ מֵעִם אֲדֹנִי. אָנֹכִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ נָחַנִי ה' בֵּית אֲחֵי אֲדֹנִי "***Blessed is Hashem Who has not withheld His kindness and truth from my master. As for me, Hashem has guided me on the way to the house of my master's brother.***" (24:27-28)



What does Eliezer mean when he says, "Hashem has guided me"?

Horav Yerucham Levovitz, zl, interprets Eliezer's words to relate that Hashem took him by the hand and led him to this place. Hashem did not let go of his hand at any time during his journey. He never permitted him to falter or stray from the path to his destination.

Rav Yerucham continues to assert that this concept applies to all of us. If we were each to look back in life, each individual tracing his own unique "history", we will note that indeed Hashem has guided us along the way. We have just to contemplate the manner in which we all arrive at our destination, be it our station in life, our vocation, our mate, or simply our everyday successes, and we will see how Hashem guides us.

The notion of being in the "right place at the right time" means that Hashem has led us to be there at the appointed time in order to achieve success; such "coincidences" do not spontaneously occur. If the path towards our success "seems" smooth, it is because Hashem has guided us on that route.

"Everything that goes on in one's home is chessed. People think they are only raising children and doing nothing more. But to nurture children in Torah and Yiras Shamayim – this is chessed and Torah!" ~ R' Shalom Schwadron zt"l.

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל "***And Avraham (was) old, advanced in age, and Hashem blessed Avraham in all things***." (24:1)

Surely the Torah is not apprising us of Avraham's success in amassing material wealth. The Torah intends to teach us the true meaning of wealth. Success is not measured by quantity, but rather by quality. Everything Avraham Avinu possessed was worthy of blessing. To possess a fortune means nothing if that fortune is not blessed. Everything that Avraham had was a source of blessing to him. Why?

Horav Moshe Swift z.l. suggests that the answer lies in the fact that Avraham controlled his possessions, rather than the possessions dominating him. He had business dealings with various people; he was even compelled to bargain for a small plot of land to be used as a burial site. Yet, he never employed any form of unethical behaviour. He was never submissive to whims and passions. On the contrary, he always ruled over them. This was the greatest tribute to the Patriarch.

There is a remarkable difference between the man who permits himself to be driven by his material ambitions and the man who holds the reins controlling his moral integrity. To reach the end of one's lifespan, able to look back with pride at a life of self-discipline and honour, is truly a significant achievement and a most notable epitaph.



וַתֵּרֶד הָעַיְנָה וַתְּמַלֵּא כַדָּהּ וַתָּעַל. וַיָּרָץ הָעֶבֶד לִקְרָאתָהּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַגְמִיאִינִי נָא מְעַט־מַיִם מִכַּדֵּךְ "***And she went down to the well and filled her pitcher and came up. And the servant ran to meet her and said, 'Let me, please, gulp a little water out of your pitcher***.'" (24:16,17)

When one studies the narrative of the entire encounter between Eliezer and Rivkah, he assumes that the length of the text emphasizes Rivkah's kindness. Eliezer devised a system of testing

this young girl to determine if she was worthy to be the wife of Yitzchak, to take her place as the second Matriarch of Klal Yisrael.

Yet, one wonders why, after Eliezer saw that the water "rose up" to "greet" Rivkah, he still felt driven to test her. Does the water rise up for every individual? Did he need any greater indication that this was no ordinary young woman?

How often do we find that "nature" alters its course out of respect for a unique individual?

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, zt'l, offers a profound insight into the character of Rivkah Imeinu. At the moment when Rivkah came toward the water, she clearly exuded such moral perfection that the water rose up to greet her. The wife of Yitzchak, however, must be so refined in the spiritual/moral sphere that the water would rise up towards her at all times.

Eliezer was searching for some type of guarantee that even in the future Rivkah would exemplify chesed, kindness. How does he obtain such a guarantee? What determines Rivkah's true essence?

This, posits Horav Ezrachi, is essentially what Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai asked his disciples, "*Go out and see which is the good way to which a man should cling*" (Pirkei Avos 2:14). The great Tanna challenged his students to present him with the best quality for man to cultivate, one that would ensure his continued success. They responded with different virtues, each reflecting his own particular temperament and character. The answer of Rabbi Elazar ben Arach found favor: He asserted that ***a good heart, a lev tov***, is the trait which is crucial in order to maintain consistency and continuity. All of the qualities which the other students expressed are included in a lev tov.

One who has a good heart maintains a spontaneous love for the good everywhere, an intuitive grasp of the inherent good in everybody and every situation. The master plan for ensuring chesed -- and all virtue

for that matter -- is to cultivate and enhance one's heart, to create a lev tov. Through a good heart, one can obtain the epitome of virtue. Thus, one sees and strives to connect only with that which is good. Gemillus chasadim, the act of showing kindness, is a noble endeavor.

Such behaviour, however, will not necessarily continue. One can perform acts of kindness, one can go out of his way to assist others in all areas of need, but there is still no guarantee that this will endure.

One who has a lev tov has a wellspring of good flowing from within himself. His heart overflows with goodness. It is not an external quality or action. It is an inherent part of his essence. One who has a lev tov is not merely a person who performs good deeds - he is a source from which good emanates. The one who performs chesed does so even at his own expense or inconvenience.

One who possesses a lev tov, however, is never inconvenienced by doing good, for that is his life! The gomel chesed, who performs acts of kindness, does so only when the need arises. In contrast, the lev tov seeks opportunities to help others.

This is the specific quality that Eliezer sought in a mate for Yitzchak, a woman who had a lev tov. Rivkah performed her kindness with alacrity and enthusiasm. She did not tire from the strain of drawing the heavy pails of water. This was her enjoyment!

Rivkah demonstrated a character trait that was innate, a virtue that was intuitive, a goodness of heart that represented her essence.

"Happiness is the direct result of complete emuna in Hashem. A person with emuna needs no other preconditions to be happy. He keeps an even keel no matter how difficult life is. He's simply happy with is lot in life." ~ R' Shalom Arush.

וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ יִצְחָק וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל בָּנָיו אֶל־מְעָרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה "***And Yitzchak and Yishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpeilah***." (25:9)

Rashi states that from this pasuk we derive the idea that Yishmael repented and permitted Yitzchak to precede him in their father's funeral procession.

This is puzzling. Why did the Torah wait until the end of Avraham's life to confirm that Yishmael repented? We know that thirty-eight years prior to Avraham's demise, Yishmael was one of the "young men" who accompanied Avraham and Yitzchak to the akeidah. Why is it imperative to acknowledge Yishmael's teshuvah once again?

Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l., offers a profound insight into the teshuvah process which applies to this situation. Perhaps Yishmael initially repented only in order to make his old father "feel good," but immediately upon Avraham's death he was planning to revert to his old lifestyle. After all, this practice is not unusual, even today.

It is for this reason that Yishmael is "featured" at Avraham's funeral, permitting his younger brother to precede him. Even after Avraham's death, Yishmael continued in his newly chosen lifestyle. - Yishmael demonstrated the authenticity of his teshuvah when he humbly permitted Yitzchak to precede him. Unpretentiousness and modesty, not arrogance and disdain, are the hallmarks of the penitent.

"When you do acts of kindness for others, you are really being kind to yourself. Other people will return favours and do acts of kindness for you in return. - Moreover, the Almighty will reward you for the good that you do for others. When you behave meanly to people, you are acting against your own best interests, because others will repay you in kind." ~ Vilna Gaon.

וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַבְרָהָם לִפְנֵי עַם־הָאָרֶץ "***And Avrohom bowed down before the people of the land***" (23:12)

Avrohom returns from his most difficult test, the Akeidas Yitzchok, only to find that his beloved wife Sarah has died.

Imagine the torment when he learns that it will cost him a small fortune to provide a proper burial for his wife. This moment is the greatest test of Avrohom's self-control, for although he is deep in his pain and anguish, he nevertheless displays great manners courage and self-control in dealing with Efron and the Bnei Cheis.

"*The actions of the forefathers are a sign for the children*" (**Ramban**).

From Avrohom's action we see that no matter what the situation or the circumstances, we must always act properly with good manners and dignity as becomes the Am Hatorah (nation of the Torah).



The Chida (*P'nei Dovid*) writes that the first word of the parashah, **ויהיו**, can be read backward and forwards to imply that even when Sarah's days were backward and filled with difficulties, she considered them good days- **כולן שוין לטובה**, "All of Sarah's years were equally good."

Tosfos writes that the final letters of **אברהם זקן בא** spell **אמן** because whoever answers amen merits a long life.

"One who lives with constant awareness of the Almighty will live a life of constant happiness." ~ Chazon Ish.

The Chazon Ish zt'l said that if non-Jews felt the enjoyment of studying Torah early Shabbos morning, they would convert just to experience this pleasure.

The Front Line by R' Ilan Meirov



How can we share our heart for the people in Eretz Yisrael?

I have no doubt that everyone is saying extra Tehillim and learning more Torah and giving more Tzedakah. But how do we turn this into something that is Chazak? – Something that is strong and real.

Back in the days, when a person went out on the battlefield during a war, the pasuk tells us אֶלֶף לַמַּטֶּה אֶלֶף לַמַּטֶּה – ***'A thousand for each tribe, a thousand for each tribe.'(Bamidbar 31:4)***

For every soldier that used to go out to war, you had a corresponding person learning Torah and saying Tehillim for his success.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz writes, "where do you think that this person was reading the Tehillim? In his house, in shul? No, he was actually following the soldier on the battlefield!" – The guy learning Torah was together with the soldier!

In this day and age, I can't see this happening. So, we do it in the Beis Haknesses or our houses. But what should our mindset be when we read the Tehillim?

You should close your eyes and think for a moment that you are that soldier that must enter that building in Gaza, to either kill a

terrorist or to save a kidnapped hostage. – What is going on in your heart at that moment? Imagine that it is your own child or husband that must enter one of these tunnels.

How are you reading Tehillim? – suddenly, the Tehillim takes on a whole new perspective. You will put your heart and soul into it. It will be from the depths of your heart.

If you really want to have an impact in Shamayim? Imagine for a second, that you are there.

By doing this, you become a real partner. - אֶלֶף לַמַּטֶּה אֶלֶף לַמַּטֶּה. B'ezras Hashem, this will be a zechus for all of us.



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה '***And Yitzchok went forth to pray in the field***.' (24:63)

In this week's parsha, we learn what davening is all about. The word used for davening is לָשׂוּחַ - to speak.

The Chofetz Chaim writes in Likutei Amarim Ch.10 – "This is what davening really is: '***Sharing your troubles with Hashem! Tell Him your concerns. Pour out your heart to Him. This is the true purpose of tefillah. As the pasuk says*** - לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה '***Speak to Hashem***.'

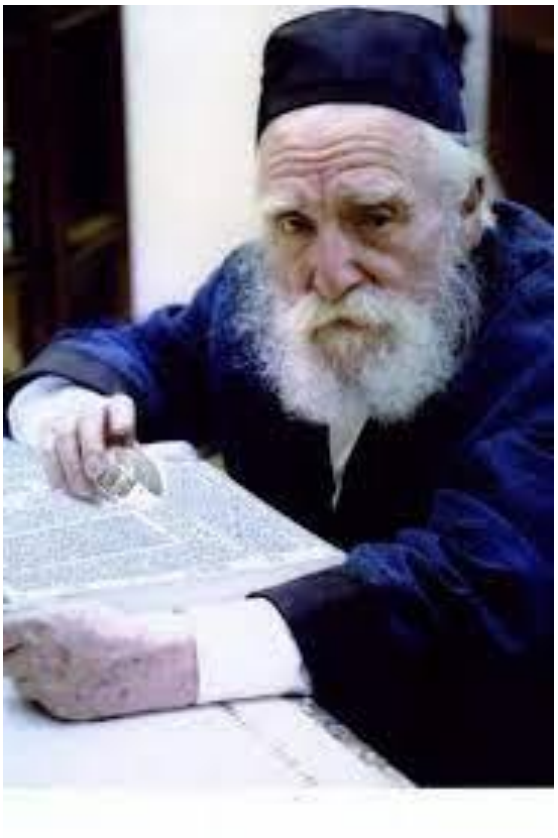
We are used to davening three tefillos every day. It has become routine and going through the motions. They lack real feeling, passion and emotion. We try to pay attention to the meaning of the words, but we may be missing the true connection.

When a person truly speaks to Hashem, he expresses himself from the depths of his heart.

The Alshich Hakadosh says תְּפִלָּה לְעָנִי כִּי יַעֲטֹף וְלִפְנֵי ה' יִשְׁפֹּךְ שִׂיחוֹ '***A prayer for a poor man when he enwraps himself and pours out his speech before Hashem***.' (Tehillim 102) - When a person is in pain, he should express it by pouring out his heart to Hashem.

When you share your pain with a friend, you feel a lot better. – Do the same with Hashem! Just like you pour out water from a vessel, pour out your troubles to Hashem and you will feel the weight taken off you!

Unburdening yourself to Hashem - This is what true tefilloh means.



Rav Moshe Feinstein

Rav Moshe Feinstein would often answer the phone himself, but towards the end of his life, he was quite weak and his rebetzin would try to answer all the phone calls.

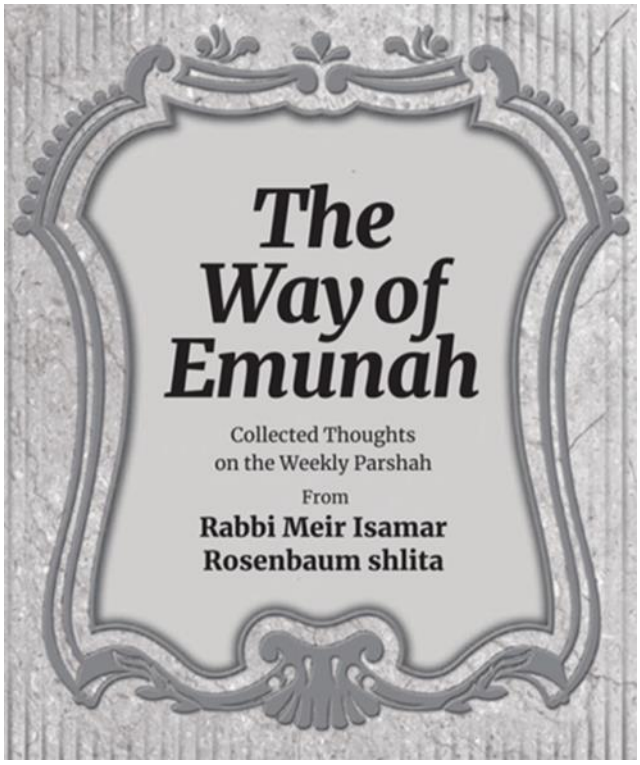
One day, she had to leave the house and pleaded with R' Moshe not to pick up the phone while she was gone. As she was leaving, the phone rang, and R' Moshe picked it up and answered.

The Rebetzin returned and confronted him: "Didn't I ask you not to answer any phone calls?"

R' Moshe replied that perhaps the only merit he has to help people who turn to him for help. "After all, I am an old man, and if I can't answer the phone to help people who need me, then what other zechus do I have?".

This anivus was very typical of R' Moshe.

Once he was at a chasuna and they davened maariv. The chazan waited for R' Moshe to finish davening before continuing with kadish. When he realized this, R' Moshe apologized, explaining that he would have rushed through shemoneh esrei, but he thought they only wait for him in his yeshiva.



Blessed With Emunah

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל 'And Avrohom was old, advanced in days, and Hashem blessed Avrohom with everything.' (24:1)

The Rebbe Reb Zushe zy"a (quoted in Sefer Mayanos Netzach) says that this pasuk is saying that Hashem blessed Avrohom with the good middah known as "kol", everything.

This middah is hinted to in the bracha we say in the morning: "She'asa li kol tzarchi. Who gave me all of my needs." It can be explained to mean that whatever Hashem does for a person is for his benefit. If Hashem gives someone something, it is what he needs. Avrohom was given this blessing. He was given the emunah to believe that Hashem always gave him exactly what he needed.

"During the war, our people were indiscriminately hated, simply for being Jewish. After the war, we must respond by indiscriminately loving all Jews, simply for being Jewish." ~ The Bluzhover Rebbe.

Giving Tzedakah Right Away

The following story is related in Sefer Toras Hamidos (Tzedakah, page 332):

Rav Mordechai Meisel was a resident of Prague who was very close to Emperor Maximilian and was given much honour. As a sign of his love and respect, the emperor gave him a golden chain, which he personally placed on his neck.

Rav Mordechai was once strolling in the streets of Prague when a poor man approached him and told him that he had a daughter who had reached marriageable age, but he had no money to marry her off. Rav Mordechai reached into his pocket but found that he had no money on him to give the man. He then took the gold chain off his neck and handed it to him, saying, "Sell this and use the money to marry off your daughter."

The man refused to take it and said, "I can't take the chain that you got as a gift from the emperor. The emperor might find out about it and be very upset that you gave away the present that he gave you. I can come to your office tomorrow and get a donation from you."

Rav Mordechai laughed and told the man, "Every penny I have was given to me as a gift from a King. It was all given to me by the King of kings. If I am allowed to give something Hashem gave me away, I certainly can give away something I got from a human king. - I suggest you take it now because right now I am in the mood to give you a large donation. Who knows if I'll feel like giving you as much tomorrow?"

"All that is thought need not be said, all that is said need not be written, all that is written need not be published, all that is published need not be read." ~ Kotzker Rebbe zt"l.

Tzedakah Protects From All Sins

On the topic of tzedakah, the author of **Sefer Shevet Mussar zt"l** writes in his Sefer Me'il Tzedakah (Siman 1542): "***I heard in the name of chachmei hakaballah that there is no 'garment' like tzedakah that has the ability to protect from all sins, even idol worship and immoral relationships. Tzedakah is a garment that protects like a shield from all accusations and from damaging angels. And Hashem hides one who gives tzedakah under His wings from the midas hadin.***"

He Sold Everything He Had for Tzedakah



Sefer Toras Hamidos relates the following story about **Rav Moshe Rivkis zt"l**, author of Be'er Hagoleh, who lived in Vilna during the times of the Shach.

Rav Moshe would always give a large portion of his income to the poor. One year, there was a terrible hunger in the city and many people needed sustenance. Rav Moshe sold all of his furniture, pots and pans and even his wife's jewellery in order to support them.

His wife had silver leichter that she used for Shabbos, which she had inherited from her mother. She hid them so that her husband wouldn't sell them.

A year later, when the situation in town changed for the better, she took our her leichter and set them up to use for Shabbos. When Rav Moshe saw it, he fainted. When he was revived, he cried, "Oy! How many Jewish people could have been fed if I had sold the leichters!"

Giving Tzedakah While Still Alive





Sefer Toras Hamidos relates (page 336) that the **Dubno Magid zt"l** was once going door to door to collect money for tzedakah. He entered the home of a wealthy man who was known to be a miser and said, "Mr. A, who is not considered to be wealthy, gave me such-and-such amount. Mr. B., who is also not rich, also gave me a large donation…"

The wealthy man interrupted him and said, "Those people have very few possessions. When they die, they won't leave anything for charity. I have a large fortune. In my will, I will leave the majority of my money to tzedakah. I don't need to give anything now."

The Magid said, "I will answer you with a moshol: There are two distinct animals – the chicken and the pig. The chicken only gives its owner a small egg. It gives a 'small donation'. But every villager is fond of his chickens and lets it play in his house.

A pig gives a 'large donation' of pork and fat. Still and all, non-Jewish villagers don't like them and won't allow them into their homes. Why is that?

"It is because the chicken only gives a small amount, but it gives it while it is alive. The pig, however, gives a large amount but only after it is dead!"

The Joy of Recognizing Hashem's Ways

וְיִצְחָק֙ בָּ֣א מִבּ֔וֹא בְּאֵ֖ר לַחַ֣י רֹאִ֑י וְה֥וּא יוֹשֵׁ֖ב בְּאֶ֥רֶץ הַנֶּֽגֶב *'And Yitzchok…coming from Be'er Lachai Ro'i, and he dwelt in the land of the south.'* (24:62)

Rav Henoch of Alexander zy"a (Sefer Chashbah L'Tova) explains this pasuk by saying that it is known that a person who recognizes that Hashem is always overseeing whatever he does will naturally be happy. Thus, the pasuk is saying: "**וְיִצְחָק֙ בָּ֣א**." - Happiness comes to a person. (The word "Yitzchok" represents happiness and laughter as is seen from Bereishis 21:6.)

Where does this happiness come from?

From "**בְּאֵ֖ר לַחַ֣י רֹאִ֑י**." - A person attains this joy when he recognizes that Hashem is watching him. (The word **רֹאִ֑י** indicates "watching".)

Even if a person "dwells in the land of the negev", i.e., a dry and desolate place, and he possesses nothing, Hashem is still always overseeing him. - When one knows this, he will be happy.



Besamei HaTorah by: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

וְאַבְרָהָ֖ם זָקֵ֣ן בָּ֑א בַּיָּמִ֔ים וַיהוָ֥ה בֵּרַ֖ךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָ֥ם בַּכֹּֽל *'Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything.'* (24:1)

Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, zt"l, translates the first part of the Posuk literally: 'Avraham was old and he came with his days' – meaning, with all his days, there wasn't one day or even one hour that was not filled with his deeds.

The Chozeh of Lublin, zt"l, explains the last part of the Posuk that Avraham was blessed with the Segulah of **בכל**, as in, **בכל לבבך בכל נפשך ובכל מאודך** – '*with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources*'. (Shivim Panim L'Torah)

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Prior to Avraham's death, the Torah states, **וְאֵלֶּה יְמֵי שְׁנֵי־חַיֵּי אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־חָי** - "***These were the years of Avraham's life, that he lived***" (25:7).

Rav Shimon Sofer explains that Avraham not only lived his life, but he also took advantage of his time, and that is why the Pasuk expressed twice that he lived.

It is not enough to be alive; we have to actually live as well.

The Siddur Speaks



The Mishnah Brurah writes a Halachah (94:2) that before one Davens Shemonah Esrei, one should imagine that he is standing inside the Kodesh HaKodashim, (see also Orach Chaim 95:2).

Rav Matisyahu Salomon, Shlit"a, once said in wonderment, that he does not understand why this basic Kavanah, which is brought as Halachah in Shulchan Aruch, is not something that is taught at all to children when they are younger!

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, zt"l, would teach, "How would you define 'time'? A taxi driver would answer, 'Time is money!' However, the Torah has a different view.

The Chofetz Chaim, zt"l, would explain the value of time by saying, 'Time is life!'"

Rav Chatzkel would tell his Talmidim that he would like to give a different definition. He would say, "Time is eternity! - Every moment of time has the potential to raise you to a higher level in Olam Haba!"

Don't Forward This by R' Shlomo Farhi



After hearing this recording my friends, - DON'T forward it! Because when you forward and share something, you think that's the mission.

Before you forward, share or like, or send me a message of how much you like my words, - I don't care how much you like my words! Do something about what I just said. And once you have done something, you have earned the right to send it to someone else.

Do you know what share and forward really means? It means that you've deflected the purpose of the message. You spend all your time putting it on all your chats, instead of doing what you should have done, which is responding to what I'm trying to communicate.

My friends, these are our brothers. These are our sisters. These are our children. These are our grandchildren.

Every person – whoever said the words, 'Never again' – where are you today? 'Never again' means that when an existential threat stands up against Am Yisrael, - you are part of it.

There is so much right now that is needed in Eretz Yisrael. When there are air raid sirens in Sderot, they have 15- 30 seconds to run to safety in a bomb shelter. They don't have enough time to get there. – But what do we do? – We say, "Oh, that's so sad!"

Nobody needs your pity or your sympathy. – Where's your prayers? Where's your Mitzvot? Where's your money?

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מְאַת שָׁנָה, עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה, וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah's life. (23:1)



Chazal (Bereishis Rabbah 23:1) quote from Sefer Tehillim (37:18), **יוֹדֵעַ ה' יְמֵי תְמִימִם**... "*Hashem knows the days of the perfect.*" K'shem she'heim temimim, kach shenosam temimim, "Just as the righteous are perfect, so are their years perfect." They say this concerning Sarah Imeinu whose life was one long series of perfection.

The Shem MiShmuel (Chayei Sara 2) brings an alternative exposition, - **אמר רב יוחנן כהדא עגלתא תמימתא** – Rabbi Yochanan says, "Sarah was perfect in her deeds," k'hada eglesa temimsa, "like an unassuming calf." Rabbi Yochanan equates temimus, perfection/wholeness, with the trait of obedience and unassuming (no questions asked – no answers expected). She followed instructions i.e. tzivui, command of Hashem, faithfully. As a calf

follows its master wherever he leads it, so, too, did Sarah follow Avraham Avinu, his guidance and direction.

The Bais HaLevi expounds on the concept of temimus, following faithfully. One who is faithful and obedient does not question, "Why?" This form of faithfulness is characteristic of the obedience of an animal. The average human being who follows a command does so because he has mulled it over and decided that it is beneficial for him to follow instructions. Thus, he is actually serving himself, not his fellow. In contrast, an animal has no free will and no real cognitive ability.

Thus, it follows its master's wishes obediently. The highest service we can perform to Hashem is to carry out His command without questioning, as an animal obeys its master. In the process of Torah study, we are permitted to delve into the rationale behind a mitzvah, but, in no way do we consider the logic at which we arrive to be the actual reason. We serve at Hashem's will, without question. This is why Chazal compare Sarah Imeinu's temimus to that of an unassuming calf.

The Shem MiShmuel cites his father, the Avnei Nezer, who explains temimus as unwavering commitment regardless of the circumstances in which one finds himself. Yetzivius, stability, and ikvius, consistency, are two terms which describe the tamim. Under all circumstances, the adam ha'shaleim, complete, perfect man, the tamim, will maintain his total conviction in Hashem.

Horav Tzadok HaKohen, zl, (Pri Tzaddik Chayei Sarah), quotes his saintly Rebbe, the **Ishbitzer, Horav Mordechai Yosef Leiner, zl** (Mei Ha'Shi'loach) who interprets eglah (which we have translated as calf) to be derived from the word agal, circle. A circle has no beginning and no end; everything is equal. Equanimity best describes the attitude of one who is compared to eglah.

The idea of a circle having no beginning and no end symbolizes its unbroken and self-contained form, which can be seen as representing perfection, and perfect harmony.

With this in mind, we have a deeper perception of Chazal's comparing Sarah to an eglah temimah. Rather than addressing obedience and faithfulness of an animal, we are talking about the perfection of a human being who, under circumstances throughout the peaks and valleys of her life, remained the same with complete equanimity, just like an agal, circle.

Parsha Potpourri by Oizer Alport

אַךְ אִם־אַתָּה לוּ שְׁמָעֵנִי נָתַתִּי כֶּסֶף הַשָּׂדֶה קַח מִמֶּנִּי וְאֶקְבְּרָה אֶת־מֵתִי שָׁמָּה "***But, if only you would listen to me. I am giving the money for the field; take [it] from me, and I will bury my dead there***."

Parshas Chayei Sorah begins with the death of Sorah. After Avrohom eulogizes her and mourns her loss, he then proceeds to obtain a burial plot for her. The Mishnah in Kiddushin (2a) teaches that one of the three methods through with a woman can be betrothed is by giving her money.

The Gemora derives this from the shared use of the word **קח** – *acquire* – in the Torah's discussion of marriage and in Avrohom's purchase of the burial plot. Just as the phrase **קח ממני** – take the money from me – that Avrohom said to Ephron refers to acquiring an item through the transfer of money, so too the mitzvah of marriage, which is described as (Devorim 24:1) **כי יקח איש אשה** – when a man takes a woman – can also be effected by giving money to the woman.

Why does the Torah specifically use the narrative of Avrohom's efforts to acquire a burial plot for Sorah to teach us a law governing marriage, and what lesson is it intended to teach us?

Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter suggests that this was done intentionally in order to teach us the proper outlook on marriage, and on relationships in general. Even though Sorah was no longer alive and was incapable of ever giving him Avrohom any additional benefits or pleasure, he was still willing to spend an exorbitant amount of money to secure an appropriate final resting place for his beloved wife.

Avrohom's willingness to do so demonstrates that his relationship with Sorah was not motivated by the pursuit of his own pleasure and happiness, but rather on how he could give to his wife and help her. In deriving one of the laws defining the conception of a marriage from this episode, the Torah is teaching us the proper outlook on marriage, namely that the very essence of the relationship is intended to be one that is focused on giving to and sharing with one's spouse, rather than a selfish focus on fulfilling one's own desires.

Entering into marriage, or any other relationship, with this Torah perspective is a proven recipe for improving our middos and enriching our bonds with others.



וְהָיָה הַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַטִּי־נָא כַדֵּךְ וְאֶשְׁתֶּה וְאָמְרָה שְׁתֵּה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה אֹתָהּ הוֹכַחְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק וּבָהּ אֵדַע כִּי־עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עִם־אֲדֹנִי "***And it will be, [that] the maiden to whom I will say, 'Lower your pitcher and I will drink,' and she will say, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels,' her have You designated for Your servant, for Isaac, and through her may I know that You have performed loving kindness with my master***."

Eliezer established a litmus test to determine whether a potential match was the proper spouse for Yitzchok. The test revolved around her dedication to kindness, which would be evidenced by her willingness to give not only Eliezer but also his camels water to drink.

Although a generous nature is certainly an important quality to seek in a prospective spouse, why was Eliezer willing to rely on this

component without additionally testing her belief in Hashem, wisdom, and values?

Rav Meir Rubman answers based on a Mishnah in Avos (2:13), which relates that Rebbi Yochanan ben Zakkai instructed his students to seek out the path in life which a person should choose. Rebbi Eliezer said the possession of a good eye. Rebbi Yehoshua answered to acquire a good friend. Rebbi Yossi suggested finding a good neighbor. Rebbi Shimon opined to see the consequences of one's actions.

Rebbi Elozar posited possession of a good heart. Rebbi Yochanan ben Zakkai responded that the final suggestion (a good heart) is the best one, as it includes all of the other characteristics. The Bartenura explains that this is because the heart is the origin of all of a person's actions.

Eliezer carefully designed his test to measure the potential match's love of assisting others. He understood that the amount of water needed to feed him and his ten thirsty camels was tremendous. A young girl who was asked by a healthy man to draw so much water for him would typically respond by questioning why he couldn't do so himself.

If a girl instead jumped at the opportunity, such as Rivkah who ran to bring the water (24:20), it could only be due to her generous heart. Once Rivkah passed this test with flying colors, Eliezer knew with confidence – as the Mishnah teaches – that she possessed all of the other necessary qualities, and there was no need to test them.

The Gemora in Taanis (24a) teaches that if one sees a prospective bride whose eyes are pretty, he needn't examine her appearance further. The Kli Yakar (24:14) is astonished by this statement. Firstly, he notes that it isn't true. There are many women with pretty eyes who are nevertheless unattractive. Secondly, why does the Gemora advocate the selection of a spouse based on her physical

appearance when Shlomo HaMelech writes (Mishlei 31:30) that charm is false and beauty is vain?

The Kli Yakar explains that the Gemora isn't referring to a physical examination of the woman's eyes, but is suggesting that one test to see whether she possesses an **עין טובה** – a giving eye – as the most important feature of a woman is her generous spirit. The Gemora advises that once this has been established, no further checking is necessary, just as we learn from Eliezer.

Parsha Points to Ponder

Why didn't Yitzchok eulogize his mother Sorah, as the Torah records **וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה בְּקִרְיַת אַרְבַּע הִוא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹא אַבְרָהָם לִסְפֹּד לְשָׂרָה וְלִבְכֹּתָהּ** (23:2) only that Avrohom did so?

Rabbeinu Bechaye writes that Sorah's death was concealed from Yitzchok due to the fact that it was indirectly caused by him, as Rashi writes (23:2) that the shock of hearing that he was almost slaughtered was the cause of her death.

Rav Shmaryahu Arieli suggests that even if he was informed of her death, the recognition that he was somewhat responsible for it caused him such overwhelming anguish that he was unable to eulogize her.

The Paneiach Raza maintains that Avrohom wounded Yitzchok during the Akeidah, and angels took him to Gan Eden to recover and heal, so he wasn't present at Sorah's burial.

The Targum Yonason ben Uziel writes that angels took Yitzchok to study in the yeshiva of Shem for 3 years until Rivkah was old enough to marry him, which explains why he wasn't available to eulogize her.

Parsha Points to Ponder

Avrohom paid 400 silver shekels to Ephron for the purchase of the burial plot for Sorah **וַיִּשְׁקֹל אַבְרָהָם לְעֶפְרֹן אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֵי־חֵת אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף עֹבֵר לַסֹּחֵר** (23:16). Was this its actual value, and if not, was it worth more or less?

The Targum Onkelos writes that the plot of land was worth 400 silver shekels, and the **Vilna Gaon** makes a brilliant calculation to support this claim.

The Steipler maintains that Ephron substantially overcharged Avrohom for the land, as Yaakov was able to purchase an apparently similar plot of land for 100 kesitahs (33:19), which is the equivalent of only 5 shekels. This is an indication that Ephron swindled and took advantage of Avrohom in setting the price at 400 shekels.

The Chasam Sofer suggests that Ephron should have received 406 shekels, which is the numerical value of his name when it is spelled with the letter "vov," but because he was so eager to maximize the sale price, he mistakenly settled for 400 shekels, which is the numerical value of his name when it is written without the letter "vov."

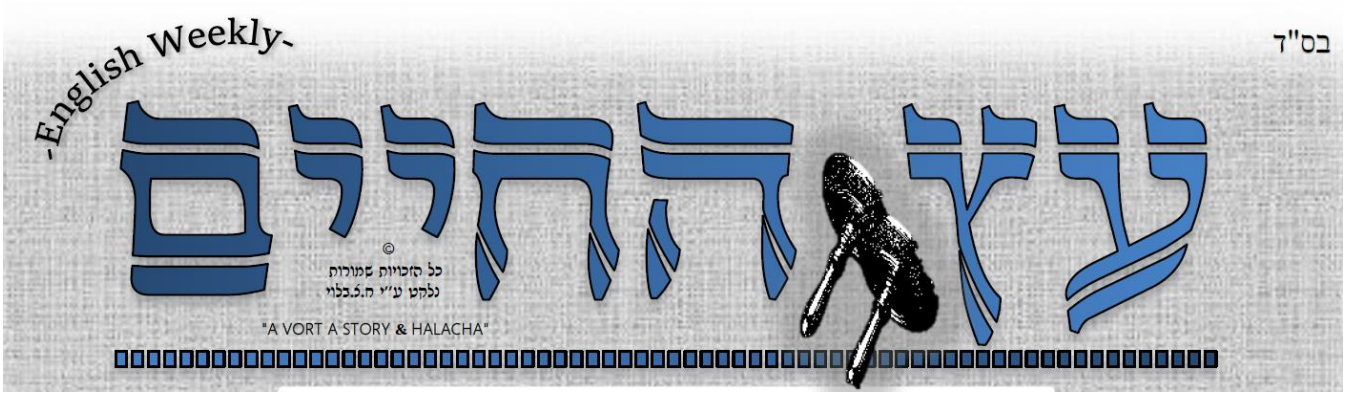
Parsha Points to Ponder

After the match between Yitzchok and Rivkah was agreed upon, Rivkah's mother and brother Lavan escorted Eliezer and Rivkah, and they blessed her that her descendants should number many millions (24:60). **וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־רִבְקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהּ אֲחֹתֵנוּ אַתְּ הֱיִי לְאַלְפֵי רְבָבָה וְיִירַשׁ זַרְעֵךְ אֵת שַׁעַר שֹׂנְאָיו**

Why did the wicked Lavan bless his sister that her offspring should be so numerous when they would presumably reflect her righteousness and the piety of her husband Yitzchok?

The Yalkut HaGershuni and Torah L'Daas answer that the Gemora in Bava Basra (110a) advises that before marrying a woman, a man should first examine the moral quality of her brothers, as the sons she bears are likely to be similar in nature to her brothers.

Knowing this, the wicked Lavan didn't fear the products of the union between the righteous Yitzchok and his sister. Just the opposite, recognizing that their sons would be like him (Lavan), he blessed Rivkah that she should have many of them.



Today is the Big Day

I heard from **Rav Aron David shlita** a famous vort in the name of the **Brisker Rov**. The Brisker Rov pointed out that in the tefillah of Eliezer when he was looking for the zivug for Yitzchok, Eliezer davened that he should find her TODAY! **הַקְרֵה־נָא לְפָנַי הַיּוֹם** (24:12)

The Brisker Rov pointed out that anyone can daven in the way Eliezer did and their Tefillah will also be answered. We have to believe that it is OUR tefillah that can be answered TODAY! We believe that there is nothing too big or too small for the Kol Yachol! Whatever you may want Hashem can give you!

We also say this in the davening 'Hashem Hoishea HaMelech Ya'anainu **B'YOM** Koireinu!'- Which means that we ask Hashem that Hashem should answer us **on the day we call out to Him**! We just have to call out to HIM and cry out in sincere prayer.

Recently, we have been saying Tehillim after davening and when we do that again and again it gets less meaningful. However, this is not the way it should be. We should be mechazek each time to put in our full heart into the tehillim and each time to give the tefilla the proper attention!

Somone once came to rebbe Yoel M'satmer and asked for a **ברכה** to be successful with raising his children. The Rebbe told him "You should know, in order to merit success with your children, you must pour out your heart in tefillah and kapitlach of tehillim with tears.

The Rebbe continued and said, "People say that good sons are not in our ability to choose, but good sons-in-law are. However the truth is the opposite, sons-in-law are not in our hands at all because this was already announced 40 days before **יצירת הוולד**, however, good children on the other hand, are in a parent's hands, by them acting properly, and through pouring out tears in prayer to Hashem.

Parents should cry for their children that they should go in the right paths of Torah, Yiras Shomayim, and Middos Tovos.

"The Puppet Show!" The Quote -The Lesson -The Story

The Quote (based on the sefer Chovos Halevavos "Shaar Habitachan"):

"***Having Bitachon means that you believe that Hashem is the One and only One that has the ability to bring anything about and to make it happen***".

The Lesson: What makes this quote so incredible is that we look around the world and we can think that this person's decisions and that person's decisions is what is maneuvering the worlds operation. However, the Chovos Helvavos is teaching us that the Ba'al Bitachon understands and realizes that the entire world is one big puppet show and it is all singlely handled by our loving caring Father Hakadosh Baruch Hu the Rebonoi Shel Oilum!

The Story: *This tale was related by the world famous maggid Rav Sholom Shwadron זצוק״ל*



There was once a fellow named Tumel. Tumel would wake up every morning and don his police uniform. Tumel imagined that he himself was responsible for controlling the traffic on the major highway entering the city.

Every morning, without fail, Tumel jumped out of his bed, like a soldier going to fulfill his duties. In his hand, Tumel held his red wand, and he was there shouting. As soon as the light turned red, Tumel walked in front of the already stopped traffic, and waved his hands high in the air, motioning to the traffic not to drive. As the light turned green, Tumel would move to the side and yell, "Okay, you can drive…" and Tumel waved his green wand side to side motioning to all the cars to drive. - For years and years this is what Tumel did every day, day-in day-out. In the snow, in the rain, in the winter and in the summer.

One day, Tumel's wife asked him' "Tumel, why do you toil so much and work so hard, don't you know that you're not doing anything? The traffic light is doing everything already from above, in an amazing and most precise way!" - Tumel replied angrily, "What about hishtadlus? I am doing my part and the traffic light is doing his! Each one has to do their part!"

One day, Tumel got wounded and he was rushed to the hospital. On his hospital bed, all Tumel could think about was one thing, "Oy vey's mere! How will the traffic in the street be taken care of if I am not there?" He trembled just by the thought of what could happen if he was not there! How could they manage without him?"

All the doctors tried to calm his nerves – but to no avail, Tumel could only picture to himself the worst. A fellow roommate turned to Tumel and explained, "My dear friend, you do not understand it was not you that was controlling the traffic! It was the traffic light that was telling everyone when to go and when to stop – not you!!!"

The wife of Tumel who was sitting nearby spoke up, "Sir, what are you talking about? If it is really true as you say that it was all coming from the traffic light, what did my husband Tumel toil for all these years?"

The roommate responded, "I am so sorry to tell you this, but the uniform and hand motions and yelling was all just an illusion! He was just imagining that he was the one doing, when in fact he was not doing anything at all."

"You're laughing!" exclaimed Rav Shalom Shwadron after relating this story. "However," continued Rav Shalom, "We live in the exact same way! We wake up every morning, we rush to work, we work. The next day, we work again, and we are sure that it is **us**, through our toil that is what is bringing in the parnassa, and if not for all **our** effort and work, we would not be making money.

We are exactly like this fellow Tumel, whose job took over his life and who was a crazy man."

Rav Shalom concluded, "True, one needs to do some form of hishtadlus to make a living. But in order to fulfill this, it is enough with the minimal number of hours, and one does not have to sacrifice his entire life on the **מזבח** of hishtadlus!"

"Keeping your mind occupied with Torah thoughts frees you from worrisome thoughts." ~ Avos D'Reb Noson.

Reb Yoel Rotenstein on The Parsha

"...אוּלַי לֹא־תֹאבֶה הָאִשָּׁה לָלֶכֶת אַחֲרַי אֶל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת" ...Perhaps the woman will not want to come back with me" פרק כד פסוק ה



Avraham had a son, and his trusted servant, Eliezer, had a daughter. Eliezer hoped that when the time came for Yitzchak to marry, Avraham would choose Eliezer's daughter to be Yitzchak's wife. As we know, Avraham had other plans, and he sent Eliezer to choose a wife from among his master's family. (Midrash)

The Alter of Novardok explains that Eliezer had to overcome his negative feelings. In order to do so, he took several precautions to ensure the success of his mission.

First, Eliezer didn't rely on the *tefillos* of Avraham alone. He himself *davened* for success. Later, right after the first sign that Rivka was destined for Yitzchak, he immediately gave her the jewellery he had brought. Eliezer was afraid that if he delayed, the *yetzer hara* would have a chance to convince him that this was not the right girl. - When Eliezer was offered food by Lavan, he refused to eat until the marriage was discussed. Then he resisted the temptation to agree to let Rivka stay in her father's home for another year. In his greatness, Eliezer was careful not to let his negative feelings enter the picture.

The power of this lesson is undeniable. If even the trusted servant of Avraham had to be on guard against the *yetzer hara*, what does that say about us? Let us learn from Eliezer the extent to which we must guard ourselves against the *yetzer hara* daily.

זכרו תורת משה

The Other Half of The Picture!

Someone complained to **Reb Moshe Kliros**, *zt"l*, the Rav of Tevaria, about his many problems. The Rav replied, "Why do you only tell me half of the story? Where's the other half of it? You can't only tell me half the story!"

"What is the other half?" the man asked.

"I don't know," replied the Rav. "The other half hasn't happened yet. But there is another half – the salvation that will come in the end. You can't just look at half and then complain if there's more to the story!" (***Torah Wellsprings, Lech Lecha***)

The Surprising Loan

When accepting the situation with love, aside from the serenity that one acquires through it, doing so in and of itself brings salvation and *brachah* into one's life. To bring out this point, **R' David Ashear** relays an incredible story that enlightens us to endure the situation that Hashem puts us in, to recognize that Hashem is in every situation, and to know that it's there for our very best interest.

A man had a son who was very successful in Torah learning. When it came time for him to get married, he was told of a girl with the finest qualities. However, after further investigation, they found out that she had a very low level of hearing. The boy did not want to pursue the *shidduch*.

The father of the girl told the father of the boy that he would give one million shekels as a dowry for his daughter. The boy's father really wanted his son to be able to learn with peace of mind, and he did not have the funds to support him. The girl did have sterling

middos and was able to hear, albeit with difficulty, so they agreed to go out and, soon enough, the *shidduch* was finalized.

A couple of months after the wedding, the father of the girl informed the couple that the million shekels that he had given them was actually a loan he'd taken out in their names. In essence, he had basically lied to get his daughter married.

The young man obviously had no way of paying back that debt, especially since he used most of the money to buy an apartment. And he honestly didn't want to have anything to do with his father-in-law anymore.

He went to **Rav Chaim Kanievsky**, *zt"l*, to ask what to do. Rav Chaim told him to overcome his natural inclination and give honor to his father-in-law, despite what he did, and everything would be fine. The boy obediently listened. On Yom Kippur, he bought his father-in-law a very special *aliyah*, and on Simchas Torah, he bought him another one.

This *avreich* was learning in the Mir Yeshiva in a group with other Americans like himself. One day, a new boy came to the yeshiva, an only child to his parents, and he was very homesick. He wasn't happy with his bed, the food was not to his taste, and he wanted to return home.

When the newly married young man found out about this boy's problem, he tried to give him *chizuk*. He told him that he also was an only child and that he also had a hard time when he'd first started out in the yeshiva, but now he loves it. He offered to learn with this boy and be his *chavrusa*, and the boy accepted.

That Chanukah, the boy's father flew on his private jet to Eretz Yisrael to visit his son. While there, the boy told him of how this nice young man saved his entire year and how much he loves the yeshiva because of him. His father was so appreciative that he asked the young man what he could do to help him. The young man, seeing

how wealthy his *chavrusa*'s father was, told him about the million shekel debt and how it happened. - The wealthy man happily went and paid the debt for him in full.

Rav Chaim knew that the secret to *brachah* comes when a person goes against his inclination and accepts his situation instead of disliking it.

By coming to this realization, we will bring out this within ourselves and get rid of any hatred we have, leaving us to only give love and honour instead.

Mazal Tov!

Come and see the reward of those who grasp Hashem's will with love from an incredible story narrated by **Rabbi Naftali Zilberzweig** about a woman who'd gone through Auschwitz and rebuilt her life in the French city of Bay.

One Erev Shabbos, she prepared her Shabbos food and left a pot on the fire while she went out to the market to buy something. While she was out, the wooden cabinet in the kitchen caught on fire, and in a short time, the fire destroyed almost her entire house and all of its contents.

Her neighbors did not know how this unfortunate woman would hold herself in the face of the great damage, as they knew that she barely managed to recover from the devastation of her life. How was she going to take even more devastation?

They rushed to the residence of **Rabbi Mordechai Pagermansky**, *zt"l*, known as R' Mottle, who lived nearby, to ask his advice on how to tell this lady who still didn't know that her home was destroyed.

Rabbi Mottle sank into his thoughts, and then said, "Wait for her nearby, and before she enters the house and sees what happened, tell her that the house went up in flames and add that if she accepts

the situation with love and joy, not even expressing 'one sigh' from her mouth, tell her that R' Mottle promises her that she will be blessed with the children she's yet to have above the natural way."

They hurried to stand by the house, waited until she returned, and told her everything that R' Mottle had told them. She heard, accepted, and with supernatural courage didn't emit one sigh from her lips.

Rabbi Naftali concludes, "I am a son who was born to her. The following year after the fire, she had a daughter, and later she had another daughter, and I am her third child."

We see from here the mindboggling reward for silently accepting the will of Hashem and knowing that it's for our very best.





Parshas Chayei Sarah is the parsha of Shidduchim

Since so many people are involved in this often difficult and relentless "parsha," allow me to share a vort I saw in a wonderful sefer **"Torah for your Table" by Rabbis Yisroel and Osher Anshel Jungreis shlit'a**:

"Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, very clearly challenged Rivkah's family: 'And now, if you intend to do kindness and truth with my master, tell me,' he demanded, 'and if not, tell me, and I will turn to the right or to the left.'

Eliezer wanted a clear yes or no, without delay, to know if they were willing to allow the shidduch of their daughter to Yitzchok to move forward or not.

From here we may learn a lesson that we would do well to remember. Ours is a society in which procrastination is in vogue. People have a tendency to date endlessly, only to see their efforts end in futility. Often, critical months and even years are wasted and leave much heartbreak in their wake. Our Torah teaches us that if a shidduch isn't working out, move on!"

Hu Haya Omer … He would Say

R' Yitzchok Zev Halevi Soloveitchik *zt"l* (Brisker Rov) would say:

וַתְּמַהֵר וַתְּעַר כַּדָּהּ אֶל הַשֹּׁקֶת וַתָּרָץ עוֹד (24:20)- Why does Rivkah hurry so much in the story? Eliezer first arrived close to *Shkiya* and *davened* and requested of *Hashem* to bring the episode to a close that same day. Why did he demand the rush?

As far as *Tzaddikim* are concerned, *shidduchim* should not take so long and Eliezer wanted to move things forward fast.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO דרגה יתירה

Many years ago, I heard a *shiur* given by a famous speaker who was discussing the *middah* of *chessed*. Someone in the crowd suddenly asked a question: "How can a person keep giving and giving and not feel like they are being taken advantage of? Didn't little 3-year old Rivkah wonder why a big, strong, able-bodied servant like Eliezer was letting her run back and forth so many times to bring him and his camels water? He could have done it himself. Didn't she feel like she was being used?"

The speaker's brilliant answer still reverberates in my ears: "In the *beracha* of *'Sim Shalom'* at the end of the *Shemona Esrei*, we ask *Hashem* for many blessings including *'chayim, chein, vachessed, v'rachamim.'* A few lines down, we again ask *Hashem* for *chayim* and

chessed, but this time we say, '*toras chaim v'ahavas chessed*' - we ask for a life of *Torah* and loving kindness. In other words, life without *Torah* is not really life and *chessed* without LOVING *chessed* is not really *chessed*!

A person who does *chessed* for ulterior motives is not really doing *chessed* for others; he is doing *chessed* for himself! But a person who LOVES to do *chessed* and does *chessed* because he wants to emulate *Hashem* will never feel that he is being taken advantage of. It has nothing to do with him. He is not just a *baal chessed*, but an *oheiv chessed*, and such a person is so happy to do *chessed* simply because he loves *Hashem* and wishes to emulate Him."

The speaker concluded, "Rivkah did not think for a second that Eliezer was taking advantage of her, the same way that Sarah did not feel 'used' when she stayed up all night to sew clothing for the poor.

Avraham who was 100 years old and in terrible pain from his *Bris Mila* did not feel like he was going overboard for his guests even though he ran all the way to Chevron to catch the animal he needed to slaughter. He never felt that it was beneath his dignity to serve people so much younger than him, in fact, he felt that it was an honour for him to serve and cater to the needs of anyone regardless of age or status."

"When one truly believes that there is nothing in the world other than Hashem, all the hardships are sweetened in the wake of their Emunah.

Even without shouting out to Hashem in prayer, with just Emunah and Bitachon, everything will appear to be a chesed – immediately." ~ Rebbe Eizik of Karmana.



Nachal Novea Mekor Chochma Breslev Tsfat Founded in 1968 by Reb Gedalyahu Aharon Kenig, zt"l

The last few weeks have been an enormous wakeup call to Jews of the Diaspora. Ivy League universities, once considered bastions of intellectualism, centers of sophistication, capitals of progress and advancement have abandoned their Jewish students, failing to protect them from Hamas-sympathizing fellow students and professors. College campuses and others are now physically dangerous places for those who proudly identify as Jews or supporters of Israel.

Rabbi Amar, the Chief Rabbi of Israel stated that there is a lot of hope, because if we do good in our actions and do the will of our Creator, with His mercy he subdues the hearts of our enemies, as the scripture goes: (Proverbs 16:7), '*When G-d favours a man, even his enemies will be reconciled with him.*'

Only Hashem can save us from what we are going through. When the painful truth is revealed the only thing we can do is to run to our Father in Heaven and pray.

This story was told by the **Rebbe of Kapischnitz**:

"I came to America as a refugee from Austria at the last minute. This story takes place before I left Austria.

I lived in Vienna at the time when the Germans took over Austria and the hatred and abuse of the Jews became magnified. I was there on Kristallnacht when hundreds of synagogues were burned, and thousands taken away. I too was taken away by the Gestapo and put

in the cellars of the Austrian jails. As my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I noticed two groups of people crowded in the cellar. On one side were Jews who were moaning painfully, they had been beaten and broken by interrogation and torture. The other side of the cellar were terrified Jews laying on the floor waiting for their turn to be taken for interrogation. I joined them.

Right next to me was a Jew slamming his head against the wall. Boom Boom Boom. It seemed like he had lost his mind; I was shocked. I turned to him with a soft voice and I said "'What are you doing?' No answer. Boom, Boom, Boom.

"I gently held his hand and I told him don't worry we will pass this.

He looked at me with eyes burning with fire. "'I don't deserve to pass this, I don't deserve to live.'

"I told him 'living or dying - leave that to Hashem. We are required to make an effort to save ourselves."

" 'No, I don't deserve to live" he answered. "

'Why do you say so?' I asked him.

"The man shared his story, 'My parents came from Galicia to Austria, they were very poor with no income, but they were G-d fearing people. But me, I didn't keep the Holy laws, I left the path of my parents.'

"What could my parents do, they saw me, they suffered and they swallowed the pain.

"When I told them I was going to marry a non-Jewish girl, they said to me from their perspective, I am disconnecting myself from Judaism and I am disconnecting myself from them.

I laughed at them, and I told them they are stuck in their old ways of prejudice and they are trying to prevent me from being happy. They didn't listen and sat shiva for me.

"I married the non-Jewish woman, and I thought I would be happy with her, I lived with her 20 years, my parents died and I felt only contempt for them.

"Now when the Germans took over Austria and publicized the Laws of Race. One of the laws was that they prohibited Jews and Gentiles to marry. But I felt safe, no one knew I was Jewish, only my wife. For 20 years my feet did not step in the synagogue, not even on Yom Kipppur.

"REBBE! "Yesterday my wife turned me in to the authorities and the Gestapo came and took me here. Our house was transferred to her name. Our bank account became solely hers.

"Rebbe, you tell me, do I deserve to live?"

Dear brothers and sisters I am writing to you with tears in my eyes, please know that we are all together and we will pass this. There is no stronger nation than the Jewish nation. We will always be here, loyal to our truth, loyal to our religion, loyal to each other and loyal to our G-d. Hashem will protect us, please have no fear.

The true and sole solution is to enslave our heart to Hashem and to realize that the message is very straight forward "My children, come back to me. I will always be there for you. I will always protect you, as I always have. And I will be with you, with your children and with all your generations forever and ever."

"When a situation arises that causes us to worry, we should realise that Hashem wants to grant us something special, so He gives us the opportunity to earn it by overcoming our fears and placing our trust in Him." ~ Beis Halevi on Bitachon.

Fallen Fears

Rav Chaim Kavievsky, zt"l wrote a pamphlet of the issue of fallen fears (being afraid of anything besides Hashem) and he taught us that fear itself can bring bad judgement to the world, and in previous wars he wasn't afraid of the situation but of the fear that people had and the bad judgement the fear can bring.

He writes that anyone who is afraid should tell the story of Rebbi Shimon and the bird that couldn't be trapped and repeat to themselves as much as needed that "Hashem protects me and totally watches over me. "

Rebbi Shimon - Rescue and Release

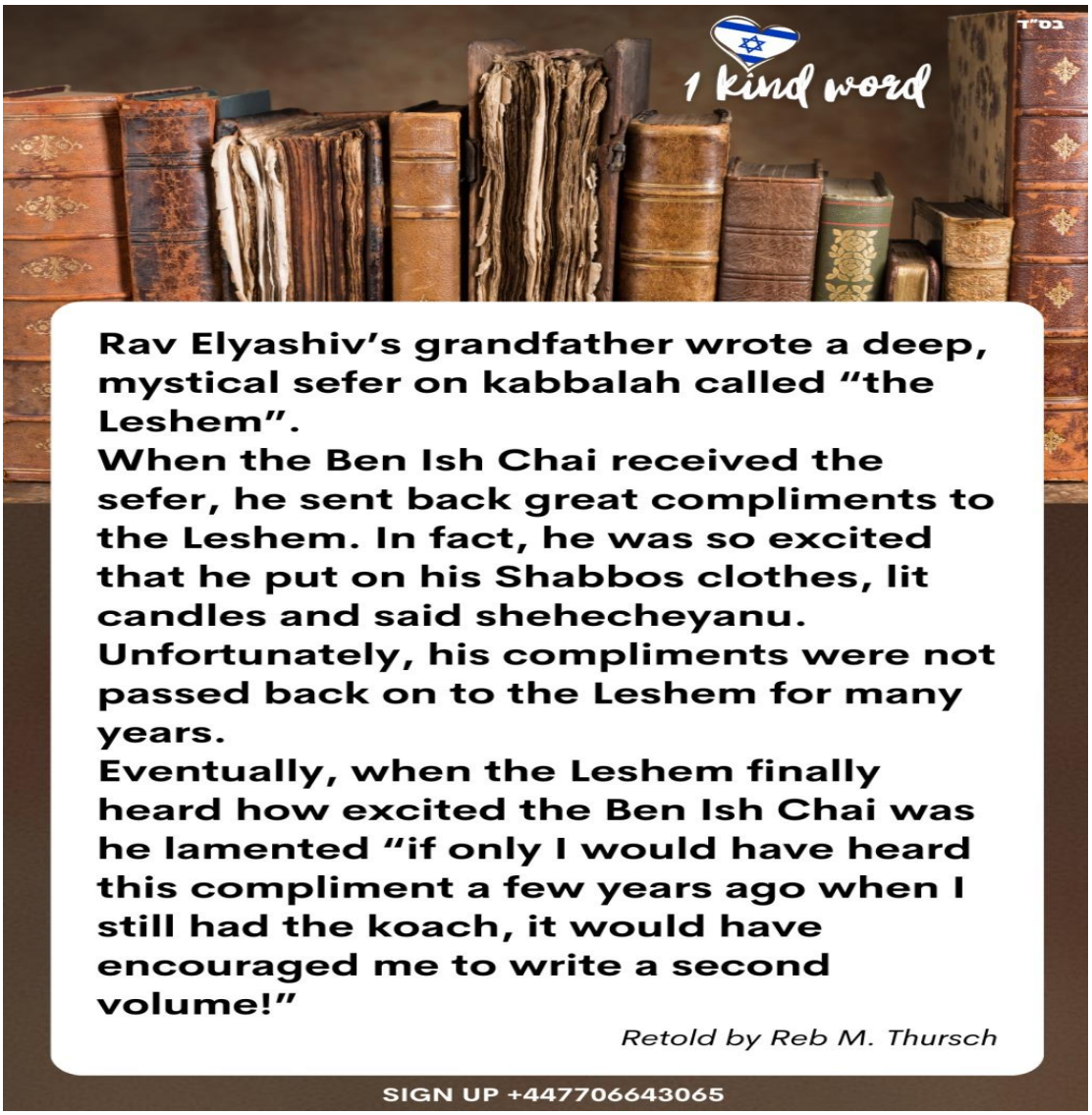
"After speaking badly of the Romans publicly, Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai was sentenced to death. he escaped with his son Elazar to a cave. For twelve years, Rabbi Shimon remained hidden.

A Heavenly voice then said: "Go out of your cave!" When they went out, they met a hunter who had a bow and arrows which he used to catch birds. They watched and saw that some birds were trapped, and others escaped the arrow.

When Rabbi Shimon heard a voice from Heaven declare: "Rescue and release!" the bird was not caught, but when the voice said "Spekula" the bird was trapped.

Rabbi Shimon turned to his son and said: "If a bird cannot be trapped unless Heaven so decrees, is this not the case, all the more, with a human being? Why, then, should we hide?"

"Bitachon is not just a matter of words, but a state of the heart. When we truly believe that Hashem is running the world, we are free from worry and fear." ~ The Chofetz Chaim.



"The root word of bitachon is betach/certain, for bitachon isn't only a belief in G-d's ability, but a sense of certainty that everything will be good in a revealed manner, until it envelops one with tranquillity.- Within bitachon is the word tach/plaster, since plaster is a connecting agent, holding together all that it covers, like a friendship bringing people together and forging a natural connection. Good friends naturally trust each other, greater the friendship, greater the bond, greater certainty that each will only do what is in the other's best interest.

Our bond with Hashem is so strong, we're plastered together!" ~ Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger



"We should be greeted with a 'Shalom Aleichem' upon concluding our Shemoneh Esrei! After all, during our prayers, our minds often wander to foreign lands and distant places…" ~ Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev.

"If a person will be happy simply because he's a Yid, I guarantee that nothing bad will happen to him – neither beruchniyus nor begashmiyus (spiritually nor physically)." ~ Beis Aharon zt"l

"Lashon hara and other forms of forbidden speech contaminate the air and are the root of diseases, rachmana litzlan." ~ The Trisker Maggid zt'l

"Don't tell me you don't sin because it is forbidden. Tell me you don't sin because you are too busy." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe



Aish Haolam

WHAT TO LEARN FROM THE MAKEUP OF THE WORLD

"Be soft like water on the outside, fiery with Torah at your core and rock-solid inside." ~ Rav Avrohom Genechovsky Zt"l

Short And Sweet Story of The Week by R'yoni Schwartz

There was a young widow who was an upstairs neighbour of **Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Z"TL**. Before he passed away, her husband would check the maror each year prior to Pesach.

One Erev Pesach, when Rav Shlomo Zalman was rushing to shul, she came downstairs to him crying. "I think my maror has bugs in it!"

His family said, "we can find somebody else to check it, the Rav is in a rush."

She didn't relent, "No... I think there's bugs..."

The family told her that they would give her fresh maror; the Rav had to get to shul.

Rav Shlomo Zalman overheard the commotion and called her into his room.

The family exclaimed, "Rebbe, Shkiah!"

He started carefully inspecting her maror inch by inch and reassured her that the maror was completely fine. Wiping the tears off her face, she profusely thanked him and headed on her way.

The family asked him if he really needed to check the maror. He replied, "Yes. This would be the first year she wouldn't have her husband with her to check the maror. She needed somebody to show they care. - Her mouth asked for help with her physical maror, but her tears asked for help with her emotional bitterness."

Comment: *In this week's parsha, Eliezer, looking for a wife for Yitzchak, does something seemingly odd. When he arrives at his destination, he comes running up to Rivka anxiously asking for water like somebody dying of thirst. Is it possible that he had countless camels loaded with Avraham's entire wealth yet didn't have water? Why would he ask Rivka for water like this?*

In truth, Eliezer was performing an emotional intelligence test. He was looking for somebody who could see past the surface of spoken words and hear the deeper message that was not explicitly verbalized. He was looking for somebody with the intelligence to understand the emotions of others and the heart to do something about it.

In Judaism, reaching spiritual heights doesn't just depend upon our rational intelligence; it depends on our emotional intelligence as well.

It is nice to understand complex Talmudic topics, but we must also be able to understand the feelings of those around us. This is the beauty of the Torah: it doesn't just teach us how to read the text "life", it also teaches us to read in between the lines and understand the things not explicitly said with words.

"When approaching a mitzvah, a person should view it as if it is his only mitzvah, as if he is the only person in the world and as if this is the only day on which he can perform it" ~ The Chofetz Chaim.

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick

The pasuk says that Avrohom gave Efron four hundred silver shekalim for Meoras Hamachpeila. As soon as Avrohom and Efron agreed upon a price, Avrohom paid without any delay.

We learn from Avrohom that when we owe someone money, we must make sure to pay them as soon as possible. [**ספר עלינו לשבח**]

Rabbi Yaakov Rahimi - The Artist of Your Life

The word emunah, belief in Hashem, relates to the word *imun*, training or exercise. Similarly, someone who knows how to manufacture tools is called an uman. Emunah, imun, uman. What is the connection between these?

The Chofetz Chaim writes that every day, a person has different obstacles and challenges come his way. Nobody imagines that on this specific day and at that specific time someone would make fun of him or drag him into a fight, or such-and-such a test would be placed before him. However, our job is to be manufacturers. We are to take the test coming our way and with a combination of exercised effort (imun) and belief (emunah) that Hashem is always behind everything, manufacture (like an uman) an opportunity out of the obstacle.

When you believe that everything is from Hashem, you gain the strength and fortitude to shape and mold the setbacks, disappointments, hardships and hurdles that come your way into springboards and opportunities for fantastic self-growth. And in that moment, you become the most marvellous artist of your life.

בורא עולם.. אני לא יכול.. אבל אתה כל יכול – *"Master of the universe – I can't… but You can do anything!" ~ Rabbi Duvi BenSoussan.*

Rabbi Avrohom Asher Makovsky - You Made It

My good friend, Rabbi Mordechai Krasny, once told me that his father, R' Shmuel, was very close to the **Klausenberger Rebbe *zt"l***. Once, the Klausenberger Rebbe was making a wedding for one of his children in New York, yet R' Shmuel was scheduled to be out of town. Notwithstanding, R' Shmuel was set on not missing the wedding, come what may. As such, he made certain to book a flight, along with its connecting flight, to return on time for the wedding.

As so happened, there were delays on both flights, and time began slipping by ever so certainly. Despite feeling terrible, he did everything he could to make it to the wedding hall as soon as possible. After deplaning, he caught a taxi and rushed over. As soon as he arrived, though, he realized he was late. Very late. They were reciting Shir Hamaalos before bentching. The chuppa, the dancing, the meal… everything had been completed. Feeling broken, especially after considering all the hard work and planning that went into coordinating his trip, R' Shmuel humbly took a seat.

But having arrived, he figured that he'd at least approach the Klausenberger Rebbe and wish him a mazel tov. Making his way to the head table, he exchanged looks with the Rebbe. And then the Rebbe, in a warm, echoing voice said, "R' Shmuel! I knew you would make it!" R' Shmuel, later reflecting on this moment, remarked, "In one second, I went from feeling like two cents to a million dollars!"

Now, for a moment, put yourself in the Klausenberger Rebbe's shoes. You might have found yourself in a similar predicament at a family simcha of your own. You've gone through hours upon hours of the chuppa, the dancing, the meal, and more dancing. And then, after all is done, and most people have left, there remains a select number of close family and friends. You sit down, about to begin bentching, and from the corner of your eye, you notice someone walking through the door. They don't look familiar. In the past several hours, you

can't remember someone looking quite like that. Until he steps closer and closer, and his face comes into focus.

It's a good friend of yours. Someone near and dear to you. Except there's one problem: everything is done. He missed it all. The chuppa that proceeded so wonderfully, along with the dancing that was so lively, and the meal that was well-received by all. All of it is in the past, and your friend didn't show up for any of it. What should you say?

The Klausenberger Rebbe taught us. "I knew you would make it!" Just how well do we know exactly how much effort our friend put in to making it to the wedding. In this case, R' Shmuel spent hours rearranging his schedule and thinking and implementing ways to make it on time. But, for reasons beyond him, he didn't. Our response? With middos. Take all the thoughts and considerations you might have of him not caring or being preoccupied with his own life and turn it all around. And then let him know that you had no doubt that he'd make it. You will see how such a warm, embracing and welcoming comment will make his face light up.

A lesson to take home, and a lesson to take outside.

R' Yissachar Frand - The Evil Inclination Never Lets Go

I once heard an insight from **Rav Aharon Kotler, z"tl**: It says at the end of the Akeidah that the ram was entangled in the bush. Rav Aharon asked, "Why did that happen?" The test was completed and Avrohom was found to be righteous. What need is there for the pasuk to emphasize that the ram was caught up in the bush?

Rav Aharon says that this shows that the Yetzer Harah never gives up. "Avrohom, you think you passed the test. Fine. You won that round, now there's another round -- the ram. You think it's going to be easy from now on? You're wrong. There are always trials and

tribulations, always problems and temptations. There are always tests."

This was the same ploy and the same trick with Sarah. You think, Avrohom, you came unscathed from the Akeidah? No, you didn't. I'll show you that you didn't. I'll give you a dead Sarah and see how you react.

Parsha Pearls by Meir Tzvi Berman

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה "***And the life of Soroh was a hundred years and twenty years and seven years, the years of the life of Soroh***."

Definition of an Era: The repetition of the phrase "the years of the life of Soroh" indicates that these years were defined by Soroh's presence. Just as a righteous person leaves an indelible mark on the place where he or she lives, he/she also leaves a mark on the entire era. ~ **S'fas Emes**.

וַיָּבֵא הָאִישׁ הַבַּיְתָה וַיְפַתַּח הַגְּמַלִּים וַיִּתֵּן תֶּבֶן וּמִסְפּוֹא לַגְּמַלִּים וּמַיִם לִרְחֹץ רַגְלָיו וְרַגְלֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ. וַיּוּשֶׂם לְפָנָיו לֶאֱכֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֹכַל עַד אִם־דִּבַּרְתִּי דְּבָרָי וַיֹּאמֶר דַּבֵּר ***And he placed straw and fodder before his camels, and water to wash his feet and those of the men who were with him. And he put food before him, and he said, "I won't eat till I say my words***." (24:32-33)

To Feed a Crowd: It seems from the verse that food was originally put only in front of Eliezer, not the men who were with him. They had only received washing water. Someone who invites guests only because he is ashamed not to, will try to get away with the minimum. Lavon felt that only Eliezer seemed respectable enough to warrant a meal. However, when Eliezer insisted on immediately broaching the subject of the marriage between Rivka and Yitzchok, Lovan realized that treating the entire party properly would be in

his best interests, because it would increase his chances of success in closing a deal with Eliezer.

Indeed, we see that following Eliezer's narration, **וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ הוּא וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־עִמּוֹ**. (***And they ate and drank, he and the men who were with him***. v.54) The other men got to eat only when Lavan realized what was at stake. ~ **Chasam Sofer**.

Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin



Eliezer arrives in Charan. Rivka gives him water to drink. The Torah states, **וַתְּכַל לְהַשְׁקֹתוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר גַּם לִגְמַלֶּיךָ אֶשְׁאָב עַד אִם־כִּלּוּ לִשְׁתֹּת** "And she finished giving him to drink. And she said, 'Also for your camels I will draw water until they finish drinking' "(24:19).

Why does the Torah specify that she will draw water rather than writing "I will give the camels to drink"?

The great Spanish Rabbi, **the Abarbanel**, tells us that Rivkah was meticulously careful not to say anything that would be untrue. Therefore, she said she would draw water, as if to say, "I don't know for sure if they will drink or not, but I will draw water for them. If they want to, they can drink."

Rabbi Shmuel Walkin adds that we see here how careful we should be to keep away from saying anything untrue. He cites as an example **Rabbi Refael of Bershid** who was always very careful to refrain from saying anything that was untrue.

One day he entered his home while it was raining outside. When asked if it was still raining, he replied, "When I was outside it was

raining." He did not want to mislead in case it had stopped raining from the time he entered his home.

This may seem to be ridiculous or inconsequential. However, if a person is careful with keeping to the truth in such instances, he will definitely be careful in more important matters. On the other hand, if a person is careless with the truth, he can even be tempted to lie in major ways!



