



Chaye Sarah



English version

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A LITTLE LOST

The greatest cause for “midlife crisis” is the belief that you are supposed to be in control. There is no greater haughtiness than the belief that you have your whole life mapped out for you. Life is full of crises, because we are all a little lost. And it is totally fine to be a little lost. The problem is when we title it as a crisis. It is just being a little lost, and that is fine. Sometimes, the best things in the world happen when we’re a little lost. There is nothing wrong with stopping and thinking. Because during those times when we are a little lost, we need to recalculate, reset our destination and, most importantly, realize that we need to humble ourselves a little to an Almighty G-d. I would not call it crisis, I would just call it *shalshélet*.

Probably the most interesting of the *ta’amim* is the *ta’am* we call *shalshélet*. The *ta’amim* set the tune for the way we read the *parasha* from the Sefer Torah. And the *ta’amim* have hidden in them great wisdom. The *shalshélet* is found in the entire Torah a total of 4 times. And a total of 3 times in *Neviim* and *Ketubim*. Interestingly enough, we had one in *Parashat Vayera* and we have one in *Parashat Chaya Sarah*, back to back. What is the meaning of the *shalshélet*?

The Vilna Gaon said that the first mention of a word in the Torah sets the tone for the rest of the usages of that word throughout the Torah. Looking back to the first time the *ta’am* of *shalshélet* appears, it is obvious that the words marked with a *shalshélet* have a double meaning. Wherever a *shalshélet* appears, the person who is being referred to is going through a

crisis. And that crisis will cause a long-lasting chain reaction, a ripple effect on history.

In *Parashat Vayera*, Lot was going through a crisis. The angels were pressing him to leave quickly, leaving all his worldly possessions behind, in order to save his life. Lot needed to think fast and decide what is more important: his career or his life. וַיִּתְמַהֲלֵהוּ -- He needed to make a quick decision; that is indicated by the *psik* after the *shalshélet*. The word is broken up into *מה* and *מה*. What or what? My status... or my ability to have something live on after me? And his decision is what brought us his descendant, King David. This is something we can learn from. At one time or another, we all need to deal with this type of crisis: choosing between our career and our family/future generations. And probably, the best way to make the decision is with humility.

In *Parashat Chaye Sarah*, we find the *shalshélet* used to accentuate the crisis of Eliezer, when he was sent to find a wife for Yitzhak. Eliezer was the ever-so-righteous servant of Avraham - as we know, הַמוֹשֵׁל בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ --

Eliezer ruled over his *yetzer hara* just like Avraham (BR 59:11), and he did not die, but entered Gan Eden alive (*Kallah Rabti* 3). But at that time, he was dealing with an inner battle. Eliezer so much wanted his own righteous daughter to marry Yitzhak. The top girl in Sarah’s seminary, she was a perfect match! She would have been, theoretically, the best mother for the Jewish Nation. There was just one problem. Eliezer was from Canaan, and Canaan was cursed by Noah.



Avraham told Eliezer that it just won't work - they are just not compatible. One who is blessed cannot marry one who is cursed. Avraham made Eliezer swear that he would not take a Canaanite girl for Yitzhak, and if he couldn't find one, Eliezer would be freed from his oath. This would mean that if Eliezer did not find a wife for Yitzhak, then Avraham would have to reconsider taking a wife from either Lot's or Yishmael's daughters, or even from Eshkol or Mamreh, who were actually Canaanites, but they had made a covenant with Avraham. But because Eliezer was a Canaanite slave, his daughter was just not an option.

Now, it was one thing for Eliezer to try his best for his master and realize that his daughter had no chance to be Yitzhak's bride. But then, there was another step: for Eliezer to pray to G-d for help in finding the right match for Yitzhak. Eliezer mustered up the strength to pray wholeheartedly to G-d. וַיֹּאמְרוּ יְקִיֵּץ אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנָי אַבְרָהָם הַקָּרֵה־נָּא לְפָנָי הַיּוֹם וַיֹּאמְרוּ יְקִיֵּץ אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנָי אַבְרָהָם הַקָּרֵה־נָּא לְפָנָי הַיּוֹם וַיֹּאמְרוּ יְקִיֵּץ אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנָי אַבְרָהָם הַקָּרֵה־נָּא לְפָנָי הַיּוֹם. And he said, “YKVK, the G-d of my master Avraham, may You arrange it for me this day that You do kindness with my master, Avraham.”

