



From the desk of
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

OHR

Parashat Hayei Sarah

HAMELECH

Don't Mix

Avraham sent Eliezer to go to Avraham's family in Aram Naharayim to find a wife for Yitzchak. Eliezer asked: And if she does not want to come to Eretz Canaan... you know, I also have a daughter. Maybe you would consider her as a match for Yitzchak?

Avraham explained, "No, I am sorry. You, Eliezer, descend from Canaan, who was cursed. I was blessed by Hashem, and so was my son. The blessed cannot join forces with the cursed."

Eliezer took the message and said no more. When he got to Aram Naharayim, he was called "blessed." The Medrash (Bereishit Raba 60:7) explains that since he served his master faithfully, he left the status of cursed and entered the status of blessed. Perhaps we can add an additional nuance. Maybe what earned him this title was his reaction (or lack thereof) to Avraham's strong retort.

Avraham had made it clear to him that he was cursed, and he said no more.

The Right To Remain Silent

We find great things said of those who hear of their shame and do not respond (Shabbat 88b). Rabbi Shimon (Avot 1:17) says that there is nothing more advantageous than knowing how to remain silent.

Sefer Magen Avot points out that this is a very high level. Those who influence others to do mitzvot are compared to stars (Daniel 12:3). But those who remain silent when insulted are compared to the sun (Shabbat 88b), whose light is much brighter.

The Hot Sun Kept its Cool

On Day Four of Creation, Hashem made the sun, moon and stars. At first, the sun and moon were the same size. But the moon protested, "Can two kings share a single crown?!"

Whereupon Hashem responded, "Go and reduce yourself." (Hullin 60b)

Now, where was the sun in this whole conversation. Here was the moon trying to usurp all the light and control and the sun did not say a word. Only Hashem came to its defense. Therefore, all those who remain silent when disgraced are compared to the brilliant sun.

Now, the sun is quite bright. But it gets even brighter. When? The day will come when the light of the sun will become seven times seven (=343) brighter than it is now! (I do not know how many digit watts to compare that to.)

Know and Befriend

In Parashat Bamidbar, the Nasi of Gad is called Elyasaf ben Deuel and later – Elyasaf ben Reuel. Why is his father's name changed?

Explains the Chid"i: Of all the 12 shevatim, four were chosen to lead Degalim: Yehuda, Reuven, Efraim and Dan. Yehuda was granted kingship, Reuven was Leah's firstborn, Efraim was from Yosef who was Rachel's firstborn, and Dan was Bilhah's firstborn. Now Gad was also a firstborn (Zilpah's); in fact, he was the only firstborn who was not granted the honor of leading a degel. He could have complained; he could have screamed and yelled and stamped his feet. But what did he do instead? He remained silent. That's right; he said nothing.



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Why did he not respond? Because he knew that these appointments came from On High. It was Hashem's decision. And Hashem's decision is the best decision, the right decision.

"Deuel" – He knew Hashem. Therefore – "Reuel" – He became a companion of Hashem. Gad received a great honor which no other Shevel received. Moshe Rabbeinu was buried in his portion.

Over the Cliff

Do you want to hear a story with the Baba Sali?

There was a contractor who was on very good terms with Baba Sali. He would visit often and ask for advice and blessings. He was quite successful and gave a lot of *tzedakah*.

One time, he came to the Baba Sali and instead of the usual warm greeting, the Baba yelled at him and hurled a few harsh words and sent him on his way.

This man was quite hurt. He had no idea what he had done that earned him such humiliation.

He was in the middle of a project in Mitzpeh Rimon. Not knowing what to do with himself. He went to the project site and saw his Arab workers. After the day's work, he took two of the workers home in his car.

It was a very windy road and he was driving fast. At one of the curves, he lost control and the car hurled over, down the mountainside. The car was totaled, as were the Arabs, but the contractor came out with nary a scratch.

He climbed up to the road and stopped a car. He reported the accident to the police. Everyone was utterly surprised how he had survived. The man knew that he had to go back to Baba Sali, and that is what he did.