וַיֹּאמְרוּ נִקְרָא לַנַּעֲרָה וְנִשְׁאֲלָה אֶת־פִּיהָ *'And they said, 'We will call the maiden and ask her decision'*. (24:57)

When Eliezer said that he wanted to leave and go back home with Rivka, for her to marry Yitzchak, her mother and sister hesitated. Not so fast. Let's ask Rivka what she wants to do. But previously they said *'here is Rivka before you, take her and go, and let her be a wife for your master's son'*. Why the change? Why a hesitation all of a sudden?

When Eliezer came, they saw all the gold and valuables that he brought. They assumed that that was for them. So they were willing to agree to anything. Afterwards, when they realized that they were only getting some food and delicacies they changed their minds. (**Alshich**)



"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe.



An integral part of faith includes one's verbal statement – "I shall do this, G-d willing," as one is about to execute anything, whether it be big or small. ~ Shelah HaKadosh



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OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation
WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

Predestined -Aleinu L'Shabeiach – Bereishis by Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein

שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה *[these were] the years of the life of Sarah*. (23:1)



The verse has already told us, Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years. Why does the Torah repeat, The years of Sarah's life?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky offered the following reason: People had begun to say that it was the Akeidah that caused Sarah's death. If not for that, they claimed, she might have lived for many more years.

The Torah refutes this, saying, 'The years of Sarah's life' — that is, these are the years that were allotted and measured out for her from the beginning. Her lifespan was not shortened by the Akeidah.

This is something that frequently happens to all of us: When a mitzvah comes to hand, the yetzer hara tries to convince us that doing it will cause us to incur a loss.

We must fortify ourselves against the yetzer's wiles, for although the pictures it draws in our minds seem to have substance, every Jew should be aware that they have no substance at all. One can never lose by doing mitzvos.

'Ah Mamme Iz A Mamme' - The Soul of Kaddish by Rabbi Yechiel Spero



After **Rav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky**, rosh yeshivah of Yeshivas Ner Yisroel, lost his mother, **Rav Elya Baruch Finkel** of Yeshivas Mir Yerushalayim sent a letter of nichum aveilim.

When his talmid handed him the letter, Rav Kulefsky asked him to read it to him, since by that time he was already nearly blind and could barely read on his own.

In the letter, Rav Elya Baruch told the following story: When **Rav Akiva Eiger**'s mother died, three rabbanim came to be menachem avel. One of them asked a seemingly innocent question, "*Vi alt iz geven di mamme*? How old was your mother?"

Rav Akiva was very bothered by the question. "*Oif ah mamme fregt mehn nisht vi alt zi iz gevehn* — When it comes to a mother, you don't ask how old she was. Ah mamme iz a mamme — A mother is a mother (and losing her is difficult no matter how old she was)!"

Hearing this story, Rav Kulefsky was intrigued. He stood up from his shivah chair and began to pace the floor, repeating the words, "Oif ah mamme fregt mehn nisht vi alt zi iz gevehn." Over and over, he repeated the phrase, each time with added intensity.

Finally, he stopped, sat down, and delivered an epic lesson. "You think I'm getting emotional here, and that's why I'm repeating it over and over? No! Rather, it's because this is nuch ah shtick Torah fuhn Rav Akiva Eiger — This is yet another piece of Torah from Rav Akiva Eiger."

In Israel, Reliving the 1941 Baghdad Massacre by Rabbi Shraga Simmons



October 7, 2023. The Tel Aviv suburb of Givatayim, 8 pm. Sirens wail, signaling an incoming missile from Gaza. Oria Jackson rushes to the protected room of her apartment, located on the top floor of a seven-story building. The horrific Hamas' massacre of 1,400 Jews and kidnapping of 230 Israelis and foreign nationals earlier that day race through her mind.

Shuddering in her bomb shelter, Oria recalls another terror massacre, 82 years ago in her birthplace of Baghdad, Iraq. During the two-day *Farhud* ("violent dispossession" in Arabic), mobs of Arabs wielding swords, axes and guns invaded thousands of Jewish homes – they were taken from us in a most horrific, inhumane, and barbaric way. pillaging, and massacring – they were brutally murdered.

Oria's thoughts of mutilated bodies, from Baghdad to Gaza, meld in a gruesome mix. Then suddenly – *SLAM!* – a missile from Gaza strikes the roof of Oria's building, just meters from where she sits. The

impact and explosion send shock waves, shattered glass and twisted metal hurtling through her apartment.

The protected room, made of reinforced concrete and steel, saves her from violent death.

"I grew up hearing gory details from my parents and six siblings who experienced the horrific Farhud," Oria tells Aish.com, "but I never imagined the same thing would happen in Israel."

Prior to the *Farhud*, Baghdad was the wealthiest Jewish community in the world. Jews dominated banking, commerce, law and government, and constituted over a third of the city's population. Jews had lived peacefully in Iraq for 2,500 years; the Babylonian Talmud was developed in present-day Iraq.

All that changed in the wake of World War II. The British were in control of Iraq's huge oil reserves, a resource that Hitler coveted for his expanding war plans: to first conquer Russia, then the Middle East – exterminating all its Jews. To this end, Nazi General Erwin Rommel's troops were positioned in Egypt.

Hitler found a willing partner in the Grand Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Muslim leader violently opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state (and till today the ideological father of the Islamist movement to annihilate Israel). With nearly one million Jews living in Arab lands, the Mufti feared a mass exodus of these Jews to Israel. Hitler's proposed genocide was a convenient final solution.

The Mufti forged a close alliance with Hitler and visiting Nazi Germany to learn the tactics of ghettos, pogroms, and concentration camps.

On Hitler's payroll, the Mufti delivered a daily pro-Nazi radio broadcast to the Muslim world and implemented a vicious anti-Jewish campaign in Iraqi media and schools. The German embassy in Iraq purchased the *Arab World* newspaper *(Al-alam Al-arabi)* and

filled it with incendiary hate propaganda about Jews as "subhuman vermin" and "the treacherous enemy."

Mein Kampf, Protocols of Elders of Zion, and Henry Ford's anti-Semitic writings were translated into Arabic and widely distributed. The Futtuwa Iraqi youth movement was established based on the model of Hitler Youth. Posters in Iraq markets declared: "G-d *(Alla)* is your master in Heaven; Hitler your master on Earth." Iraq's second-most popular baby name, after Mohammed, was Hitler.



Jewish family in Iraq, circa 1925 (illustrative)

Adolf Eichmann, on a wartime visit to Palestine, swelled with pride at how "Nazi flags fly in Palestine and they adorn their houses with Swastikas and portraits of Hitler."

High-ranking SS officer Dieter Wisliceny would later testify at the Nuremberg trials: "The Mufti was one of the initiators of the systematic extermination of European Jewry, and had been a collaborator and advisor of Eichmann and Himmler in the execution

of this plan... He was one of Eichmann's best friends and had constantly incited him to accelerate the extermination measures."

The *Farhud* Massacre

For Baghdad's Jews, the situation reached a boiling point on May 25, 1941, when Hitler issued Order 30 "to move forward in the Middle East by supporting Iraq."

One week later, on the eve of the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, tens of thousands of bloodthirsty Nazi-Muslims rampaged through the streets of Baghdad, swearing allegiance to the Mufti and Hitler, and screaming: "*Cutal al Yehud* – slaughter the Jews!"

The Arab marauders went door to door, targeting every Jewish home and business in Baghdad. (The Mufti had prepared for the massacre by ordering a red *hamsa* symbol painted on all Jewish properties.) For two terror-filled days of Shavuot, Arabs plundered and demolished hundreds of Jewish homes and businesses, while hundreds of Jews – men, women and children – were mutilated and slaughtered.

The *Farhud* was the Middle East version of Kristallnacht and showed how Hitler's Jew-hatred had spread to the Muslim world.

"When the violence started, we pushed all the furniture against our front door to prevent the mob from breaking in," - "My grandfather paid a local Arab policeman to stand outside the house and protect it. As a child, I overheard the adults speaking about how the Arabs, with their gruesome ways of murdering Jews, outdid even the sadistic Nazis."

The *Farhud* was a wakeup call for Baghdad's Jews who began to realize that, after millennia of peaceful existence in Iraq, their days were numbered.

The situation for Iraqi Jewry turned ominous in 1948 when, following Israel's declaration of independence, Iraq declared war against the Jewish state. The Iraqi government curtailed Jews' civil rights and

fired many Jewish state employees. Jewish youths and well-connected Jewish businessmen were arrested, tortured and/or publicly hanged. Iraqi Jews, realizing that the Farhud was more than just an isolated incident instigated by Nazi propaganda, sought to leave for Israel en mass.



Leaving Iraq, and escape routes were slow and treacherous.

Eventually, the Iraqi government permitted Jews to leave the country, on condition they leave all their money, property and possessions behind. Carmela's parents owned valuable real estate in Baghdad. They wanted to sell the property, but nobody would buy it – because as soon as they left, it would all be free.

By 1951, 90% of the Iraqi Jewish community had immigrated to Israel.

An interesting postscript: With Nazi propaganda legitimizing the murder of Jews in Iraq, survivors of the *Farhud* were designated by the Israeli government as "Holocaust survivors," entitling them to various benefits.

Orit, whose apartment was hit on October 7 by the missile from Gaza, says she's not surprised by the Hamas atrocities committed. "The Farhud instilled in me an emotional distrust," she says. "I always knew of the potential for a massacre. But I never imagined that 82 years later, I'd experience a repeat of the Farhud here in Israel."

To think that in the Holy Land, our Land, terrorists would roam the streets freely? This is a chilling thought which demands a real response.

Miracle In Ofakim

Rav Moshe Dov Fox - Yeshiva Toras Chaim in Yerushalayim related:

A family in Ofakim owns a dira in Ramat Eshkol which they have been renting out for many years. The tenants know the owners in Ofakim well and had invited them many times to come for a Shabbos, but they never came.

Finally, this year, when the owners were invited for Simchas Torah, their tenants in Ramat Eshkol wouldn't take 'no' for an answer: "We already cooked the food for you – you have to come!"

So the owners came and were thereby spared the horrific events of that day in the south. One of their neighbors in Ofakim was killed, another taken hostage. But the owner's family was saved!

When the owners were asked, in what merit might they have been saved, the wife replied: "The rents in Ramat Eshkol keeps climbing higher … When we finally told our tenants that we'd have to increase their rent, they said they understood it was our right to do so, but they couldn't afford the increase and would have to move away.

"My husband asked our tenant if he learned three sedarim a day. When he said he did, we decided that in the zechus of his Torah learning we wouldn't raise the rent. So, we've been keeping the rent the same all these years.

Rav Fox concluded: "This family's high regard for Torah was the zechus to save them. They gave up thousands of shekalim over the years, but they didn't lose out from it – they gained their own lives!"

A Message from the Kalever Rebbe - Only Hashem protects his children from all hidden dangers

אַל־תְּאַחֲרוּ אֹתִי וַה' הִצְלִיחַ "***Do not delay me, since Hashem has made my way prosper***." (24:56)

Antisemitism Unleashed

An unbridled hatred for the Jewish people is being unleashed around the world. Each of these haters can simply grab a knife or other weapon and attack a Jew. There are also masses of well-armed terrorists who want to destroy the Jewish people.

With the rising hatred and thirst for violence, it would be natural for there to have been many more attacks, chas vshalom, against the Jews. Truthfully, there are many individuals who are constantly planning to attack us. They even make all the preparations. Hashem, however, foils their sinister plots, protecting the Jews. - We are completely unaware of the countless times the Jewish people were in grave danger and Hashem had saved us.

Foiled Plots

During the days of the **Chozeh from Lublin, zt"l**, there was one minister who passionately hated the Jews in his town, and he wanted to kill the local Rabbi. The minister knew that the Rabbi woke up very early in the morning and that he would walk to shul in the dark. So, he devised a plan. One night, he asked his servant to dig a deep pit on the path that the rabbi would walk in the following morning, figuring that, in the darkness, the rabbi would not see the pit and would fall in, plummeting to the bottom.

However, Hashem intervened. That same night, a prestigious and wise guest visited the rabbi. They were engrossed in a deep Torah conversation as the hours ticked by. Finally, they retired for the evening far later than the rabbi was accustomed to. The following morning, the rabbi woke up a little later than usual and walked to shul while it was light. Seeing the pit, he simply walked around the dangerous obstacle.

When the minister learned the details about what had happened, he said: "Now I must praise the greatness of the Jews' G-d! He is the Omnipresence that controls the events of this world. His Divine Providence protects His beloved children, the Jewish people. He saves them from dangers that they don't even know about!"

When the Chozeh, zt"l, heard this story, he said: "The pasuk in Tehilim (117:1-2) says, 'Praise the L-rd, all gentiles, laud Him, all nations. For His kindness has overwhelmed us!' - Why do the non-Jews praise Hashem for the kindness that has "overwhelmed" the Jews, and not the Jews themself? After hearing this story, I know the answer. When the pasuk describes this chesed, this kindness, it is referring to the Jews being saved from being harmed by the non-Jews.

Only the non-Jews know how many of their wicked plots were foiled by Hashem and how many times Hashem has saved us, while those for whom these miracles occurred do not know that they happened."

Hidden Miracles

During Nishmas – which we pray on Shabbos morning – we say: "in all times of trouble and distress, we have no king, helper, supporter but You".

R' Nosson Dovid from Shidlovtza, zt"l, explained that you need to divide this phrase into two ideas. First, we say that we understand that "in all times [there is] trouble and distress", we are constantly at risk of being harmed at the hands of those who want to annihilate

us, even when it isn't publicized that we were living in "a time of trouble." And therefore - we continue to say - we understand and acknowledge that "we have no king, helper, support but You", because no other king can protect his people from the hidden dangers that surround them.

In fact, there is another more subtle miracle. Even when the non-Jewish governments and law enforcement officers uncover and, therefore, foil a terrorist attack, that is also a miracle; it goes against the natural order of the world. Those nations of the world don't like the Jewish people. However, when they intervene on our behalf, saving the Jewish people from an attack, it is solely because Hashem inspires their hearts to help the Jews. As the pasuk says (Mishlei 21:1), "A king's heart is like rivulets of water in the L-rd's hand; wherever He wishes, He turns it".

On a Short Leash

R' Yitzchak from Volozhin related that when he went to Nicholas, the Russian Tsar, to lobby for the Jews, he noticed that there were in the palace large dogs that were natural predators. Whenever someone entered the chambers to meet with the tsar, the dogs would approach the visitor and gently lick their feet.

He asked one of the dog's trainers, "How did you teach these animals to forgo their natural predatory behaviors?"

The caretaker explained that when the dog was chained to a leash, he felt that he was not free to do as he pleases. Therefore, the animal can control its natural tendencies. If the dog were unleashed, it would attack and devour the person.

The Goan from Volozhin then explained, that the same can be said regarding how the Kingdom of Heaven oversees the Jewish people. The natural tendency of the world's non-Jewish kings is to devour the Jewish people. The Jews are described as being a lamb surrounded by seventy wolves. When we see one of these nations

acting benevolently towards the Jewish people and serving their interests, it is because those kings have been shackled and leashed by Hashem. If Hashem were to unleash them, they would immediately begin issuing harsh and evil decrees against the Jews.

Don't be Afraid

This helps us understand the episode in this week's Parsha that described the shidduch between Yitzchak and Rivkah: Besuel was a king that ruled over an evil nation that despised Avraham Avinu. They wanted to kill his servant, Eliezer. Therefore, he poisoned Eliezer's food. However, an angel came and switched the bowls of food. And, as the Midrash elaborates, Besuel ate the poisoned food instead and died. Eliezer was saved.

Immediately afterwards, her brother Lavan and her mother tried to postpone Rivkah's journey to Avraham's house. They feared that she would be harmed by the Jew-haters. Eliezer reassured them saying, "Do not delay me... " Don't worry about the Jew- haters, because you just witnessed that "the L-rd has made my way prosper" - Hashem is the one who has made my journey successful. I naturally should not have been saved from danger. I didn't even know that there was a plot to poison me. Therefore, you don't need to be worried about the Jew-haters, because Hashem will always protect His people.

"Having good children is 50% prayer and 50% shalom bayis." ~ The Steipler Gaon.

Teshuva is not only for sins. Even mitzvos need teshuva, for what we could have done with more purity, more passion, more love for Hashem. ~ The Chofetz Chaim.

In Honor of Your Son by Rabbi Joey Haber



One Chabad rabbi tragically lost his son on October 7th. The rabbi was living in America, and his son was living in Israel. After receiving the news, he booked a flight in an attempt to arrive in time for his son's funeral.

Seated on an EL AL flight, he began wondering what he could do in memory of his son. He was sure that something positive could be done over the course of the next hours. And so, he began.

Turning to the man seated next to him, he broached the question. "Would you like to put on a pair of *tefillin*?" "No, I'm sorry," responded the man, "I don't really do that." Not being deterred, the rabbi proceeded to ask the same question to the man seated just one seat farther. "Would you like to put on a pair of *tefillin*?" "No, it's not my thing," came the similar sounding reply.

Still determined, the rabbi asked a third person. "Could you put on *tefillin* in honor of my son who just passed away? It will be an elevation for his soul." The man was taken aback. "Yeah, of course. It would be my honor to do so."

It didn't end there though. The man sitting closer chimed in. "In memory of your son? I'll do it too." The next man sitting even a seat closer spoke up as well. "In honor of your son? Yeah, I'll do it too."

The rabbi proceeded to help these three men put on *tefillin*, all the while remaining oblivious to what was happening right behind him. Only when he lifted his head and turned around did he see it.

A full line had formed along the entire aisle. Every man on the plane wanted to put on *tefillin* in memory of his son. After every single man had finished, the pilot told the co-pilot, "Do me a favor. You take over the plane… I want to put the *tefillin* on too."

During this past month, we have seen what we look like when we are inspired to grow. All around the world, people are putting *tefillin* on for the first time in their life. People too are suddenly wearing *tzitzit*, though they normally don't. Hundreds of thousands of pairs of tzitzit have also been delivered to Israel.

One young man who works in a pizza shop in Toronto wanted to do something. He took all the money he had made—$2100—and spent it all on *tzitzit*. He then told any customer who entered the store, "If you've never worn *tzitzit* before, you can have a pair for free." And in fact, nearly eighty students from the University of Toronto visited this pizza store and took a pair of *tzitzit* for themselves.

The Torah tells us **וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל** - ***that Hashem blessed Avraham Avinu with "everything"*** (*Bereishis* 24:1). What does 'everything' mean? Rashi explains that he was blessed with a son (Yitzchak). How can one child be everything?

Through that one child the entire Jewish nation would come into existence. And the Jewish nation is everything. We are kind, compassionate, self-effacing, generous, creative, smart, tenacious, and focused. Out of that one son, Yitzchak Avinu, a nation would come to be born which possesses every possible trait of goodness.

The question for us all is therefore this: what have we personally done to ensure that we are growing and uniting with other Jews around the world?

With that answer, we can light up the world and change it. Forever.

Chabad.ORG

From our Sages

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים – *The life of Sarah was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years (23:1)*

Why does the Torah split up the tally of her years into three parts ("one hundred years," "twenty years" and "seven years")?

To tell us that every day of her life was the equivalent of them all. At the age of one hundred years, she was like age twenty in strength, and at age twenty she was like age seven in modesty and purity; at age seven she was like age twenty in intelligence, and at age twenty she was like age one hundred in righteousness. ~ (**Midrash HaGadol**)

אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף – *'Four hundred shekels of silver,' (23:16)*

As per Leviticus 27:16, a field the size of a *beit kor*, which is the equivalent of 75,000 square cubits, represents a value of 50 silver shekels. Thus, the size of the field which Abraham purchased for 400 silver shekels was eight *kor*, or 600,000 square cubits.

A square cubit (approx. 20 inches by 20 inches) is the space occupied by a single person. This means that Abraham purchased a plot of land that provides an individual "space" for each of the 600,000 souls of Israel. ~ (**Paane'ach Raza**)

וָאָבֹא הַיּוֹם אֶל־הָעָיִן – *'I arrived today at the well.' (24:42)*

From Hebron to Charan is a 17-day journey, and Eliezer made the trip in three hours. ~ (**Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch.16**)

What's the Recipe?

R' Simcha Zissel's daughter was ill and went to the doctor who told her that the essential part of her cure was to remain calm. Since her father, the Alter of Kelm, constantly stressed the importance of peace of mind, she happily told him that doctors cure physical illness with peace of mind. Her father responded, "You should have said to the doctor, 'of course, peace of mind is needed, but please tell me how one obtains it.'"

Almost all doctors advise patients to keep calm and not get upset, but do doctors give a recipe how to obtain peace of mind? A person who observes Shabbos with the proper attitude will have a taste of true peace of mind. ~ Chochmah Umussar, vol . 2, p. 204



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

● **How much money did Ephron ask from Avrohom in private?**

וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָהָם אֶל־עֶפְרוֹן וַיִּשְׁקֹל אַבְרָהָם לְעֶפְרֹן אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֵי־חֵת אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף עֹבֵר לַסֹּחֵר (23,16) "***And Avrohom listened to Ephron, and Avrohom weighed to Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the children of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, accepted by the merchant.***"

Behold, the phrase "in the hearing of the children of Heth" is seemingly superfluous. But it seems to me that we can explain these words by first examining that which is written in the previous posuk "four hundred shekels of silver, between me and you what is it?". If the Torah intended that these words have a straightforward meaning, then it should have said the opposite "what is it between

me and you". Therefore it seems to me that his words had a different meaning, as follows:

Behold, it is normal for an average person only to accept money which can be spent everywhere, and in every country. But a large merchant who does business with places far away, will accept money even though it can be spent in only part of the world. Now, Avrohom and Ephron were great merchants and princes, and to them any coinage was acceptable. So Ephron was saying to Avrohom "a land worth four hundred shekels", and which type of shekel is it worth, "between me and you", that is, these shekalim are only considered shekalim between me and you, and not to the whole world. And thus he revealed his mind that the land was worth only four hundred inferior shekalim.

Therefore, the posuk speaks out that Ephron's statement "between me and you" was only said to Avrohom in private, but in the hearing of the children of Heth Ephron said that he wants superior shekalim which are currency everywhere. This is what the posuk is saying, "and Avrohom weighed to Ephron the silver which he spoke in the hearing of the children of Heth", and that is "four hundred shekels acceptable by the merchant", and not like he had said to Avrohom privately.

Short And Sweet Story of The Week

The Jews were in a quandary. The Germans wanted to kill them, while the Russians wanted them in Siberia. During the pangs of WWI, as the armies' troops were approaching the **Chofetz Chaim's** Yeshiva in Radin, he was faced with a high stakes decision: where to flee: Germany or Russia?

He split the Yeshivah in two camps and each fled a different way. On Friday afternoon, as Shabbos was quickly approaching, the Chofetz Chaim, ZT"L, realized that he wouldn't reach town before

sundown. One of his students suggested that everyone remain on the train and hide in the nearest city, because if the Russians spot a group of 300 young men in the forest, they would likely kill everybody.

The Chofetz Chaim said, "If people hear that I traveled on Shabbos nobody will keep Shabbos anymore." He then proceeded to get off the train. When his students saw him exit every single one chose to follow along, despite the risks involved. As the sun was setting, they began Kabbalos Shabbos. However, as they were singing *Lecha Dodi*, a Russian platoon office ran towards them. The students' hearts sank. The platoon's commander quickly approached and demanded to know what was going on. He was told that they're observing Shabbos.

"In that case," he said, "OK - Continue and we'll protect you and make sure nobody drafts your young men." Little did they know that since the Russians were low on manpower, so they went through the city streets forcibly drafting all young men.

The Chofetz Chaim later explained, "had we not gone above and beyond for Hashem, Hashem wouldn't have gone above and beyond for us!"

Jew or Israeli

Soon after the one-year commemoration of the deadly October 7 attacks in Israel, one man conducted 38 interviews focusing on the rebuilding efforts of the Israeli communities in the Gaza envelope. He met with a woman named Dafnah from *Kibbuz Re'im*. She had been the cultural director of the *kibbutz* and was one of the organizers of the Nova Festival. Touring the *kibbutz*, she showed him her charred house and the room in which her mother and children were found murdered together. She is the lone survivor of her family.

He asked her if the terrorists destroyed any *shuls* in the communities as well.

Dafnah responded, "Of course not. Not a single *beit knesset* was damaged in all 21 Gaza *kibbutzim*." - He didn't understand, how could no *shul* have been attacked, no *Sefer Torah* burned?

"It wasn't a miracle. How could they damage something that doesn't exist?" Most of the communities didn't have designated or active *shuls*, she said. Dafnah, went on to explain, "If you want to understand the day after, you have to understand the day before."

There is a man named Rabbi Shlomo Raanan, she told him, who runs an organization called *Ayelet Hashachar* which seeks to bring outreach to irreligious *kibbutzim*. He came up with an idea of a basketball game between *yeshivah bachurim* and the *kibbutzniks* of Reim. The game was set to take place on *Chol Hamoed*, October 2, just days before the massacre. Dafnah had led the charge to cancel the game. To her, the match wasn't just a friendly contest; it was a Trojan horse, a way for religious influence to creep into the *kibbutz*. "I was furious," she said. "This was outrageous. We didn't need outsiders telling us what a good Jew is."

Pulling out her phone and scrolling through old messages, she showed the text messages she had sent to Rabbi Raanan, warning him not to bring his religious mission to her doorstep. "Cancel this game immediately," she wrote. "If you don't, we'll all block the entrance with our bodies." In the spirit of peace and harmony, Rabbi Raanan canceled the game.

Five days later, the massacre came. Just over the border, inside the tunnels of Gaza, Dafnah found herself held hostage, face to face with the forces that had torn her world apart. "I said to an older guard in Arabic, why do you torture me? For 20 years, I've made programs for Arab and Jewish. The Jews are your cousins." As she pleaded in the darkness for some recognition of their shared humanity, she was met not with empathy but with a cold dismissal.

"You are not a descendent of Ibrahim! You are not a Jew!" he spat. "You are a European colonialist who stole our land!"

It was in that moment, Dafnah said, that something broke. Or perhaps, something began to be repaired. The accusation hit hard. Like many in the *kibbutz* movement, Dafnah had spent her life defining herself more as an Israeli than a Jew, and more dedicated to reconciling Arabs and Israelis, than healing the divides between different groups of Jews. Religion had always been secondary to her identity. But now, in the depths of that tunnel, being denied her Jewishness by a Hamas fighter, she experienced a crisis of self.

"I started screaming, *Ana Yahudiun, Ana Yahudiun*, I am a Jew, I am a Jew!" - The guards restrained her, taping her mouth. But for Dafnah, the internal shift had already occurred.

"For the first time in my life I saw my soul; I saw that I am a Jew. All my life," Dafnah reflected, "I've been part of this community. We didn't see ourselves as Jews, in the traditional sense. When I traveled overseas and someone asked if I was Jewish, I'd correct them. 'No, I am an Israeli,' I would say. But when this Hamas terrorist called me a colonialist, it hit me. He didn't see me as a Jew. You know why? Because I didn't see myself as a Jew!"

Dafnah's eyes wandered over the ruined landscape of her beloved *kibbutz*. "Every Arab village has a mosque. Christian settlements build churches. And here, in a community of Jewish people, we have nothing to say that we are Jews. And in that moment, I realized that if we were going to rebuild, we needed to reclaim our identity. I took upon myself the new *beit knesset* project. When we rebuild, our *beit knesset* will be the most beautiful structure on the *kibbutz*."

On *Simchas Torah*, Dafnah lost her family, but she found herself. They died, but her Jewish identity was born. (Adapted from Ami)



A Letter To Hashem

In the city of Mir, there lived a girl by the name of Chiyenna, whose dream was to marry a *ben Torah*. However, she was finding the task rather challenging. At a young age, she'd been orphaned from her father, and her family had no breadwinner. They made do with a very meager income, which certainly complicated her prospects at marrying a *ben Torah*. The years went by, and no shidduch seemed to work out.

One night, while everyone else was asleep, she sat beside the table and wrote a heart-to-heart letter to Hashem, enumerating her pain and what she was requesting of Him. But once she finished writing it, what was she going to do with it? How would she send a letter to Hashem?

She decided that she would wait for a windy day, hike up to the closest mountain, and send it into the air in the hope that it would get to Hashem. When the right day came, she made her way to the mountain, took her letter, released her grip of it, and watched it float through the air until it was out of sight. She was content to believe that Hashem had received her letter, and she climbed back down to await its results.

Lo and behold, the letter ended up falling in the path of a yeshiva *bachur*, just the type of *chosson* the girl had been hoping for! He picked up the letter and saw it addressed to "Avi She'ba'Shamayim." He was flabbergasted. "Avi She'ba'Shamayim?" he thought. Who is writing this, and what do they need? His curiosity got the better of him, and he opened it.

After reading it, he ran to his *rosh yeshiva*, **Reb Elya Baruch Kamahi**, and asked, "I've found a letter addressed to Avi She'ba'Shamayim, and it's a request for a shidduch with a *ben Torah*. Is this a message that I should consider marrying this girl?"

The *rosh yeshiva* suggested that he first meet the girl to see with whom he's dealing with. Upon meeting, this *bachur*, Yitzchok Yechiel, saw how they shared the same Torah values and that they were compatible. Reb Kamahi suggested that he marry her.

Reb Yitzchok Yechiel Davidowitz, eventually became the *rav* in the Karelitz. They were *zocheh* to astonishing offspring, including being the honorable grandparents of the Feinstein dynasty. Who hasn't benefited from one of the thousands of earthshattering *p'sakim* that **Reb Moshe Feinstein** enlightened us to?

Reb Yitzchok Yechiel and Reb. Chiyenna (Horowitz) gave birth to Reb. Faye Gittel, the mother of Reb Moshe. Such a lady who was determined to take a learning boy, and turned to Hashem without despair, was *zocheh* to such well-deserved offspring.

Two fruits hanging together on the same branch of the same tree. One of them is already ripe, while the other one may need more time to ripen. Nature is teaching us an important lesson.

When we see others around us achieving success while we have not, it does not mean we are unsuccessful. It simply means that the right time for us has not yet come.

Remember, every soul ripens in its own season. So, hold on, be patient, and never give up. Trust the process and stay rooted. You may just be a few days away from reaching your ripened state. ~ Based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810)

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Stories my grandfather told me - An Honest Question

The Kotzker Rebbe went through a period of seclusion that lasted nearly twenty years. He hardly ever left his room. He was seen only on rare occasions, once every few months. Chassidim who wished to see him and receive his blessing before departing for their homes were sometimes forced to wait in the beis midrash for weeks at a time. He stopped conducting a "tish" and received very few people. - It was said that more holiness emanated from the Kotzker Rebbe's closed door than from many open doors of other rebbes.



One day, a simple Jewish villager arrived to complain about his cow, which had suddenly stopped giving milk. The Rebbe, to everyone's astonishment, received him warmly, answered his questions, and sent him on his way with a blessing.

The Rebbetzin asked in surprise, "There are learned chassidim here, devoted servants of Hashem, but you are not interested in seeing them. Yet you let that simple man in without any delay?"

In his characteristically sharp-witted way, the Rebbe answered, "Those chassidim come asking me about spirituality, while deep in their hearts they really want my blessing for — money! I want to have nothing to do with that. But that simple villager came to me about his cow, and really meant it. The truth, with no hypocrisy, is something I do want!"



Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810) was the great-grandson of the holy Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement. He championed a unique path of divine service, urging his followers to serve Hashem with simplicity and joy. While it has been over 200 years since his passing, Rebbe Nachman's teachings continue to provide clarity, hope, and comfort to his followers. - In his magnum opus, Rebbe Nachman famously teaches, "A person must cross a very, very narrow bridge. The main rule is: Do not be frightened at all!" (Likutey Moharan II, 48:2)

We hope these words provide inspiration and encouragement as we navigate the narrow bridge of life.

◣ Always in Her Prime - Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה - "***And the life of Sarah was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years - the years of Sarah's life.***" (23:1)

At one hundred, she was like a woman of twenty regarding sin. (Rashi)

The Torah relates that Sarah always combined in her personality the virtues of youth and those of old age. When she was only twenty, she had the virtues of old age calmness and moderation. But when she was one hundred years old, she was still blessed with the zeal, vitality and enthusiasm usually associated with a young woman of twenty.

◣ Living The Good Life - Reb Noson of Nemirov

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה - "***And the life of Sarah was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years - the years of Sarah's life.***" (23:1)

All her years were equal in goodness. (Rashi)

One hundred years represent the one hundred blessings we should recite daily. All these blessings are drawn through our prayers - i.e., "the words of our mouths" - which are formed from the twenty-seven letters of the Hebrew alphabet (there are twenty-two letters plus five final consonants). - Thus, the one hundred blessings and twenty-seven letters combine to make "Sarah's life" - a good life, a life of G-dliness. (Likutey Halakhot V, p. 458)

◣ This Too Is for The Best - Reb Zusia Of Anipoli

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה - "***And the life of Sarah was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years - the years of Sarah's life.***" (23:1)

All her years were equal in goodness. (Rashi)

Weren't most of Sarah's years filled with hardships - longing for children, living in exile, imprisonment at the hands of Pharaoh and Avimelech? How could all her years have been equally good?

The answer, of course, is that during her entire life, concerning everything that was seemingly bad, Sarah would always say, "This, too, is for the best." Sarah saw Hashem's kindness in everything. We must try to emulate her and do the same.

"Smile! Be a radiating sun in which the recipient can bask." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (1914-2005)

◣ Thinking Of Others - Rabbi Moshe Schochet

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל - "***And Avraham was old, advanced in years, and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything.***" (24:1)

The Kedushas Levi interprets the last five words of this pasuk very differently. He explains that the words **וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל** mean that Hashem blessed Avraham with **everyone**, not everything. In other words, being that Avraham was such a righteous person, the only way Avraham would accept a brachah from Hashem was if Hashem included everyone else in the brachah as well. - Avraham wasn't interested in brachos unless he could share them with other people.

The Kedushas Levi is highlighting something so important. The appropriate way to daven and beseech Hashem is not to just focus on ourselves but to include others as well.

The story is told of those people who would ask **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt'l**, the Rosh Yeshivah of the Mir, what to think about when listening to the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. His response was to think about someone else!

This is the lesson that the Kedushas Levi is teaching us from Avraham Avinu. We must incorporate everyone who we can think of into our tefillos. If each of us includes and thinks about others, then we are all guaranteed to be the beneficiaries of Hashem's infinite brachos.

In the morning, arise! An important guest has arrived that was never here before and will never return… that guest: today! ~ The Saba Kadisha, Rabbi Yissachar Ber of Radoshitz (1765-1843)

◣ Committed To Modesty - Belzer Rebbe Rav Yissachar Dov

וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד עֲשָׂרָה גְמַלִּים מִגְּמַלֵּי אֲדֹנָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ וְכָל־טוּב אֲדֹנָיו בְּיָדוֹ - "***The servant took ten of his master's camels and set out, with all his master's wealth in his hand.***" (24:10)

When Eliezer came to Aram Naharayim to find a bride for his master's son, Yitzchak, he brought jewelry and clothing for the future bride.

How did he know what size clothing to bring? After all, Rivkah was only three years old at the time! ?

In fact, Eliezer didn't bring clothing to wear, but a sample of the modest clothing that women wore in Avraham's household. - Rivkah saw them and agreed to become part of such a family.

◣ Emulating Hashem's Kindness - Lubavitcher Rebbe



וְהָיָה הַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַטִּי־נָא כַדֵּךְ וְאֶשְׁתֶּה וְאָמְרָה שְׁתֵּה וְגַם־גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה אֹתָהּ הוֹכַחְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק - ***"[Eliezer prayed,] 'Let it be that the maiden to whom I will say, 'Please tilt your pitcher so that I may drink,' and she replies, 'Drink, and I will also give water to your camels,' will be the one whom You have designated for Your servant Yitzchak.'"*** (24:14)

Since G-d lacks nothing, generosity is the primary way in which He relates to the world. For the same reason, generosity is the natural hallmark of people who feel closely connected to G-d. In contrast, the hallmark of evil is selfishness. No matter how much an evil

person possesses, he remains unsatisfied, so he seeks only to take and never to give. - Eliezer therefore sought a woman for Yitzchak who would display kindness.

When Rivkah went beyond fulfilling Eliezer's specific request by offering to also water his camels, he understood that she was a G-dly person and thus a fitting match for the son of Avraham.

By demonstrating kindness to others, we too are "matched" with the worthiest partners - whether soulmates, friends, business partners, or callings in life. (Siddur im Dach 92b)

◣ Just For A Few Bucks - The Alter of Navaradok

וַיֹּאמֶר בֹּוא בְּרוּךְ ה' לָמָּה תַעֲמֹד בַּחוּץ וְאָנֹכִי פִּנִּיתִי הַבַּיִת וּמָקֹום לַגְּמַלִּים - ***"[Lavan said to Eliezer,] 'Come in... for I have cleared the house.'" (24:31)*** - He means, "I have cleared the house of idols." (Rashi)

Lavan said to Eliezer: "I have even thrown out my own idols in order to get my hands on some money from your master in return for the hand of my sister Rivkah" (Rashi on pasuk 29).

This is how people like Lavan act. For a few coins of gold, they are willing to even give away their gods!

◣ Dug His Own Grave Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

לֹא אֹכַל עַד אִם־דִּבַּרְתִּי דְּבָרָי וַיֹּאמֶר דַּבֵּר - "***I will not eat until I have spoken my words***." (24:33)

It appears quite simply that the reason why Eliezer did not want to eat before speaking his piece was because Eliezer certainly understood that these people were wicked. He undoubtedly suspected that they would attempt to kill him by poisoning his food, which was indeed the case. [According to the Midrash (Lekach Tov

24:33) Besuel opposed the match and plotted to kill Eliezer by poisoning his food.] For this reason, Eliezer said, "I will not eat until I have spoken my words."



His intention was that the meal be served only after he concluded his words, which were words of Torah. This way he would be protected from danger in the merit of the words of Torah that he said prior to the meal.

And that is in fact what transpired. An angel came and exchanged Eliezer's poisoned plate with the plate of Besuel, and Besuel "fell into the pit that he had dug" for Eliezer, i.e., he died from the poison.

בס"ד

למודי משה

Shemiras Einayim – Protecting Our Eyes

וישא עיניו וירא והנה גמלים באים - *"He (Yitzchok lifted up his eyes, and behold camels were coming"* (*Bereishis* 24:63)

What is the *pasuk* coming to teach us, by telling us that Yitzchok saw camels coming?

Perhaps we can suggest as follows: We find a similar *pasuk* by Rivkah, which says: **ותשא רבקה את עיניה ותרא את יצחק** – "Rivkah lifted up her eyes, and she saw Yitzchok".

However, there is a slight difference, when Yitzchok lifted up his eyes he saw camels, however, when Rivkah lifted up her eyes she saw Yitzchok. Seemingly, just like Rivkah when lifting up her eyes saw Yitzchok, when Yitzchok lifted up his eyes he should have seen Rivkah, how come the *pasuk* says he saw camels?

Perhaps the *pasuk* is coming to teach how careful Yitzchok was with *shemiras einayim*. He would always look down and be careful of what he saw, and even when he occasionally lifted up his eyes, he would make sure to look at the camel, and not the woman on top of it. Even when he was 40 years old, and was in the *parsha* of *shidduchim*, he was still very careful.



The Needed Trip



It was in the late 1700's and there lived a man, whom we'll call Yeshaya, that suffered from his wife's distresses. At a young age, his wife began losing her mind, and the household maintenance soon fell entirely on him. Within a few short months, his wife was completely dysfunctional, and the breadwinner was left to launder the clothes and supply supper. Yeshaya didn't know how to cope with the situation, and the new stress was taking its toll.

Yeshaya visited his hometown to seek guidance and *chizuk* from his beloved *rebbi*, **Reb Moshe Leib of Sassov**. Besides for being his *rebbi*, the Sassover himself endured great *yesurim*, and Yeshaya was sure that he was the right one to guide him. Reb Moshe Leib's body was covered with blisters to the point that even regular movement was bothersome. He davened that his blisters wouldn't cover the three fingers of his right hand. He was a sough after *mohel*, and

didn't want the blisters to prevent him from fulfilling that special mitzva.

(Reb Moshe Leib not only had *yesurim*, but also brought them upon himself. Once, the Rebbe's son overheard his father ask for the *yesurim* to disappear at a particular time and only return later.)

When Yeshaya arrived at R' Moshe Leib's home, though, he felt an aura of *simcha* and *kedusha* permeating through the air, as if the Rebbe had detached himself from the struggles he was facing.

Yeshaya asked the Rebbe, "How are you always *b'simcha*? You are also faced with many pressing challenges, and yet you are a perpetual source of happiness. A stranger would think that your life is filled with bliss, but I know that it's not. How do you keep afloat?"

R' Moshe Leib answered, "I awake to the struggles of my everyday life, but their weight lasts only until I say '*Shelo Asani Goy*.' As I say the *bracha*, all my aches and pains disappear, as I'm filled with immense gratitude and joy, and that alone relieves my problems. I reflect how Hashem handpicked me out of the seven-plus billion people on the planet, and that distracts me from my pain. The *nisyonos* then find no home in my heart. *Ashreinu, ma tov chelkeinu.*"

Hearing this, Yeshaya felt that he'd gotten the proper advice to prevent him from drowning in his challenge. He had learned to appreciate who he was and value his self-worth.

שֶׁבַע יִפֹּול צַדִּיק וָקָם- "A righteous person falls seven times and gets up." (mishlei 24:16) - This does not mean that a tzaddik gets up after falling. Rather this is precisely how a person becomes a tzaddik; He has sinned and continues to get up again, again, and again. Whether that is 7, 70, 700 or even 7,000 times." ~ Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980)

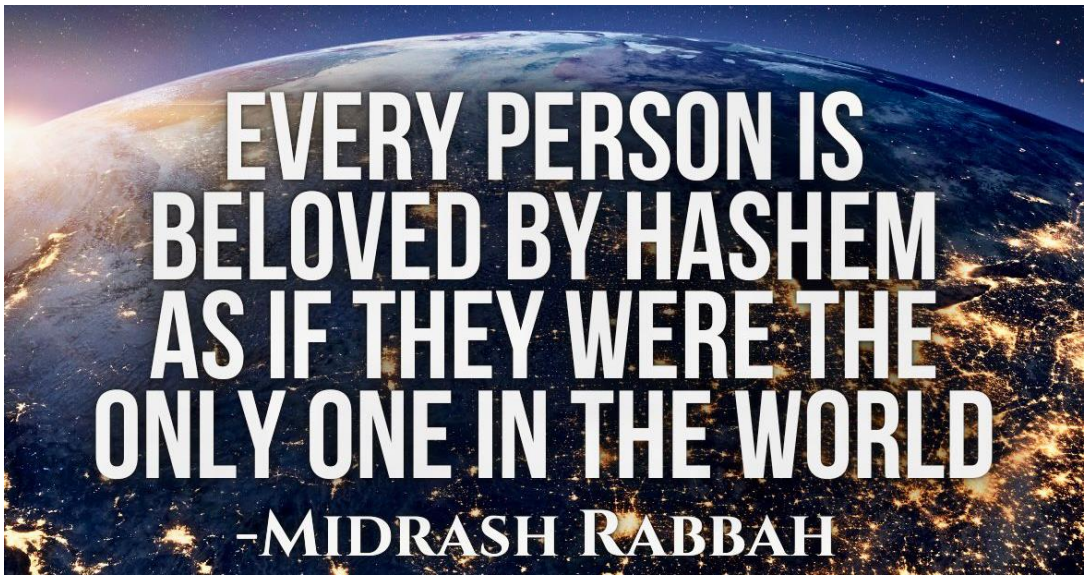
Short Bites by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

וַתְּמַהֵר וַתְּעַר כַּדָּהּ אֶל־הַשֹּׁקֶת וַתָּרָץ עוֹד אֶל־הַבְּאֵר לִשְׁאֹב וַתִּשְׁאַב לְכָל־גְּמַלָּיו - "***And she hastened and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and she ran again to the well to draw water and she drew for all his camels***" (24:20)

The Torah shows us how Rivkah repeatedly ran back and forth until she had drawn enough water for all the people and animals. She performed this act of kindness with zerizus, with great diligence, and did the mitzvah as quickly as she could.

This character trait was a hallmark of the Avos and Imahos. The **Seforno** writes: "Speed on the part of the server shows that the one being served is important to him." This is why Rivka "hastened" to give water to the camels and "ran again to the well" to get more.

If we truly felt the importance of Mitzvos and the One who commanded us to perform them, we would run to do Mitzvos, to daven with a minyan, to study Torah, to carry out the requests of our parents and all other ways in which we serve Hashem. By moving quickly to carry out His will, we show Hashem that we care about Him and His Torah.



TheYeshiva.net
BY RABBI YY JACOBSON

I grew up in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. I was often around when the mailman would deliver letters to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.



Each day, he came with several sacks, with hundreds of letters inside. I heard from the secretary that he would only open the letters himself. He wouldn't allow anyone else to open them as most of them were private.

This went on for many years. Imagine what a massive task it was to open up hundreds of letters every day – you would go crazy! – just opening them up, before reading and answering each one!

Rabbi Channen decided to make it easier for the Rebbe, and he bought the Rebbe a letter opener. – The Rebbe returned it, and told Rabbi Klyne (the secretary) that it makes too much noise.



So, this chosid bought a silent electric letter opener. And he was so thrilled that the Rebbe wouldn't have to use his fingers to open up every letter. – The Rebbe returned the silent letter opener as well!

The Rebbe had to explain himself, so he told Rabbi Binyamin Klyne to tell the chosid, "Different Jews seal their envelopes in different ways. Some people seal their envelopes with their saliva. Some people seal envelopes with glue, scotch tape or with staples. But

there are some Jews who seal their envelopes with their tears! - How could I possibly open those letters with a machine, that a person has sealed with his tears? – When I open the letters with my finger, I can already feel and take in the tears, but a machine can't detect those tears!

The Stabbing During Birchas Hamazon



The Mishna Brura cites that one reason for covering a knife (or removing it from the table) at Birchas Hamazon is based on the following incident. Once a person reached **בונה ירושלים** in Birchas Hamazon which reminded him of the *churban*, destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. As a result of the distress over the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, he stabbed himself.

A question arises: if this happened only once, why make a rule to remove the knife?

The Skver Rebbe offers an insightful answer. We are not worried concerned that people today might harm themselves in this way, as the pain of the *churban* doesn't affect us so intensely. However, every Jew should know that there was once a Jew who felt the *churban* so deeply that he actually stabbed himself! - Removing the knife serves as a reminder of how profoundly the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash can impact a person. - This can help a person become more sensitive to the *churban*.

L'Maaseh

A former student of **R' Shmuel Auerbach** had left yeshiva and was no longer a Torah observant Jew. One day, R' Shmuel called him out of the blue and told him that he would like to come visit him.

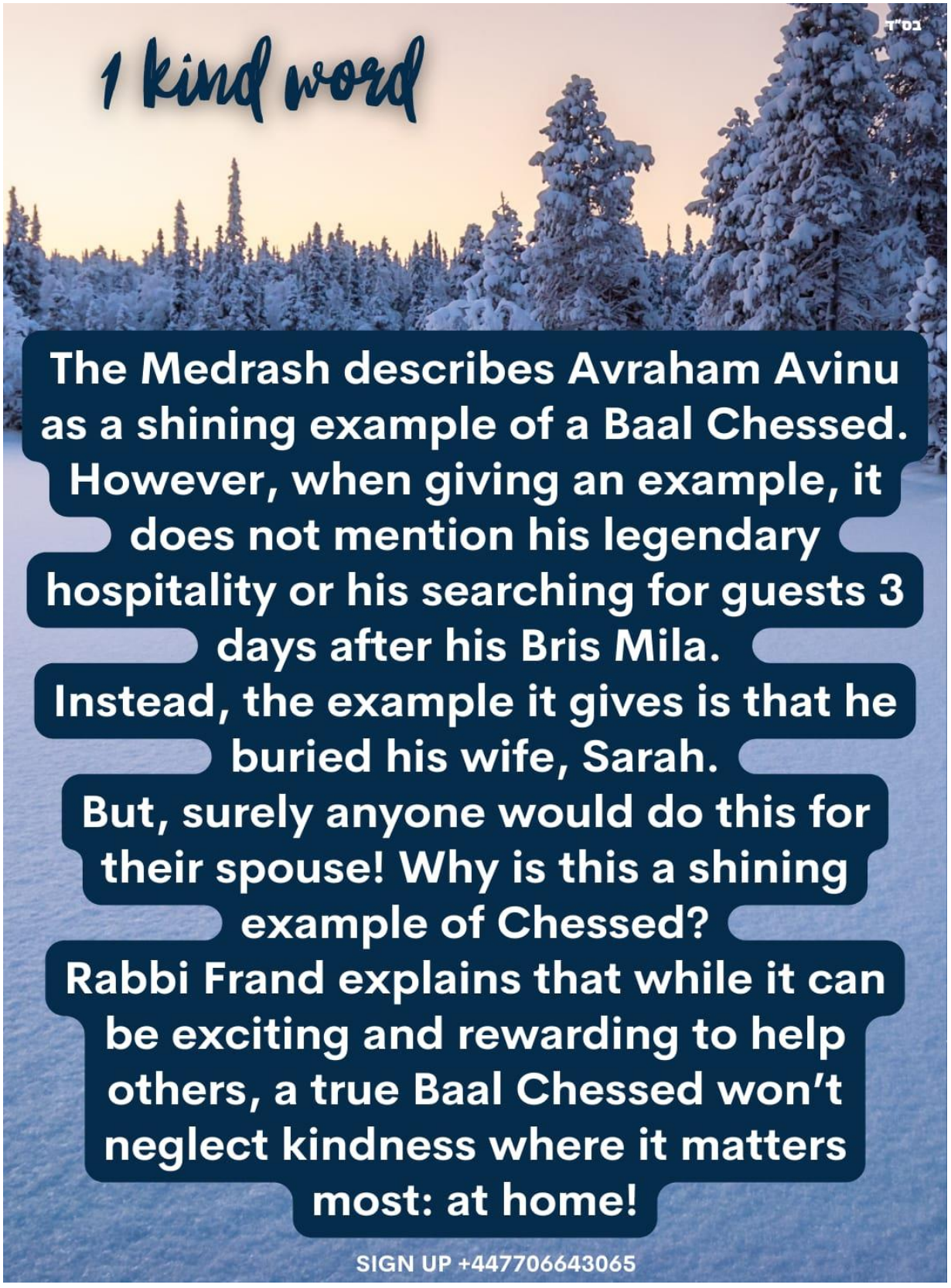
Embarrassed to let his rebbe know how far he had strayed, he acquiesced and made up a time a few days later. At the appointed time, R' Shmuel showed up with his gabaim and other students with an entire festive meal and they sat and spoke while they ate.

When it came time for bentching, R' Shmuel placed a cup of wine in front of this student and told him to lead bentching. - Knowing that as a mechalel Shabbos, he would render the wine prohibited, he declined the honour and told the Rosh Yeshiva to give it to someone else. R' Shmuel was insistent and he didn't know what to do until he remembered learning that if one fully commits to do teshuva, he is considered a tzadik, and so in his heart of hearts, he regretted his ways and made a firm decision to return to shemiras Shabbos.

Those who knew R' Shmuel testified that he never bentched with a cup of wine during the week, and this was likely exactly what he intended, and indeed this student went on to become a talmid chacham and marbitz Torah of note.

הַמֹּשֵׁל בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ – *'Who ruled over all that he had.' (24:2)*

These words refer to Avraham and indicate just how great a person he was. Though Avraham amassed wealth, he did not become like some other wealthy people for whom money becomes the only motivating factor in their lives. - Avraham ruled over his possessions, and not the other way around. (**Klai Yakar**)



"Things can go from the very worst to the very best in a blink of an eye." ~ Rebbe Nachman Of Breslov (1772-1810).



Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

The Power of Helping Others

In this week's Parsha, we learn about Yitzchak Avinu who was 40 years old and still single. He needed to get married. The pasuk tells us, "Vayeitze Yitzchak lasuach basadeh" – Yitzchok went out to pray in the field. The pasuk continues, "Vayisa einav vayar" – he lifted his eyes and his intended bride, his kallah arrived just at the moment of his prayer. Yitzchok had immediate results in his prayer. He had instantaneous success. He prayed and his prayer was answered.

There is a question here. What did Yitzchok do to have his prayer answered so expediently? Why did he merit to have such immediate results?

I heard an unbelievable answer from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita based on the Chizkuni: When it says lasuach basadeh it means that Yitzchok went to talk in the field. He went to talk to

someone. There was a person in the field. There was a person who desperately needed another person's love. There was someone who needed a listening ear and a supportive friend and Yitzchok went out to him.

Before Yitzchok prayed to Hashem, he took care of one of Hashem's children. He went out and made them feel good. That's why Hashem listened to his prayers and answered him right away. What an incredible thing! If there's someone in need and we try to help them and care for them then Hashem will take care of our needs!

The Suprise Guest

וְהָאִישׁ מִשְׁתָּאֵה לָהּ - ***"And the man was astonished…"*** (24:21)

When Eliezer the servant of Avraham was seeking out a Shidduch for Yitzchok, he encountered Rivka at the well. When describing Eliezer's reaction upon seeing Rivka the pasuk says that Eliezer was astonished. We can understand why Eliezer was elated at the prospect of fulfilling his mission but why did he have such a strong reaction of shock? What did he see that was so suprising?

I heard from Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita that the Redak and Seforno explain that Eliezer was shocked when he saw how alacritous and eager Rivka was to perform kindness. The Torah uses the exact same words for "running" and "rushing" when Rivka was serving Eliezer and the camels, as it did for Avraham when he ran and rushed to serve his guests.

For Eliezer to see the exact same behavior from Rivka that he saw in his master's house was so uncanny that it led him to stand in shock and awe. We can also suggest that it is clear from the fact that the Torah employed the exact same terminology here as it did by Avraham (as the pasuk says: **וַתְּמַהֵר** – and she hastened **וַתָּרָץ** – and she ran) that the Shidduch of Rivka was clearly a reward for

Avraham's performance of Chesed (kindness) almost four decades earlier.

The Gematria of Vayaratz וַיָּרָץ ("and he ran") is 306, the same Gematria as Devash דבש, honey. This is to teach us that one should run to do Chesed and pursue it with sweetness and joy. Chesed is so important for us to do! When you do chesed do it with a smile!

Rav Pam was once approached by a student of his who said that his father was sick in the hospital and wished that the Rosh Yeshiva could visit him (Rav Pam couldn't visit the man because he was a Kohen). The next day Rav Pam called the sick man and told him to look outside of his hospital window. The man looked outside, and he saw Rav Pam waving to him smiling from ear to ear! Rav Pam went all the way to the hospital – and found the right place to stand aligned with this man's hospital bed! One can't imagine how much joy Rav Pam brought to this man.

Another story of Rav Pam's incredible chessed: One time, one of the men who davened together with Rav Avraham Pam zt"l became very sick and was in the hospital. Rav Pam couldn't visit the man in the hospital so instead, Rav Pam sent the man a brief letter wishing the man a speedy recovery and his warm wishes. Unfortunately, this man passed away a little while later. When Rav Pam went to be Menachem Avel (consul) the man's family they told Rav Pam that their father treasured the letter with all his heart and soul. It was this letter that kept their father going in his last few days.

Whenever someone came to visit this man, the man would show them the letter beaming with pride, saying that the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Pam wrote a letter to him! Rav Pam pointed out that he never imagined that a simple gesture like writing a letter, which only took a few minutes, had lifted the spirits of that sick man. We have no idea of how far our actions can go!

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים - *"Now Avraham was old, he came with his days"* (24:1)-There is an idea expressed by many commentaries that when the verse says that Avraham came with all his days, we learn that not one day in Avraham's life was wasted. Each day he accomplished something. (Maayanah Shel Torah)

Each day is an entirely new and different experience from any other. Yesterday you may have done a lot, but you still must try to accomplish something today. At the end of each day, you should ask yourself, "What have I accomplished today?" Every day is a "new day", another opportunity to do something great! (Rav Zelig Plisken)



◣ Always in Her Prime - Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה - *"And the life of Sarah was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years - the years of Sarah's life."* (23:1)

At one hundred, she was like a woman of twenty regarding sin. (Rashi) The Torah relates that Sarah always combined in her personality the virtues of youth and those of old age. When she was only twenty, she had the virtues of old age calmness and moderation. But when she was one hundred years old, she was still blessed with the zeal, vitality and enthusiasm usually associated with a young woman of twenty.

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



Sarah's Life - The First Beis Hamikdash

When we talk about the churban Beis Hamikdash, we're accustomed to thinking about the Beis Hamikdash of Shlomo HaMelech and the second Beis Hamikdash that was built by the returnees from Bavel. Those more familiar with our history might also look back in longing to the Mishkan Hashem that the Am Yisroel had with them in the midbar for forty years, as well as its replacement, the Mishkan Shilo that stood for three hundred and sixty nine years before it's destruction by the Plishtim.

But the truth is that there was another churban beis hamikdash that took place way back in the beginning of our history: **וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה** – And Sarah passed away (Chayei Sarah 23:2). The day that Sarah took her last breath in her tent was actually the first churban bayis. The greatest home in our history was no more.

A Glorious Period In History

Now, to many people that seems like an exaggeration, we think that the most important part of our history came later, when we became shishim ribo and left Mitzrayim to accept the Torah on Har Sinai – that's when we became a nation; that's when our history began.

But that's all wrong – that was already the tail end of the glorious period of our history. We must look back at the lives of our Avos as a fundamental part of our history – when the Avos passed away a most important part of our history came to an end. The Ramban says that. He says that when the Avos passed away, the Shechina that was present in their tents went into galus.

So we understand that the first Beis Hamikdash was the tent that Sarah built. Afterwards, when Yitzchak wed Rivka, he tried to restore some of that glory. וַיְבִאֶהָ יִצְחָק הָאֹהֱלָה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ – And Yitzchok brought her into the tent of his mother, Sarah (ibid. 24:67). It says that for a reason – he "brought her into the tent of Sarah" because he wanted to try and recapture some of that old greatness of his mother, Sarah, who had just passed away (Rashi, ibid.). And Rivka tried her best, absolutely. But it wasn't the same.

A Brilliant Personality Develops



Over time Sarah became a brilliant personality of her own. Sarah looked the fluff seeds of the dandelion plant that are carried by the wind to be planted elsewhere. The fluff is not an accident; it's a light material, especially made to float in the wind. She studied the seeds of the sycamore tree; she picked one up and saw how the balls were composed of hundreds of little seeds. And each seed had wings attached to the end so that it should blow in the wind and scatter everywhere and plant some more trees. Now isn't that a remarkable accident, that a seed should have wings it? Sarah didn't see a seed with wings – she saw Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

When Sarah saw a cow in the field she thought to herself, "The cow is a wonderful machine! It eats inexpensive grass and turns it into

valuable milk and meat and leather. And what does it do with the leftovers, the waste? It drops fertilizer in the fields for food to grow. Look at the cow standing there, fertilizing the field.

But from the fertilizer flies develop — all the fields are full of flies and flies bite cows. So the cow has a long tail, and at the end of the tail there's a little mop, and it swishes the mop from side to side all day long driving the flies off." That's how Sarah was thinking all day long. She wasn't looking at cows – she was seeing the wonders of Hashem's creation.



Did you ever see a cow? I once sat and watched a cow for a long time. You should watch that one time; it's wonderful evidence of a Designer. All day long it was swishing, hitting its sides with its tail. Otherwise the flies would draw blood from the cow. And so the cow keeps protecting itself with a flyswatter provided by Hakodosh Boruch Hu. It's remarkable to see.

Sarah Was Unmatched

For years and years Sarah spent her days and nights seeing these remarkable things and thinking about Hashem. Sarah was ninety years old before she had her child and so she had many years to accomplish tremendous achievements. And of course, she took all that Awareness of Hashem that she gained and she built her house on that ideal – she built a home that nobody could match.

As much as Rivka was a wonderful personality, a tzadeikis, a pure soul – we can speak for a long time about the greatness of Rivka – but it was nowhere near Sarah. When Rivka came into the tent of Sarah, it was only a substitute; it was like a Bayis Sheini after the Bayis Rishon (see Horayos 6a).

And later, Rochel and Leah also walked in the ways of Sarah. And to a great extent they continued the building of the Am Yisroel, but it wasn't the same – no. They tried, and the spirit of idealism still continued, but on the day of **וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה**, the first Beis Hamikdash went out of existence. It's difficult for us to realize what a loss it was to the world; the idealism that was in that tent, there was nothing like it. The kedusha that reigned in that atmosphere was never again repeated – not in the mishkan and not in the building of Shlomo; never again.

Phenomenon of Old Age - A Hairy Issue

I want to talk to you tonight about hair; about the hair we have on our heads. Now, don't think that you wasted your time coming here tonight – it's a very important subject; be patient with me and you'll soon see just how important it really is.

Before we begin, the first thing to remember is what we have said here many times already. Everything in creation has one main overall purpose: **הָאֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה** – Hakodosh Boruch Hu made this entire world, **שֶׁיִּרְאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו** – in order that people should recognize the Creator (Koheles 3:14). And that means we're expected to study the phenomenon of hair in order to become aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

So next time you're holding your hand on your hair, let's say you're brushing your hair or stroking your beard, realize for a moment that you're touching a testimony of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Why did He give you hair? Why is hair on top of your skull? Why isn't hair all over your face? Where does it come from? What is hair? Is it just a simple thing, a thin thread that grows from your scalp? Those are questions that you should think about. At least once in your life you should spend some time on that because we're expected to utilize hair to come to awareness of the One who created it.

The Shock Absorbent Helmet

You know, today in the playgrounds, the more modern playgrounds, they don't have cement pavement under the swings or under the climbing poles, but they have something that gives a little bit. If you look today in the playground, you'll see that. That way when the kids fall down head first, it gives a little bit.

But Hakodosh Baruch Hu was even earlier and He provided something built in; a built-in shock absorber. Sometimes you fall on your head and that little mat is extremely important. It absorbs the blow and sometimes it makes the difference between just a headache and a crushed skull. Think about that next time you see your toddler growing out his hair; that's a gift from Hashem. That's what hair is doing on the head of the children.

But not only children; even when you grow up. Sometimes you have to fight, you go to war, and if you get a blow on the head with a club, that shock absorber makes all the difference.

Aristocratic Women Killers

The ladies too. The good old days, the age of chivalry, was an age when they used to hit women over the head with clubs. Neighbors fought with each other all the time and the women neighbors were easy pickings.

I'm talking now about the United States. In Kentucky up until recently, when a man was upset at his neighbor because he thought he was stealing his corn, he'd wait behind the bush and when his neighbor's wife would pass by on the road he'd jump out and hit her over the head with a club. When families weren't on good terms with each other, they used to shoot from behind fences at their neighbors.

We're talking about the aristocratic families in America, the blue-bloods in the hills of Kentucky – no immigrants there; no Irish, no Italians, only real old-time Americans carrying on the real old-time

tradition of good middos, of shooting at their neighbors from behind bushes! And they would shoot even at women of other families. Vendettas like this were carried on for generations; for generations neighbors shot at each other.

Of course, against modern weapons hair won't help, but way back when they didn't shoot yet, when they only used to hit each other over the head with clubs, so whether you were a child or a man or woman, a thick coil of hair or a good heavy sheitel would stand in good stead.

Miniscule Monuments

You think I'm saying that in levity? It's serious. Hair is protection. It's like a soft helmet, a protection cover, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us to carry around wherever we go. It's only because we're so accustomed to it we don't think about the benefits.

But I don't want to talk now only about hair on the whole. Every strand of hair is a neis! You know that hair under the microscope looks like a tower? And not a plain primitive tower like the Washington Monument. Each hair is a wonderfully constructed edifice of complicated planning built up like a skyscraper.

If you look at a hair under the microscope, you see that it tapers up in stages, and each stage is built up on a pedestal of the stage beneath it. Each stage becomes narrower than the previous one and is set into the bottom one just like something is set into a socket. And it's at the sockets that the hair is pliable. It's not like we think the hair is one long entity. At the various sockets of each hair, the hair bends. It's a complicated business, a strand of hair.

Wooly Bread

When you look at human hair, you see that so much hair can come out of the scalp. Hair, you know, doesn't come out of the brains – it comes out of the skin of the scalp. How can the skin of the scalp produce so much hair? Look at a man – he has a long beard; way down

to here; and it came out of the skin of his face. It's remarkable that the skin can produce this wool that is coming out of your chin.

Where does the skin get it from? And the answer is that it's a neis. Whatever you eat is transformed in the cells of your body into keratin by means of many miracles. Keratin is the material of which hair is composed. Now, you can't make keratin yourself. If you could, you could patent it and become a millionaire overnight! It's wool!

How does the food you eat become wool?! It's nothing less than a miracle. You see a girl with nice long hair; you must know it's nothing but bread. Bread?! Yes, it's nothing but bread. When you put a piece of bread in your mouth, the bread turns into hair. How can bread turn into hair? Ohhh, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is a Master Chemist; He knows how to do that. Hakodosh Boruch Hu has given the body such a wonderful ability that it can take anything that you eat and transform it into the necessary chemicals to produce the hair.

The Hairy Certificate



Now, although I have a big yetzer hora to go on – it's so interesting; at least for me it is – and I would like to talk about this subject, about how the hair we see every day is intended to make us aware of Hashem all the time, but I want to talk now about an entirely different lesson we can learn from our hair. And that's the changes that occur as you age; white hair.

Now what is the purpose that the Creator caused the hair to turn white in old age? That's a legitimate question. Why does the hair turn white? It's just an accident? The pigment runs out?

There's a plan here! Of course there are the most practical purposes; white hair is to render him exempt from various demands

of the community. In the ancient days when everyone went to war, so white haired men were exempt. He didn't have to produce a birth certificate or a medical certificate; he carried his certificate on top of his head.

When the son saw that his father's hair was beginning to change color, he would say, "Dad, you stay home in your rocking chair and relax; we'll go out to battle." He was balding already and the protective mat wasn't too useful anymore, and the little hair that he did have announced his age as too advanced for war. White hair means that they should let you alone now; you're retired from pursuits of war, and from heavy labor.

Crown of Experience

But along comes Mishlei(16:31) and he tells us another reason. **עֲטֶרֶת תִּפְאֶרֶת שֵׂיבָה** – white hair is a crown of glory. It means that this man has the experience, the life experience to be worthy of giving good counsel. Hashem crowns him by placing on his head a wreath of dignity so that the community should henceforth look up to him. The gray or white hair is an advertisement to the world, if you want advice, here is the place to come.

When people are sitting in counsel and deliberating, let's say, about the future of the community or the future of the country, who are the ones who are most trustworthy? Old heads. Old heads are calm heads and seasoned heads; not hot heads who have no experience.

And that's one of the great purposes of white hair. **עֲטֶרֶת תִּפְאֶרֶת שֵׂיבָה**, white hair is a crown of glory; it's a diploma which shows you've been through the university of hard knocks or rather the yeshivah of experience and you learned the whole Torah.

Real Diplomas

Now, some people get a diploma, even a semicha, they get by deception. They call themselves rabbi in the telephone book but they know nothing. Well, imagine a bum broke into a doctor's office and

he stole the doctor's white suit and his diploma and he took it to some garage and he hung it on the wall and he put on the white jacket and he is ready for business, he's ready to butcher people. Of course there are counterfeits. So an old man who hasn't learned anything in life except wrongdoings, he is carrying around a counterfeit document.

But had he lived with reason, had he lived properly, then this certificate entitles him to honor. That's what Shlomo adds on at the end of that possuk. **עֲטֶרֶת תִּפְאֶרֶת שֵׂיבָה** – hoariness, that is white-headedness, is a crown of glory, **בְּדֶרֶךְ צְדָקָה תִּמָּצֵא** – it is found if you walk in the path of righteousness.

And the Almighty puts it on your head for a purpose, you should know there is a difference between him and these upstarts all around him; these black-headed fellows know nothing at all. So next time you seek advice and you go to a yeshiva, let's say, don't go to the black-haired one. Go to the white-haired one. If you're going to ask yinglach, children, you're doing it at your own risk.

Old Cats and New Wine

Now, there is a statement in our sages that there was a time at the beginning of man's history when it wasn't that way. You know, people lived very long. Someday we might rediscover the secret of longevity, but in those days they knew it and they lived long; they lived very long. And they didn't age. The Gemara (Bava Metzia 87a) says **עַד אַבְרָהָם לֹא הַוְי זִקְנָה**, until Avraham there was no ziknah. It means people didn't show signs of aging.

Now you people who know about cats or dogs, unless you are a specialist you don't know the signs of age in cats or dogs. A cat is a cat; until you find him lying on the sidewalk rolled over, then you discover it was an old cat. You are not given advance information. I suppose an expert would be able to discover it, but there's no superficial sign.

But Avraham considered how wrong it is that this system should persist. He said "We're not cats and people are going to be misled. If they want to seek counsel of me, they might come to Yitzchok". In those days it wasn't possible to know. And when you go to seek the father and by accident you consult the son so it's new wine; new wine is not the same as old wine – it makes a big difference.

The First Elder

And therefore, Avraham prayed to the Almighty that there should be some changes in nature.And at that time it was **וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן** – Avraham became old (Chayei Sara 24:1).

The first time it's mentioned in the history of mankind that old age appeared as a phenomenon was **וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן** – signs of age became apparent on the head of Avraham. Nowwhether it's k'peshuto or allegorical, but the truth is there. The Almighty granted that **אַבְרָהָם זָקֵן**; old age began to evidence itself. Hakodosh Baruch Hu said that I'm going to give you a crown of glory, and people will see that you are the one from whom to seek counsel. **וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן**, that's the first one in history that's called a zaken.

Opportunity of Old Age - You Can't Hide

However, in addition to what Mishlei tells us, there is another reason, a more spiritual reason, for white hair. White hair is a notice that time is running short; that you have to hurry up and begin achieving.

That should be your biggest worry, that you didn't achieve enough during your lifetime up till now, in your youth. And that's why graying hair is a big matanah; it's a message min hashomayim that you have to shake a leg; time is short.

