



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Chayei Sarah

HAMELECH

Blessed And Cursed

In this week's *parashah*, Avraham sends Eliezer, to Aram Naharayim to look for a wife for Yitzchak. Rashi tells us that Eliezer himself had a daughter and he really would have loved to be Avraham's *mechutan*. The *shidduch* made so much sense. Where in the world would Avraham find a girl who was brought up with Avraham's *hashkafot* and *emunah*, familiar with and appreciative of Avraham's system of values? Eliezer had been Avraham's faithful servant for years! He was his primary *talmid* and gave over Avraham's teachings to the next generation of thirsty listeners. It is reasonable to assume that he raised his daughter with similar values. Far be it from Avraham to be prejudiced based on skin color.

Avraham was well aware of Eliezer's idea. He told his faithful servant, in no uncertain terms: my son is blessed, you are cursed. Cursed does not attach itself to blessed,

That's it. There is nothing more to talk about.

Now, certainly, Avraham felt that he had to make himself clear so that Eliezer would dismiss the idea entirely. Nonetheless, we can imagine how Eliezer must have felt upon hearing those sharp words. Maybe, just maybe, hearing those painful

words and bearing the pain, perhaps that got him out of the category of "cursed" and had him be "blessed".

The Medrash (Bereishit Raba 60:7) says it a bit differently: Says R' Yosi ben Dosa: Eliezer served Avraham honestly, so he left the status of "cursed" and earned the status of "blessed",

No, it is not easy being insulted and defamed. It makes your blood boil, arouses a desire for revenge. It takes a lot of strength to remain calm and hold your tongue from retaliating. But that is our job and it is very rewarding.

One who hears his shame and does not retort is called one who loves Hashem. Rabbi Shimon taught: All my days I was raised among the wise and I found nothing better than silence. Explains Sefer Magen Avot: The wise are compared to the shine of the sky. Those who arouse others to perform mitzvos are compared to stars. But one who remains silent after being insulted is compared to the sun! Not today's hot sun, but the sun of the future which will be 343 times as intense!

Can You Take An Insult?

One day, Dovid Hamelech was walking with his men when suddenly, someone came along and



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hurled at him a string of curses along with some stones and dirt. Dovid's men wanted to kill the rebel, but Dovid did not let them. He accepted the insults and said, "Hashem told him to curse me." At that, Dovid rose to a level equivalent to that of the Avot, being the fourth leg, so to speak, of the Heavenly Chariot. (Sefer Shemirat HaLashon)

Scream and Save

There was a man (let's call him Yerucham) who used to frequent the Baba Sali. On one of his visits, instead of the warm welcome he was used to, Baba Sali screamed and yelled at him a number of insults!

Yerucham was astounded and hurt. He quickly left and went to his next business appointment. Later in the day, (he was a *kablan* – contractor) he was driving two of his Arab workers from place to place. On one sharp curve, he lost control and the car tumbled over a cliff. Down went Yerucham and Arabs and all. Up came only Yerucham. The car was totaled and so were the Arabs. But somehow, Yerucham got out of there alive, unscathed. He knew that it must have had something to do with the Baba Sali. He made his way back there.

This time, he was greeted warmly. Baba Sali explained, "When you came earlier, I saw the

malach hamavess come in with you. I screamed at you, hoping that the embarrassment would replace the death sentence. Indeed it has."

So we ought to take all insults and jeers in stride and realize that they are for our own good!

The Story of the Sdei Chemed

Rabbi Chizkiyahu Medini was a young man studying in a Yeshiva. He was very successful in his studies. So much so, that a fellow colleague became very jealous of him. So much so that he even stooped to do a very lowly act, in an effort to put Reb Chizkiyahu to shame. Mr. Envious paid the cleaning lady to slander Reb Chizkiyahu. Reb Chizkiyahu was so studious that he arrived much earlier than everyone else to the Beit Medrash.

True to her pay, the cleaning lady let out a shrill cry and when the crowd assembled, she pulled an Eishet Potifar and claimed that Reb Chizkiyahu pulled a Yosef. Reb Chizkiyahu just sat there and continued learning.

Reb Chizkiyahu became the talk of the town, but the dean would not hear of it. He fired the cleaning lady who soon had no money left. She was destitute. She turned to Reb Chizkiyahu, begging for help. She promised to let out the truth and disclose the identity of Mr. Envious who had paid her to slander, if Reb Chizkiyahu would



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speak on her behalf to the dean to get her job back.

Here was Chizkiyahu's chance to clear his name from all the rumors and murmurs. But he chose to absorb the shame and not to expose Mr. Envious.

Reb Chizkiyahu said afterwards that from the moment that he made that decision, he felt so much Divine Assistance in his learning. Wellsprings of Torah opened before him. He went on to become a great Talmid Chochom, authoring the famed encyclopedic Sdei Chemed.

Bear it and Grin

Here is a more recent story. In the Vizhnitz Beis Medrash in London sat the Rosh HaYeshiva Rav P. Shneebalg with his students. There had been a bochur who had not been accepted into the Yeshiva. The father of the bochur did not know how to react. He burst into the Beit Medrash and screamed at the Rosh HaYeshiva in front of everyone there.

The Rosh HaYeshiva did not respond, although he was quite embarrassed. He remembered a certain Vizhnitzer Chossid who had been married seven years, childless. Rav Shneebalg phoned the avreich and told him that he wishes to use the *zechut* of not responding to insults for the sake of

praying for this young couple. Sure enough, nine months later, a baby girl was born to the Gafner family.

Practice Makes Perfect

It happens to all of us, sooner or later. Someone insults us and several options are available. We could return them a double helping, we could push them down, we could try to save face, or we could just remain silent.

The last option may be naturally the most difficult, but in the long run, the most rewarding.

At the scene of the crime, on a moment's notice, it is very hard to call upon one's brakes to seal up the mouth from responding. It takes weeks and months of training, of convincing ourselves that this is the most beneficial avenue to take were this to happen to me. Armed with that level of self-control, well aware of the benefits, we can hope for Divine assistance were that challenge to arise.

We beseech Hashem daily that He spare us from challenges and disgrace. Sometimes disgrace itself is the biggest challenge. Though we beg to avoid it, in the event that it happens, may we pass the test and come out ahead.

Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka