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KEFITZAS HADERECH IN SHIDDUCHIM



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SHIUR PRESENTED IN 5774

WHO HAD KEFITZAS HADERECH?

In this week's *parshah*, we learn about how Avraham sent Eliezer from Eretz Canaan on a mission to find a shidduch for Yitzchak in Charan. After Eliezer finds Rivka at the well in Charan, he relates to Rivka's family, וּבֹא הַיּוֹם אֶל הַעַיִן, "I came today to the spring" (Bereishis 24:42). Rashi says that the word הַיּוֹם, "today," implies that הַיּוֹם יִצְאָתִי, today I left my master Avraham, וְהַיּוֹם בָּאתִי, and today I arrived here; מִכָּאן, from here we learn שֶׁקִּפְצָה לוֹ הָאֶרֶץ, that he had *kefitzas haderech*. What does that mean? Some say it means the land contracted to make the trip shorter. Others explain that he traveled at a supers speed. Either way, it means that he got there extra quickly.

Now, how much of a trip did he save? How much *kefitzas haderech* did he have? The *Yalkut Shemoni* on this *passuk* says as follows: From Kiryas Arba in Eretz Canaan until Charan, which is in Syria, is a 17-day trip. And Eliezer made it to Charan in three hours. הַיּוֹם יִצְאָתִי וְהַיּוֹם בָּאתִי, he was amazed and said, והיה תמה בליבו והיה אומר, I left today and I came today. Amazing! A 17-day trip in three hours!

Now the *Gemara* in Sanhedrin (95a) says that there were two other people who experienced *kefitzas haderech*. תנו רבנן שלשה קפצה קפצה, for three people there was *kefitzas ha'aretz*. They were: Eliezer Eved Avraham, Yaakov Avinu, and Avishai ben Tzeruyah.

The *Gemara* says the source for Eliezer Eved Avraham having *kefitzas haderech* is in the *passuk* we just mentioned. Regarding Yaakov Avinu, it says ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה, "Yaakov left Be'er Sheva," which is in Eretz Yisrael, "and arrived in Charan" (Bereishis 28:10). Then the next *passuk* says ויפגע במקום וילן שם כי בא השמש, "he encountered the place and slept there." Now, "the place" refers to Beis El, which is in Eretz Yisrael. How did that happen if he was in Charan? The *Gemara* explains that after Yaakov reached Charan, he decided to return to Beis El to daven where his fathers davened. As soon as he decided to return, ויפגע במקום, he suddenly reached that place, which means he had *kefitzas haderech*. I guess Charan was somehow a place that was *mesugal* for *kefitzas haderech*. With Eliezer it was on the way to Charan, and this time, it took place on the return trip.

The third person who had *kefitzas haderech* was Avishai ben Tzeruyah. Who was Avishai ben Tzeruyah? He was a general in the army of Dovid Hamelech.

I'll give you a little history lesson, which is Torah. It's a very interesting story. It will teach you the lesson we're trying to bring out here today.

AVISHAI BEN TZERUYAH'S STORY

Golias had a brother. Everybody knows about Golias. Do you know what his brother's name was? Yishbi. And the *passuk* says *וישבי בנב אשר בילידי הרפה* (II Shmuel 21:16). The simple meaning of the *passuk* is that Yishbi was from the city of Nov. However, the *Gemara* (Sanhedrin *ibid*) explains that the words *וישבי בנב*, can be understood as a contraction: *איש*, a man, *שבא*, who came *נב* *עסקי נב* over the business in Nov.¹

What was the story of Nov? Nov was a city settled by *kohanim* who worked in the *Beis Hamikdash*. When Shaul was the king and Dovid was fleeing from him, Dovid came to Achimelech, who was the *kohen gadol* in the city of Nov. Achimelech did not know that Dovid was running away from Shaul. You know what he knew? He knew that Dovid was the son-in-law of Shaul, so he said, "What are you doing here in this city?" So Dovid said, "I'm on an important mission." The mission was that he was fleeing for his life from Shaul, but he didn't want to reveal that to him. Dovid said, "I don't have any food and I'm very hungry. Could you give me some food?" It was a *matzav* of *pikuach nefesh*. Achimelech said, "I don't have any other food besides the *lechem hapanim*," that's the holy *lechem* from the *Beis Hamikdash* that only a *kohen* can eat. Dovid Hamelech said, "Good. I'm going to eat from that *lechem*. I'm starving. It's *pikuach nefesh*. So, I need the bread."

