



## Avraham Avinu Sought a Wife for Yitzchak Whose Midah Was Chesed

In this week's parsha, parshas Chayei Sarah, we will examine the mission assigned to Eliezer. Avraham Avinu sent his loyal servant to find a suitable wife and life-partner for his son, Yitzchak (Bereishis 24, 1): **“ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברכ את”**—**now Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything.** Rashi comments: **The gematria of “ב'” equals “ב'”;** **since he had a son, he was obliged to find him a wife.**

The commentaries find this extremely perplexing. After all, the fact that Avraham fathered Yitzchak had already been mentioned several times in the text. Furthermore, further on, the text explicitly states (ibid. 4): **“ולקחת אשה לבני יצחק”**—**you shall take a wife for my son Yitzchak.** So, why was it necessary to also convey this fact by means of the gematria **“ב'” equals “ב'”**?

Additionally, we will explore the significance of the statement: **“And Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything”**—based on Rashi's comment on the passuk (ibid. 19, 24): **Whenever it says “זה” (“and Hashem”), it implies Him and His court.** This is explained in the Agra D'Pirka (351) in the name of the Sefer HaKaneh. As we know, the divine name **Havaya** represents “midas harachamim”—the attribute of divine mercy. Furthermore, the letter **“vav”** also represents “midas harachamim. This is taught in the Tikunei Zohar in relation to the passuk (ibid. 4, 15): **“וישם ה' לקין אות”**—**Hashem placed a sign (a letter) on Kayin, so that none that meet him might kill him.** We learn that Hashem inscribed the letter **“vav”** on Kayin's forehead to protect him with “midas harachamim.” Now, we have a well-

known principle (Pesachim 23a): **“אין ריבוי אחר ריבוי אלא למעט”**—**the function of an inclusion following an inclusion only comes to restrict.** Thus, the term **“זה”**—**“and Hashem”**—constitutes an inclusion following an inclusion; both the name **Havaya** and the letter **“vav”** represent rachamim. Hence, we learn that “midas harachamim” was restricted and was joined by “midas hadin” in the form of the heavenly court.

With this understanding, we must endeavor to explain the implication of the passuk: **“Now Avraham was old, well on in years, ‘and Hashem’ had blessed Avraham with everything.”** Since we have learned that the term **“and Hashem”** always refers to Hashem and His court, the Torah is teaching us that this mission—to find a wife for Yitzchak—required the approval of HKB”H and His court. Why, indeed, was the approval of “midas hadin” necessary?

### Eliezer Sought a Wife for Yitzchak Who Personified Chesed to Counterbalance Yitzchak's Inherent Din

To explain the matter, we will begin by introducing the comment of the Chasam Sofer concerning Eliezer's tefilah and the omen he sought. Here are the pertinent pesukim (ibid. 24, 12):

**“ויאמר ה' אלקי אדוני אברהם הקרה נא לפני היום, ועשה חסד עם אדוני אברהם, הנה אנכי נצב על עין המים ובנות אנשי העיר יוצאות לשאוב מים, והיה הנערה אשר אומר אליה, הטי נא כדך ואשתה, ואמרה שתה וגם גמליך אשקה, אותה הוכחת לעבדך ליצחק, ובה אדע כי עשית חסד עם אדוני.”**

**And he said, “Hashem, G-d of my master Avraham, may You so arrange it for me this day and do chesed with**

**my master Avraham. Behold, I stand 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 your jug so I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,' her will You have chosen for Your servant, for Yitzchak; and May I know through her that You have done chesed with my master."** Rashi comments: **She is fitting for him in that she will perform acts of kindness.**

Why did Eliezer focus specifically on "midas hachessed"? We will also endeavor to explain why both at the beginning of his entreaty and at its conclusion, Eliezer only mentions doing "**chesed with my master.**" Yet, after having the good fortune of finding Rivkah, who demonstrated her "chesed" both to him and his camels, he blesses Hashem as follows (ibid. 27): **"ויאמר ברוך ה' אלקי אדוני אברהם אשר לא עזב חסדו ואמתו—מעם אדוני—he said, "Blessed is Hashem, G-d of my master Avraham, Who has not withheld His 'chesed' and 'emes' from my master."** Here, in addition to "**chesed,**" Eliezer also mentions "**emes.**"

In keeping with what we find in all of our sacred texts, which is based on a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Terumah 175b), the Chasam Sofer explains that the three holy Avos each served Hashem with his own unique attribute—Avraham with "midas hachessed, Yitzchak with "midas hadin" ("gevurah") and Yaakov with "midas harachamim" ("Tiferes"). The latter, "Tiferes," combines the "chesed" of Avraham with the "din" of Yitzchak with a predilection for "chesed," resulting in "rachamim."

Based on this, the Chasam Sofer explains why Eliezer sought a mate for Yitzchak who epitomized "chesed." Since Yitzchak Avinu personified "midas hadin," it was imperative to find him a soulmate that would counterbalance his midah. Hence, Eliezer searched for a woman who personified "chesed." Otherwise, the world could not endure. After all, Yitzchak loved Eisav, and Rivkah loved Yaakov.

It is evident that the Chasam Sofer is attempting to reconcile Yitzchak's resolve to bestow the Berachos on Eisav rather than on Yaakov. Since his midah was "din," Yitzchak believed that one should study Torah and serve Hashem

without any need for material, earthly matters. Therefore, he figured that Eisav should rightfully receive the Berachos, since he was not preoccupied with Torah-study or spiritual matters. Thus, he would be able to support Yaakov—who dwelled in the tents of Torah—exemplifying the partnership that would exist between Yissachar and Zevulun. In parshas Toldos, the Chasam Sofer explains at length that that is the reason Eisav and Yaakov were born as twins.

Now, had Eisav actually received the Berachos, he would have destroyed the world, because he had no interest whatsoever in supporting Yaakov. On the contrary, when he returned from the field thoroughly exhausted, he requested of Yaakov (ibid. 30): **"הלעיטני נא מן האדום האדום הזה כי עייף אני"**—**give me to taste, now, some of that very red stuff; for I am exhausted.** In his worldview, there was no room or need for Torah-scholars. Rivkah, however, loved Yaakov, the pillar of Torah. Hence, she utilized her "midas hachessed" to mitigate the "din" of Yitzchak and arranged for Yitzchak to bestow the Berachos upon Yaakov. Thus, she saved the world from ultimate destruction.

This incredible insight is also presented in Tiferes Shlomo (Toldos). Here is what he writes:

**"צריך להתבונן בכוונת יצחק אבינו, שלא היה רצונו תיכף לברך את יעקב רק את עשו. אך העניין, שיצחק היה מופחד לברך את יעקב בברכת עולם הזה, כי היה ירא לכל יזוח דעתו וישמון ישורון ויבעט על ידי תאוות העולם הזה, לולי רבקה אמונו שהשכילה בחכמה ו בדעת להבין, כי גם טובת עולם הזה מסייע לאדם לעבוד הבורא בהרחבת הדעת. וזה שכתוב בפרשת חיי שרה, והיה הנערה אשר אומר אליה הטי נא כדך וגו' אותה הוכחת לעבדך ליצחק, פירוש, תהיה הוכחה והתנגדות למדתו של יצחק בחינת הפחד, רק לעורר רחמים וחסדים והשפעות טובות."**

It is crucial that we examine Yitzchak Avinu's concerns for not wanting initially to bless Yaakov. Yitzchak feared that the blessings of Olam HaZeh would distract Yaakov and have a negative effect upon him, in keeping with the words of the passuk (Devarim 32, 15): **"Yeshurun became fat and kicked,"** i.e., affluence causes people to become lax and even rebellious regarding their service of Hashem. It was only due to Rivka Imeinu's wisdom and foresight that Yaakov received the Berachos. She understood that the riches of this world can assist one in serving Hashem more completely. This applies as well to that which is written in parshas Chayei Sarah:

**“Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, ‘Please tip your jug’ . . . her will You have chosen for Your servant, for Yitzchak.”** In other words, she will be the reproof and opposition to the midah of Yitzchak; it will be her task to elicit mercy, favor and goodwill.

It appears that we can substantiate this notion with the teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Toldos 137a) that Yitzchak Avinu represents the strict, unforgiving aspect of “din”—דינא—“קשיא”; whereas Rivka Imeinu, imbued with “חוט של חסד”—a streak of chesed—represents the more lenient, forgiving aspect of “din” --“דינא רפיא”. Then the Zohar concludes: “ואי לא—לא דאיהי רפיא, לא יכיל עלמא למסבל דינא קשיא דיצחק” —if not for the fact that she was lenient, the world would not be able to withstand the harsh “din” of Yitzchak. Yitzchak’s form of “din” was too harsh and exacting; the world depended on Rivka to soften and moderate it.

**עִמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל צְרִיכִים פְּרִנְסָה Is an Acronym for צע"ף**

This wonderful explanation is also presented by the holy master, Sar Shalom of Belz, zy”a, addressing the passuk in this week’s parsha (24, 64): “ותשא רבקה את עיניה ותרא את יצחק” ותיפול מעל הגמל, ותאמר אל העבד מי האיש הלזה ההולך בשדה לקראתנו, —and Rivka raised her eyes and she saw Yitzchak; and she let herself down from the camel. And she said to the slave, “Who is that man walking in the field toward us?” And the slave said, “He is my master.” She then took the veil, and she covered herself. The difficulty here is that it is unbecoming and out of character for a righteous woman such as Rivka to inquire about a man walking in the field in this manner.

He resolves this difficulty based on the well-known fact that Yitzchak’s midah is “gevurah”—severity—referred to as the “dread of Yitzchak”—“pachad Yitzchak.” It was necessary for Yitzchak to wait for his appropriate mate until Rivka was born, so that she would be able to soften the severity of his “gevurah” with her “chesed.” Understanding this, Eliezer sought an irrefutable sign indicating that she was suitable for Yitzchak—that she epitomized “chesed.”

Hence, upon seeing Yitzchak for the first time, she was struck by his “gevurah,” “ותיפול מעל הגמל”—literally, “she fell from the camel.” For, she became intensely fearful that his

“gevurah” would overwhelm her “chesed.” This prompted her to inquire: **“Who is that man walking in the field toward us?”** In other words, who is this man approaching me, whose midah of “gevurah” is so intense that he stands in opposition to my midah of “chesed”? Eliezer replied: **“He is my master”**—he is the master of “gevurah”; he has chosen to serve the Almighty with this midah.

Therefore, to mitigate his inherent midah of “din”: **“She then took the veil, and she covered herself.”** The word meaning **“the veil”** --הצע"ף—possesses the same numerical value as the word רג"ה, meaning song of joy. She prayed to Hashem that when Yisrael would be in galus, they would soften the impact of the “din” by pouring out their song of joy to HKB”H. The Gemara (Succah 14a) explains this phenomenon as follows: “למה נמשלה תפלתן של צדיקים כעתר, לומר לך, מה עתה זה מהפך את התבואה בגורן ממקום למקום, אף תפלתן של צדיקים מהפכת דעתו.” Why are the prayers of tzaddikim compared to a pitchfork (see Bereishis 25, 21)? **Just as a pitchfork turns over the grain and tosses it from one place to another, so, too, the prayers of tzaddikim turn over the attributes of HKB”H from the attribute of anger to the attribute of mercy.**

This explanation is also brought down in the name of the great Rabbi Tzvi of Liska, zy”a, the author of Ach Pri Tevuah. However, he interprets the passuk in a slightly different manner. He sees the word צע"ף as an acronym for עִמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל—your people Yisrael require a source of income. Consequently, “ותתכס” implies that she covered up all of their transgressions, in keeping with the teaching in the Gemara (Eiruvim 41b) that galus and poverty alter a person’s judgment and cause him to violate the will of his Maker.

Let us now return to the comments of the Chasam Sofer. He suggests another reason for Eliezer’s searching for a wife personifying “chesed” for Yitzchak: **“כי ידע שהיה יצחק מדת הדין, על כן התפלל להשם יתברך שתזדמן לו אשה ממדת החסד, כדי שיצאו מבין”** He knew that Yitzchak embodied “midas hadin.” Hence, he prayed to the Blessed One to help him find a woman embodying “chesed”; so that their union would produce Yaakov personifying “emes,” a combination of “din” and “rachamim.” In this manner, he explains Eliezer’s words of gratitude to HKB”H after finding Rivkah: **“Blessed is Hashem, G-d of my master**

**Avraham, Who has not withheld His ‘chesed’ and ‘emes’ from my master.”** He mentions **“His chesed,”** because finding the appropriate mate for Yitzchak constituted a “chesed” HKB”H performed for Avraham. He mentions **“His emes,”** because the union of Yitzchak and Rivkah, “din” and “chesed,” produced Yaakov whose midah was **“emes.”**

We now have cause to rejoice. This illuminates for us the opening passuk of the passage: **“ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך—את אברהם בכל—now Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything.** We learned above that the term **“וה'”—and Hashem—**refers to Hashem and His court. This indicates that not only did Avraham serve Hashem with “midas hachessed,” but he also merited transforming “midas hadin” into “midas hachessed.” In other words, the heavenly court acquiesced to “midas hachessed.” Therefore, the time had arrived to send Eliezer to find a suitable wife for Yitzchak, whose inherent “midas hachessed” would mitigate and counterbalance his “midas hadin.” Additionally, as a result of their union, Yaakov would be born with the midah of “Tiferes”—the perfect balance of “chesed” and “din.”