That's why anyone, when he notices the first gray hairs, if he tries to pluck them out — by the way men shouldn't pluck out gray hairs; women are permitted but not men because it is considered a woman's practice and men don't do female practices — but besides for that,

plucking out the grey hairs is like getting a marshal's notice and ignoring it; you will not accomplish anything by tearing it up. There is a copy at headquarters! And when you're due in court they'll come and get you. You can't run from the Plan of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

The Stimulus Plan

Rabeinu Yonah in his Shaarei Teshuva (2:7) tells us that. He's talking about the various spurs, the impetuses, that Hashem gives to man in order to encourage him to correct his ways in this world before it's too late, and he says as follows.

One of the more important opportunities that a person is given to utilize as a stimulus to become better is **כַּאֲשֶׁר יָבוֹאוּ יְמֵי הַזִּקְנָה** – when the days of old age begin to approach, **וְהִגִּיעוּ יְמֵי הַשֵּׂיבָה** – and the time when when he starts turning gray. **שֵׂיבָה** means when he starts turning gray, when signs of age begin to appear in him.

וְיִכַּל כֹּחוֹ וְיִמְעַט ... וְיֶחְסַר הַמֶּזֶג בְּטִבְעוֹ. And his strength is somewhat less than before. Let's say, he doesn't have all of his teeth anymore. He'll never have as many teeth as he had when he was younger. He has some false teeth maybe, some fillings. It's not the same as it used to be once upon a time.

He's not the same man as he once was. He used to skip and jump around and now even though he's still strong and healthy, he's not that active. Once you are middle aged even bending over to pick up something from the floor is more difficult than in your younger years.

It's a gift from Hashem. Otherwise he'd keep going on and on, and never be aware. When he starts turning gray, when some aches and pains creep up on him, that's a sign from Heaven that he must get busy. It should be utilized as a sign that he has to prepare. Make use of it! **יִזְכֹּר קִצּוֹ כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא**. He should remember his end because it is now approaching. His end is approaching. The closer it gets the more he has to think about it.

It doesn't mean that he doesn't have time left. It doesn't mean he's preparing to pass out of this world, but still he's closer than before. Could be he'll live many years yet but this change in his physical condition is intended to give him a hint, a prod, to become better.

וְיָשֹׁב אֶל ה' וִירַחֲמֵהוּ And let him return to Hashem and Hashem will have pity on him. Hashem will have pity on him and help him.

Now this refers to almost anybody who is in the middle of his life, **כִּי יַעֲמֹד הָאָדָם בַּחֲצִי יָמָיו**. If you're thirty-five already, you're halfway to seventy. And when you pass the middle of your life, you're forty or fifty, then surely it should be a stimulus. But even those people who are young and haven't reached this time yet should learn this now. If you learn it now you'll prepare yourself for the time when you'll start noticing signs of infirmity and you won't let it go to waste.

Getting The Message

You're still a young man but you see now a hair that turned gray. Don't let even one gray hair go to waste! They're sending you a message min hashomayim that you must make preparations now. You must get busy improving the faults that you acquired during your years. You have to make amends for the wrong deeds you did, and do teshuva before it's too late.

Not only for what you did – it's even more important to begin making up for what you didn't do! There's so much to accomplish in Torah and mitzvos, in good character, in yiras Hashem and ahavas Hashem. And now as you're getting closer to the big din v'cheshbon, messages are being sent to you, as a stimulus, to prepare for that final day.

"When you waste a moment, you have killed it in a sense, squandering an irreplaceable opportunity. But when you use the moment properly, filling it with purpose and productivity, it lives on forever." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

The hopes, dreams, and tears of a growing child - "Touched by a Story" by R' Spiro

Dovi, a pleasant American Israeli boy, wanted nothing more than to get into the high school of his dreams. So, when he took an entrance exam, he should have been accepted on the spot. However, to get into that particular yeshivah, one had to come from a home that was also worthy. Although Dovi's parents were wonderfully kind, they owned a television and for this yeshivah, that was a red fag.

Dovi, painfully aware of the tight spot he was in, said a chapter of Tehillim every night, begging Hashem that his parents should throw out their TV, to no avail.

Dovi decided to travel to Bnei Brak, and asked permission from his school to make the trip. He wanted a private audience with the Steipler Gaon, ZT"L. Maybe, Dovi hoped, the Steipler could somehow pull of a miracle and get Dovi's parents to throw out their TV.

At this point in time, the Steipler was no longer able to hear. As such, when a visitor wanted to ask him for a berachah, he had to write down his request on a little piece of paper. Dovi carefully wrote out his request. The morning finally arrived. Dovi had received explicit instructions that he had to be back home by 10:30 at night. His rebbi, who'd arranged the trip, made that clear. He had to attend yeshivah the next day and be there on time; he couldn't come late because of a trip the night before.

By the time he arrived in Bnei Brak, Dovi was exhausted. He didn't know his way and wandered around the city until he finally found the Steipler's home. When he walked in, he saw that there was a long wait, and the line was moving ever so slowly. After a long time, the attendant came out and said, "I'm sorry, but the Rav is very tired and will be taking a nap. He will resume seeing people in two hours." Dovi had lost his opportunity. It was already late, and he had to head home to Yerushalayim, to be home by 10:30.

With a broken heart, he got on the bus, leaving Bnei Brak - and his dreams - behind. He cried the entire way home. The next morning, he walked into school and his Rebbi asked him how it went. Dovi told him and the Rebbi felt so bad, patted his student on the back, and promised that it would work out.

A few hours later, the phone rang in yeshivah; Dovi's mother was on the line. "Dovi, we threw out the TV. I went into your room yesterday afternoon and as I was cleaning up, I found a piece of paper. It was filled with smudged ink from all the drafts you wrote but then had to discard because tears stained them. I managed to make out what it said, and my tears joined yours, Dovi."

This is what she read: "*I ask the Rav to pray to Hashem to give my parents the wisdom to remove the television from our house. This is very, very difficult for me. Thank you.*"

His mother continued, "I thought to myself: How can we NOT throw it out? We need our child to go to a Rav secretly and to ask him to make a miracle happen? So right away, I decided to get rid of it. Today, I did, and I wanted to share the news with you."

No, the Steipler hadn't performed a miracle. It was something even more formidable - with even more of an impact that affected the change.

G-d appears distant, but there is in fact no one closer than Him… The space between heaven and earth is vast, and He is high above His universe, but a person can enter the synagogue, stand near the pulpit, and pray in a whisper, and G-d hears his prayer, like a person whispering in his friend's ear… Could there be a G-d any closer than that? ~ Rabbi Simlai, Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachos 9:1)

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

Only He Could Do It

I run a large printing business, and one of our specialties is printing compact discs. Hundreds of customers enjoy our quick, friendly service, among them schools, businesses, photographers, singers, and people in the music industry. Lots of private clients approach us as well when seeking to create souvenirs for events, simchos, and fundraisers.

That day I had two urgent orders: The first was for a celebrated institution that was hosting a benefit dinner for its largest donors and had ordered two hundred CD's featuring a hit single of the Jewish celebrity singer appearing at the event. The graphics on the disc and its case were exquisite, designed to coordinate with the tablescape and to be placed at each place setting. The second order was for a family that had requested sixty copies of a CD containing hespedim for the family patriarch, who had passed away recently. - They were planning to distribute it to relatives at the shloshim.

Both orders were last minute, and at four thirty p.m., I finally finished and dispatched a large cardboard box of CD's by courier to the reception hall where the dinner was being held. An hour later, a young teen entered the store, told me his name, and asked to pick up the CD's for his grandfather's shloshim. I slipped the pile of sixty discs into a bag printed with our store's logo, and the boy paid me and left.

At seven, I locked up and returned home after a full day's work. Just after midnight, I was awakened by a furious phone call. "How could you be so irresponsible! You destroyed the evening!" The tirade went on and on, and it took me some time to figure out that it was the dinner's event planner.

When I was finally able to sneak in a word, I asked, "What happened?"
"Colors! Graphics! It was all worthless!" he harangued. "We gave our donors a CD of Yiddish hespedim instead of the song that we wanted to engrave onto their hearts and forever associate with the yeshivah! A song that would open their hearts-and their pockets. I'm just imagining the donor that leaves the hall and inserts the disc into his car player. Instead of musical notes, he hears hespedim! Do you know what this means? Do you have any idea what this did to our reputation?! You destroyed the image that we worked so hard to create, making us appear like a bunch of amateurs! Do you know how many donations we'll forfeit because of this?!"

I covered my ears, unable to hear any more. It wasn't the loss of a lucrative client who makes use of my services throughout the year that caused my breath to get stuck in my throat and pained-it was the thought that I'd inflicted severe, irreparable damage on a mossad Torah.

"I'll do what I can to compensate you," I barely managed to eke out. But the man wasn't interested in my apologies.

"There's nothing you can do to compensate for destroying our image!" he yelled in disgust before ending the call.

I was deeply distraught, yet I knew that I couldn't let my emotions get the better of me. Now it was time to face the music on the other end. and apologize to the family for messing up their order and event as well. The hour was late but knowing that the affair had been planned for that evening, I assumed it wasn't too late to call.

I didn't even have to bother looking for the number because my phone rang before I found the phone book. Unsurprisingly, it was a member of the niftar's family; although he was much kinder and more under- standing than the first caller, there was no mistaking the anguish and disappointment in his voice.

"Yes, it was a mistake. An unfortunate one, but mistakes happen. Everything's bashert. A mazel that my son noticed it right before we gave out the discs. We'll return the batch, and you'll print new ones. The only trouble is going to be giving them out. We'd hoped to distribute them tonight in the hall, but now we'll have to mail them. I hope you'll help us cover the delivery costs."

"Of course, of course!" I reassured him, apologizing profusely before we ended the call.

Sleep eluded me, and I tossed and turned fitfully that whole night. Was the business I'd toiled to build for close to two decades fated to crumble because of one unfortunate mix-up? Don't exaggerate! I rebuked myself. Hashem runs the world. The business won't collapse. Mistakes happen, and we'll learn whatever lesson we can from this. Once the yeshivah director calms down, I'll figure out some way to compensate the mosdos... And if I was the one who caused them to lose potential donations, then "megalgilin chovah al yedei chayav," and this is a wake-up call for me to do teshuvah... If this happened through me, then I must be at fault.

Despite several attempts to pacify myself later that night, peace of mind remained remote from me. What happened, happened. Hashem runs the world, I told myself. This is just a test of emunah, nothing more. Ein od milvado!

And with that thought reverberating in my mind, I finally succumbed to sleep, never fantasizing the wondrous end to the story. Indeed, only Hashem could conjure such a fantastic conclusion!

The next morning, as I was triple-checking an order I was in the midst of closing, the yeshivah director whose words had stolen my peace of mind the night before called again, and shouting in my ear again, but to a different tune this time.

"You won't believe it! You won't believe it!" he repeated, unable to control his enthusiasm.

"What?!" I asked.

"A miracle!"

"The files on the disc transformed miraculously?" I ventured a wild, only slightly sarcastic guess.

The man actually chuckled. "Much, much better! It seems that even your errors have an element of siyata d'Shmaya!" - With that, he proceeded to share the most unlikely episode.

"I'd barely walked into the office this morning when the phone rang, and the voice of one of the major philanthropists who'd come last night was on the line. This guy is a multimillionaire, and we didn't dream that he'd show up to the dinner, since he very rarely has. Luckily, one of our alumni managed to schlep him along. When he called this morning, I could hear the raw emotion in his voice.

"Tell me, where did you get these hespedim on Rabbi Obermeister?' he asked. Naturally, I began apologizing profusely about the mixed-up CD, explaining that it wasn't our fault and that the new CDs would be sent out this week in the mail. To my surprise, he interrupted me midsentence.
"But I knew him! He was an amazing person, my very first melamed, and the impact of those days never faded. If I fulfill any mitzvah, it's to his credit. I haven't been in touch with him in years. In fact, I didn't even know that he passed away. I couldn't sleep the whole night because I kept thinking about the rabbi. How did you get these hespedim? I listened to them again and again, and a chill ran up my spine because I can vouch for the truth inside them. Not one of the maspidim exaggerated: his honesty, his integrity, his humility, and his extraordinary way of giving to as many people as possible. You can't find people like that today!'

"He went on and on. Then, he suddenly told me that he wished to donate to the yeshivah. 'You stirred my feelings so deeply, that I

see this CD as Rabbi Obermeister's personal will for me!' He then promised to send the check by courier.

"Less than an hour earlier, a delivery boy brought the check, which was written for a colossal sum, more than we'd hoped to earn through- out the entire evening!"

I completed my part in this magnificent puzzle by repeating the story to Rabbi Obermeister's son, who came to return the CDs and take the replacement ones. Hearing the man's words, his eyes filled with tears.

"That's so typical of Tatty," he said. "And you were clearly the lucky one, as it says, 'Megalgilin zechus al yedei zakkai!"" [Shabbos 32: A meritorious act is brought about by Heaven through a meritorious person and an iniquitous act through a guilty person.]



וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים

In this week's Parsha, Avraham's astounding life is about to come to an end as the verse testifies about him, "And Avraham was elderly and he had come along in years".

There is a fascinating Midrash on this verse which says that as Avraham was getting older, he became disturbed because at that time, people showed no signs of aging. So when people saw a son and a father walking down the street, they didn't know who was older and who was younger. Avraham then requested from Hashem that He make some sort of indicator to let people know that they were aging. Hashem responded by saying that Avraham had asked for something very wise, and because he was the first person to request

it, he would be the first person to receive it, hence the verse, "And Avraham was elderly, etc."

Similarly, Yitzchak was concerned with the fact that up until his time, nobody on earth suffered. This bothered him because a person would come to the next world and would have to take full responsibility for their action, whereas if he had suffered a little in this world, he would be slightly exonerated in the world to come. Hashem responded by saying that since Yitzchak had asked for such a wonderful thing, he would be the first to receive it, hence the verse, "And Yitchak's eyes were feeble."

And finally, Yaakov suggested that there be sickness in the world, in order that people should have some indication as to when they are going to die and can distribute their estate accordingly. Hashem responded again, by starting with Yaakov, hence the verse, "And Yosef was informed that his father was sick", and he went to see him.

R' Dessler explains this fantastic Midrash by saying that each and every person tries to serve Hashem in the way that they can do best, and when Hashem sees how hard they are trying, but they may be lacking certain "abilities", He fills in those abilities so that the person may fulfill his desire to serve his Creator.

Avraham excelled in the attribute of kindness. Kindness stems from a fundamental desire to give goodness to Hashem's creatures on this earth, just as He Himself does. However, Avraham recognized that there was a problem. He couldn't properly honor the inhabitants of this earth if he couldn't recognize who was deserving of that honor. So Hashem recognized Avraham's desire to serve Him, and invented old age in order to facilitate Avraham's holy desire.

Yitzchak excelled in the trait of self-sacrifice. But Yitzchak realized that without the tool of punishment in this earth, many people would find it difficult to repent on their own. Hashem therefore recognized this legitimate request, and invented

hardships in order to send people little wake up calls or friendly reminders so that they would turn to His service before it is too late.

And finally Yaakov excelled in truth and perfection, and didn't want to see the heirs of a late father squabbling over their inheritance when the dirt from their deceased father is still fresh. He therefore asked Hashem for illness so that people could have a little warning signal, and again, his honorable request was granted.

R' Dessler would extrapolate from this extraordinary Midrash to what extent a person who truly seeks the right path will be helped in reaching that path. We find that Hashem will even go so far as to give a person a new set of tools, tools which he was not born with, and couldn't have even imagined, if he sincerely wants to find the truth.



Indeed, it is told of **R' Chaim Kanievsky** that he finishes the entire Torah every twelve months. Bavli, Yerushalmi, Tanach, Sifra and Sifri, etc. Obviously, he is very happy when there is a leap year, because he has one month of vacation from his rigorous schedule. So every leap year R' Chaim writes a book. He has books on very obscure topics. For example, one of his books is all of the laws of a lefty.

In any case, while he was composing his book on the law of the Kosher grasshoppers, in which he delineates which one of these delectable species may be eaten and which ones may not be, there was a certain particular detail about one of the species which had completely baffled him and he could not figure out. At that point, the exact species in question hopped through his open window and sat on his desk as he diagrammed it. When he had finished, it hopped away.

When asked once if this story were true, R' Chaim responded with surprise toward the question. He exclaimed, "Haven't you ever had Heavenly aid during your studies"?

However, it goes without saying that this will only happen if a person is truly sincere in his desire to grow, and if he is using all of the tools that he was given already. Without these two conditions, it is unreasonable to expect Heavenly aid beyond his abilities. If a person is merely "floating along" and not exerting any special effort or displaying any sincere desire to grow, he will not receive this unique aid.

May we all merit to fully use the gifts that we were given, and to always foster a great yearning to do the will of our creator!



"They Were All Equally Good"

The parsha begins with the *pasuk*, "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah's life." [Bereishis 23:1]. Rashi comments on the strange construction of this *pasuk*, and in particular on the seemingly redundant phrase, "the years of Sarah's life" at the end of the *pasuk*. Rashi explains, "They were all equal for goodness." In other words, she lived a life that was good from beginning to end.

Let us ask ourselves, what is the meaning of the statement that all her years were equally good? Sarah was childless for ninety years. In addition, the Medrash calculates that her cousins all gave birth when they were eight years old. It must have been very painful for Sarah to desire children and not be able to conceive for all those years — the bulk of her life.

Furthermore, she brought Hagar into her home as a co-wife. In Hebrew, a co-wife is called a "*tzarah*" (which also means trouble) because that is what it is! The tension between co-wives is much stronger than that of sibling rivalry. Ultimately, the situation with Yishmael became intolerable. She sees Yishmael trying to influence Yitzchak towards foreign cultures. She experiences a touch of *tzaar gidul banim* [the pain of raising children].

On top of all that, she partnered with Avraham in many of <u>his</u> *nisyonos* [trials]. She accompanied him on the journey away from her birthplace and homeland. She followed him down to Egypt and was kidnapped there into Pharaoh's palace. Later she had a similar traumatic experience with Avimelech.

Where does the realization of "they were all equal for goodness" come into play? Perhaps the final years of her life were tranquil, but overall she had a very bitter and traumatic life. What is Rashi talking about?

I heard a beautiful Torah insight on this question from the current **Tolner Rebbe** of Jerusalem. He cites a Medrash in Parshas Emor. The Torah says "And you shall take for yourselves the fruit of a beautiful tree (*pri etz hadar*)…" [Vayikra 23:40]. The Medrash says the word *hadar* [beautiful] refers to Sarah as it says "and Avraham and Sarah were elderly" [Bereishis 18:11] for *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* made her beautiful with elderly beauty (*seivah tova*).

The Maharzu, a commentary on the Medrash, notes that this *pasuk* in Vayera seems to be a very inappropriate link to the *pasuk* regarding the *Esrog*. After all, the entirety of the *pasuk* reads, "Now Avraham and Sarah were old, well on in years; the course of women had ceased to be with Sarah." Out of all the *pesukim* in the Torah, why is this *pasuk* used to marshal proof that Sarah was beautiful, comparable to a lovely *Esrog*? This *pasuk* itself alludes to the fact that Sarah had a

very tough life. (She had already gone through natural menopause while she was still childless.) Furthermore, how is Sarah like an *Esrog*?

The Tolner Rebbe offers the following insight, based on a teaching of the former Slonimer Rebbe.

The Talmud [Brochos 54a] teaches that just as it is appropriate to make a blessing over good happenings, so too it is appropriate to make a blessing over bad happenings. This is one of the most difficult things in life — accepting the bad along with the good. Not only must we accept bad happenings, we must actually be prepared to recite a blessing over them. This is a very hard spiritual level to reach — to accept the good and accept the bad and make a *bracha* over both!

The Slonimer Rebbe says that now we understand why the Medrash compares Sarah to the *Pri Etz Hadar* (*Esrog*). Sarah had a life "that was all equally good." This means that despite the fact that she was barren for 90 years, despite the fact that she had aggravation with Hagar and Yishmael, despite her experiences in Egypt (with Pharaoh) and in Gerar (with Avimelech), etc., etc., despite all this, <u>in her mind</u>, they were all equally good years. She had such a high spiritual level of faith (*Emunah* and *Bitachon*) that in her mind, they <u>were</u> *kulan shavim l'tova*.

The Yalkut Shimoni says that the *pasuk* in Mishlei [31:10], "A woman of valor who can find? Far beyond pearls is her value," is the eulogy Avraham gave for Sarah. What did Avraham mean by the expression "Far beyond pearls is her value"?

The Medrash explains that she waited for 90 years to have a baby. Avraham eulogized, "this is the type of woman my wife was". She had no complaints against the Almighty. She waited 90 years for a child but never complained. She saw her entire life experience as one blessed by G-d.

We might consider what Sarah experienced and say, "That's a horrible life." However, Sarah did not see it that way. She had the capacity to see the "tova" in the "ra'ah". The Slonimer Rebbe says this is why she is like an *Esrog*. The Gemara says that the *Esrog* is the only fruit wherein the taste of the tree and that of its fruit are the same. The bark of an *Esrog* tree tastes like and *Esrog* itself!

The Slonimer Rebbe says that certainly, if a person tries taking a bite out of the bark of an *Esrog* tree, it will not taste as good as a ripe *Esrog*. Nonetheless, in the "tree", a person can already taste the flavor of an *Esrog*. Even though the wood is hard and brittle, it contains within itself a flavor reminiscent of the *Esrog* that will grow from it. Sara was like an *Esrog* because she too could sense the connection between the "tree" (i.e., – the process) and the "fruit" (i.e., – the result). Sarah saw the connection between all her trials and tribulations in her life (i.e., – the process) and the good that befell her (i.e., – the result).

This is what Chazal are trying to teach us by saying, "They were all equally good." There are people who are capable of looking at that which is a bitter life and saying, "No. It's all for the good."

This is what Rashi is saying. "The years of Sarah were all equally good" means that Sarah was on such a high spiritual level that she viewed them as such.

"Hashem will never lose His patience with you; just be sure to never lose patience with yourself." ~ Based on the teachings of Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa (1765-1827).

"Marriage isn't about finding someone wonderful to spend your life with. It's about finding someone to make you more wonderful to be with."

A Slip of the Tongue Can Mean The Difference Between Life and Death

Rashi [23:2] cites the reason given by the Medrash Tanchuma for the juxtaposition of the "Binding of Yitzchak" with the death of Sarah: "Through hearing the news of the Binding, that her son was readied for slaughter and was nearly slaughtered (**וְכִמְעַט שֶׁלֹּא נִשְׁחַט**), her soul flew from her and she died."

The Sifsei Chachomim makes an inference from Rashi's use of the expression "kim'at sehlo nishchat" (which literally means "he was almost NOT slaughtered"). The simple translation of Rashi is that Sarah was shocked by the fact that Yitzchak was almost slaughtered. However strictly speaking, that is not what the words of Rashi are saying.

The Sifsei Chachomim therefore explain the scenario as follows: The angel came from Mt. Moriah and began describing to Sarah what happened at the Akeida. He told her something to the effect that "your son was slaughtered, but he was not killed." The angel should have told Sarah "I have good news for you. Your son is fine. He was almost slaughtered." Rather than saying it that way, the angel began with the dramatic statement "Your son was on the verge of being slaughtered." Sarah died before he had a chance to add the words "but he wasn't."

Reb Yeruchem Levovitz (1874-1936) comments that we see how someone – even an angel – can have the opportunity to deliver good news but simply spoil the whole message because of the way he chooses the order of his words. The angel of "good news" became the angel of death.

The lesson here for us all is that we must be extremely careful in how we speak. So many times, people mean no harm whatsoever. But they wind up saying things to people in a way that is painful to them. There is no ill will. Their intent is not to be mean. It is just a matter

of carelessness or, at worst, stupidity. But one is not allowed to be stupid. **Rav Yisrael Salanter** used to say that the first mitzvah in the Torah is "Do not be a fool!"

Sometimes, merely the way the words are said makes all the difference in the world. Sometimes people are so terribly hurt as a result of careless in the expression of certain ideas, as a result of someone not thinking something through. - We need to sensitize ourselves to all that is going on in the homes and the minds of our listeners. We must think before we talk and think while we talk. We must know what to say, who to say it to, how to say it, and in what situations it should not be said.

As we see from this Rashi, sometimes just a slip of the tongue can mean the difference between life and death.

Her Beauty at 20 Was Like That Of A 7 Year Old

"Sarah's lifetime was 100 years and 20 years and 7 years; the years of Sarah's life." [23:1] The Rashi at the beginning of the parsha explains why the noun "years" is repeated after each unit of her age: "To say to you that each one is expounded on its own: to teach that when she was a hundred years old she was like twenty with respect to sin, just as one who is twenty is considered as if she has not sinned, for she is not liable to punishment, so too when Sarah was a hundred years old, she was without sin. And when she was twenty years old, she was like seven years old with regard to beauty.

If we were to take a poll as to who is more beautiful, a 20-year-old woman or a 7-year-old girl – I believe it would be the overwhelming conclusion that a 20-year-old has greater beauty than a 7-year-old. Beyond that, it seems strange that the Torah needs to put such emphasis on the fact that Sarah was a beautiful woman. We are all familiar with Mishlei 31:30, which we recite every Friday night — שֶׁ֭קֶר הַחֵ֣ן וְהֶ֣בֶל הַיֹּ֑פִי

Of course, we understand that as an individual who attempted to bring many women "under the Wings of the Divine Presence," it was important that the matriarch Sarah should be an attractive person, which she was. But that the Torah should place such emphasis on her physical beauty seems strange.

- If I were to be called upon to eulogize a great woman from this community and I said, "This woman was pious and righteous and humble and she was gorgeous!" – rest assured that would be the last eulogy I would ever be called upon to give in Baltimore, Maryland!

The Yeshuos Malko explains that when Chazal say that Sarah had the beauty of a 7-year-old when she was 20 years old, the Medrash knew that 20-year-old women are more beautiful than 7-year-old girls, but they were talking about Sarah's attitude toward her beauty. Normally, when a 20-year-old is beautiful, she knows it, she is proud of it, and she may even flaunt it. But Sarah was so modest that when she was 20 years old, her perception of her beauty was such that it was reminiscent of a 7-year-old. Because of her child-like innocence, a seven-year-old is totally unaware of how cute and even beautiful she is.

Chazal are not praising beauty for beauty's sake. They are praising the fact that Sarah did not let her beauty go to her head. When she was 20 and truly gorgeous, her beauty was like that of a seven-year-old – meaning she was totally oblivious to it, as a result of her modesty. Sarah was the embodiment of the idea expressed in the Zohar that no matter how big one is, the smaller they see themselves to be, the more admirable they are.

This is the greatness of our Gedolim. This is the lesson of the Matriarch Sarah. She was as beautiful as 20, but she saw her beauty as innocently as would a 7-year-old.

The Angel of Death Had One More Trick Up His Sleeve

Sarah died when she was 127 years old "… and Avrohom came to eulogize her" [Bereishis 23:2]. There is a famous Medrash which asks, "From where did Avrohom come?" The Medrash responds, "From Mount Moriah" (the place of the Binding of Yitzchak).

We have to understand what the Medrash means by its questions and what it means by its answer. They both seem to be obvious.

I saw an interpretation from Rav Dovid Keviat. There is a well-known Medrash, which says that the Malach haMaves came to Sarah and told her that her husband took her son Yitzchak, bound him up to the altar, lifted the knife to slaughter him, brought the knife down to the child's neck, … and then the angel paused. When Sarah heard this part of the story, she died from the shock of what she thought was the death of her only son, Yitzchak.

Rav Dovid Keviat asks a simple question. When the Angel of Death comes to any of us, when our time is up, he does not require any scare tactics to accomplish his task. Why then, did the Malach HaMaves, scare her to death, so to speak? Was he being sadistic? Did he get gleeful pleasure from shocking Sarah, so she would die like this? Why didn't he just come, take her neshama and be finished?

Sarah, after all, lived a full 127 years. Her time was up. In no way did she die prematurely. Why does the Malach haMaves have to resort, all of a sudden, to tricks before taking her neshama?

The answer is that this is what our Sages mean when they say "Where did Avrohom come from? He came from Mt. Moriah." The Malach haMaves did not give up! He was not satisfied that Avrohom passed the test of the 'Akeidah,' the binding of Isaac. The Malach haMaves had one more trick up the sleeve.

"I'll kill Sarah as a result of the Akeidah! When Avrohom Avinu comes back, proud of having come through the test unscathed, when he feels good about himself, and good about the 'Akeidah,' he'll come

back and find a dead wife, who died as a result of the 'Akeidah.' We'll see what his attitude will be then!"

Will he say "Oy, the Akeidah cost me my wife!"? Will Avrohom Avinu have regrets, perhaps, even for an instant, about the Akeidah?

This is a common phenomenon. People die. Doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists will tell you that one of the most common reactions after people die is that relatives start blaming themselves. "Had I taken them to the doctor one more time, perhaps they would have lived; had I done this and that, maybe they would have lived. Maybe if I would have been a better person, they would have lived." Guilt!

The Malach haMaves wanted to see whether he could get Avrohom, even for an instant, to regret his actions at the Akeidah. That is what our Sages mean when they say "And Avrohom came from Mount Moriah" — i.e. with Mount Moriah fresh in his mind, knowing that he had passed the test.

"Maybe," the Angel reasoned, "I can get him to have second thoughts about his righteousness on Mount Moriah." But the Malach HaMaves was not successful. Avrohom came from Mount Moriah — to mourn and to eulogize Sarah — with the same dedication and trust in Hashem that he demonstrated on Mount Moriah.

Charity Begins At Home

Avraham Avinu was the archetypical "gomel chessed".

And where, according to the Medrash, did Avraham demonstrate his great *Chessed*? It was through the burial of Sora. This Medrash is unfathomable! This is the example of the great attribute of kindness of Avraham Avinu? What kind of lowlife would **not** see to the appropriate burial of his wife upon her passing? Any decent human being would do no less. There are so many examples and Medrashim that could have been cited to demonstrate Avraham's attribute of

Chessed! Consider the great hospitality he provided for the three visitors that came in the heat of the day after he had just undergone *Bris Milah* at an advanced age. What is the interpretation of this Medrash?

I saw in the *sefer* Darash Mordechai that the Torah is trying to teach us a very important lesson that is unfortunately lost on many people: There are people in society who are the nicest people in the world. They would give you the shirt off their back. They do this for everyone else, except for their own family members. On the outside, they will fix your flat tire. They will do literally anything for you. But at home, they won't take out the garbage. They won't wash the dishes. They won't vacuum when their wife is having a hard day. The Torah is saying that even though we all know that Avraham Avinu was a great *Baal Chessed*, what really counts to *Hashem* more than anything else is how he treated his wife. It is the old maxim—charity begins at home.

Many years ago, I mentioned the words of Rav Chaim Vital, but they are worth repeating: There are people who do *Chessed* with all other types of people, however they do not do favors for their wives and family members. They are confident that when they come up to Heaven, the Gates of Gan Eden will open wide for them. Woe is to them and woe is to their souls, for they do not know and they do not understand that all their acts of kindness are *Hevel u'Reus Ruach* (nothingness and evil spirit). First and foremost, a person must do *Chessed* with his wife and children. 'Your own poor take precedence.' Only after charity has begun at home do the good deeds that a person has done for others count.

That is why this Medrash portrays the prototype of the *Chessed* of Avraham Avinu as the effort he expended in properly burying his wife. This is the most important type of *Chessed*.

I recently read about an incident during which a young man complained to Rav Schach: "No matter whether Shabbos starts at 4

PM or 8 PM, my wife is never ready. The house is always a turmoil those last twenty minutes before Shabbos. "She always is just barely able to *bentch licht* on time" he complained.

Rav Schach responded, "Take the broom and sweep yourself! Help your wife!"

In The "Olden Days" People Did Not Get Old

There is an interesting Medrash in Parshas Chayei Sarah: On the *pasuk* "And Avraham was old, coming in days…" [Bereishis 24:1] the Medrash points out that Avraham asked for (signs of) old age. Avraham Avinu was the first person in the history of the world to "get old" and the Medrash says he in fact asked to "show his age".

His argument was that a man and his son (who would look like each other and both would appear to be young and vigorous) would come together to a new place and the townspeople would not know to whom to give more honor and respect. In our world, we have many cases where fathers and sons look alike, but it is very obvious as to whom is the father and whom is the son. The individual who is wider around the waist and white in the beard and the head, the one with more wrinkles on his skin – he is the father. Avraham and Yitzchak had a problem. They looked alike and they both had black beards and their skin was the same.

The Almighty told Avraham that his request was a reasonable one. "By your life, this phenomenon will begin with you!" From the beginning of the Torah until Parshas Chayei Sarah the Torah does not use the word *ziknah* [old age], until this parsha where we read "And Avraham was old…".

This request for "old age" and G-d's concurrence, as it were, that it is a good idea runs counter to the mindset that we have today. Today, people do not want to get old, they don't want to look old. People spend billions of dollars in order to remain and to look young. They

use face lifts, cosmetic surgery, Grecian formula or Botox injections. People spend a lot of money in order to not look old. As Rav Shimshon Pincus, z"l, writes in his sefer, this has even crept into our circles.

We refer to certain great teachers in our tradition as "The Alter from Slabodka" and "The Alter from Kelm". This literally means "The old man from Slabodka" or "The old man from Kelm". This is not a pejorative, and it is not a derogatory term. On the contrary – this is a badge of honor. In *Eretz Yisrael* where these individuals are referred to by a Hebrew (rather than a Yiddish) title, they are not referred to as "*HaZaken mi Slabodka*" or "*HaZaken mi Kelm*", rather they are referred to as "*HaSaba mi Slabodka*", etc. (the "Grandfather" from Slabodka, not the "old man" from Slabodka). Why? It is because even today, "*ziknah*" is something to be embarrassed about.

So what is the deeper message of Avraham's request for "*ziknah*"? It is obvious that this was not merely a practical matter of trying to identify who is the father and who is the son. It would have been a much simpler idea to have them wear name tags. The father could have had the name 'Avraham' embroidered on his shirt and the son could have had a matching shirt with the name 'Yitzchak' embroidered upon it! Problem solved.

However, Avraham said, "No. I want to be old and I want to look like an old man." And the *Ribono shel Olam* said, as it were, "It's a great idea!". So what has happened between the time of Avraham Avinu and our day and age? I don't know historically when this focus on youth began – whether it's a twentieth century phenomenon or a nineteenth century innovation. I am not sure when it started — but that is certainly the mindset today. People do not want to be old and they don't want to look old.

When people live empty lives, they do not want to get old, look old or feel old. Avraham Avinu had no problem with this. Avraham was

"*bah b'yamim*" – he made good use of every single day. He looks back – at this point in his history – and says "Yes, I know most of my life is over, but that does not upset me because I have what to show for it." Therefore '*ziknah*' – old age, is a badge of honor. "I am old but look what I have done." Therefore Avraham asked for *ziknah*.

Nothing Would Have Interrupted Yitzchak On His Way To Service of G-d

At the end of the story of Eliezer going to find a mate for Yitzchak, the Torah describes the first meeting of Yitzchak and Rivka [Bereishis 24:62-67]. The narrative begins with the words "Now Yitzchak came from having gone to the Well of L'Chai-Roee…"

Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam wonders regarding the significance of the fact that Yitzchak had returned from this well. Who cares where he had just returned from when he met Rivka for the first time?

Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam gives a very interesting answer. The Well of L'Chai-Roee was the place where Yitzchak regularly davened [prayed]. When Yitzchak needed privacy and seclusion, he retreated to this place. The Torah stresses that this event occurred on his way BACK from the place, not on his way TOWARDS the place of the Well of L'Chai-Roee.

The purpose is to teach us the following lesson: Had Yitzchak been on his way to execute his Service to G-d, even the arrival of Eliezer and Rivka would not have distracted him. It is only because he had finished praying and was now returning from this place that he took note of the arrival of his father's trusted servant and the young woman brought for him from Aram Naharaim to be his future wife.

Rav Moshe Shapiro wonders why it was that in previous generations, Europe produced students who were expert in all aspects of Torah knowledge and in our times, it does not produce such great Torah

luminaries. Rav Shapiro suggests that it is because their diligence and focus was so laser-like in their formative years that they grew up to be the people they became later in life. Unfortunately, in our day and age, there are so many distractions to our Avodas Hashem [Service to G-d] and to our learning that we just do not produce the same type of Gedolim.

Rav Shapiro tells the story that Rav Chatzkel Abramsky once went over to a student and asked him where he was during seder [the fixed-time set aside for learning in the Yeshiva]. The young man explained that he went to a wedding and that the wedding was in a different city. The student explained that it took him 3 hours to travel back and forth to the wedding each way. Rav Abramsky was dumbfounded that this student spent so much time just to go to the wedding of a friend. Rav Abramsky told him that he himself went to only two weddings the entire time he was a young man — one was his sister's wedding and one was his own wedding!

When people have that type of intense focus in learning (hasmadah), with an intensity that is so strong that nothing can derail them from Torah study, then they may grow up to be people of the caliber of Rav Chatzkel Abramsky.

This, according to Rav Avraham ben HaRambam, is what the pasuk is emphasizing here by describing the fact that Yitzchak met his bride AFTER have returned from Be'er L'Chai-Roee. On the way there, nothing would have derailed him.

We obviously are not on the level to aspire to such single-minded focus in our Divine Service. However, it is important for us and for our children to understand the significance of any time that we must take off from our learning and our Service to G-d. This is how Gedolim are produced.



What Remains Is Not My Teacher's Torah, It Is How He Acted

The story of Eliezer finding a shidduch [marriage partner] for Yitzchak is one of the longest narratives in the entire Torah. Rashi cites a Rabbinic teaching: Despite the fact the Torah is normally very 'stingy' in its language and we often derive new laws from just the inclusion of an extra letter vov in a pasuk, here the Torah elaborates in great, repetitious, detail the events surrounding Eliezer's mission because "the conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs is dearer even than the Torah of the children." In other words, we can learn more about the manners and personalities of the founders of our religion – the "Avos" – by contemplating the actions and conversational nuance of their servants than we can even from delving into the Torah of their descendants.

Rav Aharon Kotler, zt"l, once commented about this teaching of Chazal: "Torah may be expounded, but personality traits must be learned". (Torah ken mir darshenen, ober midos tovos daf men oys lernen.) It is much more difficult to inculcate someone with proper behavior (middos tovos) than it is to teach them a piece of Talmud.

The reason the Torah goes to such lengths describing this narrative is because Eliezer was a reflection of Avraham Avinu. When we want to know what proper behavior and integrity is — this is our paradigm. This is what the Book of Bereishis is all about! It is called the Book of the Upright (Sefer haYashar) because it teaches us the ways of the upright (Yashrus).

Many Gedolei Yisrael [great men of Israel] are such geniuses that we can never aspire to their level of Torah study. We have neither the talents nor the perseverance to reach their level of intellectual accomplishment and mastery of Torah knowledge. But something we can aspire to is to try to learn from their "menshlichkeit" and their "midos" [their pristinely ethical personalities].

I would venture to say that for most people who learned in Yeshivos and who were exposed to great Torah personalities, they do not remember so much of the "Torah" of their teachers but they certainly remember how their teachers acted. That is what remains. What remains is not the "Torah"; what remains is "how my Rebbe used to act".

Someone recently told me that **Rav Pam, zt"l**, was walking down the street and an obviously non-religious person came over to him. The person recognized Rav Pam but Rav Pam did not recognize him. He told Rav Pam, "You were my Rebbe in fifth grade."

The fellow is today not observant. He told Rav Pam "Do you know what I remember about you? When I was in fifth grade, I was taking a test and you caught me cheating." Anyone who knew Rav Pam knows that cheating and falsehood were an anathema to him. The student went on, "Do you know what you told me? You told me 'If you need any help, I can help you.'"

This fellow probably does not remember even one interpretation or insight that Rav Pam ever said, but that is how he remembered him. He remembered that Rav Pam told him "I can help you."

This past Shabbos, I happened to be at a retreat and I was sitting at the Shabbos table together with **Rav Dovid Feinstein**. Another Rabbi brought over a fellow (who again was not religious) and introduced him to Rav Dovid Feinstein. While he was talking with Rav Dovid I asked the Rabbi who brought him over, who the fellow was. He told me that he used to live on the Lower East Side in the same neighborhood as the Feinstein family. I asked him, "Does

this guy remember anything about **Rav Moshe Feinstein?**" He told me, "Yes. He remembers one thing about Rav Moshe Feinstein. When they used to play hopscotch on the street of the Lower East Side and Rav Moshe would walk down the street, Rav Moshe would wait until the kids finished hopping before he would walk through."

This made a tremendous impression on him. Forty or fifty years later, he still remembers the hopscotch that Rav Moshe refused to interrupt. Picture the scene: Rav Moshe Feinstein, the Posek of the Jewish people, the Gadol Hador, waiting on the street for these kids to finish jumping before he continues walking to his apartment building.

This is what people remember. This is the idea that "superior is the casual conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs to the intensive Torah study of their children." That is why the Torah spends so many pasukim retelling the story because "Torah can be expounded, but good manners have to be learned."

"Chayei Sarah" – An Appropriate Name for The Parsha?

At the beginning of the *parsha*, the Torah says that Sarah lived to be 127 years old. It seems very peculiar that the name of the parsha is "*Chayei Sarah*" [the life of Sarah] when Sarah dies in its very first *pasuk*. Of course, it might not be appropriate to name the parsha "the death of Sarah" (*Misas Sarah*) but perhaps the *parsha* could have had a more fitting name, as this **is** the story of her death and burial, not her life.

The truth of the matter is that we find a similar peculiarity in *Parshas Vayechi* (which literally means "And he lived"). There too, the very first *pasuk* of the *parsha* says that Yaakov lived for 147 years, and it is basically about Yaakov's death, rather than his life.

What is the significance of these *parsha* name choices?

Even though a person may die, in a certain sense, he continues to live on. If a person lives a full and complete life (*yemei temimim*) – a life that is full of Torah and full of *mitzvos* and *ma'asim tovim* [good deeds], full of children and full of grandchildren – then that person indeed keeps on living.

Sarah is *Imeinu* ["our mother"]. We have Three Patriarchs and Four Matriarchs.*Klal Yisrael* was built on the shoulders of the Matriarchs. So all of us are here today by virtue of the lives of*Avraham Avinu* and *Sarah Imeinu*. Is there a greater "legacy", is there a greater "eternity" than having been the matriarch of an entire nation?

In spite of the fact that Sarah lived 127 years and then she died, it is still appropriate to call this *parsha* "*Chayei Sarah*" – because Sarah is very much alive, even after the 127 years of her life.

The *pasuk* in Tehillim says, "For in his death he will take nothing with him, (when he goes down into the grave) his honor will not follow him." [Psalms 49:18] The simple reading of this *pasuk* articulates the well-known maxim "You can't take it with you," according to which this *pasuk* has a very sobering message. Whatever we accumulate in this world, we will not be able to take it with us.

Rav Chatzkel Abramsky said, this *pasuk* is teaching something to which we should aspire: When a person goes to the grave, he is not going to take everything with him, because he is going to leave it here on earth! What is he going to leave on earth? His legacy! He is going to leave his children, his grandchildren, and his good deeds (*ma'asim tovim*). He is going to leave all that he accomplished in this world.

"You are not going to take anything with you" – meaning, do not worry! Your accomplishments will not descend to the grave with you. Nothing follows you to the grave. It all remains here, so that which you have accomplished here in this world will continue.

Throughout a person's lifetime, he needs to try to build this legacy, so he will have something to leave over after 120 years! "*Lo yered acharav k'vodo*" means – Do not think that when you leave this world, your honor will vanish. No! On the contrary! Honor does NOT follow a person to the grave. His honor will remain in this world – in the children he leaves over and in the dividends paid by the growth of institutions he has built and contributed to during his lifetime.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz presents a totally unique interpretation of a well-known passage. When we console a mourner, we say the words "*HaMakom Yenachem Eschem…*" [May the Omnipresent Comfort you…]. *HaMakom* is one of the Names describing *Hashem*, but why is <u>that</u> particular Name used on <u>this</u> occasion, as opposed to so many other Names indicative of other Divine Attributes?

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz says *HaMakom* does NOT refer to*Hashem*in this passage. The word *makom* literally means "place." *HaMakom Yenachem Eschem* means the place that the deceased created for him or herself in Gan Eden should be the biggest consolation! When a person reaches *Gan Eden* and *Hashem* gives him his rightful reward for all he did in this world, that MAKOM (place) will be the biggest consolation for having had to leave this world.

This then is why the parsha is called ***Chayei*** *Sarah*. Although indeed it deals with Sarah's death, in truth, Sarah is still very much alive. This is because *Hashem* is aware of the days of those who are *temimim* and the legacy they leave behind is *l'olam va'ed*. *Sarah Imenu* is still very much alive, and it is appropriate to refer to our parsha as ***Chayei*** *Sarah*!

Tosfos writes that the final letters of* <u>א</u>ברה<u>ם</u> זקן ב<u>א</u> *spell* אמן ***because whoever answers אמן ***will live long.***

When You Are Faced With Stress or Trauma – Know That You Can Handle It

"And Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, which is Chevron in the land of Canaan; and Avraham came to cry for her and mourn her." [23:2]

Rashi quotes a very famous Rabbinic tradition that explains the juxtaposition of the Binding of Yitzchak with the death of Sarah, by teaching that Sarah in fact died from the shock of hearing that her son was almost slaughtered.

How did Avraham and Yitzchak, who themselves were physically involved in the actual trauma of the Binding of Yitzchak, manage to survive the trauma? The drama must have been more vivid and frightening for them than for Sarah. Yet, they apparently were none the worse for the experience. Sarah on the other hand, only heard about the events by word of mouth — after she already heard that Yitzchak was safe — and yet she died of fright. She could not handle it. Why?

The question is even magnified in light of the fact that we are told by our Sages that Sarah's level of prophecy exceeded that of her husband. Certainly her inability to handle the relatively mild trauma cannot be explained by minimizing the personage of Sarah relative to Avraham.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz suggests that the distinction is based on a Talmudic passage in tractate Avodah Zarah. The Gemara there says [3a] "Ain HaKadosh Baruch Hu ba b'Trunya im beriyosav" [G-d does not give his creations anything that they cannot handle]. A person has the potential to withstand any stress, trial, or tribulation that he faces in his life. Whether the person does or does not withstand the test is a different story; but by definition it is not beyond the person's capabilities. Implicit in the fact that G-d gives us a difficult task is the fact that He also gives us the ability to deal with that task. Two people may face the same trying circumstances and react

differently — because one of them met the challenge and one — although he had the potential to meet the challenge — did not!

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that the test of the Akeida was a trial for Avraham and Yitzchak, but it was never intended to be a test for Sarah. By virtue of the fact that Avraham and Yitzchak had to endure this test, G-d gave them the ability to handle it. Sarah was not given this test and therefore — despite the fact that she may have been superior in prophecy to her husband — she was likewise not granted the special Divine Aid (Siyata D'Shmaya) and inner fortitude that were necessary to handle this trauma. Indeed she was not able to handle it.

This teaches us that even though one person is greater than another in certain areas, he may in fact not be able to endure something that a spiritually inferior person is able to endure — because he was never given the Divine Aid necessary to meet that challenge. The test was not his, so he may not have been granted the requisite spiritual powers that are necessary to pass the test.

Lesson Learned From The Names Of Yishmael's Sons

I heard the following observation in the name of Rav Yisrael Belsky.

The end of the parsha contains a listing of the names of the twelve sons of Yishmael. In perek [chapter] 25 pasuk 13, four sons are mentioned: Nevoyos, Keidar, Adb'el and Mivsam. In pasuk 14, three more sons are mentioned: Mishma, Duma, and Massa. Finally, in pasuk 15 the last five sons are mentioned: Chadad, Teima, Yetur, Nafish, and Keidma.

It also is interesting that when the sons of Yishmael are mentioned at the beginning of Divrei HaYamim I [perek 1; pasukim 29-31], the grouping of the second two pasukim differs from what we find in Chayei Sarah. Whereas in Chayei Sarah, 3 sons are mentioned in the second pasuk and 5 sons are mentioned in the third pasuk, in Divrei

HaYamim 5 sons are mentioned in the second pasuk (Mishma, Duma, Massa, Chadad, Teima) and 3 sons are mentioned in the third pasuk (Yetur, Nafish, and Keidma).

Furthermore, whenever a person's name appears in the Torah, the Targum (Unkelos) does not "translate" the name. A name is a name. Unkelos just repeats the name exactly as it appears in Chumash. However, in the second pasuk in Divrei HaYamim, the Targum (which is actually Targum Yonasan ben Uziel in Nach) does not just repeat the names of Yishmael's sons but rather, he 'translates' them, indicating that they mean something!

Mishma means to listen; Duma means to be silent; Massa means to understand; Chadad means to be sharp; Teima means to the south. What is the significance of these names for the sons of Yishmael?

These 5 words are the key to gaining knowledge. When someone is trying to explain something, the first thing the student must do is LISTEN. Next the student must be SILENT. Following that the student must try to UNDERSTAND it. After that the student can gain clarity and SHARPness. Finally, our Sages teach us if that if a student wishes to gain wisdom, he should pray facing the SOUTH (the Menorah which represented wisdom was positioned along the southern wall of the Temple).

However, we must ask, why on earth were the sons of Yishmael picked as the paradigm for gaining knowledge? If there is one ethnic grouping on the face of the earth that are not known for their knowledge it would be the descendants of Yishmael, of whom it is said "He is a wild-ass man; his hand is against everyone and everyone's hand is against him."

On the other hand, after the collapse of the Roman Empire, the wisest and smartest people in the world were the descendants of Yishmael. From the 7th century until the Enlightenment they were "it". The whole world was in darkness and the descendants of Yishmael possessed knowledge. They gave us Algebra. They gave us

many inventions. They had the reputation for being wise and on the cutting edge of knowledge in the world. For several centuries, they were the civilized world.

What is the lesson of this? The lesson is that even a Per'e Adam like Yishmael and his descendants can seek knowledge and become wise if they apply the rules of obtaining knowledge. Namely — Listen, Be Silent; Understand; Gain Clarity; and pray facing South!

No one is ever doomed because of his genes. Even the sons of Yishmael, when they apply the rules of knowledge can become respected for their wisdom.

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

23:1 ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים

Rashi explains that the repetition of the word "years" divides the life of Sarah *Imeinu* into three periods, Thus, at one hundred, she was as free of sin as a twenty-year old, and at twenty she maintained the innocent, wholesome beauty of a seven-year-old. *Rashi* concludes, *Kulan shavin l'tovah*; "All of her years were equal in goodness." What impact could Sarah have had at such a young age?



I came across a story that seems tailor-made to address this question. A *Rosh Yeshivah* was giving a shiur. Sometimes, what takes place is so out of character, that it is difficult to pinpoint the perpetrator. During the *Rosh Yeshivah's shiur*, on a particularly difficult passage in the *Gemorah*, a paper plane came in for a landing right on top of the *Rosh Yeshivah's Gemorah*. Someone in the back

of the room had made a paper plane and tried his wings at the expense of the *Rosh Yeshivah's shiur*.

This was unmitigated *chutzpah*. The *Rosh Yeshivah* took a few minutes to settle his nerves. He attempted to restart the *shiur,* but was unable to do so. Finally, he said, "The student who did this should stand up and leave this room!" Nothing. The room was still. No one rose from his seat. No one moved. The *Rosh Yeshivah* was known for his patience, but, this time, it had worn thin: "I repeat. The student who committed this act should immediately leave the room!" This was serious business. The *Rosh Yeshivah* rarely raised his voice, and, even when he did, it was to emphasise a Torah-related thought/concept. This was too much for him to handle. Boys did not fly paper airplanes in his classroom. He tried a third time, with "feeling": "Whoever committed this act must leave the room immediately!" This time, the *Rosh Yeshivah's* voice was almost a shout.

A few moments passed in silence – until someone stood up and began shuffling toward the door. Thirty pairs of eyes turned to look at the source of the noise. It was none other than young Nachman, a bright boy who was one of the youngest in the class. Although this act was out of character for him, perhaps his youth had gotten the better of him. Shame was written all over his face. He clearly felt bad, as did his friends and the *Rosh Yeshivah,* who had regarded young Nachman with special affection. A few days passed. Nachman apologised; the *Rosh Yeshivah* understood that boys will be boys, especially if they are much younger than the others, and Nachman re-joined the class.

Fast forward 30 years. After visiting various doctors and taking several tests, a husband and father received the dreaded news that he had feared from the very onset: He was gravely ill. He had some measure of hope. A therapy had been recently discovered and used successfully by a few physicians. There was, however, one problem:

It was extremely expensive, and this family was barely able to make ends meet on a good day. Now, with their father and primary wage-earner bedridden, the required funds were not simply a hurdle; it was an impossibility. When situations appear hopeless, however, the *askanim* and community workers took to the streets and knocked on doors in search of funds to help the young father who lay deathly ill:

Mi k'amcha Yisrael; "Who is like Your people, *Yisrael*?" Doors and hearts opened; pocketbooks opened; money slowly started pouring in to help this family. One of the family members, a brother-in-law, took it upon himself to visit an entire neighbourhood. Apartment to apartment, door to door he went, explaining the reason that he was collecting money. A young father lay bedridden, his family starving. Does one need a better reason?

As he walked through the neighbourhood, a door opened, and standing before him was a prominent young *Rosh Yeshivah*, a charismatic educator who had literally impacted the lives of hundreds of young men. He was a well-respected and admired *Rosh Yeshivah*. "How can I help you?" he asked. The brother-in-law explained that he was on a mission to raise sufficient funds, so that his brother-in-law could receive treatment for the illness that was ravaging his body. "My brother-in-law, *Reb* Nachman Galinsky, is in dire straits. Without the money, he has no chance of receiving treatment."

"What did you say his name was? *Reb* Nachman! *Oy*, *Reb* Nachman!" The *Rosh Yeshivah* began to raise his voice, "Oy, *Reb* Nachman is ill! *Oy*. I owe my life to *Reb* Nachman! Every bit of *ruchniyos*, spirituality, that I have achieved, every bit of Torah that I have studied, every *talmid*, student, that I have taught, is all due to *Reb* Nachman. If not for him, I would probably not be *frum*. He gave me back my life. I owe him everything."

The *Rosh Yeshivah* began the story with which he had lived for so many years. "I was a little '*shticky*', and, one day, in the middle of

the *Rosh Yeshivah's shiur*, I let fly a paper airplane. I did not expect the *Rosh Yeshivah* to react with hurt and then anger, but he did, and he would not budge until the perpetrator announced himself and left the classroom.

It was different in those days. If a boy was not ensconced in the protective environment of a *yeshivah*, he was a ripe candidate for the secular Zionist movement that was captivating the country. *Kefirah*, filled the streets, cafés, the meeting places. Everywhere, it was about living a life divorced from Torah. I was not a spiritually strong student. If I left the *yeshivah*, it would mean the end of my *Yiddishkeit*. So, I remained still, quiet, ignoring the *Rosh Yeshivah's* three calls for the perpetrator to leave the *shiur*.

At the very last moment, as I was about to give myself up and say goodbye to my religious commitment, little Nachman Galinsky arose from his seat and left the room. He accepted the onus of guilt for what I had done. My *Yiddishkeit* could now remain intact. "It was at this moment that I realised that I had been granted a new lease on my spiritual life. I began to learn with greater passion and *daven* with more fervour; my acts of *chesed* and caring for others meant much more to me now, because they were personal. All of this was due to Nachman Galinsky. Do you know the *z'chusim* that he has? Every bit of Torah that I or my students have learned is due to him. *Oy*, do I owe him!"

We now see how the actions of a young boy can resonate and have an effect for decades. This is the impact that a young boy had on the life of another boy that catapulted the beneficiary to such spiritual elevation that otherwise could have ended in infamy.

Prayer is knowing that I am not in charge, but at any moment, I have the ability to connect to the One Who Is.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt [לעילוי נשמת שמואל אביגדר בן יצחק מאיר ע״ה]



Perspective- Rashi tells us that Sarah's life was **כלן שוין לטובה - *all equal for goodness***. How could we say this if she suffered so much? She had pain from Hagar who said that Sarah presents herself as if she were righteous, but she isn't as she wasn't worthy of pregnancy all these years while I conceived immediately. What makes this worse is that Sarah was the one who suggested that Avraham marry Hagar. Sarah also was abducted by Avimelech in addition to not having a child until age 90. Moreover, the **ליצני הדור** - ***scoffers of the generation*** said that Sarah became pregnant from Avimelech since she spent many years with Avraham and didn't become pregnant from him.

Our outlook on life determines the life we will have. "*Our life is not determined by what life brings us but by the attitude we bring life.*" In the words of another expression- "*Your attitude determines your altitude on life.*"

The story is told of a president that wanted a portrait of himself. This president didn't have use of one of his legs and one of his eyes.

The first painter painted him without any blemishes. The president disliked this since it wasn't him.

The second painter painted it with all the blemishes. Surely, the president disliked this one.

The third painter painted the president with his blemishes while holding a bow and arrow on a horse. In this way, one couldn't see the blemishes. This was because the portrait had the blemished leg, but

he was on a horse thereby concealing this fact. One also was unable to tell there was a blemished eye since he was aiming his bow and arrow, where one eye would be closed.

The lesson is that in life we must see everything in a positive light. We know that the sky is always blue. However, at times grey clouds obscure our view of it. The same is true with life as it is always good.



We must not let grey clouds obscure our view. Happiness is always there waiting for us.

R' Zusha of Anipoli was once asked how it is possible to understand the Chazal that says **חייב אדם לברך על הרעה** – *one is obligated to bless Hashem for the bad just as he blesses Him for the good*. He replied that he is unable to answer this since he doesn't know what bad is as he had only good in his life. This was R' Zusha by who it was known lived with such poverty and affliction among many other tests.

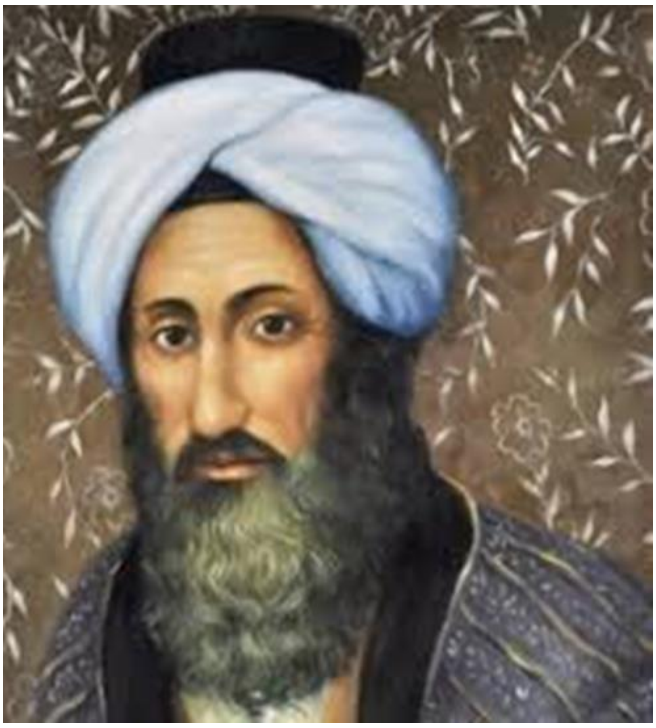
Although Sarah did have troubles in her life, she didn't view it that way. It was an attitude that all is for the best, seeing the positive. This is what is meant in **כלן שוין לטובה**.

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger



I really don't know in what way I am superior to a worm. My deeds are defective, while the worm constantly performs the will of its creator! [Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitepsk]

Efron And The 400 Shekalim



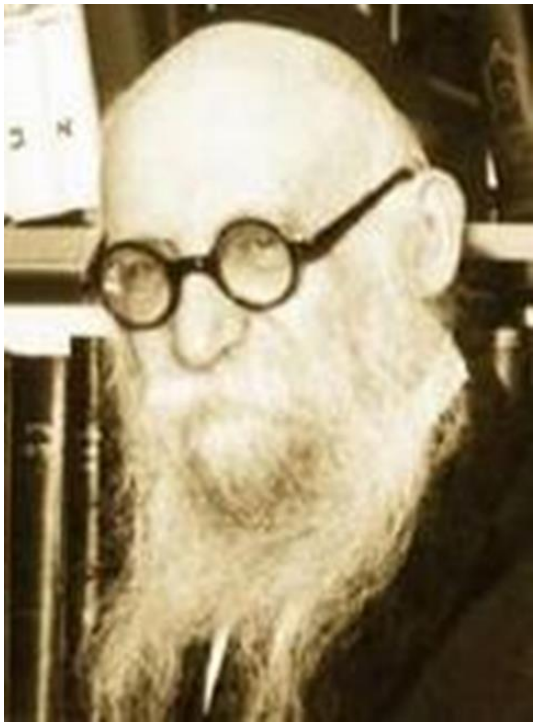
Rashi tells us that Efron spoke a lot, but he didn't even do a little. He originally offered the **המכפלה מערת** as a gift and later accepted 400 Shekalim for it, a tremendous sum of money. For this reason, his name is spelled **עפרן**, missing a **ו**, when Avraham was buying it from him. Is it any coincidence the name **עפרן** has a numerical value of 400. The Midrash tells us Efron had an **עין רע** . Is it any surprise that **עפרן** shares the same Gematria as **עין רע**. Indeed, **עפרן** is rooted in the term **עפר** - dirt, symbolizing his lowliness. His name, **עפרן בן צחר** , contain the initials **בצע** - profit. This is what Efron desired. Although Efron said **ביני וביניך מה היא** - what is 400 Shekalim between me and you- he wanted the money. Taking these words literally, what is the middle letter (**ביני** - between me) of **עפרון ? - ר**. And the middle letter (**וביניך**) of **אברהם ? - ר**. The Gematria of **ר** is 200. 200 and 200 is 400, alluding to the 400 Shekalim.

The Chida points out the following on the words **עבר לסחר** (negotiable currency): **עבר** means to precede as in **עובר לעשייתן**. If we take the letters prior to **סחר** we arrive at the word **נזק** (damage) - before **ס** is a **נ**, before a **ח** is a **ז** and before a **ר** is a **ק**. Furthermore, **סחר** is comprised of the same letters as **חסר** - lacking. Efron damaged himself (**נזק**) in that he lost out (**חסר**) and is now remembered as a greedy person.

How do we conduct ourselves with money- resembling Avraham or Efron.

Attainable Through Tefilla

The match of Yitzchak and Rivka destined from heaven? So, why did Yitzchak daven for it?



The Apta Rav who supported a Kollel in his Beis Midrash would give the stipends on Rosh Chodesh. One Rosh Chodesh, one of the Kollel members while davening thought to himself, "I don't need to add a Tefilla for livelihood since it is given to me by the Rebbe." After davening the Rebbe gave out in his room the stipends to each Kollel member. When it was his turn all the money was given out. The Rebbe left the room to get more money. When the Rebbe returned, this man for some reason went to the end of the line. When it reached his turn again, there was no more money. The Rebbe then said that every month Hashem gives me exactly the amount of money I need to support those in the Kollel. There must be a reason you didn't receive your stipend this month. Check your deeds and see if you can find the reason. The man understood it was because he didn't daven for it.

So, even when something is destined, it won't happen without Tefilla. Consequently, although Yitzchak's Shidduch was destined, Tefilla was still necessary. Here are some other examples of this:

1) Yishmael was in the desert, ill and without water. Hashem heard the cry of Yishmael and listened. Yishmael's life was saved.

The Pnei Menachem wonders why these Tefillos were necessary since Hashem promised Avraham that Yishmael would live and become a great nation? The answer is because nothing happens without Tefilla.



2) Hashem told Avraham that Sarah would give birth to a child. Furthermore, Malachim told them the exact moment this would occur. Yet, Tefillos were still necessary for this miracle to happen as Rashi explains the juxtaposition of Avraham davening for Avimelech (and then he was cured) and **וה' פקד את שרה**; Hashem remembered Sarah and she became pregnant with Yitzchak, that whoever davens for another is answered first. We must daven for everything whether before purchasing shoes, prior to cooking food so that it should come out good and so on. "Tefilla is not a spare tire to pull out in emergencies. It is a steering wheel to use daily in order to get anywhere."

R' Yonah writes that in everything you want to do ask Hashem for success. That is, even the small things as it says **בכל דרכיך דעהו**; ***in all your ways know Him***, as everything is in Hashem's hand. This doesn't mean that it must be in Shemoneh Esrei.

The Chazon Ish writes that a person may construct a short Tefilla for his personal needs and he may even use Hashem's name and is not required to insert it into the Shemoneh Esrei.

A Divine Death

Rashi tells us that when Sarah heard about the Akaida, her Neshama flew out from her, and she died. This is why the section of the Akaida and the death of Sarah are next to each other. Sarah was on a level we can't imagine. How is it possible that when she heard about the Akaida which was the will of Hashem, she died?



When Sarah heard about the Akaida, **פרחה נשמתה**, her Neshama flew out of her. A deeper explanation is that **פרחה** is from the word **פרח**, flower, to blossom. Sarah wanted the type of son who would be totally dedicated to Hashem with every limb of his body. When she heard that Yitzchak went to the Akaida, she now felt her mission was complete—blossomed to its perfection—and consequently she died.

The Parsha opens up **ויהיו חיי שרה**. The sum of **ויהיו** is 37. Yitzchak was 37 years old at the Akaida. **ויהיו חיי שרה** , these were the years of Sarah—the years she truly lived since she raised such a son that at age 37 went to the Akaida.

וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁתֵּה אֲדֹנִי ***She said, drink, my lord. (24:18)***



Eliezer asked Rivkah (*Imeinu*) if she had water to spare. The young girl's actions, her outstanding *chesed*, kindness, in not only providing for Eliezer, but also for his camels, indicated the type of person she was. In addition, she did not tarry in carrying out his request. As soon as Eliezer asked her for water, she immediately ran to do his bidding. These two aspects of Rivkah's character are evident.

Another one of her attributes is often overlooked, but should be underscored: *derech eretz*, manners, respect, human decency.



This, explains ***Horav Yitzchak Yaakov Ruderman, zl***, is to be gleaned from the word *adoni*, my lord/master. Rivkah did not know Eliezer, yet she addressed him with respect. This was probably the way in which she spoke to everyone.

Indeed, acting with *derech eretz* is the foundation upon which our Torah stands. Regardless of the person who stands before us, we must always address him or her respectfully.

Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, zl, *Rav* of Vilna and pre-World War II *gadol ha'dor*, pre-eminent leader of European Torah Jewry, would greet and treat anyone who passed his door with the utmost care and respect.

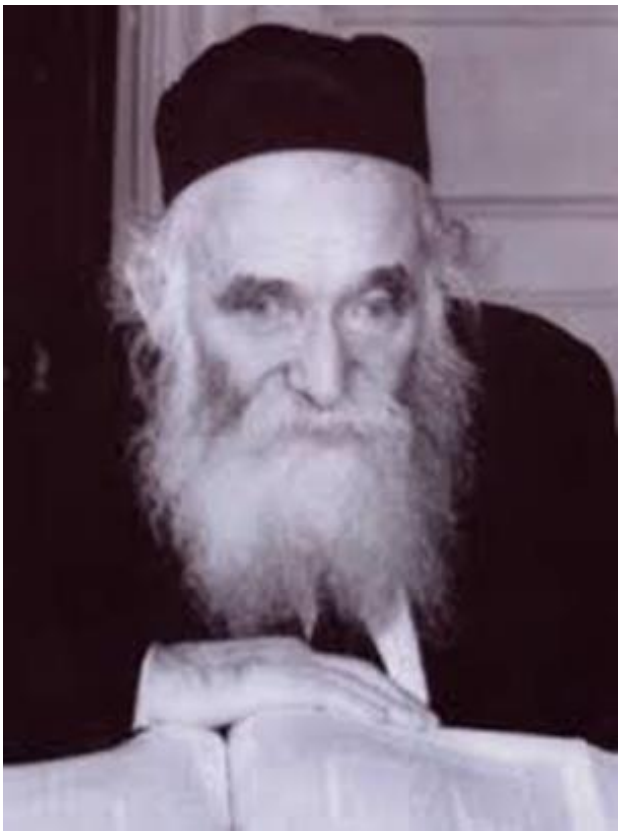
Enjoying this world

Many mistakenly think that those who are dedicated to Torah sacrifice this world in order to have a portion in the next world. The truth is that not only do they have a portion in the next world, they have this world also.

The story is told of a wealthy person who asked **R' Shach** who has more **עולם הבא** , me or you. I support many people learning whereas you are just one person learning. He replied I don't know and the truth can be that you have more **עולם הבא**. However, I certainly have more **עולם הזה**.



In Europe, when **R' Boruch Ber** would give a shiur, students from other Yeshivos would also attend. Due to overcrowding, they began locking the door as if one wasn't from the Yeshiva, he wasn't allowed in. It was the day after they began to lock the door, that they noticed a student from another Yeshiva there. When he was asked how he got in, he replied that he jumped through the window in order to hear the shiur since it was so sweet to him.



This was the famed **R' Aaron Kotler** (1892-1962), the one who later founded the Lakewood Yeshiva. In light of this we can grasp why it **שהוא בן עולם הבא** since for such a person, it is **עולם הבא** even in this world.

The Chazon Ish once underwent surgery without anaesthesia since it posed a health problem for him. He asked the surgeon to delay in making the incision until he had enough time to become involved in introspection on a deep subject of Torah. After that he would hardly feel the pain.

"Let bygones be bygones! " ~~ Talmud, Yoma

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וַיִּשְׁקֹל אַבְרָהָם לְעֶפְרֹן אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֵי־חֵת אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף עֹבֵר לַסֹּחֵר: 23:16

When Avraham Avinu came to Chevron to bury his beloved wife Sarah, he spoke to Efron Hachiti to negotiate for the land. Rashi tells us: Efron is spelled without a "vav" because he promised much but did not do even a little (he promised the cave as a gift but took a great deal of money for it).

Rav Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l- The Gemara learns through a **גזירה שוה** that **קדושי אשה** could be effected using money **קיחה קיחה משדה עפרון.** He asked, we have no better place to learn such a lofty ceremony like Kiddushin other than from Efron Hachiti, a bonafide crook? He answered, that in this transaction, Avraham Avinu acquired the Me'aras Hamachpelah, a priceless purchase for all eternity, while Efron pocketed a small fortune, 400 silver coins. They each walked away feeling that they just closed the deal of the century!

The same goes for marriage. Each side - the boy and the girl - should feel that they got a steal; a great catch! Additionally, when it comes to in-laws, whether it's a mother, daughter, or son-in-law, we have to be so careful with what we say and how we say it. I have an aunt who always says, "My daughter-in-law - she's just the best!" Compliment a person to his/her in-laws. You can make or ruin a relationship. Make sure each side feels like they won the jackpot!

