

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Chayei Sarah



©

copyright 2020

For subscription & comments
Email: Mail@torahwellsprings.com
TEL: **718-484-8136**

Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Chayei Sarah

Toiling in <i>Avodas Hashem</i>	4
<i>Gemilus Chasadim</i>	7
What to Look for in a <i>Shidduch</i>	9
Benefits of <i>Gemilus Chasadim</i>	11
Gates to Holiness	12
Minchah	12
Why is it Called Minchah?	14
Outpour of the Soul	14
Made in Heaven	15

Torah Wellsprings - Chayei Sarah

Toiling in Avodas Hashem

In last week's *parashah*, Avimelech's shepherds claimed Avraham's well was theirs. They said that that they dug it. They agreed to put it to the test. Avraham and Avimelech would each go to the well. To whomever the well water rises, it would be a sign that it belongs to him. The water rose for Avraham (see Rashi *Bereishis* 21:30). This is one of the miracles that happened to the leaders of our nation.

Also, in the desert, the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 60:5) writes, "When [Miriam's] well saw the Jewish nation, it immediately rose up for them. As it states (*Bamidbar* 21:17), **עלי באר**."

In this week's *parashah*, the water rose to Rivkah when she arrived at the well. This was to help her, so she shouldn't need to draw up the water from the well's depths. It states (24:17), **וירץ העבד**, and Rashi explains that Eliezer ran to Rivkah because, **לקראתה**, he saw the water come up to greet her. This proved she was fitting to marry into Avraham's family, for miracles were happening to her as they happened to Avraham.¹

The Ramban writes that this miracle only occurred the first time Eliezer saw Rivkah filling her jug with water² All other times, Rivkah had to draw the water from the depths of the well to give to Eliezer, his men, and his camels. As the Ramban writes, "This miracle happened the first time [Eliezer saw] Rivkah taking water from the well. Afterward, it states, **ותשאב**, that Rivkah drew the water."³

Why didn't the miracle occur all the other times?

The Kedushas Levi explains, "The first time she was drawing the water for herself. Therefore, the water came up to her, so she shouldn't have to work hard. But the subsequent times, she drew water to do *chesed*, to feed Eliezer and his camels. Those times the water didn't rise to her. This is because a mitzvah has more value when it is done with an action (**מעשה**). " Hashem wanted Rivkah to draw the water because a mitzvah that requires a deed is more precious.⁴

We can also explain it this way: Chazal say, **לפום צערא אנרא**, the reward of a mitzvah is

1. The Midrash (60:5) states, "All women have to go down and fill up the water from the well. But for Rivkah, as soon as the water saw her, they rose up to her. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'You are a sign for your children. Just as for you, as soon as the water sees you it comes up for you, so will it be so for your children. When the well will see the Jewish nation, it will immediately go up for them. As it states (*Bamidbar* 21:17) **עלי באר**."

2. As it states (24:16), **ותרד העינה ותמלא כרה ותעל**, "She went down to the well, filled her jug, and she came up." The *pasuk* doesn't state, **ותשאב**, that she drew the water. This means the water rose up for her, and she didn't have to draw the water.

3. For example, it states (24:20), **ותרץ אל הבאר לשאב ותשאב לכל גמליו**, "She ran to the well to draw, and she drew for all of his camels."

4. Even if the water had come up by itself, Rivkah would need to do the deeds of collecting the water in her jug and bringing it to Eliezer's camels. Nevertheless, the more actions involved, the greater the mitzvah. Therefore, Rivkah had to draw up the water. This increased the value of her mitzvah.

in accordance with the amount of toil involved. When Rivkah was performing a mitzvah, drawing the water became hard for her to increase her reward.

Some find *avodas Hashem* easy, but they are serving Hashem by rote, and they aren't striving to reach higher levels. When someone accepts the yoke of Heaven upon himself, he will endure many challenges and struggles (such as daven with kavanah, learning Torah well, having good *middos*, and so on). *Avodas Hashem* should be challenging. These struggles increase our reward and add value to our *avodas Hashem*.

A *bachur* told Rebbe Yankele of Peshvorsk *zt'l*, "I recently came to a new yeshiva, and I feel out of place. The *bachurim* are different from me, and most of the *bachurim* are older than me. I feel alone. This thought occupies my mind, and I can't focus on my learning. I'm always thinking about how out of place I am in the yeshiva. Please, give me a *brachah* that I can learn Torah without *מניעות*, without obstacles, and without anything bothering me."

Rebbe Yankele was shocked by the request, because it is impossible to serve Hashem without challenges. Rebbe Yankele said, "Do you see the *shtender* and chair over there? Nothing bothers them. They don't have *מניעות*, but a human being does. It must be that way. Overcoming the challenges is what makes one's *avodas Hashem* special. It states, *ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זונים אחריהם*, 'Don't follow your heart and your eyes, that you stray after them...' It doesn't state, *אם אתם זונים אחריהם*, "If you stray after them..." It states, *אשר אתם זונים*, that you stray after them. The obligation isn't that we shouldn't have temptations and challenges; instead, we should overcome them. I can't give you a *brachah* that you shouldn't have any struggles. But I can give you a *brachah* that you should have 98% success in your studies, and the challenges should be at a minimal 2%."

The Imrei Shefer *beis medresh* in Williamsburg is careful that no one speaks

during the *tefillah*. One of its members had become ill, and all participants of this *beis medresh* made a *kabbalah* not to talk during davening for forty days – even if davening elsewhere. (The Imrei Shefer shul was only open on Shabbos.) They hoped and prayed that in this merit, their friend would have a *refuah sheleimah*.

One morning, during Shacharis, someone started talking to a *yungerman* of Imrei Shefer. The *yungerman* didn't respond as it was still in the middle of the forty days, and he wouldn't break his *kabbalah*. The other man replied, mockingly, "Oh, you are also from those people who don't speak during davening?" It was very embarrassing for him, but he remained silent.

This *yungerman's* silence, and the silence of all the others from Imrei Shefer, paid off. The sick shul member had a *refuah sheleimah*.

There was an additional benefit:

During these forty days, the wife of this *yungerman* (who was humiliated for being silent during the *tefillah*) was diagnosed with "the disease" (cancer), and they asked her to come to the hospital for more complex testing.

She underwent an M.R.I. test, and it was confirmed that she had a tumor. Following their rebbe's advice, they went to another doctor (whom the rebbe recommended) for a second opinion. But this doctor reached the same conclusion. The tumor was at an advanced stage, and she required immediate surgery.

The husband was in the hospital, waiting for the operation to be completed, but it was taking longer than expected. The doctors had said that the procedure would take an hour and a half, but two hours had passed, and she was still in the operating room. The husband went to the family and visitors' lounge, and he davened the following prayer: "Ribono Shel Olam! You know how hard it was for me to be silent and not speak in shul for forty days. But now I take it upon myself not to speak in *beis medresh* for a

half-year. In this merit, let my wife have a *refuah sheleimah*."

The operation was completed after two hours and fifteen minutes. The doctor said to the husband, "We were certain there was a tumor, but when we operated, we didn't find it. The operation took longer than expected because we were looking for the tumor that we located in the tests, but it isn't there. I don't understand how it happened..."⁵

Chazal (*Bava Basra* 16) say, אין אדם נתפס על צערו. When a person is going through hard times, he isn't held responsible for his bad deeds. After the Holocaust, there were Yidden who dropped their Yiddishkeit. We don't judge them because we can't imagine what they went through, and אין אדם נתפס על צערו, one isn't held guilty for the *aveiros* he performs due to extreme distress.

We will now tell a story of a yid who was religious before the war but dropped everything after the war. Once again, we don't judge him; it is impossible to judge him.

After the war, he moved to a small village in the southern United States. He and his family may have been the only yidden living there. They didn't know; religion wasn't something they discussed. His third-generation American wife was very distant from religion, and their only son was being raised like that as well. When people inquired about their faith, their response was, "We're American." They didn't want to remember their Jewish heritage.

Nevertheless, when their son turned thirteen, the father told him, "The thirteenth birthday is a special day for Jews. We will travel to the city, and you can choose any present you desire." They were prosperous; money wasn't an issue for them, and the father was prepared to buy anything his son

wanted. They went to various stores, but the boy didn't find anything he wanted. Then they passed a Judaica store, and the boy, suddenly enthusiastic, said that he wants to go in. The father replied, "There's nothing there besides for antiques that you won't appreciate and religious items you don't need." The father was worried that his son might be showing interest in Judaism, something he was trying to escape from for so many years.

But the boy insisted that he wants to go into this store, so the father obliged. The boy walked around the store with his eyes opened wide. It was like he couldn't see enough. And then he saw a Chanukah menorah made from clay. It was old, but by the intricate artwork, it was evident that the creator made it with a lot of devotion and care. "That's what I want," the boy said.

The father replied, "I will buy you anything you want, but not that."

The boy replied, "We went to many stores, and I didn't ask for anything. This is what I want."

The father asked the store owner to tell him about the menorah.

The owner said, "This precious menorah was found in a concentration camp, shortly after the war. Obviously, in the camps, there weren't Chanukah menorahs. This inmate created this one, concealed from the eyes of the S.S. soldiers so that he could light the Chanukah *lecht*."

When the boy heard the story of the menorah, he wanted it even more. The father and the store owner agreed on a (very high) price, and the boy left the store very proud of his present.

5. I know of another community that made a kabbalah that they won't speak for forty days. The results were very positive. Many of the members speak about the salvations they earned from this: in *refuah*, *parnassah*, and so on.

The son spent many hours looking at the menorah as he tried to imagine the conditions under which it was constructed. He also wondered about the craftsman who made it: Is he still alive? What is his life like now? How was his life back then?

At first, the son's interest and intrigue frightened his parents. Eventually, they figured it was just a phase their son was going through, and he would soon drop his attraction to Yiddishkeit.

But when Chanukah was approaching, the boy took out the menorah. He wanted to light it, but the menorah slipped out of his hands and broke in many parts. The boy was devastated. The father said, "Don't worry about it. We will try to put it back together again."

As they worked on the menorah, a piece of paper fell out of one of the hollow branches, and the father fainted. When he was revived, he explained, "This paper, written in Yiddish, tells the story of the person who built this menorah. I'll read it to you: 'I have to work fourteen hours each day. At night, I abstain from sleep so I can build this menorah that says on it זיה קלי ואנוהו. In a few months, it will be Chanukah, and I will light this menorah. If *chas veshalom* I don't live until then - because no one knows what the morrow will bring - I request that whoever finds this menorah should light the candles on Chanukah, and thereby, my *neshamah* will also have an *aliyah*... The letter is signed...' and the father read the signature. It was his own name. He had made this menorah years before, during the Holocaust. With *hashgachah pratis*, it came back home.

