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צפורה ע"ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



ענין השבוע

ALIEI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

Standing Apart

The parshah recounts at great length the story of Eliezer's quest to find a wife for Yitzchak. The story is told twice: once as it unfolds, and once as Eliezer relates it to Besuel and Lavan. There are several differences between the two narrations.

You are rootless in Olam Hazei; you are at imminent risk always. You need Torah and yiras Shamayim to keep from plunging to the abyss.

One difference is that Avraham Avinu told Eliezer, לא תקח אשה לבני מבנות, *do not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanim*, among whom I dwell (Bereishis 24:3) — but when Eliezer related this message, his version concluded, *in whose land I dwell* (24:37). Instead of בקרבו, he substituted בארצו.

There is an important difference between these two phrases. *אשר אנכי יושב בקרבו* – among whom I dwell – implies that Avraham was integrated into the larger society and shared a kinship with them. This was certainly not the case, and so to prevent misunderstanding, Eliezer changed it to *אשר אנכי יושב בארצו* – in whose land I dwell. Avraham dwelled in the land, but had no affiliation with its residents.

Avraham Avinu said it the way he did to stress that while he dwelled in the midst of the Canaanites, they and their way of life did not affect him at all. But Besuel and Lavan couldn't possibly comprehend this, so Eliezer changed the wording for them.

We must study how it was, indeed, that Avraham managed to live among the Canaanites and not be influenced by them.

The pasuk in Parshas Bereishis says (2:4), *אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם* – These are the products of the heavens and the earth when they were created, and the Gemara (Menachos 29b) states: "Do not read *בהבראם* but *בראם*, He created them with the letter hei." The world was created with the letter hei.

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Animal to Malach

ותמהר ותער כדה אל השקות, ותרך עוד אל הבאר לשאב, ותשאב לך כל גמליו

She hurried and emptied her jug into the trough and kept running to the well to draw water; and she drew for all his camels.

(Bereishis 24:20)

The *Shelah hakadosh*⁴ interprets this pasuk in the following manner. After Eliezer finished drinking from her jug, Rivkah had a dilemma. If she gave whatever water remained in the jug to the camels, it would be an insult to Eliezer, as if she equated him with the camels by giving them to drink from the same jug. And if she spilled out the jug before refilling it for the camels, that too would be an affront to Eliezer, who would see the remainder of his water spilled out on the ground. Therefore, Rivkah hurried to the trough, as the pasuk says ותמהר, and while running, she pretended to slip up and drop the jug, spilling out its contents, as the pasuk says ותער כדה. Thus, with great wisdom, Rivkah preserved Eliezer's dignity.

Agra D'Kallah writes along similar lines: Why does the pasuk mention that Rivkah first emptied her jug before giving the camels to drink? Because as *Sefer*

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The Midrash¹ expounds differently: “Do not read בְּהַבְרָאָה, but בְּבִבְרָהָם.” As we shall see, these two *derashos* complement one another.

The Torah refers to Avraham as Avram Ha’Ivri.² Chazal explain:³ the whole world was on one side (*ever*), and he was on the other side. The entire world, all its population and all it had to offer, stood on one side, while Avraham stood on the other side, completely disengaged from it. He lived a life of *ruchniyus* and had no use for the commonplace lifestyle of the world around him.

The word בְּהַבְרָאָה is explicated both as בְּבִבְרָהָם and as בְּרָאָה. It was the *middah* of Avraham Ha’Ivri, of standing apart from the world, that enabled Avraham to rise above the *hei* that represents *Olam Hazeih*.

In the pasuk אֵלֶּה תוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ, which appears near the beginning of the Torah, the letter *hei* (of בְּהַבְרָאָה is written small. And near the end

of the Torah, in the pasuk הֵן לֵה' תִּגְמְלוּ זֹאת (in Parshas Haazinu, Devarim 32:6), the letter *hei* is written large. What does this mean?

Hashem created this world to serve merely as an entranceway into the grand ballroom that is *Olam Haba*. It is a place where a person can distance himself from evil and serve Hashem faithfully to merit a place in the next world. The first *hei* is written small to demonstrate the smallness and transience of this world.

הֵן לֵה' תִּגְמְלוּ זֹאת, as the Torah nears its ending, has an enlarged *hei*, expressing rebuke: *How can you misconstrue this world as something great and worthy on its own? It is only because you entrenched yourselves in its cultures and enjoyments, and confused the ikkar with the tafel.*

The Gemara (Shabbos 31b) states: “A person who possesses Torah but not *yiras Shamayim* is comparable to a treasurer who was handed the inner keys but not the outer keys. How can he enter?” The Gemara’s phrase for “how can he enter?”

is בְּהִי עֵייל – literally, *with which can he enter?* This expression would be well suited where one has multiple keys and is unsure which to use. But here there is only one key at hand, which doesn’t fit the outer lock. Why does the Gemara ask the question this way?

Perhaps it is hardly a question at all. The Gemara is addressing a person who might reason, *Nu, what’s so terrible if I don’t have yiras Shamayim and can’t access Torah wisdom?* To this the Gemara exclaims, בְּהִי עֵייל – *You have entered the hei! You are rootless in Olam Hazeih; you are at imminent risk always. You need Torah and yiras Shamayim to keep from plunging to the abyss.*

Only with Torah and *yiras Shamayim* can a person remain apart like Avraham Avinu and keep the *hei* of the world a small *hei*. In that way, he can pass through this entranceway and enter the grand ballroom of *Olam Haba*.

(בנאות דשא – חיי שרה תשפ"ד)

1 Bereishis Rabbah 12:9.
2 14:13.
3 Bereishis Rabbah 42:8.

Parshah Potpourri

וְעָפְרוֹן יָשָׁב בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי חַת, וַיַּעַן עָפְרוֹן הַחִתִּי אֶת אֲבִרְהָם בְּאָזְנֵי בְּנֵי חַת לְכָל בְּאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ לֵאמֹר

Ephron was sitting in the midst of the children of Cheis; and Ephron the Chitti responded to Avraham in the hearing of the children of Cheis, for all who come to the gate of his city, saying: (Bereishis 23:10)

The *Moshav Zekeinim* notes that here, the pasuk says לְכָל בְּאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ, *for all who*

come to the gate of his city, while in Parshas Vayishlach, the expression is reversed. After Shechem and Chamor accepted the proposal set forth by Shimon and Levi, the pasuk says (34:24), וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל חָמוֹר וְאֶל שָׁכֶם, – *They listened to Chamor and to his son, Shechem – all the people who depart through the gates of his city.*

We may explain as follows. The pasuk (Yirmiyahu 3:19) describes Eretz Yisrael as אֶרֶץ צְבִי, a deer-like land. The Gemara (Gittin 57a) explains that once a deer’s skin is removed from it, it shrinks and can no longer fit the body of the deer. In the same way, when Klal Yisrael reside in Eretz Yisrael, it expands, and when they do not, it contracts.

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Animal to Malach

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Chassidim states,⁵ once a *brachah* has been recited on a flask of water, what is left over should not be given to an animal to drink. Since Hashem's Name was recited upon it, it must be treated with due respect. Eliezer surely made a *brachah* on his water – concludes *Agra D'Kallah* – and so Rivkah couldn't give his leftovers to animals. Therefore, she

Just as one cannot operate a machine without knowing what it is, so a person must know what he is made of to fulfill his potential

first spilled it out before refilling it for the camels.

Following the simple reading of the *pasuk*, these interpretations are difficult to reconcile. Rivkah did not spill out the water, nor was she going to give the camels to drink from the jug. As the *pasuk* says, *she emptied her jug into the trough*. A trough is where animals drink from; Rivkah poured the remaining water in the jug into the trough for the

camels to drink, and then drew more water to add to it.

Nonetheless, these *peshatim* struck me: If it is improper to feed a person's leftovers to an animal, then what about the animal within the person? How can it be allowed to benefit from the eating of a *Yid*?

The Gemara (Chagigah 16a) states that in three areas man resembles animals, and in three areas he resembles *malachim*. My father would often comment: Certainly, Chazal do not mean to denigrate man, the jewel of Creation, by comparing him to animals.

The *ba'alei mussar* would say that as bad as it is to not know one's shortcomings, it is worse to be unaware of one's strengths. But before everything, one must know his basic makeup. Just as one cannot operate a machine without knowing what it is, so a person must know what he is made of to fulfill his potential. Thus, my father would conclude, Chazal compare man to animals and to *malachim* to teach us what man is at his essence. Each person has the capacity and the obligation to tap into his inner *malach* and elevate himself to the highest levels – raising up his animal traits, too. But if he doesn't, then he's only a two-legged animal.

With this in mind, how can a person eat if he has not elevated his inner animal? Not only is he feeding human

leftovers to an animal; it's actually worse, since this animal could have been elevated to resemble a *malach*.⁶

The Gemara in Kiddushin (7a) speaks of a case where a man gives a *perutah* to a woman to marry half of her. The Gemara rules that the *kiddushin* is not valid. The Gemara then examines a *braisa* which states that if part of an animal is consecrated for a *korban*, the *kedushah* spreads throughout the animal, so that the whole animal becomes a *korban*. If so – the Gemara argues – if a man marries half a woman, the *kiddushin* should spread to include all of her, and the marriage should be valid.

The *Avnei Miluim*⁷ points out that the Gemara elsewhere (Temurah 11b) derives this halachah – that the *kedushah* of a partial-*korban* spreads to encompass it completely – from a *pasuk*. If so, how can the Gemara in Kiddushin compare it to a case of *kiddushin*, since there is no such *pasuk* regarding humans?

