

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ויבאה יצחק האהלה שרה אמו ויקח את רבקה ותהי לו לאשה ויאהבה וינחם יצחק אחרי אמו ... (בר-סו)

The *Medrash* (quoted by **Rashi**) tells us that when Yitzchok married Rivka, he brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, “*for as long as Sarah was alive, a candle burned from one Shabbos eve to the next, a blessing was found in the dough, and a cloud was attached to the tent. When she died, these things ceased, and when Rivka arrived, they resumed.*”

This is a story about a Holocaust survivor who endured the horrors of war while losing everything she held dear in her life. Her family and friends were gone, and as she attempted to pick up the pieces of her broken life after liberation, her faith and Jewish observance seemed to have gone along with them. Growing up in a religious household, lighting *Shabbos* candles was a special part of her week, but now, with no faith to keep her going, she could not bring herself to do it. She stopped observing *Shabbos* and did not light *Shabbos* candles.

With time, however, her attitude mellowed and she became inspired to review her decision against *mitzvah* observance. With the help of caring individuals, she returned to the fold and resumed a religious lifestyle, as she had done in her teen years. She became a *shomeres Shabbos* and looked forward to lighting *Shabbos* candles again.

However, she recalled from her youth a *halacha* she learned, that if a woman fails to light *Shabbos* candles for whatever reason, she is required to light an extra candle the following Friday evening. She missed so many *Shabbosos*, she thought to herself, tears streaming down her eyes, how can I just simply light two candles now? Based on simple calculations, she reckoned she would need a hundred candles each week to make up for the time she missed. How will she be able to do that?

She conveyed her concerns to a confidant and that person said that he knows just the right person to consult. He arranged a time for her to speak with **R’ Yisroel Zev Gustman ז”ל**, *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Netzach Yisroel-Rameilles* in Jerusalem, and discuss the situation with him. He was a man who understood the plight of downtrodden individuals and always seemed to have the right words of *chizuk* to say to them. The woman did as he said and called the *yeshivah* building. R’ Gustman happened to be talking to a few of his *talmidim* in the office when he received the call from this new *Ba’alas Teshuva*.

Between her tears, the woman described her plight and her recent rejuvenation with *mitzvah* observance. She wanted to know what she should do with regard to lighting *Shabbos* candles. Is it true that she needs to light many candles to make up for what she had missed? Without hesitation, R’ Gustman responded with a gentle authority. He told her, “When you light candles before *Shabbos*, be sure to put a penny aside for *tzedaka* each and every week.”

The woman was silent. Is that all, she inquired, and the *Rosh Yeshivah* assured her that all she needs to do is put aside a penny a week - no more no less. Sounding relieved, the woman thanked the *Rosh Yeshivah* and hung up.

The *talmidim* present were quite surprised at their *Rebbi’s* response. They too were familiar with the *halacha* that if a woman fails to light *Shabbos* candles, she is supposed to add a candle the following *Shabbos*. This woman missed many *Shabbos* lightings, hence she should have to light many candles every *Shabbos*. Or at least something comparable.

They asked R’ Gustman and he replied with the sensitivity of a true *Gadol B’Yisroel*. “I received a tradition from my *Rebbi*, **HaGaon R’ Chaim Ozer (Grodzenski ז”ל**, Chief Rabbi and *Av Beis Din* of Vilna), that when it comes to all matters of people seeking to do *teshuvah*, the rulings of a *posek* in this world is also accepted in the heavenly courts. Now, as a *dayan* (judge) from the *Beis Din* in Vilna, I have the authority to issue a ruling that will hopefully inspire mercy in heaven for this women.” The *talmidim* listened earnestly but they did not understand.

R’ Gustman continued. “This woman went through incomparable suffering and torture during the second world war. If I tell her to light a hundred-plus candles every Friday night, I will be compounding the pain of her suffering with the guilt of her past sins of not lighting *Shabbos* candles. How can I do that to this woman in pain? I want to alleviate her pain. I am certain that the heavenly court will accept my ruling that she put a penny in the *pushka* before she lights and that will be sufficient.”

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

ומכלך דוד וכן בא בימים ... (מלכים א’ א-א)

Chazal teach that *Avraham Avinu* and *Dovid Hamelech* had intertwining souls which is why the words (זקן בא בימים) were chosen to describe both the end of *Avraham’s* life and the life of *Dovid Hamelech*. *Chazal* explain that this correlation teaches us that if one lives a life of righteousness and *chessed* like *Avraham Avinu* and *Dovid Hamelech*, he too will merit to live “a full life.” The question is, if *Avraham Avinu* is considered the pillar of *chessed* and all that it stands for, why does *Chazal* need to bring *Dovid Hamelech* as another example of someone with these virtues?

R’ Shmuel Laniado ז”ל (**Kli Yakar on Nach**) answers

that there are many different levels of *Chessed* that one can perform, and a person can achieve great strides in this *Middah* on his own personal level too. Although it is true that *Avraham Avinu* is the prime example of someone who mastered the attribute of *chessed*, it is still easy for someone to dismiss this and say that *Avraham* was living on a higher plateau and his level of giving doesn’t apply to a common man.

The *Kli Yakar* elucidates that to debunk this mistaken notion, *Chazal* explain that *Dovid Hamelech* who worked on himself tirelessly, achieved great heights in this *middah*, and just as he also became a role model in how to perform *chessed*, each individual person - no matter his social or financial standing - can be a role model for someone else.

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מחשבת הלב

וישקל אברהם לעפרן את הכסף אשר דבר באוני בני חת ארבע מאות שקל כסף עבר לסוד (בנ-מז)

When *Avraham Avinu* came to *Chevron* to bury his beloved wife Sarah, he spoke to *Efron Hachiti* to negotiate for the land.

Rashi tells us: Efron is spelled without a “vav” because he promised much but did not do even a little (he promised the cave as a gift but took a great deal of money for it). I would be remiss not to mention a classic *vort* from my *Zaida*, **Rav Chaim Yosef Kofman ז”ל**. The *Gemara* learns through a גזירה שוה that קדושי אשה could be effected using money (“קידה קידה משדה עפרון”). He asked, we have no better place to learn such a lofty ceremony like *Kiddushin* other than from *Efron Hachiti*, a bonafide crook?

He answered, that in this transaction, *Avraham Avinu* acquired the *Me’aras Hamachpelah*, a priceless purchase for all eternity, while Efron pocketed a small fortune, 400 silver coins. They each walked away feeling that they just closed the deal of the century! The same goes for marriage. Each side - the boy and the girl - should feel that they got a steal; a great catch! Additionally, when it comes to in-laws, whether it’s a mother, daughter, or son-in-law, we have to be so careful with what we say and how we say it. I have an aunt who always says, “My daughter-in-law - she’s just the best!” Compliment a person to his/her in-laws. You can make or ruin a relationship. Make sure each side feels like they won the jackpot!

In conclusion, the *posuk* at the end of the *parsha* lists the names of the *Bnei Ketura*. Their names were “משמע, דומה, מושא”. I heard a *pshat* from one of the *Brisker Rabbanim*, who based it on a **Targum Yonoson ben Uziel**. He translates the three names as follows: “נצמיתא ושיתוקא וסוברא” - which means, listen, be quiet, carry. These are life lessons for our interpersonal relationships. Sometimes, we just have to listen, hold our tongues, and not respond to an irate person’s tirade, and help them with their emotional burdens as well. May *Hashem* give us all the strength to excel in our *bein adam l’chaveiro*.

משל למח הדבר דומה

ויבא אברהם לספר לשרה ולבכתה ... (בנ-ב)

משל: The following story is quoted in *Sefer Sichas Chulin shel Talmidei Chachamim*: **Rebbitzen Sarah Rivka**, the wife of **R’ Shabsi**, *Av Beis Din* of Krasny, along with **Rebbitzen Dina**, the wife of **R’ Shaul**, *Av Beis Din* of Hag, were righteous and brilliant women who learned *Torah* and even authored the *techina* called “*Imahos.*” They were once sitting at a wedding and conversing in *Torah* topics.

R’ Tzvi Hirsch, the *Av Beis Din* of Berlin, walked by and was impressed with their *Torah* scholarship. With a smile, he interjected and said, “It is the way of *Torah* scholars to say a מילתא דבדיחותא (a joke) before learning (*Shabbos 30b*), so maybe you can tell me something humorous?”

Rebbitzen Sarah Rivka wasn’t amused with the request and responded, “With respect, the reason a joke is said prior to learning is due to the *Kedusha* of *Torah*, because the Sages were concerned maybe the *Satan* will come and take hold of the purity and contaminate it. So a joke is said at the start, to

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTSON THE MIDDAH OF – עצמיות

דרגה יתירה

ויקח העבד וכו' וילך וכל טוב אדניו בידו ... (בר-י)

The *Medrash* (ויק"ו ל-ג) tells us that when *Dovid Hamelech* saw with *Ruach Hakodesh* that in the future great *tzaddikim* will come out from his offspring, he called himself “מלך” (king). When he saw wicked sinners in his future as well, he called himself “עני” - a poor person. **R’ Simcha Sheps ז”ל** points out that *Dovid Hamelech* did not see himself as a king when he sat upon his throne, or when he valiantly and victoriously fought *milchemes Hashem*. The only time that he referred to himself as “king” was when he saw that in the future his children would follow in his ways and perform the will of *Hashem*.

This, explains R’ Sheps, is the meaning of Eliezer’s remark that when he went to find a wife for Yitzchok, he took with him “כל טוב אדני” - all the goods of his master. What exactly did Eliezer take with him? Did he bring with him *Avraham’s* entire fortune? All his sheep and cattle, gold and silver? That must have been quite cumbersome!

Actually, “*kol tuv adonav*” did not weigh anything at all! The “goods” of *Avraham* was the beautiful way of life that *Avraham Avinu* exemplified. It was his essence, his purpose, his *avodas Hashem* that was placed into Eliezer’s hands. In order to perpetuate the legacy of *Avraham Avinu*, Yitzchok, his children and grandchildren after him, would certainly need a wife/mother figure that would instill in them the values of their exemplary *Zaida Avraham*.

So Eliezer took with him “*kol tuv adonav*” - the beautiful *derech* of *Avraham*, in order to match up a wife for Yitzchok that would follow him in this lifestyle. May we all be *zoche* to merit the blessing at the end of the above-mentioned *Medrash*, that the greatest pleasure of a person is the success of his children in *Torah* and *yiras shamayim*.

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"l

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUITMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO