

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
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Chayei Sarah





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Parshas Chayei Sarah

Happiness - A Positive Attitude

On the words שני חיי שרה, “The years of Sarah’s life” Rashi writes, כולן שוין לטובה, “They were all good years.”¹

The Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim זt'l once said with immense fervor and amazement, “כולן שוין לטובה! כולן שוין לטובה!” In Sarah’s eyes, her life was always good! מ'איז איהר שמענדיג גוט געווען, Life was always good for her.”

Sarah Imeinu didn’t have an easy life. She suffered from Hagar, Yishmael, Pharaoh, Avimelech, she was childless for ninety years of her life, and so on. If she wanted to look negatively at life, she had reason enough to do so. But she always felt that her life was good. In her eyes, כולן שוין לטובה, they were all good years, and that is a wonderful level to attain.

The Midrash says that Sarah lived 127 years and as a reward, her descendant Esther ruled over 127 provinces. The Klausenberger Rebbe zy'a asks: Why should one be rewarded for living?

The answer is she *lived* 127 years. She was happy her entire life. As Rashi writes, כולן שוין לטובה. She constantly found goodness and happiness in her life. Having such a positive outlook is an enormous merit, for which her

descendant was awarded kingship over 127 countries.

The Rebbe of Klausenberg added that Sarah’s positive attitude was unique, even among the *imahos*. Rivkah Imeinu said (28:46), קצתי בחיי, “I am disgusted with my life...” Rachel Imeinu said (30:1), ‘Let me bear children, otherwise I am like dead.’ About Leah, Rashi (29:16) writes, “She cried because she feared she would end up marrying Esav...” Sarah Imeinu was unique, because despite her hardships, שני חיי שרה, she focused on the good in her life.”

The Chida teaches this lesson from the first word of the *parashah*: ויהיו. The Chida writes that this word is read the same way both frontwards and backwards. (*Lehavdil*, in English, such words are called 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 Chazon Ish said, “Everyone passes through this world —some pass through the world laughing, others pass through the world crying. We may as well pass through this world with laughter.”

1. According to its simple meaning, כולן שוין לטובה means she was a *tzadekes* her entire life.

There was a king who had two high-ranking officers; one was a Yid, the other a gentile. The king paid them well, and did many favors for them. At the king's birthday celebration, they were expected to come before the king and praise him for all the kindness he bestows on them.

One year, at the birthday ceremony, the non-Jewish officer spoke first. He thanked the king profusely for all the wonderful things the king does for him. The king was pleased.

Then it was the Yid's turn to stand before the king and sing the king's praises. But instead of praising the king, he praised Hashem. He said, "Thank You Hashem for creating this wise, compassionate, wealthy king who does so much kindness with me..."

The king was angry, "I give him so much kindness and he doesn't give me credit. He thinks his gratitude is just for Hashem. I will show him."

The king asked his baker to bake two breads. He said, "Place gold coins into the bread that goes to the non-Jewish officer. For the Jewish officer give regular bread."

The bread delivered to the non-Jew's home didn't look very appetizing, as due to the many coins inside it didn't bake well, and it came out lopsided. The non-Jewish officer said to the Yid, "Can we exchange breads? I'll will take yours and you'll take mine."

The Yid agreed. He wasn't planning on eating his bread anyway, since it was *pas akum* (non-Jewish bread). The Yid fed the lopsided loaf to his chickens. That's when he saw that it was filled with many gold coins.

The Yid returned to the king, and said, "I thank Hashem for giving me a compassionate and considerate king, for he shares his wealth with me..." The king called for the baker. "Didn't I tell you to give the bread with the coins to the non-Jewish officer?"

The baker said that he did exactly that. After some inquiries, the king discovered that the two officers exchanged breads.

The king asked his baker to bake another set of loaves, and to put poison into the Yid's loaf.

The Yid received his bread, but he wouldn't eat it because it's *pas akum*. He didn't feed it to his chickens either, because they still had bread from yesterday. So, he stored the bread somewhere in his home.

Later that day, the king's son knocked at the Yid's door, and he said, "I've just returned from a long trip, and I haven't eaten for quite a while. Your house is the first one in our city, so I came to you first. Do you have something to eat?"

The Yid replied, "You are fortunate. Your father sent this bread to me." The son ate the bread, became ill, and died.

This story reminds us that all good comes from Hashem. Even if other

people give you good things, it is also from Hashem. So direct your gratitude to Him. With this awareness in mind you

will be happy with the portion Hashem gives you, and you will proclaim, כולן שוין לטובה "all years of your life are good."

Time – a Precious Commodity

Time is our most precious commodity. We can earn so much, from each moment of our life. Unfortunately, people lose sight, and they foolishly waste precious time.

The Yismach Moshe ז"ל wrote this letter to his son:

"For Hashem's sake! Steer far away from idleness (בטלה), as distant as an arrow shot... If people would see someone throwing sacks of money into the sea, they would call him insane. The person who throws away a drop of his time and engages in *devarim beteilim*, is even more insane..."

Reb Yohonoson Eibshitz (*Yaaras Dvash* 2:10 and 1:4) writes, "No, my sons. It's not good that we waste precious time with foolish things that are valueless... At night, they waste their time...and when the sun rises, they roll over from side to side and miss the last *zman tefillah*. One sin leads to the next.... Brothers! Please, awaken from your sleep. Don't waste precious time with the foolishness of the world. Don't talk idle talk, discussing wars (who will win, who will lose) hunting, and other worthless discussions. Those are fitting for princes. Why should you waste precious time on them? It's very foolish to exchange the true world for a world of falsehood. How can one be easygoing regarding lost time? If one is destined to die on a

certain day, and someone offers him millions if he agrees to die one day earlier, I am certain he won't accept the money, despite the large amount of money that's being offered. So, if a day of life is so precious to you, how do you waste a day with idleness? ... He is the שומה described in *Chazal* (*Chagigah* 4) 'who loses everything that's given to him.' Because time is a precious gift, given to us from Hashem. With time one can know Hashem, attain perfection and correct one's deeds. With time one can attain the eternal world, because all perfection is attained specifically from [living in] this world..."

