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Tasteless Tefila

At times we may feel like we are not in the mood to daven.¹ We may feel we don't have the right mindset to daven. Nevertheless, we must still daven and not say at a different time, I'll daven properly. This is hinted to in ²ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההוא. This is to teach us even when we are not in the proper state of mind, we must still daven. Likewise, we can interpret ³ובקשתם משם... as it says משם without a time or place. So, it means to seek out Hashem wherever we find ourselves. Then as the Pasuk continues we will find Him if we search for Him.

Approximately 40 years ago, a newly observant Jew went to daven in Beis Midrash Elyon in Monsey. Being that the congregation was davening with passion and fervor while he wasn't yet so accustomed to Tefila,

he looked around observing. A little boy approached him and asked why don't you daven? Caught off guard by the question, he responded 'I don't feel like it.' The little boy retorted 'who said Hashem wants your Tefilos only when you feel like it!'

The Mishna⁴ comments on בכל נפשך, love Hashem with all your soul ⁵אפילו הוא נוטל את נפשך, even if he takes your life. The Tiferes Shlomo⁶ writes that אפילו הוא נוטל את נפשך can mean even if Hashem takes away our will as נפש means will as in אם יש את נפשכם, if it is truly your will.⁷

The Ribnitzer Rebbe (1902-1995)⁸ once needed a Minyan for Maariv in the middle of the night. People went around trying to get a Minyan. One person they asked already davened but still wished to be part of the Ribnitzer Rebbe's Minyan. When he came to join the Minyan, the Rebbe looked at him and said you davened already. After this happened, a Chassid said to him you must have felt so embarrassed since the Rebbe saw right through you. The man responded, "I felt so great because for the last 30 years I felt like my Maariv isn't worth too much. Now the Ribnitzer Rebbe felt on me that I davened Maariv. I'm so happy because my davening means something to Hashem."

Younger Sibling Marrying Before the Older

The scenario: an older sibling is still single and the younger one has reached the age to date.⁹ Should the younger sibling wait for the older?¹⁰ R' Asher Weiss¹¹ says that this question seemingly only applies when both siblings found their future mates and the question is who should get married first.¹² When two brothers or sisters are of age, there is no obligation or Mitzva for the younger to wait for the older. This applies surely to a boy as he has a Mitzva of פרייה ורבייה as well as to a girl since... טוב למיתב טן דו, it is better to live as two bodies than to live

⁴ Brachos 54a.

⁵ Devarim 6:5.

⁶ Vaera, s.v. והוצאתי.

⁷ Breishis 23:8.

⁸ The Ribnitzer Rebbe, who was a Mohel and Shochet, somehow managed to live a fully Jewish religious life even under Stalin's rule. He often fasted and immersed himself many times daily in water that was sometimes only accessible by chopping away very thick ice. His Tikken Chatzos (midnight prayer service) in sackcloth and ashes regularly lasted 6-7 hours, sometimes stretching as long as 12. He cried so much during Tikken Chatzos that when he was done, the tears and ashes mingled so that he was sitting in mud. The Ribnitzer Rebbe left the Soviet Union in 1970 and moved to the Mattersdorf section of Yerushalayim, where he lived for a few years before moving to the United States. He lived in Miami, Los Angeles, and Sea Gate, Brooklyn before he finally settled in Monsey.

⁹ See Baba Basra 120a, Rashbam s.v. במסיבה, and Kidushin 52a, Tosafos. See the Shach in Yoreh Deah 244:13. Also the Bach in 244, s.v. ומ"ש רבינו.

¹⁰ In an astonishing letter (אגרות סופרים, 29) the Chassam Sofer writes about his younger daughter getting married before her older brother, R' Shimon Sofer. The Chassam Sofer requests from his future mechutan to have the wedding for his daughter in another two years in the hope that by then R' Shimon would find his mate and get married. He writes that R' Nossan Adler told him of a case where the younger got married before the older (see שו"ת מנחת אשר 2:74:4).

