

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Chayei Sarah*



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Chayei Sarah

## Avraham and Sarah's Clarity that Everything is for the Good

The Torah tells us (24:1): *ואברהם זקן בא בימים*, "And Avraham was old, *advanced in days*..." Wouldn't it be more accurate to say the *ואברהם זקן בא בשנים*, "And Avraham was old, *advanced in years*"? The pasuk discusses Avraham's old age, so it should mention years, not days!

The word *ימים* sometimes means clarity.<sup>1</sup> As such, writes the Noam Megadim, the pasuk can be translated as (24:1) *ואברהם זקן בא בימים*, "And Avraham was old, growing in clarity." Avraham, in his older years, attained *ימים*, clarity. The clarity was that *זהו ברכ את*, that everything he had was Hashem's blessings. He clearly understood that even things that seemed bad were Hashem's brachos because everything Hashem does is for the good.

Mishmeres Isamar zy'a writes that with this idea, we can explain the pasuk (23:3) *ויקם אברהם מעל פני מתו*, "Avraham arose from before his dead." *מתו*, his dead, represents his challenges and difficult times.<sup>2</sup> *ויקם אברהם מעל פני מתו*, every "death," every tough time, resulted in *ויקם*, that he rose to higher levels.

The pasuk continues *לאמר ויקם אברהם מעל פני מתו וידבר אל בניו*, "Avraham arose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of *הת*, saying."

*הת* represents the people who go through difficult times, as it states (Devarim 1:21) *אל תחת*,

and Onkelos translates it *ולא תתבר*, don't break. So *הת* symbolizes the broken people, people who went through hard times. *וידבר אל בניו*, Avraham would speak to them and encourage them and tell them that everything is for the good. The pasuk states *וידבר אל בניו* for the good. The pasuk states *הת* *אל בניו*, and it is known that *לאמר* is *אמירה רכה*, kind, soft words. Avraham would speak to *בניו*, the people who went through hard times, *לאמר*, and tell them that ultimately all will turn around and become very good for them.<sup>3</sup>

On the words *שני חיי שרה*, Rashi (23:1) writes, *בולן שוין לטובה*, "all of Sarah's years were good." This means that Sarah lived with the outlook that everything was good.

However, the picture isn't so rosy when we study Sarah's life. Sarah was barren for ninety years and suffered from Pharaoh, Hagar, and Yishmael. How can Rashi say *בולן שוין לטובה*, that all her years were equally good? The answer is that she lived with this attitude. She knew that the good and harder years were all similarly good years.

One year, on Shabbos *parashas Chayei Sarah*, the Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* (Slonim), couldn't stop talking about this *Rashi*. He shouted, *ס'איז איר שטענדיג גוט געווען*, "Life was always good for Sarah!" Because with this perspective, life is genuinely always good.

The Baal HaTurim writes that *ויהי* is *gematriya 37*, a hint that her final thirty-seven years (after Yitzchak was born) were the

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1. *ימים* means clarity. For example, Yaakov said to Eisav (Bereishis 25:31) *מכרה כיום את בכורתך לי*, "Sell, as of this day, your *bechorah* (birthright) to me." Rashi writes, "[Sell the *bechorah*] *כיום*, like the day. Just as the day is clear, so should you sell me [the *bechorah*] with a clear [undisputable] sale."

2. The Zohar states, "Whoever falls from his level is considered *מת*, that he died." So *מתו* can refer to when one falls from his level and status, be it in regards to spiritual or worldly matters.

3. So, in conclusion, the pasuk is saying, *וידבר אל בניו* *הת* *לאמר*, Avraham would reach higher levels with every challenge, and with this awareness, he was able to give encouragement others going through hard times.

primary years of her life. Those were the good years of Sarah's life.

So how can Rashi write כולם שויים לטובה, that all of Sarah's life was equally good? Rebbe Yankele of Pshevorsk zt'l replied that the roshei teivos of לטובה שויים, is שכל, intelligence. When one thinks with his intelligence, he finds goodness even in the hard times.

The Chida (*P'nei Dovid*) notes that the first word of the parashah, ויהי, is a palindrome (it reads the same backward and forward) to imply that even when Sarah's days were backward and filled with difficulties, she considered them good days - כולן שוין לטובה, "All of Sarah's years were equally good." Externally, only her final 37 years appeared good. But they were all equally good years to Sarah because, with her שכל, she understood that everything Hashem does is for the best.<sup>4</sup>

### The World's Cycle

Hashem created the world in a way that light follows the darkness, and goodness follows suffering. Therefore, going through hard times, one should remember that it won't last forever. Better times will come.

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 8.) teaches, "When the sun set on the day Adam HaRishon was

created, Adam said, 'Woe is to me! The world has become dark because of my sin. The world will return to nothingness (תהו ובהו). This is the death that was decreed on me from heaven.'" He sat and cried the entire night, with Chavah crying opposite him. When the morning arrived, Adam said, 'This is the way of the world.' He brought an ox [for a korban todah]."

The Chofetz Chaim said over this Gemara to his students during the First World War, when many were very afraid and worried. They thought there was no hope or future for them. The Chofetz Chaim said, "Adam HaRishon cried on the first night because he thought the world would come to an end, but he didn't cry on the second night. By the second night, he understood that this was the pattern of the world. There was darkness and then light, darkness and then light again. The same is for us, Bnei Yisrael," the Chofetz Chaim explained. "In the history of the Jewish people, we have suffered through many dark eras. So many times, the 'sun set' for Klal Yisrael. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu saved us each time and we have seen the light again. So why are you so worried? The darkness we are going through now will be followed by light."<sup>5</sup>

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4. A chasid who once had a very successful day in business. He earned twenty-five rubles that day, much more than usual. But his coat ripped on the same day, and a new coat cost twenty-five rubles. The chasid went to his rebbe, the Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim zt'l, and asked him to explain what was happening. Why did he have to earn extra money only to lose it to an unexpected expense?

The Yesod HaAvodah revealed that it was decreed upon him to die r'l. But the decree was sweetened and changed so that his coat would rip instead. (The first decree was on the *clothes of the neshamah*, and the second decree was on the *clothes of the body*. The *clothes of the neshamah* is the human body. At first, it was decreed that the body should be removed from the *neshamah* - death. But the decree was changed that the *body's clothes* should be taken away, which is why his coat ripped.) But since he didn't deserve a financial loss, it was decreed that he would earn an extra twenty-five rubles - the cost of a new coat.

Let us learn from this episode that everything is for the good. It was upsetting to the chasid when his expensive coat ripped, and the entire day's profit went towards buying a new coat. But it was all for his benefit because the ripped coat saved his life.

5. Do we have to thank Hashem when we thought we had a problem, and it turns out there was no problem to begin with? Perhaps we don't have to thank Hashem for this because no salvation actually occurred.

### Feeling your Fellow Man's Pain

The Gemara (Megillah 28.) states that people asked Reb Zeira in which merit he lived a long life. He replied, "I was never happy when my friend had a problem." This Gemara is difficult to understand since this quality doesn't seem to be so special at all. How could he have been happy when his fellow man had problems? If one feels happy with another's problems, it is simply terrible middos!

Reb Yitzchak of Vorke zt'l (Siach Sarfei Kodesh) answers that Reb Zeira was saying that he wasn't happy *with his own good fortune* when he knew someone else was suffering. For example, if there was a *simchah* in his home, he couldn't rejoice, knowing that his fellow man was suffering.

Rebbe Moshe Lelover's son became dangerously ill. Everyone poured out their hearts in tefillah, and his son recovered. The family was extremely happy. When Rebbe Moshe Lelover came home and saw the great joy, he rebuked them and said, "How can you be so happy? We have a neighbor

whose son is extremely ill. How can we be happy when our neighbor is in distress?"

As a bachur, Reb Shneur Kotler zt'l was in Yerushalayim. Before returning to America for his chasunah, he said goodbye to his grandfather, Reb Isser Zalman Meltzer zt'l (Even Ha'Azul). Reb Isser Zalman gave him his brachos and walked his grandson out and down two steps.