Then Dovid said, "Oh, by the way, I forgot to bring a sword. Do you maybe have a sword to give me? A weapon?" Achimelech said, "You know what? The sword of Golias Haplishti is still here. You can take it."

Dovid then said, "There is a third thing I need from you. You're a *kohen gadol*. Could you please ask the *urim v'tumim* a question? Where should I run to?" Now, generally, the *urim v'tumim* answers only to a *melech* or to a *shaliach* of the *melech*. It never answers to any John Doe. So Achimelech went and he asked the *urim v'tumim* the *shaylah* because his understanding was that Dovid was here on a *shlichus* of the *melech*. But really, the reason the *urim v'tumim*

¹ "וישבי בנב אשר בילידי הרפה ומשקל קינו שלש מאות משקל נחשת והוא חגור חדשה ויאמר להכות את דוד". מאי "וישבי בנב"? אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: איש שבא על עסקי נוב. אמר ליה הקדוש ברוך הוא לדוד: עד מתי יהיה עון זה טמון בידך? על ידך נהרגה נוב עיר הפהנים, ועל ידך נטרד דואג האדומי, ועל ידך נהרגו שאול ושלשת בניו.

worked was because Dovid Hamelech himself was the *melech*. He had already been anointed, but Achimelech didn't know this.

Meanwhile, there was a fellow watching this. He was one of the greatest scholars of that era. He was the *Rosh Sanhedrin*. His name was Doeg Ha'Edomi. The *Sanhedrin* was then sitting in the place of the *Mishkan*. He saw everything that was going on between Dovid and Achimelech, and he reported to Shaul Hamelech, "I want you to know that Achimelech, the *kohen gadol*, is in cahoots with Dovid, your great enemy. I saw him give Dovid food, he gave him weapons, and he even asked the *urim v'tumim* where Dovid should go."

Shaul heard this. Shaul was a tremendous *anav*. He was one of the greatest *anavim*, humble people, in all of Klal Yisrael. But now he was on a mission to get rid of Dovid. He got angry and issued a command to wipe out everyone in the city of Nov, the city of *kohanim*. He said: Raze the city. Scorched earth. And they did what he said, and everybody was killed.

Now, was Dovid guilty for what happened? No. Dovid wasn't guilty, but he indirectly caused the death of many people. The *gemara* says אמר ליה הקב"ה לדוד, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Dovid, עד מתי יהיה עון זה טמון בידך, how long do you want this sin to be hidden under your hand? That means this is baggage. You're carrying around baggage, because you indirectly caused the death of the whole city of Nov. Because of you, Doeg Ha'Edomi died and lost his portion in Olam Haba (on account of the *lashon hara* he said about Dovid). And because of you, Shaul and his three sons were also killed. Now, you've got to somehow get rid of that baggage. So, Hashem gave Dovid Hamelech a choice of punishment to atone for what he caused. Hashem said do you want all your descendants to be wiped out, no descendants of the house of Dovid will remain alive, or do you prefer to be delivered into the hand of the enemy. Dovid Hamelech said, "You want to know which one I choose, Ribono Shel Olam? מוטב אמסר ביד אויב ולא יכלה זרעי, it's better that I should be delivered into the hand of the enemy, and my descendants should not be eradicated. Being delivered into the hand of the enemy is a better choice.

PARENTHETICALLY - FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It's a good thing to know, by the way, in case you ever have such a "choice." People who don't have a future, that's a terrible thing. I know people who, by choice, don't have and don't want to have children. I've told them that it's one of the stupidest, most idiotic choices they've made. And they made that choice just for comfort. They don't want to be bothered with babies. They tell me: They don't want to change diapers. They don't want to wake up at night. They

don't want dirty fingers on their dining room table. They don't want to have footprints on the floor. They don't want to have "accidents." For them, having a dog is okay, but not children. *Nebach*. They are wiped out. The line ends with those people. I told one such family, "Your other sibling has no children either. You're the last." There was no future at all. That's an awful thing. If you have a future, if you have descendants, thank Hashem from the bottom of your heart. It means that the chain is still continuing.

TRAPPED WHILE HUNTING

It says, one day, Dovid Hamelech went out to hunt for food. Just as a side point, you should know in the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* (316:2) it's *parkened* over there that to hunt *stam* is not a Jewish behavior. It's considered an act of *leitzim*. People who have no purpose in life and want to pass the time go hunting. That's why *goyim* hunt. The richer the people, the fancier the people, they have a lot of time on their hands. They don't have to work hard. They like to hunt. But the *Gemara* says if you hunt in order to eat, that's different.

The *Gemara* says, the Satan appeared to Dovid Hamelech as a deer. Dovid shot an arrow at it, but didn't reach it. He started following the deer, chasing it until he found himself in Eretz Plishtim. And lo and behold, who do you think he sees? ישבי בנב, he bumps into Yishbi.

Now, as we said, Yishbi was the brother of Golias. He took one look at Dovid Hamelech and he said, "Whoa! This is the fellow who killed Golias, my brother!" So he jumped on Dovid. Hashem obviously enabled it because Dovid was powerful. But that was the plan: You're going to be given over into the hands of your enemy. So he had no power anymore. Yishbi tied Dovid up, folded him over, and put him under an olive press. He started to tighten the press, figuring he's going to squeeze the *kishkes* out of Dovid. This was the payment plan.

The *Gemara* (ibid) says, אתעביד ליה ניסא, he had a miracle. What happened? מכה ליה ארעה מתותיה? the earth underneath the press became soft; Dovid Hamelech had an indentation in the ground in which to hide where the wood of the press didn't reach, and he was saved. Yishbi probably gave *aza kvetch*, and said, "Ahh, we got him!" But Dovid Hamelech was stuck in this little impression in the ground, and nothing happened to him. That's what the term ישבי בנב means: Hashem orchestrated it that Dovid Hamelech should face Yishbi over *iskei Nov* - as a punishment to atone for what happened in Nov. But Hashem made a miracle to save him from death. The *Gemara* states that Dovid Hamelech refers to this *neis* in *Tehillim* (18) when

he says, תרחיב צעדי תחתי ולא מעדו קרסולי, “Hashem has broadened my steps underneath me, and my ankles have not faltered.”

The *Gemara* says the day Dovid Hamelech was caught by Yishbi was Erev Shabbos. The *Gemara* says that Avishai ben Tzaruyah, Dovid’s officer and nephew, was preparing for Shabbos at that time. He was shampooing his hair. The *Gemara* says he was doing a really good shampoo job. He had four barrels of water, and he was busy shampooing himself. What happened? Avishai was busy washing, and all of a sudden, he saw some drops of blood in the water. He felt his head, and saw it wasn’t coming from him. So he took it as a message. The *Gemara* says that some say that a *yonah* came and started thrashing its wings in front of him, making its feathers fall out. He said, Klal Yisrael is compared to a dove. That means Klal Yisrael must be in danger. Who is Klal Yisrael? The *lev* of Klal Yisrael is the *melech*. It must be that Dovid Hamelech is in danger!

HURRYING TO SAVE DOVID HAMELECH

Listen to what he did. It’s amazing. It was Erev Shabbos. He runs to Dovid Hamelech’s house to check if he’s there, and Dovid Hamelech is not home. He doesn’t find Dovid. He says: What’s the *din*? I need to find Dovid. I’ve got to do something fast. He sees Dovid Hamelech’s mule. Can he ride on it? The halachah is that you can’t ride the horse of a king. You can’t sit in his chair. You can’t use his scepter. What’s the *din* if it’s a *sha’as sakanah*. Am I allowed to do it then? He ran to the *beis hamedrash* to ask. Imagine all this happening on Erev Shabbos. He runs to the *beis hamedrash*, and he says: What’s the *din*? They give a *psak*: *B’sha’as hasakanah*, it’s permitted. So he runs back, grabs Dovid Hamelech’s mule, gets on it, and says, “Let’s go, boy. Let’s go find Dovid.” Whack! And he has *kefitzas haderech*, and the next thing he knows, he finds himself in the land of the Plishtim.

As he’s riding along in the land of the Plishtim, who do you think he sees? Orpah. Orpah was the mother of Golias. Now, she didn’t like the Jewish people, because they killed her son, and she didn’t like Dovid’s people either. She was spinning thread with a strong, sharp spindle. When she saw this fellow come down, she stopped, and she threw the spindle at Avishai ben Tzeruyah in the hope that it would pierce his head and send him to the Next World. Avishai was not a general of the army for nothing. What did he do? He grabbed the needle-thing out of the air, turned it around and - boom - threw it right back at Orpah. He hit her right on the head and sent her to keep her son Golias’s company.

Avishai continued riding until he came to the place where he found Yishbi. When Yishbi saw him, Yishbi said, “Oh, now it’s

going to be two against one,” because by that time, he discovered Dovid hadn’t died. He was afraid. What did Yishbi do? He stuck his sword in the ground. Then he grabbed Dovid Hamelech, who was all bound up, and threw him up in the air to have him land directly on the sword. Why didn’t Yishbi just stick the sword straight into Dovid?? I don’t know why. This is what he decided to do. Hashem orchestrates the world.

Meanwhile, Avishai ben Tzeruyah is approaching and sees what’s going on. He sees a sword sticking out of the ground, and David Hamelech is coming down at high velocity, and this is not going to be *pashut*. The *Gemara* says אמר אבישי שם, Avishai said a Name of Hashem and Dovid remained levitating. He was hanging between *Shamayim va’aretz*. The *Gemara* goes on, but it’s not *nogea* to what we are learning today. That was the story of the *kefitzas haderech* with Avishai ben Tzeruyah.

QUALIFYING FOR KEFITZAS HADERECH

Now, we can understand why Avishai ben Tzeruyah needed *kefitzas haderech*. He had to save Dovid Hamelech. Yaakov needed *kefitzas haderech*, too, in order to get back to Beis El, the *makom hamikdash*. But why was it so important for Eliezer Eved Avraham to *kefitzas haderech*? Yitzchak had already waited forty years for his *zivug*. When Yitzchak met Rivka he was 40 years old. What’s the problem if he has to wait another seventeen days? So it’ll be another few days. What’s the big deal? What’s the rush?

Chazal (Yalkut Shimoni, *ibid*) tell us Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted to do *chessed* with Yitzchak, so He sent a *malach lifnei Eliezer*, and Eliezer had *kefitzas haderech*. Not only that, this girl Rivka was a *bas melachim* who had never before gone out to draw water. She was the daughter of Besuel. She was the daughter of a king. Besuel was a *gantze macher*. He was a feudal lord. But that day, and at that moment, she went out. All of a sudden, she had to draw water. Why? Because Eliezer was waiting for her to take her back.

The Torah tells us in *Parshas Toldos* that Yitzchak was 40 years old when he married Rivka. Why did he wait until he was *alter bachur*? Why did he wait so long? Rashi says, because that’s when Rivka became of age that she was able to get married. *Memeilah*, once the time came, and Yitzchak was able to marry Rivka, Hashem did him a *chessed* and didn’t make him waste another minute. That’s why He made *kefitzas haderech*, to be *gomel chessed* with Yitzchak.

A SHIDDUCH FROM HASHEM

There was once a *ma’aseh* with the Brisker Rav. He was at a *chupah*. The fellow was standing under the *chupah* and he tried to

put the ring on his *kallah's* hand. As he put the ring on the *kallah's* hand, his hand was trembling, and the ring fell to the floor. Now, in Yerushalayim, if you have ever been at a *chupah*, you'll see it's not like American decorum. There are no seats. Everybody stands crowded around and under the *chupah*. The ring fell on the floor and rolled away. Somebody bent down and found the ring. They picked the ring up, and the *chasson* tried a second time. The Brisker Rav was standing right there. He said, "Nu put it on and say הרי את מקודשת." He tried again and started saying הרי את מקודשת, and the ring fell. The *chasson* started becoming nervous. He turned to the Brisker Rav, and he said, "Is this a bad *siman*? Like, maybe Hashem is telling me something?" He said, "Nein." "So what is it?" He said, "*Nisht gekommen de tzeit*, the time has not yet arrived in *Shamayim* for this match to be made."

When a person gets married, a lot of times he has to wait. Sometimes you're *zocheh* to what's called *ha'aras panim*. Your *zivug* gets delivered easily, and Hashem is *gomel chessed* with you, but sometimes a person has to wait, which is sometimes very uncomfortable. But you have to know you're not going to be forced to wait longer than what is decreed in *Shamayim*. That's all. Many times, after a *shidduch* is made, people wonder, "How come I didn't think about this? This girl lives right next door. The parents wonder why they didn't think of it. The parents are friends. They talk on the phone. How come we never thought to *redt* our own kids? We're always talking about who I'm doing a *shidduch* with and who you're doing a *shidduch* with." But that's because it wasn't time yet. They go out. They get engaged. Sometimes they go out and they don't get engaged, because it's not the right one.

This is a *chizuk* that a person has to give himself. Hashem brings the *shidduch* to a person. You have to accept that in your mind, Rabosai, because making a *shidduch* is different from anything else in the world.

It says, *hakol beydei Shamayim*, everything is *beydei Shamayim*. When it comes to a *shidduch*, you have to understand that Hashem Himself, personally, is the courier, and He does the delivery service. When it says in the *passuk* that Hashem makes a delivery, it means to say there's nothing that you can do to help yourself. Hashem is the One who brings the *shidduch* to you, no matter what you do, what you want, whom you call, or whom you network with. It doesn't make any difference. If it's the right *shidduch*, it will come to you. Then, you have to know that whenever that *shidduch* comes, it's the best *shidduch* in the world for you. If someone went out to a bar and picked up fifth-hand pressed figs, that's what the *Gemara* calls girls who acted without *tznius*,

something that's been pressed, chewed up, and spit out by others, so you understand, that's not from Hashem. That's from the garbage man. But if a person lets Hakadosh Baruch Hu bring him a *shidduch*, he has to know that *shidduch* is his *shidduch*, and it's no different than Yitzchak's *shidduch*.

A PRECISE MATCH FROM HASHEM

I used to wonder, why does Hashem tell us the story of Yitzchak and Rivka? Who gets married like that?! I never heard of that happening. I heard stories like this: Someone is sitting in *shul*, he's a nice, Modern Orthodox fellow, and he looks through the *mechitzah* that's halfway open, or it's a glass *mechitzah*, or a very short one. He says, "My dear sister, do you know the time?" and she answers, "I think it's time to go on a date." And then, "Oh, *mazal tov!* It's all from Hashem." You hear all kinds of strange stories, but it has nothing to do with *shidduchim*. And then you have *shidduchim* that Hashem orchestrates - and Hashem brings you the *shidduch*.

It's funny. The divorce rate is so high in the world. You know why? Because everybody is choosing their own unsuitable matches, and they're not letting Hashem choose for them. Hashem is saying to them, "You want to get married on your own? Go ahead." All these fellas who marry the ones that *they* chose - those are very tenuous *shidduchim*, they hang by threads, because they are not Hashem's *zivugim*. A person has to *mechazek* himself and tell himself, "Hashem, I know You are the One who is bringing me my *shidduch*, and it's going to come."

Hashem says: Everybody could aspire to get a *shidduch* like Yitzchak. Yitzchak wasn't involved in the process whatsoever. Now, if somebody would have asked Yitzchak what he was doing, what would he have said? You meet him at 38 years old. You'd say, "You're 38 years old?!" In those days, the *Gemara* says, girls were having babies at the age of seven and eight. That was common. So Yitzchak was a relatively old man. "Where is your *shidduch*?" "*Nisht gekommen de tzeit*. It's not the time yet." It actually turned out to be like that. Hashem says, a person has to wait and aspire that he should be *zocheh* to a *shidduch* like Yitzchak's *shidduch*. Yitzchak said, "Hashem will bring it to me." You don't see that Yitzchak got involved in any way.

Im yirtzeh Hashem, Hashem will give you your *shidduch*. He'll bring you the *shidduch* and everything else you're waiting for. If you internalize this, then when the time comes, you'll have your own *kefitzas haderech*. That's what happens. When the time comes, Hashem makes things happen so fast! And all the people on the side, all the peanut gallery start to *shrei*, "Isn't it a little too fast?" I always say, "Didn't they wait long enough for the *shidduch*? They finally found one that's a keeper. What should they wait for?" You have to understand how *shidduchim* work. Take the *shidduch* from Hakadosh Baruch and give *hoda'ah* to Hashem.

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