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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR TAL



PRAYER

Praying isn't as easy as it seems. Sometimes we pray for something for years and never seem to be answered, yet on other occasions we can see immediate success in our prayers.

In this week's parsha we learn of one of the greatest prayers in history; that of Eliezer.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, "Three people were answered while their words were still upon their tongues; Avraham's servant Eliezer, Moshe, and Shlomo."

Regarding Eliezer, the verse states, "He had not yet finished speaking and – look! – Rivkah... came out" (v. 15).

Regarding Moshe, the verse states, "When he finished speaking all these words [after his authority had been challenged by Korach], the ground split open" (Bamidbar 16:31).

Regarding Shlomo, the verse states, "When Shlomo finished speaking to G-d [at the inauguration of the holy temple], the fire descended from heaven"(Bereishis Rabah 60:4).

Three Tsadikim prayed and were answered. Yet there is a difference between Eliezer and the others. Eliezer's prayer seems to be even greater, as he was answered even before he had finished his prayer.

Upon inspection the torah goes to great lengths to tell us about Eliezer's mission. Much ink is spilled (so to speak) from the time Avraham sends him

away to the time he succeeds in getting Rivka's consent.

Why does the torah elaborate so much on his mission? Who was Eliezer and was he really so great?

The Midrash brings a famous encounter between Avraham and Nimrod. Nimrod was the ruler of a vast empire, and believed himself to be a deity. Avraham had other ideas and knew the truth. He challenged Nimrod and was thrown into the fire. Hashem saved Avraham, and shortly after Avraham left the country.

There is an amazing Targum Yonatan that states that Eliezer was none other than the son of Nimrod.

Nimrod seeing that this man Avraham had succeeded, was so impressed that he said it would be better that his son clings to such a man, then to stay a prince in his palace.

Eliezer thus became Avraham's servant. But what kind of servant was he?

Avraham referred to his servant as 'Damesek Eliezer'.

Our Sages teach us that the word Damesek is an acronym of the words "Doleh Umashkeh", meaning the one who draws from the well and gives of it's water. Furthermore, "He (Eliezer) controlled all that was his (Avrahams)." This teaches us that Eliezer had dominion over the Torah of Avraham (Yoma 28b). Eliezer had complete mastery of Avraham's teachings and was authorised to disseminate his lessons to others. The Midrash adds that Eliezer had control over all that was his – himself; he had complete self-control and mastery over his yetzer hara.

He was Avraham's Talmid, his vehicle for fulfilling his mission in the world of spreading Hashem's life sustaining Torah. He drew from Avraham's Torah and fed others. Not only was he a Talmid Chacham but he was also the most faithful of servants to Avraham. Although he expounded on Avraham's teachings to the public, he managed Avraham's estate and was Avraham's representative to the

24 CHESHVAN 5779
SHABBAT BEGINS: 4:14 PM
SHABBAT ENDS: 5:22 PM

> MAZAL TOV

YOSSEF & LEAH TBOUL on the birth of Yael Simcha
 JASON & DEVORAH IBRAHIM on the birth of a baby boy



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Terms come from the heart and not from the brain."

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DVAR TORAH

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Q&A & CARTOON

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world, he introduced himself to Betuel and Lavan as 'Eved Avraham anochi' - I am Avraham's slave. He considered himself to be a mere servant and did not take credit for his achievements.

When the time came to look for a wife for Yitschak, Avraham summoned none other than his top confidant Eliezer for the mission.

Avraham did not want his son to marry any Canaanite women, and chose to send Eliezer in search of a wife to his family in Aram Naharayim. The Midrash enlightens us as to what occurred before Eliezer set off. Eliezer himself was father to a lovely daughter. In his eyes, it would have been the perfect match. He yearned that his daughter marries Yitschak. He approached Avraham and hinted to him that his daughter would offer the perfect match.

Avraham's response was startling. "My son is Baruch, blessed, and you are Arur, cursed, and one who is Arur cannot cleave to one who is Baruch." Eliezer was a descendent of Canaan the son of Cham who was cursed by Noach, whereas Avraham was descended from Shem, who received Noach's blessings - they could not match.

Wow. If we were Eliezer, I wonder how we would have reacted to hearing that? Something like - I have been your confidant, your servant for years.

I do all you say, I teach your torah, I am in charge of your house, you are everything for me, how can you call me cursed?!

However, Eliezer's reaction was far from that. Instead he kept quiet, and fulfilled his master's request to go to Aram Naharayim many miles away to find a wife for Yitschak.