There is a lot of talk about the shidduch crisis. People suffer from crises in relationships, and from sometimes being not wanted. How can a person accept rejection? There is only one way. Humility. G-d has His plans, and only He knows what is the best for us. Relationship crises usually occur when the person involved asks, aloud or subconsciously, “Why am I not loved/accepted/respected?” But the truth is that *only G-d has the answer to that question*. And when Eliezer fully realized that he couldn't be accepted, when he humbled himself, he became the greatest *shadchan* of all time. We all owe him our existence. A tremendous ripple effect – a historical chain reaction.

The third time there is a *shalsholet* in the Torah is when 18-year-old, most-handsome Yosef was at the height of being tested by Zilka, the beautiful wife of his master Potifphar. Yosef had been seemingly betrayed by his holy brothers, sold as a slave, lost, to be “forever” alone in Egypt - orphaned from his mother and estranged from his father. And now, he was actually popular in his master's home... just a little too popular. All she

wanted was just one time to be with him, just one child from him, as her astrology told her she would. No one would ever know. וַיִּמָּאֵן. And Yosef refused. This was a tremendous crisis for Yosef. He could have given in to his desires, enjoyed the present, and ignored G-d, Who, it seemed, might have been “ignoring” him. But, Yosef overcame his desires in order to be true to his faith. He rejected the present pleasure and got himself thrown into jail, accused of the worst. But, this refusal of Yosef is what had the greatest ripple effect on his life and on the history of the entire Jewish Nation. It was from prison that he became known as the Dream Interpreter, and from there that he arose from the bottom of the pit to the top of the Egyptian empire.

The fourth time in the Torah where the *shalsholet* is mentioned is when Moshe Rabbeinu was in crisis. He was performing all the services of Priesthood, a service to G-d that was meant to be his. And, when he needed to slaughter the sacrifice to inaugurate his brother Aharon and his four children, the Torah tells us, וַיִּשְׁתָּן. These were the seven days of *miluim* (inauguration). But, the Midrash tells us that G-d waited for Moshe at the burning bush for seven days, until Moshe agreed to take out the Jews. On the third day, Moshe said, שְׁלַח־נָּא בְיַד־תְּשַׁלַּח -- which, in essence, was asking, *Please, send the Jews out in the hands of Aharon*. Because Moshe refused G-d's proposal and instead recommended Aharon, G-d took the Priesthood from Moshe and gave it to Aharon. The Midrash teaches, *Rav Halbo says that during all of the seven days of miluim, Moshe thought he would be the Priest. But on the seventh day, G-d gave the Priesthood to Aharon*. And when Moshe gave the Priesthood to his brother, he did so with his whole heart, despite the enormity of his regret. We all have things that we regret having done in life. And sometimes, there is not much we can do to change the past. But this is part of G-d's plan. We need to accept that we are human, and we sometimes miss out on opportunities that we mistakenly thought we were not ready for.

Whether your crisis is deciding between your career or your family and future, or if your crisis is about accepting wholeheartedly that you are not accepted, whether your crisis is about standing

strong in the face of forbidden desire, or accepting that you missed out on a past opportunity and there is no going back... Whatever makes you feel a

little lost... it is okay. Relax. Recalculate. And Remember, that the greatest things in life “happen” from those times that we were lost...

AN 18 YEAR OLD SHAWARMA

Coaching yeshiva students is my life's passion. Usually, students fall out of “ben Torah performance” because of two factors: lack of academic achievement and lack of social blending. If one of these two is still in force, the academic or social factor, then the boy is somehow able to stay afloat. This being the case, I have invested a lot of time learning about social acceptance. And there are two types of students. Those who, when they come, people say to themselves, Wow! Baruch Hashem, he came! And those who, when they leave, people say, Wow! Baruch Hashem, he left! What is the difference between the two?

So many coaching sessions boil down to the question, “How do I get the guys to like me?”. Well, ancient Jewish wisdom teaches that if you want to be honored, honor others. This is the secret to being liked. Give, don't take. This is such a pivotal thought. It is so simple that too often, we tend to forget it. Why?

The reason seems to be, because many times we focus on giving, but with ulterior motives. When Lavan heard what Rivka said about Eliezer, when he saw her jewelry, וירץ לבן אל האיש ההוצה אל העין, *Lavan went running outside towards the man, to the spring*. Why does it say, העין, the spring, and not באר *the well*, mentioned earlier (passuk 11)? The reason is because the word עין also means eye. All of Lavan's efforts to make room at home for Eliezer were for the sake of finding a way, looking how to get money from him. (Lekah Tov) His name was לבן, white, because after the meal any guest that ate by him, Lavan would ask afterwards for payment, and make the guest's face turn white. At his own daughter's wedding, he did not return the coats to his guests, until they paid for their portion. (Hemdat Hayamim)

If you want to get people to like you, you need to have a giving mindset, no strings attached. If you are approaching a situation with another person, or persons, and you come looking to receive attention, affection, appreciation, or any other benefit, even if

it is down the road, then you fall under the category of a taker; and if you abuse your ability and/or right to take, people get sick of you. Allow me to mention two people that I love very much, until today, and everyone I know that knows them, loves them. And this story will tell you why.

