

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
RABBI ADI ROLAND

Conquering the Subconscious

"I said to my master, 'Ulai (perhaps) the girl won't follow me.'" (24:39)

THIS VERSE APPEARS IN ELIEZER'S RECOUNTING, to Rivka's family, of his earlier conversation with our forefather Avraham, prior to his departure to find a wife for Yitzchak.

There is a slight difference between Eliezer's words to Avraham and the way he quotes them. The Hebrew word *ulai* ("perhaps") is spelled *aleph-vav-lamed-yud*. However, when Eliezer repeats what he said, the word is spelled *aleph-lamed-yud*, without the letter *vav*—and it could be read "*eilai*, to me."

[The word is] written "*eilai*." Eliezer had a daughter, and he was looking for a reason to tell Avraham that [Yitzchak] should marry her. (Rashi)

The commentators ask: If this was Eliezer's intent, isn't it more sensible for the ambiguous spelling to appear in Eliezer's original conversation with Avraham, rather than when he repeats it to Rivka's family?

The Kotzker Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgensztern, with his usual keen insight, explains it as follows:

In all of Eliezer's interactions with Avraham, he didn't realize that his own self-interest was coloring his persona and body language, in an attempt to get Avraham to start thinking about his daughter as a prospective match for Yitzchak. Only after seeing how Rivka appeared right after Eliezer had prayed (24:15); seeing how she had acted exactly as he had asked Hashem for as a sign; and learning that she was from Avraham's family, did Eliezer realize that

Rivka was Yitzchak's true intended wife—and that his daughter was not.

Once he was able to look at the situation from an objective point of view, as he made his repetition to Rivka's family, did he realize, retroactively, how his self-interest had been subconsciously dictating his actions. He only now knew that, all along, he had been attempting to get Avraham to think about marrying Yitzchak to his daughter—without even realizing it!

This is quite a sobering thought. We are talking about Avraham's trusted servant; the Midrash (B'reishis Rabba 59, 8) states that he had full control over his character, just like his master, Avraham. Yet even he wasn't impervious to his self-interest!

So what is there to say about ourselves? Are we forever to be slaves to our negative traits, as they dictate our decisions and actions, without us even realizing it?

Absolutely not, writes Rabbi Yisrael Salanter (*Ohr Yisrael, Iggeres 10*)!

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A HALACHA FROM THE PARASHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

The bulk of this week's Torah portion talks about Yitzchak and Rivka finding each other and getting married, so let's quickly review some of the laws of Sheva B'rachos. The phrase "Sheva B'rachos" refers to the set of blessings, usually seven ("sheva") in total, recited in conjunction with the marriage ceremony and at meals eaten in honor of the new couple during the first week of their marriage.

The bride and groom traditionally honor attendees by appointing them to recite the Sheva B'rachos, and those reciting the blessings face the groom and bride. This is because the blessings are meant especially for the new couple, and because we wouldn't want to embarrass a groom who couldn't recite them himself.


Even though there is an opinion that the same person should recite all of the blessings, the near-universal practice is to permit dividing them among various

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TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY



RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

In July, 1850 (5610), the Jewish Hospital of Cincinnati was established, making it the first of approximately 113 American hospitals started by Jews. The exact opening date is unclear. The hospital was first mentioned in the press by *The Occident*, a Jewish newspaper in Philadelphia; an article in 1850 applauded the Jewish community of Cincinnati for undertaking such a project. From that article, it appears that the impetus for a Jewish hospital was twofold—to ensure that Jews who died while hospitalized would receive proper Jewish burial; and to spare Jewish patients from proselytizing by missionaries, who frequented medical institutions (and who occasionally baptized the unconscious!). Others link the establishment of the hospital to a massive cholera outbreak in 1849. Although it had been caring for patients from its inception, the Jewish Hospital Association wasn't formally incorporated until 1854. 

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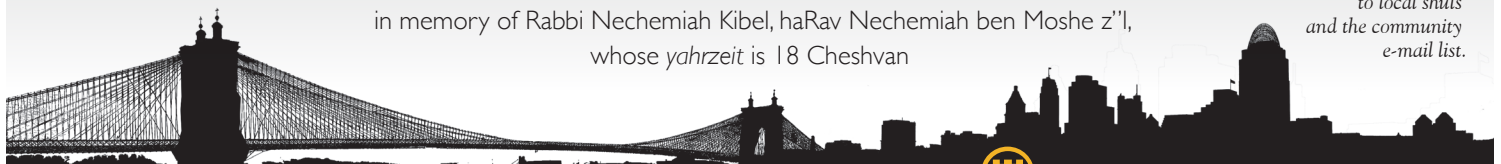
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A HALACHA FROM THE PARASHA

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people. This way, several people can be honored by the family.

