

תורת אביגדור

הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

SEFER BEREISHIS - THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION

IN HONOR OF MY DEAR FRIENDS: ZEVEY AND BLIMI STERN

TORAS AVIGDOR

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

חיי שרה

Feeding the World

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SEFER BEREISHIS

THE **CHOPP HOLDINGS** EDITION

IN HONOR OF MY DEAR FRIENDS: ZEVIY AND BLIMI STERN

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פרשת חיי שרה

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Feeding the World

Contents:

Part I. Family of Feeders - 3

Part II. World of Feeding - 9

Part III. Ideal of Feeding - 15

Part I. Family of Feeders

A Girl's Story

It's important to understand that when the Torah tells us the tales of our *Avos* and *Imahos*, it's for a purpose. We're accustomed to the stories already so when the *ba'al korei* reads them in the shul we're not even listening to the details; to us they seem to be just part of the narrative. But that's a big mistake – the stories are the most important part of the Torah! They take up more space than the *halachos*, you know. We have *halachos gedolos*, important and complicated laws, that don't get as many *pesukim* as these stories.

We'll study now an example from this week's *sedrah*. Listen to this story; if you'll think into it a little bit, you'll see that it's quite remarkable. Here's a little girl named Rivkah living in Padan Aram, far away from Avraham Avinu, and the truth is that we should have

never even heard of her. Her home wasn't so special – her family wasn't very exceptional – and she should have gone lost from history. And then suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, this little girl leaps out into our history and assumes a role of supreme greatness.

It's a queer thing. We know *chumash* already so we accept it as a fact; we're accustomed to Rivkah now because we know who she is and so we think there was always a Rivkah; it's just the way it had to be. But the truth is that at one time she was just a girl – in her home she didn't wear any golden crowns; it didn't *have* to be that she should become Rivkah Imeinu. And therefore it's a question we should ask: What was it that made Rivkah the mother of the Jewish people?

The Backstory

Now, there's no question that Rivkah had a number of good points but whatever they may have been, the Torah doesn't tell us anything about them. There's only one thing it tells us. If you look in the *chumash*, you'll see that there's only one thing that brought Rivkah to this unique role in history.

You recall that when Eliezer, the servant of Avrohom, went to Padan Aram to seek a wife for Yitzchok it was a very serious mission. Hashem had promised Avraham that from his son, Yitzchok, would come forth the Chosen Nation; and therefore the woman who would be chosen to be his wife would eventually become the mother of that nation. And therefore, it couldn't be just anyone; only an exceptional woman could be worthy of becoming the mother of the exceptional people.

Now, when Eliezer was already on his way to Padan Aram he began to reflect on how he could best execute this mission and choose the one most suited for this eternal role. The responsibility weighing down on him was so enormous that he no longer wanted to rely on himself – he should choose according to his own understanding the mother of the Chosen People? ! Oh no! He was afraid to be the one to accept such a burden. And so he turned to Hashem and asked *Him* to choose.

A Test

But in order to designate the one that Hashem would choose, Eliezer offered the following suggestion – he said like this: “I’m going to ask one of the girls who come to the well to give me a drink. And Hashem, I’m asking of You that if she is the right girl, she should acquiesce and she should offer to give water to my camels too. Please Hashem see to it that the right girl should be there.”

Now when he came to the place and he saw a pretty girl coming out with a jug on her shoulder, he hoped that she would be the one. “Hashem! Let her be the one please!” He knew that it could be that if he would wait a bit longer another girl would come out too, so he ran towards the pretty one hoping maybe she’d be the one he would take her for Yitzchok. And then he put forth the fateful question to her: “Can you let me drink a little water from your pitcher?”

Now, when an able-bodied man with a whole company of servants – I’m sure they were husky men too – stops you and asks for a drink, so you help them; you direct them to the closest grocery store or to a water fountain. Rivkah could have been polite and pointed to the well, “Mister; the well is over there.”

Even better, she could have said, “Here; have some water. Please help me lower my jug from my shoulder.” A jug filled with water is very heavy – it’s not easy to lower a jug from the shoulder. “Mister,” she should have said. “If you don’t mind, take the pitcher down from my shoulder. Forgive me for asking but it’s very heavy.”

