


**Parashat Chaye
Sara**

English version

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Kindness - Inside Out

R' Chaim Vital, student of Arizal was quoted saying something that I hope I will never forget. *There are people who perform acts of kindness with everyone, but with their own families, they do not do kindness. They think to themselves that when they come to the next world, to the Heavenly Court, the gates of Paradise will be opened wide... Woe is to them! Woe is to their souls!!! For they do not know that all their kindness is worthless!!!* (see Sefer Chaim Sheyesh Bahem pg. 100) What? Why?!

The Halacha regarding charity is that family comes first. To be a community leader, you need, first, to be a family leader. Your family before another, your city before another. And your wife comes first, before anyone else, even your parents! וּמִבְּשָׂרָהּ וּמִבְּעַמּוּתָּהּ: (Yeshayahu 58)

But some “leaders” don’t get it... some people who are kind and available outside the house, are “unavailable” inside the house. The only way a family member can get through to such people is “long distance”. An email, WhatsApp or text.

How cruel! Why would you want your children to develop a hatred for acts of kindness performed for other people? If you are kind to everyone, except for your wife and children, what generally happens? Your wife and children subconsciously begin to feel that they are not worth your time, love, interest, affection. This kindness is not kindness. This kindness is cruelty! The proof is that your children will not follow in your way; they will

not do kindness outside their own homes, because they do not want to hurt anyone, like they were hurt!

Avraham was the epitome of Balanced Kindness, by being sensitive for his own family first. When Avraham offered meat to his three guests, he went through the trouble of slaughtering three cows, to give a whole tongue in mustard sauce to each, with three Se'ah of fine flour. But when he offered them water to wash, he offered only a *small* amount. יִקַּח־נָא מֵעֹט־מַיִם. Why didn't he trouble himself to serve them a lot of water? The Talmud teaches, that the flour and the cattle, Avraham dealt with himself. But the act of bringing the water was delegated to a household member. (B. Metzia 86) That is why he only asked for the smallest amount of water. (R' Yisrael Salanter)

It is so interesting. The Torah uses the word Chessed in two regards. **Kindness** and **embarrassment/abomination**. (Vayikra 20;17) What is the significance of this? Why would the Torah use this word for two diametrically opposed meanings?

Let us take a look at the Chessed of Lot. When he invited the angel guests and was surrounded by the mob of the entire city of Sodom, he was given an ultimatum. “Give us your guests, so that we can defile their bodies!” Lot stepped out and quickly closed the door behind him, as he faced the angry mob. And then, Lot offered them the most despicable offer, *in the name of kindness!* הִגִּיד־נָא לִי



שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ אִישׁ אוֹצְיָאָה־נָּא אֶתְהֶן אֵלֵיכֶם וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶן כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם רַק לְאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵל־אֵל־תַּעֲשׂוּ דְכָר כִּי־עַל־כֵּן בָּאוּ בְּצֶל קַרְתִּי: *Here, I have two daughters who have never known any man. I will bring my daughters out to you, to do with them as you wish! But do nothing to my guests, for they have come under the shelter of my roof!!!*(Bereshit 19;8)

Lot got the first part of Avraham's class on kindness, but he missed the second part. All he knew, all he learned from Avraham was kindness, before Avraham had a family. Lot never got a chance to learn from Avraham how to balance kindness with family, because he went out on his own path before Avraham had any children! He thought that by being kind, by sacrificing his family to protect his guests he would be "Avrahamic", a drop like his uncle. But he paid a heavy price for it. His own daughters, the ones who had not yet married, got back at their own father in the cave, with the most awkward and embarrassing story of bearing children ever! She even named her child Moab- *From father*, forever announcing to the world - *this child is from my Dad! Because I learned from dad that being kind to others, saving the world, comes first, before saving face for family!*

Our Parasha begins with a very detailed episode of Avraham purchasing a grave for his deceased wife Sarah. The Midrash Rabbah comments on this achievement of Avraham with the passuk in Mishlei וְכָבוֹד וְצַדִּיקָה יִמְצָא חַיִּים רַדְרִי צַדִּיקָה וְחַסֵּד יִמְצָא חַיִּים: *He who pursues charity and kindness will find life, charity, and honor. (Mishlei 21, 21) Who is the one who pursued charity and kindness? This is Avraham, who performed kindness to his wife Sarah!*

What? Avraham is known as the King of Kindness, only because he was kind to his wife Sarah? Why is buying her a grave considered kindness? Isn't every Joe Shmoe expected to buy his wife a grave, as promised in the Ketuba?

Yes. Every husband has to buy a grave for his wife, but this was not any ordinary grave. This was the Maarat Hamachpela, something that Avraham paid \$8,160,000 dollars for, despite being promised by G-d that the Canaanite land was his. (see Kav Vnaki) Avraham knew that deep inside that cave is the entrance to Gan Eden. (Midrash Rut) Avraham

knew that this is a place where all prayers and praise pass through, before going On High. (Rama Mipano, Yonat Ilem,; Migaleh Amukot)

But there is a deeper message here. Avraham got into the Kindness Hall of Fame not for being kind to the world, *but for being kind to his wife*. All the greatest kindness that Avraham did does not add up to the one act of kindness to his own wife, Sarah: getting her the best grave in the world! Your ticket to Olam Haba is not the kindness of changing the world and making it a better place. It is the kindness of changing *your* world

Why are people not kind inside-out? There are two main reasons for this.

Aleph- Doing kindness outside home is more attractive than doing kindness inside your home. You don't get any medals for saying something kind to your wife, or spending time with your kids. Acts of kindness at home won't make you famous or make you any "connections".

Beth- You are *expected* to be nice at home, to your wife and children. And the rule in life is - people do not usually do what they are expected to do. As our Rabbis teach גדול המצווה ועושה יותר ממי שאינו מצווה ועושה. *Greater is one who does what he is commanded from someone who is not commanded and he does.* (Kiddushin 31a)

But real kindness is inside-out. First inside, and then outside. We all have a commandment that is almost impossible to fulfill. ואהבת לרעך כמוך, *Love your friend like yourself*. How is it possible to love someone else like I love myself? R' Chaim Vital writes that the situation in which you can actually love another person as yourself, can be fulfilled through loving your wife. (Shaar Likutim Ekeb) The Talmud learns from this passuk that it is forbidden for a man to marry a woman, without seeing her first. Why? Because it could be that after he marries her, he will not like the way she looks (one of the worst feelings for a woman), and the Torah says ואהבת לרעך כמוך! *Love your friend like your love yourself!* (Kiddushin 41a) After all, the real, original Chessed, was from Adam to Chava, kindness from a man to his wife, before anyone else was born!

Hillel taught אל תדין (תדון) אֶת חֵבְרֵךְ עַד שֶׁתִּגִּיעַ לְמִקוּמוֹ
Do not judge a person until you reach his place.
(Chapter 2) R Moshe Aharon Shtern would add a twist to that. If you want to judge a person, check

with his wife and children, his home, *his place*. How do *they*, *his place*, perceive their Abba? Because who you are at home, is all you really are in the World of Truth.

The Rambam rules that a Middah, a characteristic, that is not balanced is a bad characteristic, even if the characteristic is kindness. (Deot 1;5) So how does a person balance kindness? Here are the selfie steps... The self- help steps that put things into balance.

1. Master the art of kindness by learning Sefer Ahavat Chessed of the Chafetz Chaim. Chessed is a skill- not an impulse. Ask your Rabbi when in doubt.
2. First make sure that your own home is functional before helping others. Here are some ingredients to a functioning home, a home where family needs are met: Selfless love. Joy. Peace and calm. Patience. Kindness. Compassion. Faithfulness. Gentleness. Acceptance. Boundaries. Responsibility. Individualism. Health. Social life. Reasonable expectations.
3. Learn to accept yourself, and love yourself. You do not need “medals”, you just need to recognize how much good G-d has given you. You do not need connections. You just need to realize that your best and most important connections are your own family. They are G-d’s gift to you. Cherish them.

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 *shalsholet*.

Probably the most interesting of the *ta’amim* is the *ta’am* we call *shalsholet*. 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 *shalsholet* 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 *shalsholet*?

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 *shalsholet* appears, it is obvious that the words marked with a *shalsholet* have a double meaning. Wherever a *shalsholet* 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. לַיְתִמְּהָ לְמָה — He needed to make a quick decision; that is indicated by the *psik* after the *shalsholet*. 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 *shalsholet* 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, *המושל בכל אשר לו* — 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. *וַיֹּאמֶר יְקִיָּוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנָי אַבְרָהָם הַקְרָה־נָּא לִפְנֵי הַיּוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר יְקִיָּוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנָי אַבְרָהָם הַקְרָה־נָּא לִפְנֵי הַיּוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר יְקִיָּוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנָי אַבְרָהָם הַקְרָה־נָּא לִפְנֵי 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. *וַיִּצְטָרֵף* 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, *וַיִּשְׁפָּטוּ*. 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.

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, ויררץ לבן אל האיש החוצה 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

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...

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”. והנער (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!

SARAH’S RECIPES FOR SUCCESS

State of mind is probably the most crucial element for peak performance in all life areas. In business, playing sports, and wherever else performance makes a difference, state of mind can be “the make it or break it” factor. Especially in serving G-d, state of mind is a key component. *Yehuda Ben Temah said, be brazen like a leopard, light like an eagle, swift like a deer, and mighty like a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven.* To do the Will of G-d, to learn, to pray, to do kindness, to be superb as a spouse/parent at home, you can’t “just do it” to do it right. You need just the right emotion. Human beings have many built in features – moods, states of mind, emotions. Each state of mind can make a person into a different being, a different “animal”. You need swiftness, might, to be brazen and light; you need to tap into the right emotion that you have already built up in your personality, in order for the Will of G-d to be achieved.

A teacher in an Israeli classroom found written on the board one morning, “*Our teacher wants us to wake up in the morning like roosters, to jump out of bed like lions, to schlepp our schoolbags like donkeys, to copy from the chalkboard like monkeys, to remember word for word what we are taught like parrots, to be quiet and still in class like fish... and then, the teacher complains to the principal that we are like a bunch of animals!!*” The truth is, the teacher is right. The way to successful living is to find in ourselves the appropriate state of mind for each situation life brings us, in each situation asking ourselves the following question: “Which mood or state of mind can I tap into to help me perform my best in accomplishing the Will of my Father in Heaven?”

And this is what we can learn from G-d’s eulogy on Sarah, in the first passuk in our Parasha. G-d encapsulated Sarah’s life into one sentence. *Sarah’s life was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years;*

the years of Sarah's life.(Breshit 23 1) Rashi explains that all the years of Sarah's life were equal in goodness.

My Rabbi added some spice to Rashi's explanation. Life is split into three stages, childhood, parenthood and grandparenthood. The child, with his youthful attitude towards life, has this sort of optimism, creativity, purity and "out of the box" thinking. Adulthood comes with the sense of responsibility, working hard and beginning projects. Grandparenthood brings wisdom, understanding and acceptance, with (hopefully) feelings of accomplishment. If you can't laugh in life, it is because you can't tap into youthfulness. If you keep making foolish mistakes, it is because you are not tapping into that 100- year-old you. And if you are not taking responsibility for your life's dreams, you're missing the twenty-year-old you. Each day, Sarah found inside herself youthfulness, responsibility and wisdom, simultaneously. Even when she was still a 7-year-old, she had wisdom of a hundred year old, and the sense of responsibility of a 20-year-old. And she was full of youthfulness, even at the age of a grandmother. This is the way to an amazing life: 100 years old, 20 years old and 7 years, all at once. From nursery school till nursing home.

I would like to add my own twist to the Rashi, but first a fairytale. There is a story told (heard from Eliyahu Shiri) about a man with no luck. He had no money, no wife, and no happiness. A friend told him to walk in a certain distant desert for three days, in a particular direction. He would then reach a specific spot, that G-d would not refuse to answer his prayer, to change his Mazal. Desperate, he set out on his journey.

The first day, he met a tree. The tree was crying. "Dear tree, why do you cry?" The sobbing tree responded, "I am so thirsty. There is a pond of water, just near my roots. But I can't reach it!!!" The man responded, "Don't cry. I am on my way to ask G-d to change my Mazal. I will pray for you, as well. I'll be back soon." He continued on his journey, and he found a fair, young lady wandering in the desert, sobbing. "I came all the way here to pray for my shidduch, my match, but I can't find the right place. I'll never merit having a family." "Don't cry, fair lady. I am on my way to ask G-d to change my luck, and I will ask Him to help you find your mate, as well. I'll be back in a jiffy." And with that, he tilted his hat and was on his way. The morning of day three, he spotted a weeping lion. "Dear lion, why do you weep so?" "I am so hungry! I haven't eaten for a few days." "Don't worry, lion dear. I am on my way to ask

THE BREAKDANCING PRESIDENT

There are three peculiar Berachot, that we make each day. שלא עשני גוי, שלא עשני עבד, שלא עשני אשה. Blessed are

G-d to change my luck, and I will pray that He send you prey in no time."

He hurried on, and soon after, he arrived at the place of prayer. "G-d, I came all the way here to ask You to change my Mazal, my luck. I have no parnassah, no wife, and no happiness. Please, G-d, change my Mazal. And also, G-d, please help the tree's roots reach the water, send the fair, young lady a groom, and feed the lion."

Suddenly, he heard a booming, Heavenly voice. "I will change your Mazal, son. But you need to recognize the opportunities that I send you in life and grab them. Here are three envelopes, one for the tree, one for the fair lady, and one for the lion. Tell them I have answered their prayers as well."