The father never did *teshuvah*, but the story touched his son's heart, and eventually, he did *teshuvah sheleimah*. Today he has a family, all of them following Torah and mitzvos.

In the camps, the father built a menorah with *mesirus nefesh*. And when one serves Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, blessings will come from it.

Gemilus Chasadim

Eliezer conducted 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), שתה וגם גמליך אשקה, "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), ותכל להשקותו ותאמר גם, לגמליך אשאב עד אם כלו לשתות, "When she finished giving water for 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 Or HaChaim (24:18) explains that Rivkah acted with even greater piety than Eliezer was expecting. "Rivkah didn't tell Eliezer immediately that she will give water to his camels. The *tzaddekes* figured that if she told Eliezer, right from the beginning, that she will draw water for his camels, he might gulp his water down [and he might drink less than he needs to quench his thirst] because he knows that Rivkah still has a lot of work to do, to give water to all the camels. Therefore, Rivkah didn't tell Eliezer her plans so that Eliezer would drink his full at his own pace. After he finished drinking, she said, 'I will draw for your camels.'"

When we study the *parashah* well, we discover several additional aspects of Rivkah's generosity and piety.

After Eliezer finished drinking, it states (24:20), ותמהר ותער כדה אל השקת ותריץ עוד אל הבאר, "She quickly poured out the jug... And she ran to the well..."

The Shlah HaKadosh *zt'l* (end of *Chaya Sara*) writes, "After Rivkah gave water to Eliezer, some water remained in the jug. Rivkah didn't know what to do with it. If she pours this water for the camels, it will appear like she compares camels to humans, for she gives them both to drink from the

same utensil. On the other hand, to pour the water on the ground is disrespectful. It might imply that since Eliezer drank from the water, the water isn't good anymore. Therefore, Rivkah acted with wisdom. She ran and rushed and made it appear that she accidentally dropped the jug due to her haste, and the water spilled. This way, Eliezer's honor was maintained."

At the beginning of this episode, Eliezer is called עבד, a slave. For example, it states (24:10, 17) ויקח העבד... וירץ העבד. Afterward, Eliezer is called איש (see *pasuk* 21 and 26, ויהאיש משתאה... ויקד, והאיש). What caused the change?

I heard from a *talmid chacham* that the change happened when Rivkah called Eliezer שרת אדוני, "my master." As she said (24:18), "Drink my master." Eliezer was a slave, and he wasn't accustomed to hearing people address him with so much honor. She spoke to him with respect, and this lifted his self-esteem. And since he felt like an איש, the Torah also calls him that.

Rashi (24:42) writes, יפה שיחתן של עבדי אבות לפני, "The conversations of the slaves of the *avos* are more beautiful than the Torah of the *avos*'s children. שהרי פרשה של אליעזר כפולה בתורה, והרבה גופי תורה לא נתנו אלא ברמז, because the *parashah* of Eliezer is written twice in the Torah, while many sections of the Torah itself was given solely in hints." Therefore, we can certainly learn many lessons of good conduct from Eliezer's ways. He was Avraham's servant and was influenced by Avraham's exemplary and pure ways.

When Eliezer came to Besuel's house, they brought out food for Eliezer to eat. Eliezer said (24:33), לא אכל עד אם דברתי דברי ויאמר, "I won't eat until I speak with you..." As known, דבר represents speaking harshly (in contrast to אמר, which means to talk softly). Rebbe Moshe of Koznitz *zt'l* (*Daas Moshe*) explains that Eliezer was about to speak harshly to them and to rebuke them because they put poison into his food (see *Yalkut Shimoni* 209).⁶ He was about to tell them, "Is that how you treat guests who come to your home? You put poison in their food?"

The next *pasuk* (24:34) states, ויאמר עבד אברהם, "I am Avraham's slave, and I was taught to follow the ways of the Torah (the Ten Commandments begins with אנכי). I was taught to follow Hashem ways, and Hashem acts with humility. As it states, במקום גדולתו שם אתה מוצא, עוונותונתו, where there's Hashem's greatness, that's where you will find His humility. Therefore, I will not rebuke them. I will speak to them kindly."

Rivkah performed many miracles. For example, it states (24:67), ויביאה יצחק האהלה שרה, "Yitzchak brought Rivkah to the tent, והרי היא שרה אמו, and behold she was like his mother, Sarah... As long as Sarah lived, the candles burned from *erev Shabbos* to *erev Shabbos*,⁷ there was a blessing in the dough, and a cloud was tied onto the tent. When she died, these

6. The Kedushas Levi (ר"ה עור יבאר לא אוכל עד אם דברתי דברי) writes, "Why didn't Eliezer want to eat before he spoke with them? ... It's because Eliezer suspected that these *resha'im* will certainly put poison in his food, as they indeed did. Therefore, he said, 'I won't eat until I speak.' His intention was that after he speaks, which are very precious words, as Chazal say, יפה שיחתן של עבדי אבות מתורתן של בני, 'The conversations of the *avos*'s slaves are nicer than the Torah of their children.' These [holy] words would protect him from danger. And that's what happened, because a *malach* came and switched the dishes, and Besuel fell into the trap that he himself prepared."

7. The moments of *licht tzinden*, when the wife lights the Shabbos candles, is a very exalted time in the Yiddishe home. Chazal say that Sarah and Rivkah's *licht tzinden* continued for the entire week. This hints that the aura and tranquility of Shabbos remained in their home all week long.

stopped. When Rivkah arrived, these returned."

