

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
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Chayei Sarah



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

Chayei Sarah

## Shidduchim are *Bashert*

Although Hashem's hand is often concealed, everything that happens to us is bashert, destined, and planned. We believe that everything is from Hashem, but we don't always see it. However, when it comes to *shidduchim*, Hashem's hand is clearly revealed.

The Gemara (*Moed Kattan* 18:) brings proofs "from Torah, *Nevi'im*, and *Kesuvim*" that *shidduchim* are destined from heaven.

The Torah (24:50, this week's *parashah*) states, ויען לבן ובתואל ויאמרו מה יצא הדבר לא נוכל דבר אליך רע או טוב "Lavan and Besuel said, 'The matter is from Hashem. We can't tell you good or bad.'" Lavan and Besuel were big *resha'im*, but even they recognized that the *shidduch* was destined from heaven.

Rashi explains that Lavan and Besuel said, "We

can't say no to this *shidduch*... because it is clear that Hashem arranged this *shidduch*" since Eliezer told them that while he was davening for the right *shidduch*, Rivkah came (see 24:45).

The Rashbam writes that Lavan and Besuel said, לא הסתירה ולא הבניין תלוי ברצונו to break the *shidduch* or to make it isn't up to our desire. כי על כרחנו רוצים או לא רוצים, it will happen, if we like it or not. כי הקב"ה עושה זאת. שהיכולת בידו, for Hashem is making this *shidduch*, and He has the ability."

The Gemara also proves from *Navi* that *shidduchim* are made in heaven and arranged by Hashem. It states (*Shoftim* 14:4) regarding Shimshon, ואביו ואמו לא ידעו כי מזה היא "His father and mother didn't know that it was from Hashem."

Also, in *Kesuvim* it states (*Mishlei* 19:14), בית והון נחלת אבות, "A house and wealth are the parents' inheritance, but an intelligent woman is from Hashem."

With these proofs from *Chumash*, *Navi*, and *Kesuvim* the Gemara attests that *shidduchim* are from Hashem.

The question is, isn't everything from Hashem? So why does the Gemara specifically mention *shidduchim*?

The Chazon Ish's *zt'l* answered that the Gemara teaches us that the *hashgachah pratis* seen by *shidduchim* surpasses the general *hashgachah pratis*. Generally, Hakadosh Baruch Hu leads the world under a cloak of *teva*, nature, but when it comes to *shidduchim*, Hashem's hand is clearly evident. If you want to find Hashem in this world, analyze what happens by *shidduchim*, and you will be amazed at the

revealed *hashgachah pratis* you will discover.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* teaches:

When it comes to *shidduchim*, people seek different things. Some look for *yichus*. For some, the primary criteria are good looks. And others seek money in *shidduchim*.

Usually, people get what they look for. They think that they got their desires because they searched for them.

The Gemara we mentioned above proves that it isn't so. Whether you sought *yichus*, good looks, or wealth, the *shidduch* happened because it was Hashem's plan.

Avraham instructed Eliezer to find a bride for Yitzchak from his family, etc. The primary criterion was *yichus*. And, indeed, Rivkah, who is from Avraham's family, married Yitzchak. But don't think they found *yichus* because they looked for it. The



Torah tells us מה' יצא הדבר the *shidduch* happened because Hashem wanted it to happen.

Shimshon married a beautiful woman. But, once again, the *Navi* clarifies that he married the woman Hashem had destined for him. It wasn't because of his efforts. As it states, ואביו ואמו לא ידעו כי מה' היא "His father and his mother didn't know that it was from Hashem."

And for those who seek wealth and end up marrying someone wealthy, the *pasuk*

in *Kesuvim* reminds us that it happened because that was Hashem's will. As it states (*Mishlei* 19:14), בית והון, נחלת אבות ומה' אשה משכלת, "A house and wealth are the parent's inheritance, but an intelligent woman is from Hashem."

What does Hashem do if a *shidduch* is *bashert*, decreed forty days before the child's formation in the womb, but over time, the boy and girl become very different from one another? How does the *shidduch* transpire then?<sup>1</sup>

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1. At the top of the *shtar tana'im* it states, ויפק רצון מה', which can be translated: "Hashem took away their desire..." Because people search for *shidduchim* with a plan in mind of whom they want to marry. If their plan doesn't fit with Hashem's plan, Hashem will ויפק רצון, take away the person's preferences for a moment, have the person have a change of heart and agree to something that he generally wouldn't have.

For the first *shidduch* of history, Hashem put Adam to sleep to create Chavah. Having Adam asleep implies that to carry out a *shidduch*, sometimes the person's plans and ideas must be put to sleep. Only then can the *shidduch* occur.

The Pnei Menachem said to a father who regretted a *shidduch* he made, "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

Such an episode happened to a chassid of the Imrei Emes *zt'l*.

A poor chassid constantly requested that the Imrei Emes *zt'l* of Gur bless him with wealth. The Imrei Emes didn't want to give him that *brachah*, but since this man kept on insisting, the Imrei Emes obliged. He blessed him, and the words of the *tzaddik* took effect. He became rich.

Shortly after he became rich, his eighteen-year-old son was involved in an accident, thereby injuring his feet. Due to the injury, the only fitting *shidduch* the

boy could find was a girl from a poor family.

The father came to the Imrei Emes and lamented that he had to settle for a poor *shidduch* and that he didn't do a wealthy, prestigious *shidduch*, as he had hoped for.

