

Honorable Mentchen: Consideration

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

The Torah teaches us the importance of expressing gratitude and how being a grateful person makes us into a happy person. The Gemara defines a good guest and a bad guest. Ben Zoma says a good guest is one who says how much trouble has my host gone to for me. The ungrateful guest looks at the same situation very differently. He says, "Whatever they did they did for themselves. I was hardly a beneficiary." Many of us go through life as bad guests. We belittle others and are ungrateful. We have to learn to focus on the good and express gratitude.

There is a negative commandment in the Torah, "You may not despise an Egyptian for you were once a stranger in their land." Although there's a *mitzvah* to remember how the Egyptians afflicted us, we may not despise them because when we were desperate they gave us shelter. If the Egyptians made us suffer and we have to be grateful to them, how much more so must we be grateful to a

friend who does us a kindness. It's human nature that if someone does us a favor many times and then one day curtails that favor, we just forget all the good done in the past and only focus on the negative. People tend to think, "If it was me I surely would have done the favor." But one never knows. We judge other people by their actions and ourselves by our intentions. Don't focus on the negative. Remember the good.

Rabbi Telushkin mentions another way a person could be a bad guest. If a couple goes to a *simcha* at someone's house, very often the husband and wife will conduct a post mortem on the way home. "The soup was burnt. The salad was horrible." The *baalei simcha* may have spent hours preparing. They invested effort to give you a good time. Harping on the negative shows ingratitude.

Another lesson in avoiding ungratefulness is never to take advantage of someone who's

been good to you. If someone does you a favor you owe him the decency to repay the kindness. Great Rabbis would go out of their way to do acts of *chesed* not only to someone who did them a favor but to someone who had done a kindness for their parents or grandparents.

We only begin to appreciate that which we have when we lose it. We need to be grateful for the good when we have it. Rav Asher Arieli once recounted how he had met a person who had a problem with his swallowing muscle. The man said he had never known there was such a muscle. He never appreciated what it meant to swallow until he lost the ability. We have the same problem with *tefilah*. We pray for good health when we are ill. In truth we should thank Hashem every day for our health and all the countless blessings He continues to give us.

Camel Commotion: Parshat Chayei Sarah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

The Torah relates the initial meeting of Yitzchak and Rivka in inverse parallel structure. Rivka was coming from her father's home in Charan. Yitzchak was coming from Be'er Lachai Roe. Both were on the road. Neither was in a defined place. The Torah states that Yitzchak went out towards evening to talk to God in the field. He raised his eyes and noticed camels coming. Rivka also raised her eyes, beheld Yitzchak, and fell from her camel. She asked Eliezer, "Who is this man walking in the field towards us?" Eliezer answered, "He is my master." She then took the veil and covered herself. The commentators explain these verses as the preparations our ancestors made for finding their match and for beginning to forge the life of a Jewish family.

Yitzchak was forty years old. He knew he was ready for marriage. *Vayovenu Bamikrah* interprets his journey as his personal effort in the quest for a wife. He knew he could not marry a girl from Canaan and that he was prohibited from leaving the holy land. These two elements made it impossible for him to search for a bride. Even though Avraham had

sent Eliezer back to the old country to find a match, there was no guarantee of success. So Yitzchak was involving himself in the *mitzvah* of making matches in the hopes that he too would merit his own mate. He went to Be'er Lachai Roe to bring Hagar, who had done *teshuva*, back to Avraham.

Yitzchak established the *Mincha* afternoon prayer. It is in the afternoon, says Rav Reiss, when we are heavily enmeshed in the concerns of daily work that we may easily forget that everything is dependent on the will of Hashem. Certainly, finding an appropriate spouse is subject to His will. But there is a much deeper mystical connection. Rav Avigdor Parness in *Lev Tahor* takes us back to the time of creation again. He references each hour of the sixth day and how Hashem created Adam and Chava. By the ninth hour, they were already complete and were commanded not to eat from the *eitz hadaat*. In the tenth hour, Chava and Adam transgressed that one commandment and ate of the fruit. That hour when the Creator went out into the field symbolically searching for Adam and asking him rhetorically "Ayekah, where are you," was

the same hour of the day that Yitzchak went out into the field to reconnect with his Maker and rectify the sin of Adam. But to do so completely, he also needed his *ezer kenegdo* to represent Chava.

Rav Moshe Bick notes that when Yitzchak davened *Mincha*, he not only davened for his *ezer kenegdo* (helpmate), but for all of Klal Yisroel. He saw all of Jewish history before his eyes till the time of Moshiach. He knew that one of the signs that Moshiach is that *chutzpah* (impudence) will increase. He also knew that it would be a time fraught with death and destruction. Yitzchak used his self-nullification in prayer to counter this arrogance and try to prevent the massive destruction. When he saw the *gemalim*, the camels, he saw it as a sign of redemption, for it echoes Hashem's promise that although his descendants will go down to Egypt, "Gam aloh aaleh, I will also bring them up again."