This time, Baba Sali accepted him with an extra degree of warmth. Baba Sali explained to him that a harsh decree had been issued against him, but his philanthropy had pushed it off. However, recently, due to his many successes, some conceit began swelling his heart with pride and the merit of his generosity was tainted. Baba Sali perceived this with *Ruah Hakodesh*. Wishing to save his life, Baba Sali saw fit to publicly shame him, bringing him to humility, whereupon the merit of his *tzedakah* would once again save him from the throes of death. Indeed that is exactly what had happened.

We do not have *ruach hakodesh*. We can never make that decision to shame others as a merit for them. But we can learn from here that if we get insulted and respond with silence, we have a whole lot to gain.

The Sedei Hemed

Then there is the story of how the Sedei Hemed became the Sedei Hemed.

When he was a young man, he studied diligently in Yeshiva. One of the other students there was quite jealous of his acclaim. His envy got the better of him and he paid the maid to invent a scandal. One morning, bright and early, when only the Sedei Hemed (Reb Hizkiyahu) was learning in the Beit Medrash, the maid came in to wash the floors and let out a shriek. She kept screaming until people gathered around and she then accused Reb Hizkiyahu of trying to force her to sin.

The Rosh Hayeshiva immediately fired her, but the rumors were not quieted. Shortly thereafter, this woman had no money left and she came to Reb Hizkiyahu. She begged his forgiveness and offered to publicize how she had been paid to slander him, hoping that through this, she would get back on her feet.



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Reb Hizkiyahu would not hear of exposing the other fellow's low misdeed; instead, he gave up this opportunity of clearing his name. Soon thereafter, Reb Hizkiyahu felt a surge of *siyata deshemaya* in his learning. He had always been diligent, but now the wellsprings of wisdom opened up to him and he went on to author the many volumes of *Sedei Hemed*, the encyclopedic work on numerous Talmudic and Halachic concepts.

Reb Hizkiyahu attributed his success in learning to this that he chose to remain humiliated rather than expose the failings of a fellow Jew.

Double Salvation

Zohar HaKadosh praises Yosef for not retaliating against his brothers who had sold him to slavery. Not only did he not retaliate; he even sustained them during famine. Therefore, Hashem took special care of him.

Zohar goes on to relate how Rabbi Abahu once sat at the entrance to the city of Lod. He saw a man who was tired and sat down at the side of the road and fell asleep. A poisonous serpent came and was about to bite the man and inject venom, but miraculously, the snake was killed.

The man woke up and saw the dead snake. He immediately stood up from the rock upon which he had been sleeping. No sooner did he stand up and the rock fell behind down into a ravine – miracle number two.

Rabbi Abahu knew that this man must have had some major merits. Curious, Rabbi Abahu asked the man what good deed he had done. The man responded, "Whenever anyone does anything upsetting to me, I forgive him immediately. Additionally, before retiring for the night, I verbally forgive everyone who ever slighted me in

any way. Not only do I not take revenge, I even seek to help out whomever did anything against me."

Rabbi Abahu cried and exclaimed, "Wow! To a certain degree, you are greater even than Yosef Hatsaddik! Yosef dealt this way with his brothers, who were, after all, blood relations. You deal this way with everyone! That is why Hashem did for you miracles!"

Rabbi Abahu continued: Someone who goes faithfully in the ways of the Torah will not suffer harm. One who deviates and strays from the Torah's teachings will be taken to task. This man went in the Torah's ways and was protected.

Let us take this lesson to heart and apply it to our lives and especially in marriage. How often is one harsh word mentioned and then met with another one until it becomes a full-fledged feud? Over nothing?!

Step One in successful interaction and particularly marriage is knowing how to ignore insults. Meet them with silence, or better yet, understand that the other person is in distress and under pressure and go out of your way to relieve that pressure and make their life more pleasant. In the end, you only stand to gain! You will become so much closer to Hashem and receive His special protection.

Never argue over petty matters and not even over important ones. If you merit to meet insult with silence, seize the opportunity to pray for anything you want, because at that moment, you are so close to Hashem!

May we all merit love and brotherhood, peace and friendship. Amen.

Shabbat Shalom
Mordechai Malka