

טוב הקהילה

בס"ד

'יו"לע"י קהילת שנת בנית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו הרה"צ ר' גמליאל רבינוביץ שליט"א

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טיב המערכת

יצחק וישמעאל בניו – His sons Yitzchak and Yishmael

A man who had been distant from Torah observance and mitzvos once shared his story of doing Teshuva. He was fortunate to have a Rav who guided him on his journey. Whenever he faced doubts, and those returning to faith often have many questions, he would consult his Rav. One issue that preoccupied him deeply was his outward appearance. He was eager to immediately grow a beard and change his external look. However, his Rav disagreed and instructed him not to alter his appearance at all. The Rav explained that such changes might alienate his close family. Instead, he advised the man to focus on spiritual growth and creating a positive, pleasant atmosphere around him. Over time, his wife and children began to draw closer to faith as well. Eventually, he learned that his family had secretly decided they would distance themselves from him if he started growing *peiyos* and a beard. At that moment, he understood the wisdom of his Rav's counsel, which had protected him from making extreme changes that could have pushed his family away. (Of course, this story is not a directive for everyone; each person should always consult their own Rav.)

HaKadosh Baruch Hu promised Avraham that he would pass away in a "good old age," meaning he would see his descendants walking on the path of righteousness. In our parsha, the Torah recounts (25:9), ויקברו אתו יצחק וישמעאל - 'Yitzchak and Yishmael, his sons, buried him.' Rashi comments, 'From here, we learn that Yishmael did Teshuva and allowed Yitzchak to lead before him, fulfilling the promise of a 'good old age' for Avraham.' But how do we know Yishmael did Teshuva? If he had a long beard and *peiyos*, it would have been obvious, and there would be no need to deduce it from the *posuk*. So what is the answer? The very fact that Yishmael changed his actions and showed respect by letting Yitzchak, the *talmid chacham*, go first, demonstrates his Teshuva.

We are all, to some extent, constantly engaged in Teshuva—this includes even the most righteous among us, and certainly ordinary people. The Torah teaches us what it means to be a '*baal teshuva*'. It is not enough to regret past misdeeds; one must actively work to change and improve his actions. Therefore, everyone should dedicate time each day to reflect on his deeds. When they identify a wrong action, they should immediately correct it and change their ways. In this way, one can live a life of continuous Teshuva.

- Tiv HaTorah – Chayei Sarah

טיב ההשגחה

'A successful miss' - 'פספוס מוצלח'

The phone rang and on the other end was my dear mother speaking in a worried tone: "Your father has been hospitalized in the U.S. Please, make sure to fly over and help him with whatever he needs!" This set off a flurry of phone calls, as I tried to arrange a same-day renewal of my passport. The issue was that my American passport hadn't been renewed in over thirty years. This meant it was not a simple renewal but rather a process akin to issuing an entirely new passport, requiring proof that I was indeed the original holder. A kindhearted man gave me clear instructions, guiding me on exactly what documents to prepare and how to prove my identity.

Following this advice, I arrived early in the morning at the American consulate to request an urgent passport. I was warned that delays, demands, and bureaucracy were highly likely. But HaKadosh Baruch Hu had other plans. I got on the line, took a number, and, in the meantime, went to photocopy a missing document. By the time I returned, my turn had passed, and I was issued a new number. The clerk who attended to me turned out to be a religious Jew (unlike the usual Arabs). To my amazement, he recognized my father and personally vouched for me, approving the passport without requiring me to prove my American citizenship.

The righteous man who had assisted me was stunned. He had prepared himself for a lengthy battle, especially given some other issues that, by Baruch Hashem, went unnoticed. Miraculously, I received my passport that very day without any complications.

I realized that sometimes missing your turn can actually be a blessing in disguise!

'And You Shall Prolong Your Days' - 'והארכת ימים'

My daughter fell ill, and even the best doctors couldn't find a cure. My father urged me to check our mezuzahs. I smiled and assured him that this was the first thing I had done, as per the *chinuch* instilled in our home. But for some reason, my father insisted, asking me to check the mezuzahs again, even though I had already verified that they were all kosher and meticulously written. I sent them for another check, and to my shock, the *sofer* discovered that one mezuzah was entirely invalid, and several others had issues with their kashrus. It turned out that the *sofer* had mistakenly returned someone else's mezuzahs to me.

Honoring one's parents never brings loss, even when it seems illogical. Immediately after replacing the mezuzahs, my daughter recovered completely, Baruch Hashem!

