

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Chayei Sarah



בס"ד

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Torah Wellsprings

Chayei Sarah

Emunah

We all receive tests and challenges from Hashem, and He sends them to us for primarily two reasons: (1) to test our actions and (2) to see where we are up to with our emunah.

"Tests in actions" are when one must sacrifice his comfort or money to do Hashem's will. An example is when one knows he should be spending several hours studying Torah, but he is lazy and doesn't want to. Or when one knows he should awaken early to daven, but he doesn't want to. Another example is when it comes to giving tzedakah. He knows what he should do, but it is hard for him to overcome the yetzer hara. These are *nisyonos* that are given to us to test our actions.

Tests in emunah are to see whether we will continue believing in Hashem and trusting Him even when we face many questions that challenge our emunah.

Avraham Avinu's tests were tests in emunah. Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk zt'l points out that all ten of Avraham's tests were to see whether he would trust in Hashem and believe in Him, even as he endured difficulties and hardships, which could have caused him chalilah to question Hashem's hashgachah.

One of Avraham Avinu's tests was when he had to buy Maaras HaMachpeilah to bury Sarah.

The Rabbeinu Yonah writes, "[Avraham Avinu's] tenth test was Sarah's burial. Hashem told

Avraham (Bereishis 13:17), קום התהלך בארץ לארכה ולרחבה כי לך אתונה, "Arise walk about the land through its length and breadth for to you I will give it." Hashem promised that Eretz Yisrael would be his. But when Sarah was niftarah, Avraham didn't even own a plot of land to bury her! He had to buy one. But Avraham didn't ask questions on Hashem. This reveals Avraham's love."

Rashi also tells us that Avraham's ten tests were all about emunah. Rashi (Avos 5:3) writes, "These are the ten tests, and he didn't ask questions on Hashem's ways. This is because of his immense love for Hashem."

Avraham Avinu's tests weren't so much about deeds (will he do Hashem's will or not). They were about believing in Hashem

without asking any questions.

We are also confronted with these two types of tests. We are more aware of the challenges we face in doing *ratzon Hashem*. We know that we must improve in Torah study, tefillah, and mitzvah observance, but we must understand that *avodas Hashem* doesn't end there. We are also tested regarding emunah. We need to be strong, pass the tests, and believe in Hashem without question.

The Mishnah (Avos 5:3) states, עשרה נסיונות נתנסה אברהם, אבינו עליו השלום ועמד בכלם, "Avraham Avinu had ten tests, and he stood up [and passed] them all."

עמד בכלם describes the attitude of a person who remains standing erect and doesn't collapse from questions in emunah.¹

1. After World War One, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l returned to Galicia after living through the war in Hungary. Many chasidim

Rebbe Shimon Yareslover *zt'l* was niftar at age ninety-one, which was considered in his days extremely old. 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 asks questions about how Hashem leads the world, Heaven replies,

came to be with the Rebbe for his first Shabbos back in Galicia. Among the guests were Reb Naftali Tzvi Ungar *zt'l* and his ten-year-old son, Reb Boruch Avraham.

The beis midrash was packed. The Rebbe came into the beis midrash, and people pushed to the side to make room for the Rebbe to pass through. The young Boruch Avraham was crushed among the chasidim, and his arm and leg got hurt.

The young boy immediately left the beis midrash and went to the apartment where they were staying. He didn't return to the beis midrash throughout Shabbos.

Remarkably, the Rebbe noticed that Boruch Avraham wasn't there (which is difficult to recognize, as there were so many guests). At shalosh seudos, he asked Reb Naftali Tzvi where his son was. Reb Naftali Tzvi told the Rebbe what happened and explained that he was afraid he might be harmed again.

The Rebbe told him, "Tell your son that he shouldn't be afraid of pain."

Years afterwards, Reb Boruch Avraham went through the second world war, and the rebbe's counsel remained in his mind. It helped him stand up to the challenges and to pass many tests. He remembered that pain shouldn't faze him.

This is as it states about Avraham Avinu, עמד בגוים, he remained standing. No matter what happened in his life, he remained firm.

'Come up. From here you will see that everything is for the good.' I never ask questions, so I wasn't called to *shomayim* to receive answers." (*Ohel Shimon* p.17).

It states (24:1) ואברהם זקן בא בימים, ויהי ברכך את אברהם בכל, "Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything." How did Avraham merit a long life? The Binyan Dovid (47) zt'l says that it's because he never asked questions. Therefore, Heaven didn't have to call him up to show him how everything was good. ויהי ברכך את אברהם בכל, Avraham considered everything that happened to him as a blessing. He had no complaints, and he was able to live long.²

"The Life of Sarah"

The parashah begins, ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה, ושבע שנים שני חיי שרה, "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah's life."