When we study the lives of the *avos* and the *imahos*, we see that they were extremely careful with their time. Every day, every moment, was precious for them.

About Avraham, it states (24:1), ואברהם זקן, בא בימים, "Avraham was old, coming with days..." This means זקן in his old age, בא בימים, he had all of his days with him. No day was lost.

Similarly, the Torah says that Sarah lived 127 years. Rashi writes, כולן שוין לטובה, "They were all good years." Each year of her life was used for Hashem's service. We are urged to follow in the ways of the *avos* and *imahos*. Let's learn from them to grasp this precious commodity called time.

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 58:3) states, "Reb Akiva was sitting and teaching Torah and the audience was sleeping. He wanted to waken them. He said, "Why was Esther queen over 127 countries? Sarah lived 127 years, so it is fitting that her descendant, Esther, should rule over 127 countries."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains how this lesson awakened his students. "For the 127 years of Sarah's life she earned kingship over 127 countries. Thus, it is possible that each week gave her a city, each hour gave her a town, which is worth thousands and millions. When one sleeps a little bit, he may lose out on thousands! This awareness awoke them."

People tell the following *mashal*:

A visitor came to a cemetery, and read the headstones. The first gravestone he read had the following words engraved on it: "Here lies Reb Shimon ben Dovid. He died in his old age when he was two years old." The visitor didn't understand. Why is he called "Reb" if he was only two years old? And why is two years old called "old age"?

He figured that it was an unusual

gravestone. But when he looked at some other *matzeivos*, he saw they all had similar inscriptions. The oldest was the *rav* of the city, who lived ten years!

"Was there an epidemic in this town? Did everyone die young?" he wondered.

He came into town, and asked a wise, old man for an explanation. The wise man replied, "*Chazal* (*Brachos* 18:) say, רשעים בחייהם קרואים מתים, '*Resha'im* are called dead, even when they are alive.' It isn't called living, because they aren't using their time productively for Torah and mitzvos. In contrast, it states (*Mishlei* 9:11), בי בי ירבו ימך, 'With Torah you will live long.' In this city, we only inscribe the amount of years people spent with Torah and mitzvos, because that is how long he *lived*. When a person is *niftar*, we calculate the hours he designated for Torah and *tefillah*, and that's what we write on the tombstone. Sometimes, a long life adds up to just about a year or two...."

Therefore, let us not be fooled by the illusionary good times. Valuable precious time is time that is used for Hashem's service.²

2. The Gemara (*Yoma* 86:) teaches, גדולה תשובה שמארכת ימיו של אדם, "*Teshuvah* is great, for it lengthens man's life." The Tzlach explains that the days he didn't serve Hashem were like dead days, and not counted as part of his life. When one does *teshuvah*, his dead days resurrect. As Chazal say, "His *aveiros* become like mitzvos." So, it is as though he lived longer. This is how *teshuvah* "lengthens the lifespan of man."

It states (*Tehillim* 90), שבענו בבקר חסדך, kindly grant us the ability to do *teshuvah*, נרננה ונשמחה, and then we will rejoice, בכל ימינו with all our days, because we will have all our days back.

Chesed – a Paramount Trait

Before the Torah tells how Yitzchak Avinu's *shidduch* came about, there is one introductory *pasuk*:

וַאֲבִרְהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַיָּמִים וְה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל
 "Avraham was old, coming with days,
 and Hashem blessed Avraham with
 everything" (24:1).

The HaAmek Davar says that this *pasuk* is related to the story of Yitzchak's *shidduch*, as it hints to the two reasons Avraham didn't go to look for a *shidduch* for Yitzchak by himself. "Because if it weren't for those reasons, he wouldn't send his slave. Avraham would swiftly do this great mitzvah– to find a wife for Yitzchak – by himself, because everything depended on it. The chosen nation, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu promised him, would come forth from her."

Avraham couldn't go for these reasons:

1. The HaAmek Davar writes, "Avraham was old, and didn't know how much longer he would live. He feared he would die during this long trip [before he finds a wife for Yitzchak]."

2) Furthermore, וְה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל. The HaAmek Davar explains בְּכָל means that כָּל אָדָם, many, many people, were coming to Avraham, seeking his help and counsel in countless ways. Some came for food and board, some came for

advice on how to strengthen their *emunah*, the ill came to receive his *brachos* and *tefillos* for their *refuah*. As it states (*Bava Basra* 16:), "A diamond hung on Avraham's neck. Whoever saw it was immediately healed." This means Avraham would daven for the ill. "Similarly, there were many issues [that people needed him for], and therefore he was unable to go" to seek a *shidduch* for Yitzchak. He sent Eliezer on this mission instead.

The HaAmek Davar concludes, "The *pasuk* reveals Avraham's *tzidkus*, righteousness. We should know that everyone came to him, and he took care of all their needs. Therefore, he gave over the mission of the *shidduch* to his slave."

When Eliezer sought a *shidduch* for Yitzchak, the primary criterion was that she should be a girl who does *chesed*. As Rashi writes, "Such a girl is appropriate for Yitzchak, because she does *gemilus chasadim*. She is fitting to enter Avraham's house."

Avraham's house was unquestionably a house of *chesed*. As the HaAmek Davar elaborated, people came to Avraham's home for all kinds of needs, and Avraham would strive to help them. Eliezer understood that the continuation of Avraham's legacy should be with a maiden who also excels in *chesed*.³

3. Eliezer prayed to Hashem (24:12), "It shall be the girl who I will ask to tip her jug so I can drink, and she will say, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels to drink' she is the

Being sensitive to another's feelings

A sub-division of *chesed* is to be cautious not to hurt another person's feelings. Avraham Avinu excelled in that realm, too. In last week's *parashah* we read how Avraham served his guests food, and he asked his courier, his *shaliach*, to bring water to the guests. When the Yidden were in the desert they received reward for Avraham's deeds. Just as Avraham gave food to the guests himself, so did Hashem Himself make it rain down *manna* for the Yidden in the desert. However, Avraham gave his guests water through a *shaliach*. Similarly, in the desert Hashem gave them water through a *shaliach* — through Moshe Rabbeinu.

As Rashi (18:4) writes, "The water was given through a *shaliach*. Therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu rewarded his descendants through a *shaliach*. As it states (*Bamidbar* 20:11) 'Moshe raised his hand and hit the stone.'" Hashem told Moshe to bring forth water from

the stone; Hashem didn't give them water Himself.

Why didn't Avraham bring water to the guests himself? The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* explains that he didn't want to embarrass his guests. People in that era worshiped the dust of their feet and Avraham wanted them to wash off the *avodah zarah* before entering his home. If Avraham brought them water to wash their feet, it would be as if he's telling his guests that he suspects them of idol worship. That is why Avraham sent them water through a *shaliach*. They would be less embarrassed when the *shaliach* suspects them of worshipping *avodah zarah*, than when their host suspects them. This way he spared his guests embarrassment.

For in addition to doing many deeds of kindness, Avraham was always cautious never to harm or humiliate others. That is the reason Eliezer sought a maiden for Yitzchak who would also have these exalted traits.⁴

girl that is fitting for Your servant, Yitzchak."

Why did Eliezer make a sign with drinking and not with eating?

Bederech tzachus we can explain as follows:

Chazal say: "Until forty years old, food is healthy. After forty, drinks are better." Rivkah was still young (according to one opinion she was only three years old). If Eliezer asked her for food, it wouldn't be so hard for her to give it to him, because he would be asking for something that she also understands the need, which makes it easier for her to comply. But Eliezer was older than forty. For him, drinking was more important, and he asked for drinks. Rivkah couldn't fully understand that need, because it wasn't among her experiences. *Chesed* means to understand that people have different needs, even if it isn't your own, and if Eliezer says he needs to drink, apparently that's what he needs. Eliezer was testing Rivkah, to see whether she would help him, even when her own experiences didn't help her understand the need so much.

4. The course of history changed when Avraham sent his guests water through a

In this week's *parashah*, Eliezer is sometimes called עבד (see 24:10, 17, 61, and more) and sometimes called איש (see 24:22, 26, 30, 32).

Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains that when Eliezer was actively involved in finding a *shidduch* for Yitzchak he was called איש because a *malach* came to help him, which raised Eliezer status to be an איש. Before and after the finalizing of the *shidduch*, Eliezer is called עבד.

I heard another explanation (ברוך צחות): Eliezer was a slave, and people tend to treat slaves as a lower-class citizen. Rivkah however told him (24:18) שתה "Drink my master..." She greeted

him using an honorary title. This raised his esteem. He felt like an איש. Therefore, after she honored him, he is called איש.

Making people feel important is a type of *chesed*. There are people who feel like slaves; unworthy, and unwanted. If we honor them, it greatly lifts their moral, and changes their view of themselves. They feel like they are a lowly עבד and we can make them feel like an איש.⁵

Man's greatest praise is his Chesed

Miracles happened in Rikvah's merits. For example, when Rivkah came to the well, the water miraculously rose up to greet her (see *Rashi* 24:17).

messenger, and not by himself. Had Avraham himself given his guests water, Hashem would have made it rain water for the nation in the desert, and Moshe wouldn't be needed to intervene. Moshe wouldn't be asked to bring water from a stone, and thus he wouldn't sin by hitting the stone instead of speaking to it. Moshe would be permitted to enter Eretz Yisrael. Chazal say that if Moshe entered Eretz Yisrael, the Beis HaMikdash would never be destroyed... So we see that the history of the world would have been different had Avraham given them water himself. But Avraham didn't do so, because he didn't want to embarrass his guests.

5. The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 8:5) states, "When Hashem wanted to create man... Chesed said, 'Man should be created, because man will do *chesed*.' Truth said, 'Don't create man. He is totally false.' Tzedek said, 'Create him, because he will give *tzedakah*.' Shalom said, 'Don't create him, because he is always fighting.' ..."

The Shem MiShmuel understands from this episode that if someone doesn't do *tzedakah* and *chesed*, all opinions agreed that man shouldn't have been created.

It states (24:31) למא תעמוד בחוץ, ואנכי פניתי הבית ומקום הגמלים. The Kedushas Tzion (Bobov) *tz'l* explains: *Avodah zarah* means thinking that everything he has was earned by his own accomplishments. When one has that opinion, it is very hard for him to give *tzedakah*. But when one believes everything was given to him by Hashem, it will be easier for him to give charity. Therefore, Lavan told Eliezer, ואנכי פניתי הבית, and *Rashi* says that this means he cleaned the house from *avodah zarah*. In other words, he attained the *emunah* that everything is from Hashem. Now מקום לגמלים, there is room for *gemilus chasadim* to take place.

Towards the end of the *parashah* (24:67), Rashi writes, "[Rivkah] was similar to Sarah. In Sarah's lifetime her candles remained illuminated from *erev Shabbos* to *erev Shabbos*, there was a *brachah* in the dough, and a cloud hovered above her tent. With Sarah's demise, these *brachos* ceased, and when Yitzchak married Rivkah, these blessings returned."

These great miracles are alluded to in solely three or four words in the *parashah*. But when the Torah discusses Rivkah's deeds of loving-kindness there is great elaboration. Several *pesukim* talk about how Rivkah poured water for Eliezer and for his camels.

The Siduro shel Shabbos (*Shores* 1, 4:11) writes that this shows us that man's greatest praise is his good deeds. People like to tell the miracles *tzaddikim* perform, but an even greater praise are the *mitzvos* and the *gemilus chasadim* they perform.

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozhmir *zt'l* said that this is logical, because Hashem performs the miracles. People deserve credit for their good deeds.

Furthermore, indeed, the greatest miracle is that a human being can improve his

nature to such high levels of perfection. That is a greater wonder than the miracles that happened around him.⁶

Rebbe Liber HaGadol of Berditchev *zy'a* once saw a woman sitting on the roadside, crying bitterly. Rebbe Liber asked her about that, and she replied, "We used to own a sheep, which was our source of livelihood. I would sell its milk and cheese in the market. But the sheep died. Now I don't know what we'll do."

Rebbe Liber replied, "Wait here. I will buy you another sheep." While he was running to the marketplace Eliyahu HaNavi *z'l* came to him. Rebbe Liber said to Eliyahu HaNavi, "I don't have time to speak now. I have to buy a sheep for a poor woman."

Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin told this story and said, "This time, Eliyahu HaNavi had *giluy* Rebbe Liber!"⁷

This story shows us that *chesed* is greater than *giluy Eliyahu*. As we said earlier, *chesed* is greater than performing miracles. Therefore, remember: If you see someone involved in *chesed*, recognize that he deserves the utmost praise. Deeds of *chesed* are greater than miracles, and greater than *giluy Eliyahu*.

6. Eliezer saw the miracle that happened in Rivkah's merit, but that didn't convince him that she has good *middos* until he saw them. The Klausenberger Rebbe *zy'a* said that this tells us that a person can perform miracles, yet still have bad *middos*.

7. Rebbe Liber of Berditchev taught:

Chazal tell us that answering amen is *mesugal* for *arichus yamim* (longevity). Rebbe Liber said that each amen has this *segulah*, but there are two *amens* that are particularly conducive for long life. They are amen answered after *לציון שכינתו* and amen after *הפורס* *סוכת שלום* (said in *Maariv* of Shabbos and Yom Tov).

It is from the greatest accomplishments and perfections a person can attain.

Good *Middos*

There was one other factor Eliezer was looking for in this *shidduch*: Avraham insisted that the girl be a member of his family.

The Drashos HaRan (*Drush* 5) asks: Why was it important that the girl be from Avraham's family? Avraham's family were all idol worshippers!?

Rashi (14:12) writes, "Avraham converted the men and Sarah converted the women." Avraham and Sarah had a large following of converts. Wouldn't it be wiser to take a *shidduch* from one of them? That would seem to be a more fitting *shidduch* than a girl raised in an idol worshipping home.

The Drashos HaRan answers that Avraham Avinu's family had exceptional *middos*. They were idol worshippers, but idol worship is an external matter. Avraham knew that when the maiden marries Yitzchak, she would throw away the *avodah zarah* and adapt Yitzchak's *emunah*. Because one's thoughts and beliefs can change, but *middos* are hereditary, and not so easily corrected.

So, we see that there were two criteria for Yitzchak's *shidduch*: A maiden who does *chesed* and a maiden who has good *middos*.

Chesed and *middos* aren't always one and the same. *Chesed* is about caring for other people, and *middos* includes several other facets, such as not getting angry, not being lazy, being humble, carrying a happy disposition, the ability to be *mevater*⁸, and several others.

8. A family from Elad rented a vacation apartment in Tzfas. But there was a terrible odor in the apartment, because something was wrong with the plumbing. They stayed for the night, but in the morning they told the landlord that they couldn't stay in the apartment under such conditions, and they said that they don't want to pay for the night they slept there, either.

The landlord agreed, and they left. But the landlord's wife was upset. She felt they should have paid them for at least that one night they slept there. In general, she didn't think the smell was all that bad as they claimed.

As the family were driving back home to Elad, the father received a phone call from his real estate broker from Bialik (a town near Chaifa).

He owned an apartment in Bialik, which he rented out, and the real estate broker, who managed the property, called to tell him that a pipe broke on his property. It would cost 45,000 shekel to fix. Adding pain to agony, the broker added that the current tenant decided he can't live there under those conditions and moved out.

When the family arrived home, they discovered that the washing machine broke, and it would be costly to fix. The father noticed that all recent problems were about plumbing issues, and it all began after they left that vacation apartment in Tzfas without paying for the night, claiming plumbing issues.

Nevertheless, we don't find Eliezer checking for good *middos*, only for *chesed*. Why? Although he sought a maiden solely from Avraham's family, was that a foolproof guarantee that she would have good *middos*? Lavan and Besuel also came from Avraham's family, and it doesn't seem that they had the best *middos*. Why didn't Eliezer add into his test to see how her *middos* were?

The Kli Yakar answers that Eliezer sought someone who does *chesed*. All other good *middos* are included in one who does *chesed*. There is nothing else to check for.

He says that this lesson is hinted at in the Gemara (*Taanis* 24.) which says, "When a girl has beautiful eyes, you can be certain that all her body is beautiful" and she is fitting for marriage. The Kli Yakar (24:14) asks, "This is something that we know from life that it isn't so. There are many ugly women who have beautiful eyes. Furthermore, why should Chazal teach how one can find a beautiful woman? Behold שקר הרון והבל

היופי, beauty is vane, false, external. Certainly, the Gemara is hinting to a method to test a girl's *middos*. The advice is to see if she has עינים יפות, beautiful eyes. This means she does deeds of kindness with others... If she does, we can be certain that she is perfect in all her other *middos*, too. Chazal know this from Eliezer. He checked Rivkah to see whether she was perfect in *chesed*. That would automatically mean that all her other *middos* are good too."

Someone asked the Gaon of Tchebin ז"ל what he should look for in a *shidduch*. He replied, "Three things: (1) Good *middos*. (2) Good *middos*. (3) Good *middos*."

Someone asked the Imrei Chaim ז"ל of Vizhnitz about a *shidduch* that was suggested for his son. The Imrei Chaim replied, "She has good *middos*, and that's the main thing. The proof is from Eliezer. The water came up towards Rivkah, but Eliezer wasn't impressed by that. He wanted to see if she has good

He decided to pay for the night they stayed in Tzefas. Although they weren't obligated to pay, especially since the landlord agreed that they don't have to pay, nevertheless, he knew that Mrs. Landlord was very upset.

He called the owner of the apartment in Tzefas, asked for his bank account number, so he could transfer three hundred shekels for the night they were there.