Harav Noach Orlowick שליט"א says;

"A big person is someone, who is able to do small things. Why? Because he understands that there is no such thing as a small thing every act a person does is huge!"

Not for you

The Mishna Brurah writes that one shouldn't feed an animal, beast **חיה** or non-Jew (**כותי**) from that which he made **המוציא** on. Similarly, the **Bnei Yissoschar** (1783- 1841) relates that he saw people that were careful from giving Shabbos food to a non-Jew.

The Agra Dkalla says in the name of the Sefer Chassidim that if one recites a Bracha on water and leaves some over, he shouldn't give it to a non-Jew or animal since he mentioned **שם שמים** on it as he infused it with holiness. With this we can understand why after Rivka gave Eliezer to drink, she drew water for the camels- **ותמהר ותער...גמליו** ; she hurried and emptied her jug into the trough and kept running to the well to draw water, and she drew water for all his camels, as Eliezer recited a Bracha on the water.

When Rivka heard this, she said it is not fitting to give the camels from the same water. She thus said I will get water for the camels anew. **ותער כדה** – she emptied out the water Eliezer drank from and then **ותרץ אל הבאר לשאוב** , she went to draw water for the camels.



וַיְדַבֵּר אִתָּם לֵאמֹר אִם־יֵשׁ אֶת־נַפְשְׁכֶם לִקְבֹּר אֶת־מֵתִי מִלְּפָנָי ***And he spoke with them, saying, "If it is your will that I bury my dead from before me 23:8***

The following is an incredible true story that happened not long ago. It documents the power of Emunah and Hashgacha Pratis that is engendered through Tefillos that are said with tears and a broken heart. An English gentleman residing in the United States had an elderly mother back in London who was living in a senior-care facility. One day, he received a phone call from the office of the nursing facility informing him that his dear mother had passed away. It came as quite a shock! He could not believe it. He had just spoken to her a few days previously and she had sounded just fine! It was a terrible blow to him, made all the worse when he realized that due to personal

issues, he would be unable to make it to England on time to attend the funeral.

With a heavy heart, he contacted the London Chevra Kadisha and asked them to see to all the arrangements for his mother's funeral and burial. He ripped his garments and sat down to a week of shiva at his home in the United States. On the fifth day of sitting shiva, the phone rang in his home and when he took the call, he received the shock of his life. On the other end of the line was his sweet elderly mother whom he believed had just died and been buried in London.

Trembling, he listened as his mother complained why he had not called all that week, and that she was feeling a bit under the weather - not that he seemed concerned at all since he hadn't bothered to call! For many minutes, he couldn't speak and when he finally did, he could barely find the words. Quickly hanging up, he dialled the office of the senior facility and demanded an explanation.

After much bureaucratic mumbling and fumbling, he was told that a terrible mistake had been made and it wasn't his mother who had passed away - that he already knew - but that her roommate had died and the names had been mixed up! Well, he was quite happy at this point knowing that his mother was alive, but now the administrator of the facility had the unenvious job of informing the next of kin of the deceased woman that their mother had died the previous week and had already been buried! What could he possibly say to placate them? And what if they sue for emotional distress?

Resignedly, the administrator dialled the number of the woman's son. He then proceeded to explain how sorry he was to inform him of his mother's passing. But the son cut him off in mid-sentence. "Is that so?" there was a hint of malicious spite in his voice. "Listen to me. Take her body, burn it and spread her ashes on the ground!" "Excuse me?" asked the administrator in total disbelief at the callousness in his tone. But the son just laughed and repeated, "What don't you

understand? I don't want to deal with her anymore! Burn the body!" "But ... but," stammered the administrator, "she was already buried!" He then explained to him about the mix-up. There was a long pause on the other line and the son's mocking tone faded. "In that case, she has won!" He hung up.

What was going on here? The administrator was determined to get to the bottom of this and what he found out amazed him. This woman was a righteous and pious woman who spent much of her day reciting Tehillim and praying. Her son was not only irreligious, but he went so far as to convert to Christianity. Mother and son were embroiled in a horrible feud for many years and although the two were completely estranged, the son made a point of calling his mother from time to time, taunting and mocking her saying that when she died, he would see to it that her body is burned to ashes!

These words could not have been more hurtful for she knew how devious her son could be and she cried for hours on end praying that the Almighty should take pity on her and at the very least, allow her to be buried in a Jewish cemetery with a Jewish ceremony. Until her dying day, her only wish was that someway, somehow, she would merit a Jewish burial and the Lord up in Heaven obviously heard her plaintive cries - much to the chagrin of her defeated son.

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger



To break Your Yetzer Hara is not the way; you will then be left with two of them! – Chassidei Lublin.

Testing Hashem

The Medrash says that Eliezer made an inappropriate request, while in search of a mate for Yitzchok, in effect "testing" the Almighty and his Divine supervision. And yet, Hashem responded favourably seemingly "passing the test" by sending Rivkah, who displayed extraordinary kindness and caring for guests and their animals. This convinced Eliezer that she was truly befitting of his master's son.

While Rivkah did act with extraordinary kindness, one might wonder: Aren't there numerous other qualities that a prospective bride, a future Matriarch of Israel, must possess? Based on one act of chessed, how could Eliezer be so certain that Rivkah excelled in all other areas as well?



Says **R' Mordechai Katz ZT"L** (Telzer Rosh Yeshivah), it is because Rivkah had reached a "shleimus," the highest level of perfection in the area of kindness, and this caused her entire being to be elevated. Each person possesses within, countless traits and abilities that are all unified and connected. When one attains greatness in one area, advancing to an elevated status, the effect filters down throughout the person's many attributes. If one indeed reaches shleimus, like Rivkah did in the area of chessed, one is impacted on a greater scale and even a small accomplishment likewise makes a far-reaching impact on the entire person.

At the end of 1940 and early 1941, a few months before the beginning of the mass extermination of Jews by the evil Nazis, a group of about 2,100 Polish and Lithuanian Jews managed to flee Europe and make it to the coastal city of Kobe, Japan. Most notable

among this group was the famed Mir Yeshivah. A short time later, Japan expelled the Jews from its mainland, and the refugees relocated again, to Shanghai, China. There, Jewish refugees suffered from lack of food, clothing and medicines. They were forced into a ghetto where they lived in small apartments located in alleyways, often devoid of modern amenities and basic plumbing. Traffic restrictions and deprivations of war made life difficult for the yeshivah students but thankfully there existed no daily terror as experienced by the Jews of the ghettos of Europe.



R' Aryeh Leib Bakst ZT"L, the future Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivah Gedolah Ateres Mordechai of Detroit, was among the students who fled with the Mir Yeshivah and due to the terrible conditions in the ghetto, he was stricken with severe appendicitis. For days he hovered between life and death, and at one point he lost consciousness and fell into a coma. In his state, he had a dream that he was standing before the Heavenly Tribunal, the Beis Din shel Maalah, upon which sat the great Mirrer Mashgiach,

R' Yerucham Levovitz ZT"L. The dayanim were involved in a discussion about the differences between angels and human beings. A malach, an angel can only perform one task, said a prominent judge, whereas humans have the ability to do more than one thing at a time (to "multi-task"). If so, can it be that in some respect, angels are inferior to humans because they seem to be saddled with this limitation, a limitation that does not affect human beings? Suddenly, R' Yerucham turned to him and asked him what he thought about this matter. R' Leib was petrified and whispered that he would prefer not to answer.

R' Yerucham said sternly that the Beis Din was waiting for him to respond - that his very life was depending on his reply.

Finally, R' Leib spoke up in a clear voice. "The fact that a person can do numerous tasks at once does not make him better than an angel. It all depends on what he's doing, how he is doing it and what his ultimate purpose is. When an angel does a shlichus, he does it with all his being; he performs his task to perfection, because he knows no other way. A human being, on the other hand, can do a number of tasks but a human cannot be perfect. He does not have this ability. However, if his ultimate goal is to be Mekadesh Shem Shamayim, to sanctify the Name of Hashem, then all his myriad actions are working towards one shlichus, one lifelong mission. Thus, in effect, just as a malach can only do one mission at a time, so too, a human lives his entire life to perform his one unique mission: to sanctify Hashem's Name. If he rises to the level of perfection in this aspect, then his one true mission in life is fulfilled!"

R' Yerucham nodded his assent, and R' Leib woke up! For the rest of his life, he taught his talmidim to dedicate their lives to doing one thing perfectly - Kiddush Hashem. He used to say, "A person can only do one thing at a time, if he does it the way it needs to be done."



Listen – Rabbi Osher Kravitsky

When the two ears are put together side by side, it forms the shape of a heart. The word 'EAR' sits right in the middle of the word 'HEART' (H-EAR-T).

The ear is the way to the heart. So, if you want someone's heart, learn to listen to them. - If you want Hashem's heart, learn to listen to Him!

A Short Message from Rabbi Gavriel Friedman *We all tend to worry about things in life. It is almost innate to human nature and to the human condition, we would say. But there are two things in life that we should never worry about: 1) what we can change and 2) what we cannot change. And that, just about, includes every possible area in our lives.*



Why is this? Because if you can change it, then change it. Why spend your time worrying if there is something you can do to make it better? And on the contrary, if there is something you cannot change, then worrying about it will not help in any way. And so, there you have it. A worry-free life. We've all been dreaming about it, and it is all right at our fingertips. We don't need to attend any special workshop or seminar; we have all the tools we need right with us.

Have children

One of the main purposes of a woman is to have children as it says **אין האשה אלא לבנים** ; a wife is primarily for childbearing. Indeed, Rachel remarked **הבה לי בנים**... ; give me children, otherwise, I am dead.

For this reason, there are 9 words in what the Chassan says to the Kalla under the Chupa- **הרי את מקדשת לי בטבעת זו כדת משה וישראל** corresponding to the 9 months of pregnancy. It is of course no coincidence that **בנין עדי עד** yields a sum of 270. This refers to the 270 days of pregnancy as 9 (months) multiplied by 30 (days) is 270.

Torah Anytime - Rabbi Yosef Palacci- The True CEO

For one wealthy man who owned a large factory, the constant influx of people collecting for various charity organizations kept him busy for some time every day. But for those collecting and unfamiliar with the large three-story building and its layout, there was one slight problem. It was quite difficult to locate the CEO's office.

"We always try to find you," one collector said, "but we all tend to get lost. Would it be possible to post signs directing everyone where your office is and how to get there? It would help us all considerably."



The wealthy man listened to the proposition of the collectors and conceded. After all, if they needed to locate him and it was difficult to do so for mere logistical reasons, why not make their lives easier? And so, he placed small signs with arrows noting where his office as the CEO was. At different junctures and corners in the building, small posters were hung to indicate which direction led to his office.

For those collecting over the next weeks, it was significantly easier to find their way around. Until a new suggestion was brought up to the CEO which got him thinking and led to some slight alterations in the arrangement of the posted signs. While he was certainly the company's CEO, as he was told by one collector, it may be a more humbling reminder that Hashem is ultimately in charge of one's monetary status were he to title himself as the manager or something less authoritative as CEO.

The head of the company listened to the suggestion and thought about it for some time. While he was undoubtedly the CEO of the company, in the context of Hashem running the world and

micromanaging one's successes and failures, it made sense for him to relabel his position. As a growing, religious Jew, it would consistently prompt him to remember who the true CEO of the world was. And so, the next day, the head of the company relabelled all the signs and arrows to lead not to the CEO, but the manager.

Three weeks later, one of the main building pipes burst and began leaking, requiring immediate and extensive repair. This was not to mention that it would cost quite a hefty price. As the manager soon learned, however, the woman in charge of operating the cameras and monitoring the upkeep of the building had been remiss in her duties and overlooked this problem. Consequently, the company would now have to pay considerably more to fix the leakage.

The manager, unhappy with the woman's negligent work, dismissed her from her position. He would have rather kept her employed, but such an irresponsible oversight was too gross an error to warrant that. Instead, she was sent off with no job to return to the following day.

Returning home that night, she headed to her husband in tears. She explained what had occurred and why she was now left without a job. Her husband was in the least pleased to hear the news. Infuriated, he decided he would make his way down to the factory the next morning to have it out with the manager.

The next morning, on went the husband to the factory. As he entered the building, he immediately began looking for signs indicating the CEO's office, as his wife had told him to look out for. But as the husband soon figured out, there was no office belonging to the CEO, but rather to the manager.

And so, following the signs to the manager's office, he soon arrived quite frustrated and irritated. "Where is the CEO?" he hollered. Having just recently made changes to his official title in the company, the manager, without thinking twice, pointed up. In his mind, he was referring to Hashem. That was not what the husband

made it out to be, however. Rushing out of the office, the husband began making a dart towards the stairwell and heading upstairs. The manager just sat still. Thinking to himself for a moment, he realized what he had just seen. The husband was armed. Who knows what he planned on doing? Phoning the police immediately, within minutes, they were at the factory arresting the man.

Everyone remained safe and sound, as the factory's operations shortly thereafter resumed in full swing. And then the manager understood. Quite likely, his life and perhaps the life of other factory workers were spared for a very simple yet crucial reason. He realized who the real CEO and boss in this world was and had pointed upstairs, which allowed time for the police to arrive and carry out the arrest.

The key to success in life is realizing that it is not we who are in charge, but the true CEO of the world. We most certainly play a pivotal role as employers and managers in the world doing our utmost to provide for our families and carry out a Torah life, but it is all against the backdrop of appreciating that Hashem is behind everything. Our finances have been deposited into our possession to lead a happy, healthy and spiritually connected life with Hashem, and in that respect, we are all trusted managers of Hashem's cherished bank account.

Two Lives - Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה

The K'sav Kabalah says that שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה can be interpreted to mean that there were **two** lives of Sarah. One physical and one spiritual. Within these two lives, as Rashi says:

שני חיי שרה: כלן שוין לטובה They were both equally good.

Rabbi Benzion Klatzko – Remembering You Are Relevant

Years ago, a certain Rabbi Green was teaching a class to his students in Israel about having an *ayin tovah*, a good eye, and looking at others favourably. He went on to highlight the impact and importance of seeing the good in other people, despite the first or further impressions they may give off. But then he took the students through an interesting exercise.



"Everyone please take a piece of paper and write down the name of every boy in this class." After this had been completed by all the students, Rabbi Green continued. "Now write down something nice about each boy next to their name." And so they did. He has a nice smile; he is a *baal chessed* , he davens so well. Etc. At the conclusion of the class, Rabbi Green gathered together all the pieces of paper from each of the boys and put them in his briefcase.

Later that day, he headed home and wrote nicely on a new piece of paper everything each boy had written about all the other boys. Reuven thus had fifteen nice statements about himself from all fifteen other boys in the class; Shimon also had fifteen statements about himself, and so on. Rabbi Green then took the nicely collated papers and laminated them. The following day in school, each boy was handed a new paper with all the kind and uplifting words and statements their fellow students had written about them. It was a beautiful project.

Many years later, one of the students named Ovadiah had joined the Israeli army. As a young boy in school, he stood out as sweet, charming and dignified. A real *mentch*, people would say. But then, one day, Rabbi Green received a phone call. Sadly, he was informed that his previous student, Ovadiah, had been killed in combat.

Heartbroken, he headed to the shiva home to lend care and comfort to Ovadiah's parents and siblings. The parents readily noticed Rabbi Green from years before. He had been a special and remembered teacher by Ovadiah. But Ovadiah's parents had more to tell Rabbi Green than merely thank him for stopping by.

"Come with us," they pleaded. The parents led Rabbi Green to Ovadiah's room, where his uniform stood, nicely cleaned and pressed. "Look what we found in his army uniform," they said, reaching into Ovadiah's shirt pocket. "It's the list that was written about him by your students years ago," his mother said with tears in her eyes. "He took it with him into battle. Wherever he went, he was comforted by the fact that he was loved and supported by his old schoolmates. Whenever he felt low and lost and irrelevant, it was his reminder that he mattered and was relevant. Just imagine. He would look at this and think to himself, 'Wow! Yehuda thinks I'm a true friend… Yaakov thinks I have an infectious smile… Moshe thinks I sing beautifully…'"

But that was not all. Over the next few days, some of Ovadiah's old classmates in fact came to pay a *shiva* call. And guess what? Many of them also still had, folded and stored away in their wallets, that piece of paper they were given in school years ago. It was their reminder that they were beloved and relevant. You can imagine that it brought tears to their eyes as they looked at it. It was a memento that brought close to their hearts and minds the sentiment that they meant something to their family, friends and the world. Beautiful.

Hashem is focused on your potential. He doesn't just see where you are – He sees where you can be.

Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro -Waiting For You



It was a beautiful day in Jerusalem as the legendary **Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt"l*** strolled down the street for a walk. The day was filled with the beauty of life and the beauty of G-d's world. But such a mesmerizing reality came to a halt as soon as Rav Sonnenfeld noticed a little four-year-old girl crying in front of a school. Seeing that she was clearly perturbed, he approached her. "Is everything alright?" Rav Sonnenfeld gently whispered to the girl. As it turned out, today was the first day of school, and the little girl's mother was critically ill in the hospital. The doctors' prognosis was dismal. With no one to therefore pick up the girl from school, she was left alone in tears. But Rav Sonnenfeld did not waste any time. He proceeded to obtain the girl's home address and walk her home.

The story could have ended here and it would have been a beautiful demonstration of Rav Sonnenfeld's care and concern for others. But it didn't. When Rav Sonnenfeld shortly thereafter entered the little girl's home, he was met by total disarray. The house was not exactly organized and put together, but there was good reason for it. Yet, as Rav Sonnenfeld stepped further inside and extended his warm greetings to the family members, he said, "I just want you all to know two things. Firstly, the mother is going to have a complete recovery. Secondly, the mother is going to walk this four-year-old girl down to her *chuppa*."

And so it was. In an inexplicable change of circumstances, the mother underwent a total recovery. It came as an incredulous shock to all the medical staff, yet everyone graciously accepted such news.

Now it came time for fulfilment of the second part of Rav Sonnenfeld's blessing.

The four-year-old girl had grown up and she was now seventeen. Although young, names of prospective *shidduchim* were coming her way. Yet, one after another, she turned them down. She was now twenty, and her younger siblings began getting of age to marry. Although still unmarried herself, she encouragingly and happily let them go ahead.

And indeed, it happened. Three years later, her younger brother got married. And another three years later, two more of her siblings had gotten married. All the while, she received names of some wonderful boys who seemed quite suitable for her. But she just didn't go along with any of them. It seemed as if she was extremely picky. By her 32nd birthday, the last of her siblings finally married. It was an unbelievably joyous occasion for all of the family.

Within a number of months, the four-year-old girl who was now 32, finally got engaged and then married. And like Rav Sonnenfeld had said, her mother walked her down to the *chuppa*. As the next morning rolled around and everyone began to get up for another day, the mother did not. And that was not because she was tired. Rather, in fact, she had passed away in her sleep. The newly married girl of 32 would be going to her mother's funeral. As is the custom in Jerusalem, children ask forgiveness from their parents before they are lowered down to the earth for their repose. The *kallah* of just barely 12 hours had difficulty speaking, but went on to say:

"Ma, I want to ask mechillah from you. For fifteen years, I appeared to be overly picky in the many shidduch offers I received, and it brought much heartache to you. I am sorry, and I am asking for mechillah. But I just want you to know why I was so picky. It was because I wanted all of my younger siblings to also benefit from Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld's blessing to have you at their chuppa. Only

after every one of them had gotten married and you walked them down to their chuppas was I ready… Please be mochel me…"

All along, it may have seemed like the girl was being picky for herself. It was about her finding the perfect boy. But nothing could have been further from the truth. It was all about her siblings and her beloved mother. It was about affording her brothers and sisters the opportunity to have their mother dance at their weddings, and about her mother having the chance to reap the *nachas* of seeing her children's most joyous moments where they would begin building the family's future and legacy. That is what it means to lead a selfless existence. That is what it means to care for others outside of yourself.

Rebbetzin Ruthie Halberstadt - Meeting Mr. Cohen

When I was ten years old, I remember there being a man, Mr. Cohen, who lived in America and started becoming more interested in Judaism.



In his progress of learning more about Torah and *mitzvos*, he had gotten a hold of multiple Torah tapes given by my father, **Rabbi Akiva Tatz**. Deeply influencing and making an impression on him, he arranged that he would learn once a week with my father over the phone from America. For forty-five minutes, he and my father sat down miles away and discussed various Torah topics.

Now, Mr. Cohen was a very wealthy and influential individual. One of his charities, in fact, included the State of Israel. As such, whenever he would call, all of us children knew we had to be very quiet. "Abba is on the phone with Mr. Cohen!" we would say. Sometime after he began studying together with my father, he

came to Israel for a business trip. At the time, my family, which included myself and six other siblings, lived in Telz-Stone in a three-bedroom apartment. The plan was for Mr. Cohen to meet the Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, and afterwards meet my father at our house.

That day, I finished school and headed straight home. As I walked through the front door, I was met by the same state our house was commonly in: disorganized. And this time, it was nothing different than usual. Our house was often quite untidy, to say the least. There was nothing dirty or disgusting lying around, but there were always stray toys and housewares on the floor. My mother with her relaxed and easy-going personality would always say, "As long as the kids are happy, it is fine."

"But isn't his face and clothing full of chocolate?" I said. But again, with gentleness and love, she would tell me, "I can wash him and his clothes. There is a washing machine. As long as the children are happy."

It was not uncommon for me to come home and find my mother comfortably sitting on the couch reading a book and undisturbed by a whole mess surrounding her. Her patience and laidback attitude was remarkable and something which enabled our family to function happily and healthily. Personally, I could not tolerate a disorderly house. Yet, there I was standing in our lounge on the day the distinguished Mr. Cohen was going to walk inside and it was a mess.

Mr. Cohen was due to arrive very soon, and there was not enough time for me to significantly turn the house around and make it perfectly presentable. And as could be imagined, I was having a hard time coping. And then there was a knock at the door. My mother, still wearing her apron, opened the door. "Welcome," she politely said to Mr. Cohen. "Please come inside; my husband will be with you shortly." Ushering Mr. Cohen into our home, in walked this very

dignified character with a leather briefcase. He looked exactly as we had expected.

My mother then proceeded to grab a chair from the table and lightly pat it down to remove any dust. Placing the chair in front of Mr. Cohen, he took a seat in the lounge. All I could do was cringe. I could not believe my eyes. Here was this extremely well-to-do gentleman sitting in the middle of our unorganized house on a chair that was just seconds before brushed off from its dust.

Thankfully, this scene didn't last too long. A couple minutes later, in walked my father. Making his way to the nearby closet to hang up his coat as he normally did, I inched my way behind him and whispered, "Why did you marry her?"

My father paused. Walking over to Mr. Cohen, he said, "If you don't mind, I will keep you waiting two more minutes. I will be with your shortly." He then called me over to the room adjacent to the lounge. At this point, I knew I was in for it. I was only ten years old, but I had clearly crossed the line and acted with chutzpah.

As I entered the room and approached my father, he gently said to me, "You know why I married your mother? Because she is the most remarkable woman I have ever met. And I wanted her to be the mother of my children I would bring up. But you know what, Ruthie? I love it when things are neat and clean. So you know how you can help me? Every day before I come home, you can clean the lounge." And with that, my father said, "If you can now excuse me, I have to go see Mr. Cohen."

To this day, I vividly remember this incident. I even have reminded my father of this occasion, sharing with him how deep an impression he made on me. At a moment when he could have harshly reprimanded me, which I certainly deserved, he taught me an invaluable lesson which lasted much longer than being sent to my room or a week of being grounded.

Quickly thinking on his feet, he wisely imparted a message with such simplicity and beauty that said it all. If I was so disturbed about the messiness of the home, I would be the one to take care of that chore. Instead of complaining, I could be accomplishing.

That is how you use your words wisely to achieve wonderful results.

Torah Tavlin



R' Tzvi Hirsch of Riminov zt"l would say: **ותקח הצעיף ותתכת** - We ask Hashem to give the Jewish people wealth and sustenance and then we won't sin. Rivka covered herself with a veil **צעיף** when she saw Yitzchok. The word **צעיף** spells out **עַמך יִשראל צריכים פַּרנסה** '***Your nation, Yisroel, needs sustenance.***' Hashem - if we are able to have this - **ותתכת** - our sins will be covered over!"

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

24:10: **וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד ...וַיֵּלֶךְ וְכָל־טוּב אֲדֹנָיו בְּיָדוֹ**

The Medrash tells us that when Dovid Hamelech saw with Ruach Hakodesh that in the future great tzaddikim will come out from his offspring, he called himself **מלך** (king). When he saw wicked sinners in his future as well, he called himself **עני** - a poor person.

R' Simcha Sheps zt"l points out that Dovid Hamelech did not see himself as a king when he sat upon his throne, or when he valiantly and victoriously fought milchemes Hashem. The only time that he

referred to himself as "king" was when he saw that in the future his children would follow in his ways and perform the will of Hashem.



This, explains R' Sheps, is the meaning of Eliezer's remark that when he went to find a wife for Yitzchok, he took with him כָּל־טוּב אֲדֹנָיו - ***all the goods of his master***.

What exactly did Eliezer take with him? Did he bring with him Avraham's entire fortune? All his sheep and cattle, gold and silver? That must have been quite cumbersome! Actually, "kol tuv adonav" did not weigh anything at all! The "goods" of Avraham was the beautiful way of life that Avraham Avinu exemplified. It was his essence, his purpose, his avodas Hashem that was placed into Eliezer's hands.

In order to perpetuate the legacy of Avraham Avinu, Yitzchok, his children and grandchildren after him, would certainly need a wife/mother figure that would instil in them the values of their exemplary Zaida Avraham. So Eliezer took with him "kol tuv adonav" - the beautiful derech of Avraham, in order to match up a wife for Yitzchok that would follow him in this lifestyle. May we all be zoche to merit the blessing at the end of the above-mentioned Medrash, that the greatest pleasure of a person is the success of his children in Torah and yiras shamayim.

"There are seventy ways of studying Torah; one is in silence."
~~ The Tcharkover Rabbi



R' Gedalia Schorr zt"l would say: וַיֹּאמֶר בֹּוא בְּרוּךְ ה' 24:31 - The Medrash says that the moment Eliezer was greeted with the words *"blessed one of Hashem"* his nature changed; he left behind his cursed state and was now blessed. His selfless efforts for Yitzchok were what took him out of the category of **ארור** and made him **ברוך**. We see that if a Canaanite like Eliezer can become **ברוך**, so can we. If Eliezer's persistence led to such success in ridding himself of a bad middah, we surely can improve ourselves if we put in a determined effort. Eliezer teaches us that even the most ingrained middah, even one that seems genetically impossible to uproot, can in fact be uprooted if one is persistent. Eliezer undertook a mission that demanded utter subjugation of his trait of selfishness, and at the moment he completed his mission, the trait of **ארור** left him. That is the message: no matter how hard it gets, don't give up, because the most difficult moments may be the ones where a breakthrough is right at hand."

Miracles

The Khozlegover Rebbe hy"d brings down in the name of the **Chidushei Harim zy'a** that Hashem performed many miracles for Eliezer, the servant of Avraham Avinu during his quest to find a shidduch for Yitzchak Avinu (the ground "jumped" etc..).

This is to remind all future generations that **this** is the way shidduchim work :They come about through miracles.



R' Eliezer Lipa Weissblum zt"l (Yalkut HaDrush) would say: וְאֵלֶּה יְמֵי שְׁנֵי־חַיֵּי אַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־חָי מְאַת שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וְחָמֵשׁ שָׁנִים: 25:7- Avraham was supposed to live 180 years, as his son Yitzchok did. However, his grandson Esav was not behaving properly, and Hashem knew that Avraham would have much aggravation from seeing his grandson's behaviour. Thus, He shortened Avraham's life by five years. Hence, the Torah writes the words, **אֲשֶׁר־חָי** - '*which he lived*,' to emphasize that these were the years he lived and not his full allocated lifespan."

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה 23:1

The Torah uses numerous words to describe the years of Sara Imeinu. Rashi explains the reason is because all of her days and years were EQUALLY GOOD! How can that be? Does that mean that the day she was kidnapped by Pharaoh or by Avimelech, was equally as good as the day she gave birth to Yitzchok?

Is that possible? The answer is yes. In the eyes of Sarah they were all good because Sarah lived with Hashem and everything Hashem does is GOOD!

The reason why we have BAD days and experiences in life is because we don't understand the definition of GOOD and BAD. We define good as comfortable, enjoyable, what makes ME feel happy. We define bad as uncomfortable, unenjoyable, what makes ME not feel

happy! The problem is that these definitions are completely wrong, and it throws off our entire perception of life.

R' Yitzchok Kirzner zt"l explains that the definition of GOOD is



anything that brings me closer to my goal and purpose in life - which is to come closer to Hashem at all times. It may not be comfortable or enjoyable but often the hard things we go through are the BEST things that could have happened to us, because they bring us closer to our goal! When someone says they had a BAD day, that might be the farthest thing from the truth. Perhaps they had a frustrating, difficult, painful or challenging day, but it was certainly not BAD! Often the days we call GOOD, days that are filled with leisure, fun, physical pleasure or honour, are really not so good after all. In fact, they are bad for us because they remove us from the purpose of our lives.

Sara Imeinu lived with Hashem. Her entire existence revolved around kirvas Hashem. She knew that everything Hashem does is good , so whether it was comfortable or enjoyable for her or not, it really didn't matter, it was all GOOD! Every day was EQUALLY GOOD because Sarah truly understood the definition of GOOD and her true purpose in life!

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולבכתה – ולבכתה 2:23 - פענח רזא is written missing the letter 'ו, to teach us that the crying done for Sarah was not commensurate with the Kovod she should have received.

24:53 וַיּוֹצֵא הָעֶבֶד כְּלֵי־כֶסֶף וּכְלֵי זָהָב וּבְגָדִים וַיִּתֵּן לְרִבְקָה



Modest dress and refined clothing were of particular importance to the **Belzer Rebbe, R' Shalom Rokeach zt"l**. He would constantly exhort his followers to dress in a manner appropriate for a ben or bas Yisroel. In fact, when a chasid of his would become engaged, he would insist that they write into the "T'naim" that the kallah's clothing and manner of dress must be in accordance with the standards of tznius, as per the righteous Chassidim of yesteryear.

The Sar Shalom explained that this idea is not new; it is actually from the parsha, when Eliezer brought "*gold, silver and clothing and gave it to Rivkah.*" Why did Eliezer bring clothing? Did he think that Rivkah would not have what to wear? Would the family of Nachor not send their daughter off with respectable attire, as befitting their wealthy standards?

The answer, explained the Rebbe, is that Avraham Avinu thought of everything when he sent his servant to find a wife for Yitzchok. He knew that Rivkah would have clothing, probably even beautiful clothing, but he also knew that it would not be the couture that is appropriate and up to the tznius standards of Avraham. Thus, he made sure that Eliezer bring her the proper attire so that when she enters into the family of Avraham, she will dress according to his standards.

How often do we wear new and beautiful clothing, but we don't focus on the modesty level? How many times do we act and behave in a fun and joyful manner, but do not realize that perhaps we are not in accordance with tznius?

The lessons that Avraham Avinu taught so many years ago still apply till this very day. It is something we must be cognizant of at all times. "You are what you wear" is an expression that is rooted in truth, for indeed, people look at you and see from the manner in which you dress and behave, how you really think inside. Tznius is not a style – it is a way of life!



R' Yosef Patzanovsky zt"l (Pardes Yosef, b'shem R' Michael Hurvitz zt"l) would say: "According to **Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer and Yalkut Shimoni,** Eliezer the trusted servant of Avraham Avinu, was none other than the giant Og, who later became the king of Bashan **עוג מלך הבשן**. He was so large that he required a special bed made of iron to hold his incredible size and weight (Rashbam).

According to this, we can understand why he asked Rivkah, **הַגִּֽידִי נָ֣א לִ֔י הֲיֵ֥שׁ בֵּית־אָבִ֖יךְ מָק֣וֹם לָ֑נוּ לָלִֽין**: 24:23 - ***'Is there room in your father's house for us?'*** He was so huge that he couldn't be sure he would actually fit in the house!

His mind was put to rest when Lavan came out and assured him, **לָמָּה תַעֲמֹד֙ בַּח֔וּץ וְאָנֹכִ֖י פִּנִּ֣יתִי הַבַּ֑יִת** - ***'Why are you standing outside? I cleaned out the house'*** 24:31- now that the house is empty, we have room for you!"

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld-*Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*



A man once came to **Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg zt"l** with a question about a yarmulke. Inquiring if it met the requirements of proper size and material, Rav Scheinberg said, "We don't care what is on the head, but what is in the head." While of course one needs to wear a yarmulke and meet certain halachic guidelines for covering the head, ultimately, what is most important is what is going on within one's head. What impact and impression does wearing a yarmulke have on its wearer? We can never become overly involved in the particular specifics of a yarmulke and forget why we ultimately are wearing a head covering altogether. What matters most is what is going on in the inside, not the outside.

Chacham Rabbeinu Chayim Yosef Dovid Azulai zt"l (Toras HaChida) would say: אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף עֹבֵר לַסּוֹחֵר 23:16- The words עֹבֵר לַסּוֹחֵר (negotiable currency) are interesting. עֹבֵר means to precede as in עובר לשייתן (before an act is done). If we take the letters immediately prior to סּוֹחֵר we spell out the word נזק (damage) - before ס is a נ, before ח is a ז, and before ר is a ק. Furthermore, סּוֹחֵר is comprised of the same letters as חסר (lacking). By extorting Avraham for the plot of land, Efron damaged himself (נזק) in that he lost out (חסר) and is now remembered as a greedy person. It proves how Efron was a dishonest person, who was lacking (חסר) in integrity."

In the days between the First and Second World War, it was not uncommon for people to do "long distance" shidduchim - a girl from one town or country was proposed to a boy from another town or country far away, and due to the difficulty of travel in those days, the two families would agree in principle to the match. Later, before the wedding, the chosson and kallah - and their families - would meet for the first time and if all went well, the wedding would go on as scheduled. The renowned Av Beis Din of the Eida Hachareidis in Jerusalem and author of



The Minchas Yitzchok, **R' Yitzchok Yaakov Weiss zt"l**, married his first wife this way. He used to relate an inspirational story about himself: The First World War left in its wake much misery and destruction. People were displaced and rampaging soldiers added to the pain and distress. In 1922, when Yitzchok Yaakov turned twenty, he received an order to report for military service. His family moved heaven and earth to obtain a deferment but in lieu of an outright release, the young masmid went into hiding, studying in the Munkatch Yeshivah for the next six years. He grew tremendously in Torah. Thankfully, as the years went by and it appeared that the authorities had forgotten about his existence, his parents finally deemed it safe for him to get married.

In 1928, a shidduch (prospective match) was suggested for him. The shadchan spoke so wonderfully about the girl and her family, the Zimetboim family from Grosswardein. However, they lived in far-away Hungary, and Yitzchak Yaakov and his parents were unable to travel there, so they sent a shaliach (messenger) to look into the girl

and find out about her family, in order to determine whether she was a fitting match for their son.

A few weeks later, the man returned and reported that it was indeed a fine match. Based on the shadchan and the shaliach's words, Yitzchak Yaakov's parents agreed to the match and by way of a letter, the young man became engaged without his parents or anyone in his family having met the kallah.

Preparations took time and as the wedding date came closer, the chosson and his family travelled to the kallah's city for the upcoming wedding. However, when they arrived and his mother met the kallah, her future daughter-in-law for the first time, she realized that the girl had a serious physical handicap. She was quite disappointed and immediately wanted to call off the shidduch. Halachically, she was correct, as the shadchan had not been honest with them about the girl and her handicap which had the potential to become something serious, and she felt they were tricked into this shidduch.

Turning to her son, she said, "Yitzchok Yaakov, this girl is not for you. Let us go back home and leave this shidduch. We were given inaccurate information and I do not want you to have to marry a girl who is physically handicapped." Her son, who was later to become one of the Gedolei HaPoskim of our generation, asked his mother to pause. He thought about it, he told her, but even though he surely has a right to cancel the shidduch halachically, he felt that he could not do so. How could he shame and embarrass this young kallah who has been preparing all this time for her wedding? Now, just a few days before her big day he should call it off? How can he do this to her? It would destroy her, and after all, it wasn't her fault!

Against his mother's objection, R' Yitzchok Yaakov remained in Grosswardein and married the Zimetboim girl. One year later, Hashem blessed him with his one and only son, Beirish ZtL, from whom he saw much nachas and many more generations of grandchildren and great grandchildren. Unfortunately, the

Holocaust ravaged the whole of Eastern European Jewry and although R' Yitzchok Yaakov and Beirish managed to escape, his wife was killed, al kiddush Hashem.

After the war, Dayan Weiss married two more times; once to the daughter of the **Vassloi Rav zt"l** and the second time to the daughter of the **Imrei Chaim of Vishnitz**. However, in both of these marriages he had no children. And he knew why. A few years after his first marriage, the Minchas Yitzchok went to a doctor who examined him and said that it is not physically possible for him to have children. According to the laws of nature, he should have been childless! And yet, said R' Yitzchok Yaakov, it was clear to him, beyond a doubt, that he had a child from his first wife only in the zechus that he did not embarrass her and call off the wedding. Hashem repaid him supernaturally for the consideration of his kallah's feelings!

ה' אֱלֹקֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם... הוּא יִשְׁלַח מַלְאָכוֹ לְפָנֶיךָ וְלָקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לִבְנִי 24:7



A student in the Radin Yeshivah was involved in a shidduch, and since the girl was reluctant to commit to him, there was no progress. The boy's friends advised him to shave off his beard, thinking that the beard was the reason for the girl's hesitation. They claimed that most yeshivah students shaved their beards, and he should do the same.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l heard the boy's plight and invited him to his home. He told him the following mashal: *A locomotive was pulling more than one hundred loaded cars up a steep mountain. Even though the engine driver had put the engine on full steam, the locomotive*

was still moving quite slowly due to the extremely heavy load. One passenger thought he was clever and figured out a way to speed up the pace of the train. He got out and walked to the back of the last car and began pushing the train with both hands certain that with his help, the train would now move faster. The other passengers laughed at him and said, "What is your strength compared to the strength of the locomotive? You are like a mosquito compared to that of an ox!"

The Chofetz Chaim ended his mashal and said, "The same thing applies to shidduchim. Even though every shidduch is announced in Heaven forty days before the formation of a child, it is still as hard to accomplish as the splitting of the Yam Suf! We know that Hashem Himself makes the shidduchim. You might have the idea to help Hashem by shaving your beard so that the girl will like you more, but then you will be similar to the 'clever' passenger who pushed the heavy train with his hands, thinking he was 'helping' a hundred train cars up the mountain!" The Chofetz Chaim told his student that everything is in the hands of Hashem We must turn to Hashem with prayer, faith and trust, and everything will work out for the best!

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

23:1 **וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה**

Human nature is such that when a young person passes away, people consider it a terrible tragedy, and the funeral is usually very tearful. When an older person passes on, the attitude tends to be, "Well, he lived a long, happy and productive life."

The second posuk in the parsha says that Avraham Avinu came home to mourn for Sarah and to cry for her. If we look in the Sefer Torah we will see that the letter **כ** in the word **וְלִבְכֹּתָהּ** is smaller than the other letters.

The Baal HaTurim explains that it is written smaller to denote that since Sarah lived to a ripe old age, Avraham Avinu did not cry excessively. Interestingly, the ages of all the Avos are documented in the Torah, but only Sarah's lifespan is recorded.

Furthermore, the Torah tells us that the life of Sarah was one hundred + twenty + seven years - **שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה** - these were the years of Sarah's life. Why repeat that these "were the years of her life"? Isn't it obvious?

Rashi quotes a Medrash that the juxtaposition of the passing of Sarah Imeinu and the Akeida reveals to us that the shock of Yitzchok's near death at the Akeida was what caused her to die. The Torah is telling us that this is not accurate because these were **שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה** - the years she was destined to live, and no more.

My machshava here is a valuable lesson to be learned from Avraham Avinu's approach to his wife's death. When a family member passes away, often relatives start blaming themselves saying, "If only we had done this, if only we had changed doctors, if only we had changed hospitals - he or she would still be alive." From the Torah's account of Sarah's life, we see that the Torah is teaching us that feelings of guilt are not in order. Once a loved one is gone, we must mourn in proportion to the tragedy. We are not to view the loss as indictment of our own actions. Therefore, no matter what we feel we could have or should have done, every person has a predestined lifespan, as the Torah tells us **שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה** - these were the only years of Sarah's life.

May we always focus on the joy and simcha in our lives with those we hold dear and lose any misplaced feelings of guilt.

"Where men truly wish to go, their feet will manage to take them." ~~ Talmud Sukkah 53a

R' Zalman Ottenheimer ZT"L

וַיָּבֹא אַבְרָהָם לִסְפֹּד לְשָׂרָה וְלִבְכֹּתָהּ:- **The Baal HaTurim** notes that the letter **כ** of the word **לִבְכֹּתָהּ** is written small to denote that Avraham only cried a small amount. Why is it significant that Avraham cried only a bit? Would it be so wrong if he cried a lot for the loss of his wife to whom he was married for over a century?

The understanding is as follows: Rashi says that Sarah **בת מאה כבת עשרים לחטא, מה בת עשרים לא חטאה, שהרי אינה בת עונשין, אף בת מאה בלא חטא, ובת עשרים כבת שבע ליופי:-** 'At age 20 she was like age 7 in beauty,'- 'At age 100 she was like age 20 in sin.' Avraham was not focused on his dead wife's beauty, only on how she was totally removed from sin. Therefore, when he cried about the **בת כ** - her lost beauty, he only cried a little bit!"

At the end of last week's parsha, Rashi quotes the Medrash that- *Hashem informed Avraham through Ruach Hakodesh that Rivkah, the future wife of Yitzchok, was born.* If so, why did Avraham have to send Eliezer with detailed instructions to find a wife for his son and why is the whole parsha of Chayei Sarah necessary? If Avraham already knew who his son's wife was, why did he need all the tefillos and miracles that transpired with Eliezer, if this shidduch was predetermined.

Hashem has a master plan, with yeshuos, refuos, berachos and parnassa for each person, which affects them throughout their lives. However, without tefillos and hishtadlus, the Siyata D'shmaya from above does not come easily. Avraham was aware of this and even though he was informed of his future daughter-in-law's birth, he immediately began to daven that Hashem should make it happen. For without hishtadlus and tefillah, Avraham did not see how it would succeed.

וַתְּכַל לְהַשְׁקֹתוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר גַּם לִגְמַלֶּיךָ אֶשְׁאָב עַד אִם־כִּלּוּ לִשְׁתֹּת 24:19

The story of how Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, found Rivkah, the future wife of his master's son, Yitzchok, is punctuated in the parsha with the statement, וְהָאִישׁ מִשְׁתָּאֵה לָהּ- ***"The man (Eliezer) was astonished,"*** when he saw that his efforts were on the verge of success. Coming from the home of Avraham Avinu, is it possible that something like this could "astonish" Eliezer? He not only witnessed miracles and angels in Avraham's home - he took part in them!



The Beis Halevi Zt'l explains, that as part of his "challenge," Eliezer specifically requested that Rivkah give him to drink from the pitcher itself, so that he could observe what she would do with the water remaining in the jug. It would be wrong for her to bring the water home for further use. Perhaps he had some communicable disease, which might, in turn, have infected the water. On the other hand, she could not spill the water out onto the ground. That would indicate that she suspected he might be ill, which would be a blatant insult to him. Rivkah's only viable option would be to water the camels. If she offered to do so, it would be clear evidence that she possessed not only good middos, but the intelligence to decide upon a proper course of action when it was necessary.

Not only did Rivkah pass the test, but she offered to give the camels, "so they drink their fill." She managed to reduce any possible insult to Eliezer by implying that she was not pouring the water into the trough in order to avoid insulting him, but to allow the camels to have their fill. Indeed, she added that she would refill the pitcher so the animals would have even more water. - Eliezer's honour was made a non-issue by Rivkah.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l



Eliezer davened to Hashem for a shidduch for Yitzchak. **הַקְרֵה־נָא לְפָנַי הַיּוֹם** 24:12 - **וַעֲשֵׂה־חֶסֶד עִם אֲדֹנִי אַבְרָהָם** ***"Send before me on this day, and show kindness with my master Avraham."***

The Baal HaTurim says that the last letters of the words, **עִם אֲדֹנִי אַבְרָהָם** spell out **מים** - water. Eliezer said, "*For the reward of Avraham Avinu who gave the angels water, answer me now as I stand by the water.*"

Furthermore, adds the Baal Haturim, if you add the last letter of the word "**חֶסֶד**" you get **דמים** - blood. Here again, Eliezer was saying, "*Ribono shel Olam, don't forget the merit of the blood that was spilled out of fear of the Akeida.*" This is interesting. Shouldn't the blood of the Akeida be more important and noteworthy, than the water that Avraham Avinu gave to the angels? Why is the Akeida seemingly an afterthought in the tefillah of Eliezer?

I was thinking that if a person davens that Hashem should do a kindness for him, he must show Hashem that a kindness was done to deserve such a reward. This is what Eliezer was saying in his tefillah. "Hashem, look at the chessed that Avraham did by giving water to the angels; now he is worthy to have chessed done for him." The Akeida was not the main focus of Eliezer's prayer because the Akeida was not a chessed; it was an act of mesiras nefesh. For such an act, his tefillah may be answered, but kindness can only be a reward for another kindness. And in fact: **וַיְהִי־הוּא טֶרֶם כֻּלָּה לְדַבֵּר וְהִנֵּה רִבְקָה יֹצֵאת** - before Eliezer even finished speaking, his request was answered. Of course, the **זכות** of mesiras nefesh is great, but the reward for an act of chessed is answered immediately with chessed.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה 23:1

What is the posuk trying to teach us with these repetitive words? Obviously these were the years of Sarah's life? What is the chiddush?



R' Simcha Sheps ZT"L points out a Medrash that teaches us how beloved the lives of tzaddikim are in this world, and in the next world. He explains this to mean that quite often, people do things solely because of what others will say. They don't act as they should or do what they really believe in because of social pressure. Tzaddikim, on the other hand, live their lives completely for Hashem's sake and do what they believe to be right no matter what other people will say.



R' Yissachar Frand Shlit'a once described the three stages of a person's life. For the first 20 or so years, a person is very concerned about what people will say. They pattern their lives around their peers, making sure to "fit in" and be one of the crowd. For the next 20 years, a person takes the opposite approach. "I really don't care what anybody thinks! I am doing what I want and if somebody doesn't like it, well that is just too bad on him!" And then for the next 20+ years of a person's life, he realizes that no one really cared, or cares, what he is doing in the first place! He looks back at all those wasted years when he was living for others, either trying to impress or depress them by proving that he doesn't care what they think, and he comes to the stunning realization that everyone is so busy doing the same thing -

that no one is even looking at him! שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה - "*These were the years of Sarah.*" Sarah lived her life the way she knew was right. She lived her life solely to do Hashem's will. These were HER years because she lived them fully, **לשם שמים**, and not for anyone or anything else!

24:1 וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל



There was a recent linguistics conference held in London, England, which was attended by some of the leading linguists in the world, for the purpose of advancing education in the study of language acquisition, language usage and language instruction. Samsundar Balgobin, a world-renowned Guyanese linguist, was the presenter at the conference when he was asked a formidable question.

One of his colleagues in the erudite audience stood up and said, "Some say there is no difference between the word 'complete' and 'finished.' No dictionary has ever been able to satisfactorily define the difference between these two words. Please, honoured sir, explain the difference in a way that is easy to understand."

There was a slight pause before Mr. Balgobin delivered his response. ***"When you marry the right person, you are 'complete.' If you marry the wrong person, you are 'finished.' But pity the soul who strays from the first and ends up with the second - that person is 'completely finished'!"*** His answer received a five-minute standing ovation.

When Avraham reached old age, he was blessed **בַּכֹּל** - with everything. His life was full and "complete," however, he was certainly not "finished." He lived for many more years, teaching and instructing the next generation to follow in his ways.

Thus, even though **אַבְרָהָם זָקֵן**- he became old in years, **בָּא בַּיָּמִים**- he was still filling his numerous days to come with righteous acts and good deeds. As a result, Hashem blessed him **בַּכֹּל**. He now had everything he would ever need in life.

וַתְּמַהֵר וַתְּעַר כַּדָּהּ אֶל־הַשֹּׁקֶת וַתָּרָץ עוֹד אֶל־הַבְּאֵר לִשְׁאֹב וַתִּשְׁאַב לְכָל־גְּמַלָּיו 24:20

The narrative in the parsha is pretty straight-forward. A young girl goes out to the local well and gives a thirsty stranger a drink. Then, she runs to help and water his camels. A fine story indeed, but hardly an earth-shattering event. However, this "minor event" served to determine the future course of Rivkah Imeinu's life. This story is what etched her forever in the annals of Jewish hierarchy, it is what made her a Matriarch of the Jewish people.



Rabbi Dr. Avraham J. Twerski Shlit'a writes, we see something so basic and yet truly remarkable from this story. Often times, we tend to minimize the small things in life. The media make us aware of so many great events: man walking on the moon; a scientist winning the Nobel prize for a revolutionary discovery; a human being born as a result of in vitro fertilization; a person having his heart removed and replaced.

These are indeed epochal events. We hear about these incredible occurrences and we wonder: what significance can there be in the little things, in the kinds of things we do - day in and day out? They

do not move mountains nor do they shake up entire populations. Sometimes we become bored with what we consider a life of trivia. We tend to forget that life is not comprised of "fireworks displays." Most often, the only bright lights that we encounter are the ones that shine outdoors. These are the street lamps at nights; rather boring but providing the necessary illumination to help us get by in the dark. On the other hand, for all their dazzling brilliance, how much useful illumination do fireworks provide? Not much.

Our job is to do what is right and proper, says Rabbi Twerski. How much impact any given act will have is not for us to consider, because that is out of our hands. Hashem wants us - He expects us - to do the "little things" too. One young girl gives a thirsty man a drink of water and changes the course of history forever.

Torah Tavlin וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עָרֶב 24:63

The gemara tells us: "Yitzchok instituted Tefillas Mincha, as it says, 'Yitzchok went out to converse לָשׂוּחַ in the field in the early evening,' and 'converse' refers to prayer."

The Chid"a, Chacham Rabbeinu Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai ZT"L (Midbar K'demos), writes that although Yitzchok instituted the prayer of Mincha, he was not the first person to recite the afternoon prayer. Adam Harishon was created in the afternoon on the sixth day of creation, just before Shabbos, and it was at this time that he uttered the world's first prayer. This is the reason why one must be especially careful to pray the Mincha service. Similarly, Chazal teach: "One should always be meticulous in observing the Mincha prayer, because it was at Mincha that Eliyahu Hanavi was answered."

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik ZT"L explained that the Tefillah of Mincha is referred to as "Tefillas Hefsek" (prayer of interruption), for in the middle of the day, amidst our many mundane activities,

our hectic schedules and social/financial obligations, we must stop, break away, discontinue our affairs and retreat to daven Mincha.

The time for the Mincha prayer is in the afternoon (in the winter months, it is early afternoon), at the height of the day, amid intense activity. To interrupt business activities to make time for Mincha is indeed a tremendous mitzvah and a sign of deep commitment to Hashem and to the laws of His Torah. In fact, when a Jew interrupts his activities to pray, he is emulating Adam Harishon. Rashi tells us that the first prayer that Adam uttered was for rain - the nutrient that sustains the world, for without it nothing can grow and no food can be had.

It follows, that just as Adam prayed in the afternoon to bring sustenance to the world, when one davens mincha, in the midst of his hectic activities, he brings success and prosperity to himself and to his family.

Chacham Rabbeinu Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai ZT"L (Chida) would say: "The name **רבקה** has the numerical value of the name **יצחק** plus an additional one hundred - symbolic of the one hundred years of age at which Avraham fathered Yitzchok. This is what is meant when Lavan and his mother said, 'The matter has been decreed by Hashem' - even Yitzchok's name alludes to the match.

Indeed, names are not coincidental and even gentiles often investigate the meaning of names, as Esav said, 'Is it for this reason that his name is called Yaakov, for he has tricked me (**ויעקבני**) now twice!' (**כז-לה**) Rivkah's mother and brother therefore relied on the allusions that emerged from the names of Yitzchok and Rivkah to agree to the match."

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיָּרָץ הָעֶבֶד לִקְרָאתָהּ 24:17

Rashi quotes the Medrash that explains how Eliezer ran to greet Rivka because he saw how the water miraculously rose up to her from the well. However, it was not on this premise that he chose her as a wife for Yitzchok.



The Beis Halevi explains that although this was a clear sign that she was worthy of miracles performed for her, Eliezer needed to see in the future wife of Yitzchok, the future daughter-in-law of Avraham Avinu, a trait that would be the foundation of Klal Yisroel, one that would sustain them even in their darkest hour. The kindness, love and unity of Jews is truly our greatest power as it works measure for measure. Our kindness towards others then opens up the flow of Hashem's mercy and kindness to us.

Dovid Hamelech teaches us in Tehillim: **עולם חסד יבנה** - the world is built upon kindness. In the times of Noach, when the world was devoid of loving kindness, Hashem destroyed it and began all over again. He saved Noach and his family and gave him an intensive seminar on how to "give unconditionally" in the ark, where he was busy around the clock caring for the animals.

In order to begin the world again it would have to be done on the foundation - on the very premise - of kindness. For this reason, Eliezer looked for chessed for he knew that his choice of mate for Yitzchok would be planting the seeds for all future generations of Jews. He understood that being worthy of miracles was not enough; embodying the trait that the entire world is built upon, the middah of chessed, is all the more important.

Eliezer was not just looking for a **בעלת חסד** but a wife who truly loved to do chessed. He wished to find a person who saw chessed as an emulation of Hashem's unlimited kindness.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַאדֹנָי בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים 24:1

The Medrash Tanchuma tells us: "*Four things cause one to become old: fear, aggravation (from child rearing), a bad wife and war.*" The Medrash gives an example for each one. Dovid HaMelech became old because of fear; Eli HaKohen, due to the aggravation caused by his son's behaviour; Shlomo HaMelech from his evil wives; Yehoshua from all the wars. Avraham Avinu, however, **בָּא בַּיָּמִים**- became old naturally, due to the fact that he had a wife who honoured and respected him. She called him, **אדוני** - "My Master," and treated him with utmost respect and therefore he lived a long and peaceful life. Avraham and Sarah invited blessing into their home by treating one another with kindness and respect.



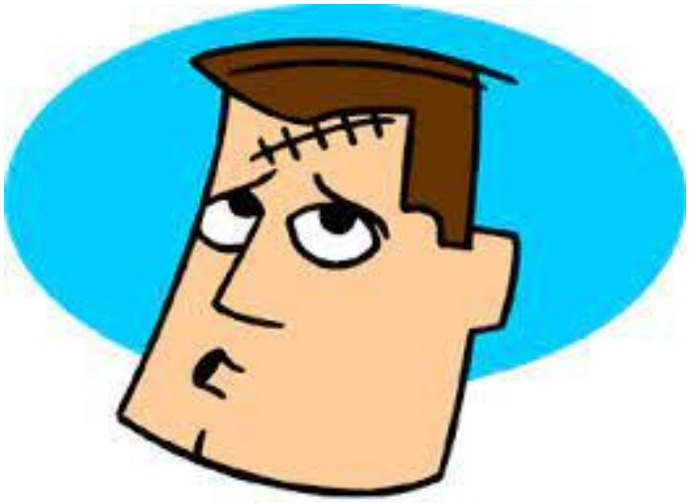


In his Kuntress L'Chasanim, **R' Wolbe ZT"L** quotes the great Kabbalist, **R' Chaim Vital ZT"L**: **מידותיו של אדם נמדדת אך ורק כפי יחתו אל אשתו** - ***"A man's character traits are measured ONLY by his relationship with his wife."*** R' Wolbe comments that a person can be involved in many good deeds and worthy causes throughout his life which will surely bring him merit and reward at the end of his life. But know with certainty,

that in Heaven one is examined by how he treated his wife! That will completely determine his judgment! If in his own home there was anger without mercy and empathy, the Heavenly Court will not remember one drop of all the chessed he did for others!

This powerful statement completely explains the posuk, **וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים**- And Avraham grew old naturally for their home was filled with marital harmony. **וה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל** - he was blessed with EVERYTHING because all blessing and reward comes from living in peace and harmony with one's spouse.

A young man from a fine family, replete with outstanding middos and a yearning for Torah study, was having difficulty finding a shidduch. It wasn't hard to figure out why; although he was an otherwise good-looking boy, he had a bright red scar running down one side of his face.



The scar was unmistakable and the moment anyone looked at him, the first thing they noticed was the big eyesore on the side of his face.

Many shadchanim proposed matches for him based on his reputation as a Talmid Chacham and a fine, upright bochur. However, the moment any girl would take one look at his face, she would invariably become uneasy and avert her eyes. In fact, most anybody who met him for the first time would display the same reaction. No girl would ever agree to go out with him on a second date.

Quite some time went by, and the young man became discouraged. Would he ever meet a girl that could look past his physical blemish, he wondered, and see him for who he really is?



The next time he found himself in Bnei Brak, he decided to voice his misgivings to **R' Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l** and receive a beracha and some practical advice. When he entered R' Chaim's room, he broke down in sobs. With a broken spirit, he explained to the Rav how he had gone out on a quite a few dates, however, not even one of the girls ever agreed to a second date. He was sure it was because of his disfigurement and there really wasn't much he could do about that.

R' Chaim looked at the young man's face and uttered a few short words. "Why don't you just tell them how it happened?" The boy was surprised at R' Chaim's suggestion. "I generally try to avoid talking about it," he said, through his tears. "It is surely not something I want to discuss on a date - especially on a first date." But R' Chaim was insistent. "On your next date, the first thing you must do when you meet the young lady, is to tell her the story of how you came to have this scar. Don't wait until a later time - tell her immediately!" Well, R' Chaim said it, so the boy would do as he was told.

When he met a young lady on his very next date, he did not hesitate and immediately opened up. "I want to tell you how I came to have this scar on the side of my face. It goes back a number of years ago. One night, I was walking in Yerushalayim and I heard some frightful shrieks coming from a nearby alley. I turned to see what the commotion was all about and there was a Jewish girl being chased by a large Arab man. He had nearly caught up to her and she was screaming in terror. I quickly ran after the Arab and literally threw him to the ground. Boruch Hashem, the girl ran away but the Arab began fighting with me. He pulled out a sharp razor and began slashing at me. In the dark it was hard to see, and the depraved

Arab cut up this entire side of my face. He ran away and I was lucky that someone found me and brought me to the closest hospital, where they treated me as best as they could."

The young man had never revealed his story to anyone on a date before and he was unsure how the girl would react. For good measure, he concluded, "This is why I look the way I do. I just thought you should know."

As he was speaking, the girl began to blush and then tremble with great excitement. She could barely control herself as she spoke in a tone of great emotion. "It was you! For all these years, I have been hoping to be able to personally thank the Heavenly Angel who came out of nowhere to rescue me from that crazy monster. Now I know who you are, and I am so fortunate to be given this opportunity to meet you and thank you!"

What a stunning turn of events! The two began to recount the amazing details of her rescue and how she could not believe that someone would put himself in harm's way to save her. The disfigurement that he had been so self-conscious about on other dates was a non-issue.

It was then that the young man realized how the advice of R' Chaim Kanievsky was much more than a helpful suggestion. It was actually a blessing which allowed him to succeed in his mission. The Siyata D'Shmaya was obvious and the couple eventually married and is raising a fine Jewish family.

Sometimes life seems impossible and the problems unsolvable. You may think there is no way out, but Hashem can create a solution. Hashem created the world from nothingness, so if needed, He can create a solution for you and save you. – Chasam Sofer.

R' Yisroel and R' Osher Anshel Jungreis Shlit'a (Torah for your Table) would say: "Eliezer very clearly challenged Rivka's family: וְעַתָּה אִם־יֶשְׁכֶם עֹשִׂים חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת אֶת־אֲדֹנִי הַגִּידוּ לִי וְאִם־לֹא הַגִּידוּ לִי וְאֶפְנֶה עַל־יָמִין אוֹ עַל־שְׂמֹאל '***And now, if you intend to do kindness and truth with my master, tell me,' he demanded, 'and if not, tell me, and I will turn to the right or to the left.***'24:49 .



Eliezer wanted a clear yes or no, without delay, to know if they were willing to allow the shidduch to move forward or not. From here we may learn a lesson that we would do well to remember. Ours is a society in which procrastination is in vogue. People have a tendency to date endlessly, only to see their efforts end in futility. Often, critical months and even years are wasted and leave much heartbreak in their wake. Our Torah teaches that if a shidduch isn't working out, move on!"

The Rebbe R' Zusia of Anipoli ZT"L would say: "Rashi explains the words, 'The years of Sarah's life' - to mean that they were all equally good. But weren't the majority of Sarah's years filled with hardships, longing for children, living in exile, imprisoned at the hands of Pharaoh and Avimelech? How can all of her years be equally good? The answer, of course, is that during her entire life, concerning everything that was seemingly bad, Sarah would always say, 'This too is for the best.' She saw Hashem's kindness in everything. We must emulate her and do the same."

23:4 גֵּר־וְתוֹשָׁב אָנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תְּנוּ לִי אֲחֻזַּת־קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָה מֵתִי מִלְּפָנָי



In the old cemetery in Krakow, Poland, sits an unmarked grave with the following words: "*Here is buried the remains of an unknown man –* **יגיד עליו ריעו** *(Let his neighbour tell about him).*" Apparently, the "neighbour" in question is in the next grave over, that of the great tzaddik and author of "**Megaleh Amukos", R' Nosson Nota Shapiro ZT"L**, and the amazing story of this unique gravesite goes as follows: Many years ago, a young man approached the shammes of the Krakow chevra kadisha with a request that he wished to buy the plot and be buried next to the Megaleh Amukos. The young man was unknown to the shammes or the community and so he dismissed the request outright; how could a simple, unknown man be buried next to one of the greatest sages of the generation?

But the young man did not give up. He took the elderly shammes to the side and said conspiratorially, "Do not worry, I can afford to pay whatever you ask!" At first, the shammes wouldn't hear of it. But then, on impulse, he mentioned a large sum of money and the man instantly agreed. In fact, he pulled the money out of his purse and held it out.

The shammes was well on in years and in a moment of weakness, thought to himself, "So what if I took the money? I deserve it after all my hard work. And besides, I am over eighty, and this young man is not even thirty. By the time he leaves this world, there will certainly be new board members, and at that time, who will be able to get the money back from me?" So he took the money.

It took fifteen years, but as fate would have it, the young man passed away while the old shammes remained alive. The chevra kadisha members, who did not know about the secret deal with the old man, buried him in another part of the cemetery as they would any unknown person in the community, and the old man thought nothing of it.

That night, the younger man appeared in a dream to the old shammes and demanded that he move him to the plot next to the Megaleh Amukos. They had a deal, he accused, and he even paid money for the exclusive right. The shammes paid no attention to the dream, but it repeated itself on the next night, and then a third night. On the fourth night, the deceased issued a warning that if the shammes did not move him, he would be summoned up to the Heavenly Court.

At this the old man became afraid, and he told the story to the esteemed **Rov of Krakow, R' Yoel Sirkis ZT"L**, also known as the Bach. The Bach rebuked the old man for taking the money and told him to distribute it to charity for the benefit of the young man's soul. But he would not consent to bury the young man next to the Megaleh Amukos. "But what will I do now?" said the old man with fear.



The Bach told him to go to the younger man's grave and inform him that if there was to be a din Torah in court, it would be here - in the Rov's home - rather than in Heaven. On the appointed day, the shammes came to the Bach's house and saw that a partition had been set up in the study. The Rov and the shammes sat on one side, and from the other side they heard

the voice of the dead man as he argued that he had bought the plot next to the Megaleh Amukos and he wanted to be moved there.

"You are unknown to us," said the Bach. "Begin by telling us, what is your name?" "I am forbidden to tell you," said the dead man. No amount of persuasion could get him to disclose his identity. "If so," said the Bach finally, "How do we know that you are worthy to be buried next to the great tzaddik? Therefore, if you cannot tell us your true identity, we cannot fulfil your request." But the dead man would not give in.

Finally, the Bach had an idea. "If your soul is really so great," he said, "then move yourself to the plot you want!" The next day when the members of the chevra kadisha entered the cemetery, they found the young man's grave empty, and next to the Megaleh Amukos they found a new grave which they had not dug. They decided to erect a stone over the grave, but since they did not know the young man's name, they wrote only the words **יגיד עליו ריעו**.



אַרְבַּע מֵאָת שֶׁקֶל־כֶּסֶף בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ מַה־הִוא 23:15
Rashi- **בין שני אוהבים כמונו מה היא חשובה לכלום** . An unusual and unlikely "friendship" seems to have sprung up between Avrohom Avinu and the owner of the land that he wished to purchase, Efron Hachiti. In fact, Rashi describes their relationship as such, for when Efron finally consented to sell the Me'aras Hamachpela to Avrohom, he demanded 400 silver coins, illogically reasoning, "Between **אוהבים**- friends such as us, is (400 shekel) of significant value?"

First of all, when did these two men become such good friends? Why would Avrohom have a "friend" such as Efron? And lastly, since when is 400 silver pieces - a considerable sum in those days - to be considered not of "significant value"?



The Vizhnitzer Rebbe, R' Chaim Meir Hagar ZT"L, reconciles the words of Rashi with a novel approach. In fact, Avrohom Avinu was not a friend of Efron, since he was a boorish Canaanite, undisciplined, unrighteous and unworthy of even conversing with a tzaddik like Avrohom. Rather, the two of them were **אוהבים**- people who loved and adored - albeit the objects of their desire were quite different and distinct from one another. Avrohom loved to perform mitzvos and good deeds, and thought nothing of spending a great deal of money to accomplish a task which he believed to be in the service of Hashem. Efron, on the other hand, loved money, a great deal of money, and only those amounts that he perceived as rich and vast, were deemed worth going after. Anything less, was not worth his while. Thus, he tells Avrohom, "Look, we both love and cherish things, from different perspectives, of course. But the common denominator is this: Between me and you, 400 shekel is no big deal!"

"The reason that worry kills more people than work is because there are more people who worry than work."



R' Yissochar Dov Rokeach ZT"L (Belzer Rebbe) would say: "When Eliezer came to Aram Naharayim to find a bride for his Master's son, Yitzchok, he brought jewellery and clothing for the future bride. How did he know what size clothing to bring, after all, Rivkah was only three years old at the time? In fact, Eliezer didn't bring clothing to wear, but a sample of the modest clothing that women wore in Avrohom's household. Rivkah saw them and agreed to become part of such a family."

אִם־יֶשְׁךָ־נָא מַצְלִיחַ דַּרְכִּי אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הֹלֵךְ עָלֶיהָ 24:42

A journey of seventeen days was accomplished in a mere three hours! According to the Medrash, Eliezer, the trusty servant of Avrohom, merited **קפיצת הדרך** - a phenomenon whereby the vast stretch of land contracted underneath him allowing him to travel in miraculously speedy fashion.

The Meforshim offer further proof of this incredible journey; Eliezer explained to his hosts how his master, Avrohom, gave over all his worldly possessions to Yitzchok, and even showed them the signed contract stipulating this very fact. The contract was dated that very same day! Thus, it was clear that Eliezer must have travelled in miraculous fashion, in order to be in two distant places on the very same day. Every Erev Yom Tov,

The Kalever Rebbe, R' Yitzchok Aizek Taub ZT"L, would disappear for many hours; no one knew where he went. One year on Erev Sukkos, the Rosh Hakahal (Community President) of Kalev, R' Yankel

Fisch, was determined to discover the tzaddik's secret. While the Rebbe was occupied, R' Yankel hid himself in the wagon, where he remained undiscovered until the Rebbe was well on his journey. When R' Yankel revealed himself, the Rebbe became visibly distressed. He exclaimed, "What can I do with you now?"



He made the stowaway promise not to ask any questions; not of himself nor of anyone else. Soon they arrived at a city which R' Yankel did not recognize. The Rebbe abruptly stopped the wagon near a mikveh and instructed his passenger to wait while he immersed himself there.

R' Yankel waited in the wagon until he was overcome by curiosity and impatience. Forgetting the tzaddik's warning, he hopped off the wagon and began questioning the people nearby. "Excuse me," he asked the first man he saw, "but where am I?" "Don't you know where you are?" the astonished fellow replied, "Where do you think you are?" "Well, I was just in Kalev a few hours ago. "Kalev? Now I know you're mad," said the man. "How could you possibly get from Kalev in Hungary, to Tzefas in a few hours?"

"Tzefas?!" cried R' Yankel. "I'm sorry but it seems that you're the one who's mad! How could I be in Tzefas, in Eretz Yisroel, if I was just in Kalev?" The argument intensified, and in the heat of the debate, R' Yankel forgot to get back to the wagon before the Rebbe reappeared. To his dismay, he arrived back to see the wagon pulling away. R' Yankel was beside himself. Here he was, stranded in a town of "meshugaim" who thought they were living in Tzefas! However, he had no choice but to ask one of them to take him in to his home for the Sukkos holiday. R' Yankel finally realized that he was really in

Tzefas, and he understood that the Kalever Rebbe, using the Holy Name of Hashem for kefitzas haderech, came there every Erev Yom Tov to immerse himself in the mikveh of the **Ariza"l**. He also realized that due to his lack of resources, he was compelled to remain in Tzefas until the Rebbe would return the following Yom Tov.

Meanwhile, back in Kalev, the Fisch family was frantic about R' Yankel's sudden disappearance, and turned to the Kalever Rebbe for advice. He assured them that there was no need for concern, promising that R' Yankel would return by Erev Pesach! They were dismayed. Erev Pesach? Why, where had he gone? But the Rebbe just smiled and told them not to worry. Six months later, R' Yankel was delighted to see the tzaddik's wagon arriving at the Arizal's mikveh on Erev Pesach. This time he made sure not to miss his ride back home. The Rebbe extracted a promise from R' Yankel not to reveal this incident in his lifetime.

Migdal Ohr - Rabbi J. Gewirtz

Eliezer made a sign that the girl who offered to give water to both him and his camels would be the one HaShem had ordained to marry Yitzchak. When he asked for water, she told him to drink. When he had drunk his fill, she said, "Now I will water your camels." The Torah tells us that as she did so, Eliezer waited to see whether G-d had blessed his journey or not. This seems strange as she'd already met the conditions of his criteria for the test. Why then was he wondering whether G-d had blessed him with "success"? Clearly He had.