She Passes the Test

No; nothing doing. What did she do? Listen well to what happened then. It was something spectacular; if it wasn’t written in the *pesukim* it would be hard to believe. This young girl – she didn’t know that this stranger was searching for a *shidduch* for his wealthy master – immediately got busy. וַתִּרְדּוּ בְּרָדָה עַל יָדָהּ וַתִּשְׁקֶהוּ. – On her own she lowered the heavy pitcher down and made it available for him to drink. וַתֹּאמֶר שְׂתֵה אֲדֹנָי. – “Here, my master,” she said to him, “Drink all you want.”

And that was only the beginning of Rivkah's *hachnasas orchim* enterprise. All of a sudden she sprung into action; she opened her mouth and she asked from him a favor: "Please sir; let me give water to your camels too – would you let me give your camels to drink?"

Now, I don't know if you've ever tried giving water to a camel but you have to know that it's an almost unlimited job. A camel will drink and drink and drink – it doesn't know when to stop. One camel itself can drink as much as thirty men; and Elazar and his retinue had more than a few camels.

And so Rivkah went into action; she began running back and forth from the well to the drinking troughs. She couldn't walk because she had such a big and long task ahead of her; she had to fill the troughs with water incessantly. As soon as a camel approached, it dried up the trough with the first gulp.

It states, וַתֵּרֶץ עוֹד אֶל הַבְּאֵר – she ran back and forth. She ran with her pitcher to the camel and she poured it in the trough to water the camel. And then back to the well, back and forth and back and forth, עַד אִם כָּלוּ לְשֵׁתָהּ, until even the camels got tired of drinking. Not they were pulled away; they stopped on their own. Now that's something! Their master never gave them that much water. He also knew that camels have a big appetite but never mind; he has pity on his legs, on his arms. It's not easy squelching the appetite of a camel.

Now, how long it took I cannot tell you, but it wasn't short. It took her a lot of time running back and forth, back and forth pouring the water from her bucket into the drinking box for the camels.

She is Chosen

At that moment the history of the world was changed forever. "Ooh!" Hakodosh Boruch Hu said. "That's the girl I choose to be the mother of My nation. This little girl who wants to do kindness to wayfarers, she's the one I want to be the mother of the Jewish people."

Now, that's all the Torah tells us about Rivkah. We don't know anything else about her. Later when Rivkah was in Yitzchak's house, she developed; we understand of course that she became greater and greater in the house of the Avos. Yitzchak was a great *rebbe*, not to mention the whole environment; Avraham Avinu and so on. But she was chosen to begin this unique career, the supreme career of being Rivkah Imeinu, only because of this one episode that the Torah tells us.

A Rose Among Thorns

Now, the question is where did Rivkah learn such a thing? To be so *meshugeh* for giving other people to drink? "Sir," she said, "Can I have the pleasure of giving your camels to drink too?" Where did she learn such business?!

One thing is for sure – it wasn't from her immediate family that Rivkah learned these things. You remember when her brother, Lavan, saw her coming back home he became very excited. But it wasn't because there was a wayfarer in town; Lavan wasn't such a big *machnis orach*; only that he saw the jewelry that the stranger had given her, so he said "בוא בְּרוּךְ הַשֵּׁם – Come O' blessed of Hashem. If you're blessed with money then you're a man I want in my house."

So Lavan was a *machnis orach* not *lishmah*, but his sister Rivkah was something else altogether. She was a marvelous phenomenon. And therefore it's a question that deserves an answer: How did a rose like Rivkah grow up among such thorns? It doesn't make sense; something as beautiful as that has to be planted and cared for.

The Caravan Gazette

The answer is like this. Rivkah was a beautiful flower growing in a desert, that's true. But she came from a house which had formerly been the family of Avrohom. Her great grandfather, Nachor, was Avrohom's brother and therefore Rivkah knew that she had a great-uncle in Eretz Canaan who was doing phenomenal things.

Even though she lived in Padan Aram, far away from Eretz Canaan, the travelers who came from one place to another told her stories about her great-uncle Avraham. She heard frequent tidings from wayfarers about what was doing.

We know from the Torah, from the end of last week's *parsha*, that people inquired from the caravans that traveled back and forth and they heard the news about their families. We see in the *pesukim* (22:20-24) how Avrohom received the news that children were born to his relatives; it says there that he even heard the news that Rivkah was born. And so the families knew about each other.

Exceptional Hospitality

Now, what did Rivkah hear? One of the things she heard most often about was Avrohom's exceptional hospitality. It was something so marvelous, so out of the ordinary, that it became the talk of the town. Everyone knew that Avrohom made it one of his fundamentals in life to feed people. People spoke about how he went all out in his efforts to attract people to eat in his tent; how he ran and he begged people to patronize him. They told about how he would fall on his face and entreat wayfarers to partake of his hospitality. Even when the wayfarers demurred; "No thank you," they said, "We're fine," but Avrohom insisted: "Please, אֵל נָא תַעֲבֹר; please don't go away."

If you passed by Avrohom's tent you were stuck because he meant business and when a person wants to accomplish something in business he goes all out. I remember many years ago I was once looking to buy a coat on the East Side. This was over forty years ago. I was walking into one store but suddenly the man next door, from the store I had just passed by, grabbed me by my lapel. He said, "Come to my store; I have better stuff."

That's how Avraham was; when Avraham saw a wayfarer coming, he didn't take any chances. Even if the day was especially hot and Avraham was not well – even if he had just undergone a not so minor surgery – no matter; he ran out. He fell down on the ground at the feet of the travelers and he begged. וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה – He

bowed down to the ground to him like a man bows down to a customer. “Please Mister, come into my store; אַל נָא תֵעָבֵר – Please don’t pass away from me. He entreated with *kol minei piyus*: “Please give me the opportunity to feed you.” And then when they acceded to his requests he was *omed aleihem*, he stood over them and he slaughtered oxen for them.

These were the stories that travelers were telling over when they came to Padan Aram. Every time the caravans stopped at the well the stories were told; and they were so remarkable that they didn’t need any embellishments. Everyone was talking about this *nesi Elokim* in Eretz Canaan who lives for the purpose of feeding others.

Hearing and Listening

Now, among those who heard the stories was a little girl named Rivkah. She came to the well to draw water for her family and she overheard the reports. But she didn’t just hear it like we hear things; in one ear and out the other. She listened well; she thought about the stories she heard and she asked for details.

Ears, you have to know, aren’t just apparatuses hanging on the side of your head. Rivkah understood what Dovid Hamelech taught many years later: אָזְנַיִם בָּרִיתָ לִי – You dug out ears into my head (Tehillim 40:7). Not “the ears that You gave me,” or “the ears that you placed on my head.” No; the “dug out ears” that are tunnels that lead into my brain. The stories Rivkah heard about Avrohom’s desire to feed others went into her mind and there began to burn within her a fire to do the same. She listened and studied the *maasim* of Avrohom and slowly but surely it made her into a new person altogether.

Part II. World of Feeding

Emulating Hashem

Now, to describe all of the things that Avrohom did and all of what Rivkah heard and understood, I couldn’t do that – I don’t know. We can surmise about the details but no matter what, we’ll

never understand these great personalities completely. And yet there's one thing we surely have to understand: Why was Avrohom so anxious, so eager, to have visitors come? Avrohom had a very big head and he had tremendous things he could have done with his time. Why did such a great man spend so much of his valuable time feeding people?

And the answer is that Avrohom saw that this is what Hashem is busy with in this world! He's feeding us! "And if it's something that Hashem spends His time doing," said Avrohom, "then that's what I want to do too!"

I'll explain that. In *Mesichta Avodah Zarah* at the beginning (3b) the *gemara* tells us a very big secret – it reveals to us what Hakodosh Boruch Hu is doing all day. He has to be doing something and the *gemara* tells us what it is. Of course it's figurative language, but it's very important for us to study that language.