Someone asked Reb Isser Zalman why he didn't accompany his grandson down all the stairs. He replied, "The stairs I didn't descend are for the thousands who couldn't get married." His grandson was about to get married, the *simchah* was enormous, but he didn't allow himself to be fully happy when thousands didn't have the opportunity to get married. He was referring to the thousands of young children and teens who were killed in the Holocaust.<sup>6</sup>

Rashi (Bereishis 21:6) writes on the pasuk וְתֹאמַר שְׂרָה צְחוּק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹדִים כֹּל הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ יִצְחַק לִי, that many salvations happened on the day Yitzchak was born. Many women were able to bear children, many ill people were healed that day, and there was a lot of joy in the

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We see from Adam HaRishon that even such situations warrant praise to Hashem. Adam was afraid and worried that he had caused the darkness, but then he discovered that the darkness wasn't due to his sin. It was part of the world cycle, and it was never a problem. When he discovered this, he brought a korban. He thanked Hashem that there was no problem. This teaches us that when we have a worry, and then we find out that the fear was baseless, nevertheless, we are obligated to thank Hashem.

Chazal tell us that when it was dark for Adam, Hashem granted him with intelligence to rub two stones together, and fire came forth, and he had light. Let us learn from this that during hard times, we shouldn't just merely wait for the good times to come. We should work to find the light within the darkness. We should seek ways to be happy, even during the hard times.

6. Reb Avraham Yehoshua Hershel of Kapishnitz zt'l was one of the great rebbes and tzaddikim who lived in America during the holocaust years. During the war, he ate very little and afflicted himself. The Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitz zt'l wrote him, "I know that you went to a doctor, and he gave you a diet: the foods you may not eat, and the foods you should eat. However, my friend, you follow the doctor's recommendations regarding what you shouldn't eat, but you don't follow the doctor's order to eat the foods that he recommended you eat! From the depths of my heart, I request and plead from you that you should have rachmanus on yourself and your family and stop these afflictions..."

The Rebbe of Kapishnitz wrote back, "Although I cherish everything the doctor told me. However, I have taken upon myself not to eat meat on a weekday until Hashem looks down from His holy place in heaven and has rachmanus on His nation. I am filled with fear, and my hair stands up on end when I think about the great tzaros and the destruction that our brothers of Bnei Yisrael are enduring."

world. We have to understand why this miracle occurred. Why did so many have their salvation on the day Yitzchak was born?

One answer is that due to their perfect middos, Avraham and Sarah couldn't be happy with their miracle, knowing that others were in distress. They felt that they couldn't rejoice with their salvation when there were barren women still waiting for children, ill people hoping for a cure, and so on. So, Hashem brought down many salvations on that day. This enabled Avraham and Sarah to be happy with their simchah – the birth of Yitzchak.<sup>7</sup>

The Chazon Ish gives counsel on how a person can reach a level where he feels the pain and distress of others. He writes (Igras vol.1 123), "You lack the trait of feeling the pain of others. The counsel to attain it is by trying to help those who suffer *tzaar*. Your actions [to help them] will arouse your heart. You should also daven for those in *tzaar*, even if the tefillah isn't from your heart. And this is even when the people with *tzaar* are simple and not respected."

The Chazon Ish's final words tell us that we should feel the pain of others, even that of simple and ordinary people. We can prove this from the story of the Mabul. Rashi (Bereishis 7:7) teaches that Noach and his family were obligated to live with *tzaar* in the teivah because the world was in a state of distress. But who was having *tzaar* at that time? It was the resha'im of *dor hamabul*! Nevertheless, it would be wrong for Noach and his family to be happy and relaxed while others were

suffering. From here we learn that we should feel the pain of others, even if they are on lower spiritual levels.

The Chofetz Chaim didn't sleep on a pillow during World War One. He said that when Yidden are sleeping in bunkers, he cannot sleep with a cushion.

Just to clarify, many of the levels we discussed are beyond us, and we aren't expected to live that way. We aren't obligated to sleep without a pillow, to eat minimally, or not to be happy at one's own *simchah*. But the lesson is a reminder to try to help others in need and to feel their pain.

### Bitachon

In the year 5699, during World War Two, the Nazis were approaching the city of Brisk, and many people escaped to the forest, hoping to sneak across the border to another country. The Brisker Rav's wife and children also wanted to escape, but the Rav wanted to think it over first. He wanted to put forth the right measure of hishtadlus while not letting go of his bitachon. After considering it well, he concluded that they should indeed escape, but he encouraged his family to be firm in their bitachon because their salvation would come from Hashem alone. The more bitachon they had, the greater their chance of survival. To strengthen their bitachon, the Brisker Rav told his family that they would travel without food. They would trust in Hashem that He would give them food when they needed it.