We wrote above the wonder that the well water rose toward her.

The Sidduro Shel Shabbos (1:4:8) adds that Rivkah had a blessing in everything she did. The Sidduro Shel Shabbos proves from the *pesukim* that Rivkah gave a drop of water to the camels and 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 כרה אל השוקת, that after the slave drank, the jug was still 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 solely hinted to in the Torah, while her deeds of *chesed* are written in elaboration? Aren't the miracles she performed a greater testimony of her righteousness?

The Sidduro Shel Shabbos answers that the Torah elaborates on the matters that we can learn from. When we are told about the miracles she performed, we don't know how to reach those levels. Therefore, the greater elaboration is 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 selected because of her excellent *middos*.⁸ As Targum Yonoson (24:67) writes, ורחמה בגין רחמא עובדהא, ותקנן כעובדי אמה "Yitzchak loved Rivkah because he saw that her deeds were good like the deeds of Sarah, his mother."

As Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir *zt'l* explains, "Hashem performs the miracles. The good deeds and the good *middos* are man's part."

What to Look for in a *Shidduch*

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*. In his prayer, he said, והיה הנערה אשר אמר אליה המי נא כדרך ואשתה ואמרה שתה וגמליך "It shall be that the girl whom I will ask her to tilt her jug so I can drink, and she will reply, 'Drink, and I will also give water to your camels,' she is proven to be fitting for your servant, Yitzchak."

Rashi explains, ראויה היא לו שתהא גומלת הסדים, וכדאי ליכנס בביתו של אברהם "She is fitting for Yitzchak because she performs *gemilus chasadim*. She is fitting to enter the home of Avraham."⁹

8. Eliezer saw Rivkah performing miracles, but he still checked whether she had good *middos*. The Klausenberger Rebbe *zt'l* says that this means one can be a *baal mofes* (miracle worker), but he might still have bad *middos*... (His point is that before we are impressed by someone's miracles, we should check the person's good deeds.)

9. The commentaries ask, why didn't Avraham, himself, seek a *shidduch* for Yitzchak. The Ababernel and others explain that it is because Avraham was old. As the story begins with the words (24:1), ויבחרם וקן בא, בימים, that Avraham was old.

The Haamek Davar adds another explanation. "Avraham was very occupied by all the people who came to him. One person came to ask a question about *emunah*. Another asked that Avraham should pray for

Chazal (*Taanis* 24.) teach, כל כלה שעיניה יפות כל, גופה אין צריך בדיקה, when a bride has beautiful eyes, that is a sign she is beautiful all over. The Kli Yakar asks (1) it isn't always so. Some women have beautiful eyes but are otherwise ugly. (2) Why should the Gemara teach us this? Beauty is an external matter, and שקר החן, והבל היפי, more important is her *yiras Shamayim*. "Certainly, the Gemara is advising us on how to check a girl's deeds. The counsel is to check whether she has good eyes, which means whether she does *gemilus chasadim*. Because if she has good eyes towards others (she cares and helps others), she is undoubtedly perfect in all of her *middos*. Chazal learned this from Eliezer, who only checked out Rivkah in this attribute. Because if she has this attribute, she certainly has all other good *middos*, too."

In next week's *parashah*, it states (28:2), ויקרא יצחק אל יעקב... ויצוהו... לא תקח אשה מבנות כנען. קום לך ויקרא יצחק אל יעקב... ויצוהו... לא תקח אשה מבנות לבן, פדנה ארם... וקח לך משם אשה מבנות לבן, "Yitzchak called for Yaakov...and he commanded him... 'Don't take a wife from the girls of Canaan. Go to Padan Aram...and take a wife from Lavan's daughters.'"

The Drashos HaRan (Drush 5) asks, Lavan worshipped *avodah zarah*. Why were his daughters better than the daughters of Canaan?

The same question can be asked in this week's *parashah*. Avraham warned Eliezer, and had him swear that he will not take a wife for Yitzchak from Canaan.

What is the reason for this restriction?

The Drashos HaRan answers that they were seeking a maiden with good *middos*. Belief in *avodah zarah* isn't hereditary, but

middos are. You can teach people the falsehoods of *avodah zarah*, and they will abandon it, but it is far harder to change one's evil nature.

Nevertheless, there's a hint in the *parashah* that good *middos*, alone, isn't enough. The world stands on three pillars: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilus chasadim*, and a wife should excel in all three areas. She should love Torah study. She should be involved in *avodah*, which in our generation means *tefillah*. And obviously, she should excel in *gemilus chasadim*.

Eliezer gave Rivkah jewelry, as it states (24:22), ויקח האיש נזם זהב בקע משקלו ושני צמידים על ידה, "The man [Eliezer] took a gold nose ring that weighed a *beka*, and two bracelets on her arms, which weighed ten gold coins." Rashi explains that the two bracelets represented the two *luchos*. They weighed ten gold coins, symbolizing the Ten Commandments. The nose ring weighed a *beka*, a *machatzis hashekel*, and represents the half-shekel that Yidden give each year to buy the *korbanos*.