The *gemara* says there that a significant part of His time Hakodosh Boruch Hu spends being *yoshev vezan mikarnei re'emim ad beitzei kinim*; it means that He is supervising the supply of food for all living things from the biggest of animals until the tiniest submicroscopic creatures. He is busy supplying each one with its peculiar food.

The Hand

We say that every day only that we're not paying attention; we don't even know what we're saying. פוֹתַח אֶת יָדָךְ וּמְשַׂבֵּיעַ לְכָל חַי רִצּוֹן – You open Your Hand and You satiate all the living. Now, Hakodosh Boruch Hu doesn't have a hand; *Yadecha*, Your Hand, means Your power of giving. *Poseiach* – How does Hashem reveal His strength? What does He do with His power of giving? *Masbia l'chol chai ratzon* – He sets into motion complicated processes in order to satiate all living things with what they need.

Poseiach es yadecha means that the most conspicuous of all demonstrations of Hashem's power that we see in this world is that He made this world into one big restaurant. Wherever you look, you'll see food being created by an endless succession of miracles – it's a stupendous process that never ends; food is reproducing on

its own all the time. You know, it's a big question: Why shouldn't food be in static supply like fuel? People should have to mine for food the way they mine for diamonds or iron or coal.

Self-Stocking Shelves

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu made a miracle – He's still making it – that food procreates. Let that sink in! Food procreates! Imagine if a can of beans on the grocer's shelf could be matched up with another can of beans and have offspring. It would be a benevolent surprise to the grocer. His shelves would never become empty.

But the truth is that it's no more surprising than what actually takes place all the time. Apples are making more apples and wheat is making more wheat. Peaches and barley and potatoes and tomatoes are reproducing by means of *nissei nissim!* Only that we are accustomed to it – we're deadened to it by habit. We've become so accustomed to witnessing the Hand of Hashem feeding the world that we never think about it.

But Avraham thought about it; he looked around at the world around him and saw that the whole world was a food world. Rabbeinu Saadya Gaon says that; he says that the entire world operates just to produce food. It's a remarkable statement of an old *Gadol* and it's the key to how we're expected to look at the world around us; whatever you see in the world is for the purpose of supplying food to Hashem's creations.

The sun shines; that's food. It shines down and it turns into the plants that cows eat and then when we eat the cows; we're eating sunshine! You know what food is? Food is sunshine stored up; that's what it is exactly – sunshine energy is in the food. When we eat the food we get the energy of the sun, only that we get it in a way that allows it to be stored in our bodies for us to use. That's how we live; from the energy of the sun that's stored up in our bodies.

Everything is Food

So the sun is for food. The clouds are for food. Wind is for food. Rain is for food. When it rains you can see the hand of Hashem

coming down to feed you. It's cherries coming down right now; red cherries and green pears; seckel pears and pears with a red blush on their cheeks. They're all coming down. Watermelons are coming down. What are watermelons? At least you hear the water there. But actually everything is water. Of course cabbages and lettuce; they're all water. And potatoes and tomatoes. Bread too! Can wheat grow without rain? Besides the fact that water is also coming down. Water to drink, water that becomes soda, water that gets into grapes and becomes wine.

And once it rains the earth goes to work for us. The entire surface of the earth is Hashem's open hand feeding us; all the functions of the earth are for food. Not only on the surface; in the earth too, it's all for feeding the world. If you look down at the ground when it rains you might see earthworms lying on the soil. They were being drowned in the soil and now they're lying on top. So you think, what a lowly creature. Oh no! The earthworms are also part of the Great Hand of Hashem that is supplying us food.

These earthworms are our saviors; they give us life. Without the earthworms we wouldn't have anything to eat. They are constantly boring through the earth swallowing the earth and excreting it; they're aerating it and fertilizing it. That's why soil is so effective in producing food; because the earthworms made it that way. The earthworms are for the purpose so that we should eat.

Avraham studied all of these things – he studied the sun and rain and earthworms and much more; I'm like a little ant looking up at a huge mountain imagining what Avrohom was thinking. But there's no question that he saw a great deal of the wisdom of Hashem in the food world around him.

However, it's even more than that. Not only did he see that Hashem made a food world, he saw that it was a *good* world, a kind world. Avrohom saw that Hashem was making it fun too; a beautiful and tasty world.

