בס"ד

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DAF KESHER

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DVAR TORAH **SPEED AND RUNNING**

A number of references to speed and running appear in the episode of Rivkah and Eliezer (this week's Parshat Chayei Sarah), as well as that of Avraham and the three guests (last week's Parshat Vayeira). Avraham's servant runs towards Rivkah when she comes to the well (Bereishit 24:17); and Rivkah quickly gives him water to drink (Bereishit 24:18). She offers to water Eliezer's camels; and she quickly dips her pitcher and fills it with water, then runs to the well to draw more water for the camels (Bereishit 24:20). After they introduce each other and realize they are relatives, Rivkah runs to tell her mother (Bereishit 24:28). Even Lavan runs to greet Eliezer (Bereishit 24:29 – but see Rashi's comment). When Rivkah's brother and mother suggest delaying the marriage, Eliezer says, " אל תאחרו אותי – Do not make me late" (Bereishit 24:56). The mood of the Torah's account is one of speed and action – the main players are all running and quick.

Rivkah's and Eliezer's running and speed recalls the running and speed of Avraham and his household in last week's Parshah: Avraham ran to the guests; Sarah quickly prepared bread; Avraham ran to the cattle; the lad speedily prepared the meat. Why are these righteous people all running?

What immediately comes to mind is that hungry and thirsty people (or camels) need to be given food and drink quickly to avoid the pain of hunger and thirst. This is certainly true; but it is only part of the picture. Not paining others is an example of סור מרע – avoiding evil, preventing harm. But Chazal, in a Midrash, teach us about another side of righteous people's running and speed.

We read in the Book of Shoftim that when Shimshon's mother (Manoach's wife) saw G-d's angel for the second time, "ותמהר האשה ותרץ ותגד לאישה – The woman acted quickly, and ran and told her husband" (Shoftim 13:10). Chazal tell us, "מלמד שכל מעשה הצדיקים במהירות – This verse teaches us that all of the tzaddikim's actions are done with speed" (Bamidbar Rabbah 10:5). This goes beyond סור מרע and beyond particular situations; this represents an entire mode of behavior.

Why do the righteous do whatever they do with speed? Why do they run?

One clear reason: People who are excited about something do it with energy and love. They'll run to make sure it gets done. They will not dilly-dally because that delays mitzvot and delays Hashem's Will from getting fulfilled. Lack of excitement, on the other hand, causes people to keep things dragging – as they say in Yiddish, "shleptzach." The righteous love Hashem; so they do His Will energetically.

Harav Elazar Azkari, זצ"ל (1533-1600, one of the great kabbalists of Tzfat and author of Sefer Charedim), composer of the poem "Yedid Nefesh," gives us another degree of insight into why tzaddikim run. His poem, sung by all of Israel at Seudah Shlishit, draws on the imagery of Shir Hashirim. "משוך עבדך אל רצונך. ירוץ עבדך כמו איל – Draw Your servant to Your Will; Your servant will run like a ram." The righteous are drawn to Hashem as if to a magnet. They are pulled to do His Will. They are forced to run. They call out to Hashem, "משכני אחריך, נרוצה – Draw me after You, so we can run together" (Shir Hashirim 1:4). The righteous run speedily, for they are trying to catch up with Hashem, to join His Presence. Where is that? It is where His mitzvot are. So they run there.

Also in this week's Daf Kesher: Source Guide – Efron and Rivkah · "Maintaining Equilibrium," by Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

SOURCE GUIDE: **EFRON AND RIVKAH**

Our Parshah features two episodes: Avraham purchasing a burial plot for Sarah from Efron the Hittite; and Avraham, through his servant, bringing Rivkah as a wife for Yitzchak. Are they placed next to each other simply because of chronological order or is there a thematic connection? The Kli Yakar answers that the latter is true, there is a thematic reason to place them next to each other in the Torah. This source guide is based on the Kli Yakar's essay on the connection between these two passages.

Eliezer presented G-d with a very precise test so he could clarify who was Yitzchak's bride-to-be:

1. Bereishit 24:14 It will be the maiden who, when I say to her, "Incline your pitcher so I can drink," replies, "Drink, and I will also give your camels to drink" – she is the one You have clarified for Your servant Yitzchak. And through her I will know that You have done kindness with my master.		**בראשית כד:יד** וְהָיָה הַנַּעֲרָ אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיהָ הַטִּי נָא כַדֵּךְ וְאֶשְׁתֶּה וְאָמְרָה שְׁתֵה וְגַם גְּמַלֶּיךָ אַשְׁקֶה, אֹתָהּ הֹכַחְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק, וּבָהּ אֵדַע כִּי עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עִם אֲדֹנִי.

Rashi explains why offering water to the camels would indicate a fitting bride:

2. Rashi on Bereishit 24:14 "She is the one You have clarified" – It is fitting for him that she be one who does acts of kindness; and she is worthy of entering Avraham's household.		**רש"י על בראשית כד:יד** "אותה הוכחת" – ראויה היא לו שתהא גומלת חסדים, וכדאי ליכנס בביתו של אברהם.

