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THE ART OF FOCUS AUDITING

When Eliezer returned with Rivkah after his mission to find a wife for Yitzhak, the Torah describes the moment as follows: "And Yitzhak went forth to pray in the field towards evening, and he lifted his eyes and saw, and behold, camels were approaching." (Bereishit 24:63).

Why does the Torah emphasize that Yitzhak saw the camels? Shouldn't the focus have been on Rivkah, his future wife and matriarch of the Jewish people? The detail seems almost unnecessary. But perhaps it contains a profound lesson about focus and perspective: Yitzhak didn't focus on Rivkah immediately. He first noticed the camels, the vehicles carrying her. His disciplined and spiritual nature ensured he wasn't distracted by appearances, although Rivka was very good looking. Contrast this with another moment in the Torah when Esav meets Yaakov and his new family after many years. After just meeting Yaakov, hugging and kissing him, it says, "And Esav lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children" (Bereishit 33:5). Esav's focus is strikingly different. He immediately notices Yaakov's wives.

What is the difference between the two, between Yitzhak and Esav? The answer lies in what each individual chooses to focus on. For Yitzhak, the arrival of Rivkah wasn't

about her physical beauty or the grandeur of the moment. It's not about Rivka's physical beauty or the drama, or "romance". It was about her character, her destiny, and her role in building a nation. He focused on Rivkah's character and her destiny as a partner in building the Jewish nation, not on her external beauty.

Esav, however, saw the world through a different lens. His focus immediately went to the visible, the external, and of course, Yaakov's wives. For him, appearances and material possessions defined reality. His focus is immediately on the external—appearances, and possessions. His perception is defined by what is flashy and obvious, the short term pleasures, not by what is enduring or meaningful, the long term goals. This is what brought Esav ultimately, to the mistake of his life. The sale of his Firstborn Rights to his younger brother Yaakov. Now he was hungry, so he sold his future for the lentils in the present.

What we focus on expands. Where your focus goes, your energy flows—and so does your destiny. What we focus on defines us and shapes our world. Your Kivun, direction and life goals, develops your Kavanna, you focus and awareness. If your goal is to live in line with your values, what is significant, and



character development, you'll build something lasting. If you focus on appearances, you'll always be chasing illusions and fleeting pleasure. If you fixate on material success, that will dominate your perception of life. That will be all that you see. But if you train yourself to focus on deeper values, you'll see a world of meaning and purpose.

When Avraham entered Egypt, he told his wife Sarah, Now I know that you are a beautiful woman. He was married to her for a long while, but never focused on these external things, as love is not about looking into each other's eyes, but in looking in the same direction. Her beauty, now, when entering Egypt, put Avraham's life in danger, so now he noticed it.

When a groom gets married, he traditionally receives an Aliyah and reads the portion of Eliezer's mission to find Rivkah. Why this story? Rabbenu Bachye explains, it's a guide to focusing on what really matters in marriage. It reminds us that building a family isn't about chasing externalities like wealth, beauty, or fame. These are fleeting—money grows wings and flies away, beauty fades, and fame is as fickle as the weather. Instead, as the verse says, "A grapevine with a grapevine, a good combination yields great wine." A good wedding, is when a good family marries into another good family. You don't want to mix good quality grapes with cheap quality grapes, if you want the best wine. For just like wine takes on the flavor of the barrel it's aged in, children absorb the character of their mother's family, as she is the "barrel" the wine is created in.

The Torah commands, "Do not stray after your hearts and your eyes" (Bamidbar 15:39). Because the heart shapes what the eyes see. If your heart is filled with greed, envy, or superficial desires, that's what your eyes will notice, everywhere you look. If your heart seeks goodness, truth, and wisdom, you'll find

those to be what you notice and focus on around you.

As my Rosh Yeshiva taught me, When a man is looking at a woman when talking to her, he can direct the attention of his heart to be focused on the floor. Sometimes, a person can be looking at the floor when talking to a woman, but his heart is focused on her looks. It is not enough to control your eyes alone, you need to control your heart, as well.

This is true in so many areas of life. Emotions, Finances, Life Goals, Relationships, Spirituality and Balanced Living. Your heart shapes what you see, and what we choose to see reflects who we are inside. If you harbor resentment, you'll find flaws everywhere. If you cultivate gratitude, generosity, and faith, your eyes will naturally gravitate toward positivity and opportunity.