Chessed will also play a critical role in ushering in the redemption. When Yitzchak saw Rivka on the *gemalim*, especially after Eliezer related how Rivka gave him and all the

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camels enough water to drink, he knew that Hashem had sent him his destined mate to complete his mission. When Rivka saw Yitzchak approaching, she was overwhelmed by the aura surrounding him, and she either fell off her camel in awe or slid off in respect. Perhaps, as Meor Vashemesh suggests, she fell figuratively. She must have known she was on a higher spiritual level than her father and brothers. But now she was witnessing true greatness. She reassessed her own worth and her stature fell in her own eyes. But she decided to grow and do *teshuvah*, and so

she took her veil and covered herself in modesty and determination.

The Belzer Rebbe explains that Rivka understood that her contribution to the household would be the attribute of *chessed*, kindness. But the aura of Yitzchak's *gevurah* was so strong, that Rivka worried it would overwhelm her *chessed* and she would not be an appropriate helpmate. To this Eliezer answered, "He is my master," he has grown up in the home of my master Avraham whose defining characteristic was also *chessed* and

he carries some of this within himself as well. As Rabbi Dovid Cohen points out, Eliezer reassured Rivka that they would balance each other out. In the same vein, we too must strive to achieve equilibrium between the attributes of *chessed* and *gevurah* within us. Although Yitzchak and Rivka were extremely different, they shared a common goal. Their differences served to complement each other and teach us how we can be inspired to grow and use each of our *middot* to build the world Hashem meant us to build.

Mesillat Yesharim: Midot

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

Hashem wants our actions to be pure. We must be careful to stay far away from such sins as *Chilul Shabbat*, *Chilul Hashem*, *onaah*, theft, and dishonesty. But perhaps a higher level than *nekiut* in action is *nekiut* in *middot*. Overcoming one's bad *middot* such as jealousy and anger can often be more difficult than abstaining from sin. Good *middot* are an innate part of the soul and stem from above. Bad *middot* develop within us as we grow. The commentators explain the verse "*Naaseh adam...*" (Let us make man.) *Naaseh* is written in plural form to teach us that man is meant to be a partner in forming himself. When Hashem fashioned man, he put into him myriad animalistic characteristics. We are meant to transcend these evil traits with the power of Torah and with fear of heaven. We are given the strength to subdue and destroy the evil within us and bring out our noble qualities.

The Rambam writes that people make a mistake and think that they only need to repent for the sins they committed. In fact a person must also repent for his corrupt ideas and philosophies and for his bad *middot*. Rav Yisrael Salanter once said that it's more difficult to uproot one evil *middah* than to go

through the entire Shas. A person could claim, "Hashem made me this way, this is my nature, it's a family trait, there's nothing I could do." But the sages say, "*Barasi yetzer hara barasi Torah tavlin.*" I created an evil inclination but I created Torah to counteract it. Torah gives a person the strength to transform his negative character traits.

The Gemara says if a person breaks vessels, throws his money around, or tears his clothing in anger it is as if he worships idols. When he does this he lets his anger manipulate him. He shows that he does not believe that Hashem controls all that happens. *Nekiut* means being patient, working on one's *middot*, judging favorably, and not getting angry because one knows it is Hashem who is in charge.

The Torah tells us, "*V'ram levavecha v'schachachta et Hashem.*" Arrogance can cause a person to forget Hashem and the Torah. So too anger can cause a person to forget the Torah he learned. We see that Torah is not just an intellectual pursuit. It involves the *middot* of a person as well.

The Mesilat Yesharim discusses jealousy. One who envies another person shows that he

lacks intelligence and understanding. He does not gain anything or cause anyone loss by being jealous. The Ibn Ezra gives an analogy. A peasant would never entertain the thought of marrying a princess. He'll only be envious of something he feels should've been his. When you think, "I should have been the president, the *rosh yeshiva*, the principal," your mind is telling you, "That should have been mine." In truth, no one can take anything that is not designated for him. The Ramban tells us that all of the Ten Commandments are found in Parshat Kedoshim. Where do we find the commandment of *Lo sachmod* (Do not covet)? If we would fulfill the *mitzvah* of *v'ahvata l'reiacha komocha* (Love your neighbor like yourself) in its fullest sense there would no longer be jealousy or hatred.

The Gemara tells the story of Yeravam ben Nevat. Hashem said to him, "If you do *teshuva* I and you and ben Yishai will walk together in Gan Eden." Yeravam asked, "Who will walk first?" Hashem said, "Ben Yishai will walk first." Yeravam said, "Then I don't want it." Yeravam ben Nevat lost the incredible opportunity to walk with Hashem to petty envy.