¹¹ 2:74:3. שו"ת מנחת אשר.

¹² See Igros Moshe, אבן העזר, אפרקטתא דעניא and אבן העזר, 3, 266. Also Divrei Yatziv, אבן העזר, 9. This is just as we see that there is a precedence to which Bracha of food takes priority when one has two foods in front of him.

¹ At times we have a Tefila with Kavana without our toil. This is a present just as one can get a free sample from the store. If he wants more, he needs to pay for it. Similarly, Hashem sends us a free sample of a great Tefila. If we want more, we need to work at it. Hashem gives us a free sample to show us how sweet it is.

² Devarim. 3:23 Zera Kodesh, Vaeschanan, s.v. ואתחנן.

³ 4:29.

alone.¹³ Logic also dictates this for if the younger were to wait for the older, how long would the wait be? Until the older one gets married? That could take years!

R' Asher Weiss says that the right thing to do is to work on the Shiduch¹⁴ of the younger sibling once the age is reached. If the younger one finds their mate, there shouldn't be a delay because of the older one.

The Maharsham¹⁵ was asked about a case where one had many daughters from his first wife. After his wife died, he remarried and had a daughter. Then he died and his widow remarried. When her daughter was 22 years old she got engaged. The older sister, who was 27, opposed the marriage since she was older and unmarried. The Maharsham ruled that since it is not Halacha, rather etiquette, and the 22-year-old was already engaged, she should marry immediately without prevention.

On this topic let us mention what the Tchailes Mordechai¹⁶ writes. Rashi says¹⁷ regarding twins that the one who is formed first exits the womb second. Consequently, Yaakov was actually the Bechor since he was formed first. The Chida brings in the name of Rabbeinu Efraim¹⁸ that Rachel and Leah were twins and Leah was born first. So according to Yaakov's view, Rachel was older, since the one who is born second is formed first. Yaakov's opinion was that Rachel was older and therefore he should marry her first. We learn from this that Yaakov didn't disagree with Lavan that לא יעשה כן לפני הבכירה, במקומו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה, to give the younger before the elder is not done in our place.¹⁹

[A Worthwhile Purchase](#)

The Gra²⁰ relates an astonishing calculation concerning the 400 silver *Shekalim* that Avraham paid Efron. The size of the courtyard of the *Mishkan* was 50 by 100 *Amos*, which is 5,000 square *Amos*.²¹ This area was fit for sowing two *Seah* of barley seed.²² Since a *Kor* equals 30 *Seah*, the area needed for sowing a *kor* is 15 by 15,000 *Amos* which is 75,000 square *Amos*.²³ Eight *Kor* is equivalent to 600,000 *Amos*. The Gemara²⁴ says just as the giving of the Torah took place before 600,000²⁵ so too its removal should take place before 600,000.²⁶ That is to say, the amount of people considered sufficient to honor the deceased is 600,000.

The Gemara teaches that one person occupies the space of one *Amah*.²⁷ So 600,000 *Amos* is enough for 600,000 people, which is a befitting way for someone like Sarah to be eulogized. Since a *Beis Kor* is redeemed for 50 silver *Shekalim*,²⁸

8 (*Kor*) multiplied by 50 is 400 (*Shekalim*). This is the amount that Avraham paid, which is what it was worth!²⁹

[Matcher Catcher](#)

We know the one who sets up a couple is called a שדכן. What is the meaning of this word?

The ³⁰ר"י tells us that it is from the term tranquility and rest as the Targum on ³¹ותשקט הארץ, the land was tranquil, is ושדוכת ארעה. The feeling one has when they find their match is of such calm and serenity as they now are at ease.

The Baal Hamaor³² writes that Shiduch is a term meaning קשירה, to join, arrange as this is what a Shadchan does.