True Works of Art

Suppose your wife would cook for you, let's say supper, and she would take the piece of meat and mash it together with the

potato and dump the whole thing on the plate in a colorless mess. You might not even want to eat it unless you're very hungry.

But what does your wife do? She arranges it in such a way that it should find favor in your eyes. She put let's say the beans on the side, and she puts the yellow sweet potatoes on the other side and the chicken over here; she makes it look tempting and appetizing so much so that when you sit down to eat you say, "My wife, I wish I had a camera to photograph this; it's a pity to eat up such a beautiful thing." You can tell that to your wife on Shabbos at the *seudah*: "We should take a picture of this *challah* and put it in the store; it's such a beautiful thing like from a master chef."

Only that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is a better Master Chef and He provides us with such beautiful things that they are actually works of art. What do people do when they want to adorn their *succahs*? They hang up artificial grapes; artificial apples they hang from the *schach*. Some people hang up real fruit too. Why? Because they are works of art.

Tasty and Fragrant

And not only is it beautiful but it's tasty too. Hakodosh Boruch Hu could have fed you food without any taste at all, and you would have thanked Him for it because it sustains life efficiently. But what does He do? He gives you all types of tastes. Beans and barley and mushrooms! Herring and peanuts! Raisins and corn and apples! It's a pleasure to sink your teeth into an apple! And not all apples are the same taste. He gives us Cortland apples and Winesap apples and Red Delicious apples and Granny Smith; all kinds of apples He's giving us. There are thousands and thousands of different tastes that He made for us.

And in addition to taste, He gives them a fragrance; even the odor of the apple, the odor of the fruit is a pleasure. And then He wraps them in beautiful wrappers; waxed waterproof wrappers that protect the fruit from spoiling even without the refrigerator. And when it comes time to eat, you can eat the wrapper too.

The Great Success of Man

Now this immense concept that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is busy with the task of supplying provender for all life, and that He's doing it with kindness, is the most obvious sign of Hashem in creation. It's the all encompassing thing that "He's busy with," and once we recognize that, we begin to understand that it's something for us to emulate!

Hashem wants that we should be like Him—that's the great success of a man—and if He tells us that He made a food world and that He's busy all the time feeding His creations, then that's what He wants you to do too. That's what Avrohom said: "I've studied this world and I see that Hakodosh Boruch Hu spends His time feeding the world and therefore I'm going to do the same." Avrohom decided, **מָה הוּא אֵף אֶתָּה** – "I'll walk in the ways of Hashem."

Why is Hashem showing it to us? Because He wants us to emulate Him; He wants us to walk in His ways! And so Avraham got busy teaching the world that the world we're living in is a world of *hachnasas orchim*. He did everything he could to demonstrate that because he understood that this is the purpose of life – *vehalachta bedrachav*, to emulate Hakodosh Boruch Hu, that means you're living successfully.

The Tree Hotel

Avrohom looked at the trees and he thought about what he was seeing. Not like we look at trees, like lumps of clay; no thinking at all. Avrohom thought, "Why is it that the tree has branches spreading out on all sides and the trunk is in the middle?"

So he saw a person come and sit down under the tree and lean with his back against the trunk. Now, he's resting comfortably and on all sides there was shade. "Look at that," Avraham said, "The tree is a hostel. Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants to entertain the travelers and make them happy and comfortable. He's making us comfortable in this world."

That's why a man resting in the shade looks up and sees dates hanging down off the tree; so he stretches out his hands and pulls off some dates. He's sitting under the tree, with his back against

the trunk, eating the dates and enjoying the cool shade. And in the winter when you want to rest under the tree, the leaves have all fallen down and now the sun is pouring through the big spaces between the branches to warm you up. It's *hachmasas orchim*.

“Oh,” Avraham said, “I understand that's what Hashem wants us to learn. He's teaching us something here! We are just wayfarers passing through this world and Hakodosh Boruch Hu is our Host who's regaling us with all good things; He's constantly giving us everything we need to make our stay here pleasant.” And because men are created in order to walk in the footsteps of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, Avrohom got busy doing the same. “I'm going to spend my life demonstrating,” said Avrohom, “that I have learned that lesson.”