The Imrei Emes told him, "Forty days before your son was formed in the womb, a *bas kol* announced that his *shidduch* should be this girl from this poor family. At that time, the *shidduch* was very fitting because both your son and the girl came from poor families. But you insisted that you want wealth, and

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happened to you. This *shidduch* was destined to be, so Hashem took away your *sechel* for a while. You should be thankful that Hashem gave you back your *sechel*. Would you prefer to remain without your common sense forever?"

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

Hashem endows the parents with a good feeling, so they feel that they made the *shidduch*. But really, Hashem makes *shidduchim* Himself.

indeed, that's what happened. Nevertheless, the *shidduch* that was *bashert* and decreed for your son had to take place. You wouldn't agree to it if it weren't for the accident; therefore, it had to occur."<sup>2</sup>

The Midrash states:

A queen asked Reb Yosi ben Chalafta, "How long did it take Hashem to create the world?"

"Six days."

"And from then until now, what does Hashem do?"

"He makes *shidduchim*."

This Midrash is well known, but there is another version (*girsah*) to it. It says

that Reb Yosi ben Chalafta told the queen that from the time of Creation until today, "Hashem is making ladders. He raises some and lowers others. As it states (*Tehillim* 75:8), כי אלקים שופט זה ישפיל וזה ירים, "Hashem is the judge, He lowers this one and raises another one."

We can explain that both statements are the same. Hashem makes *shidduchim*, but to enable the *shidduchim* to occur, Hashem sometimes needs to raise the poor and make them wealthy, or He needs to lower the rich and make them poor. Because only that way will the destined *shidduchim* occur.

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2. Obviously, a preferable solution is if the girl would become wealthy. This is hinted in *Kesubos* (48.), עולה עמו ואינו יורדת עמו, "The wife rises up to the level of her husband, but she shouldn't go down to his level."

This can also explained, *bederech tzachus*, why people say, "The *shidduch* should be עולה יפה." The hint is that if the boy and girl who are *bashert* to marry each other aren't on the same level, it should be that the one lower should go up, rather than the higher one go down.



Yaakov Avinu saw a ladder in his dream while en route to Charan to find a *shidduch* for himself. This is because ladders symbolize *shidduchim*, as Hashem raises some and lowers others to bring them to fruition.

The Sefer Chassidim (216) teaches that at times we see a *reshaim* doing *shidduchim* with *tzaddikim*. They merited making these good *shidduchim* because they had righteous ancestors or because people embarrassed them. Hashem makes these *resha'im* wealthy because otherwise, the *tzaddikim* wouldn't agree to be *meshadech* with them.

The Resha'sh (Reb Shalom Shtershon) *zt'l* ran a moneylending *gemach*, and he was cautious about marking every transaction down. But one day, the Reshash took out a Gemara from the bookcase, and he found an envelope filled with money inside. He immediately recalled an incident that occurred.

Someone returned a loan, and the Reshash, so engrossed in his studies, accidentally left the money in the Gemara and forgot to mark that the debt was paid up.

The Reshash immediately contacted the man who paid back the loan and said, "Now I remember that you told the truth. You did pay back the debt. I was wrong for suspecting you, and I apologize. Please forgive me."

The man replied, "Your apologies don't help me because my reputation was ruined. People say that I tried to steal money from the *gemach*. One of my sons ran away from Vilna, because he was so embarrassed."

The Reshash replied, "I'll tell everyone that it was my mistake."

The man wasn't satisfied with that, either. "They'll say that the *rav* is just saying so to help me, but they will still suspect me."

The Reshash said, "Then we'll do the following: I have a daughter, and you have a son. We will be *meshadech*, and then everyone will believe your innocence."

And that's what happened.

According to the world's natural laws, it wasn't conceivable that the renowned Reshash would make a *shidduch* with this person. But the *shidduch* was meant to be, and therefore Hashem arranged it so that it would happen.

Here's a recent story:

There was an older *bachur* who was about to get engaged to an older girl. The boy and his family came to the girl's city for Shabbos and stayed in a hotel. The *vort* would be motzei Shabbos, and then the *shidduch* would be announced and become official.

On Friday afternoon, the mother of the *bachur* had second thoughts. She

explained that the girl was a few years older than her son. She knew that before, but now she was concerned about it.

Secondly, the girl had older siblings who weren't engaged yet. "I know that they will give her permission to marry before them, but there might be *hakpados* and bad feelings, and I don't want our son to marry under those conditions."

The girl didn't know about it. She was expecting to get engaged motzei Shabbos, but the boy's family considered calling the *shidduch* off.

What did Hakadosh Baruch Hu do?

Friday night, her husband brought home from the beis medresh a "Torah sheet," a *divrei Torah* leaflet. The Torah sheet addressed precisely the two issues the mother was concerned about. The writer eloquently explained that a girl being older than a boy isn't a reason to stop a

*shidduch*. And older single siblings are also not a valid reason to stop a *shidduch*.

Motzei Shabbos was the *vort*. The *kallah* didn't even know that the *shidduch* almost fell through and that it was saved with *siyata dishmaya* over Shabbos.

### **Sarah's Demise**

Rashi (23:2) writes, נסמכה מיתת שרה לעקידת יצחק, לפי שעל ידי בשורת העקידה, שנודמן בנה לשחיטה וכמעט שלא נשחט, פרחו נשמותה ממה, ומתה, "Sarah's death is written near the *akeidas Yitzchak* because she was told about the *akeidah* – that her son was brought to be slaughtered and was almost slaughtered – which caused her *neshamah* to depart from her and she died."

According to one Midrash, it was the Satan who informed Sarah about *akeidas Yitzchak*.

Some say Sarah heard that her son was saved, but nevertheless, she died from shock. As the Maharal explains, "It is the way of

people to be frightened when they hear that something like this *almost* happened."