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7. There is an opinion that Moshe sent Yisro back home before matan Torah. Yalkut Shimoni (Mishlei 950) explains that Yisro couldn't be at matan Torah because Yisro didn't suffer enslavement in Mitzrayim. As if to say, "If you didn't suffer with them, you don't deserve to rejoice with the great joy of matan Torah together with them."

Reb Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi zt'l explained that the problem wasn't that Yisro wasn't a slave in Mitzrayim like the Yidden were. The issue was that Yisro lived comfortably in Mitzrayim at a time when the Egyptians oppressed the Jewish nation. The complaint against Yisro was that he didn't feel the pain of the Jewish nation who were being tortured in his country. How could he live tranquilly in Mitzrayim when the Jews suffered so much? And since he didn't participate in their sorrow, he wasn't worthy to partake in their joy.

On their first day in the forest, they met a person carrying pots of food. He told them that he had prepared the food for a chasunah, but due to the war, the wedding was postponed. He brought the food to the forest to distribute to those fleeing the Nazis.

The Rav inquired about the kashrus of the food, and when he was satisfied with what he heard, the Brisker Rav and his family enjoyed a nourishing meal. There was even dessert to end the meal on a happy note. Miraculously, and because of their strong emunah in Hashem, Hashem helped them and kept them from hunger.

Although there were leftovers from their meal when they finished, the Brisker Rav warned his family again that they should not take any food with them. They would trust in Hashem that tomorrow He would send them food again.

The following day, a similar story occurred. They met a person in the forest who had an entire meal prepared for a chasunah, postponed due to the war. There was a complete meal set up, including fish and meat, but there was no dessert this time.

No one really cared about the missing dessert. They were happy they had a good meal that could satisfy their hunger, but the Brisker Rav was very concerned about the lack of dessert. He asked his family, "Did anyone take along food from yesterday's meal?"

One of the children admitted that he had taken along some food. He explained that he was afraid there might not be food the next day, so he took some of the dessert from

yesterday's meal and stored it in a can. The Brisker Rav told his family, "We see from this the greatness of bitachon. Hashem gives to His people according to their trust in Him."

### Trust in Hashem, Alone

In the city of Radin, on the day a bachur had to sign up for the Polish army, the bachur would daven shacharis with the Chofetz Chaim (who had a private minyan in his home), and after shacharis, the Chofetz Chaim would give the bachur a brachah that he be saved from the army in the merit that he accepts on himself the yoke of Torah.

Reb Naftali Trop zt'l was the rosh yeshiva in Radin, and his son, Reb Reuven, was summoned to the army. That day, he didn't daven shacharis with the Chofetz Chaim or seek his brachah. Reb Reuven had recently suffered from tuberculosis, r'l. He was thin, appeared unwell, and was confident the army would reject him.

But the army signed him up for service. He was the only bachur drafted from the entire yeshiva. Reb Reuven told his father what occurred. Reb Naftali told him, "That is how it is. When one doesn't place his trust in Hashem, even if he is dangerously ill, he will be drafted to the army."<sup>8</sup>

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 68:2) says, "When Yaakov went to Charan, by his father's command, to find a wife, Elifaz (Eisav's son) came and took away all of his money. At that time, Yaakov said שיר למעלות אשא עיני אל הדרים מאין יבוא עזרי. Saying this *kapitel* of *Tehillim* before one takes three steps back after Shemoneh Esrei has become a segulah for finding one's shidduch easily.<sup>9</sup> Why is this

8. The Gemara (Brachos 12) says that when davening Shemonah Esrei, one should bow down when saying ברוך, and stand erect when saying ה', as it states (Tehillim 146) ה' זוקף כפופים, "Hashem straightens the bent."

Rabbeinu Yonah (on this Gemara) explains that when one is worried, he is bent over. But when one has bitachon, he has no worries and stands erect. That is how one should appear when reciting Hashem's name in Shemonah Esrei. Hashem is taking care of him, ה' זוקף כפופים, so he can stand erect.

9. This segulah is brought by the Bnei Yissaschar on parashas Vayeitzei. The source is Asarah Maamaros from the Rema m'Pano.

chapter, in particular, mesugal for shidduchim?