He replied, "You're doing a wise thing. I forgave you, but my wife is still angry about it..." He transferred the money by 2:31, Thursday afternoon. At 2:35 he received a call from the real estate manager in Bialik. He said he found a new tenant who is willing to pay a higher rent.

We learn from this story that sometimes it is wiser to pay 300 shekels than to have greater losses. We learn that it isn't worthwhile to argue over small amounts of money. And when one is *mevater* with his money for the sake of peace, Hashem will grant him many *brachos* and *yeshuos*.

middos, because that is the most important factor.⁹

It states (24:33-34), וַיֹּשֶׁם לִפְנֵי לֹאכֵל וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא, אֲכַל עַד אִם דִּבְרַתִּי דְּבַר, וַיֹּאמֶר עַבְדְּ אַבְרָהָם, “They placed food in front of [Eliezer] and he said, I won’t eat before I speak.’

“They said ‘Speak!’

“He replied, ‘I am Avraham’s slave.’”

The (עַבְדְּ אַבְרָהָם אֲנֹכִי אֹפֵן ח') דַּעַת מֹשֶׁה notices that at first, Eliezer told them that he would speak “דְּבַר” and the word דְּבַר is often used when one speaks sharp, harsh words. But when he spoke it states וַיֹּאמֶר, which implies that he spoke to them in soft, kind tones. What changed?

When they served him the meal, Eliezer sensed that there was poison in his food (as the Kedushas Levi writes)¹⁰ and he wanted to rebuke them for that. He wanted to speak sharply to them, “Is that how you treat your guests?!” But then he remembered עַבְדְּ אַבְרָהָם אֲנֹכִי, that he is Avraham’s servant, who goes in

Hashem’s ways. Hashem acts with humility, as it states, בַּמָּקוֹם גְּדוּלְתּוֹ שֶׁם עֲנוּתָנוּ, “Wherever Hashem’s greatness is mentioned, there his humility is mentioned too.” So Eliezer didn’t rebuke them. He didn’t mention the poison. He directed the conversation to discuss the *shidduch*.

Torah and Tefillah

It states in Pirkei Avos: “The world stands on three pillars: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilus chasadim*.”

A woman must excel in all three traits. She must be compassionate and kind, excelling in *gemilus chasadim*. She should devote herself to *tefillah* too. Her *tefillos* are very powerful, and she should daven for the success of the family. She also needs the pillar of Torah. She attains that by supporting and encouraging Torah study of her husband and sons.

Therefore, when Eliezer met with Rivkah it states (24:22), וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלוּ הַגַּמְלִים לִשְׁתוֹת, וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ נֹזֶם זֶהָב בַּקַּע מִשְׁקָלוֹ וּשְׁנֵי צַמִּידִים עַל יָדָהּ

9. When the Torah discusses the Dor Haflagah (who built the tower of Bavel to rebel against Hashem) the name הוי"ה is used throughout that section, and we know that הוי"ה is Hashem’s name for compassion. This is because although they were *apikorsim* and were rebelling against Hashem, Hashem had compassion on them because they weren’t bad *ben adam lechaveiro*. They weren’t sinning against one another.

However, by the *mabul*, the name אלקים is used throughout the *parashah*. This is because they were sinning against their fellow man, with thefts and corruption (וימלא הארץ חמס). And in Hashem’s eyes, sinning against your fellow man is worse than sinning against Hashem.

10. The Kedushas Levi (עוד יבואר לא אוכל עד אם דברתי דברי) writes, "It seems that Eliezer didn’t want to eat because he knew that these *resha'im* will certainly place poison in his food, as this actually happened..."

עשרה זהב משקלם, “When the camels finished drinking, the man took a golden nose ring, which weighed a *beka*, and two bracelets on her arms, weighing ten gold shekels.”

Rashi writes, “The בקע (half shekel) represents the shekalim the Yidden gave [for the *korbanos* of the Beis HaMikdash]... The two bracelets (צמידים) represent the two *luchos* (מצומדות). They weighed ten shekels, representing the

Ten Commandments that were written on them.”

The Chasam Sofer and the Maharal explain that Eliezer was hinting to her that together with the pillar of *chesed* must come along the pillar of *tefillah/avodah* (signified by the בקע), and the pillar of Torah (represented by the *luchos* and the ten commandments). The combination of all three pillars made her the perfect *shidduch* for Yitzchak.

Shidduchim* – Everything is *Bashert

A *shidduch* isn't dependent on any detail: Not on the *shadchan's* talents, and not on the amount of money he or she owns, and not on *yichus*. Forty days before the child was formed in the womb, the *shidduch* was decided (see *Sotah* 2.). Hashem is מושיב יחידים ביה, brings singles together, (*Tehillim* 68:7) according to Hashem's original plan. Even Lavan and Besuel recognized that, as they said (24:50), מה' יצא הדבר, “This *shidduch* is from Hashem.”¹¹

Eliezer prayed (24:12), ה' אלקי אדני אברהם, הקרה נא לפני היום, “Hashem, G-d of Avraham, come before me today...” He prayed that he find the *shidduch* היום, “today.” For that to happen, matters had to happen very quickly. It was already close to evening when he arrived. As it states (24:11), ויברך הגמלים מחוץ לעיר אל באר, “[Eliezer] had his camels

kneel at the well outside the city, towards evening...” and he wanted the *shidduch* to be completed that same day.

Reb Chaim of Brisk ז"ל (*Likutei Yehudah*) explains that therefore every aspect of the *shidduch* happened very quickly. ויהי הוא טרם כלה לדבר והנה רבקה יוצאת, “He didn't yet finish speaking his prayer, and behold Rikvah came out...” וירץ העבד לקראתה... ותמהר ותער כדה... ותרץ עוד אל, “The slave rushed towards her... She hurriedly lowered her jug... She ran again to the well... The girl ran and told her mother's house...” (24:15-28).