Part III. Ideal of Feeding

Seeking Opportunity

Now when Rivkah heard these stories about her great uncle in *Eretz Canaan* she became very much inspired. She was still a very young girl but there was kindled in her mind an enthusiasm to walk in the footsteps of Avrohom Avinu. She fell in love with this ideal that Avraham Avinu was practicing and teaching of bestowing kindness upon people in order to emulate Hashem. And like Avrohom, she tried as much as she could to dedicate herself to this ideal of imitating Hakodosh Boruch Hu's hospitality in this world.

Now, when a person wants to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu, when a person sincerely wants to become great in the eyes of Hashem, so Hashem gives him opportunities. And that's what happened to Rivkah. On this day that Eliezer arrived at the well in Nachor, she was asking Hashem, “Please Hashem, I don't want this day to go lost. Please give me the opportunity to do something today so that I should be able to walk in the footsteps of my great relative Avraham.”

And so she said to her parents, “Maybe I can draw some water this morning for you, for the family?” And even though her parents

said, “We’re fine; we have enough water for the day,” Rivkah was determined anyhow. “I’ll go to the well to draw some more water in case we have guests. And maybe there’ll be a wayfarer by the well whom I can invite back to our home for a meal.” So she took her pitcher and went out to the well in search of other opportunities to emulate Hashem. And in that *zechus*, that merit, of her seeking to emulate Hashem, Hashem presented her with the great opportunity of meeting Eliezer *eved Avrohom*.

Finding Opportunity

That’s how Rivkah became the mother of the Jewish people. That’s all that the Torah tells us – we’re not given any other details. How did Rivkah merit to be Rivkah Imeinu? Because she went all out just like her great uncle did; she offered water and food to wayfarers and she ran back and forth feeding their camels too. Just because she chose to demonstrate the principle of emulating Hashem in how He feeds the world, Hakodosh Boruch Hu said, “Rivkah, my daughter! You’re the one I want!”

Now, we said in the beginning of our lecture tonight that these stories in the Torah are meant to be teaching us lessons. That’s what Torah means – the word Torah means “teaching.” And the story of Rivkah at the well is teaching us that by means of emulating Hashem in how He feeds the world that’s one of the ways of achieving greatness. That’s how important it is to call in somebody and give him a meal!

Hachnasas Orchim

It doesn’t mean you call in your surfeited neighbors who have plenty to eat and instead of them eating in their homes and you in your home so you call them in and say, “Let’s all eat together” – that doesn’t mean anything. That’s just a waste of money; a waste of good food. They have plenty to eat without your food. It’s also a way of looking for trouble. But genuine *hachnasas orchim*? There’s nothing better than that!

Now, how far a person should go to fulfill the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*, that depends on the circumstances. It depends on the giver and on the recipient and on the situation.

Of course, if your husband is not home, you can't bring a strange guest into your home. Even if your husband is in town, *baalah ba'ir*, you can't rely on that today. That was in the old days; in the good old days if a *meshulach* knocked on the door so the wife could give him a meal because there was a deterrent for evil doing – her husband is in town and he might come in any moment; she's afraid. But it doesn't pay today to say that *heter* anymore, no. You can't rely on that in a generation that's so *porutz*. Even the best people today are spoiled because there's immorality in the air! And therefore there's no such thing as *hachnasas orchim* if your husband is not around.

Feeding the Weary

But suppose that your husband is home. Or let's say it's you the husband who answers the door and it's a *meshulach* from Eretz Yisroel or a *chossid* from Williamsburg; he's been away from home all day long walking in the hot sun trying to collect a dollar or two for his fourteen children. He goes *farmattert*, weary and thirsty, from house to house. This man works in the factory all day long but on Sundays he's off, so Sunday he goes collecting money to pay tuition for his children. That's what they do. They have to pay tuition; the *Satmarer cheder* doesn't give tuition for nothing. And so on Sundays he collects tuition for his children.

Now let's say you're nice enough to give him five dollars; very good! But it's not enough – don't let that opportunity pass by! Invite him in for a hot meal.