The Maharal (*Gur Aryeh*) explains, "Why did Eliezer hint to her the mitzvah of *machatzis hashekel* more than all the other mitzvos? It is because he saw her doing *gemilus chasadim*, so he hinted to her that there is also עבודה, the *korbanos* (which are bought with the *machatzis hashekel*). There is also Torah, represented by the two bracelets. Now she has the three pillars upon which the world stands: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilus chasadim*. He was hinting to her that now that she excels in one of the foundations, she should attain the remaining two."

him. As the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 16:) states, 'A diamond hung on Avraham's neck; whoever saw it was healed.' This is referring to Avraham's blessings and *tefillos* [which came forth from Avraham's neck]. Similarly, many things were dependent on Avraham. Therefore, he wasn't able to leave." This is the meaning of the words, ה' ברכ את אברהם בכל, Hashem blessed Avraham with the ability to help everyone, so he had to remain home.

This is a demonstration of Avraham's outstanding trait of *chesed*, the attribute for which he devoted his life.

Benefits of *Gemilus Chasadim*

It states (24:63), ויצא יצחק לשוב בשדה, "Yitzchak went to pray in the field..." In which field did Yitzchak daven? The Gemara (*Pesachim* 88.) says it was Har HaMoriah, where the Beis HaMikdash will be built. It is uncommon for Har HaMoriah to be called שדה, field, however it is also called שדה, field, in the following *pasuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 26:18): ציון שדה תחרש, "Zion will be plowed like a field." Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* explains that the *pasuk* is implying that Yitzchak was referring to the Churban and was davening that the Beis HaMikdash should be speedily rebuilt. The *pasuk* concludes, וישא עיניו והנה גמלים באים. Hashem revealed to Yitzchak that the redemption will come, גמלים באים, in the merit of those who do גמילות חסדים.

The Yerushalmi (*Taanis* 1:4) tells about a drought that occurred in the times of Reb Avahu. Heaven informed Reb Avahu that if Pantekikah davens for rain, it will rain.

Who was Pantekikah? He was a *rasha*, and every day, he committed five *aveiros*. But once, he gave a lot of money to *tzedakah*. Therefore, he had the power of tefillah, and whatever he asked for was answered.

The Tomer Devorah (1:6) writes, "In Heaven, there is a chamber where there are malachim appointed to write down the deeds of *chesed* that people perform in this world. Whenever the prosecuting *malachim* speak against the Jewish nation, the "*chesed*" *malachim* present the deeds of kindness that Yidden do, and Hashem has compassion on the Jewish nation. This is because Hashem desires *chesed*. Therefore, even if they are guilty and deserve punishment if they do kindness with each other, Hashem has compassion on them."

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 8:5) states, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted to create Adam HaRishon, He took counsel from the *malachim*. Chesed and Tzedek encouraged Hashem to create man, because people do *chesed* and *tzedakah*. Emes and Shalom told Hashem that he shouldn't create the world because people speak falsely, and they often get involved in disputes. Hashem threw Emes into the ground and created the world. As it states (*Daniel* 8:12), ותשלך אמת ארצה."

Based on this Midrash, the Shem MiShmuel teaches that if a person doesn't perform *tzedakah* and *chesed*, he doesn't have a right to live. Man was created solely in the merit that he will do these good deeds. The *Navi* (*Yechezkel* 16:49) writes about Sedom, כי יד עני ואביון לא החזיקו, that they didn't help the poor. The Shem MiShmuel explains that Sedom was overturned because they didn't do *tzedakah*. Because without *tzedakah* and *gemilus chasadim*, the world cannot exist.¹⁰

I heard the following story from a rav in America who heard it from the *baal hamaaseh*:

Chaveirim is a *chesed* organization that helps people in times of need. Among their deeds of *chesed*, Chaveirim help those who are experience car trouble.

One *erev Shabbos*, in Lakewood, a local Chaveirim volunteer, received a call. "My car has a flat," said the person on the line. "Can you come and help me fix it?"

The Chaveirim member asked him where his car is.

"It is parked in front of my house."

The Chaveirim volunteer became annoyed and asked, "Does it have to be fixed right now? It's only an hour before Shabbos. And

10. When people think they earn money on their own, it will be hard for them to give *tzedakah*. When they know that their money comes from Hashem, it will be easier for them to part with their money. The Kedushas Tzion of Bobov *zt'l* said that this is hinted at in the *pasuk* (24:31), פניתי הבית ומקום לגמלים. Rashi explains that פניתי הבית means he took out the *avodah zarah* from his home. When it will be פניתי הבית, that one takes away *avodah zarah* and false notions, and he believes in Hashem, ומקום לגמלים, he will be able to do *gemilus chasadim*.

after Shabbos there's a two-day-Shavuos. There's so much to do, to prepare for this long *yom tov*. Can't it wait until after *yom tov*?"

The man replied, "I am a Hatzalah volunteer, and my car needs to be in good shape. It is a matter of *pikuach nefesh*."

The Chaveirim volunteer apologized for judging him wrongly quickly came over, and changed the tire.

On the first night of Shavuos, during the *seudah*, the Chaveirim volunteer saw his mother-in-law's eyes roll upwards, a sign of a stroke. He called Hatzalah. The man he helped on *erev Shabbos* came just in time to save his mother-in-law.

The *chesed* he performed on *erev Shabbos* saved his mother-in-law's life.

Gates to Holiness

The first *סעיף* in Shulchan Aruch states the following Halachah (quoted from the Rambam): A great principle of the Torah is *לנגד ה' שויתי* 'I always remember that Hashem is before me. Because a person sits, acts, and works differently when he is alone in his home, in contrast to how he will sit, act, and work when he is in the presence of a great king. His speech with his family and friends isn't the same as how he would speak in the presence of a king. Certainly so, when a man realizes that the great king, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, whose honor fills the world, is standing above him, watching his deeds. As it states, 'אם יסתר איש במסתרים ואני לא אראנו נאם ה', 'If a person hides, will I not see him? says Hashem.' He will immediately be grasped with fear and

humility before Hashem, and he will be embarrassed before Hashem, always."