The first word of the parshah is ויהיו, and the Chida (*P'nei Dovid*) points out that the letters of this word can be read backward and forwards. This implies that even when her days were backward and full of difficulty, she considered them good days. This is indicated in Rashi, כולן שווין, לטובה, "All of Sarah's years were equally good."

It wasn't that she always had good years. Not at all.

2. 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 אברהם זקן בא spell אמ"ן, because whoever answers amen will merit a long life.

In fact, she was barren for ninety years of her life, and apparently, there were many years when she was poor. (When Avraham and Sarah traveled from Eretz Canaan to Mitzrayim without having enough money to pay for the hotels in which they stayed. When they returned from Mitzrayim, loaded with money, they returned to the hotels to pay up their debts - see Rashi 13:3). The Torah tells us that Sarah suffered from Hagar (16:5) and Yishmael (21:9). She certainly had many other challenges in her life. So, what does Rashi mean כולן שוין לטובה, that they were all good years? The answer is that she viewed every day as a good day. With her belief that everything was for the best, each day was a good day.

Rashi's words כולן שוין לטובה, therefore, teach us a great lesson for life. We must consider every day to be good, no matter what happens in one's life.

One year, on Shabbos *parashas Chayei Sarah*, the

Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* (Slonim) couldn't stop speaking about this *Rashi*. He shouted, סאיז איר שטענדיג גוט געווען, "Life was always good for Sarah!" What an outlook! What a way to look at life! She found the good in every situation and was happy with her fate.

This was also Avraham Avinu's *madreigah*. It states in this week's *parashah* (*Bereishis* 25:8), ויגוע וימת אברהם בשיבה טובה זקן ושבע, "Avraham was *niftar* at a good old age, old and satisfied." When Avraham was *niftar*, he was satisfied with his life. This isn't a simple level. Few people are happy with their lot.

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya elaborates:

"This *pasuk* teaches us about Avraham's good *middos*. He left this world fulfilled. He didn't need more. This was also Dovid HaMelech's level, as it states (*Tehillim* 21:3), תאוות לבו נתתה לו, 'You have granted him his heart's desire.'

Dovid had everything he wanted; he didn't want more. This is unlike most people who live in this world, about whom it states (*Koheles* 5:9), אֹהֵב כֶּסֶף לֹא יִשְׁבַע כֶּסֶף, 'one who desires money will never have enough money.' Chazal (*Koheles Rabba* 1:32) say, 'When a person leaves the world, he hasn't attained half of his desires. If he had one hundred, he wanted two hundred. If he had two hundred, he wanted four hundred.'" But Avraham was זָקֵן וְשִׁבְעַת יָמִים satisfied with his lot. He didn't lack anything. He was happy with what he had.

The Mishnah (*Avos* 4:1) states, אִיזְדוּ עֲשִׂיר הַשְּׂמָחָה בְּחֻלְקוֹ, "Who is wealthy? One who is satisfied with his portion." The Sfas Emes (and other meforshim) say that this also refers to one's spiritual portion. Although we should always strive for more spirituality, we should feel satisfied and happy with whatever mitzvos and spiritual

achievements we accomplished because even if it seems like a little, it is an enormous treasure.

Perhaps when the Torah tells us that Avraham was *niftar* זָקֵן וְשִׁבְעַת יָמִים, satisfied with his portion, it means that he was satisfied with his spiritual accomplishments, as well.

Why Happiness is Important

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 50:) tells us that Rebbe (Reb Yehudah HaNasi) didn't invite Bar Kapara to his son's chasunah.

Rashi explains that Bar Kapara was a happy person (אִישׁ בְּרַחֵן), and Rebbe was afraid that Bar Kapara might do something to cause Rebbe to laugh, and Rebbe didn't want to laugh. (The Gemara doesn't tell us why Rebbe didn't want to laugh, but we can guess that it was because of the churban Beis HaMikdash or because he took life and his avodas Hashem very seriously, and he didn't think it was proper to be jovial.)

Bar Kapara wrote on the wall of the chasunah hall, עשרין וארבעה אלפין רבואין 240,000,000" dinarim are being spent on this chasunah, yet Bar Kapara wasn't invited."

Bar Kapara told Rebbe (referring to Rebbe's vast wealth), "If this is the reward Hashem gives to those who transgress Hashem's will, how great will be the reward of those who do His will!"

Rebbe changed his mind and invited Bar Kapara to the chasunah.

Bar Kapara praised Rebbe and said, "If this is the reward for those who do Hashem's will in this world, in Olam HaBa it will be much greater!"

The miforshim ask: Why did Bar Kapara (initially) call Rebbe עוברי רצונו, that he transgresses Hashem's will?

The Chasam Sofer zt'l writes, "I heard from my mechutan, Reb Bunim

[Eigar], Rav of Matersdorf, that Hashem wants people to be happy, but Rebbe didn't want to enjoy this pleasure. Even on his son's wedding day, he didn't want to be happy. That is transgressing Hashem's will."

