

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



DO WE GIVE HER?

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses how Eliezer helped find a wife for Yitzchak. The Torah says that Eliezer had "all the good of his master in his hand". Rashi quotes our Sages, saying that this means that Avraham, who was extremely wealthy, gave all his wealth to Yitzchak to make the family of Besu'el eager to want to marry Yitzchak. (Bereishis 24,10)

This leads us to the following true story. Meir had four grown children. Several of them were married with young families of their own. Sadly one of his older children, a girl named Naomi, left the path of Torah and stopped being observant. In college she met a friendly non Jewish man and they eventually became engaged to get married. They planned the wedding in 6 months.

Meir and his wife were of course very saddened by these developments. It is not permitted for a Jew to marry someone who is not Jewish.

However Meir and his wife still maintained a warm relationship with Naomi. They did not want to



THOUGHTFUL ACTS OF KINDNESS

In this week's Parsha, Chayei Sara, the Torah tells us the story of the search for a wife for Yitzchok in great detail. Our father Avraham sent his servant Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchok. He instructed Eliezer to take a wife from his own family. He understood that this woman will be the mother of the Jewish nation and as such needed to have the Ahrhamatic disposition of sensitivity to the needs of others. When Eliezer arrives at the city of Nachor he turns to HaShem with the request that HaShem guide him in finding the appropriate woman. He begins his prayer with the following introduction. "Blessed be HaShem Who has not discarded His chessed (loving kindness) and His emes (truth) from my master...."

I understand Eliezer's request for kindness in this endeavor, but what is the function of truth in this request?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch writes; 'What love is in feelings, chessed is in action. Chessed is the translation of love into action.' Just as love is boundless, chessed too can be boundless. Emes, on the other hand, is extremely limiting. Truth cuts out everything that is not accurate and not appropriate.

The mix of chessed and emes produces a sophisticated form of kindness. It gives limitlessly only within the parameters of truth; a truly fine balance. Eliezer was looking for a woman of magnificent qualities but she must also have the Ahrhamatic disposition. Even if she would have developed herself to become a great woman but if her natural disposition would be otherwise, such a woman would be inappropriate for Yitzchok.

break their ties. They believed that Naomi would eventually find her way back to the Torah path. They felt that if they would not show warmth and kindness to her, it would make it much less likely that she would return.

A few months later, Meir was asked to participate in a Yeshiva raffle fundraiser. The grand prize was \$100,000. Meir did not think he would win, but he bought a few tickets to support the Yeshiva. A month later Meir got a call that he could not believe. "We are excited to tell you that you are the winner of the Yeshiva Raffle", the caller excitedly announced.

Sure enough, Meir received a check of \$100,000 and deposited it in his bank.

Meir had married children who could use the money. Meir and his wife decided that they would divide the money among their children.

And then they thought about their dear Naomi. If they give her the \$25,000 it would be supporting her non Torah lifestyle and it would also potentially help pay for her upcoming marriage to her non-Jewish fiancé.

But on the other hand, if they would not give it to her, and give it to the other children, it would cause an enormous fight in the family and it might cause Naomi to pull herself much further away from the family and from the prospect of returning. Meir wanted to give Naomi the money but felt unsure about it.

The question was brought to Rav Zilberstien. What do you think? Should Naomi be given the money like the rest of the children in order to maintain warm and friendly ties to the family? Or should she not be given it, because it would support her upcoming marriage that is not permitted by the Torah?

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If you have a true mitzvah dilemma that you would like us to share, please email it to rabiweiner@gmail.com



The primary job description of Yitzchok's wife was to raise her children in a way that they will become the progenitors of the nation that will bring the world to the state of perfection.

It was with this thought in mind that Avraham instructed Eliezer to take a woman only from his own home. On one side, it sounds elitist and lacking in kindness and acceptance. However, when considering the job description of Yitzchok's wife, Avraham's kindness must be circumspect. This is where truth meets kindness.

It is noteworthy to observe Rivka's behavior, as well. Eliezer requested from HaShem that he should meet a woman whom when asked for something to drink she should respond "I will give you to drink and to your camels to drink."

When Rivka was asked by Eliezer for a drink she responds "Drink my master" and says nothing more. Only after Eliezer finished

drinking does she offer to fetch water for the camels. If Rivka was planning to drink the camels why did she not offer Eliezer to do so initially as Eliezer had asked from HaShem? The answer is that it is demeaning to equate Eliezer to the camels. By offering Eliezer to drink with no other offer, Eliezer can drink comfortably and not feel bad for inconveniencing this woman. Only after Eliezer enjoyed his drink does she offer to drink the camels.

Behold! Even in her limitless kindness Rivka does so with remarkable consideration. Rivka's acts of kindness are not random; they are thoughtful and deliberate. Rivka is the master of mixing kindness with truth.

Given Avraham's thoughtful consideration for the choice of his daughter in-law, we must know that within every Jew lies the capability to perform thoughtful acts of kindness as well. This is the legacy of our forebears.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE HYENA

Hyenas are fascinating and poorly understood animals. They live in savannahs, grasslands, woodlands and forest edges across sub-Saharan Africa. They have an unusual appearance due to their long neck. Genetically they are in the cat family, like lions. However, they behave and appear more similar to dogs.

The spotted hyena, the largest hyena species, grows up to 5.9 feet long and 2.5 feet tall from paw to shoulder. They weigh up to 190 lbs. Spotted hyenas can run up to 37 mph.

Among most animals, the male is larger and more muscular. But it is the opposite with hyenas. Female spotted hyenas are more muscular and more aggressive than their male counterparts and take charge of the clan! This is because the females have three times as much testosterone in their bodies. As a result, spotted hyena societies are matriarchal. All females rank higher than males in the clan. Even baby girl cubs rule over the boys.

Spotted hyenas are social mammals and live in structured groups, called clans, of up to 80 individuals. There's a strict hierarchy, where females rank higher than males, and the group is led by one powerful alpha female.

People think that hyenas are scavengers, but it really depends on the species. In fact spotted hyenas may kill as many as 95% of the animals they eat. They hunt wildebeest, antelope, hippos, birds, jackals, lizards, fish, snakes, foxes, porcupines, eggs and insects. An average meal for hyenas can be up to 30 pounds of meat! Striped hyenas, however, are largely scavengers.

The main rival for the spotted hyena is the lion, as they live in similar habitats with similar prey choice. This leads to fierce competition between the two animals. Hyenas will drive lions off their kills, and they will steal lions' food and kill baby lions. Similarly often the hyena can do all the hard work that leads up to a kill, only to be approached by a hungry group of lions who steal it away. If working in a group, hyenas are capable of scaring the lions away, even though lions are more than double their size. When attacked by lions or dogs, striped and brown hyenas will sometimes pretend to be dead, however, the spotted hyena will defend itself ferociously.

Hyenas are digitigrade. This means the front and back paws have four digits or toes each. Interestingly, cats have four in the front and five in the back. Dogs, generally have five in the front and back.

The spotted hyena is very vocal, producing a number of different sounds consisting of whoops, grunts, groans, lows, giggles, yells, growls, laughs and whines. Spotted hyenas are known as "laughing hyenas" because they have a distinctive call that sounds like human laughter. It isn't a laugh at all, though. They make this sound when they are excited, but nervous, for example, when they have found food, or when they are submitting to another hyena. Their sounds can be heard three miles away! The pitch of their laugh can indicate their status in the pack. In contrast, the striped hyena is comparatively silent, its vocalizations are limited to a chattering laugh and howling.

Although it's rare, spotted and striped hyenas have been known to become man-eaters. However, human deaths caused by hyenas are less than the deaths caused by wolves, gaurs, boars, elephants, tigers, leopards and sloth bears. While they rarely attack people, hyenas readily scavenge from human corpses.

Packs of hyenas watch vultures. Vultures in turn watch the hyena packs. When either finds a dead animal, all gather and eat it together without disturbing one another.

The hyena has very strong stomach acid that is able to digest the most rotten meat, without becoming sick. Yet that strong acid never injures the wall of its stomach. These acids also allow them to digest materials that other mammals cannot, including bones. Some hyenas are insectivores, and only eat termites. Though the termites secrete poison, the hyenas are not affected by it. They consume the termites by licking them off surfaces with a flat, sticky tongue. They can consume 30,000 termites every night.

Spotted hyenas often hunt and kill in packs and can take down much larger animals such as wildebeest, antelope, zebras and young hippos. A group of hyenas can devour an entire zebra, leaving no leftovers—not even the bones—in under half an hour.

Hyenas are among the smartest animals in the world. Chimpanzees are very smart. The size of an animal's frontal cortex is believed to be connected to its social intelligence, and hyenas have a frontal cortex on par with monkeys. Taking this a step further, a study done by Duke University showed that a captive pair of hyenas performed better at problem-solving and social cooperation than chimpanzees. Even more amazing is that during the study, the hyenas solved all the problems in silence, using only non-verbal signals for communication.

Your world is so vast and so diverse!

“IF I CANNOT LEARN, WHY DOES THE RIBONO SHEL OLAM NEED ANOTHER OLD JEW? IT IS ONLY TO DO SOME CHESED WITH MY FELLOW JEWS!”

Here are a few anecdotes that relate to weddings and chesed. Once Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir in Yerushalayim, was making a wedding for his daughter. The whole family was ready to go to the hall and they were waiting in the taxi.

But after ten minutes, Rav Chaim still didn't come out to the taxi. Rav Chaim's son went in to check what was taking so long. He saw Rav Chaim shmoozing on the phone with Moshe Blechman, the oldest bachur in the yeshiva who was still not married.

Later Rav Chaim, explained what took so long. Rav Chaim knew that Moshe might be feeling sad and low while the whole yeshiva went to the wedding. Rav Chaim wanted to call Moshe before he went to the wedding to let him know that he was thinking about him during this moment of simcha.

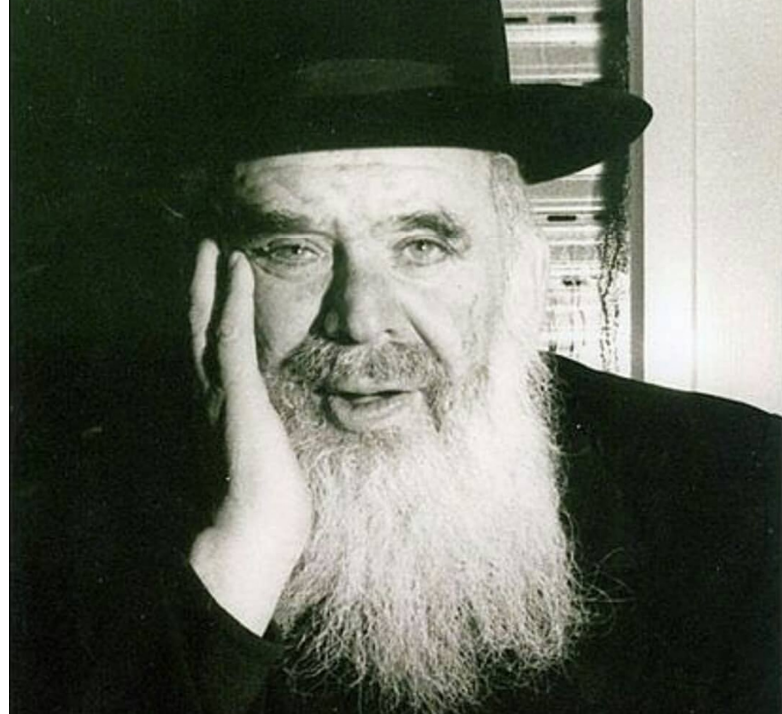
Rav Chaim could not go to his own daughter's wedding without first giving chizzuk (support) to his student.

Here is another sweet anecdote about the chesed performed by our Torah leaders.

During the last period of Rav Pam's life, when he was very ill, he became involved with chesed as never before. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in tzedakah funds passed through his hands. Even with his pain, he began a practice which until then he had tried to avoid. He began to write letters of solicitation on behalf of needy individuals. He told those close to him that he devoted himself to writing because often his pain made it difficult for him to engage in the mental strain of intensive learning which was his main joy. At such times, he would instead use the gift of life for chesed, which could be done without such strain.

Rav Pam then offered a similar story: When the Torah luminary, Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, was old and weak, a woman approached him and asked that he write a letter in Russian for her. Someone asked him, "Has the Rav become a secretary in his old age?" R' Isser Zalman replied, "If I cannot learn, why does the Ribono shel Olam need another old Jew? It is only to do some chesed with my fellow Jews!"

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of giving a different name than Nimrod at the Bris, Rav Zilberstein gives a surprising answer. He said that it would be wrong to name a Jewish child after a Rasha. The Mohel should say "And May his name be called among Yisrael, Avraham", as a protest against the name Nimrod that the parents planned to call him.

Consider sponsoring a week of TableTalk in memory of a dear one near their yartzeit. What an opportunity!

- Bring kedusha and pleasure to the Shabbos table of over 500 families
- Support the work of Achim, providing support to the local Russian speaking Jewish community.



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