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Parshas Chaya Sarah 5787
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Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע״ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז״ל

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The Yud of Yitzchak

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַד' בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל.

Avraham was elderly, coming on in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything (Bereishis 24:1).

What blessing is meant by *everything*? Rashi explains that the gematria of **בכל** equals the gematria of **בן**; Avraham was blessed with *a son*. This pasuk introduces the narrative that follows: having been blessed with a son, Avraham now needed to find him a wife.

This is difficult to understand. The pasuk presumably comes to teach us something new, but we already know that Avraham had a son. The Torah has already discussed at length the miracle of Yitzchak's birth, his bris, the expulsion of Yishmael because of his conduct toward Yitzchak, and how Yitzchak was almost brought as a korban. What is the meaning of this new allusion to Avraham having a son?

> Yitzchak was born with the benefits of the ten trials which Avraham had overcome

We might also reflect on the teaching of Chazal, quoted in Rashi on the pasuk in *Lech Lecha* (17:19) where Hashem instructed Avraham to name his son Yitzchak. Rashi first explains the name **יצחק** as relating to the word **צחוק**, the joyous laughter which Avraham expressed when he learned that Sarah would bear a son. Rashi then brings another explanation from the Midrash. The letters *tzadi* and *kuf* represent the age of Sarah (90) and the age of Avraham (100) at the time of Yitzchak's birth, the letter *ches* represents the fact that he was the first person ever to have a *bris milah* at eight days, and the letter *yud* represents Avraham's ten *nisyonos*.

Yitzchak's miraculous birth and his *bris milah* are special things about him, but the *nisyonos* of Avraham are not experiences of Yitzchak. Why are they represented in his name?

Both questions can be answered with one insight. The accomplishments of Avraham in overcoming his many trials created a lasting effect not only on himself, but in his offspring who would follow his example. Avraham blazed a path which remained accessible to his children.

This is the meaning of the Gemara (*Pesachim* 88a), "Avraham called the place of the Beis Hamikdash **הר**, a mountain, while Yitzchak called it **שדה**, a field." Avraham viewed the path to coming close to Hashem as a steep one, like climbing a mountain, while Yitzchak viewed it as a level path, as through a field. Avraham struggled mightily to

Cont. on page 2

Living with the Days

וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וַד' בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל.

Avraham was elderly, coming on in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything (Bereishis 24:1).

After describing Avraham as elderly, the Torah adds that he was **בא בימים**, literally "coming with days." A teaching attributed to the Slonimer Rebbe, author of the *Yesod HaAvodah*,[2] explains this phrase.

Many people look back at the end of each day, regretting that they did not use their time well. Many others spend much of their time worrying or dreaming about tomorrow. Neither of these is fully living in the present: one looks back at missed opportunities, while the other looks ahead to a day that has not yet arrived. A great person recognizes each day's potential as it unfolds and makes the most of it. This is what the Torah means when it says that Avraham *came with the days*.

This is the deep meaning of the pasuk, יִרְאַת ד' תּוֹסִיף יָמִים וּשְׁנוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּקְצֹרְנָה—*The fear of Hashem adds days, and the years of the wicked will be shortened* (Mishlei 10:27). It is noteworthy that the pasuk seems to measure the lives of *reshaim* in years and of *tzaddikim* in days.

The reason is that *reshaim* live many years in this world, but they are short years because many of the days are empty and wasted. For *tzaddikim*, each day of life is significant; each day is treasured and used productively.

An *oveid Hashem* lives this way: rather than wasting time agonizing over the past or worrying about the future, he embraces each day's opportunities and fills it with *avodas Hashem*.

לך לך תשפ"ה מאמר ב

2 Quoted in *Toras Avos* on this pasuk.

The Yud of Yitzchak

Cont. from page 1

arrive at the relationship of love and fear of Hashem that he achieved. Yitzchak traveled the same path that his father traveled, but he found it easier, as the path had been cleared by his father.

The ten *nisyonos* of Avraham are represented in the name of Yitzchak, because Yitzchak was born with the benefits of the ten trials which Avraham had overcome. They prepared the way for his rise to greatness.

And this explains what the pasuk conveys by saying that *Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything*—that is, *a son*, to continue his *avodas Hashem* and carry his achievements forward. This pasuk introduces Avraham's quest to find Yitzchak a suitable wife. To extend this legacy to future generations and build a nation of *ovdei Hashem*, Avraham sought a wife with the qualities needed to become the mother of those generations who would continue to carry his achievements forward.

> We, too, must be able to say, "I will follow my path, even if others disapprove."

Every Yid is born with the strength to draw close to Hashem, following the path blazed by the Avos. The *yetzer hara* places temptations and doubts along that path, but we have inherited the ability to overcome them.