The Degel Machaneh Efraim says that this lesson is hinted at in this week's *parashah*, in the *pasuk* (24:62) *ויצחק בא מבוא באר להי רואי*. The Degel Machaneh Efraim explains, "יצחק" represents fear. *בא ויצחק* means that fear comes from *באר*, the spring of *להי*, the belief that I am standing before the *הי עולמים*, the Creator of the world, who is *רואי*, looking at me, observing all my movements and deeds. With this thought, one will have fear and humility before Hashem."

It states (24:1), *וה' ברך את אברהם בכל*, Hashem blessed Avraham with *בכל*. The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* said *בכל* stands for (*Iyov* 31:1), *ברית לעיני*, "I made a bris (covenant) with my eyes [to guard them against seeing forbidden things]. The Divrei Shmuel writes, "The first gate for *kedushah* is to guard the eyes. The next gate for *kedushah*, after guarding the eyes, is to guard the speech. *וה' ברך את אברהם בכל*, means that Hashem blessed Avraham with these matters, which are the foundation of *avodas Hashem*."

Minchah

The Gemara (*Brachos* 26:) teaches that Yitzchak established *tefillas Minchah*. As it states (24:63), *ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה לפנות ערב*, "Yitzchak went to pray in the field towards evening..."

The Tur (232) writes, "One must be very careful with *Minchah*...because Eliyahu's *tefillos* were only answered by *Minchah* time. As it states (*Melachim* 1, 18:36) *ויהי בעלות המנחה ויגש אליהו*, 'Minchah time, Eliyahu approached [Hashem with *tefillah*].'¹¹

11. The Gemara concludes, "Eliyahu said, *עניי ה' עניי*, 'Answer me, Hashem. Answer me.' He prayed [two prayers]: 'Answer me that fire should come down from heaven and answer me that they shouldn't claim that I'm doing witchcraft and sorcery.' The Ben Yehoyada (*Brachos* 26:) asks, the main point of the Gemara is that one should be cautious with *Minchah*, because Eliyahu's *tefillos* were answered specifically at this time. But why does the Gemara need to add what Eliyahu said at this time, and the meaning of his words? The Ben Yehoyada explains, "Chazal (*Taanis* 8:) say, 'A person mustn't ask two prayers at one time. Therefore, it is difficult: Why did Eliyahu pray for two things (that the fire should come down from heaven and that the people shouldn't say it is witchcraft)? Rather, it is because *Minchah* is a very auspicious time for *tefillah*, more than

What is unique about Minchah that *tefillos* are answered at that time?

The Tur explains that it is the hardest *tefillah* to keep track of, as it is right in the middle of the day, while a man is in the midst of his work. Shacharis and Maariv are easy to keep track of, because it is recited the first thing in the morning, and immediately upon returning from work. But how does one remember to daven Minchah? And besides, it is hard to leave work to daven. These factors make this *tefillah* very precious, and the *tefillos* said at this time are fulfilled.

The Magen Avraham (*Balak*) writes, "I heard my father (Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl *zt'l*) say in the name of the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* that a person is busy with his work, in the market and the streets, and he almost forgets that there is a Creator, and then when it is time for Minchah, he reminds himself that it is time to daven Minchah. As he thinks about how the day passed with foolishness, he moans in his heart and runs to a side street to daven Minchah. Although he doesn't know what he is saying, nevertheless, חשוב ויקר מאד לפני הבורא ברוך הוא, the *tefillah* is very precious prayer before the Creator, והאנחה שלו, בוקע וקיעים, and his moan pierces the heavens."

The Gemara proved that *tefillos* said at Minchah are answered from Eliyahu. The Kli Yakar (24:63) adds another proof.

He writes, "Avraham and Yitzchak established Shacharis and Maariv, but we don't see that their *tefillos* were answered immediately. But when Yitzchak davened Minchah, his prayers were answered right away. Because Yitzchak was probably praying for a spouse since Eliezer was now on the road for this purpose, and it states (*Brachos* 8.), על זאת יתפלל כל חסיד לעת מצוא, a person should pray for a spouse. His prayers were answered immediately, as it states, וישא עיניו

וירא והנה גמלים באים, 'He lifted his eyes, and saw the camels coming.' He davened with his eyes turned downwards, and immediately upon finishing the *tefillah* he raised his eyes, and saw that his *tefillos* were already answered. Camels were coming carrying his future spouse. This is Chazal's proof that a person's prayers are answered more readily by Minchah than by Shacharis and Maariv.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* (*Tiferes Yonoson, Korach* ויהר ר"ה) has another explanation why *tefillas Minchah* is answered more quickly than the other *tefillos*.

His explanation is based on the following Gemara (*Shabbos* 89:):

"In the future (לעתיד לבא) Hakadosh Baruch Hu will tell Avraham Avinu, בניך חטאו לי, 'Your children sinned against me.' Avraham will reply, ימחו על קדושת שמך, 'They should be destroyed, due to Your holy name.'" Avraham will be so upset that people sinned against Hashem. Therefore, he will advise that they be destroyed, although they are his descendants.

The Gemara then relates that an identical dialogue will take place between Hashem and Yaakov Avinu."