Reb Chaim Brisker explains that this is because *shidduchim*, with all their details, are designed by Hashem, including when the *shidduch* will occur. Rivkah and Yitzchak's *shidduch* was destined to finish on that day, and

11. An engagement party is called a *vort*, which means 'word' or דבר. This is to remind us that מה' יצא הדבר, the word and the *shidduch* came from Hashem.

therefore everything happened quickly, so it would occur.¹²

Lavan and Besuel said, מַה' יֵצֵא הַדָּבָר לֹא נוֹכַל, דָּבָר אֵלַי רַע אוֹ טוֹב "The matter is from Hashem. We can't speak with you good or bad." The Rashbam explains that they were saying, "Neither building the *shidduch* nor destroying it is in our hand, because regardless whether we want it or not, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is doing this, and He has the ability." Hashem, alone, makes *shidduchim*, and nothing can prevent Hashem's plan from happening.

Therefore, although one must do *hishtadlus*, one shouldn't become anxious and worried.¹³

Someone asked the Satmar Rebbe ז"ל what is the degree of *hishtadlus* needed for *shidduchim*. He replied, "Speak with a *shadchan* once a week."

After the war, Reb Naftali Nebentzal ז"ל remained the sole survivor of his family. There was a *shidduch* he wanted, and he made *hishtadlus* but it wasn't happening. He asked the Chazon Ish whether he should do some more *hishtadlus*. The

Chazon Ish replied, "You've done enough *hishtadlus*. Now let Hashem run the world, as He plans it."

He didn't end up marrying that girl, but he married someone else – the girl that was destined for him.

Many years later, it was the day of the bris of Reb Naftali's great-grandson. He davened in a *vasikin* minyan, they gave him an *aliyah* in honor of the *simchah*, and everyone shouted "Mazal Tov!" After the *tefillah*, he said that he wished they wouldn't have given him the *aliyah*. His childhood friend, who never had children, was in the beis medresh. This friend married that woman he so much wanted to marry years back. Now he realizes the miracle Hashem performed for him by preventing him from marrying her. Otherwise, he would be barren... And now he is celebrating the bris of his great-grandson."

The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 8:1) states:

A princess (מַטְרִינִיָּתָא) asked Reb Yossi bar Chalafta, "In how many days did Hakadosh Baruch Hu make His world?" Reb Yossi Chalafta answered, "Six days,

12. The Beis Yisrael ז"ל would say ווען ס'קומט די ריכטיגע מינוט געדוירט עס ווייניגער פון א מינוט "When the right minute comes, it happens in less than a minute."

13. As an older *bachur*, someone came to the Chazon Ish and said, "What will be with me? I'm already twenty-eight and I still didn't find my *shidduch*!"

The Chazon Ish asked, "How many do you need?"

"Just one."

"One there will be."

An older *bachur* said to the Chazon Ish, "I have one big *kasha* (difficulty/question); as Chazal say that a *shidduch* is *kashin* (difficult) like *kriyas Yam Suf*."

The Chazon Ish replied, "The *kasha* of the Yam Suf was resolved in the end. Your present *kashah* will be resolved too."

as it states, *כִּי שֶׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ.*"

She asked, "And from then until now, what does He do?"

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes *shidduchim*. The daughter of *Ploni* should marry *Ploni*..."

She said, "That's all? I can do that as well. I have many slaves and many maidservants. I can match them up in a moment."

Reb Yossi replied, "It seems easy to you, but for Hakadosh Baruch Hu, it's as difficult as *kriyas Yam Suf*."

The Midrash states that she gathered a thousand of her slaves and a thousand of her maidservants, and had them line up in rows. She said, "*Ploni* will marry *Plonis*, and *Ploni* will marry *Plonis*." In one night, she married them all off. In the morning they came to her. One's skull was split; another one had his eye knocked out of its socket. One of them had a broken arm. One had a broken leg. One said, "I don't want my spouse." Another said, "I don't want my spouse." She immediately called for Reb Yossi bar Chalafta and said, "Rebbi, your Torah is true and beautiful. Everything you said is true."

Reb Yossi replied, "Didn't I tell you? It may seem easy to you, but for Hakadosh Baruch Hu it's as hard as *kriyas Yam Suf*..."

According to another opinion in the Midrash, when this princess asked the *chachamim* what Hashem does from

Creation until today, the *chacham* replied, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes ladders. He elevates one and lowers another. As it states (*Tehillim* 75:8), *כִּי אֱלֹקִים שֹׁפֵט זֶה יִשְׁפִּיל זֶה יָרִים,* "Hashem is the judge. He lowers this one and raises that one."

We see that there are two opinions regarding what Hashem does since Creation until today. Either Hashem is making *shidduchim*, or Hashem makes ladders, raising some, lowering others. Some explain that these two explanations are really saying the same thing. Hashem is making *shidduchim* for people, but for *shidduchim* to occur, Hashem sometimes needs to lower some and to raise others.

To explain this, we share the following story that the Pnei Menachem (Gur) told. It happened with his father, the Imrei Emes *zt'l*:

There was a chassid who kept coming to the Imrei Emes, requesting a *brachah* to become wealthy. The Imrei Emes didn't want to give him this *brachah*. But this man kept returning, until the Imrei Emes reluctantly agreed, and blessed him with wealth.

The *brachah* transpired. He became from the wealthiest people in Warsaw. But then his eighteen-year-old son had an accident, and both of his feet were amputated. The only girl willing to marry that boy was the daughter of a poor tailor (on condition that the groom's family pays for all the wedding expenses).

The father came to the Imrei Emes and said, "See what happened to me! A

wealthy man like me should make wealthy *shidduchim*. I had to agree to a *shidduch* that isn't fitting for my son..."

The Imrei Emes replied, "Forty days before the child is formed in the womb, it is decreed in heaven, 'the daughter of *Ploni* to *Ploni*.' When your son was in the womb, this girl was destined for him. When this was decreed in heaven, this *shidduch* would have been perfectly normal. But you insisted that you want to be wealthy. As a wealthy person, you wouldn't agree to such a *shidduch*. Therefore, your child had an accident so the destined *shidduch* could occur..."¹⁴

Similarly, the Sefer Chassidim (216) writes, "If you see a wealthy *rasha* being *meshadech* with *gedolim*, know that he became wealthy because Hakadosh Baruch Hu knew that if he didn't have this wealth, they wouldn't marry with him. Therefore he is given the wealth. The reason they are *meshadech* with him isn't because of his merits. It is in his parents' merits, or it's because someone had embarrassed him beforehand."

We learn two lessons from this: (1) Even a *rasha* can receive much goodness if he remains silent when people embarrass him. (2) When a *shidduch* is *bashert*, Hashem makes

ladders. In this example, Hashem raises the *rasha* and makes him wealthy so he can make *shidduchim* with *gedolim*.

Yaakov Avinu was going to Charan to find his *shidduch* he saw a ladder in his prophetic dream. Perhaps this is because ladders are an essential part of the *shidduch* process, raising some, lowering others, so they will be equal, and willing to marry one another.

Standing by the Side

A couple was about to finalize a *shidduch* for their son. Everything seemed perfect to them, and they planned to make the *vort* that night. But the husband remembered that they didn't yet tell his mother-in-law about the *shidduch*. "She should also be involved. She might feel insulted if we finalize a *shidduch* without having her participate in the *shidduch*." So they made a visit to the mother-in-law, and as they were conversing, they told her about this *shidduch* that was cooking for their son.

The mother-in-law made some quick inquiries of her own, and she was very excited about the *shidduch*. "It is so good! In my opinion, finish the *shidduch* tonight... But I think it would be wrong to finalize the *shidduch* without including my old mother. Go to her, as though it

14. There could have been another way. The poor tailor could have become wealthy, and then they would be fitting for the *shidduch*.

People bless the chasan and *kallah* that "The *shidduch* should be עולה יפה." We can explain that we bless them that they should become similar to one another by going up – that the poorer one should reach the wealth of the higher one. That is more preferable than the wealthy going down to the level of the lower one.

were a regular visit, and tell her what's going on with your son."

They did that, and the grandmother said that she knew the family well. "When I was young, I used to play with this girl's grandmother..." She made her own inquiries, and concluded, "In my opinion, this is a very good *shidduch*, and I recommend you finish it tonight."

That night, after all the guests of the *vort* left, the father was thinking about the events of the day, with a smile on his face. "My mother-in-law thinks the *shidduch* happened because of her. She doesn't know that it was planned before she said anything. Her mother is also taking credit for the *shidduch*. They don't know that it was all planned, and without them it would have also happened."

Then he realized that he thinks he made the *shidduch*, when actually the *shidduch* was arranged years before, when the child was still in the womb. Because Hashem makes *shidduchim*, and enables people the good feeling to think that they made the *shidduch*.

The *shtar tana'im* states, עומד מצד החתן, "[The father] who stands on the *chasan's* side..." Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* explained, when the *shidduch* happened, the father stood at the side, and he didn't do anything. Hashem alone arranged the *shidduch*.

Nevertheless, Hashem allows the parents the sensation as though they are choosing the *shidduch* for their children. It is really an illusion, because Hashem

chooses the *shidduch*, but since the parents are also partners in the child, and they toiled for so many years to raise the child, Hashem gives them the good feeling as though they are part of making the *shidduch*.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* taught:

There are three primary things that people seek in a *shidduch*: family, beauty, and wealth. When one does a *shidduch* based on any one of those three reasons, he may think that the *shidduch* was his own choice. Therefore, the Gemara brings three *pesukim* to show that even then, the *shidduch* was planned by Hashem.

For example, Yitchak's *shidduch* with Rivkah was largely based on family, since Avraham told Eliezer to seek a *shidduch* from his family. But Lavan and Besuel said, מ' יצא הדבר, "Hashem made this *shidduch*." The *shidduch* didn't happen because you chose family; it happened because that was Hashem's will.

Similarly, the *Navi* tells us that Shimshon strayed after his eyes. He sought a *shidduch* who was beautiful. That too was from Hashem, as it states, כ' מ' ה' "it was chosen by Hashem."

Finally, the *pasuk* states, בית והון נחלת אבות, ומה' אשה לאיש. This means that even when you seek בית והון, a house and wealth, meaning a *shidduch* which will grant you a lot of money, even then מה' אשה לאיש, the *shidduch* was part of Hashem's master plan.

You Hear What Hashem wants you to Hear

Someone came to the Chazon Ish *zt'l* to ask information about a certain *bachur*. The father asked, "Does he have *yiras Shamayim*?"

The Chazon Ish told him the truth, though in a subtle way. "His *yiras Shamayim* could be better."

The father thought to himself, "Of course it could be better. Everyone can improve in his *yiras Shamayim*. The main thing is that he has *yiras Shamayim*."

He probed further, "How is his *hasmadas haTorah*?"

The Chazon Ish replied with the same phrase, "It could be better."

Once again, the father misunderstood this to mean that he learns very well, only it could be better. And that didn't bother him, because everyone can learn better.

"What about his *middos*? That's vital. Does he have good *middos*?"

"It could be better."

The man was satisfied with what he heard, and the *shidduch* was finalized.

The Chazon Ish repeated this story to his sister, the Steipler Rebbetzin, and concluded, "He isn't a fool. He has a sharp mind. He should have picked up on what I was hinting to him, but he didn't. Because when a *shidduch* needs to occur, it will, and nothing can prevent it from happening."

As the Pnei Menachem *zt'l* said, "When a *shidduch* is *bashert*, the parents are led like blind horses. They simply don't see,

don't hear, and don't know about the issues that could prevent the *shidduch*."

A father asked the *mashgiach* of a yeshiva for information about one of the *bachurim*. The *mashgiach* answered in Hebrew, *הכל לא בסדר*, "Everything isn't good with this boy." After giving this devastating report, the *mashgiach* was certain the father wouldn't go on with the *shidduch*. He was very surprised when on the following day this father invited him to the *vort*. At the *vort*, he asked the father why he disregarded his caution.