From a lens of Chassidus, there is no question. A person's fundamental purpose is to elevate his lower elements, his animal aspects, into holiness. It is obvious that *kedushah* in a human being will spread. Only an animal, which has no connection to holiness, needs a *pasuk* to teach that *kedushah* can spread within it.

(חיי שרה תשפ"ד, פארשפיל מוצש"ק חיי

שרה – בישיבה גדולה פני מנחם)

5 888.

6 Along these lines, it is said about various *tzaddikim* that after drinking half a cup of tea, the *tzaddik* commented that the tea already drunk envies the tea still in the cup. What was drunk, was imbibed by a simple man (in his eyes), while what is left might still be drunk by a true *tzaddik* and receive a full *tikkun*.

7 31:18.

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The *Pri Megadim*⁸ explains that Eretz Yisrael's expanding and contracting depends not on Klal Yisrael's physical presence there, but on their conduct while there. If they lead uplifted lives, raised above earthliness, then they become host to the *Shechinah* and the land expands. But if they act improperly, then the land shrinks.

When Avraham Avinu purchased *Me'aras Hamachpelah*, the city became elevated and sanctified, and so it expanded to include the surrounding areas. The pasuk thus says לְכָל בְּאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ, a reference to the multitude who now found themselves living within the city limits.

In Parshas Vayishlach, the opposite occurred. When Shechem violated the boundaries of *kedushah* that had been in place since the *Mabul*,⁹ the city of Shechem became diminished, and suddenly people found themselves outside the city limits. Accordingly, the pasuk describes the townspeople as כָּל יִצְאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ.

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וְאָבָא הַיּוֹם אֶל הָעֵין

I came today to the spring. (24:42)

Rashi cites Chazal:¹⁰ “[Eliezer said:] Today I departed and today I arrived. This shows that he experienced *kefitzas haderech*.” Rashi continues with another statement of Chazal:¹¹ “The conversation of the servants of the Avos is dearer to Hashem than the Torah of their descendants. This is clear, because while

the *parshah* of Eliezer is repeated in the Torah, many important parts of Torah are only hinted to.”

The two segments of this Rashi seem unrelated. However, *tzaddikim* taught that Rashi's *peirush* on the Torah is full of depth in every way. Certainly, these two statements must be connected.

Sefarim hakedoshim teach that שיחתן של עבדי אבות refers, as well, to the *avodah* of the Avos. The way the Avos served Hashem set an example for their descendants, who can follow their ways and draw close to Hashem. The שיחתן של עבדי אבות becomes מתורתן של בנים, especially precious, – through their descendants who learn and implement their ways.

Kefitzas haderech, literally, “jumping of the path,” represents the ability of a person to be elevated above the ground, above the earth and its ways. How can one attain this level? By applying the שיחתן של עבדי אבות, the *avodah* of the Avos, and transforming it into תורתן של בנים.

(בנאות דשא – חיי שרה תשפ"ד)

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וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בְּשָׂדֵה לַפְּנוֹת עֶרֶב

Yitzchak went out to pray in the field toward evening. (24:63)

The Gemara (Brachos 26b) cites this pasuk to teach us that Yitzchak instituted the *tefillah* of Minchah, which is prayed *toward evening*. The Gemara identifies לְשׁוּחַ as an expression of *tefillah*, based

on a pasuk in Tehillim (102:1), תִּפְּלָה לְעֵנִי, – *A prayer of the afflicted man when he swoons, and pours forth his supplications before Hashem.*

*Tosafos*¹² points out that the Gemara elsewhere (Avodah Zarah 7b) has it the other way around: the Gemara proves from וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בְּשָׂדֵה that יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בְּשָׂדֵה is an expression of *tefillah*.

From a perspective of *avodas Hashem*, we may suggest the following.

A person might think to himself, *How can a simple person like me dare to engage in tefillah, which the holy Avos introduced, and which stands at the high point of the world?*¹⁴ To demonstrate that this thinking is wrong, the Gemara cites the *tefillah* of תִּפְּלָה לְעֵנִי. Any person can daven, even one who is not on a high *madreigah*, as long as it is a תִּפְּלָה לְעֵנִי, a supplication of one who recognizes his lowliness and is brokenhearted over it.

But one who learns this lesson might conclude that he is okay remaining at his low *madreigah*, as long as he is cognizant of it and suitably depressed. To counter this, the Gemara invokes the *tefillah* of וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בְּשָׂדֵה. Just as that *tefillah* was one of transcendent *kedushah*, uttered by none less than Yitzchak Avinu, so too every *tefillah* deserves to be offered – and is most likely to be accepted – as the *tefillah* of a Yid who is laboring to grow and connect with Hashem.

(בנאות דשא – חיי שרה תשפ"ג)

8 O.C. 47, *Mishbetzos Zahav* 1.

9 Rashi, 34:7.

10 Sanhedrin 95a, Bereishis Rabbah 59:11.

11 Bereishis Rabbah 60:8, Yalkut Shimoni 109.

12 S.v. *Vein*.

13 Brachos 26b.

14 Brachos 6b.