But then Hashem will say to Yitzchak, בניך, בניך חטאו לי, "Your children sinned to me. "

Yitzchak will reply, "Ribono Shel Olam! Are they my children and not Your children? You call them, בני בכורי ישראל, 'My firstborn, Yisroel.' And now you say that they are my children and not Yours?"

Yitzchak's arguments will ultimately save the Jewish nation.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz adds that this is the reason Yitzchak loved Eisav. He tended to pray for the *resha'im*, and to help them. Reb Yonoson Eibshitz writes that this is the

other times, and one can ask at this time even for two things at once. Therefore the Gemara brings this *drashah*, that Eliyahu asked for two matters, to prove that Minchah is a very special time for *tefillah*, because one can ask for two matters at one time."

uniqueness of Minchah. Yitzchak established Minchah, and therefore, even if a person has sinned and isn't worthy, his *tefillos* by Minchah will be answered.

He writes, "Chazal say a person should be careful with Minchah, because Eliyahu was answered by Minchah. Shacharis and Maariv were established by Avraham and Yaakov, who they didn't daven for *resha'im*. They said, ימחו על קידוש שמך, they should be destroyed, due to Hashem's holy name. But Yitzchak prayed for the *resha'im*.

"Therefore, when Eliyahu prayed for the Jewish nation, although they weren't worthy, Hashem answered his prayers by Minchah."¹²

Why is it Called Minchah?

Shacharis and Arvis are named for the time of day that they are said. (Maariv means it is said when the sun sets in the west.). But why is the afternoon *tefillah* called Minchah? A *korban minchah* is a flour offering, which comes along with many *korbanos*. A *minchah* was brought every morning, too, together with the תמיד של שחר. The afternoon *tefillah* represents the *korban tamid* that was brought in the afternoon. It was indeed brought together with a *minchah*, but that doesn't explain why this *tefillah* should be named for the *Minchah*.

The Sefer HaChaim (the brother of the Maharal) explains that Yitzchak was put on the *mizbeiach*. He was like a *korban olah*. But a *korban olah* needs a *minchah*, and Yitzchak completed that part of the *korban* with his *tefillos*.

The Baal HaTanya answers, the Gemara (*Menachos* 104:) states that the only *korban* with the word נפש, soul, written next to it is the *korban minchah*. As it states (*Vayikra* 2:1) ונפש כי תקריב מנחה לה', "If a soul brings a *korban minchah*

for Hashem." Why specifically by this *korban*? It is because Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "Who brings a *korban minchah*? Someone who is poor and can only afford to bring some flour with oil. I consider it as if he sacrificed his soul before me." Similarly, when one breaks away from his work in middle of the day to daven Minchah, there is an aspect of *mesirus nefesh*, and therefore it is called Minchah. Hashem says, "I consider it like you sacrificed your soul before me."

Outpour of the Soul

I once heard the uniqueness of Minchah described in the following way: It states (*Tehillim* 102:1) תפילה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ה' ישפוך שיחו "The prayer of the pauper who wraps himself up and he pours out his speech before Hashem." The Alshich HaKadosh explains that the *pasuk* teaches that when a person is wrapped with *tzaros*, he should pour his words out before his Creator. As it states, דאנה בלב איש ישיחנו לאחרים, when a person has a worry, he should discuss it with others, because just sharing his problems with others will make him feel better. In the same way, one should discuss the issues he is going through with Hashem. As the Alshich writes, "Just as one pours out a cup of water, so shall he pour out all his *tzaros*, and then he will feel better." These ideas are very applicable to *tefillas* Minchah, because this *tefillah* is called שיחה, as it states, ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה, "Yitzchak went out to have a conversation [with Hashem] in the field." It is therefore an ideal time for שיחו, to pour out your heart before Hashem, and to tell Hashem everything you are going through.

A prayer to Hashem in one's own words is a very precious prayer. The Chofetz Chaim (*Likutei Amarim* 10) explains that people tend to

¹². By the *machlokes* of Korach Moshe davened (*Bamidbar* 16:15), אל תפן אל מנחתם, "Hashem shouldn't accept their Minchah sacrifice." It seems strange that Moshe had to say this prayer. Why would Hashem listen to the prayers and accept the sacrifice of *resha'im*? The answer is it was a Minchah sacrifice, and by Minchah even *resha'im*'s prayers are answered (Reb Yonoson Eibshitz).

daven by rote. But when they say their own *tefillos*, expressing what lies in the depths of their hearts, it is always a *tefillah* with *kavanah*.

Therefore, Chazal (*Brachos* 29:) say, "When one davens, he should be *mechadesh* (add some of his own words)" so it won't be a *tefillah* by rote.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 34:) states, אמר רב כהנא, הציוף עלי מאן דמצלי בבקתא, Rav Kahana said, "I consider it a chutzpah when one davens in an open field." Rashi explains, "When he is in an enclosed place, he becomes afraid of the King, and he has a broken heart." Whereas, in a wide-open field, he will pray with arrogance. (The details of this Halachah is discussed in *Shulchan Aruch* 90:5).

Tosfos asks that Yitzchak davened in a field, as it states לשה בשדה. One of Tosfos answers is that שדה means Har HaMoriah, the place of the Beis HaMikdash. Tosfos' second answer is that the Gemara is referring to davening in a place where people pass by, and they will disturb his *tefillos*.