He arrived at the well and makes a supplication to the G-d of his master Avraham, and before he knows it he is answered. We can now understand why his prayer was so potent.

The Gemara states 'The world subsists only through the merit of he, who in a quarrel restrains himself to nothingness - "bolem azmo beshaat meriva". As it says "He hangs the earth upon nothing" (belima) (Iyov, 26:7). R. Abbahou said: the World rests only upon the merit of the one who thinks of himself as nothing, as it says "Underneath are the arms of the world" (Devarim 33:27).

His prayer was potent because the whole world rested upon his shoulders. The Midrash (Bereishit Rabba 60:7) relates that through Eliezer's dedication and loyalty to Avraham, he changed from Arur to Baruch!

He might have been justified to answer back, to even renegade against his Shelichut, but that wasn't Eliezer. Eliezer was an Eved Ne'eman, a

true servant, true to Hashem and true to Avraham. This was a massive merit.

Yet this was not the only thing Eliezer had going for him.

Before he set out, Avraham had prayed that Hashem send before him his Malach to help Eliezer. And once Eliezer reached the well, he prayed in the merit of Avraham. Thus Eliezer had the help of Zechut Avot. He prayed to Hashem in the merit of Avraham.

With these two powerful antidotes, his massive merit after an act of Belima, and the merit of Avraham enabled his prayer to reach the highest of heavens and he was answered even before he finished praying.

The best time to pray is after an act of selflessness. When one acts against his will but for the will of Hashem. When we conquer our Yetser hara, that is the sha'at Ratson.

That Et Ratson together with the Zechut Avot will surely lead to success. ■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI DOVIE SOCHET - RABBI AT HASMONEAN HIGH SCHOOL



HAGAR IS KETURAH

Commenting on the verse, "Avraham took another wife whose name was Keturah." Rashi comments that this was in fact Hagar who Avraham had previously separated himself from. As to the sudden change in name Rashi comments that she is called Keturah because her actions were as sweet as Ketores (incense).

At first glance this Rashi seems puzzling. What indication is there in the Torah that Keturah is in fact Hagar? It is very possible that Keturah is a totally different

person. This in indeed the position of the Rashbam, "According to the simple meaning of the verses, this is not Hagar." On what basis then is Rashi saying that Keturah is Hagar?

Rashi is bothered by a simple problem. How could it be that Hagar, after many years of living with Avraham and Sarah, an environment where the concept of monotheism was preached and practised could possibly [after her separation from Avraham] revert back to idolatrous ways? Even Yishmael towards the end of his days did Teshuvah! Based on this, the Lubavitcher Rebbe answers that Rashi was therefore looking for a hint in the Torah that at some point, Hagar must have done Teshuvah.

This Rashi concludes can be accomplished if we explain that Hagar is in fact Keturah and the name Keturah reflects Hagar's repentance.

At times in our lives we too may go astray from the path of Hashem, we might also find ourselves "worshipping idols". Nonetheless, we must remember that we are the children of Avraham and Sarah, the founders of our very faith. Though at certain points in our lives this fact may be forgotten, it is nevertheless the simple truth that lives on within us. So no matter how far down the road someone may go, remember, it is never too late to turn back.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI CHAIM HIZKIYAHU MEDINI • “AUTHOR OF SDEI HEMED”

Rabbi Hizkiyahu Medini's books provide an abundance of principles concerning Halachah, both in general and in detail, and reference a great many authors from different eras. He was great in Torah and deeds, and the great authorities of our time cannot make do without his works. We will cite one story that he himself recounted as to the origin of his wisdom.

Rabbi Hizkiyahu once told a friend that in his youth he did not have any particular talents. The sources of wisdom had only opened for him when he was older because of a certain incident.

“When I was a young avrech,” began the Sdei Hemed, “I studied in a kollel financed by a wealthy man, and which was located in his own home. At that time I was not among the most brilliant minds in the kollel, however I learned with great diligence and steadily progressed in my studies. One of the students of this group became jealous and set a trap for me. Every morning a cleaning lady came to work in the Beit Midrash. He bribed her to publicly accuse me of trying to seduce her when she arrived in the Beit Midrash to do her work in the early morning. One day, as soon as this woman arrived in the Beit Midrash, she began to scream and accuse me of disgraceful behavior. Everyone immediately gathered about, and I was accused of hypocrisy and insulted over and over again. It was a tremendous desecration of G-d's Name. Unable to tolerate such shame, I was forced to flee. The Rosh Kollel did not believe the cleaning lady, and he fired her.