This is an important lesson. Hashem wants us to be happy. He wants us to have pleasure and joy in life. We can compare it to parents who want their children to be joyous and they should experience the joie de vivre, the joy of being alive.

We receive many good things from heaven when we are happy. The Midrash (quoted in Shlah HaKadosh) on the pasuk (Shemos 3:14) אֲדֹנָי הוּא אֵלֵינוּ teaches: "Hashem acts with us in the manner we act with Him. When you smile, Hashem smiles at you. When you cry, Hashem cries with you. If you are angry, Hashem responds with anger. This is as it states (Tehillim 121:5) ה' יִלְךְ, 'Hashem is your

shadow.' A shadow mimics Hashem mimic what we man's deeds, and so does do."³

3. The Rizhiner's daughter once moaned, and her father admonished her, "When you moan, Hashem says, 'You think this is bad. I will show you what's bad.' And when a person is happy, Hashem replies, 'You think your life is good? I will show you what is good.'"

Reb Shmuel Kaminka's zt'l daughter asked Reb Refael of Barshid zt'l to bless her with children. Reb Refael told her that simchah is mesugal for bearing children.

She told her father, Reb Shmuel of Kaminka, that Reb Rafael told her that simchah is mesugal for children. Reb Shmuel remarked, 'This tzaddik [Reb Refael] learned this segulah from Chumash, Navi, and Kesuvim. Chumash states (18:12) ותצחק שרה בקרבה, "and Sarah laughed." Moments later, the malachim informed her that she will bear a child. Navi states (Yeshayah 54:1) רני עקרה לא ילדה, "Rejoice o barren one who has not given birth." The navi tells her to be happy because that will enable her to bear children. In Kesuvim (Tehillim 113:9), it states, מושיבי עקרת הבית אם הבנים שמחה, "He transforms the barren wife into a glad mother of children," which indicates that a barren woman will bear children in the merit of being joyous.

It also states (Shmuel 1, 1:18) ותאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד "[Chanah] ate and no longer had the same look on her face." Shortly before, Chanah was sad, but after Chanah davened, she trusted that Hashem would answer her tefillos, and she believed that she would bear a child. Her tefillos were answered and Shmuel HaNavi was born. The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that it was the combination of her tefillos and her joy that enabled her to bear a child.

A bachur once fell into a river (near Danzig, Germany), and his life was in grave danger. Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l saw what happened and called out to the bachur, "Send regards to the

So, when we are happy, good things will happen to us. It states (Yeshayah 55:12) כִּי בְשִׂמְחָה תֵצְאוּ, "For with gladness you shall go out." The Degel Machaneh Efraim (Likutim) explains, "With simchah, we go out of all our troubles." This lesson is taught by many tzaddikim. If you are happy, you will be saved from your troubles.

How to be Happy with your Portion

In Libya, before World War Two, the wealthier Yidden lived in Tripoli, and the poorer Yidden lived outside the city in underground caves. Their primitive accommodations were carved out of rock, and they lived on dirt

floors. Lighting was minimal, only from the sunlight that shone down on the stairwell outside their homes. These poorer Yidden were jealous of their fellow Yidden, who lived in comfortable conditions in Tripoli.

When the Nazis y"sh came to Libya, the Yidden of Tripoli were deported to Bergen-Belson and other concentration camps. On the other hand, the people living in the underground caves were saved and eventually made their way to Eretz Yisrael. Some of those Yidden are still alive today. They now realize how fortunate they were to have lived in the caves. Had they resided in spacious, bright homes in

leviyasan." The bachur found a wooden plank floating in the river, grabbed it, and was saved.

Rebbe Bunim explained that the bachur was worried and panicky. When he heard Rebbe Bunim's joke ("Send regards to the leviyasan"), he became happy, and this helped him think properly, and he was able to find the wood and save himself. Because joy results in salvation.

Tripoli, they, too, would have been deported to the camps.

Many people look back at their lives and discover that their hardships 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 understood that every stage of his life was good.

It states (*Iyov* 36:3), אשא דעי, למרחוק ולפועלי אתן צדק, "I will raise my knowledge from afar. I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker." 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 *pesukim*?

Drashos Rabbeinu Yosef Nechemyah (p.450) explains that אשא דעי למרחוק means I look towards the future.

Right now, my situation doesn't seem good. But I look at the larger picture. I try to understand what will come from it in the future. And then לפועלי, for Hashem who does everything, אתן צדק, I will say that it is good. This was Avraham's way, to recognize that ה' ברך את, אברהם בכל, everything is a blessing.

It states (*Tehillim* 147:8), המכסה שמים בעבים המכין לארץ מטר, "Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth." What we see is dark, rain clouds, the problems, and everything appears negative. But the dark clouds will give way to rain. Similarly, all the hardships will yet become good for us one day.

Satisfied with Your Lot

Chazal tell us, איזהו עשיר, "Who is wealthy? He who is satisfied with his lot." That is true wealth.

As we wrote, וה' ברך את, אברהם בכל, "Hashem blessed

Avraham with everything." The Midrash states that בכל, "everything," means Hashem showed Avraham the mitzvah of *succah*.

What is the meaning of this Midrash? Why is *succah* considered having everything?

The Chozeh of Lublin (*Aonei Zikoron* 662) *zt'l* explains that the *succah* reminds us that we can live in a hut, and everything will be fine. Nothing will be lacking. Luxuries aren't as necessary as we think. When we know that, we have הכל, everything. We are satisfied with our portion.

Rebbe Yonoson Eibshitz (6:1) writes, "Those who fear Hashem don't live in *succos* only during the *yom tov* Succos. They remember throughout the year that life is temporary." And with this outlook, they are happy with their portion, whether large or small.

A wealthy person visited the Chofetz Chaim

zt'l and expressed his surprise at how poorly furnished the Chofetz Chaim's home was. The Chofetz Chaim responded, "and where is your furniture? All I see is your horse and wagon."

The wealthy man replied, "I am just passing by. My furniture is at home."

Having expected that answer, the Chofetz Chaim exclaimed, "I too, am just passing by because this world is merely a passageway to Olam HaBa."

When we keep that in mind, we won't mind having less. We are anyway just passing through.

It states (*Tehillim* 16:8), שויתי, and the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* (*Keser Shem Tov*) explains, "שויתי" comes from the word השתוות, the same. Whatever happens to you, your reaction should be the same. Whether people praise you or disgrace you,

whether you eat delicacies or regular food... Whatever happens to you, say, 'If this is good in Hashem's eyes, it is good for me, too. This attitude is a great *madreigah*."⁴

The Joy in Hardship

Even when life is bitter, r'l, we must believe that something good will come from it. Reb Sholom Kaminka zt'l compared it to bitter beverages (like whiskey and vodka). Many

people spit it out because it is so bitter. But habitual drinkers enjoy the taste. They know that this bitterness will soon make them happy. Similarly, the painful moments we go through will result in immense happiness.

It states (Tehillim 33:3-4) *היטיבו נגן בתרועה*, "Sing well with a *truah*." The Yeitav Lev (Yeitav Panim 29) asks that the word *תרועה* refers to when bad things occur, r'l. How can a person be happy

4. Reb Boruch Yehoshua and Reb Moshe Dovidke's (chasidim of the Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim zt'l) were waiting at a train station when a Russian soldier passed by. He told them that he is a Yid, conscripted into the Czar's army, and he told them about all the difficulties and tests he endured in the army.

The chasidim sighed for him. He told them, "Don't worry about me because I know it is all for my good."

He explained: "Hashem would have gained so much more if I wasn't in the army. I would have had time to study Torah, kept Shabbos and raised a family of G-d fearing Jews. It would have been so much better for Hashem if it were that way. So, why did Hashem give me my destiny? Why am I in the army? It must be that Hashem knows that this situation is better for me. He gave me what's good for me, although He knows it isn't good for Him. So, if Hashem forgoes His own pleasures for my sake, how can I complain?"

and sing to Hashem when bad things happen?

The explanation is that when a person goes through difficulties, he does teshuvah, and Hashem improves his lot. The next pasuk states *וכל מעשהו באמונה*, "All his deeds are with emunah." Hashem has emunah in us that we will keep our kabalos tovot and follow through with our teshuvah. So, even before we do a complete teshuvah, Hashem forgives us and removes our hardships. Therefore, the pasuk states, *המינו נון בתרועה... וכל מעשהו באמונה*, sing to Hashem, even in difficult situations because the troubles will spur you to do teshuvah, and Hashem trusts that you will succeed in your quest to improve your ways.

The Zohar says that if it weren't for our hardships, we would never recognize the good Hashem gives us. So, we should be happy with hardship because that is the key to truly

appreciating Hashem's kindness.

Let us explain:

Who is happier? Someone who was wealthy his entire life or someone who was poor and became wealthy?

Who is happier? Someone who was healthy his entire life or someone who was ill and became healthy?

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (*ד"ה ויגוע*) writes that those who went through hard times, such as poverty, illness, and the like, and then have their salvation, are the happiest people in the world.

He writes, "If one were wealthy since the day he was born, he wouldn't recognize the amazing benefit of wealth. However, if one was poor and then became wealthy, he knows the pleasure of being wealthy. It is impossible to fully appreciate the good if you didn't first experience

the bad. The bad helps you recognize the sweetness of the good. This is what happened to Avraham. He was poor, he was ill, and then ה' ברך את אברהם בכל, Hashem blessed Avraham with everything: with great wealth, etc. Avraham could appreciate the good because he had experienced the feeling of lacking."