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ויאמר עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם אֲנִי: (כד:לד)

And he said, "I am a slave of Avraham." (24:34)

Much is told in the Midrashic writings of Chazal about the wisdom and wit of Eliezer, the servant of Avraham. He is described as someone who overturned the schemes of the wicked by using the oppressive laws of Sodom, designed to intimidate outsiders, to intimidate the Sodomites themselves. From the Torah as well, we can understand that Eliezer was a man blessed with success in every domain. The Torah relates (earlier, *posuk* 2) that Eliezer was in charge of all that belonged to his master, Avraham. To clarify the extent of his role, the Torah first tells us (*posuk* 1) that 'ה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת 'אברהם בכל' - 'Hashem blessed Avraham with everything.' Commentators explain this to mean that Avraham was blessed with wealth and possessions, all of which he entrusted to Eliezer, understanding him to be the right person whose wisdom would multiply Avraham's riches. Avraham gave Eliezer full control over his business dealings, confident in his ability.

In the spiritual realm as well, Eliezer was a great support to his master. Before Yitzchak's birth was promised, Avraham said (earlier, 15:2), 'והנה בן ביתי יורש אותי הוא דמשק אליעזר' - 'The steward of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.' Avraham's intent primarily referred to spiritual inheritance. Avraham converted people, and Eliezer greatly assisted him in this work. As Rashi explains, "Damascus" refers to one who "draws and gives others to drink" from his master's teachings. Eliezer so embodied Avraham's mission that Avraham even considered him a potential successor. From all this, we see that Eliezer was highly capable and influential in many areas.

Given this background, it is surprising to observe how Eliezer began his negotiations with Besuel regarding taking Rivka as a wife for Yitzchak. Skilled merchants typically present themselves as successful and, if they hold a high position, they are quick to emphasize it, seeking to gain favor and cooperation. Yet Eliezer, who served as the right-hand man to the renowned Avraham, did not speak of his lofty status. On the contrary, he introduced himself humbly: "I am Avraham's servant." In doing so, he downplayed his position, portraying himself as a mere servant and suggesting that his current fortune was merely the result of having been sold into servitude and being fortunate enough to be purchased by the kind and compassionate Avraham. Why did Eliezer choose to present himself in such a lowly manner? Was this not contrary to proper strategy?

However, upon deeper reflection on Eliezer's character, his behavior becomes clear. As noted, Eliezer was deeply committed to spreading his master's teachings and faithfully conveying Avraham's worldview and beliefs. Avraham relied on him to transmit these ideas in their entirety, without omitting any detail. This necessarily implies that Eliezer adhered to Avraham's doctrine of faith in all its particulars.

According to this doctrine of *emunah*, success does not depend on human effort (*'hishtadlus'*) at all. Rather, effort is merely a divine decree requiring people to engage in activity as a means to conceal Hashem's miraculous influence within the natural order. Although it often appears that effort yields success, this does not prove a causal relationship. Sometimes, KaKadosh Baruch Hu desires to make effort the apparent reason for success, but this is not always the case. Indeed, there are instances where, after fulfilling their obligation to exert effort, individuals achieve success through completely unexpected means.

Even a person who typically believes and 'remembers' that success is not dependent on effort might forget this when deeply immersed in it, particularly when the effort yields favorable outcomes. This forgetfulness can lead not only to a lapse in faith but also to arrogance, as one begins to attribute success to personal strength and wisdom. For this reason, it is fitting that whenever one experiences success, they reinforce their awareness that everything is in the hands of Heaven.

It is known that in Jewish history, there were those of great spiritual stature who were so concerned that natural processes might erode their trust in Hashem that they avoided situations where they might rely on natural means for their needs. If circumstances arose where natural means seemed likely to ensure their livelihood, they would intentionally disrupt those means to continually place their trust in Hashem Yisbarach alone. Such conduct, however, is appropriate only for the truly righteous, who have thoroughly examined their souls and are certain they can strengthen their trust through such actions. Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, undoubtedly belonged to this class of righteous individuals. As noted, he was deeply devoted to faith and one of its great proponents, practicing what he preached.

Therefore, after Eliezer saw how Hashem had granted him success in finding a match for Yitzchak that exceeded all of Avraham's expectations, he feared that he might attribute this success to his own effort. He also worried that such thoughts might lead to arrogance. To address both concerns, Eliezer took deliberate action: he humbly introduced himself as "Avraham's servant." This statement downplayed his own importance, ensuring that Rivka's family would not overly revere him or assume that Avraham placed extraordinary value on the proposed match. After all, if Avraham truly esteemed the match and sought to honor and enrich Rivka's family, he would have entrusted the mission to a senior official rather than a lowly servant.

Additionally, this statement served as a reminder to himself. Eliezer emphasized that he had no reason to boast. If success currently favored him, it was not because he was inherently 'successful.' If he were truly so, why was he still a servant? His success, he realized, was likely due to his subservience to his righteous master, not his own merit.

Ultimately, Eliezer came to recognize that effort is not the source of success, and there is no basis for pride, for everything depends solely on Hashem's will. The Torah records this story to teach us as well that HaKadosh Baruch Hu alone is the ultimate cause and source of all outcomes.