The Mishnah in *Avos* (5:22) records the teachings of two Tannaim who were *geirim*, Ben Bag Bag and Ben Hei Hei. The Rishonim[1] explain that the Chachamim gave them these names to hide their identities from the Roman authorities, who had outlawed conversion to Judaism. Both names allude to Avraham and Sarah, the first *geirim*. 'Hei' references the letter *hei* added to the names of Avraham and Sarah, while 'Bag' has the same gematria as *hei*.

We may suggest that the doubled names of Hei Hei and Bag Bag also give the number ten, like the *yud* in Yitzchak's name. This hints that the spiritual strength gained through Avraham Avinu's ten *nisyonos* belongs not only to the biological descendants of the Avos, but to everyone who joins Klal Yisrael and follows the path of the Avos.

לך לך תשפ"ה מאמר א

1 *Tosefos Yom Tov* there; Tosafos *Chagigah* 9b.

The Life of Sarah

Many have wondered about the name of our parshah—*Chayei Sarah*. There is no event from the life of Sarah recounted in this parshah. The parshah recounts the burial of Sarah, and events in the lives of Avraham and Yitzchak, but nothing about the life of Sarah.

We must understand that the Avos and Imahos were not private people. They did not live for the present. The labor of their lives was to extend their faith in Hashem forward into the future. Their efforts were geared to building the foundation of Klal Yisrael—a nation that would serve Hashem and glorify His name.

The central event of this parshah is the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivkah. Through this marriage the continuation of the path of *avodas Hashem* was ensured. This was the essence of the life of Sarah. Thus, it is appropriate that it is named *Chayei Sarah*.

ס"ג חיי שרה תשפ"ה

Forging Her Own Path

וַיִּקְרְאוּ לְרִבְקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ הֲתֵלְכִי עִם הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלֵךְ.

They called Rivkah and they said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." (Bereishis (24:57-58).

Rashi explains that Rivkah's response was that she was determined to go with Eliezer, even if they didn't want her to.

Everyone here was talking pleasantly. Lavan and Besuel had consented to Eliezer's request, and declared מֵד' יָצָא—*The matter has come from Hashem*. They were being agreeable. Why did Rivkah see fit to speak so forcefully?

The answer is that Rivkah Imeinu was the daughter of a *rasha*, the sister of a *rasha*, and came from a place of *reshaim*. She was chosen to be the wife of Yitzchak and the mother of Klal Yisrael precisely because she stood firmly for her principles. She neither followed her family and neighbors nor adopted their behavior. From a young age, she thought independently and forged her own path. This was her motto: "I will go my own way, and follow my own conscience, even if this is not the way of my family."

Every Yid needs an element of this spirit. We must not let our surroundings draw us away from our principles. We, too, must be able to say, "I will follow my path, even if others disapprove."

ס"ג כי תבא תשפ"ב

Kedushah in a Place of Desolation

וָאֹמַר אֶל אֲדֹנִי אֻלַי לֹא תֵלֵךְ הָאִשָּׁה אַחֲרָי.

And I said to my master, "Perhaps the woman will not follow me?" (Bereishis 24:39).

The word אולי, *perhaps*, is usually spelled with a *vav*. Without the *vav* it can be read as *eilai—to me*. As Rashi explains, the unusual spelling of אֻלַי in this pasuk hints that Eliezer himself had a daughter who he wished to marry off to Yitzchak. When he asked Avraham what to do if the girl from Avraham's family were *perhaps* unwilling to follow him, Eliezer secretly hoped that this would happen, so that Yitzchak would then come '*to me*.'

The question is raised: Why is Eliezer's secret wish only hinted here, in Eliezer's retelling of the conversation to Lavan and Besuel? The Torah records his original conversation with Avraham, in 24:5—wouldn't that be the more natural place to allude to Eliezer's secret intentions? Yet there the word אולי is spelled with a *vav*.

A story about Rav Bunim of Peshischa offers an insight. Rav Bunim regularly traveled to Danzig on business. After one visit, he felt an unusual spiritual illumination there. This puzzled him, since the *haskalah* had become so widespread in Danzig that almost no *shomrei Torah umitzvos* remained.

When he shared his surprise with the Rebbe of Lublin, the Rebbe explained that in truth the light of *kedushah* is found everywhere. *The whole world is filled with His glory*. Where many people seek closeness to Hashem, a person must work hard to draw that light to himself. Where few seek Hashem, however, the light seeks someone to whom it can attach. Thus, when an exceptional *oveid Hashem* such as Rav Bunim enters a spiritually desolate city like Danzig, the light of kedushah naturally attaches itself to him. Similarly, we may say that surely Eliezer, as a loyal servant, did not consciously wish to be unsuccessful in bringing back a wife from Avraham's family. His hope that Yitzchak might instead marry his daughter lay buried deep in his heart, and he had not attained the sharpness of clarity and honesty needed to recognize that desire within himself. Only in the home of Lavan the swindler—a place of deceit and falsehood, where no one else was a seeker of truth—was his own truthfulness heightened. He could then acknowledge that he had embarked on the mission without wholeheartedly desiring its success.