The Chasam Sofer explains, ואברהם זקן בא בימים, in Avraham's older years he saw, וה' ברך את אברהם בכל, that his entire life was a blessing. Looking back, he recognized the benefit of the difficult times because these hard times enabled him to truly appreciate the good that Hashem eventually gave him.

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

The Chasam Sofer explains this Gemara allegorically. The "good stone" hanging from Avraham's neck is a vital lesson people acquired when they looked at Avraham Avinu. They saw that all the hardships he endured were for his benefit because now that he was healthy and wealthy, he appreciated all that he had so much more since he once lacked them. They realized that when one merits salvation, the happiness he experiences is according to the extent of troubles that preceded it.

But when Avraham was *niftar*, no one could internalize this profound lesson.

What did Hashem do? "He put the stone in the sun." This is because the sun also teaches us this lesson. The sun shines and lightens up the world only after there is darkness. The pleasure of light and warmth people enjoy from

the sun is a result of the darkness beforehand. Chazal (*Zohar, Tazria 47:*) say that people appreciate light because they know about darkness. If it weren't for darkness, they wouldn't appreciate the goodness of light. Therefore, the sun encourages everyone. The poor and the ill see the sun and realize that all their suffering will serve a good purpose. When they finally become healthy and wealthy, their hardships will accentuate the good they will receive in the future.

We have explained above that life's bitter and hard moments are for our benefit. However, if one can't be happy with life's hardships and disappointments, one should ignore them. Don't let the hard moments pull you down.

In Kiryas Tzanz, Netanyah, there was a couple who was very occupied with public work (tzedakah, chesed projects, and

more). They were devoted to helping the community in any way possible. Their busiest time of year was before Pesach. One year, on the night of the seder, they were exhausted after weeks of hard work for the community, and they decided to sleep for a half hour before they began the seder. When they awoke, it was already morning. That year, they didn't have the mitzvah of matzah, the four cups of wine, the story of yetzias Mitzrayim, and they were devastated.

On Yom tov morning, the husband said to the Klausenberger Rebbe zt'l, "What will be?"

The Rebbe replied, "What will be? We will daven Shacharis."

We need to move on. What was, was. Even if we did an aveirah and lost out on a great opportunity, we need to move on and seek to improve the future.

Bashert

We say in the Sheva Brachos, שמח תשמח רעים האהובים, כשמחך יצירך בגן עדן מקדם, "Make the loving couple happy as you made Your creation happy in Gan Eden." In this brachah, we ask Hashem to make the new couple happy as Hashem made Adam and Chavah happy in Gan Eden. What was unique about Adam and Chavah's joy in Gan Eden?

Sometimes, after a shidduch is finalized, the chasan or kallah can think, "I should have gotten engaged to someone with better yichus." This thought ruins the joy of the shidduch and after the marriage, can destroy the shalom bayis. Adam and Chavah didn't have such ideas because they both had identical yichus. They were both creations of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Their joy was perfect. We pray that this new couple should have as perfect joy and happiness as Adam and Chavah.

We can also explain it this way:

Sometimes, people think that they should have married someone else, and are upset that they made, what they consider, a poor choice. Such thoughts ruin the joy of the shidduch and cause shalom bayis issues. Adam and Chavah didn't have such dilemmas because they were the only people in the world, and there was no one else to choose from. Their marriage contained perfect joy because they knew they married "the right one," We daven that this new couple should also find such joy in their marriage. They should feel that they married the one destined for them.

The Gemara (Sotah 2.) says, "Forty days before a child is formed [in the womb], a bas kol comes forth and says, 'The daughter of ploni will marry ploni.'" So, it was decided way back then who would be the spouse. One can therefore feel sure

that he married the one destined for him!

Reb Chaim Brisker zt'l said not only is a shidduch bashert but even the hour and day that the shidduch will occur is also bashert. It won't happen a day earlier or later.⁵

Tzaddikim say that it is also decreed who will be the shadchan.

Hashem planned it so that people should think that they made the shidduch. They raised the child for many years and want the good feeling that they married off their son

or daughter. But a person cannot do anything on his own, especially shidduchim. This is a realm that is entirely in Hashem's hands.

The Gemara (*Moed Kattan* 18:) proves "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 "Lavan and Besual said, 'The matter is from Hashem. We can't say good or bad.'"⁶

5. The Imrei Emes said that with tefillah, a shidduch could happen earlier, before the destined time. He proves this from the Gemara (*Moad Kattan* 18:) that permits getting kiddushin on chol hamoed, שמה יקדמנו אחר, "Lest someone take her first." Although, forty days before his birth it was decided that this was his spouse, someone can take it away through tefillah. If tefillah can take away someone's zivug, tefillah can undoubtedly cause the zivug that is supposed to come later to come sooner, before the destined time.