Others say Sarah thought Yitzchak was slaughtered, and she died from sorrow.

Either way, it seems that she would have lived longer if it weren't for the *akeidah*.

But is that so?

The first *pasuk* of the *parashah* tells us that Sarah lived 127 years, and the Midrash (58:1) explains that she lived a complete life. Not one day was missing from the lifespan that was destined for her.

It states (Tehillim 37:18), יודע ה' ימי תמימים, "Hashem knows the days of the perfect," and the Midrash says, "Just as *tzaddikim* are תמימים (perfect), so are their days תמימים, perfect, complete." The Yefei Toar (commentary on Midrash) explains, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu sits and fills the years of *tzaddikim*. Every

day and every month are given to them. As Chazal (*Kiddushin* 38.) tell us that from the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 23:26), *את מספר ימיו אמלא*, 'I will fill the days of your life.'

So why does Rashi say she was *niftarah* because of the news of the *akeidah*?

The answer is, both happened at the same time. She heard about the *akeidah* on the day and time that she was destined to leave this world.

Let this be a lesson in Hashem's *hashgachah*. Sometimes we think, "This caused it" or "That caused it," and we forget that regardless of what caused it, it occurred because this was Hashem's will and plan.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* had a brother who was a *rav*, and when he married, his wife's elderly parents lived with them in their home. They needed someone to help them, so they lived in their daughter and son-in-law's home right after the

*chasunah*. (This arrangement isn't always recommended for young couples. Nevertheless, that is what happened with this couple).

It worked well for many years, but then one of the Auerbach children wasn't doing well. One wise *mechanech* told them that the son wasn't receiving sufficient attention from his parents and that this was the root of the hardships the child was enduring.

The parents agreed that this was the primary problem, so they placed the elderly father in a nursing home.

(By this time, the mother wasn't alive anymore.)

Four months later, the elderly father was *niftar*.

His daughter couldn't forgive herself for bringing her elderly father to the nursing home. She was convinced that had they kept him home he would have lived longer. For a long time, she suffered from this guilty conscience.

One day, her husband showed her a picture of the Chazon Ish *zt'l*, and she fainted. (This was in the era when photos were less common, and she never saw a picture of the Chazon Ish before.) When she woke up, she said, "I once saw my father in the dream, flanked by two distinguished rabbanim, and my father told me, 'Don't be anguished over my death, because I died when it was time for me to go.' I never knew who these two rabbanim were, but now I know that one of them was the Chazon Ish *zt'l*."

The lesson: People are *niftar* when the time comes. Circumstances can bring about their death, *r'l*, but ultimately, it was Hashem's plan. This is what happened to Sarah Imeinu. She was *niftarah* when someone told her about the *akeidah*, but that all happened precisely at the time she was destined to leave the world.

*Akeidas Yitzchak* begins with (*Bereishis* 22:1), ויהי אחר, the *akeidah* took

place "after these words." After which words?

Rashi writes, "After the Satan's words."

Because on the day Yitzchak was weaned, at two years old, Avraham made a large feast. As it states (*Bereishis* 21:8), ויעש אברהם, מושתה גדול ביום הגמל את יצחק, "Avraham made a great feast the day Yitzchak was weaned." He invited many distinguished guests but didn't bring a *korban* to Hashem. The Satan said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Avraham didn't sacrifice even one ox or one ram for You at this party."

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied, "For who did Avraham make this party? He made it for his son, Yitzchak. Even if I asked Avraham to sacrifice Yitzchak before Me, he wouldn't hesitate."

Hashem wanted to prove this to the Satan, therefore, אחר הדברים האלה, after that conversation with the Satan, Hashem tested

Avraham and told him to sacrifice Yitzchak.

Based on this information, we would assume that *akeidas Yitzchak* would have been soon after Avraham made his celebration for Yitzchak, when Yitzchak was weaned.

However, *akeidas Yitzchak* took place when Yitzchak was thirty-seven years old, which is thirty-five years later! Why was this test postponed for so long?

Reb Yehudah Asad *zt'l* answers that Sarah was destined to die as soon as she heard about the *akeidah*, therefore, the *akeidah* was postponed for thirty-five years, when it was time for Sarah to leave the world.

Rashi (23:2) asks, למה נסמכה, מיתת שרה לעקידת יצחק, "Why does Sarah's death follow *akeidas Yitzchak*?" Reb

Yehudah Asad explains that Rashi is asking, "Why was *akeidas Yitzchak* so late? It should have been thirty-five years earlier when the Satan challenged Avraham's righteousness?

Rashi answers, לפי שעל ידי בשורת העקידה... פרחת נשמתה ממנה ומתה, "It's because the information of the *akeidah*... caused Sarah's soul to leave her." Therefore, the *akeidah* couldn't be earlier, as it wasn't yet time for Sarah to leave the world.

### "The Life of Sarah"

Rashi (23:1) writes, כולן שוין, לטובה, all of Sarah's years were good.

Were they all good? It doesn't seem so. She was barren for ninety years, and she and Avraham were poor for the first seventy-five years of their life.<sup>3</sup>

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3. To prove that they were poor, see Rashi [*Bereishis* 13:3], that they didn't have money to pay for the hotels where they stayed, and when they returned from Mitzrayim they paid those debts.



Why do we say that she had a good life and that כולן שוין לטובה, that they were all good?!

The answer is, Sarah considered her life good. No matter what she went through, she found the good in every situation, and she was happy with her fate.

One year, Shabbos *parashas Chayei Sarah*, the Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* (Slonim) couldn't stop speaking about this *Rashi*. He shouted, ס'איז איר שטענדיג גוט געווען, "Life was always good for Sarah!" What an outlook! What a way to look at life!

The first word of the *parashah*, ויהי, can be read forwards or backward. The Chida (*P'nei Dovid*) explains that even days that seemed backward and negative, Sarah considered them good. For her, כולן שוין לטובה, every day of her life was good.

It states (*Tehillim* 16:8), שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד, and the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* (*Keser Shem*

*Tov*) explains, "שויתי" comes from the word השתוות, the same, or equal. Whatever happens, it should be the same for you. Whether people praise you or disgrace you, whether you eat delicacies or simple food... Whatever happens to you, say, 'If it is good in Hashem's eyes [it is good for me, too]' To live with this attitude is a great *madreigah*."

And that was Sarah Imeinu's level. As *Rashi* writes, כולן שוין לטובה, she considered all of her years good.

Avraham was the same. Every day of his life was good.

Towards the end of the *parashah*, it states (*Bereishis* 25:8), ויגוע וימת אברהם בשיבה טובה, זקן ושבע, "Avraham was *niftar* at a good old age, old and satisfied."

A key word here is שבע, satisfied. He died content with his lot. The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains:

"This *pasuk* is teaching us Avraham's good *middos*. He left this world fulfilled. He didn't need more. As it states about Dovid HaMelech (*Tehillim* 21:3), תָּמַת לִבּוֹ נָתַתָּה לוֹ, 'You gave him the desires of his heart.' Dovid had everything he wanted; he didn't want more. This is unlike most people, as it states (*Koheles* 5:9), אוֹהֵב כֶּסֶף לֹא יִשְׁבַּע כֶּסֶף, 'one who desires money will never have enough money.' And Chazal (*Koheles Rabba* 1:32) say, 'When a person leaves the world, he doesn't attain half of his desires. If he has one hundred, he wants two hundred. If he has two hundred, he wants four hundred.'" But Avraham was זָקֵן וְשָׂבַע יָמִים "old and satisfied." He didn't lack anything. He was satisfied and happy with what he had.

The Sfas Emes and several other *meforshim* say that when the Mishnah (*Avos* 4:1) states, אִיזְהוּ עֹשֵׂי הַשְּׂמֵחַ בְּחֶלְקוֹ, "Who is wealthy? He who is satisfied with his portion," refers to one's

spiritual portion, too. Although one must always yearn for more spirituality, we should simultaneously feel satisfied and happy with whatever mitzvos and spiritual achievements we have accomplished because even if it is a little, it is an enormous treasure.

Perhaps we can say that when the Torah tells us that Avraham was *niftar* זָקֵן וְשָׂבַע, satisfied with his portion, this means he was satisfied with his spiritual accomplishments, too. He left the world satisfied with his lot - material and spiritual - and that is a great level that few attain.

### How to be Happy with your Portion

An approach to help us accept hardships is to recognize that these challenging moments, themselves, are given to us for our benefit.

We'll express this with a historical event:

In Libya, before World War Two, the wealthier Yidden lived in Tripoli, and outside the city lived the poor Yidden in underground caves. They had rooms, apartments, but it was all carved out from rock. Sunlight was minimal; only what shone through the stairwell and the floors were made from dirt. They were jealous of their fellow Jews who lived in better conditions in Tripoli.

But then the Nazis arrived in Libya. The Yidden in Tripoli were brought to Bergen-Belson and other concentration camps, while the people living underground were saved and eventually came to Eretz Yisrael. (They were fewer than the Yidden in the large city of Tripoli, and the Nazis couldn't expend the effort to ship them to the camps.)

Some of these "cave" Yidden are still alive. They

look back and realize how fortunate they were to live in those caves. Had they lived in a nice, bright house in Tripoli, they probably wouldn't be alive today.

Many people look back at their lives and discover that the hardships they went through were really for their benefit.

Thus, the Torah tells us, ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל. In Avraham's old age, he looked back, and he understood that every stage of his life was good.

It states (Iyov 36:3), אשא דעי, למרחוק ולפועלי אתון צדק,<sup>4</sup> The Midrash says that this *pasuk* is a commentary on the *pasuk* (24:1), ואברהם זקן בא בימים, וה' ברך את אברהם בכל, "Avraham was old, well in on years, and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything."

What is the connection between these two *pesukim*?

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4. The Metzudas Dovid translates, "I will say my thoughts loudly so many will hear, and I will tell the righteousness of my Creator."

*Drashos Rabbeinu Yosef Nechemyah* (p.450) explains that אֵשׁ דַּעֲ לַמֶּרְחֹק means I look towards the future. Right now, things don't seem good. But I take in the greater picture. I try to understand what will come from it in the future. And then לַפְּעֻלִּי, for Hashem who does everything, אֵתָּן צֶדֶק, I will say that it is all good. This was Avraham's way, to recognize that ה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם, everything is a blessing.

As it states (*Tehillim* 147:8), הַמְכַסֶּה שָׁמַיִם בַּעֲבֻיִם הַמְכִּין לָאָרֶץ מָטָר, "Hashem covers the heavens with clouds, and He prepares rain for the earth." We see the dark, rainclouds, the problems; everything appears negative. But the dark clouds will turn to rain. Similarly, all the hardships we endure will yet become good for us one day.

Rebbe Shimon Yareslover *zt'l* was niftar at age 91 (which was extremely old in his days). People asked

him, "How did you merit to live so long?"

He replied, "It's because I never asked questions."

He explained, "When a person has questions on the way Hashem leads the world, and he asks, 'Why is Hashem doing this to me?' Heaven will tell him, 'Come up to heaven, and you will see how everything is for the good.' I, however, never ask questions, so I wasn't called up to heaven to receive answers. Therefore, I was able to live long" (*Ohel Shimon* p.17).