The Kli Yakar (Harav Shlomo Efraim of Luntschitz, זצ"ל, 1550-1619) connects this with the previous episode, Avraham purchasing a burial plot for Sarah from Efron the Hittite. The Torah contrasts Efron with Rivkah:

3. Kli Yakar on Bereishit 24:14 "She is the one You have clarified for Your servant Yitzchak" – Rashi explained: It is fitting for him that she be one who does acts of kindness. Hashem juxtaposed this episode to the episode of Efron the Hittite, for he was also from the offspring of Canaan, as it says, "Canaan begat Tzidon his firstborn, and Chet (ancestor of the Hittites)" (Bereishit 10:15). Efron possessed the evil eye. Therefore, Avraham commanded to distance Canaanites, who have the evil eye.		**כלי יקר על בראשית כד:יד** "אותה הוכחת לעבדך ליצחק" – פירש"י: ראויה היא לו שתהא גומלת חסדים. סמך פרשה זו לפרשת עפרון החתי כי גם הוא היה מזרע כנען, שנאמר, "וכנען ילד את צידון בכורו ואת חת" (בראשית י:טו). ועפרון היה רע עין, על כן צוה להרחיק הכנענים שהם בעלי עין הרע.

The "evil eye" is associated with jealousy and stinginess. Efron displayed this trait. Even though he first offered Avraham his field for free (verse 11) – Efron then asked for an extremely high sum (verse 15):

4. Bereishit 23:11, 15 (11) No, my master, listen to me. I have given you the field and given you the cave within it. I have given it to you before the eyes of the people of my nation. Bury your dead. (15) My master, listen. A parcel of land worth four-hundred silver shekalim – between you and me what is it? Bury your dead.		**בראשית כג:יא, טו** (יא) לֹא אֲדֹנִי שְׁמָעֵנִי הַשָּׂדֶה נָתַתִּי לָּךְ וְהַמְּעָרָה אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ לְךָ נְתַתִּיהָ לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי עַמִּי נְתַתִּיהָ לָּךְ קְבֹר מֵתֶךָ. (טו) אֲדֹנִי שְׁמָעֵנִי אֶרֶץ אַרְבַּע מֵאֹת שֶׁקֶל כֶּסֶף בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ מַה הִוא וְאֶת מֵתְךָ קְבֹר:

From Efron's strange flip-flop – from zero to four-hundred – Avraham understood that Efron's generosity was not genuine. Efron communicated: "I want it on record that I offered you the land for free; but I really want a large quantity of silver in my possession and not yours. I can't bear to see that land in your possession and not mine without serious compensation." Using today's language, we would say about Efron: "He's got money issues." Seeing how Efron related to money convinced Avraham that Yitzchak's bride must not be Canaanite.

How a person relates to money is a major touchstone of his or her character:

5. Kli Yakar on Bereishit 24:14 For money pronounces and testifies about everything (based on Kohelet 10:19). Every person's character can be judged by their pocket (that is, how they deal with money - see Eruvin 65b) – if they are pure and their actions upright. There is no better refining pot or furnace to test a person's character – than silver and gold. Thus said Shlomo: "a refining pot for silver; and a furnace for gold …" (Mishlei 17:3). For if one wants to forge a man and test him he should go to [how he deals with] silver and see his character. Similarly, for a furnace to test a person, one should go to gold and see how he acts with regards to it. For if a person stays righteous in his monetary dealings, with all he will reveal himself to be complete – and the opposite is also true.		**כלי יקר על בראשית כד:יד** כי הכסף יענה ויעיד על הכל (על פי קהלת י:יט). וכל אדם ניכר בכיסו אם זך וישר פעלו. ואין לך מצרף וכור הבחינה על האדם כי אם הכסף והזהב. וכן אמר שלמה "מצרף לכסף וכור לזהב" (משלי יז:ג). כי הרוצה לצרף האדם ולבחנו ילך אל הכסף ויראה מה טיבו, וכן כור להבחין בו האדם, ילך לזהב ויראה איך האדם מתנהג בו. כי אם יעמוד בצדקתו בעסק ממון, בכל תושיה יתגלה כי שלם הוא וכן להפך.

This approach was behind Eliezer's method of discerning the character of Yitzchak's future bride. A show of generosity – a "good eye" – indicates positive character; lack of it the opposite (Possessing "a good eye" is one of Avraham Avinu's dominant character traits – see Pirkei Avot 5:19):

6. Kli Yakar on Bereishit 24:14 From here Eliezer learned only to check Rivkah with this trait, whether she had a "good eye" and related with acts of kindness. Therefore he said, "I will only request that she give me to drink. If she then responds, 'Drink and I will give water to your camels,' she is certainly a kind person, giving me more than I requested. If so, You have clarified that she is the one for Your servant Yitzchak. For Yitchak's entire household is "clothed" with "garments of salvation" for others.		**כלי יקר על בראשית כד:יד** ומכאן למד אליעזר שלא בדק את רבקה כי אם במדה זו אם יש לה עין טובה וגומלת חסדים, לכך אמר אני לא אתבע ממנה כ"א שתתן לי לשתות, והיה אם תשיב לי שתה וגם גמליך אשקה אז בודאי היא בעלת גמילות חסדים שתתן לי יותר ממה שאני שואל, ואם כן אותה הוכחת לעבדך ליצחק, כי כל ביתו לבוש בגדי ישע לבריות.