Now, most likely he'll take a look at you and he'll think twice before he eats in your house. Even a *milchig* meal he'd be afraid to eat in your house; he's afraid that your milk is not *cholov Yisroel*. But at least a glass of water you could offer him. If you can finagle him to take a glass of water from your kitchen, a cup of *kosher* water, so you can consider your day a successful one.

J&J Cholov Yisroel

Now, if you have any sense you'll always have handy J&J or one of the other kosher milks. The truth is that there's no reason why people shouldn't buy Jewish milk for themselves and their families

too. It's a very good idea; it's available and it doesn't cost too much either. So think it over. Why not buy Jewish milk? It's a big thing if you institute Jewish milk in your home. Even if you came here tonight just to hear that and you'd stop relying on *terutzim*, on leniencies, it was worth the trip. Start with Jewish milk in your home. Then when a Williamsburger or an *Eretz Yisraeldik* Jew comes, at least you can offer him a cup of milk. He might insist on a Dixie cup – you don't have to *toivel* or *kasher* a Dixie cup – so have a Dixie cup ready.

Now, once you roped him in, he's stuck. Tell him that you'd like him to eat something. You can offer him a *glatt kosher* apple. Now, he might be in a rush – he has tuition to pay – but don't let him escape: "Maybe you want an apple to take along with you." Ah, if you can deceive such a man, if you can trick him into taking an apple from you, then you have lived for a purpose that day. Just like Hashem is giving apples to the world, you're doing the same.

It's a pity that people don't understand that. They give him a dollar and let him go on. It's a missed opportunity for perfection of character, for walking in the ways of Hashem. And therefore even if he *didn't* knock on *your* door – if you just see a Jew knocking on other people's doors collecting money for a *yeshivah*, it's not a bad idea to invite him in for a drink. If you can pour something down his throat, you're a lucky man; if he'll quaff a cup of milk in your home then that day was worth living. And if you'll get him to take more solid stuff even better – maybe you can knock him down and tie him up and put a funnel in his mouth and pour in milk and other good things; *then* you'll be living for a purpose.

Stretching Out The Hand

Now, all this is wonderful, it's excellent. But it's not good enough. It's not enough because we have to remember what Avrohom kept in mind when he was feeding guests. When Avraham was *mekabel orchim* he always kept in mind that he was making a demonstration of Hakodosh Boruch Hu's *chesed*. That's why he did it. Every day he wanted to practice with his little hand, in his little

world, what Hakodosh Boruch Hu was practicing with His powerful hand in His world.

And the truth is that Avraham was only able to do it with such conviction because he studied the *chesed Hashem* all his life. He studied the world and he saw how everything was for kindness to Mankind and that's how he himself became saturated with the ideal of *chesed*. The awareness of the *chesed Hashem* burned in his heart all the time and therefore everything he did was a demonstration of his great idealism.

Imitating Rivkah Imeinu

Now, we can't expect to compare to Avraham's loyalty to this ideal but we're expected to try as much as we can. We can't do it overnight either; it takes practice. It takes time to contemplate the *chesed Hashem* in this world; to actually become aware of the Great Hand of Hashem that is feeding Mankind all the time. And then when there awakens within you a little bit of that recognition – even if it's a weak and shallow imitation of Avrohom's recognition – you have to begin practicing those great ideals in your own life just like Avrohom Avinu and Rivkah Imeinu did.

Actually, everyone has the opportunity to practice emulating Hashem all the time! Try it at home. When you stretch out your hand and give some food to someone, you're thinking, it's *poseach es yadecha*, it's the Great Hand of Hakodosh Boruch Hu that is being stretched out; only that I have the privilege right now that this great ideal of Hashem feeding the world is expressed, in my poor little weak human hand.

It's important to keep this in mind when you're giving the food to your guest or you're handing the glass of milk to the *meshulach*; you should think that. You should think "I am doing the *shlichus* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. My hand is His hand and I am emulating this great function which Hakodosh Boruch Hu practices to the world; one of the most outstanding things in all of creation."