6. Rashi explains that Lavan and Besuel said, "We can't say no to this *shidduch* because it is clear that Hashem arranged this *shidduch*" because Eliezer told them that while he was davening for the *shidduch*, Rivkah showed up (see 24:45).

The Gemara proves from *Navi* that *shidduchim* are made in heaven because it states (*Shoftim* 14:4) regarding Shimshon, ואביו ואמו לא ידעו כי מיה 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, ומה אשה משכלת "A house and wealth are the parent's inheritance, but an intelligent woman is from Hashem."

Thus, the Gemara proves from *Chumash*, *Navi*, and *Kesuvim* that *shidduchim* are from Hashem.

The question arises, isn't everything from Hashem? So why does the Gemara specify that *shidduchim* are from Hashem?

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

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* taught:

When it comes to *shidduchim*, people seek different things. Some look for *yichus*. For some, the primary criterion is good looks. And some seek a *shidduch* with money.

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

Often, people get what they are looking for. They think that they get their desires because they search for them.

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

Avraham told Eliezer that he should find a bride for Yitzchak from his family. 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 *מדה 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 due to his efforts. As it states, *ואביו ואמו*

לא ידעו כי מדה היא "His father and his mother didn't know that it was from Hashem."

And for those who seek wealth and marry 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*, "A house and wealth are the parent's inheritance, but an intelligent woman is from Hashem."

At *kriyas Yam Suf*, the nation attained the level of *ruach hakodesh*. Chazal say that a maidservant at the *Yam Suf* had a greater prophetic vision than *Navi Yechezkel*. *Reb Noson Gestetner zt'l* said that we can therefore assume that also by *shidduchim* there is *ruach hakodesh* because Chazal say (*Pesachim* 118.) "A *shidduch* of man is as difficult as *kriyas Yam Suf*." So, just as by *kriyas Yam Suf*, there was *ruach hakodesh*, also by a *shidduch*, the parents have

ruach hakodesh to know whom to choose for their children.

But doesn't it look like it is entirely in man's hands? He inquires, investigates, and decides on the best option. But the truth is that Hashem manipulates the world in such a way that what is destined to be will be. Obviously, you must do hishtadlus but simultaneously trust in Hashem because He does everything.

The Shpole Zeida zt'l said, "Every person has maalos and chesronos (qualities and faults). When a shidduch is decreed in heaven, a wide wooden beam comes down from heaven to cover all the faults. Now, only the qualities are seen. When a shidduch isn't bashert, a wide wooden beam comes down from heaven and covers the qualities, exposing only the faults."

People asked the Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz zt'l, "Why

do people say shidduchim are from heaven? Sometimes, a person has enemies, and they ruin a good shidduch!"

The Ahavas Yisrael replied, "When a shidduch is bashert, Hashem arranges that you only ask for information from friends who say good things about him. And when a shidduch isn't bashert, Hashem arranges that you will ask information from his enemies so that you won't want the shidduch.

(We add that you don't have to be angry at someone for ruining a shidduch because, in the end, what occurred was min hashamayim.)

The Pnei Menachem zt'l said, "When it is time to make a shidduch, Hakshem leads the parents like blind horses; they don't see any faults so that the shidduch should happen.

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 68:2) tells that when Yaakov Avinu went to Charan to find his spouse,

he davened (Tehillim 121) שיר
למעלות אשא עיני אל ההרים מאין יבא
עזרי מעם "...I raise my eyes to
the mountains, from where
will my help come?" עזרי מעם
"My help comes from Hashem, the
creator of heaven and
earth."

The Rema m'Pano says
that it is mesugal to say
this chapter of Tehillim to
help one find his or her
shidduch. Yaakov Avinu
said this chapter while
looking for his shidduch,
making it mesugal for all
singles to do the same.

Perhaps, we can explain
that the segulah is the
awareness of מאין יבא עזרי,
"from where will my
salvation come?" Salvation
comes when a person
recognizes that he can't
find a shidduch alone.
Rather, עזרי מעם ה',
"My help is from Hashem."
Only Hashem can help me.
This awareness is mesugal
to finding one's shidduch.

Chazal (Megillah 6:) say,
יגעת ומצאת תאמין, if someone

tells you that he toiled in
Torah and he found
[knowledge in Torah], you
can believe him.

Miforshim ask why it is
called מצאת, finding. If you
toil in Torah, you acquired
Torah. You didn't find it!
You earned it with your
hard labor.

The Vayeged Yaakov of
Pupa zt'l said that the same
question can be asked on
the pasuk (Mishlei 18:22) מצא
אשה מצא טוב, "One who has
found a wife has found
goodness." Is finding the
right word for getting
engaged? Didn't he work
hard on his shidduch? Is
that called finding?

The Vayeged Yaakov
explains that when one
toils in Torah in one place,
he will also understand
other areas of Torah. It isn't
logical; it is the segulah of
Torah. When you toil in
one misechta, you will also
understand other
misechtas; when you toil in
one sugyah you understand
another sugyah.