### **Do Not Delay My Departure This Union Is Ordained from Above**

It is with great pleasure that we will now delight in the sacred commentary of the Chasam Sofer on this week’s parsha. A dispute arose between Lavan and Betuel (on the one side) and Eliezer (on the other) as to whether Rivkah should marry Yitzchak immediately or wait an indefinite period of time until they would send her (ibid. 24, 50):

**“ויען לכן ובתואל ויאמרו מה' יצא הדבר לא נוכל דבר אליך רע או טוב, הנה רבקה לפניך קח ולך ותהי אשה לכן אדוניך כאשר דיבר ה'... ויאמר אחיה ואמה תשב הנערה אתנו ימים או עשור אחר תלך, ויאמר אליהם אל תאחרו אותי וה' הצליח דרכי שלחוני ואלכה לאדוני.”**

**Then Lavan and Betuel answered and said, “The matter stemmed from Hashem! We are unable to speak to you either bad or good. Here, Rivka is before you; take her and go, and let her be a wife to your master’s son as Hashem has spoken.” . . . Her brother and her mother said, “Let the maiden remain with us days (a year) or a set of ten months; then she will go.” He (Eliezer) said to**

**them, “Do not delay me now that Hashem had made my way successful. Send me and I will go to my master.”** We must endeavor to comprehend the bone of contention here. On the one hand, Lavan and Betuel request: **“Let the maiden remain with us days or a set of ten months.”** On the other hand, Eliezer counters: **“Do not delay me now that Hashem had made my way successful.”**

To explain the matter, the Chasam Sofer relies on the well-known principle that the forces of tumah have no power or influence stemming from the divine name of mercy (“rachamim”), **Havaya.** They are nourished primarily from the name of judgment (“din”), **Elokim.** It is for this reason that the Gemara (Berachos 7a) teaches us that the wicked Bilam was able to discern the precise moment of HKB”H’s wrath; because he could only grasp the attribute of “din,” the source of divine wrath.

The source for this notion is found in the Arizal’s Sha’ar HaKavanos (Pesach Drush 1). Applying this notion, he explains the wicked Pharaoh’s obstinate disavowal of the name Havaya, when he proclaims (Shemos 5, 2): **“מי הו'ה אשר אשמע בקולו לשלח—מי הו'ה את ישראל לא ידעתי את הו'ה”—who is Havaya that I should heed his voice to send out Yisrael? I do not know Havaya.** In contrast, Pharaoh did believe in the name Elokim, as we see from his remark to Yosef (Bereishis 41, 39): **“ויאמר פרעה אל—יוסף אחרי הודיע אלקים אותך את כל זאת אין חכם וגבון כמוך—then Pharaoh said to Yosef, “Since Elokim has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.”** This demonstrates that the forces of tumah are not connected with the name Havaya but only to the name Elokim.

Applying this concept to Lavan and Betuel’s response to Eliezer, the Chasam Sofer provides us with a very nice interpretation: **“The matter stemmed from Havaya! We are unable to speak to you either bad or good”—**they acknowledge that the matter had been ordained by the name **Havaya,** from which they do not derive any power or influence; therefore, they are powerless to delay it or prevent it. That being the case: **“Here, Rivka is before you; take her and go, and let her be a wife to your master’s son as Havaya has spoken”—**they were willing to let Rivka go with him. Nevertheless, due to their extreme wickedness, they

suggested deviously: **“Let the maiden remain with us days or a set of ten months; then she will go.”** They hoped that during that extended period of time, they would be able to invoke the attribute of “din” emanating from the name Elokim, to which they did have some connection. Thus, they would ultimately succeed in postponing and thwarting the union of Yitzchak and Rivka.

Eliezer, however, grasped their evil intent and proceeded to prove to them that their efforts were in vain, and that they were simply wasting time. To convey this message, he says: **“Do not delay me”** in the hope that you may arouse the attribute of “din” and postpone the union. After all, **“Havaya and His heavenly Beis Din (יה) have made my way successful.”** As we have learned, the name Havaya alone connotes mercy—“rachamim”—the name Havaya with the prefix ו implies: **“He and His Beis Din.”** Thus, Eliezer informed them that even “midas hadin” had agreed to this union. Therefore, **“send me on my way and I will go to my master.”** This concludes his wonderful explanation.

If we combine the explanation of the Chasam Sofer with what has been discussed above, we can begin to comprehend Lavan and Betuel’s scheme. They wished to invoke “midas hadin” to prevent the union of Yitzchak and Rivkah. Since Yitzchak’s midah was “din,” he required a wife to temper that midah, so that together they could give birth to Yaakov Avinu, the personification of “rachamim”—the proper balance and combination of “chesed” and “din.” Hence, they thought it likely that “midas hadin” would delay and interfere with this union. To dispel this belief, Eliezer informed them: **“זה הצליח דרכי”**—he had already received the approval of “midas hadin.”