Perhaps we can explain that this chapter expresses the fears of a person who doesn't have any idea *מאין יבא עזרי*, where he can receive his salvation. He feels lost. But he knows that his only solution is *עזרי מעם ה'*, that Hashem will help him. And when one attains this awareness, he merits salvation.

Accordingly, this chapter isn't solely a segulah for shidduchim. It is a segulah for all one's needs.<sup>10</sup>

The Arugas HaBosem explains the pasuk (Yirmiyahu 17:7) *ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח בה' והיה ה' מבטחו*, "Blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem, and Hashem shall be his trust." This tells us that the true bitachon is to trust entirely on Hashem and not to think that his hishtadlus helped at all.

### Bitachon for Shidduchim

It is repeated in the name of the Brisker Rav zt'l that when it comes to all matters of the world, one must do hishtadlus. For example, for parnassah, the Torah says (Bereishis 3:19) *בזעת אפך תאכל לחם*, "With the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread." And for refuah, one has to go to a doctor, and so on. But when it comes to shidduchim, hishtadlus isn't needed. One doesn't have to rush from one shadchan to the next one because *מדה' אשה לאיש*, Hashem arranges shidduchim. All that a person has to do is to raise his eyes to Hashem in heaven, for He is the true shadchan, and there is no other.

The Brisker Rav concluded, "So if you will ask me why I go to shadchanim and why I make hishtadlus for my children to get married, it is to calm my nerves, but really, it isn't needed.

The Vilna Gaon (quoted in *יהל אור*) said, *שוא הוא*, "It is foolish the toil (hishtadlus) of people when it comes to shidduchim, because everything is from Hashem."

When Avraham sent Eliezer to find a shidduch for Yitzchak, he said to Eliezer (24:7) *ה' אלקי השמים... הוא ישלח מלאכו לפניך ולקחת אשה*, "Hashem, the G-d of the heavens... He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there." Notice the word *לפניך*, "before you". The malach will go before Eliezer, showing him the way. Eliezer repeated what Avraham had said to Lavan and Besuel, but he repeated it slightly differently. He said, (24:40) *ה' אשר התהלכתי לפניו ישלח מלאכו אתך והצליח דרכך ולקחת אשה לפני*, "Hashem, before Whom I walked, will send His angel *with you* and make your way prosper, and you shall take a wife for my son..." This time, it states *אתך*, that the malach will go "with you". It doesn't state that the malach will go before you!

This is because Lavan and Besuel didn't understand that Hashem does everything. They thought that Hashem only *helps*. Therefore, Eliezer spoke to them on the level they could comprehend. He reported that Avraham told him that Hashem would go *אתך*, with him. Hashem would help him find the shidduch, but Eliezer would also need to do his part. However, Avraham told Eliezer the truth: Hashem will send His malach before him and direct him on the path. Everything is from Hashem, entirely, and not from his hishtadlus.

This reminds us of the renowned story of a person who spoke at the final sheva brachos of his youngest child. He had a large family of fifteen children, who were all married. At the final sheva brachos, he wanted to express his joy that he reached this stage. But when

<sup>10</sup> The Kaf HaChaim (426:10) writes that being careful always to recite *kiddush levanah* with kavanah and with a minyan is a segulah to find a shidduch. A hint to this idea can be found in the word *לבנה*, moon, which is *roshei teivos* of *ליום הרביעי*, a *besulah* gets married on Wednesdays. (These are the first words of Masechta Kesubos and hints at the concept that *kiddush levanah* is mesugal for shidduchim and marriage.)

he stood up to speak, he said something so unusual and surprising that his children were embarrassed and wanted to stop him from speaking. This is how he began his drashah:

"I married off fifteen of my children, and Hashem didn't help me at all!"

His children thought their father had lost his mind! (They thought that perhaps due to the debts of all the chasunos or because of some other trauma, he lost his sanity). They stood up to stop him, but their father immediately explained: "Hashem didn't help me. He did everything!"

Rashi (24:42) writes, יפה שיחתן של עבדי אבות לפני, המקום מתורתן של בנים, שהרי פרשה של אליעזר כפולה "The conversations of the servants of the Avos are more beloved before Hashem than the Torah of their children. For the parashah of Eliezer is written twice in the Torah, whereas many fundamentals of the Torah were given only through allusions."