Perhaps, to answer Tosfos question, we can explain that "the field" is also allegorical. Avraham prayed in a מקום, a place, as it states (*Bereishis* 19:27), וישכם אברהם בבקר אל המקום אשר עמד, שם, "Avraham awoke in the morning [and went to] the *place* where he stood there before." Yaakov also davened at a place, as it states (*Bereishis* 28:11), ויפגע במקום. This implies an orderly *tefillah*. There is a place. There is a preparation. Everything is in order.¹³ Yitzchak, however, prayed in a field, which represents when things happen suddenly, without preparation. In the middle of work,

one turns to Hashem and tells Him everything he is going through. That is also the unique attribute of this *tefillah*, the outpouring of the soul.

Made in Heaven

The Gemara writes, "[We can prove] from the Torah, from *Navi*, and from *Kesuvim* that Hashem arranges *shidduchim*. In the *Chumash* [in this week's *parashah*] it states מה' יצא הדבר, 'the matter came forth from Hashem' (*Bereishis* 24:50). In *Navi* it states ואביו ואמו לא ידעו כי מה' היא, '[Shimshon's] father and mother didn't know [that the woman he married] was predestined by Hashem' (*Shoftim* 14). In *Kesuvim* (*Mishlei* 19), it states 'מה' אשה משכלת... 'A wise woman [to her husband] is from Hashem...' (*Moed Koton* 18:).¹⁴

Some say that an engagement celebration is called a *vort*, ('a word') to remind us that שהכל נהיה ברבו, "everything happened by Hashem's word." The *shidduch* didn't happen because the *shadchan* thought of the *shidduch*, and it also wasn't because the father of the girl has money or because the boy is a *talmid chacham*. The *shidduch* came to be because this was Hashem's plan.

At the *sheva brachos* we say שמה תשמח רעים, "bring joy to the loving friends, as You brought joy to Your creations in Gan Eden..." What was unique about the joy in Gan Eden? Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Visheve *zt'l* said that sometimes after closing a *shidduch*, people 'eat themselves up' with regret, and they feel they could have chosen someone else. And sometimes they regret not choosing someone

13. Among the preparations are *pesukei d'zimra* and *kriyas Shema*, which are in Shacharis, and somewhat in Maariv, but aren't in Minchah.

Someone once said to Reb Yechezkel Levenstein *zt'l* that he can awaken early and daven Shacharis with the *neitz hachamah*, but he won't have time to say *pesukei d'zimra*. Should he daven with the *neitz*?

Reb Yechezkel Levenstein replied, "Davening is more important than the *neitz*. If you skip *pesukei d'zimra*, you lack an essential part of the *tefillah*."

14. Chazal also say, forty days before the formation of a child in a womb, it is decreed, בת פלוני לפלוני, "Ploni's daughter will marry Ploni."

with a better *yichus*. Adam and Chavah didn't have these concerns. They didn't think they should have married someone else since there was no one else to marry. They also didn't regret not choosing someone with a better *yichus*, because they both shared the same *yichus*, as they were both created by Hashem. Their joy was complete. We bless the *chassan* and *kallah* that their happiness should be as complete and as joyous, with the belief that their marriage is what Hashem chose for them.

The Vilna Gaon *zy' a* was once a guest in someone's home. Taking leave of his host, the Vilna Gaon said, "I noticed that every morning you prepare a coffee for your wife, even before you make your coffee. I was wondering why you do this. Is it because Chazal say יותר מגופו יתור מגופו, one should honor his wife more than he honors himself?"

The host said, "The answer to your question is the story of my life. When I was thirteen years old, I was already *talmid chacham*. A wealthy person recognized my potential and chose me to as his future son-in-law. The *chasunah* was scheduled for seven years later when I would be twenty. In the meanwhile, he hired private tutors and teachers so that I could grow in Torah. When I turned twenty, I was a recognized *talmid chacham*, but my to-be father-in-law lost all his money by then. I would have gone ahead with the wedding regardless because I had *hakaras hatov* to him for hiring Torah teachers for me all those years, but my father refused to let me go ahead with the *shidduch*. He considered it a disgrace that I, an accomplished scholar, should marry a poor man's daughter.

"I married a girl from a wealthy family. Soon after we married, I discovered that I have a health problem, which I didn't know about beforehand. My father-in-law invested a lot of money to cure me. Doctors earned a nice living, as they pretended to try to heal me until one doctor admitted to my father-in-law that nothing known to medicine could cure me. My father-in-law asked me to divorce his daughter, and I obliged.

"First a broken *shidduch* and then a divorce... I felt my life was in shambles. I became depressed and went to live in the *hekdesh* (a communal room-and-board for the homeless). Someone who knew me was shocked to see me in the *hekdesh*. 'You have so much potential; how did you end up here?' I told him what happened. Sometime later, that man returned to the *hekdesh* and offered me a *shidduch*. 'The girl has the very same defect as you have,' he said.

"I married her. After the *chasunah*, she said to me, 'You were born with your defect, but I was born healthy. I developed my health problems later in life.' She explained that she was once engaged to marry a Torah scholar, but since her father lost all his money, the *shidduch* was called off. She became depressed and ill.

"I asked her some questions and discovered that I was her first *chassan*! She became sick on my account! Doesn't she deserve that I should honor her with a cup of coffee each morning?"

The Vilna Gaon said, "If I came here only to hear this story, it would have been worthwhile." The Vilna Gaon was impressed by this story because it's a demonstration that when a *shidduch* is *bashert*, it will happen.