Perhaps we can learn a valuable lesson. Eliezer knew that Rivka was the one who met his criteria. He knew that she was the one he had prayed for. What he didn't know was whether he'd prayed for the right thing. He came up with a sign that seemed to him to convey that she was a woman of chesed/kindness. However, he could have been wrong. But, when he saw that upon finishing the watering of his

camels she did not ask for any payment, he realized that she was truly a woman of kindness and HaShem had blessed his efforts to find a suitable match for Yitzchak.

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport



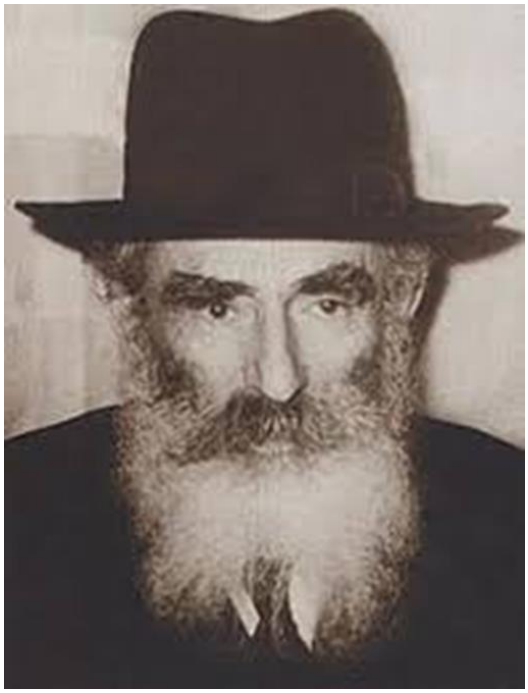
Avrohom paid 400 silver shekels to Ephron for the purchase of the burial plot for Sorah (23:14). Was this its actual value, and if not, was it worth more or less? *(Targum Onkelos, Peninim MiShulchan HaGra, Chasam Sofer, Birkas Peretz)*

The Targum Onkelos writes that the plot of land was worth 400 silver shekels, and the **Vilna Gaon** makes a brilliant calculation to support this claim. **The Steipler** maintains that Ephron substantially overcharged Avrohom for the land, as Yaakov was able to purchase an apparently similar plot of land for 100 kesitahs (33:19), which is the equivalent of only 5 shekels. This is an indication that Ephron swindled and took advantage of Avrohom in setting the price at 400 shekels.

The Chasam Sofer suggests that Ephron should have received 406 shekels, which is the numerical value of his name when it is spelled with the letter "vov," but because he was so eager to maximize the sale price, he mistakenly settled for 400 shekels, which is the numerical value of his name when it is written without the letter "vov."

Sensitivity To Other's Property

"And the man came into the house and he unmuzzled the camels, and he gave straw and food for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him." Bereshis 24:32 He removed their muzzles, for he had closed their mouths so that on the journey they would not graze in other people's fields. -- Rashi - The sensitivity of Avraham and his household to avoid all elements of theft should serve as a lesson to us.



Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein told the story of an incident that occurred one time when the wife of the **Chofetz Chaim** purchased a large fish together with her friend. They agreed that the neighbour would come to her house and they would divide the fish there. As the afternoon rolled on, the friend did not come as expected. The hours passed, and the time to cook the fish for the evening meal was approaching, but the neighbour still had not come. Finally, as the dinner hour arrived, and the woman still did not show up to get her portion of the fish, the wife of the Chofetz Chaim divided the fish herself, placing the larger half aside for her friend. She then prepared the other piece for her husband and family to eat.

The Chofetz Chaim sat down to eat. He washed his hands, took a piece of bread to eat, and recited the psalm of Mizmor L'David (Tehillim 23). His wife served the fish, but the Chofetz Chaim only took another piece of bread, and then another. His son, Reb Leib, noticed that something was unusual, and he ran into the kitchen to find out the mystery of the fish and why his father had apparently detected a problem with it. His mother told him the story of how she had waited for the neighbour to arrive, and that she had finally

been compelled to split it by herself, but that she had reserved the larger half for her friend. Reb Leib sighed, as he now understood the answer to the puzzle.

The Shulchan Aruch tells us that "if the precise time to divide an object has not been set, or if a time has been set and the time has expired, one partner may only divide it without the other in front of a panel of three Jews. These three may even be laymen, provided that they are trustworthy. If the one partner divided without this panel of three present, the division has no validity." Accordingly, the fish which was divided improperly was still owned jointly by both women, and the saintly Chofetz Chaim had been sensitive to the slight element of impropriety which was inherent in the fish.



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

In Parshas Chaya Sarah we can study all about shidduchim. One of the primary lessons is to know that shidduchim are arranged by Hashem. It's not because I chose, or because that person said, or because this or that happened, etc. The shidduch went through because Hashem wanted it to happen. Avraham Avinu said to Eliezer, ***"Hashem, the G-d of the heavens… will send His malach before you, and you will take a wife for my son…"*** *(24:7).*

Hashem sends His malach and sets up all the steps necessary to enable a shidduch to be finalized. The truth of this matter is so evident, that even the resha'im, Besuel and Lavan, recognized that shidduchim are arranged by Hashem.

When Eliezer spoke with Besuel and Lavan, and asked them whether they agree to the shidduch, they replied, "meiHashem yatza hadavar lo nuchal dabeir aleicha ra o tov — it was destined from Hashem. We

cannot speak to you bad or good" (24:50). [An engagement celebration is called a vort, to remind us of the passuk, "mei'Hashem yatza hadavar" (hadavar can mean word or vort in yiddish).]— it was destined by Hashem.

The Vilna Gaon zy"a was once a guest in someone's home. The Vilna Gaon thanked him and said, "There was one thing that I noticed while staying in your home, that I wanted to ask you about. I saw that you prepare a coffee for your wife, every morning, even before you made your own coffee. I was wondering why you do this. Is it because of what Chazal say, 'michabdaso yoser megufo — one should honour his wife more than he honours himself'?"

The host said, "*When I was thirteen years old, I was a prodigy, already well-versed in Torah, and a wealthy person chose me for his chassan. The chasunah was scheduled for seven years later, when I would be twenty. In the meanwhile, my future father-in-law hired private tutors, so I could grow in Torah. For the next seven years, I learned with these tutors and became a talmid chacham. When I turned twenty, and it was time for the chasunah, my future father-in-law lost all his money. "Personally, I wanted to continue with this shidduch, because I had hakaras hatov for the seven years that he supplied me with tutors, but my father didn't permit the marriage. He refused to allow his son, who had become a talmid chacham, to marry a poor girl. "Another shidduch was suggested, and I married a girl from a wealthy family.*

Soon after the marriage, we discovered that I have a mum (an illness). My father-in-law spent a lot of money to cure me, but in the end, the doctors said that there was nothing they could do; there was no cure. This was a very hard moment in my life. My father-in-law asked me to divorce his daughter, and I obliged. "First a broken shiduch, then a divorce… I felt that my life was in shambles.

Depressed, I began to live with other lost souls with the homeless. Someone I knew saw me in the home and was shocked. He said, 'You

have so much potential in Torah; how did you end up here?' I told him what happened to me. "Some time later, this man returned, and offered me a shidduch. 'The girl has the very same illness as you have,' he told me. "We met and we married.

After the chasunah, she said, 'You were born with your mum, but I was born healthy. I developed the mum later on in my life.' She told me that she was once engaged to marry a Torah scholar, but because her father lost his money, the shidduch was called off. She was so depressed that she became ill. "I asked her some questions, and I discovered that her original chassan was me! She was my first shidduch and she became ill, on my account! Doesn't she deserve a cup of coffee each morning?"

The Vilna Gaon was very happy that he heard this story, and exclaimed, "If I came here only to hear this story, it would also be worthwhile," because it demonstrates Hashem's Hand in shidduchim. If a shidduch is destined to be, it will happen.

In parashas Bereishis, the Torah tells us, "vayapel Hashem Elokim tardeimah al ha'adam vayishan vayikach achas metzalosav… — Hashem cast a sleep onto Adam, he slept, and Hashem took one of his ribs…[and created Chavah]." This is how the first shidduch came to be.

Bederech tzachus, this reminds the older singles, who are worried about when they will find their shidduch, that they need not worry, because Hashem is taking care of them. The Torah tells them, "Just go to sleep – don't worry. Everything will be taken care of. Hashem is working for you, arranging your bashert from heaven."

In the shtar tena'im (engagement document) it states at the top of the document, "vayafek ratzon mei'Hashem hatov — [the shidduch] came forth according to Hashem's will", to remind everyone that the shidduch was destined from Hashem.

Chessed

When Eliezer searched for a wife for Yitzchak, one of the primary traits he sought was to find a girl committed to chessed. Rashi writes, "Such a girl is appropriate for Yitzchak, because she does gemilus chessed. She is fitting to come into the house of Avraham" . Chessed is from the greatest qualities a person can have.



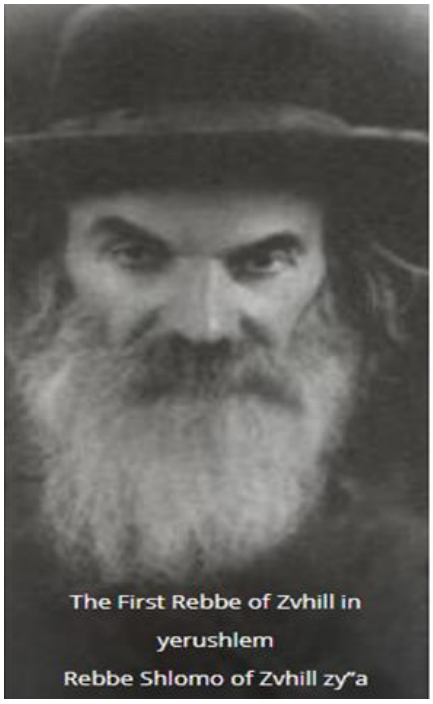
Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir zy"a said, Eliezer saw the water miraculously coming up to Rivkah and he realized that she must be a tzaddekes, but he still wasn't certain that Rivkah was Yitzchak's shiduch. He still wanted to test her middos and see her generosity, because a good middah is more valuable, than a thousand miracles.

Deeds of loving kindness are also greater than meeting with Eliyahu HaNavi. **Rebbe Liber HaGadol of Berditchev zy"a** once saw a woman, sitting and crying bitterly. Reb Liber asked her what was bothering her. She told him that their goat died. The goat was the source of their livelihood because she would sell its milk and cheese in the market. "Now I don't know what we'll do," she cried. Reb Liber told her, "Wait here and I will go to the market and buy you another goat." - As he was running, he met **Eliyahu HaNavi z"l.** Reb Liber didn't stop to speak to him. He said to Eliyahu, "I don't have time. I have to buy a goat for a poor woman."

Doing chessed is greater than meeting with Eliyahu HaNavi, and more impressive than wondrous miracles. This was the trait Eliezer sought when he looked for a shidduch for Yitzchak. Therefore, Avraham chose to search for a shidduch for Yitzchak by his family, because they excelled in middos tovos

Rebbe Gedalya Moshe zy"a of Zvhil (whose yahrtzeit is the 24th of Cheshvon) excelled in chessed. He said: "My father, **Rebbe Shlomke zy"a**, was prepared to give his life away to help another Yid. I am not on that level, but I am ready to give away my ten fingers to help another Yid."

He meant this literally, because it is known that the Zvhiler rebbes didn't speak with exaggerations. He was literally ready to give away all his fingers, to help his fellow man.







Two people came to Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe, for a court case, and afterwards, they both ate dinner in his home. The Russian government went searching for these two men, because they thought that they were spies. The government officials asked Rebbe Gedalya Moshe to reveal their identities, but he refused to do so.

He was brought to court, and they gave him electric shocks, to force him to talk, but he remained quiet. He wouldn't harm another Yid, even if this meant that he would suffer. The interrogators said, "If you do not cooperate with us, we will execute you" rachmana litzlan.

Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe replied, "I'm not afraid of you. If it wasn't decreed in heaven, you can't do anything to me." One of the interrogators was a secular Jew who remembered the Zvhiller

rebbes from his younger years, when he was still religious. Out of respect for the family, he saved Rebbe Gedalya Moshe, by exiling him to Siberia, rather than executing him. Obviously, his problems didn't end when he was in Siberia, but Rebbe Gedalya Moshe accepted all these hardships, rather than to slander his fellow men.

Once, in Siberia, he was confined in a pit for a week, without food, and he said that he almost died. Rats were biting at his feet. Miraculously, a roll of bread fell directly into Rebbe Gedalya Moshe's mouth, and that saved his life. He said that if the bread would have fallen to the ground, he wouldn't have the strength to bend down and pick it up. He was in Siberia for eight years, and then an officer called him into his office and said, "Sign these papers, and you will be freed." "I can't sign today. It's Shabbos." The officer looked squarely in his eye and said, "So you'll stay here forever." "I'll stay," he answered simply.



But there was another Yid there, who was also being released from Siberia together with Rebbe Gedalya Moshe. When this Yid saw that Rebbe Gedalya Moshe was moser nefesh not to sign on Shabbos, he said that he also doesn't want to sign the papers. He said to the officer, "Give me his documents and I'll sign them for him." Rebbe Gedalya Moshe explained, "I don't want to sign my documents, because I can survive here in Siberia. But I am not certain that this man can survive. For him it is pikuach nefesh so I will sign for him."

The officer was impressed by the dedication that Rebbe Gedalya Moshe had for his fellow man, so he said, "I will free both of you. You don't need to sign anything."

Throughout his entire life, Rebbe Gedalya Moshe had consideration for others. When he was in the ambulance, going to the hospital at the end of his life, he said, "I am not afraid of the judgment in heaven. My only fear is if I ever hurt a Yid in some way."

Rebbe Gedalya Moshe's daughter was in the hospital, and she needed a serious operation. As the rebbe with his gabai were getting ready to go to the hospital, a broken woman came to the rebbe's home, and began to pour her heart out. The rebbe listened patiently. The gabai hinted that it was late, but the rebbe continued to listen to this woman's plight. When she finally finished speaking, someone came from the hospital to tell Rebbe Gedalya Moshe that the operation was a success. Rebbe Gedalya Moshe said, "In the merit that I listened to this broken woman, the operation was successful."



In the year 5708 (while war was raging in Eretz Yisrael) **Reb Chaim Brim's** wife was gravely ill. Reb Chaim Brim spoke to **Reb Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky zt"l**, the Rav of Yerushalayim, about his wife's illness, and Rav Dushinsky said that they should add to her another name. "Go to Rebbe Gedalya Moshe, the Zvhiller Rebbe. He is an expert in names. He will tell you which name to add." Reb Chaim Brim went to Rebbe Gedalya Moshe, and told him what Rav Dushinsky said, but Rebbe Gedalya Moshe told him, "It won't help. It is too late for that." Reb Chaim cried, "She is still young… What will be with the children?"

Rebbe Gedalya Moshe told him: "Go to the bomb shelter and ask the people there to donate a half year of their lives to prolong your

wife's life. If you can receive this donation from a hundred people, she will live another fifty years." "But who will agree to give away a half year of their life?" Reb Chaim asked. "Tell them that I promised that whoever donates a half year will live through the war." "They will not believe me, that you actually said this." "Then I will write a letter." Rebbe Gedalya Moshe wrote his promise on a piece of paper and signed it.

When the frightened people hiding in the bomb shelter saw that Rebbe Gedalya Moshe promised them that they would survive the war if they donate a half year to Reb Chaim Brim's wife, they quickly lined up to sign the paper. Reb Chaim soon returned to Rebbe Gedalya Moshe with one hundred signatures. His wife became better. She was niftar in year 5758 exactly fifty years later. When the rebbes of Zvhil came to be menachem avel, Reb Chaim Brim repeated this great miracle. "5708/5758" he kept saying.

Developing Good Middos

The Chinuch teaches us that this is ultimately the reason Hashem commanded us to do deeds of kindness. The purpose of these mitzvos isn't only to give aid to the poor and to the needy – because if this was the sole purpose, Hashem could support them alone, without our help. The main intention of these mitzvos is to accustom us to doing loving kindness, until this attitude becomes imbedded in us, and we become kind and generous people.

The Chinuch writes, "Hashem wants His nation to be accustomed and trained to do deeds of kindness and mercy, because these are among the praiseworthy attributes. When they improve their middos, they will be able to receive Hashem's kindness, because goodness and blessings go to those who are good.

The Kav HaYashor says, we understand that when someone is very stingy, he is under the jurisdiction of the sheidim, who control his

money, whereas someone who is benevolent and generous is under the influence of holiness. Therefore, one should be cautious not to be too stingy. This will bring him to holiness, and he will merit Olam HaBa."



All of Sarah's Years Were Good

The Midrash says, "Rabbi Akiva was sitting and teaching Torah, but his students were falling asleep. To awaken them, Rabbi Akiva asked, 'Why was Ester queen over 127 provinces? [It is because] Ester was the granddaughter of Sarah Imeinu who lived 127 years."

The Klausenberger Rebbe zy"a asks, why should living be rewarded? The Midrash doesn't mention any specific deed of Sarah Imeinu, to merit having a descendent ruling over 127 provinces other than that she lived for 127 years. What is special about living? Why should this be rewarded?

The answer to this question is alluded to in Rashi, at the beginning of the parashah. Rashi writes, "Kulan shavin latovah — all of Sarah's years were good." Sarah didn't only live 127 years, she ***lived*** them. She constantly found goodness and happiness in her life. For this, she deserves to be rewarded.

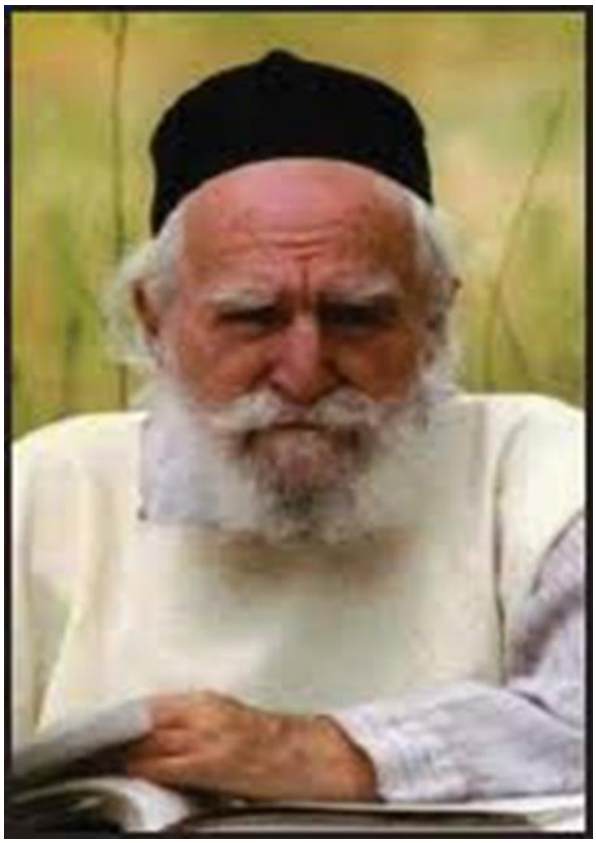
It Is repeated that the **Yesod HaAvodah (the first Slonimer Rebbe) zy"a** spoke about this Rashi ("Kulan shavin latovah — all of Sarah's years were good") with great enthusiasm, until everyone present was inspired together with him. He shouted, *"se'iz ir shtendig git givein — life was always good for her."* She was always satisfied and happy with her life.

The first word of the parasha is vayehiyu (**ויהיו**). This word can be spelled backwards and forwards (it is a palindrome). The Chida teaches, **ויהיו חיי שרה** means that regardless whether her life was going in the 'right' direction, or whether her life seemed to be going in a backwards manner, she always viewed her life as being very good.

The Chovas Halevovos writes: "The attribute of *hishtavus* (to be always satisfied with life) is the highest level of chassidus" *(Yichud HaMaasah 5).*

The Chazon Ish said, "Everyone passes through this world, some laugh and some cry. We may as well pass through this world with laughter."

Torah U' Tefilah- Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



When Avraham instructed Eliezer regarding finding a wife for Yitzchak, he warns him to not get involved in a situation where Yitzchak would have to leave and go to her (24:6).

Why is this such an important issue, that Avraham was even willing to compromise and take a daughter-in-law from Lot or Yishmael, as long as Yitzchak would not have to leave?

Rav Moshe Feinstein takes out of this a very important point. We see here how important a person's surroundings are. Even for a person like Yitzchak, there was room for concern that he could be influenced by the atmosphere around him. We must always be concerned that we are in the right environment for us so that we are not affected by what is around us.

Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.

Rav Naftali of Ropshitz -Shabbos Kugel -By M. Horowitz

As opposed to sinning with food, drink and accompaniment of guests, the Jew elevates himself by taking the physicality of this world and making it holy. This is the way of Avraham, and this must be our way, as we follow his path and emulate his deeds.



R' Naftali of Ropshitz's wife was extremely frugal, but exceptionally devout. When she davened, she was transported into another world. The rebbetzin would put the bare minimum of schmaltz into the kugel. R' Naftali's entreaties to increase the amount of schmaltz in the kugel went unheeded. One Friday, when the rebbetzin was davening, R' Naftali removed the keys from her apron pockets, unlocked the pantry and put several spoonfuls of schmaltz into the kugel. He then returned the keys, while the rebbetzin remained completely oblivious to what had transpired.



Shabbos morning, when she served the kugel, the rebbetzin said, "See! You always criticize me for not putting enough schmaltz into the kugel. But look at the Divine blessing. The kugel is dripping with schmaltz!" R' Naftali nodded, "It is indeed a Divine blessing," he said. "We merited this blessing by virtue of deine tefillos un meine maasim tovim - your fervent davening and my good deeds!"

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

ותרד העינה ותמלא כדה ותעל 16:24 – העמק דבר .

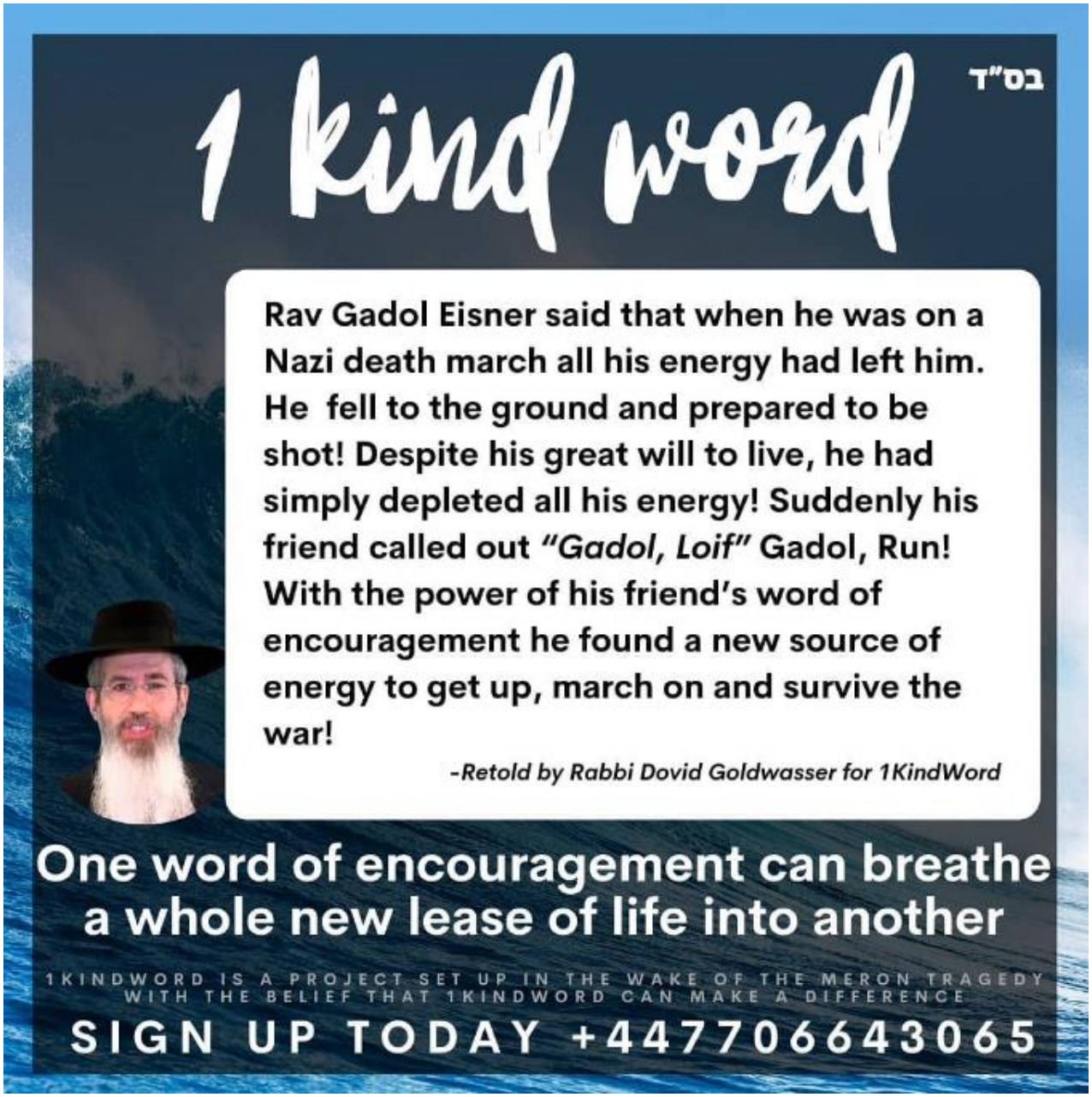
Eliezer saw that Rivkah did not act like all the other women who went to draw water in a manner that was not Tzniusdig, lacking modesty. Rivkah descended into the spring so that she should not be seen, and then once she had her water she ascended, so that her Tznius was never compromised.

עץ יוסף - 60:6 ויצץ העבד לקראתה- "The water rose up to Rivkah exclusively ,and not to other people there. The rising of the water was not, in and of itself, proof of her suitability. Rather, Eliezer recognized that she had many good deeds by the fact that the water rose up exclusively to her.

Parsha Pages- Bracelets on Her Hands

Ohr haChaim: Her hands fit exactly as if the bracelet was made to her exact size. **Tiferes Zion**: Avrohom gave a siman to Eliezer with the bracelets. The bracelets would exactly fit the correct person that was to be the wife of Yitzchak just like the crown fits the king. Avodah Zarah (44a): When the crown of Dovid was placed on a person fitting to be King, it conformed to the dimensions of that person's head. Avrohom passed the bracelets to Eliezer as a siman (just like the crown of Dovid) that the bracelets would conform to the arms of the person fitting to be the wife of Yitzchak, and would not fit anyone not fitting to be the wife of Yitzchak.

Who is the perfect Jew? - *He should have a Litvishe Kop, a Chadishe heart, the integrity of a Yeker, the innocence and Temimus of a Hungarian, the Kovod Hatorah of a Sefardi and the love of Eretz Yisroel.*



בראשית פרק כג-טז וַיִּשְׁקֹל אַבְרָהָם לְעֶפְרֹן אֶת-הַכֶּסֶף

Efron sought money and didn't know that he would come to a long-term loss. In this verse the Torah removes a letter Vav from his name. Why does the Torah allude to the loss to Efron with this letter?

The basis of belief in HaShem is to believe in the six particular manifestations of HaShem, that He rules in the four directions, above and below. Whereas, the pursuit of riches brings one to a loss of faith (for example, the spoils from the Egyptians at the Sea led

to the Golden Calf). Efron in his pursuit of wealth, lost sight of belief in HaShem that rules in the six directions, and thus, lost his Vav.

This is further alluded to in the name of Efron (without the Vav) has a numerical value of 400, indicating that the **עין רע**) also numeric value of 400) now directed him, and thus, sold the cave for 400 shekel.



Morality

The stories of Sefer Braishis are the guideposts of morality for the Jewish nation. They teach us ethics and guide our character. Sometimes we can even apply their lessons to teach us even the simple and practical ways of the world. This week we can even learn a little business acumen from our forefather, Avraham.

In this week's portion, Avraham sets out to find a burial site for his wife, Sora. He approaches the children of Ches and asks to meet Ephron, who sanctimoniously offers any plot of land and benevolently offers it for nothing. Avraham does not jump at the offer, but immediately declares that he is ready to pay top dollar: in fact, even before Ephron uses the words, "behold I have given it to you," Avraham responds, "I have given you the money! Take it from me! And now allow me to bury my dead." Then, in a quick turnabout, Ephron announces an exorbitant price which Avraham, without bargaining or negotiating, pays immediately.

The entire transaction is strange. Despite Ephron's generous overtures, it seems that Avraham is throwing the money at him in an effort to consummate the deal. And the minute a price is mentioned, exorbitant as it may be, Avraham pays it without further question. All it seems is that he wanted to close the deal and leave. Why?

The Ponovezer Rav, Rabbi Yosef Kahanemen zt"l, was one of the foremost builders of Torah in the post-war era. He was also a remarkable fund-raiser. Once he was welcomed into the home of a

wealthy individual who was more interested in discussing Torah with him than giving money to the Ponevezer Yeshiva. Every time the Rav would talk about the donating for the construction of the new building, the man would begin to expound on a different Torah topic. Finally, Rav Kahaneman told him the following story:

A woman in Poland had a daughter who was well past her prime. The matchmaker suggested that she alter her passport and claim she was much younger than her true age. He explained that he knew a Polish passport official, who, for the right price, could make her any age she would like. The official met the woman and then looked at the girl. "Oh, this is not a major problem. I am sure that there must have been an error in processing the original document. Of course, we can rectify this most egregious error. In fact, for a small service fee of 500 zloty I can take seven years off the date on her birth certificate, and we can have her at 21 years old!"

Despite the steep service charge, the mother heartily agreed and quickly took the money from her purse. Feeling that there were many more zloty from where the first 500 came from the officer held up his hand. "You know what," he smiled devilishly, "maybe there was a bigger error than we actually had thought! Actually, for 700 zloty I could make her 20 years old!"

Reluctantly, the mother agreed and went to her purse for more zloty. The officer began to get quite greedy. "You know, he said, for an additional 300 zloty, I could even have her at 18!"

The mother became very nervous. Quickly she handed over the 700 zloty and yelled, "No, thank you. 20 years old is fine!" She grabbed her daughter. "Quick," she shouted, "let's get out of here! Soon we will be left with no more zloty and no more years!" The Rav's message struck its mark. The man stopped his Torah-filled filibuster and handed over a sizable check.

Avraham knew his negotiating partner well. He understood that the longer Ephron would wait, the more time Sora would lie in state, and

the more expensive the transaction would become. As soon as he heard the false graciousness of Ephron, Avraham immediately told him that he would pay full price – on one condition. Take the money and give me the plot. He understood when it was time to do what had to be done and move on. He was not interested in prolonging negotiations that would only leave him without money and perhaps without land. Often it is worthwhile to take a hit and leave, because the pain of the moment is far less than the agony of insincerity. ***(By R' Mordechai Kamenetzky)***

Stories of Gedolim -Etz Chaim

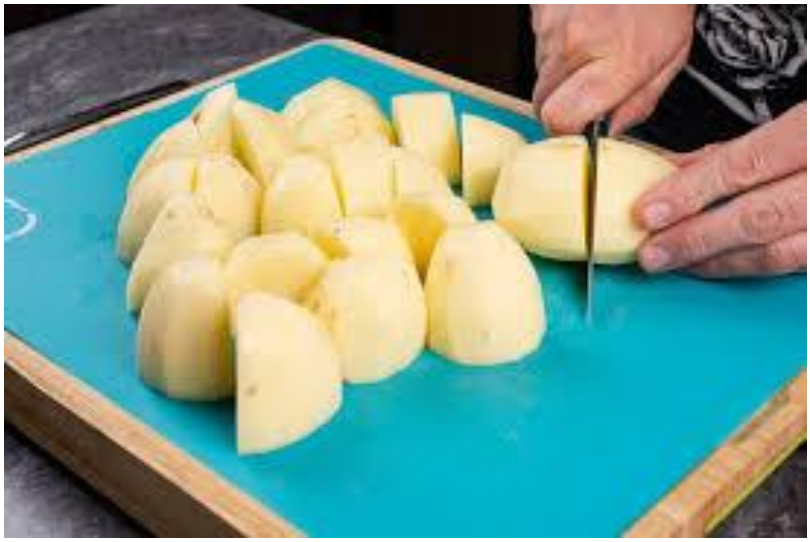
Many times, gedolim make requests and statements which others do not understand until much later when their foresight and wisdom become known to all. **Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski zt"l** led his generation during incredibly turbulent rimes, the years preceding World War II. His followers and talmidim adhered to his every word and direction, though at times they were puzzled.



Horav Yisroel Zev Gustman zt"l was a talmid who, though very young at the time, was appointed to the Vilna Bet Din by R' Chaim Ozer. Once while walking through the forest, R' Chaim Ozer seemed to go "off-topic" and began showing R' Yisroel Zev different plants, bushes and shrubs. He pointed out which were edible, and which were poisonous. R' Yisroel Zev listened attentively to his Rebbe, although he had no idea why he was telling him these things. Another thing that was puzzling was R' Chaim Ozer's request that a ten-year calendar be printed.

At that time, calendars were printed yearly, and many did not want to change the accepted practice and put out a longer term calendar. But R' Chaim Ozer insisted. And so it was. A little while later, R' Chaim Ozer passed away and the Nazis ym"s overtook Vilna. R' Yisroel Zev Gustman miraculously escaped the Nazi's clutches and he, along with his wife and daughter escaped to the forest. R' Gustman was able to sustain himself and his family by eating the plants R' Chaim Ozer had showed him as edible and avoiding those he had been taught were poisonous. R' Gustman was also able to keep track of the Jewish Calendar and yamim tovim, since he owned the calendar that R' Chaim Ozer had insisted be written. His rebbe's guidance had saved him, both physically and spiritually.

Rabbi Y Richtman- The Glass is Half Full



In Yeshivas Mir, there were two cooks who prepared the meals for all the bochurim and kollel members. They both came from Russia, and they both were cooks in a University in Russia prior to coming to Yerushalayim. One day, a fellow walked by the kitchen and heard the cooks talking while peeling the potatoes.

One cook was lamenting "my life is so pathetic, I left Russia to start a new life. Look at me now, I am in the same dead-end life, I work hard and get paid nothing." A moment later the other cook said, "Are you out of your mind. In Russia we had to peel potatoes for people who are studying general topics. Now we are so fortunate to prepare food for people who are studying Torah. This is such a wonderful opportunity; I would even do it for free."

R'Yitzchok Zilber used to say this story ever year the week of parshas Chayei Sarah. He would comment "we see that you can have



two people that are going through the same situation and one person can only see the bad in it, while another person is able to see the great opportunity that is being sent his way". This concept helped me resolve a difficulty that I had with the first Rashi in this week's parsha. Rashi comments that all of the years of Sarah's life were equally good. How could Rashi write this, if you take a quick look at her life you will see that it was full of difficult and painful events?

R' Yitzchok would say that if we would look at her life, WE would say it was all bad. However Sarah Imeinu looked at things differently, and she saw in all her challenges tremendous opportunities. She took every stumbling block and turned it into a stepping stone.

A Short Vort- Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

וַתֵּרֶד הָעַיְנָה וַתְּמַלֵּא כַדָּהּ וַתָּעַל ***She went down to the spring, filled her jug and went up*** *(24:16)* As soon as Eliezer finished praying to Hashem requesting help to find a wife for Yitzchak, he saw Rivkah taking water from the well. Since our verse does not mention that Rivkah "drew" water from the well, only that she "filled her jug," the Medrash understands that the water miraculously rose up to her.

However, when Rivkah offered water to Eliezer and all of his entourage, she had to struggle and physically draw the water for

them — a mammoth task considering that Eliezer brought with him at least ten camels!

Surely, if Rivkah was worthy of water miraculously rising up to her instead of having to go down and get it, would it not have been more preferable for her to have received this miracle when she went to get water for Eliezer and all of his camels instead?



The Kedushas Levi answers that Rivkah was worthy of having water rise up for her every time she wanted to get water for herself. However, once she decided to perform a mitzvah, Hashem allowed her to gain even greater reward by letting her struggle. This concept is based on the Mishna in Pirkei Avos which says, "According to the effort is the reward." . We find this concept with all mitzvos, but it is most prevalent regarding Torah study where Avos D'Rebbe Nosson says that the reward for learning Torah through hardship is a hundred times greater than learning undisturbed!

*This teaching was the basis for the **Chofetz Chaim's** praise of one of his newer students. "Tell me," said the Chofetz Chaim, "how many pages of Gemora have you learned so far in this yeshiva?"*

The student answered, "Three"

"300!" responded the Chofetz Chaim with pride and joy. "Emm, no Rebbe, just three!" the boy responded, thinking that the Chofetz Chaim had misheard him originally. "No my son," said the Chofetz Chaim, taking the boy's hands in his. "We're told that learning through hardship is worth a hundred times learning without. And no

one here has suffered more hardship than you. So, although you may have only learned three pages, its real worth is 300 pages!"

If we truly knew the reward we would receive for every moment of learning Torah or every mitzvah that we undertake through difficult circumstances, we would all but ask for the hardship! Of course, we do not wish difficulty upon ourselves, but if Hashem has chosen that this is the situation we find ourselves in, we should look positively upon it and embrace it as an opportunity to achieve far greater reward than if we were not put in this difficult situation.

Parsha Pages-Response To The Chesed of Rivkah

"And the man (Eliezer) took a golden nose-ring, one beka (half-a-shekel) its weight, and two bracelets he placed on her hands, weighing ten golden shekolim" (Bereshis 24:22).

The Beka, explains Rashi, hints at the half-shekolim that Yisroel would later give in the desert to the upkeep of the Mishkon, and the two bracelets weighing ten golden shekolim, at the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. When Eliezer saw the extent to which Rivkah excelled in the midah of chesed, he hinted to her that chesed is but one of the three pillars on which the world stands, and that there are two more: Avodah and Torah. So he gave her the nose-ring, signifying the half-shekel, with which they would purchase the korbanos (the pillar of Avodah), and the bracelets, signifying the two Luchos containing the Ten Commandments (the pillar of Torah) - Gur Aryeh. Significantly, the Maharal says these 3 middos were given to the avos: Chesed to Avrohom, Avodah to Yitzchak, and Torah to Yaacov. Rivkah as a non-Jew could excel in the midah of Chesed. Avodah and Torah are for the Jews. Whereas an observant Jew is trained to excel in midos of Avodah and Torah, often additional effort needs to obtain the universal midah of Chesed

Chain Of Events



After Akeidas Yitzchak, Avraham decides it is time to find a wife for Yitzchak. He calls on his trusted servant Eliezer to fulfil that mission. Upon hearing the news that Yitzchok is ready for marriage, Eliezer thinks his daughter would be a perfect match. When he makes this suggestion to Avraham he is turned away due to the fact that he comes from a cursed nation, while Yitzchok is from a blessed nation. It wouldn't be proper for a blessed nation to mix with a nation that is cursed.

Eliezer sets out on his mission with a heart filled with disappointment. He arrives at the well and davens that, in the zechus of Avraham, he finds a wife quickly for Yitzchok. The first word of his Tefilah is "vayomer" and the trup on that word is a shalsheles. There are two other times in Bereshis where that trup is used. In last week's parsha, when Lot fled S'dom it is used. The second time is when Yosef Hatzadik turns away from the wife of Potiphar. In all three instances the people involved are being faced with a difficult decision. Lot has to decide to flee S'dom and deal with being compared to Avraham. Eliezer has to disregard his personal agenda of his daughter marrying Yitzchok. Yosef Hatzadik has to turn away from a very challenging temptation.

In all three cases each party ultimately makes the right decision. This is represented in the trup of shasheles which means a chain. Meaning, all three people grabbed on to the chain of our Avos and made the right decision.

The Weekly Vort

The Atheist Doctor Who Envied the Yeshiva Students In the Concentration Camp

R' Soloveitchik, zt'l, relates, "A Jewish doctor, an atheist, wrote a memoir of his experiences as an inmate in a concentration camp in Latvia. The daily schedule required the inmates to wake up at 4:30 A.M, to perform backbreaking work for 14 hours daily in subzero temperatures wearing threadbare clothing.

The work itself was useless; the routine was designed merely to exhaust the inmates. Many left for work never to return. Those who did survive each exhausting day of slave labor were forced to stand in line at the gate upon their return to the concentration camp, where doctors at the entrance examined each of them. Those deemed too unhealthy to continue working were sent to the gas chambers and crematoria…

"In his memoir, the doctor wrote of a group of yeshiva students along with their rosh yeshiva, followers of the Mussar school of Novardok, who were imprisoned along with him. At night, upon their return to the barracks, these yeshiva students would sit on the ground with their Rosh Yeshiva and recite Tehillim: 'From the depths I called You, Hashem' (Ps. 130:1).

Witnessing this scene, the doctor wrote that he would have given up his very life to have the faith to recite Tehillim under such circumstances. "The uniqueness of the Jew is the ability to perceive G-d's Presence even in terrible conditions"

Though Avraham lived a life of tests, his life was one of glory, triumph, faith and hope.

The Reward of a Mitzvah?



Rabbi Paysach Krohn in his wonderful work Around the Magid's Table tells a beautiful story. One Shabbos afternoon when young Yitzchak Eisenbach was in Jerusalem, he spotted a very valuable gold coin shining in the distance. The value of the coin was enough to support his entire family for two weeks! But it was Shabbos and young Yitzele knew that the coin was muktzeh, prohibited to be picked up and taken on the Shabbos.

He decided to put his foot on top of the coin and guard the coin until sunset. An Arab boy saw Yitzchak with his foot strangely and obviously strategically placed, and decided to investigate further.

"What's that you're hiding?" the Arab asked.

"Nothing," replied Yitzchak as he shifted his body to hide the fact that he was guarding a golden treasure.

It was too late. The Arab boy pushed him, saw the prize, quickly grabbed it and ran away. All Yitzchak could do was watch in horror as his attacker melted into the Arab marketplace.

Dejected, Yitzchak sulked to the nearby Tzcernobel Bais Medrash where he sat in a corner. Normally, Yitzchak would help prepare the final Shabbos meal, but today he sat — dejected and depressed — until the Sabbath was over. The Rebbe inquired about young Yitzchok's sullen mood and was told the story.

Immediately after Shabbos **the Tzcernobel Rebbe** (1840-1936) summoned Yitzchak into his private study. In his hand he held a gold coin, exactly the same size as the one Yitzchak had almost secured earlier that day. "I am very proud of you," said the Rebbe. You did not desecrate the Shabbos even for tremendous monetary gain.

In fact," he continued, "I am so proud of you that I am willing to give you this same coin." The Rebbe halted. "On one condition. I want you to give me the reward for the mitzvah you did." The boy looked at the Rebbe in utter disbelief. "You want to trade the coin for the Mitzvah?" The Rebbe nodded, slowly. "If that's the case, keep the coin. I'll keep the mitzvah." The Rebbe leaned over and kissed the child.



Rav Avigdor Miller

Is it proper for a wife to nag her husband?

Absolutely. But it depends for what, and it depends how it's done. If it's done for the mitzvah of nagging, which is usually the case, then not only is it improper, but it's a ruination of herself.

A husband, even the nicest one, will come to hate a woman who is a nag. It won't help how beautiful she is. And it won't matter how much of a good cook and good housekeeper she is. If she nags just for the sake of nagging, then she's going to become hated. So it doesn't pay to become hated. Now, if something has to be done by the husband, then that's a different story. If something must be done, and the husband is obstinate, that's different.

All husbands are stubborn like mules, this you have to know. There isn't a husband who is not stubborn like a mule. And there isn't a woman who is not frantic about it like a wild cat. However, both are wrong. All the husbands are stubborn, and all the women are wild. So it's not a simple job for a frantic cat to properly nag a stubborn mule. But with wisdom it's possible.

When somebody uses a certain amount judgement, they can sometimes accomplish what they want, what is needed is judicial

nagging. But if nagging is done just for the pleasure of needling somebody, of hurting him, then it doesn't pay. It doesn't pay at all. And that's a very important lesson.

Many times, the objective you were aiming for, the objective for which you started out on a career of nagging is very small, and it simply doesn't justify losing favour in the eyes of your husband. That objective, of keeping his favour, is often more important than the objective that you are trying to achieve, what you are trying to get him to do, by nagging him.

Always remember that each one of you, each spouse, has capital that you come into the marriage with, capital that has been built up, and that capital must be preserved. And that capital is the goodwill of your partner. You want to maintain your partner's love and respect for you. That comes first. You want to preserve that capital. Now sometimes, if it's an emergency, you might have to sacrifice that too. But otherwise, watch your step, because you're giving away something that you might never be able to regain.

Torah U' Tefilah- Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

After Sarah passed away, her life is referred to as 'Shnei Chayei Sarah', the years of Sarah's life (23:1). The word 'Shnei' can also imply that she lived multiple lives.

Rav Yaakov Schnaidman elaborates on this idea. In life we travel through many circles: our work, our family, our Shul, our community, etc. Often, the way we express ourselves in one circle can contradict the way we are in another. Sarah lived all of her circles at the same standard. As Rashi notes, they were all equally good. We aspire to live like Sarah where all of our 'lives' are at one standard, and not conflicting.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, zt"l, would always recite the Birchas HaShachar out loud each morning in front of the Shul. One morning, as he was saying the Brachos, he skipped over the Brachah of 'Shelo Asani Goy", which praises Hashem for not making us Goyim.

After Shacharis, a few people approached Rav Levi Yitzchak and asked him why he didn't say this Brachah. Rav Levi Yitzchok replied, "When I woke up this morning, I was overcome with such intense joy that I was born a Jew, and I had a whole day ahead of me to serve Hashem. I couldn't control myself to wait until I got to Shul, and without any hesitation, I said this Brachah at home at the first opportunity I had today. Since I said the Brachah already, I couldn't repeat it when I said the rest of the Brachos!"

Welcome To The Ponevezer Yeshivah



The Ponevez Yeshivah in Bnei Brak is one of the most distinguished Yeshivos around, and gaining entrance to the Yeshivah is not simple. It was quite surprising when one day, a young teenage boy from Switzerland, who was not at the learning level that was required for this Yeshivah, insisted on meeting the Rebbetzin, the widow of the Rav who founded the Yeshivah, **Rav Yosef Kahaneman, zt"l**, the Ponevezer Rav. The Rebbetzin was not involved with the Yeshivah's admission process, and the Ponevezer Rav had already passed away a few years prior. The boy, however, had arrived at the Yeshivah, and wanted to meet with the Rebbetzin.

He was guided to the Rebbetzin's apartment and met with her for a few moments. He then emerged from the meeting with a big smile

across his face, along with the Rebbetzin who asked to speak with the present Rosh Yeshivah.

A few minutes went by as the elderly widow conversed with the Rosh Yeshivah, and then the Rosh Yeshivah motioned for the young student to come over. He said, "Welcome to the Ponevezer Yeshivah!"

Everyone, especially the students who had been observing the entire incident, was surprised and confused about what had taken place. Later, the young boy explained to them that he once had a meeting with the Ponevezer Rav, and he explained, "One summer when I was seven years old, I went on a vacation with my mother in Switzerland. While we were staying at the hotel, which was the only Kosher establishment in the area, the Ponevezer Rav arrived to spend some time to recuperate. The only room that the hotel had available for Ponevezer Rav and his Rebbetzin was on the top floor, and it very difficult for the Rav to walk up and down all the flights of stairs.

When my mother heard of the problem, she immediately offered to switch rooms with the Rav, since we were on the first floor and it would be much easier for them there. The Rav graciously accepted my mother's offer and afterwards invited my mother and me to visit him in his room. He said to my mother, 'I want to express my gratitude to you and to your son for your kindness. I know that when someone goes on vacation, they want everything to go as planned. Since you changed your plans to help us, I would like to buy a gift for your son, maybe a nice toy, as a token of my appreciation.' I immediately spoke up and said, 'Please, Rebbe, if it is ok, I do not want a toy, and I do not even want a few coins. I would only like one thing, and that is to one day to be a student at the Ponevezer Yeshivah.'

The Rav smiled and took out his pen and started to write a note on the hotel stationery that I was accepted as a student in the Ponevezer Yeshivah! The Rav told me that when I got a little older

and the time was right, I should bring this letter to the Yeshivah, and I would be accepted without question. I came to find the Rebbetzin to help me because she was there when the letter was written!"

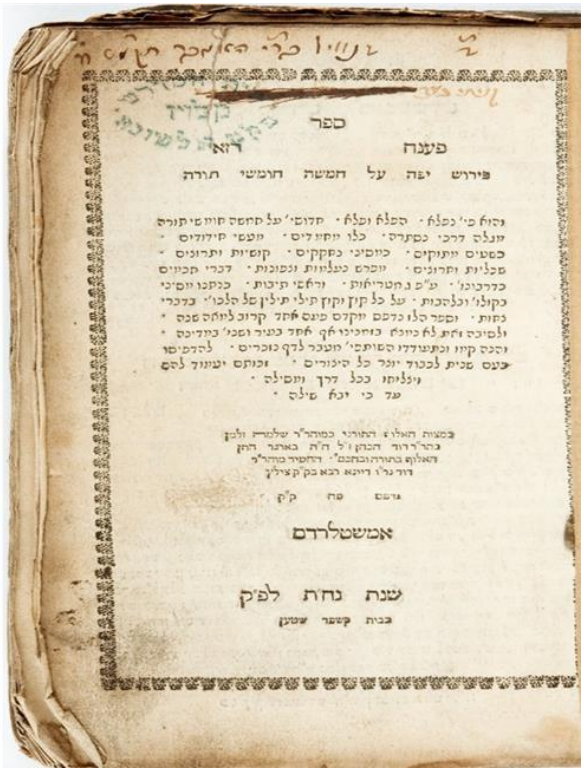
Rav Shlomo Levenshtein arrived at his shul in Bnei Brak a few minutes before prayers and saw his neighbour looking down pensively. "What's the matter?" the Rav inquired, wondering if he could help. The neighbour replied: "My daughter is currently seriously dating a young man. She has a medical condition. Even though the Posek (halachic ruler) told her that she doesn't need to divulge the information, she revealed it anyway. The young man was taken aback and informed her that he needed time to think about it. It's been 24 hours and the young man still hasn't called back."



Rav Levenshtein told the neighbour, "don't worry, everything is from Hashem and all will be good!" As the man took leave after prayers, Rav Levenshtein asked him to keep him updated. A day later, the man came back overjoyed and reported the following: "The young man had serious qualms about continuing. He considering breaking off the match. To feel that he was justified in his decision, he went to ask his mother for advice. The mother told him it was no big deal. 'But this condition would mess up one's daily life,' the young man objected. The mother looked at her son squarely in his eyes and asked: 'Did you ever notice that I have the same condition? I am telling you that it will not interfere with life. If that's the only thing holding you back, you have nothing to worry about!"

Comment: Yes, sometimes dating matches must be broken off. However, one cannot simply refuse a marriage proposal because it sounds suspicious. Instead, one must put in an effort to investigate the root of the issue. The Evil Inclination does his best to keep Shidduchim from being consummated because a marriage is another potential link in the strengthening the Jewish nation. Therefore, each party must really do their homework before saying no (or saying yes!).

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport


ספר
פענח
פירוש יפה על חמשה חומשי תורה
אמשטלרדם
שנת נחת לפ"ק

Who in Parshas Chayei Sorah walked upside down?

When Rivkah observed Yitzchok for the first time, she asked Eliezer (24:65), "*Who is that man walking in the field?*" What prompted her to inquire about Yitzchok when she surely did not ask Eliezer about every other man they encountered on their journey?

The **Moshav Z'keinim** and **Paneiach Raza** quote a Midrash that says that Yitzchok was walking upside down, with his feet in the air. They explain that Avrohom wounded Yitzchok when he was bound up to be offered as a sacrifice at the Akaida, so angels took him to Gan Eden to recover and heal, and when people return from Gan Eden, it is customary for them to walk upside down (Rashi Shmuel 1 28:12). Thus, when Rivkah observed Yitzchok walking in this highly unusual manner, her curiosity was triggered, and she asked Eliezer about his identity.

Chicago Community Kollel-Halacha Encounters

Flowers on a Grave: Many poskim *(Minchas Elazar 4:61, Minchas Yitzchak 1:31)* prohibit placing flowers on a grave as a sign of respect. The reason for the prohibition is because non-Jews do so to give respect to the niftar, and in reality there is no comfort or respect felt or received by the niftar with these actions; therefore, it is considered a custom with no valid reason and is prohibited.

The Minchas Yitzchak even prohibits planting flowers and trees throughout the graveyard. However, **Harav Ovadia Yosef zt"l** *(Yabia Omer, Y.D. 3:24)* permits one to plant or place flowers next to a grave; as mentioned, whenever we can explain the purpose of the custom, it is permitted to follow the practice, and in this case the custom is followed to honour the dead.

Blowing out the Candles on a Birthday Cake: This is indeed a forbidden practice. Upon investigation, it seems that this practice can be traced back to Ancient Greece. To pay respect to Ar-----, the goddess of the hunt (it is forbidden to mention the names of foreign gods), people would place cakes with candles in them on altars in her honour to symbolize a prosperous hunt under the glow of the moon. During these times it was believed that smoke could carry prayers up to the gods, so the act of making a wish, and then blowing out the candles, would send them on their way to being fulfilled. This custom would then fall under the category of practices of non-Jews that are sourced in idolatry.



Throwing Money in a Wishing Well: Besides for the prohibition of bal taschis (in the case of those wells that do not serve as a collection point for charity), throwing money into a well and 'making a wish' is also an idolatrous practice. A wishing well is a term from European

folklore to describe wells where it was thought that any wish spoken there would be granted. The idea that a wish would be fulfilled came from the notion that water housed deities or had been placed there as a gift from the gods. This practice is thought to have arisen because water is a source of life and was often a scarce commodity. Accordingly, the practice falls under the rubric of chukas akum and is forbidden. If someone wishes to donate to the charity that the collection benefits, he may donate by credit card!

Moment of Silence: A moment of silence is held in many public places at the start of public affairs in various parts of society. The question is whether this is a reflective moment that is religious in nature, or merely an introspective moment. Obviously, if it was inherently religious, this practice would not be permitted during most government-sponsored activities because of the many atheists in America who are allergic to religion. This author believes that it is an introspective, sombre moment meant to slow life down; as such, this non-religious, positive practice may be observed and emulated. Included in this leniency are the moments of silence observed on national days of remembrance.

Wedding Bands for Men: It has become the style of many men (though not practiced by Bnei Torah) to wear a wedding band (ring). **R' Moshe zt"l** (Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:32:2) rules that it does not constitute chukas akum, so long as the ring was given well after the wedding and cannot be construed as being part of the wedding ceremony. The reason this is permitted is because the wearer is wearing the ring as jewellery, and as mentioned in part two, this practice was not set up specifically as a non-Jewish custom. Additionally, it is being worn to advertise the fact (both to the wearer and others) that this person is married, which is also a permitted reason.

Bas Mitzvah Celebrations: The Sridei Eish (Y.D. 39) has an extended discussion regarding whether the bas mitzvah celebration

violates the principles of chukas akum, for perhaps it is sourced from the "confirmation" ceremony held in other religions at the onset of adulthood. His conclusion is that as long as the celebration is not held in the sanctuary of a shul (or with a mix of boys), it is permitted and is even recommended to inspire the girls with the beauty of yiddishkeit and its mitzvos.

Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin



"And the life of Sarah was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years. These were the years of the life of Sarah." Why does the Torah add the seemingly repetitive verse, "These were the years of the life of Sarah"? Rashi informs us that the message from the repetitive phrase is that all of the years of Sara's life were equally good. How is it possible to say this about Sarah's life? For many years she was childless; she experienced famine and exile; she was taken captive by the Pharaoh of Egypt and later by Avimelech.

Rabbi Zushe of Anipoli explained that Sarah mastered the attribute of constantly saying, "This too is for the good." Even those events that others might consider to be bad, she was aware that they were from the Almighty and therefore she was able to evaluate them as positive.

Hashem is an integral part of this world. He supervises and manages everything. There is nothing out of His control. Moreover, continues the Rashba, Avraham went out to publicize that Hashem is the Master Supervisor. Therefore, it was crucial for him to beseech for offspring. If Hashem would do the seemingly impossible and give an infertile man a child, it would be the greatest publication that Hashem is in total control and can change the laws of nature at will.

Then the **Rashba** makes a very important statement. How did Avraham accomplish this feat of defying the laws of nature? By attaching himself to the source of everything, he now changed his very being and an infertile man became fertile. It is deveikus to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that enables man to rise above this mundane physical world and become united with the infinite Divine. When one is attached to Hashem, nothing is impossible.

This deveikus was the centre of Avraham Avinu's essence. Avraham's remarkable discovery is the foundation of all Yiddishkeit: **אין עוד מלבדו** - Ein Od Milvado. ***There is nothing else besides Him***. The whole purpose of Yiddishkeit is to transform the physical man into a holy spiritual being. And that comes through deveikus, internalizing that Hashem Echod, and there is nothing besides Him. In this way, nothing is impossible.

The Marvelous Segula **עוד מלבדו אין! – R. Chaim Volozhin** in Nefesh Hachaim reveals to us the secret of the Marvelous Segula: "A person must implant within his heart the knowledge that 'G-d is the only true power and there is no force in the universe besides Him.' He must make himself completely dependent upon G-d, paying no heed to any other power or will in the world... When he does this — making his mind entirely subservient to Hashem and totally focusing his thoughts on the One G-d, blessed be He — then the Almighty will cause all forces and desires in the world to be null and void against him, and nothing will have any effect upon him whatsoever... Whatever he declares — will take place, and he will be able to perform many wondrous acts and miracles that are in opposition to the natural forces of the cosmos..."

The Brisker Rav related that his father, **R. Chaim Brisker zt"l**, told him that when a person finds himself in trouble, he should focus his entire awareness on the fact that Hashem is One, as explained in Nefesh HaChaim.

נפלאות הבורא - Hashems Amazing World - The Icefish



The Icefish which is appropriately named since you will mostly find them around Antarctica. These fish survive in temperatures from 28.4 to 39.2 degrees Fahrenheit. I know you are all astute readers so you may be wondering how the temperature of the water can be colder than the freezing point. No, these fish are not living in ice although it might feel like it. The dissolved salt lowers the freezing point in seawater. I won't get into the chemistry of it, but the freezing point of salt water is lower than that of freshwater systems. As you can imagine, these fish have some interesting qualities that allow them to live in such frigid waters. The first is the presence of an antifreeze glycoprotein in their blood and body fluids. Obviously, this is important as it ensures the bodily fluids of the icefish don't turn into, well, ice. For the record most species in the freezing waters of the Antarctic were endowed with this antifreeze.

The second major feature the icefish has is actually a reduction in haemoglobin, which is responsible for attaching and transporting oxygen throughout the blood. The blood of most animals contain about 45% haemoglobin while the icefish only has about 1%. They don't need as much as other animals since one of the features of extremely cold water is a high oxygen content. There is so much oxygen in the water, the icefish simply absorbs what they need to survive. This is responsible for one of the most startling characteristics among the Antarctic fish fauna is the nearly translucent, white blood of Antarctic icefishes due to their lack of haemoglobin (Hb) expression. Which means their blood is clear- as you can clearly see in the picture above!

Pretty cool huh? ❄ As we can "clearly" see from the icefish as well as all the other creations around us, that Hashem has carefully designed each and every creation with the greatest wisdom to survive in its appropriate habitat! [***Rabbi Eliyahu Tobal***]

Give Thanks To Hashem Written by Benjamin A Rose

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם אֶת־דִּבְרֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה לה' **24:52** *Now it came to pass when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he prostrated himself on the ground to the L-rd.*

Rashi-: **מכאן שמודים על בשורה טובה : וישתחו ארצה** *that he prostrated himself on the ground: From here [we learn] that we must give thanks for good tidings.*

We see that Eliezer is discussing the marriage of Rivka to Yitschok. As soon as he heard the words from Lavan and Besuel's mouths that they Rivka can go with him back to Canaan to marry Yitschok, Yishtachu artzoh – he bows to the ground. We see from the Rashi to this posuk the importance of saying thank you for even the smallest things in life!!

At this stage of the story there is no real major development after all Rivka has still not given her consent to the marriage. but even at this small development Eliezer prostrates himself to thank Hashem. We should all take to heart what Rashi learns from this, that we should be grateful and thank Hashem even for every B'soiroh Toivah.

A little Boruch Hashem (thank G-D) when things are going good can go a long way to show that you appreciate Hashem's Blessing!!.

When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us.

Ezri m'im HaShem- Divine Help- Written by D Fine

If you look in the part of the sedra in which Eliezer goes off to find a wife for Yitzchak, you will notice that the name of HaShem is mentioned in conversation an abnormally great number of times (specifically, see 24;49-52). Why is this?

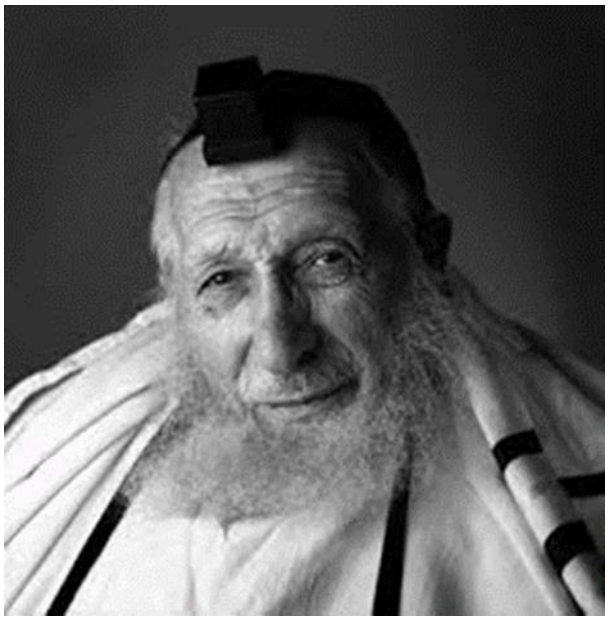
To teach us that HaShem is the One behind selecting and finding our marriage partners with whom we match and can gel with. "Ezri (my help) me'im HaShem" – also explained to mean my *ezer* (*ie ezer kenegdo;* the phrase describing Chavah, and one's wife in general) is from HaShem. (*heard from R Krohn*).

127 years; 4005072000 seconds -Written by D Fine

The opening pasuk of our sedra notes that Sarah Imeinu was 127 years old when she died. Now there's another appearance of the number 127 in Tanach. The Megillah tells us that Achashveirosh ruled over 127 countries; and (unsurprisingly) there is a link between these two appearances of the number 127. Chazal tell us that Rabbi Akiva was once giving a shiur, and several students were dozing off.

Rabbi Akiva remarked 'in the merit of Sarah Imeinu's 127 years, the Jewish People in the 127 countries in the Purim story were saved.' Suddenly, the students stopped dozing off and began fully concentrating on the shiur. Why; what changed?

The explanation I heard was that Rabbi Akiva's words caused the students to realise the value of time. How? For Sarah's spiritually wholesome 127 years saving 127 countries meant that each year that Sarah used productively to perform mitzvos saw another country saved. So each month meant another town saved, each week a neighbourhood saved, each day a block, each minute a road, and each second a family (etc.). Thus, the students of Rabbi Akiva realised the importance of making use of every second of their time; using it for constructive purposes.



As **Rav Sheinberg** stressed, when David HaMelech said '*who is the man who desires life*? One who loves days to do good' he was referring to someone who realises the value of time and the importance of making the most of all the time he has available to him in this world.

Rabbi Akiva Eiger was away from home for a Rabbis conference, when he walked past a coffee shop and saw many people sitting on table sluggishly drinking their coffees. Asking the people what they were doing, they replied 'we're killing time.' Rabbi Eiger was shocked; 'killing time,' he shrieked, 'why don't you give some time to me – I wish I had more time!' Such is the attitude of someone who realises the value of time.

We are only here in this world temporarily; let's use all the time we have.

Parshah Thoughts Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Throughout the story of Eliezer looking for a wife for Yitzchak, there is only one character trait which is stressed, that of good *middos*. Why is Eliezer only looking for good *middos* and not *yiras Shamayim*, fear of Hashem, or other essential spiritual characteristics?

R' Nosson Zvi Finkel (the Mir Rosh Yeshiva) explained that as long as a person has proper *middos*, they have the capability to change and fashion themselves in all other great traits. But, if one is lacking good *middos*, all other traits are almost worthless.



Segula for Marriage

What is the *Segula* for getting married? *Segula* means, what is some means, some mysterious means of getting married?

The most mysterious means of getting married is, to pray to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, that's also a *Segula*, it's a mystery how it works. Everybody has to pray to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* before marriage, because it's something that's going to affect you and your generations.



If you're going to marry a girl who doesn't want to have many children, and therefore you're going to have just a little family of maybe two. Some day you'll look around, you'll see - others have families of children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, and you see a *Nachas*, you see how many *Frum* Jews resulted from that little marriage years ago.

Remember that poor little marriage in a hall years ago, and look what happened, so many *Bnei Torah*, so many beautiful boys and girls all *Frum*. Isn't it a tragedy that because of a silly girl who got into her head, she didn't want to have more than two babies, so therefore you're deprived of all this greatness?

You have to pray, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* should send the right boy or send the right girl and pray all you can. You have to pray all you can, and I want to add an advice, it wouldn't hurt, wouldn't harm to shed a tear or two while you're praying. Pray and shed a tear to *Hakadosh*

Baruch Hu, He should send the right one. That's the best *Segula* of all.

However if you want additional *Segulas*, girls: If you have to see a boy, the first time or second time, whatever it is, don't make the mistake of fumbling, of spurning the occasion; go to a beauty parlor. I once said that to a *Frum* girl, and she said, do you mean to say that a real *Ben Torah* would look at such things?

Isn't that silly, certainly a *Ben Torah* will look at such things. It's as unrealistic as could be; every girl has to prepare for the first encounter. You have to use everything you have, and even what you don't have. That's a *Torahdika* attitude, a woman has to utilize all the means that she can get, to win the right man. And I'll add one more thing; ***to keep the right man***.

All her life, a wife has to make herself beautiful for her husband, not for the street. It's not only a waste of effort, but it's not a *Mitzvah* at all for a woman to go out pretty in the street. She's not supposed to be seen by other people when she is pretty.

So in the street, as plain as possible, don't advertise your femininity on the street. Don't flaunt your femininity on the street. But at home, your husband has to see a beautiful wife at all times, even if you're an old woman. Don't think an old *Talmid Chochom*, an old *Tzadik* doesn't care for these things.

And what you hear is solid good advice, and you'll discover it when you're eighty five.

"Everyone has inside of him a piece of good news. The good news is that you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is! "



Concealed Kindness

One way to translate the word **פלא** is **concealed** as it states (*Devarim* 17:8), **דבר כי יפלא ממך** - "When a halachah is concealed from you..." In Shemoneh Esrei we praise Hashem for His kindness, and we express our gratitude **על נפלאותיך** even when the kindness is concealed from us. We know that even in times of distress, when things seem to be bad, they are only orchestrated by Hashem for our good. (from *siddur HaGr'a*).

Reb Hershel Berkowitz Shlita of Ashdod told the following story:

Reb Hershel Berkowitz's daughter got engaged a year ago, and he travelled to New York to raise money for the *chasunah*. Reb Hershel made up with a driver to pick him up at 5:30 in the morning and drive him to several batei midrashim to collect money during Shacharis.

Reb Hershel waited for a half-hour for the driver, but he didn't show up. Initially, he was angry at the driver, but then he overcame that *nisayon*. He pushed away those angry thoughts and went to Munkatch beis medresh in Boro Park and said *Tehillim* with *kavanah*.

Soon after, a Yid tapped him on the shoulder and gave him five hundred dollars, noticing that he came to America to collect money. The Yid told him, "I'm going to court today, as people are trying to force me, illegally, to give them a lot of money. It isn't simple, and I need a *yeshuah*. Please, say *Tehillim* that I should succeed. I will call you later today to tell you the outcome of the court case."

Reb Hershel told him, "You won't have to look for me. I will remain here, in this beis medresh until you return and tell me how your day went."

Reb Hershel spent the morning in the Munkatch shul saying *Tehillim*, davening Shacharis, learning Torah, until he received a phone call from this man.

"Where are you?" "I'm still in Munkatch."

"I'll be there shortly."

He arrived and told him what occurred:

"I had a court case this morning in Manhattan, but my lawyer didn't show up. I was very upset about that because judges in this country don't respect a person who comes to court without a lawyer. They see it as a lack of respect towards the court. That alone could have caused me to lose the case. "I called my lawyer, but he didn't answer the phone.

I stood before the judge, my knees trembling from fear. The judge asked me what I can say to prove my side of the story, and I explained my claim. Then the miracle occurred. The judge said, 'The fact you came here today without a lawyer proves you are confident with your claim and that you are telling the truth. Otherwise, you would hire a lawyer. I believe everything you say.'

"The ruling was far better than what I expected to achieve, even with my lawyer. I was hoping the lawyer would convince the judge to schedule another hearing, and then there would be a compromise. But I was exonerated!

"When I left the court, the lawyer called me. He said, 'I have been a lawyer for forty years, and this is the first time I overslept. Please forgive me.'

"I told him how the proceedings went, and he was shocked. He said he had never heard of a judge using that logic before. So, I told him that I would send him a copy of the minutes so he can see for himself."

This Yid said to Reb Hershel, "I couldn't speak for an hour because I was so overwhelmed by the miracle that happened to me. Thank you for davening for me. Here's five thousand dollars, the amount I put aside to pay the lawyer."

They chatted some more, and the Yid wrote down Reb Hershel's address and the date of his daughter's *chasunah*.

Later that afternoon, the driver called Reb Hershel to apologize for not coming on time. He said, "I have driven *meshulachim* for years, and this is the first time I overslept. Please forgive me." (He said almost the exact words the lawyer said.) The driver added that he would drive him the following day for free to compensate for the loss of money he caused him today.

And, on the day of Reb Hershel's daughter's *chasunah*, a messenger came with a generous envelope filled with money for Reb Hershel.

The lesson: Hashem's kindness is often concealed. What seems bad, is all good. These are the **נפלאותיך** that we thank Hashem for.

Reb Shach gave an example from the Yidden in Russia who were exiled to Siberia. Everyone thought it was a terrible decree, and those who remained at home thought they were the fortunate ones. But then the Holocaust came. Those in faraway Siberia survived, and those who remained home were killed by the Nazis, *yimach shemom*..