This principle is why being a "working-learning" person—a balance between Torah study and earning a livelihood—is so challenging. Each area demands focus, and without careful discipline, one focus can easily overshadow the other. It's easier to fully immerse yourself in just learning or just working, but balancing the two? That's a constant tug-of-war.

In life, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the long road ahead—how will I support my family, marry off my children, or achieve my goals? The secret is to focus on the next step. If you focus on your next step, G-d will help you, and take you to success. As the passuk says, אֲשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל-הַרְרִים, I lift my eyes to the mountains, to my Patriachs, my Horim, מֵאַיִן יָבֹא עֲזָרִי עֲזָרִי From where will my help come? יְהוָה מֵעַם יְהוָה My help will come from YKVK, הַיְהוָה עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth. When you realize that you are אֵין, that you are nothing, that is when G-d will help you. He will achieve your goals for you, as



long as you focus on your next step. He will show up out of nowhere, like the Pink Fiat...

Last week, I was coming out of a supermarket parking lot when a large van collided with my car, smashing in the front left wing. The man driving the van insisted we exchange details outside the lot as many cars were in line trying to exit the parking lot. I agreed, but as soon as we exited, he sped away.

There I was—frustrated, my car damaged, with nothing but a phone number that wasn't being answered. I tried chasing him to take a picture of his license plate, but couldn't catch up. The supermarket refused to release camera footage without police involvement. When he would answer the phone, he would say he does not have time, he is in a rush. He said, if I wanted to, I could call the police. Police said, go to station to file a claim. Feeling stuck and uncertain about what to do next, I drove slowly home, discouraged and unsure how to proceed.

As I stopped at a red light just two blocks from my home, I noticed the pink Fiat that had been behind me at the accident. This was an hour and a half after the accident, and here is that same car?!? I rolled down my window and asked if the driver remembered what happened. To my amazement, the driver confirmed everything and agreed to be a witness for my insurance claim! The chances of encountering this witness again, far from the accident site, were almost zero. The driver could have been in Cyprus by then. Yet, it happened.

When we can't see the way forward, G-d sends the "pink Fiat" we need right when we need it. I told the Van driver, that I had a witness, and he then gave me his information. The insurance was only willing to cover the damage, if I had a witness. Thank you G-d, for sending me the Pink Fiat!

In the future, when you need it most, G-d will send you your Pink Fiat. Instead of worrying about the steps ahead, identify the immediate action you can take. Whether it's a phone call, a conversation, or a single step forward, this focus keeps you moving. This is true in any area of life, including your financials. "A person's livelihood is as difficult as the splitting of the sea." Yet, just as G-d provided a path for the Jews when they needed it most, telling them, just focus on your next step through the Sea, so too does He guide us when we take our next step forward in faith.

This is true regarding Teshuva as well. The Rambam writes in Hilchot Teshuvah that each of us should view the world as balanced on a scale—our next action has the power to tip the scale toward good. One step towards spirituality, can make you into a tzaddik... You just need to focus on what the next mitzvah for you is, and it will change the world. When we focus on our next step, we give ourselves the opportunity to move forward without getting bogged down by the enormity of the journey or repentance.

A word of caution: We live in a time where, tech has taken over our hearts, not giving us a chance to focus on our goals. Smartphones are machines that are much smarter than us humans. Inappropriate sites are much stronger than our Yetzer Tov. (There are more views of inappropriate content websites, than the views of Youtube, Netflix, Amazon Prime and Twitter, combined!!! 30 % of all internet usage is inappropriate content related! These are the facts.) These tech tools, when not properly filtered, in an instant, can infiltrate into your deepest desires, and control your choices, even if you had no interest in such content to begin with, even if you were pure at heart to begin with.

Social media, YouTube, and anything else that is addicting where you just wanted to be scrolling or browsing for 2 or 3 minutes, but



then you find yourself an hour later still there, are Focus Pirates. They are multi billion dollar machines, that pirate your focus and sell your focus to advertisers. The rule in consumer psychology is, if there is no product to buy, if something is free, it is because, YOU are the product.

To get back our focus, we need periodic digital detox. We need gratitude journaling and meditating, to recover from the cognitive damage done by these machines. Spirituality only expands when you can focus on it. All the Torah began from Moshe's focus on a burning bush. If Moshe would have had a Smartphone, he would have never noticed the burning bush!! (And if he did, he might have just taken a selfie by the bush, post it for some likes, and

move on!) And then we would have never received the Torah!

Selfie Steps : 1. At the end of each day, write down three things you noticed that brought you joy or meaning. This trains your eyes to focus on positivity and depth. 2. When faced with a choice, pause and ask: Am I focusing on the short-term or the long-term? What are the deeper values at play here? Focus on what builds, not on what fades. Modesty remains. Makeup fades. 3. Visualize your long-term goals daily, write them down. Imagine the person you want to be, the legacy you want to leave behind. 4. Keep a focus log, do a "Focus Audit". Make sure your focus is on the good in others, and the opportunities in the challenges.

THE ART OF CONTINUED RELENTLESS PRAYER

In the Daf Yomi this week, we have just learned that a human is a creature that that a human being, at his core, is expected to pray. The Jewish people want G-d to tell them why this Galut is so long and dark. When will this Night end, this long, dark Galut? שֹׁמֵר מֵהַמַּלְאָכָה שֹׁמֵר מֵהַמַּלְאָכָה: G-d, the Watchman for the Jewish Nation, answers. אָמַר שֹׁמֵר אֶתְהָ בָקָר The morning came, the opportunity for Mashiach came and it passed, and now night has come... If you want the Mashiach to come at the opportune times, you need to pray, to request with your whole heart. You need to do Teshuva. (Yeshayahu 21 ;12)

The first Mishna in B. Kama refers to a human as a מַבְעָה, a person who is praying. Because that is when a person is doing what he is inherently created to do. (Netziv B. Kama; Alei Shur page 24) Man is called אָדָם, Adam, because all Mankind have in them a split nature, either to be earthly, Adamah, or to be G-dly, Adameh, I will be similar to G-d. Similarly, a person is either a מַבְעָה, a

destructive creature, or a מַבְעָה, a creature that prays. Either a person is G-dly, connects to G-d, or a person is at risk of being animalistic. If we take the letters of Man, אָדָם, and we write out the name of each one, one at a time, we will see what a Man is meant to be. -א-ל-ף, -ד-א-ל-ף. When the name Adam is spelled out in full, we have the letters מִתְפַּלֵּל. Because that is what we are created for. That is our purpose, the meaning of why G-d created Man.

There are two types of prayer. There is Yishmael's prayer, which is a utilitarian prayer. He turns to G-d when he needs Him, but does not believe that he can see G-d in difficult times. When Hagar had a revelation from G-d that she would have a child called Yishmael, who would cause difficulties to the Jewish Nation at the End of Days, causing them to cry out to G-d, she called the place Be'er Lachai Ro'ee, *A well, where G-d sees me*. This means, "G-d sees me in my difficult times, but I can't see Him." יִשְׁמַעֲלֵי, He will hear my voice when I cry out to Him for help, but still, I can't see Him in my everyday life.



ותקרא שם-יְקוֹנֵן הדבֵר אליה אתה אל רֹאֵי כִי אֲמֹרָה הַגֵּם
כִּי-שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים She only sees G-d, *after* G-
d sees her, after G-d takes care of her and
answers her prayers, but not during the
difficult times. When Yishmael prays, G-d
listens, as He promised Hagar that He would.
כִּי-שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים and then, וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת-קוֹל הַנְּעֹרָה
אֶל-קוֹל הַנְּעֹרָה. G-d only hears him, but he
doesn't see G-d.

Twice in this parsha, we find that Yitzhak is mentioned as being in the vicinity of this same well, the Be'er Lachai Ro'ee. First time is when Rivka comes to meet Yitzhak: that is where Yitzhak was, when he was inaugurating the Minha prayer for eternity. Second time is when Yitzhak brought (Ketorah) Hagar to marry his father Avraham, after Sarah died. But what was the significance of this place?

Yitzhak knew that this place connected to Hagar had holiness in it. He knew that he needed to fix, to correct and repair the prayers of Hagar; after all, both Yitzhak and Hagar share the same gematria, [numerical value] of 208. When Avraham was with Yitzhak facing Har Hamoriah, ready to sacrifice Yitzhak, Avraham and Yitzhak saw G-d and His Cloud, while Yishmael and Eliezer did not see either G-d or His Cloud there. Avraham said to both of them, since *you* don't see, and the donkey which is such a lowly animal does not see, both of you are like donkeys! Stay behind with the donkey. (Midrash Raba 56 1-2). What was the meaning of this?

Yishmael does not see G-d in the difficult times, just like his mother Hagar does not see G-d in the difficult times. Avraham gives this holy mountain of the Jewish people's prayer - a name. וַיִּקְרָא אֲבְרָהָם שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא יְקוֹנֵן וְרֹאֵה
אֶשֶׁר יֵאמָר הַיּוֹם בְּתַר יְקוֹנֵן וְרֹאֵה
And Avraham called the name of that place *YKVK will see, that it will be said from today onwards, in the Mountain (of Moriah) Hashem will be seen.* Yitzhak sees G-d even in hard times, while Yishmael calls out to G-d in hard times, and

sees G-d only after G-d answers his prayers. That is the fundamental difference between Hagar's prayer and Yitzhak's prayer. And that is what Yitzhak was doing: fixing Hagar's prayer, at Be'er Lachai Ro'ee.

We pray, not to be answered, but to see G-d in the hard times, and to connect to Him. Yishmael was promised that his prayers would be answered, and he has Avraham's mistaken prayer of לֹא יִשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה לְפָנָי: keeping him around till the End of Days. (Zohar) He has the merit of the Brit Milah to be in the Land of Israel, until that merit runs out. (Zohar) He is what G-d uses to bring about judgement on the Jewish People, as he was born when Avraham was 86, the numerical value of Elokim, G-d's Name of Judgment. When we see G-d in the hard times, in times of judgement, then the prayers of Yishmael are not answered. Yishmael's prayers Allahu Akbar, are answered, only when we are not praying or learning. It is so interesting, how my sons in Yeshivat Hebron told me, that there was a sign put up in Yeshiva, a request from the IDF. "Please have students learn and pray from the hours 2 a.m. till 5 a.m., taking rotations! The IDF soldiers who are getting attacked in Gaza, are all getting hurt or dying, from 2 a.m. till 5 a.m., when no one is learning or praying! This war, is a war that is battling out the merits of Yitzhak vs. Yishmael's prayers!

It is so interesting how the Shaharit prayer was inaugurated by Avraham, and his prayer was specifically for the people of Sodom - a prayer that was never answered! It was a prayer that Avraham knew had almost no hope, for G-d had already checked out Sodom and made His decision after His research. אֲרָדָה-נָא וְאָרָא
הַכַּצְעָעִתָּהּ הַבָּאָה אֵלַי עָשׂוּ פְלָה וְאִם-לֹא אֲדַעָה
So, what was this Shaharit prayer even about?

Another question. G-d explains why He felt it was important to tell Avraham about the destruction of Sodom. Avraham will be a forefather of a big nation. וַיִּקְוֶה אֲמִר הַמְּכַפָּה אֲנִי



מאברהם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה וְאֶבְרָהִם *Hashem asked, How will I hide from Avraham what I am doing?* וְאֶבְרָהִם *And Avraham will be a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the land will be blessed through him...* Why is that a reason for G-d to tell Avraham about the destruction of Sodom?!

There was once a retired man in a clothing store, and it took him a long time to find a suit to buy. He noticed how a younger man came in and bought a suit within fifteen minutes. He turned to the younger fellow and asked him how he bought a suit so fast. The man answered, "Simple. I have 5 boys at home. If the suit does not fit one, it will fit the next one. You don't have any boys at home, so if the suit will not fit you, it will go to the garbage!"

G-d knew that this prayer to save Sodom had no chance. Avraham's praying was to see G-d, through His Judgement, and to bring awareness of G-d to the Universe. If the prayer wasn't answered, it didn't mean it did not work. Prayer is ברומו של עולם ; it will be reserved in the highest place in Heaven for something else, in the right place, and the right time. Being that Avraham will have so many descendants, those prayers for Sodom will have somewhere to go!

And those prayers did get to good use!

Who came out of Sodom? Who survived? Lot and his daughters, who ended up to be the ancestors of Ruth, who was the grandmother of King David, and the Forefather of Mashiach!!!

Yitzhak specifically set up the prayer of Minha, the prayer that is symbolic of the End of Days, at the well of Be'er Lechai Ro'ee, the spiritual place of Yishmael. It is not clear where this place is. (Although it is most probably 'Ein Avdat) What is the connection between the prayers at the end of days and the spirituality of Yishmael, and G-d answering Yishmael's prayers?

As long as Yishmael's merit lasts, his prayers can do something. The Baal Haturim says, at the end of our Parasha, that Yishmael died "on the face of all his brothers". על-פְּנֵי כָּל-אֶחָיו נָפַל. This is adjacent to the words of the beginning of the next parasha, וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק, these are the chronicles of Yitzhak - to teach us that at the End of Days, when Yishmael falls Mashiach ben David, Yitzhak's descendant, will sprout forth. We just need to keep on praying! Relentlessly! That is all we can do! The Rambam (1138-1204) wrote, in Iggeret Teiman, in his days of difficult times with Yishmael, that our greatest enemy is Yishmael. "The way to deal with the oppression of Yishmael is, like the Midrash says, hidden in the names of Yishmael's sons וּמִשְׁמַע וְדוּמָה. The Midrash says, שאנו שומעין חרפתינו ושותקין ונושאין עולם ודוממין. ועליהם אמרה תורה אי מי יחיה משמו אל (במדבר כד, כג), אוי למי שיחיה במלכות ישמעאל. *That when we hear our disgrace (Pro Palestinian riots?) we are to remain silent, and bear the world's view and to keep our silence. And regarding Yishmael, it says, Woe is to the one who lives in the times of Yishmael's rule.*

This is all so strange, to say that the last of the Galut will be to deal with Yishmael. After all, the passuk says, וְעָלוּ מִן-עֵשָׂא בְּהָרַיִם לְשִׁפְטֵי אֶת-הָרַיִם. That at the end, the Jews will lead, in Har Tzion, *after Esav*, not after Yishmael!? And how are we supposed to ever get rid of terror, if we are just to keep quiet?

If you want to get rid of terror, don't read Netanyahu's books! He still did not figure it out! He feels that it is his responsibility to protect his country and he failed! How foolish of him! No one can protect G-d's Nation, except G-d! No one will ever get rid of terror, as G-d created terror for us to pray to Him! Only G-d will get rid of terror, all by Himself! The Arabs will kill each other, while Esav will be involved. This is all clearly stated in the Midrash, Pesikta Rabti (Piska 36). אמר רבי



יצחק שנה שמלך המשיח נגלה בו כל מלכי האומות העולם מתגרים זה בזה, מלך פרס מתגרה במלך ערביא, *R' Yitzhak said, the year that King Mashiach will come, all of the kings of the world will be involved in a cold war. The king of Iran will start with the king of Saudi Arabia.* והולך מלך ערביא לאדום ליטול עצה מהם וחוזר מלך פרס ומחריב *And the king of Saudi Arabia will go to take advice from Edom (Esav) (USA? U.N.?), and then, the king of Iran will destroy the whole world!* וכל אומות העולם מתרעשים ומתבהלים ונופלים על פניהם ויאהזו אותם צירים כצירי יולדה, וישראל מתרעשים ומתבהלים *And all the nations of the world, will be petrified, and they will fall*

on their faces, and they will be so scared, they will have birth-pang like feelings. And Yisrael, will be petrified, saying, where should we run to?! (Sounds familiar? People ran from Israel to USA, and now they want to run back to Israel!) ואומר להם בניי אל תתייראו כל מה שעשיתי לא עשיתי אלא בשבילכם, מפני מה אתם מתייראים אל *And G-d says to them, My sons! Don't fear! All that I did, I did for you! Why are you afraid? The time of your redemption has come!*

All G-d wants from us, is to pray with our whole soul, that we see Him in these hard times, and He will redeem us!

THE ART OF CHOOSING FRIENDS

Your friend is either your חבר, friend, or your הרב; the letters, switched around, spell *sword*. Your "friend" can take you down, can kill you spiritually, emotionally, and productively. Although you can't always choose your children's friends, it is your responsibility, as a parent, to guide your child toward the best choices. How does one know who is a good friend and who is not? Simple. If the friend brings you up, when you are down, he is a good friend. If he brings you *down* when you are up, he is not good.

A common thread found in the lessons of the Parashiot of the Yesharim, the Straightforward Patriarchs, is that you will be who your friends are. The reason why G-d revealed himself to Avraham in Elonei Mamre, after Avraham's Brit Milah, was because it was Mamre, Avraham's friend, who convinced him to do the Brit Milah! Avraham was afraid to do a Brit Milah at the age of 99, and knowing that he had many enemies after fighting and winning the World War of the Kings. He needed to stay strong. But G-d asked him to circumcise himself. He sought advice from his friend Mamrei, and told him the story.

Mamrei said to Avraham, What? You are afraid? Of what? Of who? G-d saved you from the fires of Ur Kasdim, when Nimrod threw you into the world's biggest furnace. The angels, then blessed אברהם *מגן אתה ה'*. G-d is not only your מושיע, Who saves you from harm, He is your מגן, your shield, protecting you, that nothing bad can befall you! For sure, He can protect you from all harm and cure you from all pain! Do the Milah, Avraham! Not only that, I, myself, will do the circumcision on myself, FIRST! (Midrash Hagadol) Even at 99, the friends you have make you or break you!

A friend is someone, who will perform a circumcision on himself, to bring you up! To coach you, to help you to reach your greatest heights! Not the one who you enjoy wasting time with!

When David Hamelech was asked who he is friends with... Sephardi? Ashkenazi? Chassidish? Temani? Chabad? Breslov? Frum from birth? Baal Teshuva? He had one answer. חֵבֵר אֲנִי לְכָל-אֲשֶׁר יִרְאוּהוּ וְלִשְׁמֵרֵי פְקוּדָיו. I am a friend of **all those Who fear You, G-d!** And to those who keep Your commandments.



But, Rabbi! Dad! I can't be friends with those people; they are too religious for me!

What does "too religious" mean? It means someone who is keeping more than the 613. If the person is keeping more than the 613, and more than the Shulchan Aruch, don't be friends with them. But if the person is keeping less than the 613, or less than the Shulchan Aruch, and is not even trying and caring to keep the 613 or the Code of Jewish Law, he is not religious enough for you. You could, and should, be friendly and nice and respectful to everyone, no matter what level they are on. But a friend is someone who will do anything to bring you to keep the mitzvot you are afraid to keep, the ones you don't have energy to keep!

When Sarah was eulogized on her greatness of being an Eshet Chayil, the greatest woman of Valor, of inner strength, Avraham mentioned that she was greater than he was, because of this art of choosing friends. דְּרָשָׁה צְמָר וּפְשָׁתִים. She looks out for wool and linen, not allowing them to mix and become Shaatnez. The Midrash Tanhuma says that she sent away Hagar and Yishmael, as they were not a good influence on her son Yitzhak! This was very hard on Avraham! Avraham was worried to heed her voice: Who is to say that this child, Yishmael, won't do Teshuva? Who is to say that his children won't be better than Yitzhak's children?? But G-d told Avraham, Sarah has greater Ruach Hakodesh than you! She can discern character traits, and with that understanding, she can see into the future and know how those traits can influence their behaviors and behaviors of others, in ways that you won't ever be able to change!

Even Avraham, when he chose a wife for Yitzhak, made Eliezer swear that he would not

choose a girl from the cursed nation of Canaan. Why not? Because a man's heart, what he wants, is in the palm of the woman he loves, beginning from the first Man and Woman, Adam and Chava... all the way down to King Solomon,... and down to nowadays. And this is the warning to every man, when he goes up to the Torah on the Shabbat when he is a Hatan, when the custom is to read the Parasha of Eliezer choosing a wife for Yitzhak. To teach you that a Jewish man should not marry a woman **because of her looks**, as King Solomon, a man who married a thousand women, taught us: אֶקֶר הָעוֹן וְהַבֵּל הַיָּפִי Beauty is vanity, and makeup is just make up. And not to marry a woman **because of money**, because money comes and money goes; money has wings and it has a tendency to fly away, but the personality always stays the same! And never marry a woman **because of power or fame**. The only reason to marry a woman is for the Sake of Heaven, to marry into a good family, because your sons will take on the Middot of your wife's brothers, as their own natural tendencies. Just like the wine picks up the flavor of its container. (Rabbenu Bachye) It is amazing. Avraham is worried about influence on his son, Yitzhak, even after Yitzhak aced the test of having himself slaughtered as a sacrifice for G-d!