The Binyan Dovid (47, written by Reb Dov Berish Meizels of Uhel *zt'l*) says that this is the meaning of the *pasuk* וַאֲבִרָהּ זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים, "Avraham was old, well in on years." How did he merit living so long? It's because he never asked questions. As it states, וְה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל (ה'). To his mind, everything (בְּכָל) was a blessing (ה'). And since

he never asked questions,  
he lived long.<sup>5</sup>

The Midrash states that  
בכל, "everything" refers to  
the mitzvah of *succah*.

What is the Midrash  
teaching us? Why is *succah*  
considered having  
everything?

The Chozeh of Lublin  
(*Avnei Zikoron* 662) *zt'l* explains  
that *succah* is our reminder  
that we can live in a hut,  
too, and it will be fine.  
Nothing will happen to us.  
Life isn't about gathering  
wealth, and luxuries aren't  
as necessary as what we  
make them to be. When we  
know that, we have הכל,  
everything. We are satisfied  
with our portion – no  
matter how grand it is.

As Chazal tell us, איזהו  
עשיר השמח בחלקו, "Who is  
wealthy? He who is satisfied  
with his lot."

Rebbe Yonoson Eibshitz  
(6:1) writes, "Those who fear  
Hashem won't only have  
*succos* during the *yom tov*  
Succos. The entire year they  
will remember that life is  
temporary." And with this  
outlook, they will be happy  
with their portion.

There's a beautiful  
explanation from the  
Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (ד"ה ויגוע)  
that teaches us how to be  
happy with our lot even in  
hard times.

The Chasam Sofer  
explains that the happiest  
people are those who went  
through hardships. For  
example, a poor person

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5. Chazal (*Brachos* 13:) say, כל המאריך באחד מאריכין לו ימיו ושנותיו. Literally,  
this means whoever says a long אחד by the Shema will live long.  
But it can also mean, כל המאריך באחד, one who focuses on how  
everything comes from the one Hashem, מאריכין לו ימיו ושנותיו, he will  
live long.

Tosfos writes that the final letters of אמן זקן בא spell אמ"ן because  
whoever answers amen will live long.

who became wealthy will enjoy his wealth much more than someone who was wealthy his entire life. Also, an ill person who became well enjoys good health more than someone who was always healthy. Therefore, when a person goes through hard times, he must know that goodness is concealed there. Because these difficult times will enable him to rejoice with the salvation that will follow.

We quote the Chasam Sofer: "It is impossible to fully appreciate good if you didn't first experience bad. The bad helps you recognize the sweetness of the good. This is what happened to Avraham, too. He was poor, he was ill, and then ה' ברך את אברהם בכל, Hashem blessed Avraham with everything: great wealth, etc." Avraham was able to appreciate the good because he experienced how it is when these goods were lacking."

Therefore, it states, ואברהם זקן בא בימים, the Chasam Sofer

explains, in Avraham's older years he saw, וה' ברך את אברהם בכל, that his entire life was a blessing. Because the hard times enabled him to appreciate the good Hashem gave him later on in his life.

Chazal (*Bava Basra* 16:) say, "A precious stone hung from Avraham's neck, and when an ill person saw it, he was immediately healed. When Avraham was *niftar*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu put this stone in the sun."

This Gemara is literal, but the Chasam Sofer also explains this Gemara allegorically. The "good stone" refers to the lesson people learned when they looked at Avraham Avinu. They saw a person who suffered illness and poverty, but he became healthy and wealthy after going in Hashem's ways. They realized that if they too follow in Hashem's ways, life will become good for them too. And not only that, but when their life becomes good, all the past hardships will be for their



benefit, as it will enable them to appreciate the good they have.

When Avraham was *niftar*, there was no one in the world who could teach this lesson, so Hashem placed the lesson in the sun. The explanation is as follows: Chazal (*Zohar, Tazria* 47:) say that people appreciate light because they know about darkness. If it weren't for darkness, we wouldn't appreciate the good light. Therefore, the sun encourages everyone. The poor and the ill see the sun, and realize that all their suffering can serve a good purpose; because when they finally become healthy and prosperous, their hardships will accentuate the good they will receive in the future. As the Chasam Sofer writes, "It will be bright, and then, the good will be multiplied because of the days of darkness that preceded it."

### ***Bitachon***

The Meor Einayim was a *yasom* and was raised in

his aunt and uncle's home. Unfortunately, his aunt and uncle didn't treat him as an equal to their own children. One morning, his aunt served toast and butter to her children, and to the young Reb Nochum, she gave just toast. Reb Nochum complained (he was a young child), and his aunt locked him in a room as a punishment. He saw a bucket and thought it was filled with butter. He smeared it on his bread, but then he discovered that it was cement. He said he learned from this episode that when one takes what isn't his, he loses what is his!

You gain more when you have patience and trust in Hashem.

The Gemara discusses two people who saw a lost object. One pounced on it, and one gently picked it up. The item belongs to the one who gently picked it up (because pouncing doesn't qualify for a *kinyan*).

The Kotzker explained that the problem with the one who pounced on the object is that he tried too hard. This isn't the right way to go about earning a living. It must be done with *bitachon*, patience, joy, and *emunah*.

The money-hungry Efron asked Avraham to pay four hundred shekalim to purchase Maaras HaMachpeilah, and Efron felt that he got a good deal. However, the Midrash (*Rabba* 58:7) writes about him as follows (*Mishlei* 28:22), נבהל להון איש רע עין ולא ידע, "The one who is overeager for wealth has a bad eye. He doesn't know that he is lacking."