Sometimes, Hashem's kindness is revealed in remarkably, concealed ways.

Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* was in Eretz Yisrael after the war where

he met someone he knew from Poland from before the war. "How are things?" Reb Gad'l asked warmly. The man replied that both of his parents and most of his family were killed in the Holocaust, and therefore he dropped religion entirely. "How can I be religious, after going through all of this?"

Reb Gad'l said, "A person can be in Warsaw and yet he is able to speak to someone in America. Does that make sense to you? Do you know exactly how the phone works? Do you understand the mechanism that is used to transfer the sound waves over so many miles? But you use the phone anyway.

Similarly, even if we don't understand Hashem's ways, that isn't a reason to abandon Yiddishkeit."

Years later, Reb Gad'l was walking down a street in Tel Aviv and a religious Yid riding a motorcycle stopped near him. "Come aboard. I'll give you a ride." The motorcycle had a small trailer attached to it, suited for a passenger.



Reb Gad'l never rode on such an apparatus before, and he didn't know how to get in. He said, "I don't know how these things work."

The man replied, "Do you need to understand everything? When a Yid is in Warsaw and is speaking on the phone to a Yid in America, does he understand how it works? But that doesn't stop him from using the phone."

Reb Gad'l looked closer at this person. The man said, "Do you recognize me? Years ago, you used this reasoning to convince me to believe in Hashem even when matters didn't make sense to me. I took your words to heart and did *teshuvah*."

Parshah Pearls -B'nei Cheis, B'nei Cheis, B'nei Cheis …

The Torah repeats "B'nei Cheis" no less than ten times, points out the Ba'al ha'Turim. This is because if someone assists a Talmid-Chacham in making a purchase, it is as if he had fulfilled the Ten Commandments, which contain the letter 'Ches' ten times.

L'Maaseh



During the Holocaust, the Nazis, *ym"s*, would collect many Jewish artifacts and *Seforim*, because they wanted to make a museum called, 'The Jew That Was'. After the war, the allies came into Germany and found many crates of *Seforim*. They didn't know what to do with them, so they decided to send it to America.

When the crates got there, someone suggested that since all of the *Seforim* came from *Yeshivos*, it would be appropriate for them to be sent again to *Yeshivos* in America. Every *Yeshivah* got a package. When *Ner Yisroel* in Baltimore got their package, **Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman, *zt"l***, the *Rosh Yeshivah*, decided that since he wasn't in Germany during the Holocaust, and the *Mashgiach*, **Rav Dovid Kronglas, *zt"l***, was there, he said that Rav Dovid should open it. It was a very emotional time for Rav Dovid as he remembered how the Nazis *ym"s* came and took these *Seforim* away from people.

After Rav Dovid opened the box, he became even more emotional because the top *Sefer* was *Sefer Chachmah U'Mussar*, which was written by his own *Rebbe*, **Rav Yeruchum Levovitz, *zt"l***.

With tears streaming down his face, Rav Dovid's face turned white as he opened the *Sefer* and saw that written on the inside the cover, it said: ***'From the Seforim of Dovid Kronglas'!***

A Young Child's Prank

When the **Rebbe Shmuel of Lubavitch** was a young child he was unusually serious, but often a bit mischievous.

One day, when he was just six or seven years old and searching for a quiet place to sit and learn Torah, he decided to try the women's section of the Shul. But suddenly the silence was broken by sound of the side door opening followed by the sobs of a woman. He silently walked to the front of the balcony and peeked down to the main floor. There he saw a woman standing before the Holy Ark, weeping uncontrollably.

"G-d, please help me!" she moaned. "I'm alone! I've tried to work; I've tried everything. But the house is bare, and my children are starving! My husband is dead, all I have is You. Please answer my prayers, G-d!"

Little Shmuel felt he had to do something. She was disturbing his learning and besides, he couldn't stand to see suffering. He ducked down behind the low wall and said in the lowest voice he could conjure. "Lady! Lady! Do not worry!" The high ceiling of the empty Shul created a sort of heavenly echo that made it seem as though his voice was coming from everywhere.

The woman fell to her knees, looked up at the ceiling, raised her hands towards heaven and sighed "Oh! Oh! Thank you, L-rd!" When he saw it was working, he continued, "Do not cry! You will have money. I am giving you the power to heal! When someone is sick, just take a glass of water, make a blessing on it, drink a bit, pour a bit for the sick person, and then bless them. People will pay you much money and you will never be needy again!"

Then the boy paused dramatically for a moment and said, "But remember! Never tell anyone how you got this power." "Oh, I won't. I promise!" She innocently replied. "Thank you, L-rd. Thank you! I won't tell a soul. Oh, this is wonderful!"

The next morning, she got to work spreading the word that she could heal, and that very day someone brought their sick father to be cured. She felt a bit strange, but she did as the voice had told her the day before and amazingly, it worked. The man actually felt better!

The news spread like a forest fire and in no time people were lined up at her door. She transformed from a pauper to a fairly wealthy woman in just a few weeks. The years passed. About 25 years later the child, Shmuel, became the Rebbe "Maharash" of Chabad, renowned throughout Russia for his genius and his holiness. Thousands flocked to his center in Lubavitch to obtain his blessings and his advice.



Then, one cold winter he became dangerously ill. He had developed a boil that had become seriously infected, and his health deteriorated rapidly. The Rebbe had a high fever and it appeared there was no alternative but to operate. Then someone suggested that maybe, as a last resort, they should try Bubba (Grandma) Sarah. It seems there was this old Jewish lady in Vitebsk that had some charm for healing people and because there was no other choice she was brought, trembling with awe at the thought that she was actually in the same room with the holy Lubavitcher Rebbe, to heal him.

The Rebbe was lying on his back, his head propped up by a large pillow breathing with great difficulty and in obvious pain. But before she could even begin, he asked, "First you must tell me what the source of your power to heal is."

"Oh, Rebbe!" moaned the old woman. "Please don't ask me to do that. I promised that I wouldn't tell. Please Rebbe!" But the Rebbe insisted. "I promise that nothing will happen to you or your remedy." After all, G-d also tells me things that are secret, so He won't mind if I know your secret too. In any case, I cannot take your treatment until you tell me."

How could she deny the holy Rebbe? She told him the entire story of how 25 years ago a heavenly voice spoke to her in the shul. Suddenly the Rebbe realized that it was he himself that had given her the blessing and he began to laugh. It was painful because of the boil, but the more he thought about it the harder he laughed, he simply couldn't stop himself.

His family, hearing the noise from where they were in the next room, thought the Rebbe was having some sort of attack and rushed into the room after sending for the doctor. The doctor arrived just in time to see that the Rebbe's exuberant laughter had split the boil open and now all that remained was to clean the wound. In just days the Rebbe was back on his feet, a completely healthy man!

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP] - The Recipe for Happiness During Challenging Times

"And the life of Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years. These were the years of the life of Sarah." (23:1) – וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה

All that Hashem does is good. Although we can't always see it with our own eyes, one day we will understand why certain things had to happen.

Rashi questions the end of the pasuk, wondering why the Torah repeated, "These were the years of the life of Sarah". Rashi explains the Torah is teaching us that **all** the years of Sarah's life were equally good.

Rabbi Naftoli Tzvi Yehudah Berlin zt"l, in his commentary Ha'emek Davar, says that Rashi is telling us Sarah felt joy and happiness **all** the years of her life.

How can **Rashi** say that Sarah felt joy and happiness for every moment of her life? Didn't she suffer throughout her life? She didn't have a child for the first ninety years of her life. She felt the need to give her maidservant, Hagar to Avraham as a wife, hoping that she would bear him a child. Furthermore, when Hagar became pregnant immediately, she began to act disrespectfully to Sarah. Also, Sarah experienced famine and had to leave Eretz Yisroel. She was taken captive twice, once by Pharaoh and once by Avimelech. Only due to miracles was her purity protected. After she gave birth to Yitzchak, many people doubted that he was genuinely her child. Sarah also had the challenge of sending Yishmael out of her house to prevent him from negatively influencing Yitzchak. Was this this good life that Sarah had experienced?!

Rabbi Naftoli Tzvi Yehudah Berlin zt"l explains, that Sarah had a very strong faith and trust in Hashem. That enabled her to feel joy and happiness for her entire life.

This is a powerful lesson for us. ***We all experience difficulties and challenges throughout our lives. At times, it may <u>seem</u> as if we are in total darkness and are totally abandoned. In reality, we are not. Hashem loves us immensely and only wants to give us goodness and happiness. What appears as a challenge today, may be the source of our salvation tomorrow.***



כָּל הַמַּאֲרִיךְ בְּאֶחָד, מַאֲרִיכִין לוֹ יָמָיו וּשְׁנוֹתָיו (Brachos 13b)

One who focuses on how everything comes from the One Hashem, will live long – R' Elimelech Biderman



Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

Rabbi Aryeh Levine zt"l once noticed that a youngster in his school was badly in need of a new pair of shoes. He knew that the boy's father would feel bad if he bought the boy a new pair of shoes. Rabbi Levine thought of a plan. During recess, he called the boy into his office and told him that he wanted to test how well he was learning. Rabbi Levine asked the boy relatively easy questions. After the boy answered those questions, Rabbi Levine said that he deserved a prize. He handed the boy a note to give to the local shoemaker to give him a pair of shoes, which Rabbi Levine would pay for. Rabbi Levine also gave the boy a note for his father. The note indicated that the boy won a pair of shoes as a prize for correctly answering all the questions that he had been asked. (Love Your Neighbour by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

Every act of kindness we do for others is very special and is richly rewarded by Hashem. If we are exceedingly kind and do many acts of kindness, we are considered a ba'al chesed. We can be considered a complete ba'al chesed when we strive to notice, anticipate, and provide for the needs of others, even before we are asked.

Deal Direct

In this week's Parsha Chayei-Sorah, the Torah tells in great detail the account of Avrohom buying the burial plot for his recently deceased wife Sorah. The Torah describes how Avrohom did not bargain on the price; how he paid right away; and how he paid in cash.

The Sages tell us that the deeds of the Avos - patriarchs are a sign of the proper behavior for us, the children of the patriarchs. We can therefore learn a lesson from the Torah's lengthy account of Avrohom's honest business dealings; namely, we must always be honest in business. The following two stories illustrate how being

honest in business causes Hashem's name to be sanctified in the world.



A number of years ago, the Kleinbarts of Boro Park were expecting their sixth child. When labour began one morning, she told her husband, Yidel, that they had to rush to Mt. Sinai Hospital in Manhattan to deliver their child. "It's rush hour. How will we get there on time?" Yidel asked anxiously. "Don't worry, we'll get there," his wife assured him, a little nervous herself.

Driving through the streets of Boro Park was manageable, but the Prospect and Gowanus Expressways toward Manhattan were frightening. The roads were clogged. Every passing minute increased Yidel's fear and trepidation that they would not get to the hospital in time. The quickest way to Manhattan is through the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, but the lines of cars bottlenecking toward the tunnel seemed endless. In desperation, Yidel turned illegally into the lane reserved for buses and taxis, and sped along, a lone car among yellow cabs and commuter buses. When he reached the tollbooth, Yidel sped into the tunnel, without paying the toll.

As they emerged from the other side, a policeman, notified of Yidel's "crime" by tunnel authorities, flagged down the car. "What's going on?" the officer demanded. "My wife is in labour. We're rushing to the hospital to have a baby," shouted Yidel. "Why didn't you call us?" the policeman called back. "We would have given you an escort. Go!"

The Kleinbarts resumed their rush and made it to Mount Sinai Hospital on time. The baby was born that morning. That night Yidel returned to Boro Park from Manhattan via the Battery Tunnel, and

when he reached the tollbooth, he handed two tokens to the toll collector.

"What's this?" the toll collector asked. "I was here this morning and I was rushing — " Before he could finish the sentence, the toll collector said excitedly, "Oh, what did your wife have?"

Yidel was stunned. "How did you know?" he asked the toll collector in amazement. "They told us that a guy like you (a religious Jew) would surely come back and pay!' replied the toll collector. The officers in the tollbooth and the patrol car had seen Yidel for merely moments and yet were confident to make their evaluation of an Orthodox Jew! (p. 130 Echoes of The Maggid Rav Paysach Krohn.)

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

"ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים שני חיי שרה"
"*And Sarah lived one hundred years, twenty years and seven years, the years of Sarah's life*." (23:1)

Rashi explains that the Torah repeats the words "the years of Sarah's life" to let us know that "**כולם שוין לטובה**" — "they were all equal in goodness." How could we say that all her years were equally good if during her life she was barren for many years and was held in captivity by Pharaoh and Avimelech?

In the *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 21a) there is a story of the *Tanna* who was known as "Nachum Ish Gamzu." Regardless of what happened to him, even apparently negative things, he always said, *"Gam zu letovah"* — "this is also for the good."

Once, the Jews selected Nachum to deliver to the king of Rome a box full of valuable stones and gems. While on his journey he slept at an inn, where some thieves emptied the box and filled it with sand. When he realized what happened, he said, *"Gam zu letovah."*

Upon arriving at the king's palace, he presented the gift. The king became very angry and wanted to kill the entire Jewish people for making fun of him. Suddenly, the prohet Eliyahu appeared looking like one of the king's advisors and said, "Perhaps this is the same type of sand which Avraham used during his war against the kings, sand that turned into ammunition." The king was then at war with a country he was unable to conquer. It was decided to test the sand against the enemy. The king's forces were amazed when indeed, thanks to the sand, they were victorious. Upon hearing this, the king had the gift box filled with valuable stones and gems and sent Nachum off with great honours.

Rashi's statement that all the years of Sarah's life were *"shavin letovah"* — "equal in goodness" — means that, even when confronted with difficult and unpleasant situations, she would also always say, *"Gam zu letovah."* (**פון אונזער אלטען אוצר**)

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

"אדני ישמעני ארץ ארבע מאות שקל כסף ביני ובינך מה הוא"
"My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you?" (23:15)

How did Efron calculate the amount of 400 shekels?

The name "Avraham" (**אברהם**) has five letters and the middle letter is a "**ר**". The name "Efron" (**עפרון**) also has five letters and the middle is also a "**ר**". The numerical value of "**ר**" is 200.

Efron, therefore, said to Avraham, "Since you insist on paying for the land, I arbitrarily decided that you should give me 400 shekels because: **'ביני ובינך'** — 'the [middle] between my name and your name' — **'מה הוא'** — 'what does it add up to? 400.' " (**אונזער אלטען אוצר**)

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולבכתה" ***"Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and weep for her."*** **(23:2)**

Why is the word "**ולבכתה**" — "and weep for her" written with a small "**כ**"?

Avraham in addition to having a son, Yitzchak, also had a daughter named "Bakol" (*Bava Batra* 16b). When Avraham went with Yitzchak to Mount Moriah, she remained home with her mother. When Sarah died upon hearing about Yitzchak and the *Akeidah*, her daughter, Bakol, also died.

The word "**ולבכתה**" alludes to the above. Without the "**כ**" it is "**וּלְבִתָּהּ**" (and for her daughter) and with the "**כ**" it is "**וְלִבְכֹּתָהּ**" which means to "cry over her." Avraham did both: He wept for her (Sarah) and also "**וּלְבִתָּהּ**" (for her daughter who died at the same time). (**זכרון ישראל בשם לב אבי**)



Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולבכתה" ***"And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and weep for her."*** **(23:2)**

Rashi comments: "The narratives of Sarah's death and the Binding of Yitzchak follow one another, for through the announcement of the Binding, that her son had been prepared for slaughter and had almost been slaughtered, her soul fled from her and she died."

Why would a righteous woman like Sarah expire upon hearing that her son was prepared for slaughter for the sake of Hashem? On the contrary, she should have been proud!

When Sarah heard of Avraham's mission to Mount Moriah, she marvelled at his spiritual heroism. Had she been told that Yitzchak was sacrificed, she would have been filled with joy at the fact that

her son was accepted by Hashem. She, however, was told that he had *almost* been slaughtered.

Upon hearing this, she was terribly saddened, because she presumed that at the last moment her son was found unsuitable. Sarah feared that perhaps her influence was in some way inadequate and her education of Yitzchak imperfect. This was so profoundly saddening that her soul departed.

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל"
***"And Avraham was old and advanced in age and G-d blessed Avraham with everything."* (24:1)**

The word *"bakol"* (**בכל**) has the numerical value of 52, which is also the same value as the word *"ben"* (**בן**) — "son" — alluding to the fact that Avraham had a son (Rashi).

What is the connection between Avraham's becoming old and his having everything — a son?

There is an old adage, ***"A father or a mother can manage their ten children, but ten children cannot take care of one father or mother."*** Often as parents grow older, their children consider them a burden and find caring for them difficult.

As a dutiful son, Yitzchak, however, was profoundly grateful for the love and concern provided by Avraham and Sarah. The Torah tells us that Avraham was blessed with "everything" to say that though he remained alone and was advanced in age, his son Yitzchak stood at his side and was totally dedicated to his welfare. He took care of *everything* Avraham needed to make his old age pleasant and comfortable. Such a child is indeed a blessing to a parent.

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

"וה' ברך את אברהם בכל" ***"G-d blessed Avraham with everything."*** **(24:1)** What was the "everything?" When the letters of the word "**בכל**" are spelled out the way they are pronounced, i.e. **ב=בית, כ=כף, ל=למד**, the total numerical value is 586. This is the same numerical value as the word "*shofar*" (**שופר**).

Yitzchak was originally destined to be brought up on the altar as a sacrifice. When the angel intervened, he was spared, and instead Avraham sacrificed a ram which suddenly appeared. From the horn of this ram, a *shofar* was made which was sounded when Hashem gave the Torah to the Jewish people (*Pirkei De'Rebbi Eliezer,* 31). This *shofar* will also be sounded to announce the revelation of *Mashiach* (Isaiah 27:13).

Thus Yitzchak plays an important role in the giving of Torah and coming of *Mashiach.* To the Jewish people, Torah and *Mashiach* are "everything," and Avraham was blessed with a son who will be involved in the delivery of "everything" to *Klal Yisrael.* (**חתם סופר**)

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

והיה הנערה אשר אמר אליה הטי נא כדך ואשתה ואמרה שתה וגם גמליך אשקה ***"Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Please tip over your jug so I may drink.' and who replies 'Drink, and I will even water your camels....'"*** **(24:14)**

Why did Eliezer test her in this way? Eliezer wanted to verify two basic things about the girl. 1) Was she good natured? 2) Would she be resourceful in difficult situations?

Therefore, Eliezer asked her to tilt the jug so that he could drink from the *jug itself.* If she was good-natured, she would have pity on a thirsty man and let him drink. However, he was curious to see what she would do with the leftover water. If she would take it home or

drink it herself, she would appear to be foolish because Eliezer was a stranger and might have been sick, contaminating the water. On the other hand, if she would spill it out on the ground, this would be disrespectful to Eliezer.

When Eliezer saw that after letting him drink, Rivkah took the remainder of the jug and gave it to the camels, he knew that not only was she good-natured but also very bright and of refined character. (**בית הלוי**)

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky



"וירץ העבד לקראתה" ***"The servant [Eliezer] ran towards her [Rivkah]."*** **(24:17)**

Rashi explains that the servant ran to her because he witnessed a miracle: The water in the well rose to her. **The Ramban** explains that Rashi derives this from the later phrase "she drew water for all his camels" (24:20). Obviously, in the previous *pasuk*, she did not have to draw the water. Why didn't the water rise the second time?

At first, when Rivkah came to the well, her intention was to draw water for herself. Hashem didn't want a *tzaddeikit* to inconvenience herself and, therefore, caused the well water to rise so that she could fill her jug easily.

However, the second time, when she went to the well, it was for a *mitzvah* — to feed thirsty animals — and Hashem did not want to take away part of the *mitzvah* by making it easier for her. Therefore, the water did not rise, and it was necessary for her to "draw water for the camels." (**מעינה של תורה**)

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ויברכו את רבקה ויאמרו לה אחתנו את היי לאלפי רִבְבָה"
***"They blessed Rivkah and said to her, 'Our sister be the mother of thousands of ten thousands.'"* (24:60)**

Why did Lavan give his sister such a nice blessing?

Lavan really did not want to wish his sister well. All he told her was that, "If you become *'le'alfei'*— the mother of thousands of ten thousands (the wife of a millionaire) — do not forget your family and relatives. You should always remember, *'revavah'* (**רבבה**) — which is the acronym for **'רִבְקָה בַּת בְּתוּאֵל הָאֲרַמִי'** — 'You are the daughter of the crooked Betuel.' " (**ארונו של יוסף**)

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ויאמר בוא ברוך ה'" ***"And he said: 'Come, blessed by G-d.'"* (24:31)**

Why did Lavan consider Eliezer "blessed by G-d"?

Lavan came as a villain, casting His eyes on Eliezer's money. Eliezer was petrified with fear and concerned about his well-being. Immediately, he uttered Hashem's holy name, and suddenly Lavan saw him positioned ***on top*** of the camels, and the camels ***on top*** of the water, and he was unable to reach them.

This is obvious from what the Torah relates that when Lavan came near Eliezer, he noticed that: **"והנה עמד על הגמלים על העין"** — "behold, he stood ***on*** the camels ***on*** the fountain" (24:30). Grammatically, it should read, **"והנה עמד אצל הגמלים אצל העין"** — "and, behold, he stood ***near*** the camels ***near*** the fountain."

Lavan knew than water nullifies sorcery. As the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 67b) relates about Zeiri who purchased a camel in Alexandria, Egypt. When he wanted to give it water to drink, it turned into a plank of wood of a bridge. After investigating, he

found out that this camel was originally made through magic from the bridge plank, and *water* possesses the power to nullify sorcery.

Hence, when Lavan saw Eliezer standing ***on*** the camels which were ***on*** the fountain of water, he realizes that Eliezer was not a mere magician who performed acts of sorcery, but was blessed by G-d with Divine powers. (**ילקוט מעם לועז**)

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ויברכו את רבקה ויאמרו לה אחתנו את היי לאלפי רבבה"
***"They blessed Rivkah and said to her, 'Our sister, be the mother of thousands of ten thousands."* (24:60)**

Before a *chuppah*, when the <u>*chassan*</u> covers the *kallah*'s face with a veil , it is customary to recite this blessing.

What do we mean that the <u>*kallah*</u> should have a family of tens of thousands of children?

When Hashem blesses a person with financial success, it is proper to give a portion to *tzedakah*. When one supports a *yeshivah*, the children who are learning Torah thanks to his financial assistance are considered his children. Years later, the students of those <u>*yeshivah*</u> students are also considered his children.

The <u>*berachah*</u> to the *kallah* is that in her marriage she should be blessed with wealth and be imbued with the good sense to give <u>*tzedakah*</u> to Torah institutions. Through helping children receive a Torah education, she in turn becomes a mother of thousands of children.

Alternatively, the *Gemara* (*Bava Batra* 110a) says that when one marries a woman he should investigate her brothers, because most sons resemble the brothers of the mother. Lavan's *berachah* on the surface appears to be very nice. In reality, however, he meant that his sister was to be blessed with many children and since most of

them should resemble him, the Jewish people would be flooded with people of his character. Therefore, as the *kallah* is about to enter in marriage, the rabbi and prominent people who escort the *chatan* to the *badekenish* declare to the *kallah*, you are "*achoteinu*" – "our sister" – and we wish you that you should be blessed with children who will resemble us and thus be a source of *Yiddishe nachas* to you and *K'lal Yisrael*.(שלחן העזר סי׳ ז)

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky



מי האיש הלזה ההלך בשדה לקראתנו *"Who is this man walking in the field toward us?"* (24:65)

The word **הלזה** — "this" — is extra. Would it not be sufficient to say, "Who is the man walking in the field?"

Like all the other matriarchs, Rivkah was a prophetess (*Bereishit* 29:34, Rashi). When she noticed Yitzchak, she became very much impressed because of certain things she saw about him. She saw that he had something special to do with two "*hei*"s (**ה-ה**), and that he had a unique connection also with the letters "**ל**" and "**ז**". Consequently, she asked Eliezer what is the meaning of the "**הלזה**" that I see about this man?

Eliezer identified the man as Yitzchak, son of Avraham and Sarah. He went on to explain: for many years they were childless, and when Hashem added a "**ה**" and changed the name "Avram" to "Avraham" and another "**ה**" to change the name "Sarai" to "Sarah," they were able to give birth to him. When this man reached the age of 37, which is the numerical value of **ל״ז**, his father was ready to bring him up as an offering to Hashem and he fully agreed. (**מגלה עמוקות**)

Vedibarta Bam - by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ואלה ימי שני חיי אברהם אשר חי מאת שנה ושבעים שנה וחמש שנים"
***"And these are the years of Avraham, which he lived, a hundred years, seventy years, and five years."* (25:7)**

The words "which he lived" seem redundant?

Avraham was really supposed to live 180 years, as his son Yitzchak did. However, his grandson Eisav was not behaving properly, and Hashem knew that Avraham would have much aggravation from seeing his grandson's behaviour. Therefore, He shortened Avraham's life by five years (Rashi 25:30). Hence, the Torah writes the words "which he lived," to emphasize that these were the years he lived and *not* his full allocated lifespan. (**ילקוט הדרוש**)

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



A man was once deeply troubled over his child's illness, that despite all the treatments, nothing seemed to be working and help him get better. He decided to make a trip and visit **the *Chazon Ish*** in Bnei Brak, to seek his *brachah* and advice.

When the man entered the home of the great *tzaddik*, the *Chazon Ish* was saying the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*. He pronounced each word slowly and clearly, and had tremendous *kavanah*. Due to the man's intense worry over his child, he couldn't contain himself and wait for the *Chazon Ish* to finish the *brachah*. He blurted out that his child was very ill and the doctors gave up any hope that he will recover! The *Chazon Ish*, finishing his *brachah*, emphasized the last few words of the *brachah*: *Baruch atah*

Hashem, rofei kol basar u'mafli la'asos, You, Hashem, are the Source of all blessing, Who heals all flesh and acts wondrously!

The man answered '*amein*', and felt badly about having spoken while the *gadol* was saying a *brachah*. The *Chazon Ish* then turned to the man and said, "Did you hear the words of the *brachah*? Hashem does wonders!" This was all the *Chazon Ish* said to the man, and the man nodded and turned to leave. His child had a completely recovery!

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

In this week's *Parshah*, when Eliezer comes to the well and asks Rivka to give him water to drink to determine if she was the one who would marry Yitzchak, the Torah describes how Rivka 'acted speedily' (24:20). What is the point of describing her hurry? Also, why did she hurry?

The *Sh'nei Luchos Ha'Bris* (the *Sh"lah*) explains that Rivka was in a quandary. After she poured from her pitcher for Eliezer, she had water left over. She could not then go and give it to the animals as that would be equating Eliezer with the animals. Nor could she spill it out as that would be a sign that there was something wrong with the water that Eliezer drank from.

Therefore, being sensitive to these feelings, Rivka went about in a hurried fashion and thereby caused the remaining water to "inadvertently" spill. Doing this, she would not cause any slight to Eliezer's feelings.

Hashem said to Dovid Ha'melech: "Involve yourself in Torah study, and I will fight your battles." (Yalkut Tehilim 722)

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

Rabbi Yonatan Rietti says the following fascinating insight pertaining to the *middah* of happiness, especially on Shabbos. It is taught in *Avos* (5:26) that the reward for doing a mitzvah depends on the amount of effort involved in doing it— the more work that goes into a mitzvah, the greater the reward.

Avos D'Rabbi Nassan (3:6) explains that any mitzvah done with difficulty has a reward one hundred times greater than a mitzvah that is done easily.

Orchos Tzaddikim (*Sha'ar HaSimchah*) states that any mitzvah done with *simchah* is worth one thousand times more than a mitzvah done without *simchah*.

The *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 105b) teaches that getting angry is compared to serving *avodah zarah*, worshipping idols; while the *Gemara* (*Chullin* 5a) says that not serving *avodah zarah* is equal to keeping the entire Torah, which is comprised of 613 *mitzvos*!

This means that not getting angry has a reward equal to keeping the entire Torah!

The *Ben Ish Chai* (see *Shemos*, *Shanah II*, Introduction) writes that any mitzvah done on Shabbos is worth one thousand times more than if it is done during the week. Therefore, not getting angry on Shabbos and remaining happy, which is sometimes a difficult thing to do and also equals the whole Torah, has a value of 61 billion and 300 million *mitzvos*!!! (613 x 100 x 1000 x 1000 = 61,300,000,000)

Whenever we confront people or situations that aggravate us, we must realize that Hashem is offering us opportunities to act with *simchah*, in order to earn a tremendous reward! Imagine earning *so much* in just one short moment of self-control!

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

Once, while **the *Baal Shem Tov*** was sitting at the Shabbos night *seudah*, he suddenly started to laugh. This was a most unusual thing for him to do, and his *talmidim* wondered what could make their Rebbe laugh like that. After a few minutes, the Rebbe started laughing again! A short while later, the Rebbe started laughing a third time!

The next day, one of the students, Reb Zev, who was very close to the *Baal Shem Tov*, would approach their Rebbe and ask about this unusual behaviour. The *Baal Shem Tov* said to him, "Why don't you and the rest of the *talmidim* come to me tonight after Shabbos, and I will show you what it was that made me laugh."

That night, after *Havdalah*¸ the *Baal Shem Tov* asked the students to prepare the wagon and horses for a trip. They travelled the entire night, and at daybreak, they arrived at a large town and went to *daven Shacharis*. After *davening*, the *Baal Shem Tov* went over to the *gabbai* and asked to see Reb Shabsi, the *seforim* binder, and the *Baal Shem Tov* said to Reb Shabsi, "Please tell us what happened to you on Shabbos night." Reb Shabsi told them the following:

"All my life I worked binding *seforim*, and *Boruch Hashem* it supported all my needs. It was my *minhag* that every Thursday, I would buy everything needed for Shabbos and have everything ready for Shabbos by *chatzos* on Friday. After *chatzos* I would not do any more work except get dressed for Shabbos and go to *shul*, review the *Parshah— Shnayim Mikra V'Echod Targum*, and say *Shir HaShirim* until it was time for *Minchah* and *Kabbalas Shabbos*, and I would then go home and make *Kiddush*.

This was my practice for many years. Lately however, since I am getting older, I don't have the strength to work as much binding *seforim*, and I slowly started running out of money. I don't always have enough now to buy everything I need for Shabbos, but I still keep my *minhag* to go to *shul* at *chatzos* on *Erev Shabbos*.

This past Friday was especially difficult. I had no money left over from the week to buy anything for Shabbos. When *chatzos* came, I told my wife that I was going to go to *shul* as always, but I made her promise not to go to the neighbours to borrow anything for Shabbos— no oil for lighting candles, no food or wine or *challah*. I did this because as *Chazal* say, it is better to make Shabbos like a weekday, than have to borrow from people. I went to *shul* as usual and learned and *davened*, knowing that my house was dark and empty of anything for Shabbos. After *Maariv*, when I was walking home and getting close to my house, I noticed that there was bright light coming from the windows of my house! 'How could this be?' I wondered, we didn't have money this week to buy oil or candles. I thought that my wife certainly must have broken her promise and gone to the neighbours to borrow candles.



When I went inside, I saw the table set beautifully, with fresh *challos* and the whole house smelled of delicious food! I got very upset, because I had told my wife to promise me that she wouldn't borrow anything, and she didn't keep her word! I decided though, that since it was Shabbos I was not going to say anything so as not to cause any arguments. I just started to happily sing *Shalom Aleichem* and *Eishes Chayil*.

When my wife handed me the wine for *Kiddush*, however, I couldn't control myself anymore, and I had to ask her why she broke her promise. My wife told me that she didn't break any promises. She said that after I left for *shul*, she had nothing to do. There was no food to prepare, and the house was clean, so she decided that instead of wasting time, she would fold some old clothes from the storage chest.

While working, she found one of my old coats that I hadn't worn in many years, and she noticed that the buttons were made of pure gold! She quickly cut them off and took them to the market where she sold them for a small fortune! She hurried and bought every item and delicacy that we would need for Shabbos, and rushed home to prepare everything!

"When I heard this, I rejoiced in my heart and said *Kiddush* with great *simchah*! My wife served fish and I told her how lucky we were to have such a *brachah* from Hashem that He saved us from poverty! In our joy, we both got up and danced like a *chosson* and *kallah* on the day of their *chuppah*! After that we sat down and ate soup and meat and other delicious foods. Because of our great happiness, we started dancing again until we got tired! Then we ate all types of fruits and desserts and got up and danced a third time! We were so thankful to Hashem and by dancing we could show Him our *simchah* for saving us!"

At this point the *Baal Shem Tov* said to everyone listening, "Every time Reb Shabsi and his wife danced at the Shabbos night *seudah*, the *Malachei HaShareis* also danced in *Shamayim*! This was what delighted me and made me smile and laugh three times during the *seudah*!

The *Baal Shem Tov* asked Reb Shabsi, "What can I *bentch* you with? Would you like a *brachah* that you live the rest of your days not lacking anything ever again, or would you like a *brachah* to have a child?" Reb Shabsi answered, "I never had any children, Rebbe. Please give me and my wife a *brachah* to have a child." The *Baal Shem Tov* agreed, and said that by this time next year, Reb Shabsi and his wife would have a son, and he would like to attend the *bris*!

And so it was! The next year Reb Shabsi and his wife had a baby boy! They invited *Rebbe Yisroel Baal Shem Tov* to come to the *bris*, where they named the baby *Yisroel*— the name of the Rebbe who gave them the *brachah*. This child grew up to be a great *talmid chacham*, and

eventually wrote the *sefer* called '*Avodas Yisroel*'. This child was none other than the famed ***Kosnitzer Maggid***! (**Rabbi Yisroel Hopstein** 1737–1814)

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

ולרבקה אח ושמו לבן Rivka had a brother whose name was Lavan *(24:29)*

This *Posuk* needs explanation. *Chazal* have said that the righteous are introduced with the phrase 'and his name was', and then the name, for example, **ושמו בועז, ושמו מרדכי, ושמו אלקנה**, and the wicked are listed by name followed by the phrase, 'was his name', for example, **נבל שמו, גולית שמו** and yet here it is written " **ושמו לבן** ", as is stated by the righteous.

The explanation is that in regard to Lavan, only his name was Lavan [meaning white], but everything else about him was black.

Parshah Thoughts By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



Eliezer gave Rivka a nose ring which represented the half *Shekel* coins which the Jewish people would contribute annually to the *Mishkan*, and two bracelets which represent the *Luchos* (24:22, *Rashi*).

The *Chida* (*Pnei Dovid*) notes that this was also a message for marriage. A spouse has to realize that they are half of a whole, and through their mutual respect and honour, a couple can attain growth in *Torah*.

SHABBOS STORIES FOR CHAYEI SARAH

Almost at the Peak

Chazal tell us that whenever the Torah writes "rak - only," it is excluding something. Therefore, **והיית רק למעלה** 13:28 means the Jewish nation will be on top of all nations, and they will enjoy immense success. Everything will be good for them – but not everything. Something will be missing.





The Chasam Sofer, zt"l and the grave of Reb Eliezer Ashkenazi in Remah Cemetery in Kraków

The Chasam Sofer zt'l writes in the name of Reb Eliezer Ashkenazi (author of Maasei Hashem) that this is for our benefit. Because when you reach perfection, the only way to go is down. It states (Mishlei 16:18), **שבר לפני גאון** "Before breaking, one becomes great." So it is better when something is lacking.

Several times in his sefarim, the Chasam Sofer expresses that a perfect life isn't perfect at all. People want to have a life without any problems at all, but the Chasam Sofer clarifies that the

problems are what keep us going. They give us a challenge to conquer, a reason to wake up in the morning to amend.

Klal Yisrael can make their goal in life success in Torah and in avodas Hashem, and that will grant them a purpose in life. But for many, a perfect life is anything but perfect. As much as we don't want the problems, what would we do with our time if we didn't have problems to deal with? Life would become boring.

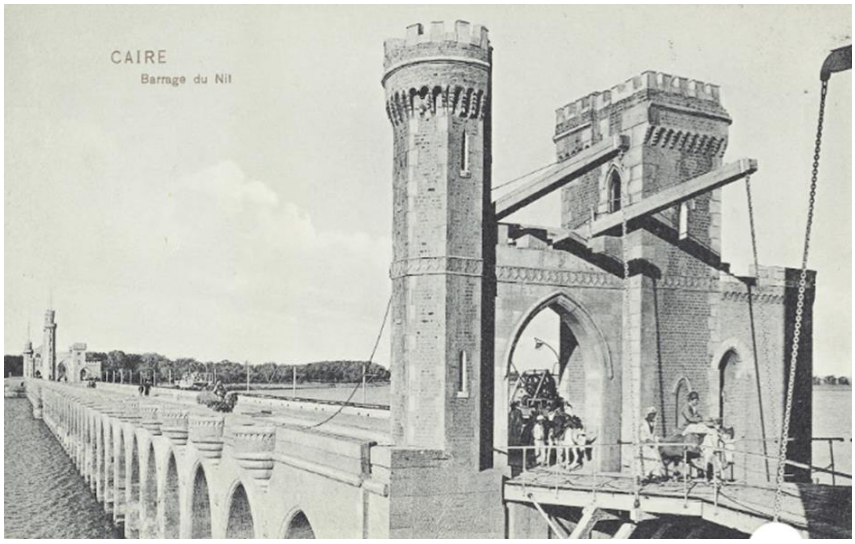
Therefore, we receive Hashem's blessings, **רק והיית למעלה**, you will be on top, things will be good for you – but not everything. Even at the best times, something will be lacking, and that is for our benefit. Reb Eliezer Ashkanazi experienced firsthand that it isn't good to be all the way on top.

This is what happened to him: Reb Eliezer Ashkenazi lived in Mitzrayim and was renowned for his honesty, cleverness, and vast wisdom. The king of Mitzrayim also heard of Reb Eliezer's greatness, and he appointed him to be one among his ministers. The king of Mitzrayim didn't regret appointing Reb Eliezer Ashkanazi at this high position. Reb Eliezer's wisdom helped the king run his country smoothly and successful, and the king loved Reb Eliezer very much. He even gave Reb Eliezer his signet ring, an honour that only Reb Eliezer received.

The other ministers, advisors, and officials in the king's cabinet were jealous that the king loved Reb Eliezer so much. They waited for the opportunity to harm Reb Eliezer Ashkenazi and lower his rank. The king's birthday was approaching, and he invited his cabinet to his birthday celebration.

Reb Eliezer was crossing a bridge over the Nile to go to the celebration, when another minister asked him whether he forgot to bring the king's signet ring. Reb Eliezer took out the ring to show that he has it with him, and the jealous officer grabbed it and threw it to the Nile. Reb Eliezer jumped and caught the ring in mid-air,

before it fell into the waters below. It was a miracle that he caught it.



At the party, the king accorded Reb Eliezer immense honour, and all the other officials cringed with jealousy. After the celebration ended, the king walked Reb Eliezer out of the palace. Once again, this roused the wrath of Reb Eliezer's fellow officials. Reb Eliezer wasn't happy that he received so many honours at the party. He reminded himself that Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men, said, **לפני שבר גאון** Mishlei (18:16) "Before falling, one becomes great."

Reb Eliezer feared that the honour he received was a sign that he would soon plummet and lose everything. It was time to leave the country. That very night he tossed precious gems into a box and boarded a ship for Turkey. Indeed, this act saved his life. Later he heard that after he left the celebration, some of the king's officers approached the king with terrible false claims about Reb Eliezer.

The king believed them and ordered his arrest. But by the time the police came to his home, he was already on his way to Turkey. He was saved once, but soon his life was at risk again. Not far from the Turkish port in Constantinople, the ship hit a rock and sunk.

All passengers jumped into the water and tried to swim ashore. Reb Eliezer realized, with a heavy heart, that he couldn't take along his box filled with gems, but he was fortunate to find a plank floating in the water, which helped him reach the shores of Constantinople.

Reb Eliezer recovered from his ordeal at sea, and he thought over what's happening to him. Just a few days before, he had wealth and

honour. He was the Egyptian's king's highest ranking official after the king. And now he was a stranger in a foreign land, without money and without prestige.

Why was he being punished? After contemplating this matter, he concluded that he was being punished for bitul (neglecting the study of) Torah. When he was serving in the king's palace, his many obligations prevented him from properly studying Torah. He made a firm resolve to correct this error. He was ready to live simply if he could devote himself to studying Torah.

Reb Eliezer heard that there was a tiny apartment for rent, which supplied daily meals. The apartment was owned by a poor Jewish widow, and the meals weren't much; mostly dried up bread. But Reb Eliezer agreed to move there. It wasn't what he was used to. Up until very recently he lived a life of luxury. But he didn't mind, so long as he could devote himself to studying Torah.

One day, the widow didn't have dry bread. All she served was watery soup. That's all she could afford that day, and that was all Reb Eliezer had to ward off his hunger. To make matters worse, there was a spider in the soup! Reb Eliezer realized that he had reached a nadir, and he knew that now his mazal would turn around and things will become better. Because when one is at the top, the only way to go is down, and when one is at the lowest rank, the only way to go is up.

Later that day, he heard an announcement: "The sultan seeks a chess partner to play with." The sultan's previous chess partner died, and he sought a replacement. Reb Eliezer applied for the position. The sultan played a game of chess with Reb Eliezer and was impressed with Reb Eliezer's wisdom and expertise. He immediately hired him for the position and appointed him to be a minister.

Reb Eliezer knew that he must be cautious from bitul Torah. So he kept track of the hours he played with the sultan, and he made up those hours studying Torah at the wee hours of the night.

Sometimes he was very tired, but he remembered that he was once punished for bitul Torah study, and he didn't want to make the same mistake again.

One night, while playing chess with the sultan, Reb Eliezer fell asleep in the middle of the game. That was extremely disrespectful; the sultan could take off someone's head for such an offence. However, the sultan liked Reb Eliezer, and the sultan placed his own cushion under Reb Eliezer's head.

When Reb Eliezer awoke, he realized he had reached another peak, and that meant his descent was soon coming. So, he left Turkey and moved to Posen, where he served as the rav. Afterwards, he went to Krakow. He was the rav of Krakow and that is where he is buried. Because this is the way of the world: When one reaches the highest levels and everything is going his way, the only way to go is down. And in contrast, when everything is bad, things have to improve. It can't become worse than it is. (*Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.)*

Lessons From Our Sages Through The Ages

When the **Manchester Rosh Yeshiva** lived with his daughter, he asked what he could do to help her each morning. She replied that she did not want him to serve her as he was her father and it was her job to respect him, not the other way around.

R' Segal z"l said, "When your mother was alive, I would make her a cup of coffee each morning before I went to daven. That way, I had a chesed in my pocket when I approached the Ribono Shel Olam. Now that she is gone, I have no one else to do chesed with, so I want to do something for you in the morning."

He understood that every day there is room to grow and achieve.

Why Davening is Like An Old Kugel Pot



The Tzadik Rav Alexander Ziskind, zt"l, the author of the Sefer Yesod V'Shoresh HaAvodah, would regularly Daven in a nearby Shul. Even when he got older and he didn't have the same strength that he used to, he still pushed himself to Daven in his set place.

His wife saw him struggle to get to Shul and asked him why he bothers himself to do this. Perhaps it would be a good idea to have a Minyan for him in their house, and this way he wouldn't have to walk anywhere. Certainly, she said, his Tefilos would be answered from the house no less than they would be answered from Shul.

The Tzadik answered her, "You know from experience that when you prepare a Kugel for Shabbos, what pot you will use? Wouldn't you use the old one, which has a lot of oil absorbed in its walls? It then only needs a little oil to be added to the Kugel, and it will come out good.

This is not so if you used a new pot, where even if you add a lot of oil, the oil will be absorbed in its walls and the Kugel will not have any flavour. Tefilah is like that Kugel! The Shul is a place where the walls are soaked in extra Kedushah from all the Tefilos and Torah that take place there. Even if someone Davens without all the proper intentions, his Tefilah will ascend before Hashem.

This is not so with the Tefilah that takes place in a private home, because this is a place where the walls are not soaked with so much Torah and Tefilah, and sometimes there are conversations that are not appropriate that take place there. Who knows if such a Tefilah will ascend to Shamayim?" (Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.)

The True Ruler of the Satmar Rav's Home

Rav Gamliel Rabbinowitz, Shlit"a, related that a Satmar Chasid, who was very attached to his Rebbe, the author of 'VaYoel Moshe', once told him the following story. On Erev Shabbos Kodesh, there is no time for the Satmar Rav to receive the public. However, since this particular person was a Rav of one of the Communities of the Satmar Chasidim, and he had to resolve questions regarding Shabbos, he was allowed to visit with the Satmar Rav.



When he went inside the Rav's home, he saw the Rebbetzin carrying the tray of Shabbos candles to the large table in the dining room. The Satmar Rav asked her, "Why are you setting up the candles here in the house?"

Their custom was that if the Rebbe was arranging a Tish on Shabbos night in the large Bais Medrash, the Rebbetzin would light her candles there, since it was preferrable to light candles where they would eat.

The Rebbetzin replied, "I don't want you to make a Tish today, because you do not have the strength for it. Today, you will have your Shabbos Seudah in the house."

The Rebbe disagreed and said, "This is not possible. I already let several people know that I am making a Tish, and many guests are coming for Shabbos, among them some people that need Chizuk, encouragement, and I must be there for them!"

They discussed the matter between themselves, and ultimately, the Rebbetzin prevailed, and the Rebbe agreed that he would not make a Tish that week.

The man, who was quietly waiting on the side, saw this incident take place, and he was bothered. He was under the impression that the most influential person in the world was the Satmar Rav. The whole world trembled from him. And here, he saw that the Rebbetzin was more powerful than the Rebbe!

While he was still standing there, the Satmar Rav approached him, as if he had read his mind. With his famous smile, he said to the man, "When it comes to Shalom Bayis, tranquility in the house, everything, without exception, depends on the Middah of giving in pleasantly. Therefore, the one who is really the winner is the one who yields to the other!" (Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.)

The Chofetz Chaim or the Doctors?



Reb Yoseph Chaim had studied under the **Chofetz Chaim** before he settled in America. He had a long and tranquil life until his son, Hirschel, was in a terrible car accident and the doctors feared the worst.

The family did not know just how to tell the news to the aged, yet very coherent, 87-year-old father. The hospital chaplain, Rabbi Schapiro, was asked to drive the old man to the hospital and slowly break the news on the way.

When he broke the terrible news, however, the Rabbi was shocked at the old man's indifference. "Perhaps I didn't explain the severity of the situation," he thought. He figured that the scene at the bedside would speak for itself. It didn't.

Reb Yoseph Chaim walked up to the bedside, saw his son connected to a maze of tubes protruding from all over his body, and said to the

surrounding physicians, "I guess he's not up to talking right now. We probably should come back a little later."

The entire family was stupefied. They knew their father had an astute grasp of almost every situation, yet in this instance he could not face reality. The doctors predicted that Hirschel would not survive, yet his father wasn't even fazed.

Reb Yoseph Chaim looked at all the shocked faces in the crowded ICU. "You doctors think you know the future? I know that Hirschel will be just fine. Let me explain.

"Many years ago, the **Chofetz Chaim** wanted to make sure that his writings were understandable for the layman. He asked me to read the galleys and point out any difficult nuances. He was very appreciative of my efforts, and before I left for America, he promised me: "Yoseph Chaim, if you remain a faithful Jew and Shomer Shabbos, I promise that you will have a long life filled with nachas. You will not lose any of your children or grandchildren in your lifetime.'

"Now gentlemen, who should I believe?"

Needless to say, within weeks Hirschel was out of the hospital. (Reb Yoseph lived to the ripe age of 96; all his kids/grandkids outlived him!) (Story from **R'Mordechai Kamenetzky**)

The word ברוך (blessed) is from the same root as בריכה (a pool). ברוך אתה ה' means that Hashem is like a pool of blessing that sustains everything in the world. From his great pool of blessing emanates everything, and he gives and gives... -R Shimshon Pincus ztl.

Last Is Most Precious By Rabbi Zalman Bronstein



In 1942 I was drafted into the Red army. The situation at home was terrible. We had no bread and water, there were three little children, and on top of that I was now drafted.

Not many Chabad chassidim were drafted. It was extremely dangerous and whoever was able to, fled for his life. I had the "privilege" of being drafted and served in the Russian army for four years in difficult battles against the Germans. I experienced endless stories and wonders. I saw death before my eyes countless times but something supernatural always happened and my life was saved.

Right after I was drafted I was sent to serve in the 123 brigade. This brigade stood at the ready to serve as reserve units.

It was not easy being a Jew in the army as there was tremendous anti-Semitism. I remember that one of the soldiers once said to me nastily, "When we go on the attack at the front my first bullet won't be shot against the enemy but at your back."

When I was first inducted, I had a pair of tefillin with me but it wasn't easy to put them on. I was afraid that I would be caught putting them on, which was dangerous, but I did it anyway. Every morning, when everyone else was still asleep in the bunker, I covered myself with my blanket and put on tefillin and said a quick prayer. The rest I prayed without tefillin.

When we were in the forest, I would wake up early and put on tefillin quickly among the trees. I did so every morning until I lost my tefillin.

At some point during the war I lost my night vision due to a vitamin deficiency. By day I could see and at night I was blind. One night, we went on an exhausting march. Since I could see nothing, two soldiers led me by the arms the entire way. We arrived at a village in the morning and, the way it was done then, the soldiers dispersed among the houses to rest. It was cold with both rain and snow. I also entered one of the homes. I took off my clothes and laid them on the stove to dry. I put the tefillin there too.

I was sound asleep when I suddenly heard an urgent call for all soldiers to appear outside. As a result of the rushing and confusion, I hurried to get dressed and go out and we were on our way within minutes. That is when I remembered that I had forgotten my tefillin but it was too late. I was inconsolable.

During my four years in the army I never ate cooked food, and managed on bread and vegetables. It wasn't easy but Hashem helped me in this too. Often, when we walked in fields, I pulled out potatoes. I had a pot with me that I filled with rainwater, and I cooked the potatoes for myself.

As a result of inadequate nutrition, I became very weak. At a certain point I decided to stop eating almost completely in the hopes that my heart would become weaker, and they would release me.

I was stricken with hepatitis and was hospitalized in Sverdlovsk in the Urals. When the doctors tried to give me food so I would regain some strength, I refused, saying I had no appetite.

One day, a Jewish doctor came, and she whispered, "Bronstein, start shtuppen zich [Yid. stuffing yourself] and I promise you that if you eat more in the next two weeks, your heart will be a bit stronger and then we will send you on furlough. Right now we are afraid to release you because you will not be able to make the trip home."

I took her advice and over the next two weeks I started eating bread and vegetables. Two weeks later I was examined again and the

doctor said she was pleased with the condition of my heart. She kept her promise and I was given two months off. I immediately traveled to Tashkent where I met my wife and children as well as my fellow Chassidim.

After two months I had to return to the army. I went to the hospital in Tashkent and gave a bribe so they would allow me to continue on furlough. I got another month with difficulty, but in the end I had to return to my unit which was camped not far from Smolensk.

When I returned to my unit a great and most shocking miracle occurred to me. Many soldiers were waiting to go to their next assignment when, suddenly, one of the commanders loudly announced that they needed a thousand soldiers for work. Our unit was a reserve unit and some of the soldiers were supposed to be sent to the front and some to work.

All the soldiers immediately ran to the registration window for they all preferred working to going to the front. Of course, I was among them. The line moved quickly. In front of me were just two soldiers and I was almost at the window when a thought popped into my mind, "acharon acharon chaviv" (the last is beloved). I did not understand why this thought came to me and gave me no rest. I left my place and moved to the back of the line so I could be last.

Then I realized what I had done. Oy, by the time it would be my turn, they would already have a thousand men who would be sent to work while I would be sent to the front! I tried to console myself by thinking it wasn't for nothing that the thought had come to my mind and there was something to it.

As soon as the registration was over, the thousand happy soldiers went off to work while I remained with the other soldiers, expecting to be sent to the burning front.

The next morning we received an order to start going. As we passed the fields we saw, to our horror, hundreds of bodies of dead soldiers

with missing limbs. These were the soldiers who had registered for work but had actually been sent to an attack on the front lines and nobody remained alive.

I suddenly realized what "acharon acharon chaviv" meant. It was an open miracle.

A Lesson to Be Learned From Camels and Donkeys By Rabbi Reuven Semah

וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד עֲשָׂרָה גְמַלִּים מִגְּמַלֵּי אֲדֹנָיו ***"Then the servant took ten camels of his master's camels."*** *(24:10)*

When Eliezer, the devoted servant of Abraham Avinu, set out on his mission to seek a wife for Yitzhak Avinu, he took "ten camels of his master's camels."

Rashi reveals to us what the Torah is teaching with the words "his master's camels." They were distinguishable from other camels by the fact that they would go out muzzled to prevent robbery so that they should not graze in strangers' fields.



The Midrash wonders about this description of Abraham's camels, because of a story involving Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair's donkey. One night, robbers stole this donkey and took it to their hideout. After three days they finally released the donkey, and the donkey came home on its own. The donkey had not been fed for three days and was obviously starving. However, all efforts to feed the donkey failed, until the Rabbi was informed that the barley that the donkey was being fed was possibly demai. Demai is grain that there is a possibility that the ma'aser was

not taken from it. Demai is permitted to give to an animal, but this animal was strict and didn't want to be lenient.

How is it possible that Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair's donkey is on a greater spiritual level than the camels of Abraham Avinu? If his starving donkey after three days of eating anything was so strict on himself that she refused to eat demai, why was it necessary for Abraham Avinu's camels to wear a muzzle to make sure they wouldn't steal from strangers' fields?

The Nahalat Ya'akov answers that there was no reason to be concerned that camels belonging to Abraham would graze in others' fields. The reason they were muzzled was so that others would see and learn from this righteous appearance and muzzle their own animals as well.

The Torah teaches that our animals must not steal. How much more careful do human beings have to be not to steal.

Rav Naftali of Ropshitz and His Wife's Shabbos Kugel



As opposed to sinning with food, drink and accompaniment of guests, the Jew elevates himself by taking the physicality of this world and making it holy. This is the way of Avraham, and this must be our way, as we follow his path and emulate his deeds.

R' Naftali of Ropshitz's wife was extremely frugal, but exceptionally devout. When she davened, she was transported into another world.

The rebbetzin would put the bare minimum of schmaltz into the kugel. R' Naftali's entreaties to increase the amount of schmaltz in the kugel went unheeded. One Friday, when the rebbetzin was davening, R' Naftali removed the keys from her apron pockets, unlocked the pantry and put several spoonfuls of schmaltz into the kugel. He then returned the keys, while the rebbetzin remained completely oblivious to what had transpired.

Shabbos morning, when she served the kugel, the rebbetzin said, "See! You always criticize me for not putting enough schmaltz into the kugel. But look at the Divine blessing. The kugel is dripping with schmaltz!"

R' Naftali nodded, "It is indeed a Divine blessing," he said. "We merited this blessing by virtue of deine tefillos un meine maasim tovim - your fervent davening and my good deeds!"

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything. *(24:1)*

Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, *zt"l*, translates the first part of the *Posuk* literally: 'Avraham was old and he came with his days' – meaning, with all his days, there wasn't one day or even one hour that was not filled with his deeds.

The *Chozeh* of Lublin, *zt"l*, explains the last part of the *Posuk* that Avraham was blessed with the *Segulah* of ' **בכל** ', as in, **בכל לבבך בכל נפשך ובכל מאודך** – 'with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources'. (*Shivim Panim L'Torah*)

Vechol Maaminim - The Gates of Gan Eden

Chazal (Shabbos 119b) promise wonderful reward for one who is careful to answer amen properly. They say: "Reish Lakish said: Anyone who answers amen with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him, as it says (Yeshayah 26:2) **שְׂעָרִים וְיָבֹא גּוֹי־ צַדִּיק שֹׁמֵר אֱמֻנִים** – do not read it 'shomer emunim' but rather 'she'omrim amen.'"

Rabi Eliezer Papo said: The tremendous reward promised to one who is strict about answering amen with all his might – "the gates of Gan Eden are opened for him" –teaches us about the lofty virtues of answering amen, and the great nachas ruach for Hashem generated by answering amen properly.

We see that a person must certainly be happy with the fact that he merits to bring nachas ruach to his Creator, and it is virtuous for every Jew to be moser nefesh to do so. (Chesed L'Alafim Pele Yoetz 56:1)

Essential Rabbi Nachman - JOY

It is a great mitzvah to be happy always! If you are happy, the whole world benefits. Make every effort to maintain a happy, positive outlook at all times. It is a natural human tendency to become discouraged and depressed because of the hardships of life: everyone has their full share of suffering. That is why you must force yourself to always be happy. Use every possible way to bring yourself to joy, even by joking or acting a little crazy! (Likutey Moharan II, 24 VII) - Even if you are upset and unhappy, you can at least put on a happy front. At first you may not feel genuinely happy in your heart. Even so, if you act happy you will eventually attain true happiness and joy. (Sichot Haran #74)



Hagaon Reb Elya Baruch Finkel Zatzal used to say:

וַתִּשָּׂא רִבְקָה֙ אֶת־עֵינֶ֔יהָ וַתֵּ֖רֶא אֶת־יִצְחָ֑ק וַתִּפֹּ֖ל מֵעַ֥ל הַגָּמָֽל 24:64

When Yitzchok and Rivka met, he was davening the first ever Mincha. Rivka assumed that he was davening Shachris in the evening…. And fell off her camel from the shock….

Never judge your spouse!

Peninim on the Torah

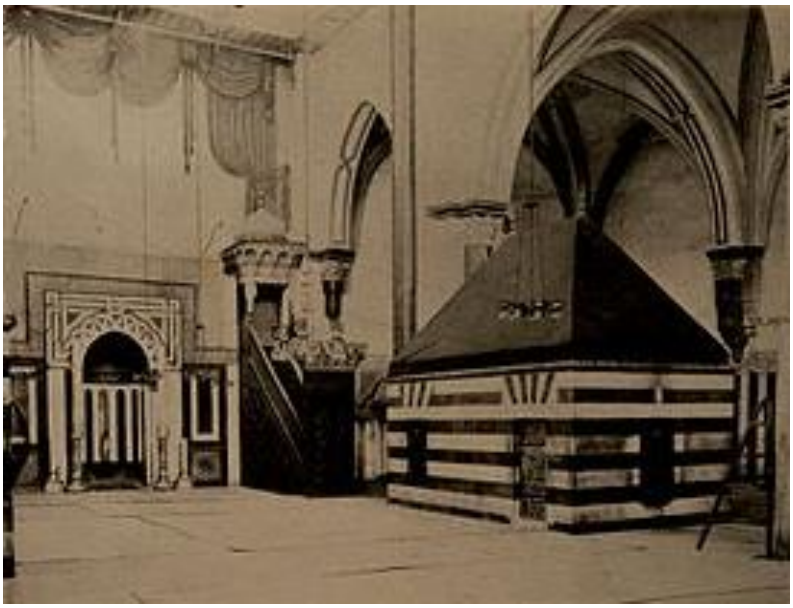
קבר אברהם את שרה אשתו אל מערת שדה המכפלה... היא חברון Avraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpeilah… which is Chevron. *(23:19)*

The *Meoras Ha'Machpeilah* is the final resting place of four couples: Adam/Chavah; Avraham/Sarah; Yitzchak/Rivkah; Yaakov/Leah. As such, it is sacred ground which no one has penetrated and returned to report about. There was, however, one person who went, entered and even, exited – ***Horav Avraham Azulai,zl***, author of the *Chesed L'Avraham*, great-grandfather of the ***Chida,zl***.

The story took place in 1643, in the city of Chevron. The sultan of the Ottoman Empire decided to visit the many places of distinction that were part of his vast empire. Chevron, which is home to the *Meoras Ha'Machpeilah*, was one of his stops. He entered the cave adorned in his royal garb, including his unique golden, diamond studded sword which hung at his side. He went from room to room, finally entering the huge hall named after Yitzchak *Avinu*.

The centre of attraction in the Yitzchak hall is a small circular hole in the floor, which is considered to be the most sacred spot in the

entire structure, since it leads down into the caves/burial place themselves. People would come from all over the world just to stand and pray at this hole, which according to tradition was excavated/created by Adam *HaRishon*.



The sultan leaned over the aperture and peered down into the hole. As he bent over, his precious sword became loose and tumbled through the opening. When the sultan heard the clang of metal hit the ground of the cave, he realised that his sword was now in the mysterious burial place of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. He wanted his sword retrieved.

He ordered the officer of the guard to send down a soldier to bring back the sword. Not one to waste the sultan's time, the officer immediately dispatched a soldier through the hole, after first tying a strong rope around his body. No sooner had the soldier been lowered when they heard piercing screams coming from the cave below. They pulled up the soldier, who was no longer alive!

The sultan kept on sending soldiers down into the hole – with the same result: no sword, and another dead soldier. The sultan had little concern for his soldiers. He just wanted his sword back.

Finally, the officers suggested, "Since there are so many Jews in Chevron let one of them descend into the hole. Why should our soldiers die?" Word was sent to the Jews that the sultan expected one of them to retrieve his sword. No Jew was prepared to forfeit his life. The sultan said, "Unless a Jew descends and retrieves my sword, the entire Jewish community will pay with their lives!" Sadly,

this is the type of tyranny under which we had lived throughout our exile.

Not willing to put anyone's life in danger, the elderly *Rav* of Chevron, the *Kabbalist*, *Rav* Avraham Azulai said that he would go down. "I have no fear," he said. Rav Azulai prayed passionately for guidance and success, and dressed in his white *tachrichim*, burial shrouds, he then set forth for the cave. With a rope tied around his waist, the elderly *Rav* was lowered down to the ground of the cave.

He was met by three bearded men, who "introduced" themselves as the Patriarchs. *Rav* Avraham was in total shock. "Why should I leave here?" he asked. "I am old. I have come face to face with my Patriarchs. I desire to stay here with you." The Patriarchs replied, "You must return the sultan's sword or the entire Jewish community of Chevron will be annihilated. However, have no fear, for in another seven days you will return here to be with us."

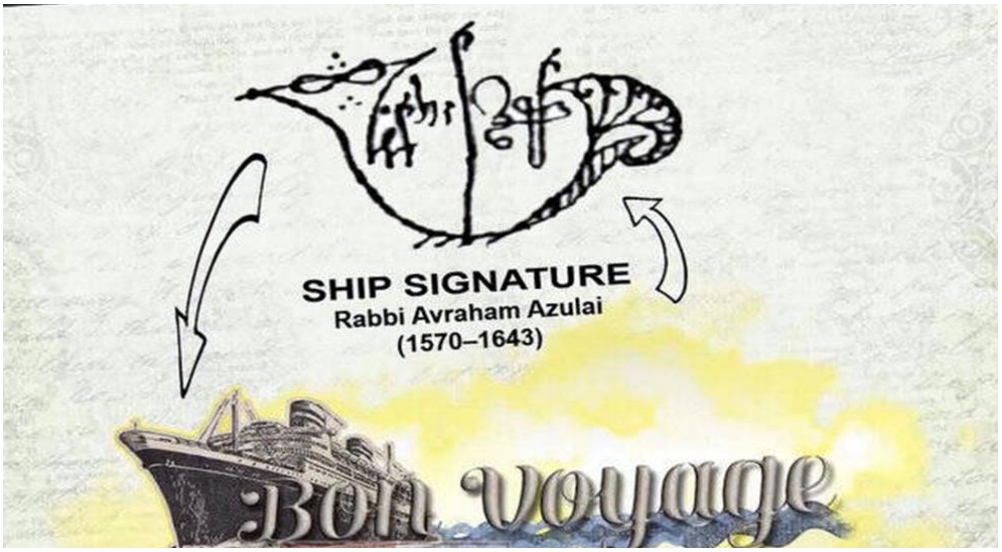
The *Rav* returned to a hero's welcome. After returning the sword to the sultan, he quickly went to his *shul* where he spent the next week transmitting to his students all of the esoteric teachings of the Torah. He learned with them night and day, imparting to them all that he knew. Seven days after entering the cave of *Machpeilah*,

Rav Avraham Azulai was called "Home," returning his lofty soul to it's Heavenly Source. He was buried in the ancient Chevron cemetery, overlooking the final resting place of our Patriarchs.

Pearls of Wisdom…*A Word for the Ages*

Rav Elya Dessler, *zt"l*, commented, "For those that say they work so hard and it is all *L'Sheim Shamayim*¸ for the sake of Heaven, they should ask themselves, 'Do *Torah* thoughts come to mind when I work, or do work thoughts come to mind during *Shemoneh Esrei*?'"

Rabbi Abraham Azulay (1570-1643)



Rabbi Abraham Azulay (also "Azulai) was born in the city of Fes, Morocco, in 1570. The city of Fes was a very important Jewish centre where many Jews found refuge when they escaped the expulsion from Spain.

The family of Rabbi Azulay also came from Spain (Castilla). Living in Fes was far from being in a paradise. Apart from the constant persecution by Muslim extremists, the area was very poor and often suffered from long droughts. Rabbi Shaul Serero says that in the Jewish community of Fes, between 10 and 20 people died every day… of starvation. After one long drought that lasted for more than 3 years, Rabbi Azulay left Fes and headed towards the land of Israel.

Travelling by sea was extremely dangerous. When rabbi Azulay arrived near the port of Capotakia (Port Said) a great storm destroyed his ship, and all his belongings sank. Miraculously, Rabbi Azulay survived and arrived (presumably swimming) to the coast. This miracle was never forgotten by Rabbi Azulai. And as a sign of his eternal gratitude to HaShem for this miracle, Rabbi Azulay designed his signature in the shape of a boat (see illustration above).

Once he arrived in Israel he settled in the city of Hebron (also known as Kiryat Arba) where he met with the great rabbis of that time such as Rabbi Eliezer Arha and others.

Rabbi Azulay wrote famous books: a commentary on the book of the Zohar "Hesed LeAbraham" in reference to the fact that he himself, Abraham, was twice saved from the terrible epidemic that claimed

so many lives). He also wrote "Ba'ale Berit Abram", a mystical commentary on the Tora. Rabbi Azulay is known for his mystical writings, but he also wrote a few traditional rabbinical works. One of the least known books of Rabbi Azulay, is "ahaba bata'anuguim", a beautiful and extensive commentary on the Mishna.

Rabbi Azulay died the day after he emerged from the depth of the cave of Makhpela, Friday Ereb Shabbat, Perashat Haye Sara the Shabbat in which our Tora mentions the acquisition of the cave of Makhpela.

Rabbi Abraham Azulay is buried in the old cemetery of the city of Hebron. His grave, as was the custom in Hebron, carries no inscription, not even his name (I think this was done as a gesture of deference to our Patriarchs, buried in that city).

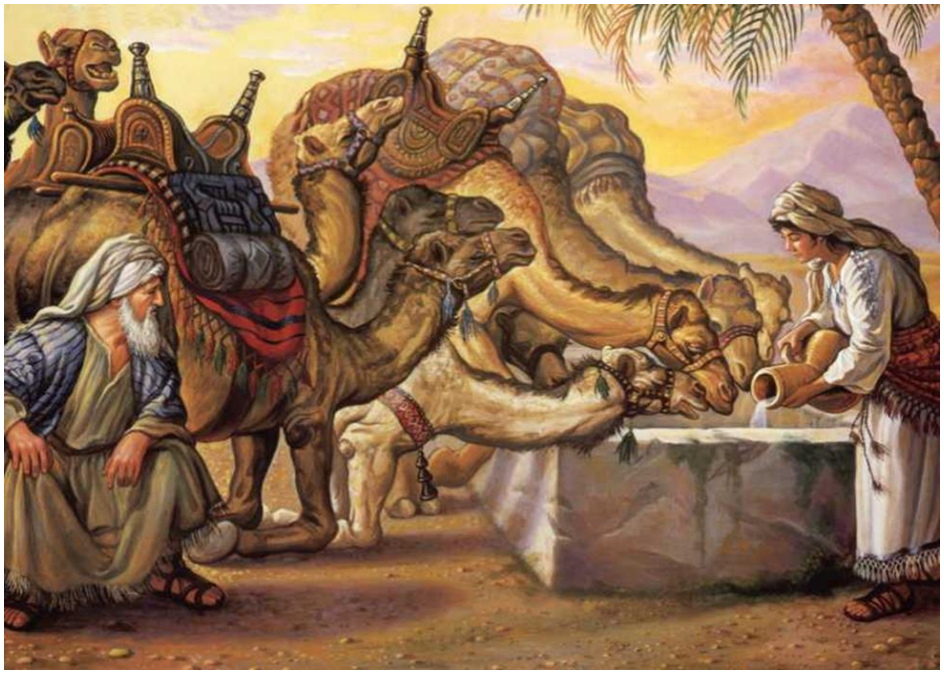
One of his great-grandchildren was the famous Rabbi Hayim Yosef David Azulay, also known as the Hida (1724-1806).

Rabbi Moshe Oelbaum - How Precious is Tefilas Mincha

To daven mincha with kavana you have to block out your thoughts and overpower them in order to concentrate properly. Simply put, it takes much more effort to daven mincha with kavana than shachris or maariv. Mincha is a tefilla that a person is mekadesh his gashmiyos because it's in middle of his business world.

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה, (24:63). When a person is in the middle of the field, in middle of plowing, and he stops in order to daven. That means he is sanctifying the field; the gashmiyos gets elevated through his tefillas mincha. He's rising above his thoughts and worries about his daily business and instead focuses on connecting to Hashem. And that's why tefillas mincha is so precious and chashuv to Hashem.

ותאמר שתה וגם גמליך אשקה ***And she said, "Drink, and I will even water your camels."*** *(24:46)*



Rivkah is lauded for her incredible sensitivity and kindness in offering water to Eliezer. This was the finishing touch upon which her selection to be Yitzchak *Avinu's* wife was predicated. Imagine, someone has been wearily trudging through the sun-baked wilderness. His throat is parched; he is sweating profusely. He badly needs water. Would the person who reaches out to him with a jug of water be considered especially kind or, simply a decent human being?

Horav Eliyahu Dushnitzer, zl, explains that Rivkah's greatness shone forth when she offered to water the camels as well. Eliezer had asked for a drink for himself. Rivkah immediately poured him a drink and then offered to provide water for his ten camels! Camels drink a lot. To provide for them meant running back and forth to the well numerous times. It was this sensitivity to others – even to animals – that exemplified Rivkah's character.

