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Hilula

25 - Rabbi David Cohen Lamjerbi

26 - Rabbi Shalom Aharon Lopus,
Rav of Acco

27 - Rabbi Moshe Natan Neta
Tzinvirt

28 - Rabbeinu Yona Hachasid
of Girondi

29 - Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Riminov

1 - Rabbi Ephraim Anakaveh

2 - Rabbi Nosson Meir Wachtfogel



Appreciating the Value of Time

"Then the servant took ten camels of his master's camels and set out with all the bounty of his master in his hand and made his way to Aram Naharaim to the city of Nachor" (Bereishit 24:10)

Avraham Avinu commanded his servant Eliezer to go to Charan and choose a righteous wife for his son Yitzchak, from among the local girls. Chazal explain (Bereishit Rabba 59:11) that Hashem miraculously shortened the journey for Eliezer and he arrived within one day, although it was a journey that normally takes a few days. The question is, Avraham Avinu, famous throughout the world for his exceptional righteousness, did not merit having his journey shortened when Hashem commanded him to leave Charan and go to the land of Canaan. Why was this so? If his servant Eliezer merited this miracle, all the more it seems that the master should be deserving?

I would like to suggest the following answer: Hashem never places a person in a challenging situation that he is unable to endure. If a person is faced with any kind of challenge, this itself is a clear sign that he is capable of overcoming it. If, chalila, a person does not merit passing the test, he apparently did not invest enough effort and strength in overcoming the challenge. Eliezer possessed a deep desire that his own daughter should become Yitzchak's wife. Since Hashem knew that Eliezer was not capable of completing this mission as his master wished, travelling the long distance from Canaan to Charan without giving in to this desire, Hashem therefore shortened the distance for him so that he would be capable of fulfilling his task in the way that Avraham requested.

On the other hand, Avraham Avinu was on a much higher spiritual level and in this lofty position he could travel the entire way from Charan to Canaan without deliberating Hashem's command or asking questions. Avraham followed Hashem's command without knowing where he would end up, which means that every step of the way was a test. And since Hashem wishes to give great reward to those who follow His wish without doubting Him, Hashem did not shorten the journey so that Avraham could receive reward for every step that he took in accordance with Hashem's command.

Now we understand why Hashem shortened the way for Eliezer while he left it as it was for his master Avraham. This explanation also teaches us the great value of time. Every moment in this world which is utilized appropriately in the service of Hashem, merits a person with invaluable reward. Another lesson that we can derive is that Hashem does not test a person with a trial that he cannot overcome, to the extent that He performed a miracle for Eliezer and shortened the way for him so that he should not come to stumble during the long journey.

When Eliezer saw Lavan from afar and realized that he was armed with weaponry, he immediately pronounced the Name of Hashem and then he and his ten camels flew into the air. The difficulty is, why did Eliezer not approach Lavan and fight against him. We know that Eliezer was blessed with great strength from the fact that Eliezer and Avraham went together to fight against the five kings by themselves and emerged victorious. So why was Eliezer hesitant to fight Lavan and tried to escape war with him through uttering the Holy Name?

We can answer that since Eliezer knew that going to find a wife for Yitzchak entailed a great trial for him, he did not wish to waste his time fighting against Lavan. His sole desire was to perform his master's mission as quickly as possible so that he shouldn't come to stumble because of his personal considerations in the matter. This is why Eliezer uttered the Holy Name.

When Eliezer returned with Rivka to his master's house, the length of the journey remained as it was since he had already fulfilled his master's wish and the suspicion that the long way will leave him with the opportunity to go against Avraham's command was no longer relevant. Since Eliezer had found a suitable wife for Yitzchak, he relinquished the idea of taking Yitzchak for his own daughter. Especially after seeing how Hashem was with him and had helped him to succeed in his task, he immediately understood that this was Hashem's wish and that "There is neither wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Hashem".

On his way home, Eliezer wished to travel in the normal manner without the way being shortened for him. Since now his travelling no longer involved any challenge, he wished to enjoy reward for his every step. Indeed, Hashem did not hold back his reward and he was rewarded for every step of his long journey back to his master.

The Sifrei Kabbalah tell us that Hashem created the entire world on the first day and on each subsequent day He set in place and perfected the creation of that day.

The division of the year into days, weeks and months was fashioned for the sake of man who is the crown of creation. This division affords him times where he can examine himself and search his ways to see if he utilized the lengthy time that he was given in an appropriate manner, or chalilah, if he squandered his time on the futilities of this world. There is a story told about Harav Shach zt"l, whose talmidim once found him crying bitterly. He explained to his talmidim that on that day he had not recited kriyat shema at the most halachically virtuous time as he was his daily custom. Since the time had passed and would never return, he cried due to his deep distress.