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* explains that if Efron wasn't so hungry for money, he would have received more. Avraham would have given him one thousand shekalim.

Avraham received a thousand shekalim from Avimelech, as it states (*Bereishis* 20:16), הנה נתתיך לאחיד,

אלף כסף. Avraham didn't want to use the money from such a *rasha*, and he put it aside to buy a burial plot. Efron asked for four hundred silver coins, so Avraham gave him that amount, but Avraham would have given him a thousand if he hadn't asked for anything.

The hint is that several times it states עפרון, with a ו"ו, but when Avraham paid the four hundred shekalim it states (23:16), וישקול אברהם לעפרון את הכסף... ארבע מאות שקל כסף, "Avraham paid Efron...four hundred silver coins." This time it states עפרון without a ו"ו, because ו"ו is *gematriya* six, and Efron lost six hundred shekalim. (He received only four hundred shekalim, and not a thousand.)

The Mishnah (*Peah* 8:9, following the Tosfos Yom Tov's commentary) teaches that when a poor person refuses to receive tzedakah, he is rewarded with long life, wealth, and is told that there will yet come a time

when he will be able to support others.

It is worthy and admirable when one doesn't take tzedakah; rather, he trusts Hashem.

It states (*Mishlei* 15:27), שונא מתנות יחיה, those who refuse to receive gifts will live.

The Tur (*Choshen Mishpat* 249) explains that it is a *middas chassidus*, a righteous approach, not to accept gifts from anyone. Instead, trust that Hashem will give you all your needs. For doing so, יחיה, you will live long.

The Prishah explains, "Usually, people desire presents because they think the gifts will grant them life (food) for them and their families. So, we tell them, שונא מתנות יחיה, hate gifts. Instead, have *bitachon* that Hashem will help you, and then Hashem will grant you life."

When it comes to marrying off children, many people are worried: "How will we manage to

put together so much money? The *chasunah* expenses and the dowry are so expensive!"

This isn't a new problem. It was around for generations. But Hashem helps. Gird yourself with *bitachon*, and see the wonders Hashem will do for you.

Once, a *shidduch* was almost finalized, but the girl's father said he wouldn't agree to the *shidduch* before the boy's father promised four hundred liras to the couple as a dowry.

The boy's father wasn't sure he could afford it.

The boy's father spoke with Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* and told him about his worries. Reb Chaim Brim said, "Let's ask the Chazon Ish together."

The father explained to the Chazon Ish that he was afraid he might not be able to keep this promise. The Chazon Ish *zt'l* replied, "We see that if one tries, Hashem helps."

The Chazon Ish asked for his name so that he could pray for him.

The end of the story was that the father was able to pay up the entire sum without any hardships at all (*Maaseh Ish*, vol.2 p.160).

Once, two *mechutanim* came to the Chazon Ish *zt'l*. Each of them argued that the other one should pay the lion's share of their children's upcoming *chasunah*.

When they left, the Chazon Ish said to his relative, Reb Shmaryahu Greineman *zt'l*, "Do you know what they were arguing about? They were debating who should receive Hashem's *brachos*. Each one said the other one should receive Hashem's *brachos*..." Because Hashem blesses and helps those who are obligated to pay for a *chasunah*.

Someone came to Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* and said, "My daughter was recently engaged to be married. But I discovered

that when the boy was a child, he was deathly ill with a serious disease."

"So what's your question?" Reb Shlomo Zalman asked. "Do you want to break off the *shidduch* because of that?"

"No. Doctors say 99% the illness won't return."

"So what's your question?"

"It's regarding the money. I promised a lot of money to the couple. If I knew the boy had an illness with a 1% chance of recurring, I wouldn't promise so much money."

Reb Shlomo Zalman considered this to be a very crooked way of thinking. So, uncharacteristically, Reb Shlomo Zalman took a broom and shooed the man out of his house. "Get out of my house! Get out of my house!" With his correct perception of right and wrong, Reb Shlomo Zalman couldn't bear to hear this person's crookedness.

## Hashem is Watching

It states (24:62), וַיִּצְחַק בָּא, מְבוֹא לְחַי רֹאִי. Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l explained, וַיִּצְחַק, laughter, and happiness, בָּא, comes מְבוֹא לְחַי רֹאִי, when one believes that the חַי, living Hashem, רֹאִי, sees him. Because when one believes and realizes that Hashem is always watching him and taking care of him, he will be happy.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim explains the *pasuk* as follows: יִצְחַק represents fear of Hashem. בָּא, fear of Hashem comes מְבוֹא לְחַי רֹאִי, when one believes and knows that Hashem is always watching over him.

About a year ago, a girl was working in a small supermarket. Part of her job was to return all the items taken off the shelves and placed somewhere else in the store. She did this part of the job only after store hours.

The first day on the job, she saw that her boss was

also in the store after closing. She thought that it was a one-time thing. But the next day, when her boss was again in the store after closing hours, she came home and told her father that she didn't want to work there anymore.

According to halachah, there wasn't an actual *issur yichud* there, but she didn't feel comfortable and felt it was a breach in *tznius*.

Some days later, she met a woman who also worked in the store, who asked her why she left. She told her the reason. That woman was impressed by her *yiras Shamayim*, and she went home and told her parents, "About a half-year-ago, a *shidduch* was *redt* for our sister with a certain *bachur*, but you turned it down because you got the impression that the *yiras Shamayim* in that home wasn't so high. I just met the sister of that *bachur*. She left her job because of *tznius*! So you see, the family has a lot of *yiras Shamayim*."

The parents checked into it once again, and the *shidduch* was finalized.

The lesson is, as we say in *Baruch She'amar*, Hashem is *משלם שכר טוב ליראיו*, gives a good reward for those who fear Him.

A Lubavitcher chassid escaped World War Two by going to Shanghai and then on to Montreal, Canada. Every day he davened for a very long time. Once, he kept repeating over and over again, the *pasuk* from Ashrei *מלכותך מלכות כל עולמים וממשלתך בכל דור ודור*, "Your Kingship is in all worlds, and Your reign is in every generation." Someone asked him why he is saying this *pasuk* so many times, why he doesn't just move on with the tefillah. He replied, "It's good for me here, why should I move on?"

We can also say, "How good it is when one remembers *מלכותך מלכות כל עולמים*, that Hashem is everywhere, and His

kingship rules over everything.

## Most Precious Commodity

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 58:3) states, "Reb Akiva was teaching Torah and saw that his students were falling asleep. To awaken them, he asked, "Why did Esther rule over 127 countries? It's because her ancestor Sarah lived 127 years."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that this awakened his students because it taught them to utilize each minute of life to its fullest. Had Sarah, *chas veshalom*, wasted a year of her life, her descendent, Esther, wouldn't have ruled over the 127 countries.

The Chidushei HaRim elaborates, "Each week of Sarah's life granted Esther a city. Each hour granted Esther a town worth thousands. This means that when one oversleeps, he's losing thousands of rubles!" This jolted Reb Akiva's students awake, for they



became aware of what they can earn with time because there's no greater loss than lost time.

About Avraham it states (24:1), ואברהם זקן בא בימים, "Avraham was old, he came with his days..." This also indicates that he utilized every moment of his life for *avodas Hashem*. He came with all his days.

In a letter, the Yismach Moshe zt'l, encouraged his son to be cautious not to waste time. He writes, למען ה', For Hashem's sake, distance yourself from *batalah*, idleness, as distant as a shot arrow... If a person threw a package of money into the sea, people would consider him insane. Even more insane is someone who throws a drop of his time away and engages in idle talk."

Similarly, the Yaaras Dvash (2:10) writes, "No, my sons. It's not good that we waste precious time with foolish things that have no value... At night, they waste their time, and

when the sun rises, they roll over from side to side and miss the last *zeman tefillah*. One sin leads on to the next."

In another location, the Yaaras Dvash (1:4) writes, "My brothers, please, awaken from your sleep. Don't waste precious time with the foolishness of the world, such as idle talk, discussing wars (who will win and who will lose), hunting, or other forms of emptiness. These are deeds fitting for princes, but why should you waste precious time on them? It's very foolish to exchange the real world for a world of falsehood. How can one waste 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 know that he won't accept the money, regardless of its large quantity. So, if a day of life is so precious to you, how do you waste a day with idleness? He is the שוטה, foo, stated in Chazal (*Chagigah* 4) who loses

everything that's given to him. Because time is a precious gift from Hashem; with time one can know Hashem, attain perfection, and correct his deeds. With time one can attain the eternal world, because all perfection is attained specifically in this world."

People tell the following *mashal*:

Someone came to a cemetery and started reading the headstones, "Here lies Reb Shimon ben Dovid. He lived for two years." Most *matzeivos* stated that the *niftar* lived one or two years. The oldest among them was the *matzeivah* of the rav of the town. His headstone read, "Here lies the rav of our city... He was ten years old when he died."

"What's this all about?" he wondered. "Was there an epidemic in the city, and everyone died young? And how could it be that the rav of the city was only ten years old?"

He came into town and asked the wise men for an explanation. They told him, "In this city, we don't write when a person died; we write the number of years he *lived*. Only the hours used for Torah, *tefillah*, and mitzvos are considered time living. We count the amount of hours he designated and devoted for Torah and *tefillah*, and that's what we write on the headstone. Sometimes, a long life adds up to just about a year."

The visitor didn't understand. "Why do you say that he only lived for a year? He lived much longer."

The wise men of the town saw that they must elaborate some more, so they explained: "*Chazal* (*Brachos* 18:) say, רשעים בחייהם, קרואים מתים, '*Resha'im* are called dead, even when they are alive.' True, they are living, but they are as good as the dead because they aren't using their time productively for Torah and mitzvos. Regarding

learning and keeping Torah it states (*Mishlei* 9:11), כי בי ירבו, 'With me, you will live long.' Ultimately, only moments used for Hashem are called living."

The Gemara (*Yoma* 86:) teaches, גדולה תשובה שמארכת ימיו, "Teshuvah is great, for it lengthens the lifespan of man." The Tzlach explains that *teshuvah* doesn't add more years to a person's life; *teshuvah* resurrects and fixes all the dead days – days that weren't considered life. Before one does *teshuvah* he has many dead days, which aren't counted as part of his life. When one does *teshuvah* out of love (תשובה מאהבה) his sins become mitzvos, and his past days are resurrected and are now counted as part of his life. This is how *teshuvah* "lengthens the lifespan of man."<sup>6</sup>

### **Gemilus Chasadim**

Eliezer set a test to determine who is a fitting wife for Yitzchak. He will ask for a sip of water. If the maiden replies (24:14), 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 to Eliezer, she said, 'I will also draw for your camels until they finish drinking.'" She didn't mention the camels until Eliezer finished drinking. Why?

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

The Or HaChaim (24:18) explains that Rivkah acted with greater piety than Eliezer was testing for. "Rivkah didn't tell Eliezer immediately that she will give water to his camels, and this demonstrates her generosity. The *tzaddekes* figured that if she told Eliezer right away that she will draw water for his camels too, he might drink his water very quickly [and he might drink less than he needed to quench his thirst], because he knows that Rivkah still has a lot of work to do, to give water to all the camels. Rivkah didn't tell Eliezer her plans, so that he would drink at his own pace, as much as he needed. After he finished drinking, she said, 'I will draw for your camels.'