Kindness means more than providing what one asks. Kindness means looking and appraising oneself of what someone needs. Thinking of others, regardless of who or what they are, indicates the loftiness of one's character.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, related the following vignette concerning *Rav* Dushnitzer when he was the *Menahel Ruchani* Ethical Supervisor, of Yeshivas Lomza in Petach Tikvah:

A man who was totally secular in his faith and commitment to Judaism walked by the *yeshivah* on *erev Yom Kippur*. He noticed that outside of the *sheirutim*, the room which housed the lavatories, there stood an elderly *rav* sporting a long, white beard, tearing toilet paper. Why would a man who appeared to be a distinguished person stand outside the lavatory tearing toilet paper on *erev Yom Kippur*?

The man could not contain his incredulity, so, he approached the *Mashgiach* and asked what and why he was doing this? The *Mashgiach*, in his quiet, humble manner, replied, "Tomorrow is *Yom Kippur*, and we will be having many guests joining us for the *tefillos*. As a result, it is expected that this area will be used and paper will be needed. Thus, I am making sure that the necessary paper is available."

The man who related this incident to *Rav* Sholom said, "With each rip of the paper, he was ripping my heart! To see such an eminent person care for others on a day when he surely had much more to do for himself, inspired me to begin reflecting on my life and how I had wasted it.

Immediately after *Yom Kippur*, I made an appointment to meet with the *mashgiach* and asked him to help me while I could still save myself and my future generations." All this happened because a holy man cared about the "little things" that people needed.

We take much for granted – especially those things which we have deemed to fall under the rubric of "little things," "unimportant things."

"You can't drive away the darkness with sticks or weapons. The only way is to light a candle and the darkness will disappear by itself. Our candle is the Torah." ~~ The Chofetz Chaim



How to be Happy with your Portion

"The Life of Sarah" Rashi (23:1) writes, **כולן שוין לטובה**, all of Sarah's years were good.

Were they all good? It doesn't seem so. She was barren for ninety years, and she and Avraham were poor for the first seventy-five years of their life. Why do we say that she had a good life and that **כולן שוין לטובה**, that they were all good?!

The answer is, Sarah considered her life good. No matter what she went through, she found the good in every situation, and she was happy with her fate.

One year, Shabbos *parashas Chayei Sarah*, the **Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l*** (Slonim) couldn't stop speaking about this *Rashi*.

He shouted, "Life was always good for Sarah!" What an outlook! What a way to look at life!

The first word of the *parashah*, **ויהיו**, is a palindrome and can be read forwards or backward. **The Chida** (*P'nei Dovid*) explains that even days that seemed backward and negative, Sarah considered them good. For her, every day of her life was good.

Avraham was the same. Every day of his life was good. Towards the end of the *parashah*, it states **וַיִּגְוַע וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם בְּשֵׂיבָה טוֹבָה זָקֵן וְשָׂבֵעַ** -"***Avraham was niftar at a good old age, old and satisfied***." 25:8

A key word here is **שבע** - satisfied. He died content with his lot. The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains: An approach to help us accept hardships is to recognize that these challenging moments,

themselves, are given to us for our benefit. We'll express this with a historical event:

In Libya, before World War Two, the wealthier Yidden lived in Tripoli, and outside the city lived the poor Yidden in underground caves. They had rooms, apartments, but it was all carved out from rock. Sunlight was minimal; only what shone through the stairwell and the floors were made from dirt. They were jealous of their fellow Jews who lived in better conditions in Tripoli. But then the Nazis arrived in Libya. The Yidden in Tripoli were brought to Bergen-Belson and other concentration camps, while the people living underground were saved and eventually came to Eretz Yisrael. (They were fewer than the Yidden in the large city of Tripoli, and the Nazis couldn't expend the effort to ship them to the camps.)

Some of these "cave" Yidden are still alive. They look back and realize how fortunate they were to live in those caves. Had they lived in a nice, bright house in Tripoli, they probably wouldn't be alive today.

Many people look back at their lives and discover that the hardships they went through were really for their benefit. The Torah tells us, **ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל**. In Avraham's old age, he looked back, and he understood that every stage of his life was good.

The Chasam Sofer explains that the happiest people are those who went through hardships. For example, a poor person who became wealthy will enjoy his wealth much more than someone who was wealthy his entire life.

Also, an ill person who became well enjoys good health more than someone who was always healthy. Therefore, when a person goes through hard times, he must know that goodness is concealed there. Because these difficult times will enable him to rejoice with the salvation that will follow.

Efron

The money-hungry Efron asked Avraham to pay four hundred shekalim to purchase Maaras HaMachpeilah, and Efron felt that he got a good deal. However, the Midrash (*Rabba* 58:7) writes about him as follows (*Mishlei* **28:22** **נבהל להון איש רע עין כי חסר יבואנו ולא ידע** "***The one who is overeager for wealth has a bad eye. He doesn't know that he is lacking***."

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* explains that if Efron wasn't so hungry for money, he would have received more. Avraham would have given him one thousand shekalim.

Avraham received a thousand shekalim from Avimelech, as it states (*Bereishis* 20:16) **הנה נתתי לאחיך אלף כסף**. Avraham didn't want to use the money from such a *rasha*, and he put it aside to buy a burial plot. Efron asked for four hundred silver coins, so Avraham gave him that amount, but Avraham would have given him a thousand if he hadn't asked for anything.

The hint is that several times it states **עפרון**, with a **ו״א**, but when Avraham paid the four hundred shekalim it states (23:16), **וישקול אברהם לעפרן את הכסף... ארבע מאות שקל כסף**, "Avraham paid Efron...four hundred silver coins." This time it states **עפרן** without a **ו״א** , because **ו״א** is *gematriya* six, and Efron lost six hundred shekalim. (He received only 400 shekalim, and not a thousand.)

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel used to say:

"When I was young, I admired cleverness. Now that I am old, I find I admire kindness more."

"Who answers Amein with all his might, to him the gates of Paradise are open." ~~ Talmud, Shabbat

Gemilus Chasadim

Eliezer set a test to determine who is a fitting wife for Yitzchak. He will ask for a sip of water. If the maiden replies (24:14) **וגם גמליך אשקה שתה**, "Drink and I will also give water to your camels, **אתה הוכחת לעבדך יצחק** this is proven to be good for Yitzchak."

Things didn't go exactly as planned. He asked Rivkah for water, and she gave it to him. At this point, she didn't yet mention the camels. Then it states (24:19) **וַתְּכַל לְהַשְׁקֹתוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר גַּם לִגְמַלֶּיךָ אֶשְׁאָב עַד אִם־כִּלּוּ לִשְׁתֹּת**, "When she finished giving water to Eliezer, she said, 'I will also draw for your camels until they finish drinking.'" She didn't mention the camels until Eliezer finished drinking. Why?





The Ohr HaChaim (24:18) explains that Rivkah acted with greater piety than Eliezer was testing for. "Rivkah didn't tell Eliezer immediately that she will give water to his camels, and this demonstrates her generosity.

The *tzaddekes* figured that if she told Eliezer right away that she will draw water for his camels too, he might drink his water very quickly [and he might drink less than he needed to quench his thirst], because he knows that Rivkah still has a lot of work to do, to give water to all the camels.

Rivkah didn't tell Eliezer her plans, so that he would drink at his own pace, as much as he needed. After he finished drinking, she said, 'I will draw for your camels.'

The Sidduro Shel Shabbos (1:4:8) adds that there was a blessing in everything Rivkah did. The Sidduro Shel Shabbos proves from the *pesukim* that Rivkah gave a drop of water to the camels and to Eliezer, and it was enough for them because there was a blessing in all her deeds.

We quote, "After the camels drank a little, they stopped drinking." This is because there was a *brachah* in Rivkah's deeds. A drop of water was blessed in their bellies, and they had enough. Also it states, **ותער כדה אל השוקת**, that after the slave drank, the jug was still completely full, just as when she gave it to him!

Also it states, **ותשאב לכל גמליו** with one drawing of water, it was sufficient for all the ten camels that were with him. And this is all because there was a blessing in everything Rivkah did."

The Sidduro Shel Shabbos (1:4:11) asks, why are the miracles merely hinted to in the Torah, while her deeds of *chesed* are written in elaboration?

The Sidduro Shel Shabbos answers that the Torah elaborates on the matters we can learn from. When we are told about the miracles she performed, we don't know what we can do to reach those levels. Therefore, there is a greater elaboration on her good deeds, which brought her to those levels.

We can also explain that the Torah elaborates on her *gemilus chasadim* and not on the miracles that happened to her because *gemilus chasadim* is the greatest praise! Rivkah wasn't chosen to be Yitzchak's wife because she performed miracles. She was chosen because of her good *middos*.

The Chebiner Rav *zt'l* gave the following counsel for those seeking a *kallah* for their sons: **"Check for three things: *middos*, *middos*,**

and *middos*." That was the criterion Eliezer looked for when seeking a *shidduch* for Yitzchak. He sought a maiden who does *gemilus chasadim*.

Rabbi Yisroel Majeski - A Match Made in Chevron



In this week's Parsha, Avraham Avinu deals with Ephron in order to purchase the Me'aras HaMachpeila. What's notable is that the Gemara (Kiddushin 2a) derives from here that when a man gets engaged to a woman, it can be through money. In relation to the transaction between Avraham and Ephron, the Pasuk states, "The money which I gave you, take from me," and the Torah later states in the context of marriage, "When a man takes a wife." The similar use of the word "take" in both Pesukim imply a similarity and connection between the two, which derives the Gemara, is that money can be used to marry a woman, just as it was done in the transaction between Ephron and Avraham.

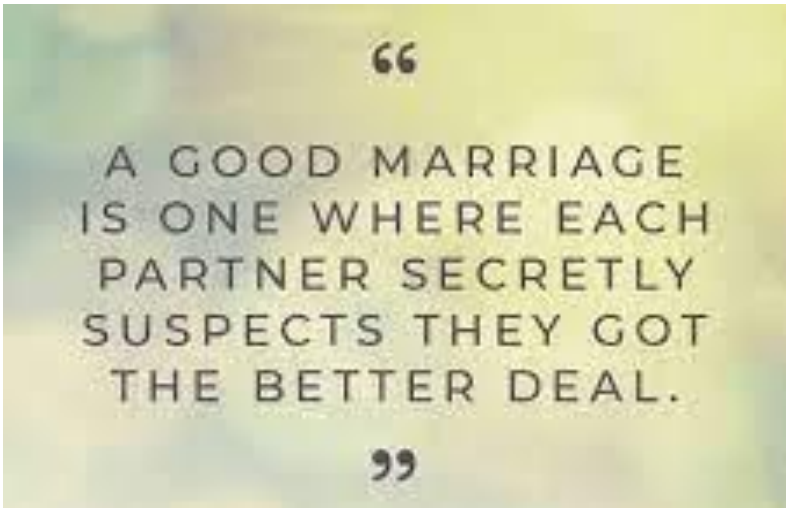
From all places where we can learn about the parameters of marriage, why do we do so from Ephron? A marriage represents two people coming together to build a home where the Shechina is going to rest, two souls combining to become one, and we learn of this concept from way to him and "talked a lot and did a little"? Why of all places is it here that the laws of marriage are taught?

The Bobover Rebbe explains that specifically and only here is there a profound lesson embedded for a successful marriage. When Avraham walked away from this business deal, he felt to himself, "I

got the best deal of my life! For just four hundred Shekalim, I purchased the Me'aras HaMachpeila, the burial site of Adam and Chava and the eventual holy, resting place of the Avos and Imahos." Ephron himself felt afterwards, "I got the best deal of my life! I sold just a simple cave, a plain piece of land, and I was given a huge sum of four hundred Shekalim for it!" Both Avraham and Ephron believed that they got the better end of the deal.

So too, when a man and a woman join together in marriage, they each believe that they got the better deal! "I can't believe she is my wife! I'm the luckiest man alive!" "I can't be- "I can't believe he's my husband! I got the better deal; I'm the luckiest woman in the world!"

The key to marriage is to always see and believe that you got the best deal. When a couple does this, it's a sure recipe for a great life together.



It's colloquially been said that the best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago, and the second best time is right now. It's never too late to prepare for marriage. When we are younger, we want to prepare our middos, and once we are married, it is the opportunity to implement everything which we cultivated and learned to create a fantastic marriage and family together.

But this is not the only message for marriage hidden within this interaction between Avraham and Ephron. **וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָהָם אֶל־עֶפְרוֹן** The Torah repeatedly uses some form of the word "And he listened" 23:16 to describe Avraham's actions in relation to Ephron and those he interacted with. To have a good marriage, you must be a good listener.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach mentioned at the funeral of his wife that he doesn't need to ask mechillah from her, because he never fought with her. How could this be? It doesn't mean that he never disagreed with his wife. Rather, although they disagreed, it never turned into a heated argument. He carefully listened to her, as did she to him, and they arrived at the best solution.

Moreover, Avraham was charged a steep price for the Me'aras HaMachpeila. However, Avraham was mevater, he conceded, because he knew the true value inherent in what he was purchasing. The little, petty fights in a relationship are just not worth it in comparison to building a happy home.

In addition, Avraham spent money. Specifically in the realm of money, sometimes we need to let things go. We know things will cost money and we do it with an appreciation for the value it creates in generating goodwill and happiness within the home.

Lastly, Avraham Avinu's wife has just passed away, and understandably so, he would be out of sorts and in turmoil, and yet throughout the entire dialogue recorded about the Me'aras HaMachpeila, Avraham speaks in a calm, gentle voice. Avraham carried himself with the right respectful and calming context, even amidst the inner turmoil that was generated by what had just happened to Sarah.

In business and life, we can get very stressed. But when we walk through the doors to our home, we must put everything behind us and carry the right context in that we are entering our home – a special place where the Divine Presence resides. Avraham Avinu taught us so much. The rest is up to us.

"No man can consider himself truly married until he understands every word his wife is not saying."

Torah Tavlin

A man lived in a rented apartment in Lakewood, NJ with his large family bli ayin hara. One day, the landlord informed him that he needed the apartment back in order to move in himself and asked the tenant to please find a new place.

The tenant began to urgently look for another place to live, but it proved to be very difficult. Most of the apartments were too small for his large family; when there was a suitable one, he was unable to reach a satisfactory agreement with the landlord. The man found himself without a place to live on the one hand, and the landlord, on the other, hounding him to get out of the apartment already.

We are familiar with the words of Chazal (Pesachim 86b), "Anything that the baal habayis (i.e. the landlord) tells you, you should do, except 'tzei,' to get out." But this man had no other choice, because his landlord even warned him that if he was not out of the house by a certain date, he would simply remove the tenant's belongings from the apartment and throw the whole family onto the street ...

After extensive thought, the tenant decided that under the circumstances, he had no choice but to consider buying a new house. He made some calculations and figured out that he could afford to pay up to $410,000 for a new home. With this amount, he hoped to buy something spacious to accommodate his family. But after looking into it further, he discovered that he could not purchase a house of the size he needed for that price in Lakewood. Thus, he decided to look beyond Lakewood and made some inquiries in Jackson, the neighbouring township.

He found a house that was for sale; the owners were seeking at least $400,000, but on the other hand, they wanted to sell it to the highest bidder. The man immediately entered a bid for $410,000 in the hope that the house would stay at that price and he could purchase it. This was the highest he could bid, as he could not afford

more. A few days later, when he checked the bids, he saw that there were offers on file for $480,000.

Resigned, he realized that he could not realistically purchase this house, because the cost was too high, and he withdrew from the bidding. A few days later, he received a phone call from the agent of the Jackson house. Excitedly, the agent exclaimed, "Mazel Tov! The house is yours!" The man was taken aback and asked the agent in surprise, "I made the lowest offer, for $410,000. After I checked and saw that there were bids for $480,000, I withdrew. How is it possible that the house is mine?" But the agent reassured him and said, "Relax. The house is yours and you have nothing to worry about."

Well, this individual did everything but relax - he could feel that something was not right here, and he pressed the agent to tell him exactly how it came to be that the house was his if his bid had remained the lowest of all the offers.



The agent explained: The house belongs to a non-Jewish couple who filed for divorce. They went to court to settle their financial affairs. The judge decided that the woman was the owner of all the assets and forced the husband to deal with selling the assets and transferring the revenue to the wife. But the man made every effort to deceive his wife, to ensure she came away with the least amount of money possible. Therefore, he decided that he would sell the house, not for the most money, but to the lowest bidder!

Because the woman had no idea what the bids were, as the court had tasked the husband with handling the sale, he could do as he pleased.

"Your bid was the lowest and therefore you got the house," he was told.

(*Source: "Noam Siach" - sichos of R' Shlomo Zalman Friedman shlita, Rov of Khal Zichron Elazar Santov in Lakewood*)

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky on Chaye Soroh

Take My Money, Please!

The stories of Sefer Braishis are the guideposts of morality for the Jewish nation. They teach us ethics and guide our character. Sometimes we can even apply their lessons to teach us even the simple and practical ways of the world. This week we can even learn a little business acumen from our forefather, Avraham.



In this week's portion, Avraham sets out to find a burial site for his wife, Sora. He approaches the children of Ches and asks to meet Ephron, who sanctimoniously offers any plot of land and benevolently offers it for nothing.

Avraham does not jump at the offer, but immediately declares that he is ready to pay top dollar: in fact, even before Ephron uses the words, "behold I have given it to you," Avraham responds, "I have given you the money! Take it from me! And now allow me to bury my dead."

Then, in a quick turnabout, Ephron announces an exorbitant price which Avraham, without bargaining or negotiating, pays immediately.

The entire transaction is strange. Despite Ephron's generous overtures, it seems that Avraham is throwing the money at him in an

effort to consummate the deal. And the minute a price is mentioned, exorbitant as it may be, Avraham pays it without further question. All it seems is that he wanted to close the deal and leave. Why? **Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz**, the Bostoner Rebbe of Lawrence, NY once told me this wonderful anecdote:

The Ponovezer Rav, Rabbi Yosef Kahanemen zt"l, was one of the foremost builders of Torah in the post-war era. He was also a remarkable fund-raiser. Once he was welcomed into the home of a wealthy individual who was more interested in discussing Torah with him than giving money to the Ponevezer Yeshiva. Every time the Rav would talk about the donating for the construction of the new building, the man would begin to expound on a different Torah topic. Finally, Rav Kahaneman told him the following story:

A woman in Poland had a daughter who was well past her prime. The matchmaker suggested that she alter her passport and claim she was much younger than her true age. He explained that he knew a Polish passport official, who, for the right price, could make her any age she would like.

The official met the woman and then looked at the girl. "Oh, this is not a major problem. I am sure that there must have been an error in processing the original document. Of course, we can rectify this most egregious error. In fact, for a small service fee of 500 zloty I can take seven years off the date on her birth certificate, and we can have her at 21 years old!"

Despite the steep service charge, the mother heartily agreed and quickly took the money from her purse. Feeling that there were many more zloty from where the first 500 came from the officer held up his hand. "You know what," he smiled devilishly, "maybe there was a bigger error than we actually had thought! Actually, for 700 zloty I could make her 20 years old!"

Reluctantly, the mother agreed and went to her purse for more zloty. At that point, the officer began to get quite greedy. "You

know, he said, for an additional 300 zloty, I could even have her at 18!"

The mother became very nervous. Quickly she handed over the 700 zloty and yelled, "No, thank you. 20 years old is fine!" She grabbed her daughter. "Quick," she shouted, "let's get out of here! Soon we will be left with no more zloty and no more years!"

The Rav's message struck its mark. The man stopped his Torah-filled filibuster and handed over a sizable check.

Avraham knew his negotiating partner well. He understood that the longer Ephron would wait, the more time Sora would lie in state, and the more expensive the transaction would become. As soon as he heard the false graciousness of Ephron, Avraham immediately told him that he would pay full price – on one condition. Take the money and give me the plot. He understood when it was time to do what had to be done and move on. He was not interested in prolonging negotiations that would only leave him without money and perhaps without land.

Often it is worthwhile to take a hit and leave, because the pain of the moment is far less than the agony of insincerity. Good Shabbos!

There has never been, and there will never be, anyone born into the same set of circumstances and environments, possessing the same skills and talents, and facing the same tests and challenges as you. There never was another you, and there never will be another you; there is no one in the world who can bring what you bring. - So serve Hashem in the way that only you can, and always remember: you are unique, essential, and utterly irreplaceable.

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (1914-2005)

As Heard From Rabbi Avigdor Miller Z'tl

Practice makes perfect.

In a eulogy delivered by Rabbi Mayer Yechiel Miller, the grandson of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, z"tl, the grandson revealed, "***My grandfather was not born great. He worked on becoming great every minute***."

This seemingly obvious statement deserves reflection.



I once heard a criticism of the biographies of Torah giants: "The books make us think that all our Torah leaders were prodigies born with uncanny, abnormal abilities and talents. This is very far from the truth. Our greats studied the ideals of our Torah and then worked on their inborn flaws and developed their Hashem-given talents in order to achieve perfection.

The Hafess Hayim z"tl learned how to avoid the sin of lashon hara, and **Rav Moshe Feinstein z"tl** studied anger control and patience."

The rule, "Practice makes perfect," applies to the spiritual as well as physical aspects of our being. Rabbi Miller, z"tl, never spoke without weighing the propriety of his words before allowing them to leave his lips. He honed this skill with the diligence of an Olympic athlete preparing for the gold. Each time he was about to speak, he waited five seconds before allowing the words in his mind to leave his lips. Day in and day out he practiced, until he mastered the technique.

Whenever you are about to speak, spend five seconds contemplating what you are about to say. Release the words only after editing them carefully in your mind. - It will lead to a much more perfect you.

Short Vort – Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

וּלְרִבְקָה אָח וּשְׁמוֹ לָבָן וַיָּרָץ לָבָן אֶל הָאִישׁ – *And Rivka had a brother, his name is Lavan, and Lavan ran toward the man* (24:29)

The Ohr HaChaim notes a difficulty in the words of this verse. The Medrash tells us that when referring to tzaddikim, the way of the Torah is to write "his name is" before stating the person's name (for example, "*his name is* Boaz"), whereas the opposite is done for an evil person (eg. "Naval *is his name*".) If so, questions the Ohr HaChaim, why does the Torah introduce the wicked Lavan with "*his name is* Lavan", surely it should have been written "Lavan *is his name*"?!

The answer, explains the Ohr HaChaim, is found in what Lavan was doing at the time. "He ran toward the man" — Eliezer. Why?

Initially he ran to confront Eliezer, a total stranger, after he saw the gifts that Rivkah received. For he suspected that Eliezer had acted inappropriately with his sister, and he had therefore provided her jewellery. For this act of standing up for his sister's modesty, explains the Ohr HaChaim, Lavan is referred to as a tzaddik!

We see from here many incredible lessons. One of them is that for eternity, Lavan is credited in the Torah for his righteous act. This message should provide us with great encouragement, for Hashem looks at our every action and every intention — at every moment. This means that we always have an opportunity to be a tzaddik. Even Lavan, whom Hashem refers to as "Lavan the evil one", at that moment, is credited with being a tzaddik for what he did.

It doesn't matter who we are, what we have done and even what we will do, all of our actions are accounted for. Therefore, let us take the next opportunity to connect "tzaddik" to our names!

Chazu Bonai



כ' חשון marks the 37th yahrzeit of the **מקובל** and **ראש ישיבה Rav Mordechai Sharabi זצ''ל**. Born in Taiz, Yemen in 1908-5669 [Died: *Jerusalem, 1983-5744*], (his father Rav Yehuda was niftar before he was born) Morderchai was raised by his grandfather Rav Yefes Avraham, the Rav of Sharab. Rav Morderchai's paternal grandfather was the famed **מקובל** Rav Sholom Sharabi, known as the **רש''ש**.

Soon After marrying in 1931, Rav Morderchai emigrated to **ארץ ישראל** and settled in **ירושלים**. He founded **ישיבת נהר שלום** in the **מחנה יהודה** neighbourhood of **ירושלים**. Although he was not **זוכה** to biological children, [Some say that after his wife's death, he married a very young woman who bore him one son. Many of his followers today do not know that he had a child, and nobody knows what happened to this boy, whose father died when he was five years old.] many of the neighbourhood boys would eat Shabbos meals in his home and would go on to become prominent **רבנים** and **ראשי ישיבות**.

The week of Reb Morderchai's **פטירה**, the **Babi Sali** had a dream that there was a terrible **גזירה** on **קלל ישראל** and many Yidden would be killed. He davened and fasted all day and announced the next morning that the **גזירה** had been lifted and that one of the **צדיקים** had given his life away for the generation.

Later that week, Rav Morderchai was **נפטר**..... **יהי זכרו ברוך**.

Rabbi YY Jacobson Love and Respect

In a relationship, what is the difference between love and respect?



Love is an expression of feeling one with another, identifying with them, and experiencing a union that fuses two into one. We are bound together with strong ties of mutual devotion and affection. Respect, on the other hand, is borne out of knowing that the other is in fact separate and distinct from ourselves. They are outside our immediate sphere, possess a uniqueness that is chiselled and carved out by their own individualism, and beyond our touch of similarity. It is with our deepest respect that we honour that very boundary of difference and separation.

By and large, it is much more difficult to respect another than love them. Loving our parents, our children or our siblings carries a naturalness to it. There is an innate context for affinity and connection with them. Respect, however, calls for a deep measure of identification with their individualism and independence, divorced from our own perspectives and wishes.

Practically, our children are loved by us without measure, and it is undeniably because we want the best for them. But our children are also distinct individuals, separate from ourselves. And to appreciate that difference, we must show our deepest respect for who they are, and not who we want them to be.

This is why Avraham didn't search for a wife for Yitzchak, but delegated the responsibility to Eliezer. Avraham knew that if he would do so, he would choose a woman like his own wife, Sarah. But

Sarah was a strong-willed woman, and Avraham knew that Yitzchak didn't need that. Avraham, whose natural tendencies were for kindness and selflessness, needed the tenacity and strength that Sarah provided. But Yitzchak epitomized strength, and Rivkah, with her graceful devotion, would perfectly complement him. To search for a wife that mirrored Sarah would be doing what Avraham saw fit, and not what Yitzchak needed.

Avraham remains a prime example of what it means to not only love your child, but respect who he is and what he needs. He is the role model for all generations of balancing true love and respect.



Mussar – Introspection

In "Orchos Yosher", **Rav Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l** cites a Midrash (Tanna Debai Eliyahu Zuta 3) that says that Falsehood (Sheker) and Injustice (Avlah) are the only things not created by Hashem. Rav Chaim explains that all other attributes are necessary at times and have a use within the realm of Kedusha. Not so with Sheker and Avlah, they have no acceptable use. Man caused these detestable attributes to be created due to his sins.

A young man came to Rav Chaim to ask him for advice. Painfully, he recounted the following incident: "I wanted to take a day off from work, but I could not find an acceptable excuse. I finally decided to call my manager and lie to him that my grandmother had died and I needed the day off to attend her funeral. Of course, my manager agreed and expressed his deepest condolences. Two days later, my grandmother who had been healthy and active until now, suddenly

died. I cannot escape the feeling that I am somehow responsible for her death. I have come to ask the Rav what I should do."

If the young man thought that Rav Chaim would console and reassure him, he was mistaken. Rav Chaim spoke to him sternly: "You acted very improperly and did a foolish thing. Chazal tell us (see Moed Kattan 18A) that human speech has power -- it is forbidden to say foolish things like that. Now commit yourself to study Mishnayos every day until your grandmother's Yahrtzeit as a Zechus for her soul and may Hashem help you." (Rav Chaim Kanievsky on Tehillim – Rabbi Shai Graucher)



Chizuk – Inspiration

Rav Noson Kamenetzky ZT'L, the son of **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ZT'L**, wanted to research his family's roots, which brought him to visit a small, Lithuanian town in which Rav Yaakov had been the Rav. While Rav Noson was there, he discovered a very interesting historical fact - even though much of Lithuanian Jewry was killed during the Holocaust, to a large extent the Jews of this town survived the Holocaust.

Rav Noson went to the mayor of the town and asked him if he could explain how the Jews of the town were saved. The mayor said, "I can tell you exactly how the Jews survived." The mayor explained that before the war, the person who eventually became the mayor was the postmaster of the town. As postmaster, he devised a "test" for the local clergy of the town - for both Jews and Gentiles. When clergy members would buy postage from him, he would purposely give them more change than they were owed to see if they would return the extra change. This was the postmaster's litmus test to judge the character of the people he was dealing with.

He tested Rav Yaakov three times in this manner. Each time Rav Yaakov purchased postage, the postmaster gave him more change

than he was owed. And each time, Rav Yaakov returned the extra change. The postmaster was so impressed with Rav Yaakov, who was the head of the Jewish community of the town, that years later when he became mayor, whenever he became aware of a German action which would have harmed the Jews of the town, he would notify the Jews to give them time to run and hide.

When Rav Noson returned to America, he asked his father if he remembered the post office and if he recalled being tested by the postmaster. Rav Yaakov said that he could not recall being tested, but he did remember that the postmaster did not know how to count. (**Rabbi Yissocher Frand**)

Rabbi Yosef Brandeiss -Rosh HaYeshiva Yeshivah L'zeirim Manchester

24:1 **וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל**

Rashi says **בכל עולה בגימטריא בן, ומאחר שהיה לו בן היה צריך להשיאו אשה** - [The word] **בַּכֹּל** is numerically equal to **בֵּן** [son]. Since he had a son, he had to find him a wife. In other words, a person is **מְחֻיָּיב** to be **מְקֻיָּים** the mitzva of **פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ**.

The Shem Mi'Shmuel says that Avraham was ensuring that Yitzchok had a wife. However, his wife Sarah had just died and the only child that they had was Yitzchok, therefore Avrohom himself had not yet been **מְקֻיָּים** the mitzva of **פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ**.

Therefore, surely Avrohom should have been looking for a wife for himself first, before Yitzchok?

Chazal answer that **בַּכֹּל** was actually the name of their daughter! Therefore, Avraham **had** already been **מְקֻיָּים** the mitzva of **פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ**, and he could now concentrate on finding a wife for Yitzchok.

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וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה בְּקִרְיַת אַרְבַּע הִוא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹא אַבְרָהָם לִסְפֹּד לְשָׂרָה וְלִבְכֹּתָהּ 23:2

Why did Avrohom eulogise Sarah before crying? This is not the normal order?

The Satan did everything in its power to hamper Avraham in his mission to carry out the **עקידה** but was not successful. Therefore, the Satan killed Sarah so that Avraham should have **חרטה** for the mitzva.

Gemara Kiddushin 40b says: **אָמַר רֵישׁ לָקִישׁ בְּתוֹהֶא עַל הָרִאשׁוֹנוֹת**

One who regrets all the initial mitzvot he performed in the past. In this case the mitzvot he performed are not taken into account.

Therefore, the Pasuk says that Avrohom didn't submit to the Satan, so first he was **מספיד** and then he cried a small amount.

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וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ נֶזֶם זָהָב בֶּקַע מִשְׁקָלוֹ וּשְׁנֵי צְמִידִים עַל־יָדֶיהָ - ***the man took a golden nose ring, weighing half [a shekel], and two bracelets for her hands.***

The Nitra Rav says that the **בֶּקַע** and the **שְׁנֵי צְמִידִים** were compared to the **מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל** and the **עשרת הדברות/ לוחות.**

The world stands on three things: **תורה - עבודה - וגמילות חסדים.** **רבקה** already had the **גמילות חסדים** , he only had to give her the other two.

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24:15 וְהִנֵּה רִבְקָה יֹצֵאת אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לִבְתוּאֵל

The Imrei Binah asks, how could Avraham even contemplate taking a wife for Yitzchok that came from the house of **בְתוּאֵל** – A house that was steeped in **עבודה זרה?**

Avraham's other choice would be to take a girl from **כְּנַעַן**. These were a people that were descended from **חם בן נח** – A people without morals or any semblance of **מידות טובות**.

This was completely alien to Avraham Avinu. However, with regard to **עבודה זרה**, this was something that he could handle and was confident that he could eradicate, and knew that **רבקה** already had sterling **מידות טובות**.

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

וַאדֹנִי בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים *"And Hashem blessed Avraham with everything"* (24:1)



One Sukkos, the **Vilna Gaon** was sitting in his sukkah with several guests, He turned to them and asked, "From where do we know that Avraham fulfilled the mitzvah of sukkah?"

His guests sat in silence and could not think of the answer.

Said the Gaon: "The Midrash tells us, 'And Hashem blessed Avraham **בַּכֹּל** — this refers to the mitzvah of Sukkah.' Where do we find any

reference to the mitzvah of Sukkah in this verse? Look at the word **בַּכֹּל**.

"Its three letters allude to the three verses that describe the mitzvah of sukkah:

"**בַּסֻּכֹּת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים**" — "***You shall live in sukkahs for seven days***" (Vayikra 23:42);

כָּל־הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֻּכֹּת -"***All natives among Israel shall live in sukkahs***" (ibid);

לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל "***So that your generations will be aware that I settled the Children of Israel in sukkahs***" (ibid. 23:43)**!**

יט חשון 2nd Yahrtzeit of Rav Dovid Feinstein ZT"L by Rabbi Yair Hoffman



Today was the 2nd yahrtzeit of HaGaon HaRav Dovid Feinstein zt"l. The Rosh Yeshiva had taken the helm of MTJ after his father, **Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l**, had passed away in 1986.

Even before that, he was the Rosh Kollel of the Yeshiva in Staten Island. Reb Dovid headed the Yeshiva for 34 years. Rav Moshe zt"l had said about his son that he knew the entire Shas b'al peh and b'iyun – with great depth. He also knew the *shitos rishonim* on every sugya and he knew it in great depth.

And while it was not so well known, almost every difficult halachic question posed in the United States that was referred elsewhere –

was sent to Reb Dovid zt"l. He grasped the essence of the shailah in seconds. Often, he answered with just a few words.

Klal Yisroel, of course, mourns for the loss of his enormous Torah. Reb Dovid went through Shas several times. As he learned through it, he kept a notebook and wrote down his insights and chiddushim.

Once a Ger posed the following question: his biological father passed away and his brothers wanted to cremate the body. Is the soul of a gentile negatively affected by cremation? Should he argue with his brothers? Reb Dovid responded that it is negatively affected and that he should use as much influence as possible to stop the cremation.

Someone with a daughter named Shira had asked him about **Reb Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l's** position that "Shira" is not a name and that girls named "Shira" should adopt a different name. He answered that he would never publicly dispute with such a Gadol baTorah – but that he never understood it. He then brought four instant proofs that it would be permitted.

A few years ago, Reb Dovid issued a psak that Rav Moshe's ruling on smoking not being technically forbidden was only valid based upon the limited scientific knowledge available at the time. However, he explained, that he would certainly rule that in modern times it would be absolutely forbidden. The psak was promulgated by Rabbi Boruch Moskowitz, author of two seforim, veDibarta Bam, that discusses in depth sugyas upon which Reb Dovid zt"l ruled upon.

Reb Dovid was not just a brilliant Posaik and Talmudic scholar. He was extremely careful in matters of respecting others and never embarrassing another person. He was concerned about the kavod of others to a remarkable degree. Reb Dovid also combined his remarkable knowledge and erudition with an abiding sense of humility and strong degree of, well, utter simplicity.

The Yeshiva building in MTJ is old, reminiscent of the buildings that have not been upgraded since the 1930's. The Yeshiva had a soda machine that no one was refilling. As his active chessed Reb Dovid took it upon himself to refill the soda machine with sodas each night – so that the bochurim would have access to something to drink. Eventually, the yeshiva realized that the Gadol haDor should not be the one to be refilling the sodas.

Once, out of town parents were driving their daughter to Camp Hedvah in Liberty, New York. They needed to get to the FDR, and saw a Jewish man on the street. They asked him directions to the 'on ramp'. He explained that it was somewhat complicated, but he could get in the car and direct them. That man did and then prepared to leave. The parents asked him what his name was, he replied, "Dovid Feinstein." They did not realize that they were in the presence of the Rosh Yeshiva himself.

The Rosh yeshiva was very close to the members of the Jewish community in the Lower East Side. He made sure to attend their simchos whenever it was possible. One could always meet him at such a wedding, and this practice inspired many Rabbonim to do likewise. If Reb Dovid attends such simchas – how can others not do so?

These stories reflect upon the Rosh yeshiva unassuming nature.

The Rosh Yeshiva also had a sense of humour. Once a videographer at a wedding asked the Rosh yeshiva for a bracha for the Chosson and Kallah. He responded that he would gladly do so and that he could leave out the particular names of the Chosson and Kallah so that the videographer could reuse the footage for future weddings.

Reb Dovid did not speak publicly and had a reputation of having a quiet personality. He gave shiurim, but never publicly addressed large forums. Yet, when it was necessary, he rose to the occasion.

Once, while Rav Moshe zt"l was alive, there was an emergency Chinuch Atzmai meeting. Rav Moshe was ill and could not attend the

meeting. Reb Dovid attended in his stead. Apparently, Chinuch Atzmai was undergoing a severe financial crisis. There was a deficit of some two million dollars – a large sum in the early 1980's.

Reb Dovid knew what to do. He remarked, "There are twenty of us here. If each of us is *mekable* to take *achrayus* for raising $100,000 – the problem will be resolved. I will begin and take upon myself to raise my $100,000."

When someone related what had transpired to his father, Rav Moshe, the latter responded, "That's not my Dovid'l." But, when necessary, Reb Dovid knew what needed to be done. He stood up for the needs of Klal Yisroel.



עדת אש קודש
Adass Aish Kodesh

The Healing of The Sun - Harav Y. Reuven Rubin

וַאדֹנָי בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל 24:1



The Toras Chayim quotes the Gemoro in Bava Basra that tells us that Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai taught that "A precious stone hung from the neck of Avrohom Avinu. Any sick person that looked at it was cured. When Avrohom passed from the world, Hashem hung this stone in the orb of the sun."

The sefer then tells an amazing story. In the days when the Beis Halevi lived with his father-in law Rebbe Yitzchok Epron his young child Chaim'l (later to grow up to become known as **Rav Chaim of Brisk**) became extremely ill with a life-threatening illness. Just at that time Rebbe Yitzchok's Rebbe, the Rebbe **Rav Moshe of Kabrin** came to Volozhin for a visit. It was his custom to stay at the home of his devoted chosid Rebbe Yitzchok and when he was told that the family was experiencing a difficult time owing to the young child's critical illness, the Rebbe insisted that Reb Yitzchok carry on as normal and even host a festive meal.

During the meal the Rebbe started to talk about this Gemoro and how Avrohom had this stone that would cure all who looked upon it. "And what was this precious stone? It was the midah of hospitality and chesed that was so magnanimously practiced by Avrohom Avinu. And when Avrohom Avinu passed on Hashem placed this midah of chesed in the sun where it can shine upon the entire world.

"In Parshas Vayera when the malochim came to Avrohom Avinu, he prepared food for them. It says in the passage that he stood ***with*** them. The use of this word is in the present, not the past tense. The Rebbe said that every time a Jew does a charitable act, Avrohom Avinu stands with him. That is why the term is in the present tense.

Every time we do a chesed, that sun of illumination that was Avrohom Avinu shines on us and cures our ills." The Rebbe then smiled, "Reb Itcha has given hospitality today beyond the call of duty and in that merit his grandson Chaim'l will have a complete recovery. And so it was…

Peninim on The Torah

ויקם אברהם מעל פני מתו וידבר אל בני חת *Avraham rose up from the presence of his dead and spoke to bnei Cheis. (23:3)*



The Torah is circumspect concerning its text, spelling of each word and overall locution. No word is superfluous, no spelling is ignored. *Chazal* derive volumes of *halachah* from every nuance, every seeming redundancy. As the message of its Divine Author, nothing in the Torah is to be taken capriciously. As such, it is intriguing to note that the words, *bnei Cheis* (children of Cheis), are mentioned nine times in our *parshah* and once in *Parashas Vayechi* (49:32).

It is not as if these were laudable people. They were idolaters who were greedy and selfish – among other things. Yet, the Torah finds it important to underscore their negotiating with Avraham *Avinu* when he sought to purchase a plot of land to bury his wife.

Chazal (*Bereishis Rabbah* 58:8) intimate this question. Rabbi Eliezer said, "How much ink is spilled and how many quills are broken, in order to write '*bnei cheis*'! Ten times, the Torah writes '*bnei cheis*'.

These ten citations correspond to the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, in order to teach that whoever assists in the business ventures of a *tzaddik*, righteous person, it is considered as if he has fulfilled the *Aseres HaDibros*."

Chazal ask the question, derive the lesson, convey the message, but what should we learn from it (other than the overriding importance of assisting a *tzaddik* in his financial affairs)?

Horav Noach Weinberg, zl (Wisdom for Living), explains that *Chazal* are teaching us that (even) one act can alter the course of history. *Bnei cheis* were far from respectable people. They were barbarians whose entire demeanour was the antithesis of that of Avraham *Avinu*. It was the furthest from the mind to imagine them sitting down to the table with our holy Patriarch to discuss a business enterprise – one which was not a long-term arrangement, but a one-time deal which would net them just so much. Yet, for once, they acted like *mentchen*, decent human beings, deferring respect to the *tzaddik* who stood before them, someone who was acknowledged as the *Nasi Elokim*, Prince of G-d.

This godless people showed reverence to a representative of G-d who embodied spirituality at its apex. This one time, one act, singular performance of kindness and decency, elevated them to the point that they are considered to have fulfilled the *Aseres HaDibros*. Their one-time achievement made their life worth living!

One deed, one achievement at the right time, in the right place, can impact the world in such a manner that it qualifies (and gives meaning to) one's existence and makes his name worthy of being perpetuated for all time. One well-placed act can enroll a person in the eternal book of history. Because he made a change, he made a difference. This does not mean that once one has successfully performed this

life-altering act that he should go into retirement, live a reclusive life of abandon. No! It should serve as the springboard for a continued successful life – impactful living.

While some live longer than others, it does not mean that the one with the shorter life span has a diminished opportunity for achievement. It is not how *long* one lives – it is *how* one lives that matters. If every G-d-given moment of life is recognised as just that – G-d-given, he will not waste it. He knows that he can achieve and influence a world in that moment.

The people who change the course of history, who leave an enduring impact, are not necessarily the well-known movers and shakers. Each and every one of us has the opportunity to leave our imprint for eternity. *Rav* Weinberg explains that by reaching out to our fellow Jew, who – for a number of reasons (many out of his control) – is alienated from the religion of his ancestors, whose understanding and appreciation of his heritage is at best minimal, superficial and often jaundiced, is drowning in a society whose culture is immoral and toxic, one can change the course of generations to come. If we throw him/her a line and succeed in reining him/her in, we have changed the world and made our mark for eternity.

The one good deed will pay out its investment in ways that one cannot imagine. I present two vignettes in which we see how this played out.

***Rav* Mendel Futerfas**, a *Lubavitch chassid* emigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* from Communist Russia after spending many years in the *gulag*, Russian prison, for the "treason" of teaching and inspiring Jews to *Yiddishkeit*. He also risked his life to help his fellow Jews escape from Russia.

When he emigrated in the 1970's, he first travelled to England where his wife was living. He then went to Crown Heights to meet with the ***Lubavitcher Rebbe, zl***. When he left New York, his first destination was to return to his wife in England, and together they would travel to *Eretz Yisrael*. He was sitting next to a man whose

facial features identified him as Jewish. He could not prove it, but his gut feeling gravitated toward Jewish. The man was clearly not *frum*, observant.

His soul was in a turmoil. After spending years reaching out to Jews of all stripes, in a country dedicated to denying the existence of a Supreme Being, saving Jews both physically and spiritually, how could he sit next to this man for six hours and ignore his apparent disconnect from Jewish observance?

The problem was that he hardly spoke English. How could he interact with the man? On the other hand, the fact that they were sitting next to one another was surely Divinely pre-ordained.

He had an idea. He took out his *Tefillin* and pointed to them. He said to him, "I Jew, you Jew; I *Tefillin*, you *Tefillin*." His neighbour agreed to put on *Tefillin*. It was not the most eloquent oratory – but it was sincere.

When words emanate from the heart – not just the mouth – they drive home a message: "I care about you." That one decision altered the trajectory of that man's life.



Rabbi Yechiel Spero (*To Light a Spark*) relates the story of a family in Bnei Brak who began to notice cracks in their son, Yossi's, spiritual armour. In the beginning, it was little nuances, the manner in which he would *daven*, his attitude toward *Shabbos; kashrus* was no longer observed in the strict manner in which he was raised. Their normally good relationship began to sour, as his failure to observe Torah and *mitzvos* became more obvious, evidencing a lack of respect for his parents' feelings and an almost rebellious attitude toward Torah and *halachah*.

The clincher came when Yossi asked his father to buy him a car. It was not as if his parents could not afford the expenditure. They were well-to-do, and a car would not break the bank. Their concern was: Would he flagrantly drive on *Shabbos*? Were they assisting him in *chillul Shabbos*? Perhaps they should purchase the car on the condition that he does not drive it on *Shabbos*?

They decided that they knew only one address to hear *daas Torah*, the wisdom of Torah: **The *Chazon Ish***. The sage was not well, but he made the effort to advise families that were going through challenges with their children.

The *Chazon Ish* met with the father and listened to his tale of woe. The father related his son's latest request and his suggestion that he buy him the car on the condition that he does not drive it on *Shabbos*.

The *Chazon Ish* responded immediately, "Absolutely not! When a father buys a car for his son, no strings or conditions should be attached to the gift."

The father was expecting/hoping to hear a different response from the sage, but the *gadol hador*, pre-eminent leader of the generation, had spoken. He would adhere.

The next day Yossi received his new car – without strings attached. Surprisingly, when *Shabbos* began, the car was parked in its place. Yossi no longer observed *Shabbos*, but, apparently, he was not about to desecrate it with the new car that he had received.

This went on for four weeks, until one *Shabbos*, Yossi sat down to partake in the *Shabbos* meal with the rest of his family. Words cannot describe the joy mixed with tears that coursed through his parents' heart. It was an inspiring meal, almost like a homecoming – which it was. Nonetheless, the father wanted to know what it was that had effected the change in Yossi's attitude.

Yossi explained, "When I asked you to buy me a car, I was certain there would be the condition of no driving on *Shabbos*. I had decided that if this would be the case, I would return the car, make a loan and purchase my own car, which I would drive all over – on *Shabbos*. I was going to do this to spite you. If you cannot accept me for who I am, then you do not really love me.

When you bought me the car and gave it to me without strings attached, however, I realised that you were giving me the car because you loved me. I then asked myself, "How can I drive the car when I know that it will hurt my parents and cause them severe pain?" I decided not to drive out of respect for you. After a few weeks, I realised how much *Shabbos* meant to me – and I returned.

One decision prompted by the *gadol hador* saved a young boy from the abyss of spiritual infamy.



ויגוע וימת אברהם בשיבה טובה זקן ושבע ***And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, mature and content****. (25:8)*

The perfection and wholesomeness in life which Sarah *Imeinu* achieved was also merited by Avraham *Avinu*.

Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl*,* would refer to Avraham *Avinu's* life as *zate' teg*, days for which he was content and satisfied, knowing that he had lived every moment of his life in accordance with the *ratzon*, will, of Hashem. One hundred seventy-five years: thirty days a month, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. He did not waste a moment of his life.

When one lives in such a manner, leaving this world is merely crossing over to the next world. **The *Chafetz Chaim, zl****,* would weep copious tears as he rebuked himself when he was unable to account for half-an-hour. He was not completely certain what he did during this time. He would say, "Half an hour is thirty minutes, with each minute affording me the time to learn two hundred letters of Torah."

The *Ponovezher Rav, zl*, spoke on *Shabbos mevorchim ha'chodesh*, when the blessing ushering in the forthcoming month is recited, to his *yeshivah* students. He began, "We pray, *V'sitein lanu chaim aruchim*, 'May You give us long life.' At present, we are praying for the following month. Why do we interject and ask for long life? How does 'long' life interplay with the blessing for the following thirty days?"

The *Rav* explained that a moment saved and used for the correct purpose is *chaim aruchim*, long life, since by our actions we can transform one minute into *nitzchiyus*, eternity. Thus, we ask Hashem to grant us the ability and resolution to merit to convert the mundanity of life into purposeful living in accordance with the will of Hashem, thereby elevating it to eternity.



When the ***Ohr Sameach*** was *niftar*, ***the Rogatchover Gaon, zl***, who was his colleague in Dvinsk, eulogised him. He bewailed the inestimable loss to *Klal Yisrael*. "*Rav* Meir Simcha learned Torah with such diligence, similar to a person who is rescuing his possessions from a raging fire. Under such overwhelming circumstances, one does not stop to look at the clock: Is it the middle of the night? Is it the afternoon, and I have things to do? Does rescuing my possessions involve difficulty?

No! One rolls up his sleeves and acts, doing whatever he must do to save whatever he can. This was *Rav* Meir Simcha. Every minute that could be devoted to Torah he pulled out of the fire." He was salvaging that minute to learn Torah. Another minute, another minute; every minute was precious. How could he abandon it?"

Va'ani Tefillah

אשרי יושבי ביתך Fortunate are those who dwell in Your house.

Reciting *Tehillah l'David* (*Ashrei*) provides the supplicant with amazing merit, to the point that *Chazal* (*Berachos* 4:b) teach that one who says this prayer three times daily is guaranteed a place in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come.

First and foremost, this merit is earned only after one recites the *tefillah* with great *kavanah*, intention, and sincerity. Otherwise, he is just saying words. Many reasons are given for this prayer's distinction. The *Machatzis HaShekel* (1:7) writes, "When one recites *Tehillah l'David* with the proper intention, he will come to realise that everything in life comes to us from Hashem. This prayer is comprised completely of praise to Hashem, lauding His attributes. When a person acknowledges the incredible kindness which Hashem provides him, he will be circumspect to distance himself from any negative activity which may lead to sin. This will engender within him a desire to repent and come closer to Hashem. He will, thus, be ensured a place in *Olam Habba.*

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

A Rav who had once learned under **Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zt"l**, in Yeshivas Ponevezh, came to Bnei Brak to visit Rav Shteinman with about 100 members of his Kehilah. When they met, the Rav remarked to Rav Ahraon Leib, "I haven't been in the Rosh Yeshivah's house for 30 years, but it looks exactly the same now as it did then!"

Rav Aharon Leib smiled and replied, "It isn't the house that is supposed to change with renovations and updates. It is the person who lives in the house who is supposed to change!"

L'Maaseh



Once, **Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l**, went to a Chasunah, where he was the Mesader Kidushin. When the Chupah was over, many people came over to shake his hand and ask for a Brachah. Rav Moshe happened to be in a rush to get to another wedding, yet, he took the time to shake everyone's hand, and smile at everyone who greeted him. His driver gently urged the crowd to let him leave, and he said, "The Rav needs to get to another wedding," but the people just kept crowding around him asking for Brachos. It took a while until the driver was finally able to escort Rav Moshe to the exit, and the whole way, people kept followed him, and asking for Brachos and advice.

Finally, Rav Moshe left the hall and entered the car. The driver, who kept glancing at his watch, rushed to start the engine. He had just pulled away from the parking lot when suddenly Rav Moshe said, "Stop!"

The driver stopped with a screech. "What happened?"

"I must go back to the hall," Rav Moshe said. The driver responded, "If something was left behind, I can go up and get it." Rav Moshe insisted, "No. I must go back myself."

The driver, seeing how adamant Rav Moshe was, parked the car again, and accompanied him back to the hall. When they went in, the driver saw that Rav Moshe began to scan the hall, looking for someone.

"Who are you looking for?" he asked.

Rav Moshe answered, "I don't know."

The driver wondered a little about this answer, but he didn't say anything. He knew there must be a reason. After several minutes of looking, Rav Moshe suddenly spotted the person he was looking for. He crossed the hall quickly, keeping his eyes on this person, so he wouldn't lose sight of him. When Rav Moshe reached him, he said, "Sholom Aleichem, Reb Yid. How are you? How do you feel?"

The man was startled. He couldn't understand the meaning of this special attention, but it was easy to see how pleased he was by it. Finally, Rav Moshe asked, "What is your name?" The stranger answered. Rav Moshe then parted from him with a great display of affection.

When they were once again seated in the car, the driver respectfully asked Rav Moshe the meaning of what had happened, and who that man was. The driver was certain he must be a hidden Tzadik.

Rav Moshe told him that he had never seen the man before in his life! Rav Moshe said, "This man was one of the guests who asked for a Brachah just as I was concentrating on the closing doors of the elevator and watching that they didn't close on me. I nodded goodbye to him. I didn't look at him, and I didn't smile at him. I was preoccupied with something else.

When we started driving away, I recalled his look of disappointment at not receiving a nice smile from me. That's why I went back and looked for his face, which I remembered what it looked like, and I gave him the attention he deserved!"

"In times of worry and uncertainty, seek the warmth of others. Together, we can light a fire of hope and strengthen one another's hearts." Piaseczner Rebbe, Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira.

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

When the **Steipler Gaon, zt"l**, went to **Rav Menachem Zeimba, zt"l**, to receive a letter of Haskamah for his first Sefer, there was a long line of people waiting to see him. Although many of the people waiting to see the Rav were conversing with each other, when the Steipler joined the line, he opened his Gemara Masechta Kesuvos, and he started learning.

When it was his turn to go in to see Rav Zeimba, he had learned twenty-two Blatt of Gemara!



Remain Firm

The Mishnah (Avos 5:3) states עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִתְנַסָּה עָלָיו אַבְרָהָם הַשָּׁלוֹם וְעָמַד אָבִינוּ בְּכֻלָּם "***Avraham Avinu had ten tests, and he stood up [and passed] them all.***"

עמד בכולם describes the attitude of a person who remains standing erect and doesn't collapse from questions in emunah.

Rebbe Shimon Yareslover *zt'l* was niftar at age ninety-one, which was considered in his days extremely old. People asked him, "How did you merit to live so long?"

He replied, "It's because I never asked questions."

He explained, "When a person asks questions about how Hashem leads the world, Heaven replies, 'Come up. From here you will see that everything is for the good.'

I never ask questions, so I wasn't called to *shomayim* to receive answers."

It states (24:1) **וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל** "***Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything***."

How did Avraham merit a long life?

The Binyan Dovid (47) **zt'l** says that it's because he never asked questions. Therefore, Heaven didn't have to call him up to show him how everything was good. Avraham considered everything that happened to him as a blessing. He had no complaints, and he was able to live long.

After World War One, **Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l** returned to Galicia after living through the war in Hungary. Many chasidim came to be with the Rebbe for his first Shabbos back in Galicia.

Among the guests were **Reb Naftali Tzvi Ungar zt'l** and his ten year-old son, Reb Boruch Avraham. The beis midrash was packed. The Rebbe came into the beis midrash, and people pushed to the side to make room for the Rebbe to pass through. The young Boruch Avraham was crushed among the chasidim, and his arm and leg got hurt.

The young boy immediately left the beis midrash and went to the apartment where they were staying. He didn't return to the beis midrash throughout Shabbos.

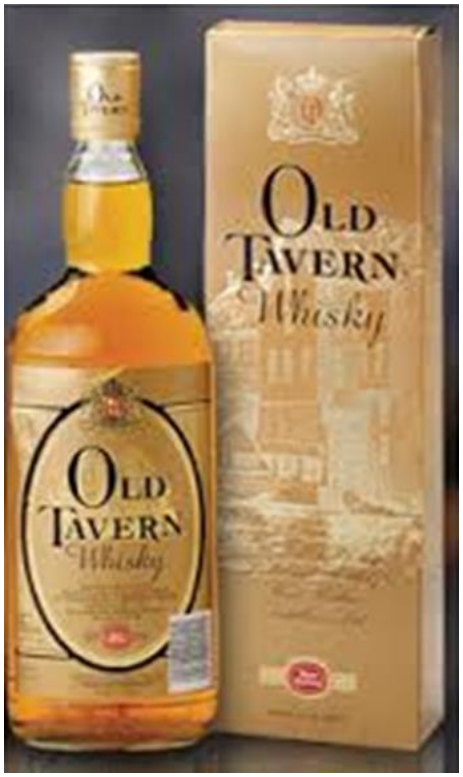
Remarkably, the Rebbe noticed that Boruch Avraham wasn't there (which is difficult to recognize, as there were so many guests).

At shalosh seudos, he asked Reb Naftali Tzvi where his son was. Reb Naftali Tzvi told the Rebbe what happened and explained that he was afraid he might be harmed again. The Rebbe told him, "Tell your son that he shouldn't be afraid of pain."

Years afterwards, Reb Boruch Avraham went through the second world war, and the rebbe's counsel remained in his mind. It helped him stand up to the challenges and to pass many tests.

He remembered that pain shouldn't faze him. This is as it states about Avraham Avinu, **עמד בכולם** , he remained standing. No matter what happened in his life, he remained firm.

The Jewish Weekly – It Once Happened



The Best Whiskey of All by Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Leibel and Shoshana had eleven children, yet they lived a life of ease and comfort. Their tavern was the most popular in their area, as the expertise of Leibel as a brewer was head and shoulders above any competition.

In the cellar of their house Leibel had set up a small factory for making whiskey. He laboured long hard hours in the production of his unique whiskey, while his good wife administered the business side of the tavern.

One day, though, tragedy struck. Leibel fell severely ill, and in but a short while he returned his soul to its Maker. His death left his widow totally broken-hearted, nor did she understand how she would be able to obtain the large amounts of food necessary to feed her eleven orphaned children. The tavern was doomed; she hadn't the faintest idea how to prepare the whiskey; nor was there anyone to ask. The secrets of its recipe and its manner of preparation went down into the earth with her husband.

Leibel was accustomed to visit the 'court' of his Rebbe, **Rabbi Avraham Yaakov of Sadigora** (the son of the **'holy Rhiziner'**). Shoshana well remembered how every time he returned from a visit to the Rebbe, he was in an excellent mood. So she decided that she should now go herself to the Rebbe and seek his blessing.

Face to face with the Rebbe, Shoshana reported her situation through a veil of sobs and tears. The Rebbe listened with full attention and visible compassion to every word. After, he blessed her and encouraged her to place her trust in G-d Almighty.

Several months went by as the widow's financial circumstances deteriorated further. Creditors were repeatedly knocking on her door, including representatives of the poritz, the local nobleman landlord, to whom much money was owed even before Leibel's death aggravated the situation.

Shoshana made another journey to the Sadigorer, but this time refused to be satisfied with his blessing only. Feeling under enormous pressure, she began enumerating to the Rebbe various methods she imagined that the Ribono Shel Olam could employ to help her. For example, He could arrange that she should happen to be on the road at the exact moment that the poritz returned from an excursion, and when he descended from his coach his wallet could fall from his pocket, and only she would notice it. "Then," she explained, "I could extract the money inside it and keep it. After all, the poritz is exceptionally wealthy, so he won't feel damaged by the loss. I'll then take the majority of the money and give it to the poritz to clear our debt to him, while the remainder will provide sustenance for myself and my children for a long while."

Sharing the pain of her desperateness, the Rebbe gazed at the widow with empathy and mercy before responding gently, "We don't need to give advice to the Creator of All; He knows quite well all by Himself how to provide a solution."

One day not so long after the above encounter, at an hour when the widow was not at home, her oldest son, a lad of fifteen, heard a persistent knocking on their front door. When he opened it, he was startled to see the poritz himself standing there, in all his glory.

"Is your father at home?" he asked. The boy answered that it is months already that his father has not been among the living.

"What!" cried out the poritz in a shocked tone. "I am so sorry to hear that. I was never told about it." Then he immediately switched to the matter for which he had come.

"I have always purchased my whiskey from your father exclusively. In another two weeks I will be making a wedding for my daughter, and I need a very large amount of quality whiskey, like that which your father knew to prepare."

Leibel's son answered that since his father passed away, all activity in the cellar has ceased. "There is no whiskey left. The barrels are all empty." The poritz, however, figured that the teenager was simply trying to act like a sharp businessman, and his disclaimer was in order to establish a bargaining position.

"There is no reason to negotiate," he replied. "I'll pay you double or triple the usual price; just agree to prepare this large order on time for me." The boy froze in fear. He could not understand what the poritz expected of him, so he remained silent. The exasperated poritz ran out of patience and raised his voice. "Why don't you answer me, boy? Take me immediately to the cellar. I want to see for myself what remains." Leibel's son, in trepidation, barely managed to drag himself down the stairs. The poritz, however, was becoming happier and more excited with each step. "Ah!" he exclaimed as he sniffed the air. "The scent of whiskey - good, strong whiskey! - is seeping into my nostrils."



In the cellar, the poritz began to inspect the barrels, one by one. So far, they were all empty. The son was becoming increasingly apprehensive, frightened even. He knew that the only casks with any liquid in them were the few that

were full of water, soaking in order to remove the last dregs of the whiskey. What would be the poritz's reaction when he finished his survey?

When the poritz reached the first water-filled barrel, he stepped back in surprise. "What is this?" he asked the boy in an inquisitive yet demanding tone. "Water," was the one-word response. Suspicious, the poritz scooped a bit of the contents with his hand and swallowed it.

His face lit up and he roared with joy. "I'm amazed. The taste of this whiskey is even better than what your father used to make! "You tried to fool me! I shall forgive you, but only on the condition you prepare for me in time for the wedding three barrels of whiskey with this supremely delicious taste exactly." The poritz next took out his wallet, removed from it a thick wad of bills, and handed it to the trembling teenager. Then he walked quickly up the stairs and departed.

The boy ran to tell his mother the astonishing turn of events. She immediately departed in the first carriage to Sadigora. "Rebbe!" She cried out. "How can I possibly acquire three full barrels of high quality whiskey in less than two weeks?"

The Rebbe smiled warmly and answered, "Is water lacking? Fill the barrels with water from the river, as you usually do when cleaning." The woman returned home, astonished and perplexed by the words of the Rebbe. Nevertheless, she and her son hurried to fulfil the Tzadik's directive.

A few days later, she managed to deliver the barrels to the poritz, who was so grateful that he extended to her a generous bonus. The day of the wedding of the Poritz's daughter arrived. The men guests were out of their minds with delight at how tasty and strong the whiskey was. They demanded to know the identity of its maker. The Poritz revealed that it was a teenage boy! - the son of the departed Leibel, the master brewer.

The next morning, representatives of all the wealthy noblemen that had been at the wedding crowded into the courtyard of the widow. They all wished to buy the unique whiskey they had imbibed the previous day.

Shoshana ran inside to tell her son. They looked at each other, shrugged in bewilderment, and did the only thing they could think of: hustle to the river with a wagon of empty casks and fill them with water from the river. Maybe the miracle would re-occur, they prayed.Their eager customers nevertheless took the precaution of tasting. They were immensely satisfied; within the hour all the barrels were sold at a premium price.

Not a week passed and nearly all the nobles sent to purchase more of 'the best whiskey ever.' It did not take long after that until Shoshana was able to pay off all their debts to the poritz and other creditors. Nor did that use up all the money from the sales. Plenty remained to support the large family.

Soon after, the widow journeyed to the Rebbe again, this time to thank him for his miraculous blessing. The Rebbe smiled his warm smile and said, "Didn't I tell you that the Al-mighty doesn't need our suggestions!" The woman replied innocently. "Please, the Rebbe should believe me. I thought of so many different possibilities for salvation, but this method, that water should be converted into whiskey, I have to admit that never occurred to me!"

To Bring Satisfaction to The Creator Yisbarach By Rav Gamliel Rabinovitch

I travel to Meron every Shabbos that we bentch Rosh Chodesh. I have a steady minyan in Meron where they ask me to bentch the month as I have for many years, and it is established that I get it. This year, on the Shabbos that we bentch Cheshvan, I got ready to go to Meron as usual with the rebbetzin.

However, we had an unexpected appointment on Sunday for an important examination for the rebbetzin. I calculated that even if we leave Meron after Shabbos at the earliest possible time, because of traffic we would still arrive in Yerushalayim very late which would be hard for the Rebbetzin, since the appointment was early Sunday morning.



So, I informed the Rebbetzin that we would not be going to Meron this Shabbos. She was speechless since this was our tradition and she would not forego this unless it was for something important like a simcha for the children/grandchildren or something else, but not for something like this…

I explained to her that it was not good for her to come back so late and be in the hospital so early, despite that being in Meron for Shabbos meant more to me than I can describe, but after considering all the difficulty and what is a person's obligation in this world, and what the Creator wants from us at this time, I came to this conclusion and this is what we did.

On Shabbos I went to my minyan in Yerushalayim where I have davened for at least twenty years and to my great surprise, they asked me to bentch Rosh Chodesh. I have never been asked to bentch Rosh Chodesh in this minyan!!!

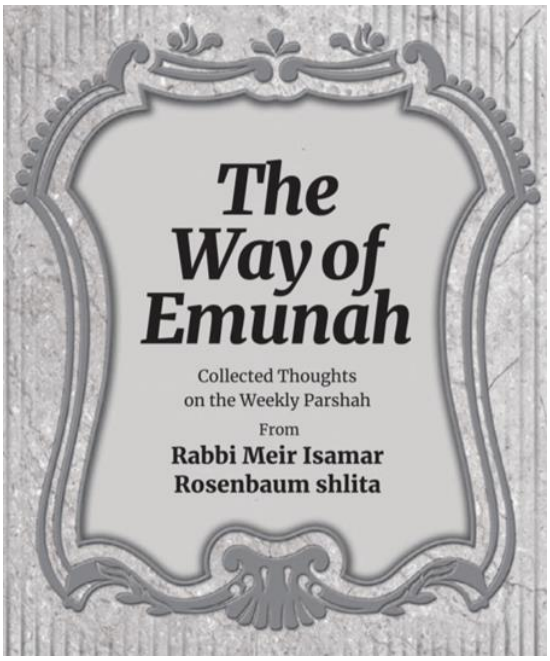
Occasionally, I would find myself at this minyan on a Shabbos mevarchim, for one reason or another, but they have never asked me to bentch Rosh Chodesh. I went up to bentch Rosh Chodesh and I felt like I received regards from Meron and a smile from the Creator of the world, as if He said, "My son, you made the right decision by not going to Meron!!!"

Why do I bother to tell my story about Meron?! Because many times I meet young men and even older men, yarei shamayim, who hold onto something specific that without it, they cannot conclude the week, month, or year, and they will not forego this thing even if it is at a cost to the wife, the children, or ordinary people or friends.

The person must know that whoever does the will of Hashem never loses out. Even if it is a tradition of many years, there are times when one must forego this tradition when he senses the will of the Creator.

To conclude: '***When it comes to the will of the Creator, there is no place for nervousness or customs, just do His will and you will never lose out***.'

Baruch Hashem, the examination went well and better than expected, with thanks to the Creator of the world!!!



In The Merit of Tzedakah, Even the Midas Hadin Agrees to Grant Wealth And Long Life

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל

And Avrohom was old, advanced in days, and Hashem blessed Avrohom with everything. (24:1)

The Chida zt"l (Sefer Rosh Dovid, Parshas Vayakhel) explains this pasuk by quoting the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 51) that says that every time the verse refers to Hashem with the letter "vav" preceding His name ("va'Hashem") it is referring to "Him and his beis din".

Chazal also say (Bereishis Rabbah 43:8) that Hashem blessed Avrohom "bakol", with everything, in the merit of giving maaser, as

it is stated (Bereishis 14:20) that Avrohom gave maaser "m'kol", from everything.

From all of this, we see that if a person pursues chesed and tzedakah, he is granted life, and he even transforms the midas hadin, into midas rachamim This is the meaning of the pasuk. Avrohom was old - he merited a long life. Furthermore, he merited having Hashem's middah of rachamim with him. Hashem and His bais din blessed Avrohom – meaning that even the midas hadin agreed to grant him long life and wealth. He merited all of this in the merit of maaser.

This proves that giving tzedakah has the power to transform the midas hadin to rachamim and to provide a person with wealth and a long, happy life.



The Days Are Like Parchment

Kisvei HaRamam writes that he heard the **Yesod Ha'avodah of Slonim zy"a** relate that the following to his students in the name of a "certain chochom":

You should know that days are like parchment. Blank parchment that has nothing written on it is only worth the value of parchment. But when holy words are written on that parchment, its value rises exponentially.

The opposite is also true. If someone writes disgusting and inappropriate things on a piece of parchment, the parchment loses its value completely and is now worth much less than a piece of blank parchment.

So too, every new day is a blank page. If a person uses it to do good things, such as learning Torah, davening and doing mitzvos, he is filling the page with holiness and raising its value immensely. However, if he uses it for the wrong purposes, he is filling his page with impurity and destroying its value.

Therefore, a person should realize how important every day is. One should know that he has the power to uplift this day and make it priceless. This is stated in the pasuk: "Avrohom was old, advanced in days." All of his days were spent properly and used to fulfil the will of Hashem.

The Present

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עָרֶב And Yitzchok went forth to pray in the field towards evening. (24:63)

When the **Chozeh of Lublin** was a young boy, he would daven with a lot of kavanah, and his tefillos took a very long time.

He once was asked why he did this and he answered, "Before I daven, I think: The past is gone. The future is not yet here because a person doesn't know when the time will come for him to leave this world. All I have is the present.

The only thing I can worry about is the current moment. At least I can use this moment to be an eved Hashem and to daven with kavanah."

Lavan Merited a Good Name in The Merit of Rivka

וּלְרִבְקָה אָח וּשְׁמוֹ לָבָן And Rivkah had a brother and his name was Lavan. And Lavan ran. (24:29)

Chazal state (Bamidbor Rabbah 15:10): "There are some people whose names are nice but their actions not nice and there are some

people whose actions are nice and their names are nice. And there are some whose names and actions are both not nice."

The Ben Ish Chai (Sefer Od Yosef Chai) says that Lavan's name was nice, but his actions were bad. The name Lavan means "white" (meaning pure and clean), but his actions were "black like coal" (dirty and impure).

Why did the wicked Lavan merit a good name? Because he was the brother of the tzadeikes Rivkah. This is stated in the pasuk: "And Rivkah had a brother and his name was Lavan." Because he was Rivkah's brother, he merited having the nice name of Lavan.



Different Folks, Different Strokes

QUESTION: When there are differences between different groups among the Jewish People, how are we to know who is right?

ANSWER: Everyone is right. And everyone is wrong. Nobody is perfect in this world. We have to live with the principle of knowing that we ourselves are not altogether right. And we have to do our best to improve. Although we don't have to adopt what everybody else does, and everyone should follow the customs and manners of his kehilla in the very best manner, nevertheless, he should know that there are things to be learned everywhere.

Even though you're a chossid, when you walk into Telshe Yeshiva, you can learn good things there too. And if a Telshe bochur goes to Williamsburg, he can learn good things there, no question about it. Therefore, everyone should try to steal from others all the good things they can. Instead of going around and saying "Well, I saw in this shteibel that they talk during davening so it's not so bad."