This Chazal is renowned, but there is another similar phrase from Chazal, which is less known. It states in this week's parashah (24:32) ויבא האיש הבייתה ויתן... ומים לרחץ רגליו ורגלי האנשים "And the man came to the house... and he gave... water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him." The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 60:8) writes, יפה רחיצת עבדי, "It is better before Hashem the washing of the slaves' [feet] than the Torah of the [avos's] children." What is the significance of washing the feet?

The concept of washing feet is also mentioned when Avraham brought in guests (beginning of וירא). It states there (18:4) יקח נא מעט מים ורחצו רגליכם, "Please let a little water be taken, and bathe your feet."

Rashi writes that Avraham thought the *malachim* were Arabs merchants who bowed down to אבק שברגליהם, the dust on their feet,

so he was cautious to wash their feet, to remove the dust, that was avodah zarah.

The Divrei Yechezkel zt'l asks, what type of avodah zarah is this? We never heard that people worship the dust of their feet!

He explains that it means they believed in their hishtadlus, which is equivalent to bowing down to the dust. The Arab merchants would think, "Because I went here or there, I made money. It is good that I decided to go there." They attributed their success to their feet, to their hishtadlus, and not to Hashem who does everything.

Avraham would make sure to wash their feet. He didn't permit this avodah zarah to enter his home because we must believe that parnassah is from Hashem, not our hishtadlus.

The Arugas HaBosem also explains that the avodah zarah that is mentioned here is the belief in hishtadlus, however, he explains אבק שברגליהם "the dust of the feet" a different way.

He says that רגלי doesn't only mean "feet." It also means one's hishtadlus for parnassah (see Bereishis 33:14, לרגל המלאכה). And the word אבק, dust, is used in halachah and Chazal to describe a slight transgression, not the primary transgression. For example, there is the concept of אבק לשון הרע, the dust of lashon hara. It isn't actual lashon hara, but it is dust, a sub-category of lashon hara of a lesser severity. Another example is אבק ריבית, the dust of ribis. The Arugas HaBosem explains that there is also אבק עבודה זרה, the dust of avodah zarah. It isn't the primary aveirah but a sub-category of avodah zarah of a lesser severity. An example of אבק עבודה זרה, says the Arugas HaBosem, is when one thinks that his hishtadlus brings him his wealth. Avraham would wash אבק שברגליהם, the slight avodah zarah of believing in hishtadlus.<sup>11</sup>

11. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't do hishtadlus, rather it means that we shouldn't believe in the hishtadlus, only in Hashem.

Eliezer came to make a shidduch, and they had to remember that it is from Hashem, not their hishtadlus. Indeed, it was revealed by this shidduch מזה יצא הדבר, that it was from Hashem. This is why he had to wash his feet from the dust.

We now understand the Midrash, יפה עבדי אבות יותר מתורתן של בנים, that Hashem loves the washing of the slaves' feet more than the Torah of the children. The washing of the feet represents the belief that it isn't our hishtadlus; rather, it is from Hashem. And this awareness is a very significant accomplishment and level in emunah.<sup>12</sup>

### The Shidduch is from Hashem

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.<sup>13</sup>

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 מה 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 parents' inheritance, but an intelligent woman is from Hashem."<sup>14</sup>

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 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 it has another version (*girsas*). 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,

12. The Arugas HaBosem concludes, "Let us take mussar from this that even in matters of avodas Hashem, if Hashem wouldn't help, we would fail. One shouldn't feel proud because everything is from Hashem Yisbarach."

13. Rashi explains that Lavan and Besuel said, "We can't say no to this *shidduch* because it was clearly arranged by Hashem" since Eliezer told them that while he was davening for the right *shidduch*, Rivkah arrived (see 24:45).

Rashbam writes that Lavan and Besuel said, לא הסתירה ולא הבניין תלוי ברצוננו, neither to make nor to break the *shidduch* depends on us. כי על כרחנו רוצים או לא רוצים, it will happen, whether we like it or not. כי הקב"ה עושה זאת, for Hashem is doing this *shidduch*, and He has the ability."