“After a certain time, when the cleaning lady had exhausted all the money that she had made with her accusations, she came to beg my forgiveness for the tremendous wrong that

she had done. She promised me that she would publicly recount the truth and state that it was all a plot, that one of the avrechim had given her money to accuse me.

“Given that she had no longer any livelihood, she implored me to do all that I could, once she had cleared my name, to help her get her job back.

“At that moment,” said the Sdei Hemed, “I was confronted with a tremendous dilemma. On one side, I was happy with this unexpected opportunity to see my name cleared of this terrible accusation and to have everything put back in order. I almost agreed to her request, yet at the same time the complete opposite thought came to me. A terrible desecration of G-d's Name had already occurred, and if the actual story were to become known, there would be yet another one due to the shameful conduct of the avrech. Not only that, but he himself would suffer a terrible fate. Consequently, it was preferable that I continue to bear my shame in silence than to provoke a new scandal. The decision was very hard to make, and my thoughts were jostling against one another in my head as I changed my mind from one minute to the next. Finally, I decided to tell the cleaning lady that I would push myself to speak in her favor, but I absolutely forbid her to tell anybody about the bribe.

“At the time that I took this difficult decision, one that risked endangering my entire future in the world of Torah,” concluded the Sdei Hemed, “I felt the sources of wisdom opening before me. Instead of the damage that my choice should have caused me, I had merited great Heavenly assistance, one that has led me until my present situation.” ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

DOES THE OFFICIATING RABBI DRINK THE WINE UNDER THE HUPA?

The Hupa ceremony begins with the Rabbi reciting the Beracha of “Boreh Peri Ha'gefen” over a cup of wine, followed by the Birkat Erusin. He then gives the cup to the groom to sip, and then the bride is given the cup to sip. Must the Rabbi also sip some of the wine, or does it suffice for the bride and groom to sip?

This question was addressed by the Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Maimonides, Spain-Egypt, 1135-1204), in one of his responsa (Pe'er Ha'dor). He writes that the Rabbi must, in fact, take a sip of the wine, and if he does not, then his Beracha is considered a Beracha Le'batala (a Beracha recited in vain). The reason, the Rambam explains, is that the recitation of Birkat Erusin constitutes a Minhag (accepted custom), and not an outright obligation. This Beracha thus differs from Kiddush and Habdala, which are also Berachot recited over wine. The person who recites Kiddush and Habdala may have somebody else drink without drinking himself, since these Berachot are required according to Halacha. When the Beracha is obligatory, one can recite the Beracha of “Ha'gefen” and the obligatory Beracha for somebody else, who may then drink the wine. Indeed, Hacham Baruch Ben-Haim zt”l would give the Habdala cup to somebody else to drink after he recited Habdala. But when the Beracha is not obligatory, the person who recites the Beracha with “Ha'gefen” must drink the wine.

It is thus customary for the Rabbi to take a sip of the wine over which he recites the Birkat Erusin. In order not to drink directly from the cup that he will then give to the bride and groom, the Rabbi generally spills a few drops onto his finger and then sips it that way, thereby fulfilling the Halacha without drinking directly from the cup.

This Halacha does not apply to the second cup of wine used at a Hupa, over which the seven Berachot are recited at the end of the ceremony. The one who recites “Ha'gefen” over this cup does not have to sip from the wine, since these Berachot are, indeed, obligatory, and it is therefore sufficient for the bride and groom to drink some of the wine.

Summary: After the Rabbi recites Birkat Erusin at a wedding, he sips a bit of the wine and then gives the cup to the bride and groom. Regarding the second cup at the Hupa, over which the seven Berachot are recited, only the bride and groom need to drink from the cup. ■

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TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- ❶ Name the four couples buried in Kiryat Arba.
- ❷ What did Sara hear that caused her death?
- ❸ What title of honor did the B'nei Chet bestow upon Avraham?
- ❹ Where was Avraham born?
- ❺ How were Avraham's camels distinguished?

Answer

- ❶ 23:2 - Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzhak and Rivka, Yaakov and Leah.
- ❷ 23:2 - That Yitzhak was almost slaughtered.
- ❸ 23:6 - Prince of G-d.
- ❹ 24:7 - Ur Kasdim.
- ❺ 24:10 - They were muzzled, so they wouldn't graze in the fields of others.

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