Or, "In the other place they daven fast, so I can also daven fast." So, this person goes around collecting all the wrong things from all the places. No! Go around collecting all the good things from everybody – that's what they're there for.

And that's the person who will succeed. That's what jealousy is for. *Kinah* means to be *koneh,* to acquire, to be jealous of all the good things that you find. "Why is he saying a long shemonah esrei and not me?" "Why does he treat his wife so nicely and I'm so gruff?" "Why does he go out to learn at night and I'm still wasting away?" And everybody should try to steal from everyone else all the good things that they find.

And thus, the first mother, Chava, gave the first child ever born in this world the name Kayin which means to be *koneh,* to acquire. She wanted him to think about that all the time because that's our purpose – to acquire all the qualities that find favor in the eyes of Hashem.

Because what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants of us is shleimus, perfection. Shleimus in knowledge of the Torah, perfection in knowing His ways, perfection in recognizing Him in history and in nature. Perfection in character and self-control and kindliness to our fellow man. Every form of perfection that's possible for a person to emulate, to imitate, to steal from all sides, he should do that. Whenever he comes into contact with people, whenever he sees anything good in the world, he should emulate it and take it for himself.

A 40 year old man began rapidly losing his eyesight. He went to the optician and doctors for checks. They told him to accept the fact – you are going blind, nothing can be done.



The man cried to Hashem for several hours. But he didn't ask for his eyesight back. No, he accepted the fact. "This is what you decree, Hashem? This is what You want, then fine."

What was he crying about?

"For 40 years, I've been on this earth… and I never thanked You for my eyes and my eyesight. For 40 years, my eyesight has been perfect."

He grabbed a notebook, and started to write 'Thank You's… and he sarted crying that he hadn't yet said thank You.

In short, Hashem cured him. He now truly understood that for 40 years, he was blind – Only now, he has begun to see!

That's why now I say, 'Thank You Hashem for the chair. Thank You Hashem for the car. 'Thank You Hashem for every minute… every second.'



We say in the morning, "Blessed are You Hashem Who opens the eyes of the blind." – Do you realise what you are saying? - Don't take anything for granted. Pay attention to what Hashem gives you, for all the good that He does for you. Thank Hashem for everything, and don't be blind.

Rav Aharon Kotler and the Fly by R' Reuven Semah



Rabbi Yaakov Bender tells us a story that occurred with his parents that illustrates this very same point. One summer his parents were staying at a hotel in the Catskills. At mealtimes, they sat together with Rav Aharon Kotler and his Rebbetzin. At one point, a fly was buzzing around Rabbi Bender's mother, and she waved it away. "No!" Rav Aharon said with distress. "No, do not swat it in that direction."

Mrs. Bender was puzzled, and the Rosh Yeshivah explained that she had swatted in the direction of the other guests, rather than towards the open door.

That was it. We have never seen a fly take directions, but the Rosh Yeshivah was so sensitive that he was anguished at the thought that the fly might irritate others.

Great people take everything into account, and therein lies the secret to their greatness.

"Nefesh Shimshon" – From the Teachings of Rabbeinu Shimshon Dovid Pincus Zt"L - Careful Money

ואיזהו מטבע של <u>אברהם אבינו</u> זקן וזקינה מצד אחד ובחור ובתולה מצד אחר - ***What was [stamped] on the coin of Avraham Avinu? An elderly man and woman on one side; a young man and woman on the other side***. (*Bava Kama* 97b)

What was the meaning of the images stamped on *Avraham Avinu's* coin?

Simply speaking, *Avraham Avinu* was a king, and it is the way of kings to put out currency bearing the icon of the king. Avraham's currency

bore on one side the image of an elderly man and woman, who were Avraham and Sarah, and on the other side, a young man and woman, who were Yitzchak and Rivkah. They were the royal personages.

Besides the simple meaning, we could say Avraham wished to teach the people a lesson about *kosher* money. Avraham Avinu's outstanding trait was chesed. The Torah recounts the amazing chesed he did with his angelic guests. On the other hand, Yitzchak's outstanding trait was yiras Shamayim, as the verse says, Pachad Yitzchak.

The message on the front of the coin was that money is given to us so we may do chesed and tzedakah with it, as represented by Avraham and Sarah, the paragons of chesed. But this is only half the message. The back side of the coin showed Yitzchak and Rivkah, who represent yiras Shamayim. This teaches that we need to make sure our money is free of theft and other sins. Only then, when it is a kosher coin, is it the currency of Avraham Avinu.

Some people don't know this. They think that if they give nice donations to the shul and other good causes, then it is not so terrible if their business dealings are less than 100% clean and pure. And it is forgivable if they forget to pay some little debts, or neglect to pay them on time.

Avraham Avinu came to teach us that this is not so. A coin is kosher only when it bears the stamp of Yitzchak Avinu on it. When it is marked by yiras Shamayim. This lesson is pertinent to everyone, including those who spend most of their time in the beis midrash.

The Vilna Gaon said that a Torah learner will not see success in his learning if there is even one nail stuck into his home that is not his according to the dinim of the Torah. This is something to think about. Even if it involves just a small amount, and even if we have good excuses, a debt is a debt. It must be paid.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

WITH RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

Question: Why is it that out of all animals, it's monkeys that resemble man most?

Answer: And the answer is that if you make a blood analysis, you'll discover that there are some animals whose blood resembles human blood more than monkeys' blood does. A monkey has no more intelligence than a dog.



In fact, the porpoise can learn more tricks than a monkey. We shouldn't be deceived by the fact that a monkey resembles a human being. In intelligence, he is no better than other animals. The fact is that in circuses they have trained porpoises to come out of the water and balance balls on their nose. They leap over certain hurdles and they can do tricks – remarkable things they've been taught to do and they're considered intelligent marine mammals, if animals could be called intelligent.

But monkeys, no matter how much you try, you'll never teach them to do what a human being has to do. Even what a seven-year-old boy or a three-year-old boy can do, a monkey will never learn to do. Of course, there's a big ballyhoo in the magazines. They say monkeys have been trained to do this and they're making progress and soon who knows what's going to happen?!

I'll tell you what's going to happen. Thousands of years will pass by and they'll still be plain monkeys. And why they resemble human beings? Well, resemblance doesn't mean anything. We shouldn't allow ourselves to be deceived by the claims of evolutionists. This has nothing to do with evolution.

Five Minutes



Years ago, the bochurim in Yeshivas Staten Island got together and approached **Reb Moshe Feinstein זצוק״ל** with a question. The Yeshiva had a forty-five-minute break between breakfast and first seder, and after **שחרית** most Bochurim had a seder in **מ״ב , קש״ע** (etc.) for fifteen minutes, followed by breakfast. The **מנהל** , Rav Mintz, would go around at some point during this time and check that their beds were neatly made. The Bochurim made a **חשבון** that after learning, waiting on line by breakfast and going to the dorm to make their bed neat they could use some extra time. They requested to have a fifty-minute break instead of the forty-five-minute break.

They presented Reb Moshe with their **שאלה**. Reb Moshe paskened that they can't add five minutes to the break. Reb Moshe explained that they were not dealing with just five minutes every day for the Bochurim in yeshiva now, but five minutes times hundreds of Bochurim – for **דורי דורות**. "That is thousands of hours of **לימוד התורה**.

Analysis of the Haftorah by R' Tzvi Hirsch Hoffman

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַיְכַסֻּהוּ בַּבְּגָדִים וְלֹא יִחַם לוֹ – And king David was old, he came into his old age, and they covered him with clothes, but he was not warmed. Melachim 1:1:1

Dovid Hamelech became "old, coming into his days" - like the way the Torah describes Avraham Avinu's twilight years. The Navi says that

even though Dovid was continuously covered by multiple layers of clothes, he never felt warm.

The explanation given by Chazal is that this was punishment for Dovid having cut off the corner of Shaul's coat while he was in hiding. What is the deeper understanding here?



R' Moshe Teitelbaum zt"l (Yismach Moshe) explains that just as clothing serves to protect a person's body from the elements, so too, a person's good deeds serve as a layer of protection for the soul. When a person mistreats his clothing, he is showing a lack of care on more than just a superficial level. On the contrary, a lack of respect for one's clothing serves as a metaphor for how that person treats his spiritual "clothing" - and that has much deeper consequences.

Obviously, one cannot ever fathom the spiritual level that Dovid Hamelech was on - nor how "clean" his spiritual "clothes" were. Says the Yismach Moshe, Tzaddikim never feel satisfied in their avodas Hashem, and Dovid Hamelech was no different. The "clothing" that he was trying to "warm" himself up with was in fact an additional amount of time devoted to his avodas Hashem. Yet, he felt that it still wasn't enough, and it wasn't "warming him up."

It is amazing to think that this was a legitimate concern of Dovid Hamelech, and it serves as a lesson for us to never feel complacent in our growth. Indeed, we can always achieve more.

The Bathtub Test



Dr. Stephen Smith, an American psychiatrist was visiting attending a conference in Israel and decided to visit one of the local hospitals specializing in mental health.

On his visit, Dr. Smith asked the hospital director, Dr. Dudu Smadar how he determined whether or not a patient should be institutionalized.

"Well," said Dr. Smadar, "we fill up a bathtub, then we offer a teaspoon, a teacup and a bucket to the patient and ask him or her to empty the bathtub."

"Oh, I understand," said Dr. Smith.

"A normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the spoon or the teacup."

"No," said Dr. Smadar, "a normal person would pull the plug. Dr. Smith, do you want a bed near the window?"

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

23:1 וַיִּהְיוּ חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה

Sarah lived 100 years and 20 years and 7 years. Her years are delineated individually to teach us that they were all equally good. Every single moment of Sarah's life was good because she had true faith in Hashem. She had SHEMA in her voice!

The Klausenberger Rebbe zt"l was once asked how he managed to survive the war, losing his wife and 11 children, and still go on to build up thousands of Jews and infuse them with a love for Hashem and Yiddishkeit. Where did he get such superhuman strength from?

He answered that it was from his mother. He remembered his mother putting him to bed as a young child before the war and saying SHEMA with him at night. She would cover his eyes and say the words, "Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad."



He asked her why we cover our eyes when we say these words. She told him that SHEMA means that Hashem is One and only does what is good. Sometimes in this world we look around and see things that look bad. They challenge our emunah because we think that Hashem is doing bad, but in truth we must believe that everything is from Hashem and all that Hashem does is good. This is why we cover our eyes when we say these words. We must not let our eyes deceive us. We must have faith in Hashem and believe that everything He does is good.

The Klausenberger Rebbe said, "It was these words that my mother said to me that gave me the strength to survive and rebuild after the war."

The greatness of Sarah Imeinu was "**שמע בקולה**" - SHEMA was **in** her voice! The message of SHEMA, perfect faith and trust in Hashem is a woman's job to pass on to the next generation. She does not have a mitzvah of tefillin. She does not need the constant reminder every day to bind herself down in deed and in mind, to Hashem by wrapping retzuos around her arm. A woman is innately connected.

The Maharal says that the tefillin of a woman is inside of her! May the voices of all Yiddishe Mothers be heard in all that they say and do, in order to be zoche to infuse future generations with emunah.

Zera Shimshon

HaRav Shimshon Nachmaini, author of Zera Shimshon lived in Italy about 300 years ago in the time of the Or HaChaim HaKodesh. The Chida writes that he was a great Mekubal and wrote many sefarim including sefarim about " practical kabbolo" but asked that all of his sefarim be buried after he passes away except for Zera Shimshon and Niflaos Shimshon on Avos. He had one child who died in his lifetime (hence the name "Zera Shimshon") and in the preface he promises for people who learn his sefarim after he dies "... And your eyes will see children and grandchildren like the offshoots of an olive tree around your tables, wise and understanding with houses filled with all manner of good things... and wealth and honour....."

Zera Shimshon

וַיָּבֹא אַבְרָהָם לִסְפֹּד לְשָׂרָה וְלִבְכֹּתָהּ And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry for her (23:2)

The passuk describes that Avraham Avinu first eulogized Sarah and only then cried for her. This seems to contradict the normal occurrence of events. Usually, upon receiving the terrible news that a spouse passed away, one cries first and then eulogize them? As well, according to halacha, the period set aside for eulogies is longer than that set aside for crying as the Gemara (Moed Kattan 27b) says, the first three days of Shiva are for crying and all seven are for eulogies. Based on this, the Mefarshim ask why did Avraham Avinu first eulogize Sarah and only then cry for her?

The Zera Shimshon explains, based on the **Ma'avar Ya'abok**, that crying during the eulogy brings great benefit the soul of the departed. This is because by way of the tears, the gates of tears, which are never locked, will open up for the deceased to enter through, and in that area, the attribute of judgment is greatly mitigated through the tears.

However, the Ma'avar Ya'abok cautions that this is only true if the crying is for the benefit of the soul of the departed and not over the physical loss.

This is why at first, Avraham Avinu eulogized Sarah and only then began to cry for her, he wanted his crying to be during the eulogy in order to give Sarah this great benefit mentioned in the Ma'avar Ya'abok.

Another explanation is that the normal crying that one cries upon hearing or seeing bad news in a normal reaction and does not reflect the greatness of the loss. Even the lowest person's death causes their relatives to naturally shed tears. However, the passing of a truly great person causes one to cry over his loss long after the eulogies and natural crying is over.

This was the case regarding Sarah and therefore, even after the time for eulogizing Sarah was over, her greatness as a wife and a person brought Avraham Avinu to cry.

Zera Shimshon

גמלתהו טוב ולא רע כל ימי חייה She bestows upon him good and not bad, all the days of her life (Eishes Chayil was said by Avraham Avinu as a eulogy for Sara Imanu.)

The Zera Shimshon asks why it is necessary to state that she bestows upon him good and not bad? If she bestows upon him good, then this is obviously not bad.

The Zera Shimshon brings a Gemara (Baba Metzia 59a) that says that blessing is only found in a home on account of the wife. the reason for this is based on a concept found in Mishlei. The Passuk says (28:20), "***through a trusted person- many blessings***."

On this Passuk the Medrash (Shemos Rabba 51:1) says; whomever people put their trust into Hashem, sends blessings through him. Thus, being that a good wife trusts in her husband and is trustworthy to him, for this reason Hashem sends Bracha on behalf of this trusting wife through her husband in whom she places trust.

With this, the Zera Shimshon carefully explains the aforementioned Passuk. "She bestows upon him good" - this is referring to the blessing (good) that comes to a person on behalf of his wife, (not her good actions as we may have previously understood the words to mean.) These blessings are due to the words that are mentioned at the end of the Passuk - "and not bad"-meaning that the wife is the starting point for the cycle of this blessing, she trusts and is entirely trustworthy to her husband and does him no harm!

Short Story of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin



An illustrious family that was very close to the **Chazon Ish, ZT"L**, had a wonderful daughter who reached the age of shidduchim, seeking a marriage partner. Although she had numerous special qualities and many prospective names mentioned for her, sadly none of the ideas ever came to fruition. For some reason, the other side always said no. Each idea, each young man that was suggested, always came back with another excuse as to why the young lady was not a proper idea for them. The situation became very frustrating for the young lady, as all of her friends were finding their bashert, while she was constantly getting rejected.

One day, when she was feeling particularly depressed over her inability to find her shidduch, she decided to go into the Chazon Ish to pour out her heart to the Tzaddik. She entered the Chazon Ish's humble home and tearfully explained her predicament.

She finished with a cry, "Am I so terrible that nobody wants me?"

The Chazon Ish listened intently to everything that she said and answered her in a calm, measured voice. "I am going to ask you a question," began the Chazon Ish, "please answer me honestly. Say I gave you an envelope to deliver to the Levi Family at 35 Rechov Rabbi Akiva, and you go to that address and discover that it's a huge building with many apartments, with no names on any of the mailboxes. How would you find the Levy Family?"

The young lady answered that she would knock on the first apartment and ask if they were the Levy Family. "And if they said no, they were Cohen, not Levy?" "I'd ask if Levy lived in this building?" "And they'd answer yes - 4th floor, apartment # 12," continued the Chazon Ish.

"Imagine if on the first door that you knocked on (Cohen) you began screaming at them, 'How come you aren't Levy? I came all this way, and you're not Levy?' Would that make any sense? Of course not. Levy lives on the 4th floor, and Cohen lives in this apartment. There's no reason to scream at the Cohens."

The Chazon Ish explained, "When a shidduch is mentioned to you and to the boy's side, and they say no - this shidduch is not your shidduch! You have to marry 'Levy' and this is 'Cohen'. Instead of getting upset that Cohen said no, you have to thank Hashem that you didn't marry the wrong person that isn't your shidduch! It's not a reflection on you, not a negative at all about yourself, rather, this simply isn't your shidduch!"

"You should know," finished off the Chazon Ish, when your 'Levy' comes calling there won't be any "No's". And so it was, the right shidduch came along and everything came together quickly and beautifully!

Comment: When Eliezer told Lavan and Besuel about the shidduch of Yitzchak for Rivka, and explained all that had happened at the well, they answered that all that occurred came from Hashem. They clearly saw the Hand of Hashem in the story. When it comes to

shidduchim, the Jewish nation clearly sees the Hand of Hashem. When it's not bashert, it doesn't work out. When a match is ordained by Hashem, and the two young people are destined to marry, nothing can stop the shidduch from happening!

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair Speeding Through Life.

Time. Hard work. Generosity. Those are some of the most salient aspects that comprise our life. And they all are intertwined together.

D**o** you remember being seven years old and the time until your next birthday seemed about 100 years? And from 8 to 9 years old, it was around 50 years. And now the six months between Sukkot and Pesach seems to have shrunk to about six weeks, and it seems just after we're putting away the Sukkah, we start to search for chametz. I have a theory that we experience the passage of time as a fraction of the amount, the total time, that we've already lived. The longer you live, each moment becomes a smaller fraction of your life to date.

I remember my father a"h saying that when he was 70, the last ten years had passed in the twinkling of an eye. At the time, I couldn't relate at all to what he was saying. Now I know exactly what he means. Each second adds to the total of our life, but each second becomes a smaller fraction of the whole. And so the second seems to go faster and the years get shorter. Why did Hashem make us this way?

However long your life is, it's only relatively long compared with the lives of others. In absolute terms, even the longest life is like yesterday when it has passed. As you get older, you actually see time contracting faster and faster, rushing towards the end of your life. They say that youth is wasted on the young. An intelligent person

will take heed of this acceleration of time and try to use his or her time more wisely.

The Torah tells us that Sarah lived for 127 years. It says Sarah's lifetime was 100 years, 20 years and 7 years. Why repeat the word "years" three times? Maybe the Torah is hinting to us that Sarah's perception of time when she was seven years old was no different from that of 20 or 100. Just as at 100 years old, she knew how precious every G-d-given second was, so it was when she was 20, and even when she was seven, when the distance between one birthday and another seemed an eternity.

But what do we do with our time? Such is the question we all ask ourselves.



The millionaire had no doubts to whom he would not leave his vast fortune. His son. His son was a professional layabout who could give a three year course on idleness without a note of preparation. One day, the billionaire called his son into his study and announced his intention to donate his entire worth to charity. Faced with this catastrophe, the son hurried to his chief adviser and confidant, his mother. "Look," she said. "Here's a hundred dollar bill. Go and tell your father that you earned this and that you're really worthy of being his inheritor." The son went into his father's office, waving the hundred dollar bill. "Father, look at this. I made this money myself." "Let me see that," said the father. He took the hundred dollar bill in his hand. And with that, the father incinerated the hundred dollar bill with the tip of his cigar.

The son went back to his mother and told her what had happened. "Okay," she said, "wait a couple of days and try again. Take this $50 bill and tell him that you worked all morning for it." The second bill received the identical treatment as the first. Dejected, the son returned to his mother. "Listen, she said. "Why don't you actually try and get yourself a job? Go down to the town square and see if they're hiring people down there." The son made his way down to the town square and eventually someone gave him a couple of hours work, schlepping some very heavy kegs of beer into a cellar. And for this, he received the princely sum of $10. Immediately, he ran to his father and said, "Daddy, look, I made this money just now." The father took the bill, and as the cigar started to get very close to the bill, the son cried out, "Stop! Don't do that. You don't know how hard I worked for that money." "Ah," the father, "this money you earned."

The Torah says that Sarah's lifetime was 100 years, 20 years and seven years. Rashi tells us that the reason the Torah repeats the word "years" between each number is that each section of Sarah's life exemplified an outstanding quality. For example, at the age of 100, she was as free of sin as a 20 year old girl. Why 20? Because the Torah only mandates penalties for a person aged 20 and above. Now you don't clock up a hundred sinless years without a lot of hard work. G-d created the entire universe just so that we could be close to Him to experience the ultimate pleasure. Compared to this pleasure, everything else is as valuable as a glass diamond. But if the purpose of the world is for us to have this pleasure, why is it such hard work to get there?

It's axiomatic that G-d is the ultimate good. Since His desire was to do good to another, namely man, it follows that such good must be the best possible good and the best possible good is being close to Him. It also follows that the ultimate good must be given in the best possible way. And that's why we have to work for it. If we were to get this ultimate good of being close to G-d without working for

it, we'd feel like a pauper. When someone drops a coin into our hand, we'd feel, "I don't really deserve this." To avoid this, G-d gives us this ultimate good by allowing us to earn it, by resisting our basic instincts of selfishness, of anger, greed and indulgence, and applying ourselves to fulfilling His will. And even though the reward he gives us is incomparably more than the effort we put in, nevertheless, in a real sense, we worked for it. And then a $10 bill feels like a lot more than $100.

But there's one more thing that blends into this larger picture of life.

The Burnham Society of Jewish Psychiatrists always had a monthly lunch and learn. They always invited somebody stimulating and thought provoking, such as doctors, scientists, economists, media personalities. They all graced the tables of this exclusive gathering of intellectuals. It occurred to them one day that they never actually had an address by an Orthodox rabbi. So a phone call was duly made to the local yeshiva, and the distinguished rabbi was invited to speak at their next lunch. The polite applause died down and the rabbi started to speak. He spoke in terms suited to his secular audience, but his material was authentic Torah philosophy, 3000 years old and honed by a life of study. About 10 minutes into his talk, a man in the audience suddenly rose to his feet and said, in a low and threatening voice, "Stop that man from speaking. Stop that man from speaking. Stop that man from speaking or I'll have to change my entire life."

I often think that if the Torah required Jews to travel around the world eating in all the best non-kosher restaurants, a lot more Jews would be religious. Usually, the greatest barrier to faith in G-d isn't logical, but psychological. Because if we accept that the manifest ordering creation logically implies an order, subconsciously, we already know that we may have to stop driving to the golf club on Saturday morning. And more than that, we're going to have to stop

seeing ourselves as the centre of the universe. And having been brought up in the 'me' generation, the thought that the pursuit of happiness and self-fulfilment may not be the ultimate purpose of life strikes at the very foundations of our most self-evident beliefs.

This is a bribe that most people find irresistible. The desires of the heart blind the intellect and the search for truth becomes its first victim. ***As R' Samson Rafael Hirsch once put it, belief is not the knowledge that there's a G-d, but rather the acknowledgment.***

In this week's Torah portion, when Abraham's servant, Eliezer, tested Rivka to see if she was a fit wife of Yitzhak, he wanted only to find out if she had a love of kindness. Why didn't he check that she also had the unshakable faith in G-d that was necessary as the future mother of the Jewish people?

The answer is that kindness and faith are inextricably linked. Only someone who is selflessly involved in the needs of others can free himself from the bribes of his own selfish desires. And only one who loves kindness for its own sake has the objectivity to recognize that there's a Creator in the world.

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Last week's parsha ended with the near-sacrifice of Yitzchok, and this week's parsha begins with the death of Sarah. Rashi explains that the reason these two are placed side-by-side is because Sarah was told that her husband Avraham was about to kill her only child, Yitzchok, and at the last minute he was saved. At that point, due to the shock of hearing that her son was about to be killed, her soul left her.

There are many explanations of this Rashi, too many for this venue.

However, **Rav Pinkus** wanted to learn an important lesson from this Rashi. He says, we must learn the importance of measuring our

words when speaking with others. Here you have a case of bad news being delivered, followed by good news. However, the shock of the bad news was enough to kill Sarah. Therefore, he says, it's important, in such a case, to first start off with the good news, so when the full story comes out, which contains the bad news, the person will not be in shock.



This is similar, he said, to a person who goes up to a parent, who's child went on a field trip with his school. If they say, "Did you hear that the bus your son was on was in a terrible accident? Baruch Hashem, it sounds like your child is okay…", that, even though there was a small amount of time between the bad and good, will immediately startle the parent. In such a case, it would be better to say, "Baruch Hashem, your child is fine and well, but I heard…".

There is a secretary here from one of the schools, that every time she needs to call a parent during school hours, she starts off immediately with, "This is so and so calling from the school, don't worry, your son is okay…", because she knows that a parent begins to worry when the school is calling at that time.

So, we see from here that how a person words things can cause shock to another, and how we need to try our best to think ahead on how not to cause such a shock, even for a small moment.

"Your greatest strength is not in your perfection, but in your willingness to keep moving forward despite any imperfections." ~ The Ishbitzer, Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner.

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick





The **פְּסוּק** says that Avrohom Avinu gave Eliezer clothing and jewellery to give to Rivkah. **Horav Yehoshua Leib Diskin זצ"ל** explains the reason why Avrohom gave jewellery with the clothing.

Avrohom was afraid that the clothing that Rivkah owned was made out of shaatnez and therefore gave her new clothing. However, Avrohom didn't want Rivkah and her family to be embarrassed, so he sent the clothing with gold and silver jewellery.[**ספר טללי אורות**]

Parsha Points to Ponder by R' Ozer Alport

The Torah records (Bereishis 23:2) that Avrohom eulogized Sorah. Why didn't Yitzchok do so as well? (Targum Yonason ben Uziel 22:19, Rabbeinu Bechaye, Paneiach Raza, Mishmeres Ariel)

Rabbeinu Bechaye writes that Sorah's death was concealed from Yitzchok because it was indirectly caused by him, as Rashi writes (23:2) that the shock of hearing that he was almost slaughtered was the cause of her death.

Rav Shmaryahu Arieli suggests that even if he was informed of her death, the recognition that he was somewhat responsible for it caused him such overwhelming anguish that he was unable to eulogize her.

The **Paneiach Raza** maintains that Avrohom wounded Yitzchok during the Akeidah, and angels took him to Gan Eden to recover and heal, so he was not present at Sorah's burial.

The **Targum Yo-nason ben Uziel** writes that angels took Yitzchok to study in the yeshiva of Shem for 3 years until Rivkah was old enough to marry him, which explains why he was unavailable to eulogize her.



Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Rav Shach related a vort that he heard from the **Ponoviezher Rav.** The Ponoviezher Rav had heard it directly from the **Chofetz Chaim.** It is a very powerful vort. Listen Yidelach!

Rashi says in this week's parsha: **שיחתן של עבדי אבות לפני המקום מתורתן של בנים** -'***The ordinary conversation of the servants of the Avos, is more beloved by Hashem than the Torah of their sons***!' (24:42)

The Medrash says this in an even stronger way, proving it with the following: 'We see that the Torah dedicates two- three pages to the story of Eliezer- the servant of Avraham. The Torah elaborates on all the details, how he waited for the right girl, the one that will offer to give him to drink and include his camels. It discusses the entire back and forth of how Eliezer repeated the story to Besuel etc.

On the other hand, there is a halacha regarding the blood of a non-kosher creature, that is derived from just one letter in the Torah – an extra vov in the Pasuk **וזה לכם הטמא.**

This halacha is learned from a single letter in the Torah, and the story of Eliezer takes up 2-3 pages?! This proves, says the Medrash, that the conversation of the servants of the Avos is more beloved by Hashem than the Torah of their sons.

The Chofetz Chaim exclaimed, "How can this possibly be understood. Can there be something greater than Torah? How is it that the

conversation of servants of the Avos is greater than halachos of Torah?"

Pay attention to what the Chofetz Chaim answered!

Usually, when parents have a child in shidduchim, they daven. "Riboino Shel Olam, help me, my child needs a shidduch." But what if one's son is the best bachur in Yeshiva? Then he davens, but he's calm about the situation- Let the mechutan beg…Such a great bachur.. He's a catch!



The Chofetz Chaim continues, "And what if the father is a billionaire? Then he too will daven to Hashem; But he's quite confident that people will come running after him! He'll daven, but not from the depths of his heart."

'Now what if one's son is the best bachur in yeshiva, he's a billionaire too, and in addition to that, he has the greatest yichus?'

In such a case, one might think, "What, I need to daven? Let the mechutan complete Tehillim three times on Rosh Hashana and twice on Yom Kippur, and then maybe he'll merit to be meshadech with me!" "I need to daven? My son is the best bachur, the one with the greatest yichus and the most money!

This is what transpired over here, explained the Chofetz Chaim.

Eliezer was looking for a shidduch for the best bachur- Yitzchok Avinu - וְכָל־טּוּב אֲדֹנָיו בְּיָדוֹ 'All the best of his master was in his hand; He was a billionaire!' (24:10) And he had the greatest yichus- he was the son of Avraham Avinu! – And yet, he was standing and pleading like a desperate person; הַקְרֵה־נָא לְפָנַי הַיּוֹם וַעֲשֵׂה־חֶסֶד עִם אֲדֹנִי אַבְרָהָם - ***'Please Hashem, do kindness with my master Avraham. Grant me success in finding the right one today! Have mercy***!' (24:12)

It was as though he was trying to marry off a problematic boy… how would he find a shidduch?

"This is more beloved by Hashem than the Torah of their sons!" said the Chofetz Chaim. "You may have the best bachur, the most money and the greatest yichus – but without sincere davening, you won't have anything!"

This kind of ***conversation*** – these sincere tefillos, are more beloved by Hashem than Torah!

Parsha Points to Ponder by R' Ozer Alport

Avrohom paid 400 silver shekels to Ephron for the purchase of the burial plot for Sorah (23:14). Was this its actual value, and if not, was it worth more or less? (Targum Onkelos, Peninim MiShulchan HaGra, Chasam Sofer, Birkas Peretz)

The **Targum Onkelos** writes that the plot of land was worth 400 silver shekels, and the **Vilna Gaon** makes a brilliant calculation to support this claim.

The **Steipler** maintains that Ephron substantially overcharged Avrohom for the land, as Yaakov was able to purchase an apparently similar plot of land for 100 kesitahs (33:19), which is the equivalent of only 5 shekels. This is an indication that Ephron swindled and took advantage of Avrohom in setting the price at 400 shekels.

The **Chasam Sofer** suggests that Ephron should have received 406 shekels, which is the numerical value of his name when it is spelled with the letter "vav," but because he was so eager to maximize the sale price, he mistakenly settled for 400 shekels, which is the numerical value of his name when it is written without the letter "vav."

Parshas Chayei Sarah – 24 MarCheshvan

Rav Gedalya Moshe Goldman of Zvhil (1888-1950), son of Rav Shlomo (Reb Shlomke) of Zhvil.



After eight years of incarceration in the Siberian Gulag, the rebbe arrived in Eretz Yisrael in 1936, where he worked to conceal his greatness. But the Gedolai Eretz Yisroel recognized him as a Poel Yeshuos. He served as an Admor for only five years. He died when he was only 61.

It was a time when Har Hazeisim was no longer accessible and Har HaMenuchos was not yet developed as a cemetery. The Rebbe was buried in a small cemetery on a piece of land right where the Knesset is now located.

Until recently, his Kever remained unknown and unnoticed. Through the efforts of R' Pinchas Kornfeld, a Gerrer Yerushalmi, the kever has become a magnet for Yidden in need. Numerous Yeshuos have been reported by people who davened there over a cycle of any Monday-Thursday-Monday.

Toras Avigdor – Rabbi Avigdor Miller - Holy Homes

The Shechinah dwells in the Jewish home and just like the Shechinah departed when the Beis Hamikdash was laid waste, the Shechinah departs when a Jewish home stops functioning.

We think it's just words, *meshalim*. No, no. I'm not talking *drush*. We have no idea the *kedushah* in a Jewish home.

In ancient times people understood that. A man once told me, he told this to me about sixty years ago. He had an old mother from Europe

who lived with him. He remembered from when he was a boy his mother used to say, "Don't sit on the table. A Jewish table is *kodesh*." A little boy would sit on the table and the mother would shoo him off, "The table is *kodesh*."

We have no idea of the holiness. It's so remarkable I can't describe it to you. I myself have no idea of such *kedushah*. But people lived for Hashem and they lived according to Hashem's principles, with His ideals, and they understood the home was much more than a home, a place to live.

When The Angels Visit

Once upon a time people believed in *ma'amarei Chazal k'peshuto*. Everybody understood that when a man came home from *shul* with the boys Friday night he didn't come alone. Two *malochim* came along with him. *K'peshuto*. They believed that *k'peshuto*. Two *malochim* came along with him. As they walked in the house, the mother and the daughters were standing all dressed up and greeting them and the *malochim* as they walked in the doorway. They said, "Good Shabbos." It was an experience of feeling the *kedushah*.

And the *malochim* came into the house and the *malochim* saw the table was set. It was a poor little house. The candlesticks were nothing expensive. But they did their best. They took some chicken bones and made soup. Whatever it was, from their limited resources they made Shabbos. And the *malochim* gave them a blessing and they understood it was a blessing. They felt that blessing. Everyone felt the presence of the *kedushah* that the *malochim* brought into the house. And it lasted all week; all week the house was *kadosh*.

Now, it's true that some of that greatness has been lost nowadays, but it's not lost entirely. *Boruch Hashem*, there are beautiful Jewish homes today. No question, there's *kedushah* in every Jewish home today. Those who keep the Torah, no question. The *malochim* still come. Whether you think about them or not, they come anyhow.

There's no question that the house where Jews live and practice the Torah is a *makom kadosh.*

When a *chosson* and *kallah* marry and move into a home, they have to know that it's an opportunity to accomplish to create a *makom kadosh* and bring the presence of Hashem to the Am Yisrael. And don't think that it's *agav orcha.* You might think the main purpose of being a Jew is to go to the *beis hakenesses.* Oh no! It's very important, no question, but the most important function of the Am Yisrael is building your home as a replica of the Beis Hamikdash.

We have the opportunity to invite the Shechinah into our homes, just as Sarah transformed her humble tent into a sanctuary. The first requirement of those who enter the Mikdash is to pray for peace, because that is what makes the Mikdash an appropriate place for the Shechinah to rest.



The Weekly Vort

■ **ויאמרו מקרא לנערה ונשאלה את פיה** – ***They said, 'Let's call the girl and ask her.'*** (24:57). When Eliezer first asked Besuel and Lavan for permission for Yitzchok to marry Rivka, they responded, "Rivka is right here in front of you. Take her and go. Let her be the wife of your master's son, as you have spoken." But later Rivka's mother and brother told Eliezer that he would have to ask Rivka whether she consented to the marriage, indicating that they regretted what they had originally told Eliezer. What made them change their minds?

The Alshich HaKadosh answers that when Eliezer initially came with ten camels laden with Avraham's wealth, Besuel and Lavan assumed they would receive a great portion of the riches if they consented to the marriage, so they immediately gave their approval. Later, Eliezer gave the gold, silver dishes and expensive cloths to Rivka, while Rivka's mother and brother received only fruit. When they realized that they were not about to receive a large share of the wealth, they regretted having given their consent. (A Gut Vort)

Parshah Pearls (Adapted from Rabeinu Bachye)

The Three Age-Zones, *"And the years of the life of Sarah were a hundred years, and twenty years and seven years*" (23:1).

Commenting on the seemingly superfluous repetition, Rashi points out that when Sarah was a hundred, she was as sinless as when she was twenty, and when she was twenty, she was as beautiful as when she was seven.

The first part of this statement is easily understood, since up to the age of twenty, a person is not punishable bi'yedei Shamayim. The second part is puzzling however, seeing as a woman of twenty is generally far more beautiful than a girl of seven. No doubt it is in

answer to this question that R. Bachye gives the following explanation.

There are three age-zones in a person's life, he says - childhood, adulthood, and old age. Childhood is the time when a person progresses, adulthood when he basically remains physically static, whereas it is during old age that he regresses. What the Pasuk is therefore teaching us is that even when Sarah reached adulthood, she continued to become more beautiful, even though she had reached an age when other women tend to remain as they are.



Why Avraham Stood Up, *"And Avraham arose ... and he spoke to the sons of Cheis*" (23:3).

The Torah is coming here to teach us Derech Eretz (protocol), says R. Bachye - that it is correct to stand up whenever one talks in public.

It seems, he continues, that it was customary to remain standing for the duration of one's speech, and then to sit down. And that is precisely what Avraham did. That explains why, after the b'nei Cheis' initial reply ("You are a prince of G-d … "), the Torah informs us once again (in Pasuk 7) that Avraham arose - before making his second request of the b'nei Cheis to find him Efron.



Parsha Points to Ponder by Oizer Alport

Parshas Chayei Sorah recounts in great detail Eliezer's efforts to find a suitable shidduch for Yitzchok, the son of his master Avrohom. How many times does Eliezer's name appear in Parshas Chayei Sorah?

Although the narrative of Parshas Chayei Sorah revolves around Eliezer's actions, his name is astonishingly not mentioned a single time in the parsha. Instead, he is repeatedly referred to (e.g.,

24:34) as "the servant of Avrohom." **Rav Yisroel Reisman** suggests that this is not coincidental.

Because Eliezer acted as the shadchan who arranged the match between Yitzchok and Rivkah, the omission of his name teaches us that a good shadchan is one who can completely remove himself and his personal considerations from the process to focus solely on what is in the best interests of the parties involved.



משל למה הדבר דומה

וְלָקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לִבְנִי מִשָּׁם – *'and you shall take a wife for my son from there'. (24:7)*

At the joyous event of his daughter's *sheva berachos*, the *kallah's* father stood up to speak, and he eloquently weaved the joyous occasion in with *Torah*-related topics, as well as praises of his daughter - and the *chosson*. The *chosson*? Yes! After all, he himself handpicked the *chosson*.

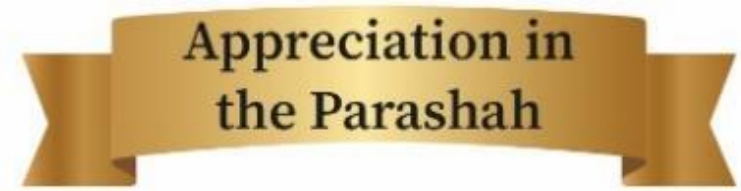
At the end of his lengthy discourse, he announced that he would like to reveal what it was that made him want this *chosson* to marry his daughter. There was a hush in the crowd, something exciting after the prolonged speech:

"Not long ago," he began "this boy was driving me all the way from Jerusalem to *Bnei Brak*. It was a Friday and there was heavy traffic. As a back seat driver, I was agitated, but then I observed the driver. I couldn't help but notice how he did not honk the horn even once! This takes extraordinary patience. I thought to myself, this is the type of boy I want for my daughter. It was right then and there that I decided to make this *shidduch* a reality."

The crowd burst into clapping and singing. This was truly a special trait. The *chosson*, on the other hand, turned beet red. He was

clearly embarrassed about something. - Quietly and under his breath, he murmured, "Umm ... the horn was broken!"

Chazal tell us (Sota 2a), *"Forty days before the formation of a child, a voice from Heaven announces: 'The daughter of Ploni (so-and-so) will marry Ploni'."* - While many of us are familiar with the concept of *"bashert"*, that really only guarantees one thing: *Hashem* arranges that you encounter that person. *Bashert* does not guarantee that you will marry that person, or that the marriage will be a happy and fulfilling one; those depend on your free choice and good character traits.



Bowing with gratitude. After the grave loss of Sarah's passing, Avraham sought to honor her with the most dignified burial possible. He decided that the *Ma'aras HaMachpelah* was the most fitting resting place for this *tzedekes* and requested that the *Bnei Ches*, agents of the land's owner, Efron, to help with the sale.

When they reached an agreement, Avraham was overjoyed and bowed before them (23:12). Why specifically did he bow?

The *Seforno* explains that it was an expression of his profound gratitude toward them.

We encounter another instance of bowing as an expression of gratitude later in our *Parashah* — during Eliezer's mission to find a wife for Yitzchak. When he realized that his mission was succeeding, he bowed down to Hashem in heartfelt appreciation (24:52). What is the connection between bowing and gratitude?

True gratitude means acknowledging that we are indebted to someone else — humbling ourselves before our benefactor. In fact, the Hebrew word **להודות** (to thank) shares the same root as **מודה** (to

admit), since genuine gratitude is an act of acknowledgment and humility. (Based on *Bereishis Rabbah* 7)

Feeling humbled is a key feeling when we sincerely express gratitude. As the ***Sefer Chareidim*** (9:3) teaches, when a person reflects upon the endless kindnesses Hashem bestows, he becomes humbled before Him, ashamed of his shortcomings and inspired to repent.

Avraham Avinu, the embodiment of gratitude, was also the model of humility. For example, when he petitioned that the people of *Sedom* should be saved, he referred to himself as "dust and ashes."



The *Orchos Tzadikim* (*Sha'ar Ha'anavah*) explains that Avraham's awareness of the countless blessings he received led him to a deep sense of humility. We see that the same deep gratitude and humility was reflected in his devoted disciple, Eliezer. We, too, must strive to follow in their footsteps — to appreciate the abundance of good in our lives until it fills us with humility before Hashem.

This idea sheds light on why our Sages instituted that we bow several times in *davening* when we are expressing our appreciation. For instance, in *Modim*, the *berachah* of thanksgiving, we bow both at the beginning and at the end. We need to feel overwhelmed by the kindness of Hashem to the extent that we will feel humbled before Him. So, bowing expresses our feelings of gratitude.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller would caution against bowing out of rote. Instead, he urged people to think of something specific they are grateful for before saying "*Modim Anachnu Lach.*" He would say, "Don't waste a bow." Each bow is an opportunity to experience true gratitude and deepen our connection with Hashem.

Modim is a unique expression of praise to Hashem. We thank Him for being our eternal G-D and the source of our protection and our salvations throughout all the generations. We also express our gratitude for the gift of life and for the miracles that accompany us daily. Chazal (*Shochar Tov* 70) teach that one who thanks Hashem for His miracles is spared from future misfortune. So reciting *Modim* helps bring protection, as we see in this story:

During Israel's War of Independence, the city of Tzfat was under heavy bombardment. Many Jews took shelter in the Ari Ashkenazi Shul. Once, a shell exploded in the courtyard, sending shrapnel flying into the shul. At that very moment, a man praying Shemoneh Esrei bowed for Modim, and the shrapnel zoomed right over him — his bow literally saved his life! (Eretz Avoseinu, p. 263)

Interestingly, *Modim* is the only blessing during the *Chazaras HaShatz* where the *tzibbur* bows and recites a separate text together with the *chazzan*. The *Abudraham* explains that since the essence of *Modim* is to express our personal submission to Hashem, it cannot be conveyed through a messenger. Just as a servant must declare loyalty directly to his master, so too must we express our gratitude personally. Requests may be delivered by a messenger, but gratitude — an act of humility and personal acknowledgment — must come from the heart.

*When **Rav Elyashiv** was in his final years, he required a very important surgery in which a top surgeon was flown in from America. After the surgery, he asked those around him, how to say thank you in English. Surprised, they said we will thank him for you.*

"No", Rav Elyashiv insisted, I need to thank him personally. He practiced how to say "thank you" in English and then personally thanked the surgeon in his own language.

Another time when we bow in *davening* is during *Alainu*. This is a precious tefillah which expresses our praise that we are privileged to be His emissaries on earth, giving us a unique role. It is so lofty

that each time we say it, the Heavenly hosts gather together with Hashem to listen to us recite it and recount our praise (*Mishnah Berurah* 132:8). We bow down in this *tefillah* as an expression of our allegiance to Hashem, the true King, Who singles us out to be His treasured children from all the nations.

Rav Chatzkel Leventstein notes that gratitude is a key theme of the Siddur. He explains that gratitude is the very foundation of *Avodas Hashem*. So, if we invest just a little more *kavanah* into our *tefilos*, utilizing this daily opportunity to thank Hashem, we can take our *Avodas Hashem* to an entirely new level. Therefore, if we try and focus when we bow to feel humbled by Hashem's kindnesses, and not just do so by rote, it would make an incredible impact on our lives, in this world and the next.

Parashah pearls

When Rabbi Akiva was giving a shiur, some of his students were dozing off. To awaken them, he asked, "Why did Esther rule over 127 countries? It was because her ancestor Sarah lived 127 years." (*Bereishis Rabbah* 58:3) How would this message awaken them?

The *Chidushei HaRim* explains that he was telling his students to utilize each minute of life to its fullest. Had Sarah, *Chas VeShalom* misused a year of her life, her descendant Esther wouldn't have ruled over the 127 countries. Each week of Sarah's life granted Esther a city. Each hour granted Esther a town worth thousands!

This jolted the students awake, for they became aware of what they could gain with time. This is also a powerful lesson for all of us about how much we can accomplish with the precious time Hashem gives us.

After *Akeidas Yitzhak*, the Torah (22:19) relates how Avraham returned home, but where was Yitzhak? **The *Da'as Zekenim*** (ibid) brings an opinion from Chazal (Sanhedrin 91a) that he went to learn in Yeshiva. He was so moved by the experience he had that he channeled the inspiration into learning Torah. It is very normal after an uplifting experience to feel motivated to improve. However, after a short time, the inspiration can wear off. We can learn from Yitzhak that we should always try to do an action straight away, even something very small, in order to retain the initial enthusiasm.

When Eliezer was brought into Rivkah's house to discuss the marriage proposal, he was offered a meal. However, he exclaimed, 'I cannot eat until I have spoken.' (24:33) **The *Ba'al HaTurim*** teaches that Eliezer was referring to reciting a *berachah*. He grew up in Avraham's house, and expressing gratitude to Hashem for the gift of food was second nature to him. - This insistence saved his life! As Chazal tell us, the evil *Besuel* poured poison into Eliezer's soup, planning to kill him, yet a *Malach* came and switched their bowls, and he died instead. In the merit of Eliezer's desire to express gratitude, his life was saved and he was able to fulfill his mission of finding a wife for Yitzhak!



Some of the most stunning seashells were shaped by the roughest waves. You may not realize it now, but all the tumbling, the crashing, the chaos – they're all polishing you into something precious and beautiful. ~ Rabbi Asher Resnick

בס"ד

למודי משה

A Special Gift

The Tur (son of the Rosh) was very poor, as is clear from the Tur (*Orach Chaim* 242) where he asked his father the Rosh if he could make his Shabbos like a weekday. Due to the extent of his poverty, he had nothing to give his wife on the occasion of the wedding, and in great sorrow he cried to Hashem about this, and he was granted the privilege of writing his *sefer* and he gave it to her as a gift!

Rabbi Aryeh Levin *zt"l* was known to be very poor. On his wedding day, he told his wife that he had nothing that he was able to give her as a present, and even the clothes that he was wearing were borrowed on a short-term basis. All that he was able to give was himself and the fact that he would always give in to her. - His *kallah* also gave back the same wedding gift, that she would always help him and give in to him!

The Takonah of the Lev Simcha, and Why Gifts Are Different

The *Lev Simcha* of Ger *zt"l* made *takonas* [enactments] for the sake of the public, that *chasunah* expenses must be within reason, and not to extravagant. However, there is one exception and that is the gifts that the *chosan* and *kallah* give to each other, for this there is no *takonah* (*Neimos HaChaim*, pg. 201).

The Admor of Ger *shlita* said in the name of his father (*shmoozen*, Chayei Sorah) that the reason for this is, that it is clear in the Torah by Eliezer and Rivka that extravagant gifts were given, and it's clear from the *Taz* (*Yoreh Deah* 117:1, and *Orach Chaim* 588:5) that we can't make enactments against things the Torah explicitly allows.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

This week sadly records the death of Sarah Imeinu. In the Sefer Torah, when it speaks of Avraham's eulogy of his life's partner, the word, "v'l'vkosa, to cry over her," is written with a small 'kof.'

The Midrash relates that the words of Aishes Chayil, recounted by Shlomo HaMelech in Mishlei, and sung every Friday night in Jewish homes around the world, were recited at Sarah's funeral in praise of this holy, special, woman. Arranged alphabetically, the song offers praises for the woman of valor from aleph to taf.

The verse that begins with 'kof,' reads: Kapa parsa l'ani, she stretches her palm to the poor man, v'yadeha shilcha la'evyon, and her hand she sends towards the pauper. It refers to tzedakah, the kindness that Sarah so excelled in. What Avraham said then was that all the aspects of praise in this song would be missing in his life now that Sarah was gone. However, the aspect of charity and chesed in specific, in which Sarah was his special partner, as it says they both cooked food for the travelers, would be affected most.

Therefore, the Torah hints to us that this was the case by diminishing the letter 'kof' in the posuk, conveying the magnitude of kindness, and also of those who do mitzvos. When they are gone, the world notes their loss.

Rav Elyashiv would say to people who would ask for forgiveness, and they were nervous that the Rov had a hakpadda on them, "I pashut don't have the head space or the time to have hakpados on anybody!"

בס"ד

למודי משה

The Proper Outlook on Marriage



In *Parshas Chayei Sorah* we learn about how after Avraham eulogizes Sorah and mourns her loss, he proceeds to obtain a burial plot for her. The Mishnah (*Kiddushin* 2a) teaches that one of the three methods by which a woman can be betrothed is giving her money. The Gemara derives this from the shared use of the word **קח** – acquire – in the Torah's discussion of marriage and in Avraham's purchase of the burial plot.

Just as the phrase **קח ממני** – take the money from me – that Avraham said to Ephron refers to acquiring an item through the transfer of money, so too the mitzvah of marriage, which is described as (*Devorim* 24:1) **כי יקח איש אשה** – when a man takes a woman – can also take effect by giving money to the woman. Why does the Torah specifically use the narrative of Avraham's efforts to acquire a burial plot for Sorah to teach us a law governing marriage, and what lesson is it intended to teach us?

Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter beautifully suggests that this was done intentionally in order to teach us the proper outlook on marriage, and on relationships in general. Even though Sorah was no longer alive and was incapable of ever giving Avraham any additional benefits or pleasure, he was still willing to spend an exorbitant amount of money in order to secure an appropriate final resting place for his beloved

wife. Avraham's willingness to do so demonstrates that his relationship with Sorah was not motivated by the pursuit of his own pleasure and happiness, but rather on how he could give to his wife and help her.

In deriving one of the laws defining the concept of a marriage from this episode, the Torah is teaching us the proper outlook on marriage, namely that the very essence of the relationship is intended to be one that is focused on giving to and sharing with one's spouse, rather than a selfish focus on fulfilling one's own desires. Entering into marriage or any other relationship with this Torah perspective is a proven recipe for improving our *middos* and enriching our bonds with others.

* * *

The Bobover Rebbe points out that when Ephron sold the land containing *Me'aras Hamachpela* to Avraham, he was convinced he was making a killing. In exchange for a rocky field, he was receiving top dollar and was certain that he was shrewdly taking advantage of the buyer's naivete. At the same time, Avraham recognized that this was no ordinary field. He knew it contained the cave where Adam and Chava were buried and possessed tremendous kedusha. Even though Avraham paid 400 silver shekels for the land, he understood that he was the one who was getting the deal of a lifetime.

Rav Halberstam explains that this transaction, in which each party staunchly believed that he was coming out ahead, is the ideal paradigm for marriage. The Torah specifically connects the laws of betrothal to Avraham's purchase of Ephron's field to hint to us that as a *chosson* and *kallah* prepare to spend the rest of their lives together, each of them should be so focused on the positive qualities of the other that he is certain that he is getting the better end of the deal. (R' Ozer Alport)



Hagar Transformed – וַיֹּסֶף אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה וּשְׁמָהּ קְטוּרָה

'*Avraham took another wife and her name was Keturah*'. 25:1

Who was Keturah?

Rashi: Hagar. She was called Keturah because her deeds were as pleasant as incense (**קטורת**).

Chizkuni: How could Hagar be described as a person whose "deeds were as pleasant as incense" when, after Avraham sent her away, she returned to idol worship (Rashi on 21:14, above)? Clearly, she must have done teshuvah before Avraham took her for the second time, and the Torah calls her Keturah due to the sweet "aroma" of her teshuvah.

Kli Yakar: Avraham actually named her Keturah to make it known that she had done teshuvah.

Rav said: "She is Hagar." - B'reisheet Rabba 61

Targum Yonatan: She is Hagar, who had been bound to him from the beginning.



The *mitzva* of *nichum aveilim*, comforting mourners, is an act of *chesed* which benefits the bereaved, gives honor to the deceased, and connects us to the Divine, imitating the actions of *Hashem* Himself.

As this week's *parsha* addresses the topic of *Sara's* death and burial, and *Avraham's* mourning, I would like to take the opportunity to review some of the laws and customs of visiting a *beis aveil*, a house of mourning, better known as 'paying a *shiva* call'.

Even though Avrohom was a man of immense faith, the Torah records that he "came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her" (23:2).

This teaches that expressing grief and crying is a healthy, necessary human response to loss.

Abraham's first act was to speak about Sarah's virtues. In Jewish law, a eulogy is considered an honour for the deceased (kavod ha-met) and a way for the living to begin processing their loss by focusing on the values the person embodied.

After weeping, Abraham immediately rose to secure a permanent burial place—the Cave of Machpelah—marking the first legal acquisition of land in Israel by the Jewish people.

The sedra is titled Chayei Sarah ("The Life of Sarah") despite beginning with her death. This paradox emphasizes that the "life" of the righteous continues through the actions of their descendants and the values they left behind.

Just as the Hittites gathered to witness Avrohom's purchase and offer him respect, the Jewish mourning period of shiva (seven days) is designed to surround the mourner with community support.

1. A shiva call is not a social outing or a mere formality. Its purpose is to share the sorrow of one's friends and relatives, and to support them with one's comforting presence. In no way is the visit meant to distract the aveil from the mourning, or to disrupt a sombre mood.

2. Hence, it is inappropriate to steer conversation to idle chatter, jokes, and small talk. The conversation is to be focused on the life of the deceased, his/her passing, and the family. Frivolous discussions are certainly inappropriate in a beis aveil.

3. One does not extend greetings to the mourner or to others in a shiva house.

4. A visitor does not initiate conversation with a mourner; one waits for the aveil to initiate any dialogue. Sometimes one's presence alone is a comfort to the mourner and words are unnecessary.

5. One should avoid visiting late at night. Additionally, one should be considerate of the mourner, and recognize that visits should generally be kept brief, approximately 15-30 minutes, as at times the mourners need a break to rest.

6. Customs vary regarding eating food in a beis aveil. Some specifically have a custom to eat so the beracha over the food will be a merit for the soul of the deceased. Others customs consider eating inappropriate.

7. Many have the custom of giving tzedakah in a beis aveil as another source of merit for the deceased.

8. Upon leaving the shiva house, visitors should say, **הַמָּקוֹם יְנַחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׁאָר אֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלָיִם** – '*May the Almighty comfort you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem*.' - The mourner should respond 'Amen.'

HaMakom (The Place): This unique name for Hashem—literally "The Place"—is used here to remind the mourner that G-d is omnipresent. It suggests that Hashem is present even in the "place" of grief and that He is the only one who can truly fill the void or "empty space" left by a loss.

The "Mourners of Zion and Jerusalem": This phrase connects the individual's personal grief to the collective national mourning for the destruction of the Holy Temples in Jerusalem. It serves two functions:

Solidarity: It reminds the mourner they are not alone; their pain is part of a larger community's history.

Hope: Just as the Jewish people believe Jerusalem will be rebuilt and comforted, so too will the individual mourner eventually find comfort.

Plural vs. Singular: Traditionally, the plural form (**אֶתְכֶם**) is used even if speaking to a single mourner, acknowledging that the entire family or community shares the loss.

Sefardim offer the consolation of, **מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם תְּנוּחָמוּ** – '*May you be comforted from the Heavens.*'

May the day soon arrive when these laws and customs are merely academic.



Sometimes one small action seemingly insignificant at the time can change the course of history forever.

We're told this week that a young girl Rifka gives a thirsty man to drink and then waters his camels. This is hardly an earthshattering event, but it determined the course of Rifka's life forever, making her one of our matriarchs.

We often minimize the small things in life. The media makes us aware of so many great events. Man walking on the moon, a scientist winning the Nobel Prize for a revolutionary discovery. Yes, these are indeed tremendous events and achievements. So, what significance can little things really have?

The type of things we do day in day out. They don't move mountains nor do they shake up entire populations.

Such an example took place here in the bustling streets of Yerushalayim. - There lived a teacher named Uri. One chilly winter morning, he notices a young boy coughing in the cold, unable to attend school because his home lacked even the simplest medical equipment. He thought, "I can help even just a little."

He borrowed a few devices from neighbors and lent them to the boy's family and thought his job was done. But word spread and

another family needed a wheelchair, another oxygen tanks. What began as one teacher small act grew into a huge organization called Yad Soroh - One of the largest organizations with thousands of volunteers helping families every single day.



One single spark of care lighting countless homes.

We too in our lives tend to forget that life is not comprised of firework displays. Most often the only things that shine outdoors are the street lights. Rather boring but providing the necessary illumination. Come to think of it, for all that dazzling brilliance, how much useful light do fireworks even provide?

This week's parsha is hinting to us the most incredible of all lessons. Our job is to do what's right and proper. How much impact any given act will have is not for us to consider because that is out of our hands. Hashem wants us to do the little things.

Also, one young girl gives a thirsty man a drink of water and changes the course of history forever. Think about that next time you do something seemingly small. - Have an amazing Shabbos.



Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series
לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה

רבי עקיבא and the 127 Provinces

The **מדרש** says **רבי עקיבא** once saw his **תלמידים מתנמנם**. To awaken them he said: "**אסתר** ruled over 127 provinces because her ancestress **שרה** lived 127 years." The **פגשי אפרים** explains: one year = one province; one month = a country; one day = a city; one hour = a street; one minute = a building; one second = a room. The **שפת אמת** says this means **שרה אמנו** lived every second to its fullest. **רבי עקיבא** was hinting: every moment counts—even for **תלמידים** on the highest **מדריגות**.

In the **פרשה** of **מערת המכפלה**, six times the **תורה** says **קבורה** before **מיתה** (e.g., **לקבור את מתי, קבר מתך**). The seventh time reverses it: **ואת מיתך קבור**.

The **וילנא גאון** explains through the **גמרא (שבת קנ״ב): רב נחמן** encountered **רב אחאי בר יאשיה**, whose body had not decomposed. He explained that only those with **קנאה** have rotting bones **ורקב עצמות קנאה. צדיקים** remain intact until one moment before **תחיית המתים**, when they finally return to **עפר**.

Thus, the six **זוגות** buried in **מערת המכפלה, אברהם ושרה, אדם וחוה, יצחק ורבקה, יעקב ולאה**—are **צדיקים : קבורה** precedes **מיתה**. But **עשו**, a **רשע**, is "**מת** even in life," so by him it says: **ואת מיתך קבור עפרון**.

אמר הרבה ואפילו מעט לא עשה — The **נצי״ב** notes that **אברהם** sensed immediately that **עפרון** wanted money. **אברהם** asked only for the **מערה בקצה שדהו** - **עפרון** responded with exaggerated generosity hinting that privately he expected payment.

Therefore **אברהם** insisted **עפרון** name the price, and paid **בכסף עובר לסוחר** so the sale could never be contested. Because **עפרון** spoke grandly but acted poorly, his name loses the **ו׳ (עפרון → עפרן)**.

חירם מלך צור — The **משל דובנא מגיד**'s

שלמה המלך requested cedarwood from **חירם** for the **בית המקדש.** Chiram agreed freely, without demanding payment. **שלמה** then sent him abundant provisions every month.

The **גמרא** says **חירם** could have received immense **שכר**—had he not later made himself into a god.

The **דובנא מגיד** explains with a **משל**: A wealthy merchant stayed in many hotels, always paying inflated bills. But one hotel owner refused payment, saying it was an honor to host him. The merchant later sent him lavish gifts yearly—far more than the cost of the stay—because they had become friends. So too, **חירם** acted like a friend of **כלל ישראל**; therefore his potential **שכר** was enormous. But **עפרון**, who demanded payment, was no "friend," and thus earned no merit.

אליעזר's **Search** — **חסד Above All**

When **אליעזר** seeks a wife for **יצחק**, the only **מדה** he tests for is **חסד.** **רבקה** offers water not only to him but to the camels.

The **מלבי"ם** explains the distinction between **מעיין** (clean water for humans) and **באר** (marshy water for animals). **רבקה** draws from the **מעיין** for **אליעזר**, and from the **באר** for the camels.

Why does she pour leftover water into the trough? sensitivity: pouring out water in front of someone who just drank from it is a **ביזיון**; instead she pours it into the trough so it becomes a **חסד** for animals.

- **שמשון רפאל הירש**: nothing given by **ה'** for **עבודת השם** should be wasted. Even a small amount of water must be used for **חסד**.

This trait likely shaped **יעקב אבינו**'s sensitivity to **פחים קטנים**—absorbed from his mother **רבקה**.



ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה לפנות ערב וישא עיניו וירא והנה גמלים באים (כד-סג)

Yitzchok went into the field - *Har Hamoriya*, the future site of the *Bais Hamikdosh* - in order to pray and instituted *Tefillas Mincha*, the afternoon prayer. The *gemara* advises us to be especially vigilant about *Mincha*, for *Hashem* is especially attentive to our prayers in the afternoon. The question is: Why is *Tefillas Mincha* so important and what makes it so effective?

R' Shlomo Horowitz Shlit"a quotes the **Tur** who links Mincha's prominence to its timing. It comes at a time when people are preoccupied with their daily work and business affairs.

In order to pray, one has to pause and concentrate on his dependence upon the Creator, who is the source of all blessing. This is far from easy to do.

In the morning, before one starts out for work, we wake up refreshed, and in the proper mood for prayer and offer thanksgiving for our very existence on earth. At night, with a productive day behind us, it is likewise easier to take a few moments to thank *Hashem* for the blessings of the day. In the afternoon, however, the situation is different. We are called upon to interrupt the pursuit of our livelihood, to suspend our seeming dependence on the strength of our hands and turn instead to *Hashem* in prayer.

Tefillas Mincha testifies to man's humility in the presence of G-d and this offering of worship and devotion recited in the afternoon is a precious **מנחה** - gift, readily accepted by *Hashem*.

No matter where one finds himself – at home, at work, or out in the field – let him stop and take a break of inspiration and then be confident that *Hashem* will hearken to his *tefillah*.

Torah Gems

ותרד העינה ותמלא כדה ותעל. וירץ העבד לקראתה וכו' (כד-טז,יז)

Rashi explains that when Rivkah came to the well, the water rose up to greet her and she was not compelled to actually draw the water. However, the water did not rise up when she came to draw water for the camels.

The reasoning for this is clear, says **R' Alexander Zushia Friedman ZT"L**. The primary purpose of a mitzvah is the heart's intent to do the bidding of it's creator. Initially, when Rivkah came to draw water, she had meant to draw it for herself, but due to her greatness, she did not have to bother, for the water came up to greet her. However, afterwards, when she came a second time to draw water for the camels, it was for the purpose of doing a mitzvah of *Gemillas Chesed*, to allow even the camels to have a drink. Thus, the water did not rise up to greet her for Heaven wished her to do the mitzvah with her own hands, with no help from on high.

לפום צערא אגרא - The exertion and effort that a person will put into the fulfillment of a mitzvah is regarded with unprecedented and remarkable significance by *Hashem Yisborach*, and the rewards for such an effort are incredibly great.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ואברך את ה' אלקי אדני אברהם אשר הנחני בדרך אמת וכו' (כד-מח)

Throughout Europe, the wonderful kindness and **הכנסת אורחים** of the great **R' Aharon Karliner ZT"L**, was legendary. It happened, once, that R' Aharon's daughter contracted a very serious illness and her condition deteriorated to the point where her family didn't think she would even make it through the night.

That very evening, a guest came to R' Aharon's house - none other than **R' Moshe of Kobrin ZT"L**. He was welcomed into the house, as usual, and was treated to a warm meal. R' Aharon sat with him

throughout the meal and at one point, mentioned that his daughter was very ill and was in great need of a **רפואה שלמה**.

R' Moshe stopped eating and said, "The *gemara* (**בבא בתרא**) tells us that an **אבן טובה** - a *great stone*, hung around the neck of Avrohom Avinu, and any sick person who would look at it would immediately get better. Now, what kind of wondrous stone are we talking about, that could heal all the sick people of the world?" asked R' Moshe. "I believe that this is not to be taken in the literal sense of the word. What this

"great stone" is referring to is the wondrous *middah* of Avrohom - his excellence in the mitzvah of welcoming guests and **הכנסת אורחים**. Through his actions, he could heal any sick person who came to him."

R' Moshe looked right at the Karliner Rebbe and said, "R' Aharon, your daughter is very sick. But through your legendary greatness in the mitzvah of **הכנסת אורחים**, you possess the actual **אבן טובה** - the *great stone*, that is needed to cure her. Let her look at her father and watch as he fulfills this mitzvah perfectly - and with Hashem's help, she will merit having a complete recovery!"

R' Aharon immediately listened to the words of his holy guest and did exactly as he said. And wonder of wonders, that very night, a noticeable change for the better came over his daughter and not long afterwards - through observing her father fulfill the mitzvah of **הכנסת אורחים** - she completely recovered from her sickness.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ויבא יצחק האהלה .... ויקח את רבקה ותהי לו לאשה ויאהבה וכו' (כד-סז)

While waiting to pick up his wife from the airport, a newly married young man couldn't help but notice another man who had just deplaned, walking swiftly towards a woman holding a baby, flanked by two young boys on each side. As the man approached his anxiously

awaiting family, the two boys, age 8 and 10, ran forward, arms outstretched, loudly yelling, "Daddy!"

The man laid down his bags and took the boys into his arms, hugging and caressing them, and in a low voice mouthing the words, "I missed you two so much." This continued for another minute until the man finally stood up. All the while, the baby girl was squirming excitedly in her mother's arms, never once taking her little eyes off the wonderful sight of her returning father.

The man said, "Hi, baby girl!" as he gently took the child from her mother. He kissed her and held her close to his chest while rocking her from side to side. The little girl instantly relaxed and simply laid her head on her father's shoulder, motionless in pure contentment.

After several moments, he handed his daughter back to his wife and turned his attention toward her. They stared at each other, beaming big smiles at one another. "I missed you so much," he barely was able to utter the words as the emotion gripped his voice. She, too, had no words in response, but the look in her eyes bespoke volumes of her caring and love for her husband.

For an instant, the onlooker thought that they reminded him of newlyweds, but he knew by the age of their kids that they couldn't possibly be. - Suddenly, and without warning the young man heard his own voice exclaim, "Wow! How long have you two been married?"

The man replied in a casual, unhurried tone, "We're happily married for 12 years."

Without even thinking, the onlooker blurted out again, "Well, then, how long have you been away?"

The man finally turned and looked at him. "Two whole days!"

Two days? By the intensity of the greeting, he'd assumed he'd been gone for at least several weeks, if not months. His shocked expression betrayed him, and he said almost offhandedly, "I hope my marriage is still that strong after 12 years!"

The man suddenly stopped smiling. He looked straight at the newlywed, and with a forcefulness that burned he pointedly remarked, "Don't hope, my friend; Decide!" Then he flashed his wonderful smile again and waved as he and his family turned and strode away.

The young man was still watching that exceptional family when his wife came up to him and asked, "Hey, what are you looking at?"

Without hesitating, and with a curious sense of certainty, he answered, "Our future!"

ויוסף אברהם ויקח אשה ושמה קטורה וגו' (כה-א)

Why did Avrohom need to marry again, when he was already 140 years old? The pleasures of this world would not have held any appeal for him, and he was already priveleged to experience a taste of the World to Come, as we learn from the gemarah (**בבא בתרא יז.**), so what then motivated Avrohom to take another wife?



Explains **R' Dovid Feinstein** that even though he tasted a portion of **עולם הבא**, Avrohom also understood, quite well, the purpose of this world. As *Chazal* teach us "Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world, than an entire life in the World to Come".

While the pleasures of this world no longer attracted him, Avrohom still valued the opportunity to do mitzvos, which is our entire purpose on this world. Therefore, he wanted to add to the mitzvos he had already done and continue to occupy himself with the mitzva of **פרו ורבו**, for which purpose he needed to take another wife.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ואשביעך בה' אלקי השמים .... לא תקח אשה לבני מבנות הכנעני וכו' (כד-ג)

On Shabbos, one is required to partake of three meals. The third and last meal, however, is omitted in certain Litvishe circles and instead, Torah learning and discussions of Medrash and Aggadah are conducted. Chassidim, on the other hand, tend to be scrupulous in observing this mitzvah and a formal meal is eaten.

"Why must you eat the third meal?" a Chassidishe Rebbe was once asked by a Litvishe Rov. In reply, he said, "A discussion of Torah cannot be a substitute for an actual meal."

The questioner persisted. "But why go through all the trouble of preparing and eating a meal, when you could simply open a sefer and learn, thereby saving yourself the entire effort and expense of a full meal."

The rebbe looked at the questioner and began to explain, "In this week's parsha, we learn that Avrohom Avinu sent his servant, Eliezer, to find a wife for his son Yitzchok. Avrohom was adamant that Yitzchok not marry a woman from a pagan population and that included his immediate environment. But why was this all necessary? The Torah tells us, "**ויאמר אברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל**" - "And Avrohom became old in his days and Hashem blessed him with everything". The gemara explains that "**בכל**" was actually the name of Avrohom's daughter. Now, since marriage between brother and sister was, at that time, permitted,

why did Avrohom go to all the trouble of bringing a wife from a far-away land for his son, when Yitzchok could have simply married his sister?"

The Litvak scratched his head, not knowing how to answer. "It would seem," said the rebbe, "that Yitzchok wanted to marry a real-life, factual wife, as opposed to one that is not explicitly cited in the posuk but is derived by the gemara and the medrash from the word

"**בכל**". And do you want to know the reason for this preference? Obviously, because if someone were to come and refute this Talmudic teaching - Yitzchok would then be left without a wife!"

The Chassidishe Rebbe smiled. "Similarly, a meal that consists of real food is a factual meal. There is nothing to dispute. However, a 'meal' that consists of Torah learning and discussion alone, is unreliable, because if someone were to come and refute the entire discussion and the learning that was done - the entire 'meal' is as if it never was!"