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 lower the rich and make them poor. Because only that way will the destined *shidduchim* occur.<sup>14</sup>

Sefer Chassidim (216) teaches that we sometimes see *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 father of the chasan and the father of the kallah is called "the *מחותן*" *mechutan*, and the mother is called "the *mechutenste*". The Belzer Rav *zt'l* asked that it would make more sense if the father were called "the *מחתן*" *michaten* (verb) because, to a large extent, he made the *shidduch*, he paid for the wedding and so on. Why should he be called *מחותן*, which implies that the marriage happened to him? But the explanation is that the parents don't make the *chasunah*, even if they were involved in choosing the *shidduch* and paying for the *chasunah*. They remain *מחותן*; it happened to them. The *מחתן*, the One who makes the *chasunah*, is Hashem himself.

Similarly, Chazal refer to the chasan as *ארוס*. The Tosfos Yom Tov (Nedarim 10:3) asks that, according to *dikduk*, he should be called *מארס* because he is the one who marries

the woman. *ארוס* sounds like it happened to him, and not that he did it. But the answer is the same. Everything is arranged from heaven. He marries the woman, but in a way, everything happened to him.

The truth is that this is stated in the Gemara (Sotah 2): "Forty days before the child is formed in the womb, a *bas kol* announces *בת פלוני לפלוני*, "The daughter of *ploni* will marry *ploni*." The *shidduch* was arranged and planned even before the child was born, so it was destined that they should get married.

The Tenaim contract contains the words *המגיד מראשית אחרית הוא יתן שם ושארית*. It is said in the name of the Rema *m'Pano* that the words *ראשית* and *שארית* have the same letters. This is to hint to the chasan and kallah that just like at the beginning of their married life, at the end of their married life, *ראשית*, they knew that the *shidduch* was from heaven and that Hashem arranged it, they should also remember this ten years after the marriage, and twenty years after the marriage, and so on. They should remember at the end that the *shidduch* was from heaven from the *ראשית*. Keep this *emunah* in *hashgachah pratis* alive throughout the marriage.

### Hashem is Watching

It states (24:62), *ויצחק בא מבוא לחי רואי*. Rebbe Henech of Alexander *zt'l* explained, *ויצחק*, laughter, and happiness, *בא*, comes *מבוא לחי רואי*, when one believes that the *חי*, living Hashem, *רואי*, sees him. Because when one believes and realizes that Hashem is always

14. Obviously, the preferable solution is for the poor side to become wealthy. This is hinted in *Kesubos* (48.), *עולה עמו ואינו יורדת עמו*, "The wife rises to the level of her husband, but she shouldn't go down to his level."

This can also explain *b'derech tzachus*, why people say, "The *shidduch* should be *עולה יפה*." This hints 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 should go up, rather than the opposite.

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 *shidduchim* to fruition.

watching and taking care of him, he will be happy.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim explains the *pasuk* as follows: יִצְחָק represents fear of Hashem. בָּא, fear of Hashem comes מְבוֹא לְחַי לְרוֹאֵי, when one believes and knows that Hashem is always watching over him.<sup>15</sup>

A Lubavitcher chassid escaped World War Two by going to Shanghai and then to Montreal, Canada. Every day, he davened for a very long time. Once, he kept repeating over and over again, the *pasuk* from Ashrei מְלִכּוּתְךָ מְלִכּוּת כָּל עוֹלָמִים וּמְשַׁלֵּתְךָ בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר, "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 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 מְלִכּוּתְךָ מְלִכּוּת כָּל עוֹלָמִים, that Hashem is everywhere, and His kingship rules over everything.

### Time is the 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. If Sarah, *chas veshalom*, had 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 encouraged Reb Akiva's students to stay awake, for they became aware of the value of time, and that there is no greater loss than lost time.

About Avraham, it states (24:1), וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא, ביָמָיו, "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, לִמְעַן ה', For Hashem's sake, distance yourself from *batalah*, idleness, as distant as a shot arrow... If a person threw

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15. A couple of years ago, a girl was employed at a local supermarket. One of her responsibilities was to return all the items taken off the shelves and placed elsewhere in the store. This task she performed after store-hours.

On the first day on the job, she noticed that her boss also stayed in the store after closing. She thought it was a one-time thing. But the next day, when her boss was there again after closing hours. She came home and told her father she no longer wanted to work there.