There is a specific sequence to these blessings, and they should be recited in that order. If, however, one was skipped by mistake, it should be recited as soon as one remembers. The one exception is "Yotzer ha'Adam" (#2) which cannot be said after reciting "Asher Yatzar" (#3).

A *minyan* (quorum of ten adult males) is required in order to say all of the *Sheva B'rachos*, whether under the wedding canopy or during the week after. The groom is included in the quorum. If only three are present, the blessing over the wine, as well as the final blessing ("Asher Bara") can still be made.

If either the bride or the groom has never been married before, any meal that is made in their honor for the seven days following their wedding (with the wedding day counting as day one) is a *se'udas mitzvah*, a "mitzvah meal." If bread was eaten and *Birkas haMazon* is said, the seven blessings can be recited. If this is a second marriage for both, the *B'rachos* can be made on the first day only.

Many authorities permit saying *Sheva B'rachos* even if only seven attendees ate bread, as long as the rest ate something.

In order to recite *Sheva B'rachos*, *panim chadashos* (a "new face," i.e. a person over bar mitzvah who had not been at the wedding meal or any previous *Sheva B'rachos*) must be invited. Ideally *panim chadashos* should be someone who increases the joy of the groom or the bride—a friend, a relative, or a distinguished person. The custom seems to be to count strangers or waiters as *panim chadashos*. *Panim chadashos* are not necessary at the first two Shabbos meals. *Se'uda Sh'l'ishis* is also exempt, if words of Torah are said at the meal. 🥂

Conquering... CONTINUED

Firstly, if we have an objective party to discuss a situation with, they will be more capable of seeing clearly if a decision or action is or isn't subjective.

But, more importantly, if we're aware of a specific character trait that we would like

A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Who would be sent to live in a City of Refuge (*Ir Miklat*) even though he had never killed anyone accidentally?

The answer will appear in two weeks.

PREVIOUS RIDDLE:

Q Over which mitzvah does one recite two blessings that include the words "Who has sanctified us with His commandments?"

A Circumcision. One is recite by the father and the other by the *mohel*. 🥂

GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

RABBI EZRIEL DOVID FEINTAG WAS FROM THE Modzitzer Chassidim, a group generally known for its stirring music, and R' Ezriel himself was the composer of several songs.

Now he was among the masses being herded into cattle cars traveling from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka death camp. Amid the confusion and fear and the crying of children, people began to hear R' Ezriel's voice, singing, "*Ani ma'amin b'emunah sh'leima b'vi'as haMoshiach*—I believe with perfect faith in the coming of Moshiach."

"Who in his right mind thinks this is a time for song?" thought those around him.

But R' Ezriel kept singing this new composition, and soon he had the attention of everyone in the cattle car; others joined in, until the entire car was enveloped in song. They became uplifted by the impassioned singing, rising above their dire circumstances to strengthen their faith in Hashem.

R' Ezriel held up his hand and waited for everyone to quiet down. He called out, "This song must be kept alive, to strengthen other Jews. To whoever is able to escape and bring this song to the Modzitzer Rebbe, I promise half of my share in the World to Come."

Two young men took R' Ezriel up on his offer and jumped from the train. One, unfortunately did not make it through; but the other eventually made his way to the Modzitzer Rebbe in America.

Upon seeing the Rebbe, he exclaimed, "I've brought you something from the World to Come." Then, with great feeling, the man began to sing R' Ezriel's song.

The Rebbe soon joined in, and together, tears running unabated, they sang the song that had given strength to those who had made the ultimate sacrifice to earn their share in the World to Come. 🥂

Skyping with
Rabbi Yosef Weinman
of Lakewood, NJ



Who doesn't enjoy
night seder
at the Kollel?

to work on, and we couple that knowledge with a short, daily learning of what our Sages have told us about that trait, Their teachings will eventually seep into our subconscious, grab hold of that undesirable trait, and start changing it. Even if we don't see any progress

at first, the constant, daily reinforcement will wear away at that once impenetrable trait, like a river that eventually cuts through rock, and we will have changed ourselves for the better. 🥂