When you choose your friends, ask yourself if you are doing so because there is a financial gain? Are you doing so because it makes you look good being around people who look good? Or, is it because it gives you power to be connected to these powerful people?

If none of these are your motives, we can be sure that you are friends because you know this person will empower you to be the best you can be.

THE ART OF BEING AN ESHET CHAYIL



One of the greatest things I ever taught was the explanation of Eshet Hayil. There are many explanations of the Eshet Hayil. It was written by King Solomon, at the very end of Mishlei. It could be explained as the soul, (Malbim) as the Torah (Vilna Gaon's commentary), as the Hall of Fame of Eshet Hayil women (Midrash Mishlei) or as Avraham's eulogy on Sarah. (Tanchuma Chaye Sarah 4). In its most simple explanation, it is the recipe to become a super woman. (see Malbim – דרך הפשט)

Eshet Chayil, a woman of valor. Valor is not just any strength. It is courage, boldness, bravery, strength of mind, particularly in place of fear and great danger. All the women of the Eshet Chayil hall of fame got in there for a certain display of intrepidity and inner strength that they displayed at some specific episode in their life. *Sarah, for making her husband rich from Pharaoh. Rivka, for helping Yitzchak overcome the loss of his mother. Leah, for greeting Yaacov with a cheerful face when he returned from the field, when she purchased that night from Rachel for some mandrakes. Rachel, for going through embarrassment of having no children, every day. Bitya, daughter of Pharaoh, who converted and dealt with Moshe. Yochebed, for being the mother of Moshe. Miriam, for prophesying that her mother would have the child that would save the Jewish People, for getting slapped on her head over her prophecy by Amram when the slavery got worse instead of the redemption arriving, and when Little Moshe was thrown into the Nile, she stayed strong to her prophecy, by waiting on the side of Nile to see what would happen to her brother. Chana, for praying for a son, and in that merit of prayer, to be the mother of Shmuel, who was equal to both Moshe and Aharon, together. Yael, for not killing Sisra with a sword, so as not to wear a manly item, but instead, killing him with a tent peg. The widowed woman who gave bread and water to Eliyahu the prophet. Rachav, the harlot, who was willing to help the*

Jewish Spies when the Jews came to destroy Yericho. Bat Sheva, for being the mother of King Shlomo. Michal, for saving King David's life from the hands of her father, King Shaul. Shimshon's mother. Elisheva bat Aminadav, the wife of Aharon, and the mother of all Kohanim. Serah Bat Asher, who saved a whole city of Jews, with her sound advice. The wife of Ovadiah the prophet, who prevented her sons from falling into King Achav's persuasion to worship idols. Shunamit, for feeding the prophet Elisha. Ruth, for converting and embracing the religion in such a way that she merited to be King David's grandmother. (Midrash Mishlei)

What brought King Solomon to write the Eshet Chayil? The heavy rebuke his mother Bat Sheva gave him! The same night that King Solomon celebrated the completion of the building of the Temple, he married the daughter of Pharaoh. The party for the Bet Hamikdash was not as festive and fancy as the royal wedding! (Midrash Mishlei 4) King Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, right after he killed his Rabbi, Shimi Ben Gera, as commanded by his father King David, before his death. (Melachim 2 Chapter 2-Chapter 3) When he had no Rabbi to consult with, he made the biggest mistake of his life, despite his having been the smartest man, ever. (Berachot 8a)

The beginning of the chapter in Mishlei, before mentioning the Eshet Chayil, is where it all began. The night of the wedding, Pharaoh's daughter staged a "setup" for King Solomon. Under King Solomon's pillow were the keys to the Temple. She set up the room in such a way that the ceiling would be dark, and she had paintings of the moon and the stars as props. She brought the best musicians, and she kept King Solomon up all night, all in order to be sure that the first Korban Tamid would not be brought! In the morning, the people were petrified to wake up the king, to get the keys,



as they had just seen that Shimi had been killed, for betraying the king's word. When King Solomon woke up, his new bride told him it was still night, and that he should go back to sleep. Until Bat Sheva, King Solomon's mother, came into the room, woke up her son, got the keys, and the Korban Tamid was brought four hours into the day, on the very first day of the Bet Hamikdash! And G-d thought at that moment that He would eventually destroy this Temple! (M. Mishlei)