According to halachah, it wasn't a situation that involved an actual *issur yichud*, but she was uncomfortable and felt it was a breach in *tznius*.

Some days later, she met a woman who also worked in the store and asked her why she left. She told her the reason. That woman was impressed by her *yiras Shamayim*, and 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 up to par. I just met the sister of that *bachur*. She left her job because of *tznius*! So, you see, the *yiras Shamayim* in that house is strong."

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

As we say in *Baruch She'amar*, Hashem is מְשַׁלֵּם שְׂכָר טוֹב לִירְאָיו, pays a good reward for those who fear Him.

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... They waste their time at night, 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 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. With time, one can attain the eternal world because all perfection is attained specifically in this world."<sup>16</sup>

The Gemara (*Yoma* 86:) teaches, גדולה תשובה, שמארכת ימיו של אדם, "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 called 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>17</sup>

### Gemilus Chasadim

Eliezer set a test to determine who was a fitting wife for Yitzchak. He would 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, יצחק, אתה הוכחת לעבדך, this is proven to be good for Yitzchak."

16. The following *mashal* is told:

Someone entered a cemetery and read the headstones, "Here lies Reb Shimon ben Dovid. He lived for two years." Most *matzeivos* read that the *niftar* lived one or two years. The oldest among them was 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 went into town and asked the wise men for an explanation. They told him, "In this city, we don't write how old a person was when he died; we write the number of years he *lived*. Only the hours utilized for Torah, *tefillah*, and mitzvos are considered time *lived*. We add up the hours he spent *living*, and that's what we write on the headstone. Sadly, sometimes a long life adds up to just about a year."

*Chazal* (*Brachos* 18:) say, רשעים בהייהם קרואים מתים, 'Resha'im are called dead, even in their lifetime.' True, they are living, but they are as good as dead because they aren't using their time productively for Torah and mitzvos. Regarding learning and keeping the Torah, it states (*Mishlei* 9:11), כי בי ירבו ימך, 'With me, you will live long.' Ultimately, only time used in service of Hashem is called living.

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

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, "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?

The Or HaChaim (24:18) explains that Rivkah acted with greater piety than Eliezer tested for. "Rivkah didn't tell Eliezer immediately that she would give water to his camels, and this demonstrates her generosity. The *tzaddekes* figured that if she told Eliezer right away that she would 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 he would drink as much as he needed at his own pace. After he finished drinking, she said, 'I will draw for your camels.'

The Shlah found in the *parashah* another remarkable facet of Rivkah's kindness. After Eliezer finished drinking, it states (24:20), ותמהר ותער כדה אל השקת ותרוץ עוד אל הבאר, "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, ...האיש 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.

Many miracles were performed for Rivkah. For example, it states (24:67), וביאה יצחק, והיה היא, וראה אמו, ויהיה האהלה, ויהיה האהלה שרה אמו, and behold she was like his mother, Sarah... As long as Sarah lived, the candles burned from *erev Shabbos* to *erev Shabbos*, 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 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 *pasukim* that Rivkah gave a drop of water to the camels and 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* in Rivkah's deeds. A drop of water was blessed in their stomachs, and they had enough. It also states, ותער כדה אל השוקת, that after the slave drank, the jug was still full, like when she gave it to him! Also, it states, ותשאב לכל גמליו, one drawing of water 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 at 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 how 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 excellent *middos*.<sup>18</sup> As Targum Yonason (24:67) writes, ורחמה בגין דחמא עובדה א דתקן כעובדי אמיה "Yitzchak loved Rivkah because he saw that her deeds were good, like the deeds of Sarah, his mother."

As Reb Yechezkel of Kuzmir *zt'l* explains, "Hashem performs miracles. The good deeds and the good *middos* are man's part."<sup>19</sup>

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**18.** Even after Eliezer saw Rivkah performing miracles, he checked whether she had good *middos*. The Klausenberger Rebbe *zt'l* says that this proves that one can be a *baal mofes* (miracle worker) but might still have bad *middos*.

**19.** 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 to Rivkah. (4) The *malach* switched the plates so Besuel would eat the poisoned food, not Eliezer. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* says that every *shidduch* involves miracles.

The Kozeglover 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 the obstacle the Satan puts forth.