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

An Eye Sees and an Ear Hears

Throughout the course of a flight abroad, a fellow Jewish passenger watched my every move. When mealtime came, I removed a sandwich from my bag, washed my hands, and began eating, whereas my seatmate accepted the non-kosher meal that he was served. As he finished his meal, he felt uncomfortable and tried to justify his act. "What can I do?" he asked, in self-defense, "A man has to eat. There's no other choice."

"Why do I have another choice, but you don't?" I asked in wonder. "If I were to offer you some of my kosher food, would you eat it instead of the non-kosher plane food?"

"I'll think about it," he replied.

We continued talking amiably, until the man heard I was from France.

"Do you by any chance know Rav Pinto? My mother told me a lot about him and I would love to meet him."

"I certainly do! And as far as I know, he is meant to arrive at the same city where we are headed."

The man became extremely excited and proclaimed that as soon as he came to that city, he would look up Rav Pinto.

We finally landed. The heads of the community were at the airport to welcome me on account of my holy ancestors, zy"a. When my seat-mate discovered that the white-bearded man who had talked to him throughout the flight was none other than Rav Pinto himself, he was in a state of shock. He shamefully apologized for eating treif food in front of me.

I replied that he had no reason to feel ashamed before me. The next day he would forget about me already as we would part ways. But he had every reason to be ashamed before Hashem, Whose Shechinah fills the world. He sees each and every deed of ours, for better or for worse.

The time will come when we will be given a bill for all we ate in this establishment called Olam Hazeh, and we will have to pay the price for every bite.

The Haftarah

"King David was old, advanced in years" (Melachim I, 1)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah says, "King David was old, advanced in years", while we are told in the Parsha, "Now Avraham was old, well on in years". The Haftarah also speaks about David handing over the kingship to his son Shlomo before his death, similar to the topic in the Parsha which tells us that Avraham gave all that he had to his son Yitzchak.



Guard Your Tongue

It is a Mitzvah to Give the Benefit of the Doubt

Even if it unfolds that what so and so said about someone or did to someone is true, one is obligated to give him the benefit of the doubt and believe that he did not intend to degrade or aggravate him.

It is a Torah obligation to judge the person favorably. If one does not do this, this matter turns into a wrongdoing, since if one holds it against him in one's heart for speaking against him or doing something to him, he is considered as having transgressed the prohibition of accepting rechilus.



Words of our Sages

A collection of insights on the topic of shidduchim, from Maran Hagaon Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita:

"Take a wife for my son Yitzchak" (Bereishit 24:4)

Rabbeinu reiterates how numerous times in his life he was witness to the fact that when a match is not destined to take place, the person involved will hear fabricated information and stories that never transpired, so that it shouldn't come to be. On the other hand, when it is destined, Hashem hides even information that is important to know. Everything is directed by Heaven! He tells an example of someone who came to the Chazon Ish and cried to him that his neighbor who lives beneath him constantly besmirches his name. How will he be able to find shidduchim like this for his children? The Chazon Ish replied, "When the right shidduch comes they will inquire from the neighbor who lives above you and not from this neighbor underneath you"... and so it was!

Appropriate age for marriage: Rabbeinu encourages marriage at a young age, according to the Mishna and the ruling of the Rambam: "An eighteen-year-old goes to the marriage canopy". He cites the opinion of the Chazon Ish who said that one should get married already at seventeen years old. To those who claim that they are apprehensive about marriage disturbing their learning, he renounces this reason by saying that this was correct in Chutz La'aretz at the time when organized Kollelim were not the norm, but today, on the contrary, marriage enhances one's learning. He brings a story about the great-grandson of the Chafetz Chaim who wished to get married at a young age but his mother did not agree and he ended up remaining single.

Prayers for a shidduch: Rabbeinu was asked from which age parents should start to pray for their children that they should merit good shidduchim and that it should go easily. He answered, "From when they are born".

A segulah for a shidduch: To someone who asked for a segulah to find his marriage partner quickly, Rabbeinu replied that he should learn the tractate Kiddushin.

