

Parshat Chayei Sara: Beautiful Badeken

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

When Rivka is about to set off to marry Yitzchak, Lavan blesses her, "Our sister, may you come to be thousands of myriads, and may your offspring inherit the gate of its foes." This blessing is customarily given to a bride before she enters her own wedding canopy. The Shvilei Pinchas asks, why choose the blessing of the evil Lavan? In fact the *Midrash* notes that Rivka remained childless specifically so people would not attribute her having children to Lavan's blessing. What was this blessing about? The Chatam Sofer z"l posits that Lavan's emphasis was on "our sister." He hoped that her children would be evil, like him. That explains why this blessing has been adopted by rabbis and sages, who will wish the bride to have righteous children as themselves.

Rabbi Wolbe z"l notes that when the *aron kodesh* was being returned to the *Mishkan* after *Bnei Yisroel* traveled in the desert (and today in shuls after each Torah reading), the congregation recites, "Return Hashem to the myriad thousands of Israel." From this verse, our sages extrapolate that God's presence rests upon *Bnei Yisroel* when there are 22,000 present. The prayer is that this marriage produce righteous children that will bring the Shechinah down and with it His many gifts.

Our Sages tell us that making a match is as difficult as splitting the Red Sea. At the Red Sea, the negative angels approached Hashem and asked why He was redeeming the Israelites who were idol worshippers, while condemning the Egyptians to death. Similarly, when attempting to make a *shidduch*, the negative angels try to thwart it. In this situation, Betuel and Lavan attested to the fact that this match was engineered by Hashem and no negative force could stop it.

However, if they could delay Rivka's departure, perhaps the attribute of justice would find a way to abort this match. Eliezer understood their tactic and responded, "And Hashem has made my journey successful. By adding "And," Eliezer was hinting that they would not be successful. With similar reasoning, writes the Shevilei Pinchas citing Ohr Lashamayim, the bride's face is covered so that the "evil eye" should not fall upon her. Breaking the glass is perhaps another attempt to foil the Accusers.

Aleinu Leshabayach contends that Lavan's blessing did come true, for Rivkah did become a matriarch of myriads and thousands. The lesson here is that we should never discount the blessing of anyone. In fact, writes Rabbi Meislsh, this is the source for giving blessings to a chatan and kallah. Everyone's blessing has power. The *Ginzei Chayim* explains that a blessing mentions the positive attributes of the recipient and thereby arouses the Giver of all blessings to expand on this attribute and give him further blessings. It is analogous to turning on a light switch which then illuminates everything else. One compliment, one affirmation of a positive attribute in another, leads to additional compliments. It gives the receiver confidence and validation, and a desire to continue to achieve on that level. The *Ramchal* urges us to find opportunities to bless other people. Not only does it bring blessings to them, but it also trains us to have a "good eye", a more positive outlook on the world. If we look for opportunities, we could be giving blessings all day long. Commenting on anything positive or even saying a simple good morning can change someone's day.

"You be myriads and thousands." Rabbi Schwadron z"l interprets this -you yourself will be the equivalent of myriads and thousands

just as Moshe Rabbenu was equivalent to all of Bnei Yisroel. The *Kli Yakar* ties the two halves of the blessing together. First, he notes that inheriting the gates of the enemy is part of Hashem's blessing to Avraham as well as part of Lavan's blessing to his sister. Then the *Kli Yakar* states that Avraham Avinu made many friends because of the extent of his *chesed*. Because of that, if he would ever be in danger, his friends would come to his aid and he would inherit the gates of his foes. Similarly, Rivka was also full of *chesed*. She too would therefore have many who would love her and come to protect her if she would be in danger. Through her *chesed* to those myriad others, she herself is the equivalent of myriads.

"And be a blessing" is both a destiny and a mission, writes the *Birkat Mordechai*. To enable Avraham to fulfill this, Hashem blessed Avraham bakol/with everything he would need. Being a blessing to others was Avraham's essence as it would be Rivkah's. It is this blessing that we bestow on a bride at her wedding. You too be a blessing to others. The acts that you do have the power to impact multitudes of people and fill the world with *chesed*. In fact, the power of a single Jew to impact the world is so great that the halacha states that if an enemy force lays siege to a city and demands one Jew in exchange for sparing the entire city, they may not deliver the victim for we do not know the worth of any individual.

Lavan's *brachah* teaches us that anyone can give a powerful *brachah*. It tells us that a sincere *brachah* can impact not only the individual we are bestowing it upon, but also many generations to come. May all our blessings to others be for the good.



Builder of Her Home Respect Sum Up Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

In Bereishit Rabbah, the Midrash tells us that women were given precedence in lighting Shabbat candles because Chava extinguished the soul of Adam. It says in Mishlei, "Hashem's candle is man's soul." Just as the nature of a candle is to rise, the soul yearns to ascend. The *neshama* can never be eradicated but it could lose its sensitivity. The physical side of a person can shout so loud that it drowns out the voice of the soul. Chava didn't let Adam hear his *neshama*. She was insightful enough to know how to influence him and how to make him hear one voice over another. Everything that is true about Adam and Chava is true about all their descendants. Every woman has the ability to ignite a soul. By lighting the *Shabbat* candles, the woman is meant to give back to Adam the spirituality

that his sin caused him to lose. The Remak explains that just as a physical blockage prevents the blood from flowing to a limb or organ which may cause it to die, so too sin is an impediment that makes the soul wither. Adam's sin engendered an immense blockage. A woman's task is to rectify this by helping her husband rediscover his soul. She can do this, not by being contemptuous, not by feeling that his lack is his definition. She can ignite his soul by having a relationship based on *kavod*. *Kavod* means acknowledgement, validation, and appreciation of what's genuinely good in the other person. It says in Mishlei, "A woman of grace will support *kavod*." She will be the pillar that makes his inner light shine. And it will be mutual. He'll mirror it back to her.

One of the ten names of the *neshama* is *kavod*. The *kavod* that defines the *neshama* is the *kavod* that is eternal. Traits such as integrity, dedication, and compassion are attributes that a woman might find in her husband if she only looks. She has to be able to zero in on them and make her husband know what is in him that deserves *kavod*. This is why one of the ten names of the soul is *kavod*. It is the part of the person that deserves acknowledgement and appreciation for its eternal nature. Every woman can give her husband a sense of his own eternity. There's no gift better than that. *Kavod* is the only thing that gives a person an enduring sense of importance and meaning. When the wife gives the husband *kavod*, his sensitivity to his *neshama* returns.

Men and Women: The Goal of Humanity Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

In Bereishit we read how Hashem tells the angels, "Let us make man in our image in our form..." The image of Hashem are His *middot*, the attributes we share in common such as *chesed*, *gevurah*, *tiferet*... The likeness is our intellectual faculties which are divine like. We seek meaning. We want to understand and draw moral conclusions.

Perek heh in Bereishit concludes the account of creation, "He made them male and female and He blessed them and He called their name Adam." Adam equals male and female. The ability to seek meaning, to understand, to draw moral conclusions, to want to contribute, overcome obstacles, see the whole picture, feel gratitude, and build relationships, are both male and female. A complete person has both components. Hashem blessed them and he said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land and conquer her..." Rashi tells us that *V'koveshuha* is written without a *vav* so that you can read it *v'kivsha*- conquer her. This teaches us that the male element is meant to conquer the female element. The man whose way is to conquer is commanded to be fruitful and multiply and not the women. The male element which is the aspect of ourselves that

says give forth has to conquer the female element, which is the part that says receive and build. Building out of nothing brings destruction. Our desire to serve Hashem, the female element of *malchut*, has to follow the dictates of *chochmah*- the male element which provides her with insight and direction. Within each person, the relationship has to be *hashpaah* and *kabbalah*, giving and then building. You cannot build from nothing. Yet you cannot give to yourself unless there's a clear desire to build.

You cannot build without wisdom. However wisdom has nowhere to go unless there's someone who will take the ideas and give them actualization. The female aspect of self is the builder while the male aspect is the provider. The provider has to conquer the builder and make what he's giving to her appealing so that she will desire to build.

Adam is placed in Gan Eden and Hashem says, "It's not good for Adam to be alone. I'll make him a helper." Unkelos translates *ezer* as *sameach*, a supporter. *K'negdo* means parallel to him which Unkelos translates as *kiblei*, facing him. Targum explains, Hashem

says- I'll make him one who helps, who's parallel to him. Targum Yonoson adds on to Unkelos, I'll make him a wife to be a supporter parallel to him. An androgynous person with male and female elements, as Adam originally was, runs the risk of imbalance. A truly autonomous person isn't good. Rashi says that Hashem split Adam in two in order that it not be said there are two authorities, Hashem unique and singular above and Adam unique and singular below. Autonomy creates the illusion that we need no one. We are not Hashem and a person remains incomplete without a spouse. Autonomy keeps us from seeing who we are and what we're here for. The Ramban says the reason that it was not good for Adam to be alone is not because of his need to reproduce but that it was better for the enabler to be separate from him. He would see her and unite with her according to his free will. Humans cannot exist alone. It leads us into the trap of separation from Hashem. Adam was originally created androgynous in order to create a certain recognition of lack of wholeness. The husband and wife, each a separate human being, has the potential to really give one to the other so that the original bond of true unity is recreated again.