ס"ג כי תבא תשפ"ב

Speaking to the Heart

אֲנִי טֶרֶם אֲכַלֶּה לְדַבֵּר אֶל לִבִּי וְהִנֵּה רִבְקָה יֹצֵאת וכו'.

I had not yet finished speaking to my heart, and, behold, Rivkah was coming ... (Bereishis 24:45).

Eliezer was relating how he davened to Hashem and his request was immediately fulfilled. He described his *tefillah* as *speaking to my heart*. But he was speaking to Hashem; why did he refer to this as speaking to his heart?

The simplest explanation is that because he said the words quietly, and no other person heard his words, it is as if he was speaking to himself.

But this phrase carries a deeper meaning. Eliezer's tefillah is one of the first recorded in the Torah, and this description teaches us something fundamental about davening.

The Gemara tells us (*Berachos* 32b), "Rabi Elazar said: From the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, the gates of tefillah were locked. And Rabi Elazar said: From the day that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, a wall of iron has separated between Yisrael and their Father in Heaven."

We must reflect: The world is full of His glory. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is present everywhere, here on earth as well as in heaven. How can an iron wall separate us from Him when He is right beside us?

The iron wall that separates between us and Hashem is inside ourselves, between the heart and the mouth. Since the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, there is something preventing our hearts from connecting with our lips and fully expressing our essence in tefillah.

The meaning of tefillah is for our hearts to feel complete reliance on Hakadosh Baruch Hu and to express this with the words of tefillah. Putting into words our trust in Hashem, strengthens it and impresses its truth upon our hearts and minds.

Chazal[3] say, "זה סימן לתפילה, אם כוון אדם לבו לתפילה יהא מובטח שתפילתו נשמעת—This is an indicator regarding tefillah: if a person is '*mechaven*' his heart for tefillah, he may be certain that his tefillah is heard." The Sefas Emes interprets the word כוון as *straightened*. Accordingly, this means, if a person finds that his tefillah made an impression on his heart, this is a sign that he davened a proper and effective tefillah, because tefillah straightens and connects the heart to the Ribono Shel Olam.

This is the deeper meaning of Eliezer's *speaking to his heart*. True tefillah not only addresses Hashem but also gives voice to, and thereby strengthens, the trust and faith within the heart.

ס"ג כי תבא תשפ"ב

3 *Devarim Rabbah* 2

GUTMAN'S
INSURANCE BROKERAGE

Parshas Chaya Sarah	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbos
Brooklyn	4:28	5:28
Lakewood	4:30	5:30
Baltimore	4:41	5:41
Chicago	4:18	5:21
North Miami	5:17	6:11
Los Angeles	4:37	5:34

A Place for the Camels

וַיֹּאמֶר בּוֹא בְּרוּךְ ד' לָמָּה תַעֲמֹד בַּחוּץ וְאָנֹכִי פִּנִּיתִי הַבַּיִת וּמָקוֹם לַגְּמַלִּים.

He said, "Come, blessed of Hashem. Why are you standing outside when I have cleared the house and a place for the camels?" (Bereishis 24:31).

The Baal HaTurim notes that the word וּמָקוֹם, *and a place*, appears in only one other instance in Tanach. It is in Iyov, כִּי יֵשׁ לַכֶּסֶף מוֹצָא וּמָקוֹם לַזָּהָב יָזֹקּוּ—*For there is a source for silver and a place where gold is refined* (Iyov 28:1).

He explains that this connection reveals Lavan's motive: his hospitality sprang not from kindness, but from greed. Seeing Eliezer's silver and gold, Lavan offered room for the camels in the hope of gaining some of that wealth.

It is noteworthy that while Lavan greeted Eliezer with the offer of a place for his camels to rest, Rivkah first offered food for the camels, as it says, וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו גַּם תֶּבֶן גַּם מִסְפּוֹא רַב עִמָּנוּ גַּם מָקוֹם לָלוּן— *She said to him, "There is plenty of both straw and feed by us, and also room to spend the night"* (24:25). But Lavan did not mention food for the camels. Only after Eliezer entered the house and unmuzzled the camels does the pasuk record that Lavan gave them straw and feed (24:32).

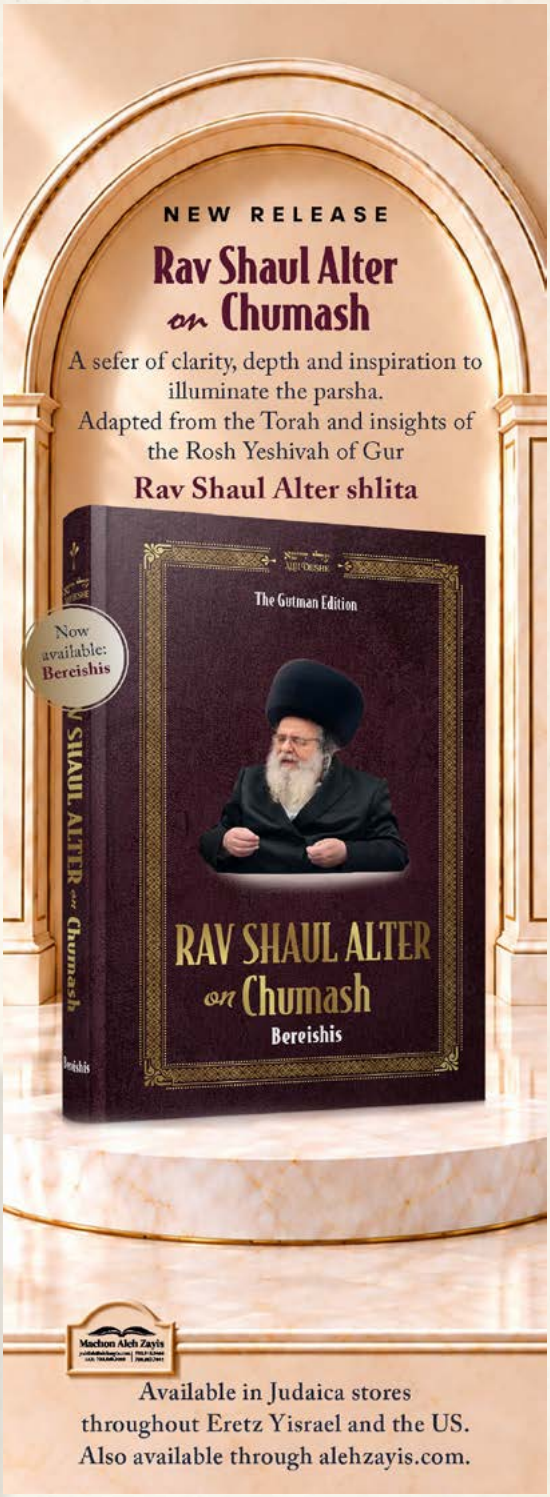
Since Lavan was seeking to ingratiate himself to Eliezer we would expect him to immediately offer food for the camels, the way Rivkah had done. Why was this not part of his greeting?

On the pasuk וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד עֲשָׂרָה גְמַלִּים מִגְּמַלֵּי אֲדֹנָיו—*The servant took ten camels of his master's camels* (24:10), Rashi explains that Avraham's camels were distinct from other camels in that they were muzzled while traveling, to prevent them from grazing in other people's fields.

Rivkah was sensitive to this and immediately noticed that the camels were muzzled and needed to be fed, so the first thing she offered was food for the hungry camels. Lavan, on the other hand, did not think about the camels eating because when he traveled his camels grazed from the fields that they passed. Only when Eliezer brought the camels inside and unmuzzled them did Lavan realize that they had not eaten and needed food.

With this insight we may add to the connection between the *pesukim*, with the link to *"a place where gold is refined"* hinting at Lavan's hunger for money. He avoided feeding his camels when they could graze in other people's fields, and his greeting to Eliezer therefore offered only *a place for the camels*, not food.

ס"ג כי תבא תשפ"ב



From the Desk of the Rosh Yeshivah

Certainly, it is only human nature for a person to feel hurt if his immediate family has chosen not to participate in his *simchah*.

Yet, from pain a person can elevate himself. This Shabbos I spoke about Rashi on the pasuk in Tehillim, נָתַתָּה לִירֵאֶיךָ נֵס לְהִתְנוֹסֵס מִפְּנֵי קֶשֶׁט סֶלָה—*You have given trials to those that fear you to elevate themselves* (60:6). Rashi explains that every difficulty and challenge presents an opportunity, through mindful reflection, to benefit and rise higher.

In this instance, what you should reflect on is that the true content of the wedding will remain forever. What will endure is not who participated, and not even the pictures which "immortalize" the event, but the establishment of a *Yiddishe* home in which the *Shechinah* resides and the chain of generations that will emerge from it, *Iy"H*.

This is a gift and kindness from the Creator that we cannot possibly deserve. Gratitude for this tremendous gift should fill our hearts and melt away any feeling of pain for things we missed out on.

May Hashem help you to rejoice with true, inner joy.

Your friend,

Shaul

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