The same occurs with shidduchim. A person can work very hard on one shidduch and, in the end, marry someone he didn't even think of. Often, the person they marry is someone they would have never considered, but somehow, this time, they considered it, and the shidduch happened. That is why shidduchim are considered a "find" rather than an acquisition.

A poor person often urged the Imrei Emes *zt'l* of Gur to bless him with wealth. The Imrei Emes didn't want to give him that *brachah*, but when this man kept pressuring him, he finally agreed. He blessed him with wealth, and the words of the *tzaddik* took effect. He became wealthy.

But then, his eighteen-year-old son was in an accident, and his feet were

injured. 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 bemoaned his fate. He had to settle for a poor *shidduch* and couldn't do a wealthy, prestigious *shidduch*, as he had hoped for.

The Imrei Emes told him, "Forty days before your son was formed, a *bas kol* announced this *shidduch*, your son and this girl from the poor family. At that time, the *shidduch* was very fitting because both your son and the girl were from poor families. But you insisted on being wealthy, and that's what happened. Nevertheless, the *shidduch* that was *bashert* and decreed for your son had to transpire. Since you would never agree to the *shidduch* if it weren't for the accident, it had to occur."⁷

7. Obviously, a preferable solution would be for the girl also to become wealthy. This is hinted in *Kesubos* (48.), עולה עמו ואינו יורדת עמו,

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*). It says that Reb Yosi ben Chalafta told the queen that from Creation until today, "Hashem makes 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 *shidduchim* to occur, Hashem sometimes needs to raise the poor and make them wealthy, or vice versa. Because only that way the destined *shidduchim* will happen.⁸

Tefillah

While one must daven for all his needs, the

"The wife rises to the level of her husband, but she shouldn't go down to his level."

We can also explain, *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 lower one should go up rather than the opposite.

8. Some people make simanim for their *shidduch*. They say, "If the *shidduch* doesn't go smoothly, that's a sign that it isn't *bashert*." But let's think about Yaakov Avinu's *shidduchim*. He was tricked, and went through hard times, but these were his *shidduchim*, and from them came the twelve shevatim.

Gemara (Brachos 8.) singles out the importance of davening for a wife. It is written in the pasuk (Tehillim 32:6) עַל זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל חַסִּיד לְעֵת מִצְוֹה, that a person should daven for a מִצְוֹה, which, the Gemara teaches, means a wife, as it states (Mishlei 18:22) מִצְוֵה אִשָּׁה מִצְוֵה טוֹב.

The Gemara (Pesachim 118.) tells us that making shidduchim and earning a parnassah are as difficult as kriyas Yam Suf."

What is the significance of this information? The Rashbam answers that it teaches us the importance of davening for parnassah and shidduchim.

Regarding parnassah, the Rashbam writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu performs a great miracle to the one he gives parnassah, as He did for Yisrael when

He split the Yam Suf. The importance of knowing this is to know that he should daven."

Baruch Hashem, Hashem performs this miracle for us all the time. But we must do our part. We must daven for parnassah because it isn't a simple matter. It is as great a miracle as the splitting of the sea.

The Yidden at the Yam Suf certainly poured their hearts out to Hashem, asking Hashem to split the sea. With this desperation, we must daven for parnassah because it is a miracle, and only Hashem can help us.

Shidduchim are also compared to kriyas yam suf. This tells us how much we must daven for shidduchim.⁹

9. Someone told the Chazon Ish, "I have one question, but the question is as great as kriyas Yam Suf." The Chazon Ish understood that he meant that he was an older bachur and needed a shidduch, which is as hard as kriyas Yam Suf. The Chazon Ish told him, "In

Eliezer wanted to convince Lavan and Besuel that the shidduch (Yitzchak with Rivkah) was from heaven.

He told them (24:42) וַאֲבָא הַיּוֹם אֶל הָעֵיץ "So I came today to the fountain."

Rashi on this pasuk explains, הַיּוֹם יֵצְאתִי וְהַיּוֹם בָּאתִי מִכָּאן שֶׁקִּפְצָה לוֹ הָאָרֶץ "Today I left, and today I arrived. From here, we learn that the earth shrank for him" [i.e., his journey was miraculously shortened].

But when Eliezer returned to Avraham and Yitzchak, the earth didn't jump or shrink; no miracles occurred. Why not?

The Chasam Sofer zt'l answers that they needed to wait until Yitzchak davened for a shidduch. If they returned home quickly, Yitzchak would meet Rivkah before he davened for a wife!

But let's see what happened. It states (24:63) וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּבָה בְּשָׂדֵה... וַיֵּשֶׂא עֵינָיו וְהִנֵּה

the end, the sea split. Don't worry. Your question will be answered, too."