Doubt concerning a shidduch: A respected avreich was hesitant about a certain shidduch that was suggested for his exceptional son. He went to Rabbeinu and poured out his dilemma: "I have a son in shidduchim, an excellent bachur b"H and different suggestions have come up. Right now a girl from a family that doesn't have much money was suggested and I am concerned that maybe for the sake of the success of my son's learning, we should not consider this suggestion since after their marriage he will have to shoulder a financial burden. Maybe I should wait for a different suggestion, a girl from a family who are offering more support?" Rabbeinu ruled: "If the girl is virtuous, he will be able to learn well after their marriage no matter the situation." (Divrei Siach)



Pearls of the Parsha

Exact Reckoning of Our Forefathers Lives

"The years of Sara's life" (Bereishit 23:1)

Rashi expounds on these words: "All were equal in goodness", meaning that she was saintly throughout her life. The Gaon Rabbi Akiva Eiger zt"l explains that this Rashi answers the question of why Avraham lived longer than Sara, until the age of one hundred and seventy-five. This was because Avraham was already forty-eight years old (according to one of the reckonings of Chazal) when he recognized his Creator. This being the case, it transpires that he too 'lived' for one hundred and twenty-seven years, (one hundred and seventy-five minus forty-eight), the same number of years as Sara Immeinu a"h who recognized her Creator already from birth (as Rashi explains that Sara was also named 'Yiska' since she could perceive the future (suka) with Divine inspiration). Rashi writes that all of Sara's years were equal in goodness, meaning that she was religious right from when she was born and this is why it is considered that Avraham and Sara lived for the same amount of time.

This World is a Corridor

"I am an alien and a resident among you" (Bereishit 23:4)

The holy Ohr Hachaim zya"l explains that Avraham Avinu a"h was hesitant to say about himself that he was a resident in this world. This statement is the opposite of a tzaddik's attribute. He knows that this world is only a lobby on the way to the banquet hall, as David Hamelech a"l said, "I am a sojourner in the world".

Due to this Avraham preceded by saying that he is 'an alien', implying that he is foremost a foreigner in this world and only after that did he add that he is a resident among them.

A Shidduch is Not a Business Deal

"That you not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites" (Bereishit 24:3)

The word 'Cana'ani' is derived from the term 'dealer'. We find in many places in the Torah that 'Can'anim' refers to merchants.

Using this idea, the sefer 'Likutim v'Sippurim' explains allegorically that Avraham Avinu a"l was commanding his servant Eliezer not to take a wife for Yitzchak from those who make a trade out of shidduchim, from those for whom the dowry is of top priority. He should rather pay attention to the girl's inner qualities and good middot which are of foremost importance in a marriage partner.

When Do You Stoop Before an Animal?

"So Avraham bowed down before the members of the council" (Bereishit 23:12)

It is told that once the Noda B'Yehuda zt"l, while collecting funds for an important matter, arrived at the house of a stingy and vulgar person.

His escort turned to him and said, "Rabbeinu, it is beneath your dignity to approach this person."

The Noda B'Yehuda replied: "When a person requires milk, he crouches down even in front of an animal, just so that he can milk him..."

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



Yishmael in Light of Yitzchak

"These were the years of Yishmael's life: a hundred and thirty-seven years, when he expired and died, and was gathered to his people"

(Bereishit 25:17)

The Mefarshim explain that mentioning the number of years that Yishmael lived infers that he repented before his death. Rashi too writes that the term 'expired' is only used concerning tzaddikim, therefore one must conclude that Yishmael repented completely before his death and died as a righteous being.

The Torah tells us that Yishmael merited giving birth to twelve chieftains. What was his merit? The mitzvah of brit milah that he performed. The holy Zohar (Vol II, 32:1) adds that if Yishmael merited such a great reward for fulfilling one mitzvah, this teaches us how much Hashem does not withhold a person's reward and pays each person in an exact way for each deed. We can derive from this that all the more so an upright Jew who is meticulous to fulfil all the Torah commandments, will merit enormous reward.

This Parsha concludes with the words, "over all his brothers he dwelt". This implies that the reward for this mitzvah will not flow over to Yishmael's descendants and they will not receive reward for it. As Chazal tell us, (Yalkut Shimoni Bamidbar, remez 684) in the future Hashem will announce, "Whoever possesses a book of lineage should come and take his reward". The descendants of Yishmael too will come to receive their reward by saying they are the descendants of Yishmael who was the son of Avraham, but they will not have a clear lineage since throughout the generations they corrupted their ways, integrated with the nations of the world and entered into illegitimate marriages thereby giving birth to mamzerim (children born from illegitimate marriages). Due to this they did not preserve their lineage.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



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

Rashi: "She is befitting for him if she is one who performs acts of kindness. She will be worthy of entering Avraham's house." Due to this, Eliezer composed a test to confirm who would be a fitting wife for Yitzchak and worthy of entering Avraham's home: The girl should be one who performs acts of kindness- only this kind of person is fitting to marry Yitzchak.

