

CHAYAY SARAH BUFFALO – 5768

A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

History may or may not repeat itself, but it sure has a funny way of plagiarizing from the past.

Bareishis seems to be chock-full of parallels and patterns, of “imitations of design”. Last week we saw how Avraham was willing to sacrifice his own child, and, while *that* act is celebrated, Lot, when doing the same to *his* daughters is seen as the epitome of evil; Avraham prays on behalf of Sdom, arguing that G-d should not gain a reputation of killing the good with the bad - Rashi cites the Mabul and Dor Haphlaga as examples, and, Avimelech too prays on behalf of himself, arguing that G-d should not gain a reputation of killing the good with the bad – and Rashi again cites the Mabul and Dor Haphlaga as examples; Avraham’s wife does not take the angels message seriously and is only slightly reprimanded, while Lot’s wife does the same and is voided of her humanity; Avraham is met by angels while sitting at his entrance, as was, later, Lot. The list goes on.

This week’s Parsha is no exception. Rivka/Rebecca, after being asked to marry a man from Canaan, says she must first go to “Beis Ima”, Yitzchak/Isaac too, after meeting his new wife, first must test her in his mother’s tent; Eliezer was Mishtomem (astounded, as Rashi explains the verse) upon first meeting Rivka, and, Rivka was Mishtomem (astounded, as Rashi explains *that* verse) upon first meeting Isaac. This list too goes on.

However, there is one pattern that is far more profound than the above and it is based on a well known question:

Many have wondered, and some have explained, why, of our three Forefathers, Isaac seems to be talked about the least in the Torah.

However, I believe there is a deeper mystery to be found, a pattern, in what the Torah *does* reveal about his life that can explain his relative absence from verse, for, what we *are* told about him, is not really about “him” at all:

Abraham is told to sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac was not even informed until the last minute, and even that was only parenthetical; when G-d sent a messenger to inform them not to proceed in the Akeida, it was a message to Abraham, the “sacrificer”, not Isaac, the “sacrificee”; Ishmael is a bad influence on him, so it is Sarah, his mother, who solves the problem with the final approval of Abraham, again behind Isaac’s back; Isaac needs a wife, so Abraham and his trusted servant Eliezer embark on a mission for a spouse while completely shunning Isaac from the process (Isaac was close to forty at the time!); Isaac needs to bless his progeny Israel, so behind the scenes, Rivka, together with her son Yaakov/Jacob, make sure he blesses the right one - whether Isaac knows it or not. Even Isaac’s name was dictated before he was born!

What was it about Isaac that makes it appear as if he lived through the actions of others, rarely acting on his own, thus forcing the Torah to omit his almost passive life?

To answer the above as well as to explain the patterns we have thus far shared in this week’s Parsha between Isaac and Rivka, we must define and explain a seemingly unrelated set of events.

Avraham charges his trusted servant to find a match for his son, and, while on this blinded mission (like Avraham in Lech Lcha and again by the Akaida, Eliezer was not sure where, or better said to whom, he was going), Eliezer prays, and, so bold is his prayer that some sages find in it a cruel miscalculation (see Taanis 4a¹). But, amazingly, it seemed to work. A young lady came and went beyond the call of duty by feeding not just him and his men, but the camels as well. But as the Pasuk says and Rashi explains, he still was not sure if this was “the one”, both familial-wise and in character. Yet, in the very next Pasuk, before even asking for her name or any new information - just five words later (“when the camels finished drinking”) - he gives her the “jewelry of the bride”! What

¹ Personally, this complaint against Eliezer always seemed explainable. When one looks closely at what he said he will see the words of Eliezer during this Tephilla, “... והיה הנער (ה) אשר אמר אליה...”, which seems to suggest that he always had control of the events, first choosing to speak to the one who was not blind, lame etc.

changed? Did not Rashi and the Pasuk a few words before say he was not sure yet? Indeed, some, like Ramban, change the order of events to say that this giving of the gifts took place later, after he asked her the basic questions about her family, yet it is Rashi, of all commentators, who does *not* change the order, explaining that since Eliezer had faith in G-d he knew it would work out. This although Rashi *just* taught otherwise! So again, what changed between the time of Eliezer's doubt and the five words of the camels finishing to drink that eliminated that same reservation and uncertainty?

What was Eliezer looking to find for Isaac? Who was Isaac and whom did *he* need? Isaac, as we know, represents Tephila – "LaSuach BaSadeh " was his *introduction* to Rivka- Pachad Yitzchak, serving to and trusting in G-d was his life. So drunk² was he with this approach to the divine, it would seem, that he prayed at Bear Roey Lechey, named so, for it was the place where Yishmoel was answered, who goes to a place where his exiled, idol worshipping, adversarial brother is answered? Only someone who embraces Tephila, whatever its source. Avraham and Sara knew their own child well. Isaac's blind faith and endless tolerance in seeing G-d's plan through was an impediment to the world of Hishdatlut, and, although Tephila was a necessary ingredient, even a road block if it should ever be lacking, without "doing" and only "waiting", however, a Forefather can not accomplish what is needed of him.

With G-d alone we survive, but through our efforts He responds.

So they (Sara, Avraham, Eliezer and later Yaakov and Rivka) set out to make sure that his Tephilos were answered, doing the physical effort that Isaac found so anathema: kicking out Yishmoel and finding him a mate, never just waiting for the answer of his Tephilos to fall from the sky. Like Avraham who had to go against his tendency for kindness by fighting wars and sacrificing his son, and Yaakov who although he represented truth, had to lie (to Lavan, as the Talmud teaches – "Said Yaakov, 'I am his brother in crookedness.' ") to protect his progeny – Isaac too needed to be tested in his greatest attribute to see if he would be willing to forgo that absolute faith and do, act. *Kindness is survived by caring, Truthfulness needs a precise intellect (Yaakov Yashav Bohel), and the Midda of Isaac, Tephilla, too needs a predicate, namely patience. The ability to wait for the moment G-d decides to act and realize His promise.*

² See לכן שמעי נא זאת עניה ושכרת ולא מיין, ישעיה נא כא

Rivka comes along and she is proactive, doing, accomplishing through action and deeds, performing, even *beyond* what was expected. Eliezer knew then that this is the balance that Isaac so badly needed, yet, he was not entirely convinced. A match has to compliment itself but it is also critical that a spouse can relate to the other half, only then will they be able to translate known feelings into their higher dimension.

The Seporno peripherally explains, as does the commentary to Hirsh, that to feed the camels of these men would take well over 180 gallons of water! They continue that what Eliezer saw at that moment (in those five words-) was the catalyst, the *patient resolve* needed to convince him that she *was* the one both in contrast and in common to/with Isaac. She did act but she knew as well how to patiently wait and see it through as well. This was the straw on Eliezer's camel's back; action because of, not in spite of, patience³.

We all have the internal struggle between patience/faith and Hishtadlus/action, we all fall trap to each one's opulent and duplicities temptations between "It is all good, Hashem will take care of it" and "Kochi Votzam Yodi". We believe Israel will be fine in the end because ...well...it has to be...right? Or do we understand that she needs our physical support? We strive for growth in our respective communities yet, sometimes, we are not sure if our actions and wants are getting in the way with our needed patience, and, visa versa.

Let us follow Eliezer's example and fuse these two qualities, Faith and Hishtadlus/Effort, into one common goal.

³ It is important to note from this episode the importance of patience in not only faith and prayer but in being successful at kindness at well