Full of expectation, the man set back home. On his way, he reached the Tree. He handed over the envelope, and the tree read aloud." Dear Tree. Find someone to do you a favor and remove the treasure chest full of precious gems blocking your roots." The tree begged the man with new luck to help it and take the hidden treasure from its roots, so it could have water from the pond. "Sorry, tree, I have helped you enough. I am on my way to my fame and fortune with my new luck. Find someone else." With that, he continued on, soon after, noticing the fair, young lady. He delivered her the envelope from G-d. "Marry the first man you meet upon receiving this letter. You will live happily ever after, with lives full of plenty." She turned to the man and asked him for a date. "Sorry, I am on my way, fair lady, to my new mazal. Ask someone else." And with that, he continued on his way and saw that hungry lion. He handed over the letter from G-d. "If this Shlumazal manages to bring you this letter, eat him for lunch! He was too foolish to take advantage of the first two opportunities I sent him. He is a waste of a life!"

So many people get stuck in life, waiting for that Mazal of the next stage. Childhood has its beauty, adulthood has its great times, and the golden age of grandparenthood has its bliss, as well. But you have to grab the opportunity when it presents itself, not wait for the next stage, or wish you were in a previous one.

When we make the most of each stage in life, we can live a life of fulfillment, like Sarah, who lived 100 and 20 and 7. We can then say that each and every year was the best year of our life. Because the only way that a part of life is great is if we make it so.

You... for You did not make me a gentile, ... for not making me a slave, ... for not making me a woman.

What is so bad about being a woman? A woman like Sarah, our Matriarch, was greater than Avraham in prophecy! What is so bad about being a slave, like Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, who was called דמשק אליעזר for he was מרבו לאהררים תורה ומשקה, he would transmit his master, Avraham's, teaching to the world, a servant for whom G-d performed open miracles? What is wrong being a gentile like O. Shindler, or the Druze Arab who was killed in the Har Nof massacre, both of whom put their lives on the line to defend innocent Jews?

And another question. Why is the blessing made in the negative? Just simply say, thanks for making me Jewish, for making me a free man and for making me male! Why do we make the blessings in this weird fashion?

My friend answered this question with something he said he heard from R' D. Orlofsky. The best way to explain it is using the Rabbi's parable: Marty went to school, from 1st – 12th grade, anticipating going on the big, graduation, overseas, extreme trip. Two weeks before the flight, his mom mentioned to him that Aunt Martha, who he's never met, is coming for a visit. He can't miss this once in a lifetime chance to meet her. "I canceled your flight for you, so you do not have to worry. I think that this meeting is very important." "Noooooooooooo!" To make a long story short, he ended up having a great time with his auntie. Now, Marty wants to thank Aunt Martha for this opportunity of getting to know her. He has two choices of what to say. "Thanks for giving me a great time." Or, "I had such a great time! It was worth it for me to miss my grand graduation trip, just to get to know you". Which one has more meaning?

The blessings we make prior to these are that G-d gave us all that we need, and that G-d glorified us as Jews. The blessing we make here is that we thank G-d for making me me. For putting me in the position of being a male, a Jew and a free man, so that I have the full gamut of the 613 mitzvot. "And, G-d, I am so thankful that you made me me, with the challenges of being a male, that I thank you even for not being Sarah, Eliezer, or O.

Schindler. I want to know who the next president of the U. S. is going to be, the most respectful position in the world, so that I can thank G-d, saying, it is so worthwhile being the Jew that You made me, that I would give up being Mr. President, if I had to, for that honor.

Where has that Jew gone, the one that is happier to have the opportunity to be commanded to put on tefillin than he is to have the opportunity to be the President? Or happier to have a mitzvah to put on a Tallit, than to be a holy woman, like Rebbetzin Kaniefsky? Or to have a mitzvah to learn 3 sedarim in Yeshiva more than having miracles happen to him, like flying camels, and having G-d answer your wish before you finish your request... or to send you angels to poison those who poison you? The authentic Jew thought this way in the last generation, but nowadays, the average Jew wants to be President. He wants to breakdance like a Goy at weddings, and would rather not be woken up for saying Kriat Shema on time, as men are commanded to do.

This reminds me of a common syndrome. I had a meeting with one of my students in NYC last month, on Broadway. I stepped into the Kosher Bravo Pizza and bought a drink. I sat down, and next to me, an African American family, polite mother and kids, sat down to share a pie. The mother asked if it bothers me that they sat next to me. I said, not in the least. "But, I just want to ask you a question. I always thought that non kosher pizza tastes better and costs less. Is it worth it for you to pay more to eat pizza with supervision?" She answered me, "No, Rabbi, you got it wrong. Pizza here costs less and tastes better!"

There is a fear that is underestimated. It is the fear of missing out. The fear that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. Or that someone else's situation is better or easier. People do not like to accept that 'G-d made me the way He made me, because He wants me to be me.' He wants me to grow from the position that I am in.

Blessed are You G-d, that you made for me all that I need.

To support this publication, or receive it by e-mail, please email me at rabbioseffarhi@gmail.com.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A"H