Eliezer was satisfied with discerning whether she possessed the attribute of chessed. However, this is something that requires contemplation. Avraham Avinu a"h possessed many other qualities besides chessed, for example fear of G-d, trust and in particular emunah. If so, why did Eliezer not find it necessary to investigate whether she possessed these other traits? It could very well be that even if her attribute of kindness was faultless, she could still lack other important traits. How could she become part of Avraham Avinu's household if she doesn't possess his other traits?! However, from the verses, it seems that Eliezer was satisfied with checking for the trait of kindness alone?

The ba'alei mussar ask another question: Assuming that she indeed possessed extensive sterling qualities, however, since she grew up in a home that served idolatry how could she be considered as a wife for Yitzchak? Even if she herself never served idols, she nevertheless certainly absorbed the atmosphere while growing up in such an environment. What good are her positive qualities if she comes from a house that practiced idolatry?

Rabbi Rubman zt"l, in the sefer 'Zichron Meir', points out that Eliezer the elder of Avraham's household was very clever and knew well what his mission entailed. He

understood that he was being asked to find a wife who would be fitting to take the holy place of Sara Immeinu. One who would merit the Shechina resting in their home, with a cloud resting permanently over their tent and the candles remaining alight from Erev Shabbat to Erev Shabbat (the miracles that were present while Sara Immeinu was alive). Her total devotion to Hashem would be demonstrated through her love of kindness and performing great acts of benevolence, exactly as Hashem acts to us.

Eliezer was certain that Hashem had delegated this elevated neshama to some worthy person, therefore he prayed to Hashem that He should perform kindness with Avraham his master and send him success in his lofty goal, in a miraculous way.

With great wisdom Eliezer thought of a sign that was unlike the normal manner of behavior. It concerned a kind of generosity that was fitting only for the holy Imahot to possess, whom out of the strength of their devotion to Hashem possess a thirst to perform kindness even with rich people who are not lacking in any way. This is what Eliezer said in his prayer, "may I know through her that You have done kindness with my master". If he will be presented with a noble girl who will perform this kind of kindness wholeheartedly, then he will be certain that he has reached his goal, for there is no one else in the world who would act in this way.

But we still need to understand why Eliezer did not attach importance to the girl's other qualities?

The following Mishna (Avot 2:9) answers this question: "He said to them: Go out and discern which is the proper way to which a man should cling. Rabbi Eliezer says: A good eye. Rabbi Yehoshua says: A good friend. Rabbi Yose says: A good neighbor. Rabbi Shimon says: One who considers the outcome of a deed. Rabbi Elazar says: A good heart. He [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai] said to them: I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach to your words, for your words are included in his words."

Rabbi Ovadiah M'bartenurah explains: The heart is the drive for all other powers. It is the source from which all other acts flow. This is why Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai said "I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach

to your words, for your words are included in his words".

The Tiferet Yisrael adds a beautiful description to this explanation: "A peaceful and joyful heart sees the good in every person and he will have many loved ones, good friends and good neighbors. With his tranquility, he will be able to perceive the future and will also love Hashem with all his heart and soul."

Performing a positive act, for example, an act of charity or kindness, is not proof enough of a person's good heart. Doing someone a favor could stem from a weakness of being unable to see pain and performing this act of 'kindness' relieves him of this pain. Or he could be acting out of different reasons.

But since here it says "and the feet of the men who were with him", this stresses that Eliezer was accompanied by his men and they did not really require help in giving their camels to drink. Eliezer prayed, "Behold, I am standing here by the spring of water and the daughters of the townsmen come out to draw water. Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Please tip over your jug so that I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,'". As is known, a camel is capable of holding a week's supply of water since they travel in the desert and drink large amounts of water. Giving a camel to drink involves great trouble since an average camel drinks about seventy liters. If a regular pail contains about ten liters, this means that for every camel she had to fill up the pail seven times and since there were ten camels, she refilled the pail seventy times!

Although Eliezer and his men were standing and watching and did not offer any assistance, Rivka went about this task with joy and alacrity, as if she was coming to the aid of a helpless person. This was a sign of her sincere good heart. One who truly possess a good heart desires and longs to help others. This is not due to any personal weakness, distress or feelings of mercy, but simply because he rejoices at the opportunity to assist others.

We will do well to take a look at the behavior of our Matriarchs and learn from their lofty deeds how to be good to others with desire, joy and true devotion.