The Kli Yakar makes an interesting and creative comment (rooted in Midrash Tanchuma Shemini 8): We cannot ignore the similarity between the word גמל – camel, and the expression גמילות חסדים – doing acts of kindness. If the maiden offers water for the גמלים, the camels, Eliezer saw that as a sign from Heaven that she was a גומלת חסדים. That would also be a sign of how central kindness must be in her life – words with the letters גמל will be on her tongue.

He makes one last suggestion for why Eliezer chose "I will also give your camels water" as the test for Yitzchak's future bride. If she will eventually become Yitzchak's bride, those camels will belong to her. If she shows more concern for the camels than I myself do, said Eliezer, it is because she owns them more than I do. Her concern for the camels will be a semi-prophetic indicator that they are the camels of her future husband. If I see a maiden taking care of Yitzchak's camels – she must be Yitzchak's future wife.

MAINTAINING EQUALIBRIUM BY RABBI FYVEL SHUSTER

Along with many of other commentators, the Sfas Emes asks a powerful question on a comment Rashi makes in the first verse of our Parshah. Rashi needs to solve a textual problem. After saying that Sarah's life lasted one-hundred and twenty-seven years, the Torah adds three seemingly superfluous words: "שני חיי שרה – These are the years of Sarah's life." Rashi comments: "They were all equal in goodness."

This is an astounding statement. Sarah was barren for ninety years. She wandered, experienced famine and left the Promised Land, then was kidnapped by Pharaoh's men. That episode was replayed with Avimelech and the Phillistines. Her maidservant Hagar taunted her and treated her lightly. When Sarah finally had a child, the beloved Yitzchak, his stepbrother Yishmael taunted him and had to be banished. Then her son was

taken away to the Akeidah and she died. How can the Torah describe all of her one-hundred and twenty-seven years as equally good?

Sarah, says the Sfas Emes, possessed the middah (character trait) that the Chovos Halevavos and the Baal Shem Tov describe as השתוות – perhaps best translated as equanimity. A person with this trait has the ability to maintain equilibrium during all of the various types of events that come his or her way. Someone with the trait of השתוות realizes that all situations can be challenging, both tragedy and success, both wealth and poverty. Everything comes from Hashem, who controls all that happens; but the key is to act the way Hashem wants us to act in each and every situation.

According to the Sfas Emes, Rashi's expression, "equally good," refers to how Sarah related to all the years of her life. Throughout all of Sarah's life – not only from age ninety and on – she related to all situations she encountered with השתוות. Not only did she know that all of the events of her life were part of Hashem's plan for the world – she related to each situation appropriately as she encountered it.

Avraham, says the Mishnah, was tested ten times, but "stood" during all of them (Avos 5:3). Says the Sfas Emes: "Even if all of the winds in the world blew over him, he stood in his place." A person with השתוות always remains himself; he preserves his identity, holds on to his principles. If he acts as Hashem wants him to act, it does not make a difference to him whether people scorn him or cheer for him. He acts as he should.

A person with השתוות is proactive, not reactive. A person without it determines who he is and how he should act by what comes his way. He often has to apologize for having acted improperly, overwhelmed by difficult tests or challenges. He'll get enraged, and then say, "Sorry, I just was not myself this morning" (the Zohar describes that when a person gets enraged the connection between his soul and body becomes partially severed, leaving himself open to negative forces – he really was not himself!). He is like a metal ball in a pinball machine, bouncing around on whatever he hits – happy when pleasant things happen, annoyed by difficulties.

The trait of השתוות is not just for great tzaddikim. In fact, it is extremely helpful after failing a test, after a fall. Instead of letting a failure destroy him, a person with השתוות always asks himself, "Who am I? What should I do? How can I go forward?" He says, "I failed, but I'm not going to lose myself by letting the failure define me. I cannot lose my equilibrium."

How can we cultivate this trait and emulate Sarah Imenu? One thing we can do is to tap into the place within ourselves that is our own hidden, inner world. In that ever-present zone we are truly ourselves, always walking with G-d. Deep within ourselves we have an ongoing dialogue with Hashem, praying for guidance in every situation and challenge, and asking what He wants of us at this moment.

[Based on one of Rabbi Shuster's shiurim in Sfas Emes and a shmuze at Shapell's.]

שבת שלום ומבורך

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Shapell's Darché Noam
דרכיה דרכי נעם

The following digital Torah resources have been extremely helpful in researching and preparing the Shapell's Daf Kesher:
DBS – Hataklitor Hatorani, Otzar Hachochmah, the Bar Ilan Responsa Project, and Hebrewbooks.org.

We pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.