Bat Sheva tied her son King Solomon to a pole and whipped him, saying the strongest Mussar a mother could ever give her child. מה־בְּרִי וְמִה־בְּרִי־בְּטָנִי וְיָמָה בְּרִי־נִדְרָי You are an embarrassment to your mother! All the other wives of King David prayed that their sons would be the next king. But I prayed only for a son to be a kosher child, a Tzaddik; a child who lives by Torah. You are not the child that I prayed for!!! Don't give your strength to women, don't let wine take over your mind!

About his mother who rebuked him, who almost regretted being his mother, King Solomon composed the Eshet Chayil! Avraham Avinu eulogized his wife Sarah, with the Eshet Chayil. בטח בה לב בעלה for when she lied for Avraham, saying that she was just a sister and not his wife. דרשה צמר ופשתים - for when she separated between Yitzhak and Yishmael when she got up early to help Avraham get ready for his early morning trip to Akeidat Yitzchak. הגרה בעוז for when she rushed to prepare the food for the angels/guests. ידיה שלחה בכשור for when she would give food for the passersby. כפה for when she would give charity to the poor and dress them. עוז והדר לבושה for her having the clouds of glory over her tent, פיה for when she said to Avraham to marry Hagar. Etc. The Midrash finishes off that after she died, suddenly, Avraham got very old. Indeed, after Sarah's funeral, we don't see any more activity on the part of

Avraham. As if to say that Avraham was only Avraham, as long as he had Sarah at his side.

The simplest translation of the Eshet Chayil is discussing the resourcefulness of the woman. Her ability to run the home and allow her husband to learn Torah, and bring up children who go in the way of the Torah. It starts from her being able to balance the finances, to live within her budget. בטח בה לב בעלה וְשָׁלָל לֹא יִהְיֶה having a no-waste, financially responsible mindset. Continuing with stitching and sowing, דְּרָשָׁה צֹמֵר וּפְשֵׁתִים וְלָמַעַשׂ בְּהַפְזֵן כַּפְיָהּ Doing business, buying at a low overseas, and selling at a high, הִיטָה פְּאֻנְיוֹת סוּחֵר מְמָרְחֵק תְּבִיא לְהַמָּה . While still running the home, making the sandwiches, and staying up late nights, with the kids. וְתִקְמוּ בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה וְתִתֵּן טֶרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֵק Even going out to the field, to make it work, and managing the calendar of the seasons. וְזָמְמָה שָׂדֵה וְתִקְחֶהּ מִפְּרֵי כַּפְיָהּ נָטַע גִּטְעָה כָּרָם. All this, in order to allow her husband and sons the time and patience they need, to grow in Torah and to become G-d fearing. נוֹדַע בְּשַׁעְרֵי תְּנוּגָה מִפְּרֵי יָדֶיהָ and, בְּעֵלְהָ כְּשִׁבְתּוֹ עִם־וּקְנֵי־אֶרֶץ Dressing modestly, knowing that in the next world, she will be rewarded for dressing like a true Bat Yisrael, and a Bat Melech. עֲזוֹ וְהִגְרָ לְבוּשָׁה וְתִשְׁחַק לַיּוֹם אֶחָדוֹן

Being an Eshet Chayil is not being a Barbie doll with Yirat Shamayim. It is not about being C3, Calm, Cheerful, and Cute, letting her husband get away with being irresponsible, making bad decisions, or not caring when he is supposed to. It is about being a woman of valor. A woman that has to, sometimes, when appropriate, stand up for her values, to make sure that her home will be a place where G-d will feel comfortable and accepted. צוֹפִיָּה הַלִּיכּוֹת Never being lazy about her duties of being a mother, וְלָקַחַם לְעֲצוּלוֹת לֹא תֵאָכֵל And knowing what real beauty is, וְשָׁקַר אִסּוּר וְהַבֵּל הִיפִי אִשָּׁה יְרֵאת־יְקוֹן הִיא תִתְהַלֵּל

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