The Shlah found in the *parshah* another remarkable facet of Rivkah's courtesy and kindness. After Eliezer finished drinking, it states (24:20), ותמהר ותער כדה אל השקת, "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 was left in the jug, but Rivkah didn't know what she should do with it. If she pours this water for the camels, it will appear like she is comparing camels to humans, for she gives them both to drink from the same utensil. [Giving the same water to Eliezer and then to the animals might indicate that she considers Eliezer and the animals equal.] 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. Rivkah acted with wisdom. She ran and rushed, making it appear that she accidentally dropped the jug and the water spilled out due to her haste. This way Eliezer's honor was upheld."

At the beginning of this episode, Eliezer is called עבד, a slave. For example, it states (24:10, 17), ויקח העבד... וירץ,

העבד. Afterwards, Eliezer is called איש (see *pasuk* 21 and 26, וזהאיש משתאה... ויקד האיש). What caused the change?

I heard from a *talmid chacham* that the change happened when Rivkah called Eliezer אדוני, "my master." As she said (24:18), שתה אדוני, "Drink my master." Eliezer was a slave and wasn't accustomed to people addressing him with 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 way.

Rivkah wrought many miracles. For example, it states (24:67), ויביאה יצחק האהלה, שרה אמו. Rashi explains, "ויביאה האהלה", 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*,<sup>7</sup> there was a blessing in the dough, and a cloud was tied onto the tent. When she died, these miracles ceased. When Rivkah came, these returned."

The well-water came up on its own to greet her.

The Sidduro Shel Shabbos (1:4:8) adds that there was a blessing in everything Rivkah did. The Sidduro Shel Shabbos proves from the *pesukim* that Rivkah gave a drop of water to the camels and to Eliezer, and it was enough for them because there was a blessing in all her deeds.

We quote, "After the camels drank a little, they stopped drinking." This is because there was a *brachah*

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

in Rivkah's deeds. A drop of water was blessed in their bellies, and they had enough. Also it states, ותער כדה אל השוקת, that after the slave drank, the jug was still completely full, just as when she gave it to him! Also it states, ותשאב לכל גמליו, with one drawing of water, it was sufficient for all the ten camels that were with him. And this is all because there was a blessing in everything Rivkah did."

The Sidduro Shel Shabbos (1:4:11) asks, why are the miracles merely hinted to in the Torah, while her deeds of *chesed* are written in elaboration?

The Sidduro Shel Shabbos answers that the Torah elaborates on the matters we can learn from. When we are told about the miracles she performed, we don't know what we can do

to reach those levels. Therefore, there is a greater elaboration on her good deeds, which brought her to those levels.

We can also explain that the Torah elaborates on her *gemilus chasadim* and not on the miracles that happened to her because *gemilus chasadim* is the greatest praise! Rivkah wasn't chosen to be Yitzchak's wife because she performed miracles. She was chosen because of her good *middos*.<sup>8</sup> As Targum Yonoson (24:67) writes, ורחמה בגין דחמא עובדה, "Yitzchak דתקנן כעובדי אמייה loved Rivkah because he saw that her deeds were good, like the deeds of Sarah, his mother."

As Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir *zt'l* explains, "Hashem performs miracles. The good deeds

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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*.



and the good *middos* are man's part."<sup>9</sup>

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 הטי נא כדך 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 חסדים וכדאי ליכנס בביתו של אברהם, "She is fitting for Yitzchak because she performs *gemilus chasadim*. She is fitting to enter into the home of Avraham."<sup>10</sup>

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9. Several miracles took place when Eliezer sought a *shidduch* for Yitzchak. Among the miracles were: (1) קפיצת הארץ - the earth jumped for him and he traveled from Eretz Yisrael to Aram Naharayim in one day. (2) While Eliezer was still davening for the *shidduch*, Rivkah appeared. (3) The water miraculously rose up to Rivkah. (4) The *malach* exchanged the plates so Besuel would eat the poisoned food, and not Eliezer, and there are other miracles.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* says that every *shidduch* has miracles.

The Koziglover Rav *zt'l* explains that the Satan tries to prevent *shidduchim* from happening, because he is aware of the importance and the greatness of *shidduchim*. Therefore, miracles are part of the process of finding a *shidduch*, which enables us to overcome every obstacle the Satan puts forth.

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

Chazal (*Taanis* 24.) teach, כל כלה שענייה יפות כל גופה אין צריך בדיקה, when a bride has beautiful eyes, that is a sign that she is beautiful all over. The Kli Yakar asks (1) it isn't always so. Some women have beautiful eyes but are otherwise not beautiful. (2) Why does the Gemara teach us this? Beauty is an external matter, and שקר החן והבל היפי, her *yiras Shamayim* is more important. "Certainly, the Gemara is teaching us how

to check a girl's deeds. The advise is to check whether she has good eyes, which means whether she does *gemilus chasadim*. If she has a good eye towards others (she cares and helps others), she is without a doubt perfect in all of her *middos*. Chazal learned this from Eliezer, who only checked Rivkah in this attribute. If she has this attribute [doing kindness for others], she certainly possesses all other good *middos*, too."

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The Haamek Davar adds another explanation. "Avraham was very busy with all the people who came to him. One person came to ask a question about *emunah*. Another asked that Avraham should pray for 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, so he wasn't able to leave." This is the meaning of the words, ה' ברך 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 to which he devoted his entire life.