I remember, 18 years ago, when I first came to Mikdash Melech in Bayit Vegan, a few days before the z'man started, Rabbi Rafael Ashkenazi, (then nicknamed Ryan Ash) greeted me in the empty building, right when I came in from the airport. He greeted me with a smile, and before I could say "Who...", he took my two heavy suitcases up three flights to the room he thought was mine. When I finally caught up to him, I told him, no, I was told that I am not in that shiur. I was told my Rebbi will be Rabbi Lamet. He said, “Wow! Chashuv!” And without blinking an eye, took my two suitcases down two flights, to that part of the dorm. Then, Rabbi “Gil” Attar saw me, and said, within the first minute of meeting me, “Can I have the honor of taking you out and buying you your very first shawarma? You can't turn down such an offer; it's on the house!” I can never forget the acts of kindness they both did for me. It's already eighteen years later, and the memory is so fresh in my mind. There is so much chessed we can do, if we just get into that mindset. Become a giver. It is not an action, it is a mindset. You either have it, or you don't. If you don't, it takes time and effort to acquire it.

Some people have the feeling that they are being used. Of worrying that if they focus on how to give in their relationships, they will not get what they need. This is where Emunah kicks in. If you have Emunah, if you know that Hashem is going to provide whatever you need, that Hashem gives you attention, appreciation, and affection, financial aid, honor and help, and if you understand that you do not need to take from the other person in the relationship, you will find favor in their eyes, and you will be perceived as a giver. Because if you

believe you have everything you need, and trust that Hashem is taking care of you, you are not worried about giving without getting. People who are loved by all are givers. Of course, we all need to take from some people, some time in our life. But the focus is always on being the one who is ready to give, not to be the one who is looking to take. So the first issue that I work on in social performance is the desire to contribute, to give. The more your mindset is one of giving, the more people will be drawn to you. You will not become well-liked by the people in your life just because you “exist”. You will become liked because you have something to offer in the relationship.

The Orchot Tzaddikim lists what you need, in order to be appreciated by people. And the main focus of all the list is to help others as much as you can, with your soul and your money. This includes, 1. Lending (safely) 2. Giving presents (even to the rich) 3. Helping 4. Forgiving 5. Behaving with honesty 6. Giving of your time, patience and/or empathy 7. Not being a taker 8. Speaking calmly 9. Not revenging your disgrace, or mistakes of others 10. Being responsible for others 11. Not expecting others to be responsible for you 12. Not being argumentative. 13. Greeting people with a pleasant face, showing that you are happy to see them 14. Caring and sincerely asking others how they are doing 15. Offering consolation to others for their frustrations and fears 16. Keeping confidential matters to yourself 17. Not speaking badly about others 18. Judging favorably 19. Not being haughty, and 20. Do whatever you do, with intention of serving G-d. (Orchot Tzaddikim; Ahava; ובאיזה דרך)

I have not met anyone who keeps all these 20 and still feels that he/she is not appreciated, loved, or respected. No one really cares for you because you have money, good looks, or strength. They might want your money, looks or strength, but they do not care for you because of what you have. People care for you if you are a giver.

When Eliezer was searching for the most suitable mate for his master's son, it made no impression on him that Rivka was the best-looking girl "on the market". והנהער(ה) טבת מראה מאד. He did not care that she did not need to bend down in order to draw water. All he cared about was that she was a giver. Even Yitzhak was happy with Rivka only when he saw that she had the giving character of his mother, Sarah. And that was despite all the miracles that Eliezer said happened on the way.

The Seforno points to an interesting question. Why did Eliezer wait for Rivka to finish giving all the water in the bucket to the camel, before giving her the jewelry and making the proposal? Once Rivka offered to give water to both Eliezer and all of his camels, didn't she fit the bill? A match made by Heaven? What was Eliezer waiting for?

The Seforno answers, he wanted to see if Rivka would ask for any sort of payment for her good deeds. He wanted to see if, perhaps, she was looking for a compliment. But after finishing, Rivka turned around and started out on her way home. That was when Eliezer went running after her!! When she was a total giver, without expecting anything in return!

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