An older bachur of twenty-eight told the Chazon Ish that he is worried because he hadn't found his shidduch yet. The Chazon Ish asked him, "How many shidduchim do you need?"

He replied, "One."

The Chazon Ish told him, "Don't worry. One you will find."

The Sekulener Rebbe zt'l said to an older bachur, "You are already a chasan. Your bride was chosen forty days before you were formed. Only you don't know who it is. But you are a chasan. All you need to do is to daven that Hashem opens your eyes so you can find your aveidah and that Hashem reveals to you with whom you are engaged."

גמלים באים, "Yitzchak went forth to pray in the field towards evening, and he lifted his eyes and saw, and behold, camels were approaching."

He davened, and immediately Rivkah arrived. The timing was perfect. But Rivkah couldn't come before Yitzchak had davened for a wife.

The Gemara (Bava Kama 92.) says, מנא הא מילתא דאמור רבנן, כל המבקש רחמים על חברו והוא צריך להאזינו דבר הוא נענה תחילה, "How do we know... that when one davens for his friend, and he himself also needs that matter, he is answered first?" Let's say you need a shidduch. If you daven for other singles to get engaged, you will be engaged before them. If you daven for others to become well, you will be cured before they are cured.

The Gemara proves this from Iyov (42:10). It states וה' שב את שבות איוב בהתפללו בעד רעהו, "Hashem returns Iyov's

captivity after he prayed for his friend."

Iyov davened for his friends when they were ill, and therefore, Iyov was answered first and was cured of his illnesses.

The Gemara also proves it from Avraham Avinu (Bereishis 20:17). He davened for Avimelech (and for Avimelech's wife and maidservants) [that they should be healed and be able to bear children]. Afterwards, it states (Bereishis 21:1) וה' פקד את שרה, Hashem remembered Sarah to give her a child. So, Avraham davened for others, and his tefillos helped him first.

Reb Noson Lubert zt'l (She'eris Noson) writes that this isn't only regarding tefillah. When one does hishtadlus to help another Yid, and he also needs the same thing, he will be answered first.

This is what occurred in this week's parashah. It states (24:62) ויצחק בא מבוא באר

לחי'רואי, "Yitzchak came from having gone to Be'er Lachi Ro'i, and Rashi explains that he went to bring Hagar to Avraham to marry her. He did his hishtadlus to help a shidduch happen, the shidduch of his father. The next pasuk states that Rivkah Imeinu arrived, and he found his shidduch. Yitzchak helped his father, and immediately, his wife arrived, too.

So, we see that whenever you do for others, you are answered first. You will have your salvation in the merit that you help others.

Praise

Lavan and Besuel told Eliezer (24:50-51) ... מוה' יצא הדבר... "[The shidduch] is destined from Hashem... Rivkah is before you. Take her and go."

Eliezer was overjoyed that Hashem helped him succeed in his mission to find a shidduch for Yitzchak. (24:52) ויהי כאשר שמע עבד אברהם את דבריהם וישתחו ארצה לה, "When [Eliezer]

Avraham's slave heard what they said he bowed to the ground to Hashem."

Rashi writes, מכאן שמודים, על בשורה טובה, "We learn from this to praise Hashem for happy tidings." Some people have a very hard time finding a shidduch, and when they finally find one, they praise Hashem. But those who find a shidduch easily don't realize how much they must praise Hashem. Eliezer found Rivkah quickly. He had kefitzas haderech, arrived in one day, and immediately found Rivkah, and the family agreed to the shidduch. Eliezer praised Hashem. This teaches us that also when things go easily, we must praise Hashem. In fact, especially when matters go easily, we should praise Hashem because it isn't only that Hashem helped us find the shidduch, but it was arranged in such an easy way.

Hashem is Watching

It states (24:62), ויצחק בא מבווא, לחי רואי. Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l explained, ויצחק, laughter and happiness, בא, comes לחי רואי, when one believes that the חי, living Hashem, רואי, sees him. When one believes and realizes that Hashem is always watching and taking care of him, he will be happy.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim explains the *pasuk* as follows: יצחק represents fear of Hashem. בא, fear of Hashem comes מבווא לחי רואי, when one believes and knows that Hashem is always watching over him.

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

On the first day on the job, she noticed that her boss was also in the store

after the store was closed. 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 was no actual *issur yichud* there, but she didn't feel comfortable and felt it was a breach in *tznius*.

A few days later, she met a girl who also worked in the store and asked her why she left. She told her the true reason. That woman was impressed by her *yiras Shamayim*. She 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* of 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.

There was a Lubavitcher chassid who 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 the *pasuk* from Ashrei מלכותך בכל דור 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 was saying this *pasuk* so many times, why he didn't 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 could earn with time. 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 on 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 world's foolishness, 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 specific 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 the large amount of money he's been offered. So, if a day of life is so precious to you, how do you waste it with idleness? He is the *שוטה*, fool, 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. "