But how did Eliezer know that the heavenly Beis Din had acquiesced to the success of his mission? In keeping with what has been explained above, it works out beautifully. Eliezer was a loyal servant and disciple of Avraham and was immersed in his Torah. As such, he perceived that which the Torah attributes to Avraham at the outset of the mission: **“ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה ברכ את אברהם בכל”**. Note that here, too, the Torah employs the term **יה**, indicating that Avraham was privileged to be blessed even by the forces of “din.” Thus, Eliezer knew that as Avraham’s agent, he and his mission

were also supported by the forces of “din.” This is implied by his statement: **“זה הצליח דרכי”**—employing the term **יה**.

### At the Akeidah Avraham’s Chesed and Yitzchak’s Din Were Bound Together

Following this line of reasoning, we will now address Rashi’s comment: **“And Hashem had blessed Avraham בכ”ל (with everything).”** Rashi comments: **The gematria of בכ”ל equals כ”ב; since he had a son, he was obliged to find him a wife.** Above, we presented the commentaries bewilderment. Why do we need a gematria to allude to this, seeing as we have an explicit passuk stating: **“You shall take a wife for my son Yitzchak”?**

It appears that we can explain the matter based on a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Vayeira 119b). The purpose of the Akeidah was to bind the “chesed” of Avraham—analogue to water—with the “din” of Yitzchak—analogue to fire. Placing his only son upon the mizbeiach constituted an act of “din.” But since Avraham personified “chesed,” he inculcated in his son “midas hachessed.” Thus, the Akeidah combined the fiery “din” of Yitzchak with the waters of “chesed” of Avraham.

In this vein, we find the following interpretation from the Arizal n Likutei Torah (Vayeira). The passuk says (ibid. 22, 7): **“ויאמר יצחק אל אברהם אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר הנני בני”**—**then Yitzchak to Avraham his father and said, “Father.” And he said, “Here I am, my son.”** Yitzchak, whose midah was “din,” was telling his father Avraham that he wished to connect with his midah of “chesed.” This is conveyed by the words **“ויאמר אביו”**. Avraham, on the other hand wished to connect with his son’s midah of “din.” Hence, he replied **“הנני בני”**. Therefore, the following passuk concludes with the words (ibid. 8): **“ויילכו שניהם יחדיו”**—**the two of them went together**—teaching us that Avraham and Yitzchak continued on their journey united as one; both contained both the midah of “chesed” and the midah of “din.” However, Avraham remained primarily “chesed” tempered by “din”; while Yitzchak remained primarily “din” tempered by “chesed.”

This explains very nicely the text that appears after the Akeidah (ibid. 20): **“ויהי אחר הדברים האלה ויוגד לאברהם לאמר הנה ילדה מלכה גם היא בנים לנחור אחיך”**—**and it happened, after these**

events, that Avraham was told, saying: Behold, Milkah, she, too, has borne children to Nachor, your brother. Rashi comments: HKB”H informed him (Avraham) that Rivkah, his (Yitzchak’s) spouse, had been born. After the Akeidah, once Avraham and Yitzchak and their respective midos had been bound together, it was possible for Yaakov to descend from them—the midah of “Tiferes,” the perfect blend of “chesed” and “din.” Therefore, HKB”H informed Avraham of the birth of Rivkah, who would temper the “din” of Yitzchak.

We can now understand why the Torah prefaces the mission to find a suitable wife for Yitzchak with the passuk: “ואברהם זקן בא בימים”. As a result of the Akeidah, Avraham acquired a measure of Yitzchak’s “din.” Hence, he became “זקן מלא רחמים”—an elderly person full of “rachamim.” For, as we know, “rachamim” is a combination of “chesed” and “din.”

Additionally: “And Hashem blessed Avraham בכ”ל”, whose gematria equals ב”ן. For, until then, he had a son whose midah was in conflict with his midah of “chesed.” After the Akeidah, however, he was privileged to have a son who also possessed a measure of “midas hachessed.” It was as if he had spiritually given birth to a new son, who would follow in his footsteps and continue his legacy.

This interpretation is implicit in the words of Rashi: **Since he now had a son**—whose “din” was tempered by “chesed”—**it was time to find him a suitable wife**—epitomizing “chesed” to mitigate the force of Yitzchak’s “din.” (Due to the force of his “din,” this required more than the “chesed” he acquired from Avraham at the Akeidah.) As a result, they would give birth to Yaakov Avinu, the elite of the Avos, the embodiment of “Tiferes.”



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