The Sefer ³³מגדיל ישועות מלכו brings that שדכן is an acronym for שבר דלתות נחשת, He smashed copper gates.³⁴ This is because the Shadchan works hard to pair up the Chosson and Kalla to the extent that at times there are things preventing the Shiduch that are like iron and copper walls until the Shadchan finishes off the Shiduch.

Another acronym for שדכן is said from R' Yaakov Emden: שקר ובר כסף נוטל, speaks falsehood and takes money. After a Shadchan was told by the boy and girl following the first date that they both weren't interested in continuing, she told each side that the other wants to give it another try. The boy and girl agreed to give it another attempt. Not too long after they were engaged and then married. Today they have a family of 13!

R' Baruch Mezbitzer writes, "When the Shadchan doesn't say any falsehood regarding a Shiduch, I guarantee that the Shiduch won't follow through (אני ערב בזה שלא יוגמר) (השידוך)."³⁵ This can be understood with the following analogy. If a dog is obstructing one's path on his way to his destination, he may throw a piece of meat at a distance so that the dog will run after it keeping him satisfied. Similarly, the Satan wants to block a Shiduch from going through. To keep him pleased, we say some falsehood so that the Shiduch may follow through.

Taking the initials of כמעט שכנה דומה נפשי, had Hashem not been a help to me, my soul would have soon dwelt in silence,³⁶ we get the word שדכן. This is because in every Shiduch, we see such ³⁷השגחה פרטית, Divine Providence and as it says מה' יצא הדבר, the matter stems from Hashem.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Tzt"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg Tzt"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the Sefer, *Fascinating Insights: Torah Perspectives on Unique Topics*. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹³ Yevamos 118b. That is, a woman prefers even a less than desirable marriage over staying single.

¹⁴ See Tzitz Eliezer 22:52:4.

¹⁵ שו"ת מהרש"ם 3:136.

¹⁶ Vayeitzei. This is the Maharsham's sefer on Chumash.

¹⁷ Breishis 25:26.

¹⁸ Vayeitzei. On Motzai Shabbos Parshas Vayera, October 28, 2018, a woman in Be'er Sheva gave birth to twins. The boy was born at 1:58 a.m. and his sister was born four minutes later. Because the clock was set back an hour in Eretz Yisrael at 2 a.m., the girl was legally born at 1:02, making her the older one.

¹⁹ 29:26. We can understand Lavan's words, לא יעשה כן במקומו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה, that it goes according to who was actually born first.

²⁰ Hamaor Hagadol, pp. 58-9.

²¹ Shemos 27:18.

²² Eruvin 23b.

²³ See Rashi to Kidushin 60b s.v. בית כור.

²⁴ Kesubos 17a.

²⁵ See Shemos 12:37 and 20:15.

²⁶ A Torah scholar's death and the resultant cessation of his study constitutes the removal of his Torah (Rashi to Kesubos 17a, s.v. נטילתה).

²⁷ Succa 7b.

²⁸ Eruchin 25a.

²⁹ Targum Onkelos (Breishis 23:15) says that it's a land worth 400 *Shekalim*.

³⁰ Shabbos 5b, s.v. אין משדכין. This is Rabbeinu Nissim of Gerona, who passed away in 1376. He was a physician and was known to have served as a physician in the royal palace. He also had knowledge of astronomy. In addition to serving as a judge and teacher for the Jewish community in Barcelona, he founded a yeshiva there. Even beyond Spain he was recognized as a rabbinical authority, and questions (*Shailos*) were addressed to him not only from his own country, but also from France, Italy, Africa, Syria, and Eretz Yisrael. He wrote in reply about 1,000 responsa, of which only 77 have been preserved.

³¹ Shoftim 5:31. See Rus 1:9.

³² Shabbos 85b s.v. אמר. See Kidushin 44b.

³³ 69.

³⁴ Tehillim 107:16.

³⁵ 13. אות, נשואין, בוצינא דנהורא.

³⁶ Tehillim 94:17.

³⁷ Breishis 24:50.