Practicing on Family

Now, some people are very busy with their own families; they can't be busy with guests, with strangers all the time. So you have to weigh one thing against another. If you have to go to work, so your job is *hachnasas orchim* to your wife and your children. You have to pay rent for them. But even if you have no wayfarer, when you hand a glass of milk to your child, think the same thought. "I am doing this not because of a thoughtless reaction to an instinct of feeding my offspring. I'm doing it because my hand is the hand of Hakodosh Boruch Hu."

In case you're a bachelor and you live alone so when you bring the piece of food to your own lips, think that you're emulating Hashem by feeding *yourself!* And that's not an exaggerated attitude because when Hillel was leaving the *beis hamedrash* in the morning, they asked him, "Where are you going?" So he said, "*Ligmol chessed im achsanya aluvah zu* – I'm going to do kindness with this poor inn where I'm staying" (*Vayikra Rabbah, Behar*). He meant he's going to eat breakfast. And so eating breakfast is also a *gemilus chassadim*. You can think that noble thought too while you're sitting alone eating your breakfast. You're also a wayfarer in this world and your hand is the hand of Hakodosh Baruch Hu. Try it tonight or tomorrow morning; practice it.

Prelude to Greatness

Practice it because that's the prelude to greatness. That's what our sages have declared; that's their verdict. In *Mesichta Sanhedrin (104a)* they teach us that principle: *Gedolah legimah* – How great is a *legimah*? *Legimah* means a little sip of something or a bite of some food that you provide for someone. It doesn't have to be a banquet; just a little something to emulate the *chesed Hashem*.

"How big is it to feed someone something or to give someone a drink?" asks the Gemara. *Shemekareves es harechokim* – It's so great of an act that it brings near those who would have been distant. People who would have remained far off become near;

they are brought closer to perfection and they are made great because of this one act that they did, that they fed a wayfarer.

And that's the great lesson of our *parsha*. A little girl, far off in a foreign country, was brought closer – she walked onto the stage of history just because of that. Just because Rivkah recognized the kindness of Hashem in this world, His overwhelming kindness in feeding the world, and she made it her business to emulate Him by giving food to wayfarers, that's why she became the mother of our people forever.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Observe and Imitate

Avrohom Avinu and Rivkah Imeinu became great *baalei chesed* because they spent time contemplating the *chesed Hashem* of providing food in this world and then trying to emulate Him.

Once a day, when I say the words **פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדְךָ וּמַשְׁבִּיעַ לְכֹל חַי רְצוֹן**, I will stop for thirty seconds and think about one example of Hashem's powerful Food Providing Hand in this world.

And then at least once a day when I'm giving food to somebody (a guest, a child or even myself) I will remind myself that I am acting as a messenger of Hashem in His world – my hand is just an imitation and extension of His hand that is always feeding the world.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

36 - Prelude to Greatness | E-138 - Jewels for the Beautiful Nation

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

The Rabbi said tonight that he believes that Moshe Rabeinu was the greatest man who ever lived. Who was the greatest woman who ever lived? And why?

A:

That's a big question. I think it was Sarah. And I think I can substantiate that by saying that she had the greatest husband. Now, although I said that I believe Moshe Rabeinu was even greater than Avraham, but Tziporah, Moshe's wife, was a different story. Although she certainly was a *tzidkanis*, we don't have any evidence that Tziporah participated in Moshe Rabeinu's career. The truth is that she didn't. Moshe Rabeinu had to separate from her for many years until the end of his life in order to be with Hashem.

But Sarah, she was Abraham's partner. That we know. They lived together and their idealism was shared till the end. אברהם מגייר את האנשים ושרה מגיירת את הנשים – They were a team: Avraham was teaching about Hakodesh Boruch Hu to the men, while Sarah was doing the same for the women.

So it seems to me that it's simple to say that it was Sarah who was the greatest woman who ever lived. Now, I really should say, that maybe Chava was greater. Our first mother may have been greater than Sarah. And so I'll have to leave that open for now.

TAPE # 144 (November 1976)

This week's Q&A sponsored:

In honor of Dovid Schwartz who shares the Toras Avigdor with us every Shabbos
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