He replied, "Last night, I told my daughter what you said, that *הקול לא בסדר*, that his voice isn't good, and she said that in her opinion, if the boy isn't able to sing well, that's not a reason to hold up a *shidduch*..."

The father didn't realize that the *mashgiach* had said *הכל לא בסדר*, with a 'ב', which means nothing is good with the *bachur*. This is an example how *shidduchim* happen with *hashgachah pratis*, and information is misunderstood, or not heard, when that is Hashem's plan.

A simple person wanted his daughter to marry a *talmid chacham*. A *shidduch* was offered, and he was very impressed by the information he heard. The *shidduch* was finalized. At the *vort* he was among the happiest people in the world. He thought his daughter was engaged to the next Reb Akiva Eigar. Soon though, he discovered that the *bachur* was ignorant, and not a *talmid chacham* at all. He began to rethink the information people

gave him, and he realized that they were hinting to him that the boy wasn't a scholar. But at the time, he didn't pick up on the cues. He was very upset at himself, and spoke with the Pnei Menachem of Gur *zt'l* about it.

The Pnei Menachem said, "Sometimes, to enable a *shidduch* to occur, Hashem takes away the parent's reasoning, because if the parents would think rationally, they wouldn't agree to the *shidduch*. That's what happened with you. You should be thankful that Hashem gave you your *sechel* back. Would you prefer to remain without your common sense forever?"

Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* was a beloved *rosh yeshiva* who served in several yeshivos. His principle was that a *bachur* should never be thrown out of a yeshiva. He would say, "If the *bachur* is sent out, I'm leaving too."

There was a *bachur* that the yeshiva wanted to expel, but they refrained from doing so, because they didn't want to lose Reb Chaim Brim as their *rosh yeshiva*. But when this *bachur's* behavior became even worse, the yeshiva decided that they have no choice. They expelled the *bachur*, and

as forewarned, Reb Chaim Brim took his things, and left the yeshiva.

Just as he left the yeshiva and went outside, he met someone coming to the yeshiva to ask information about that *bachur* for a *shidduch*. He was glad he met Reb Chaim Brim, and asked him for information. Reb Chaim replied, "We just had a staff meeting, and the *rosh yeshiva*, the *mashgiach*, and all the *magidei shiurim* said, 'This yeshiva never had such a *bachur* before! There are eighty-six *bachurim* in the yeshiva, but none of them are like this one!'" The man heard enough (he didn't consider that perhaps that meant that he was unique in a negative way) and the *shidduch* was finalized.

Someone asked the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz *zt'l*:

"We say *shidduchim* are *bashert*, but isn't it true that someone can speak *lashon hara* and ruin a *shidduch*? So we see that it is in man's hands too."

The Ahavas Yisrael replied, "When a *shidduch* is *bashert*, Hashem arranges it that he will hear information solely from his friends. And when a *shidduch* isn't *bashert*, Hashem has him ask information from his enemies."¹⁵

Rosh Chodesh Kislev – a time for Teshuva

Every Rosh Chodesh is a time for *mussaf*, ראשי חודשים לעמך נתת זמן כפרה לכל, *teshuvah* and *kaparah*. As we say in תולדות, "You gave Rosh Chodesh to

15. The Shpole Zeida *zt'l* explained that each person has good points and negative points. When the *shidduch* is *bashert*, a wide board comes down from heaven to cover over all his faults. People only see his qualities, and the *shidduch* is made. When a *shidduch* isn't *bashert*, the board covers all of his qualities, only the faults are seen, and the *shidduch* is rejected.

Your nation. It is a time for atonement for everything they did." The Beis Yosef (*siman* 423) explains that Rosh Chodesh atones for **כל תולדותם**, all the wrong things they did the previous month. **זכרון לכולם יהיו**, and it's a day of memory before Hashem, when Hashem saves them from the *yetzer hara*.

So every Rosh Chodesh is a time for *teshuvah*, but Rosh Chodesh Kislev is a uniquely *mesugal* for *teshuvah* and atonement. Therefore, Yirmiyahu HaNavi had his generation fast on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, so they could prevent the *Churban*. As Yirmiyahu said (*Yirmiyahu* 36:9) **בחדש התשיעי קראו צום**, "On the ninth month (Kislev) call a fast...אולי תפל תחנתם לפני ה' וישבו איש מדרכו הרעה כי גדול תפלה ותחנה אשר דבר ה' אל העם הזה", "Perhaps they will pray before Hashem and repent their bad ways..."

There's an old Rashi (printed in *Tanach*, circa 460) on the words **קראו צום** which explains why Yirmiyahu wanted them to fast specifically on Rosh Chodesh Kislev. Rashi writes, "The fast was on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, because it is a day for *kaparah*, similar to Yom Kippur."

Why is Rosh Chodesh Kislev similar to Yom Kippur? Old *sefarim* (quoted in *Likutei Tzvi*) explain that Rosh Chodesh Kislev is forty days after Hoshanah Rabba. The primary time for atonement is on Yom Kippur, but if one didn't do *teshuvah*, he has time to repent until Hoshanah Rabba. If he didn't do *teshuvah* by Hoshanah Rabba, he has another forty days to do *teshuvah* until Rosh Chodesh Kislev, corresponding to the forty days of *mattan Torah*. This is the reason Rosh Chodesh Kislev, the fortieth day, is a special day for *teshuvah* and *kaparah*, just like Yom Kippur.

Chasidim say that one Rosh Chodesh Kislev, Rebbe Aharon of Chernobyl *zt'l* woke up from his sleep and said that he saw a great commotion in heaven. Reb Aharon asked about it, and they told him, "Today is Rosh Chodesh Kislev, which is like Yom Kippur. It is a day for atonement for the Jewish nation. This is because the **גמר התימה טובה** (the last chance to amend the judgment of Rosh Hashanah, and to merit a good year) is on Chanukah, and the spiritual lights of Chanukah begin shining from the beginning of the month."