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THE CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK (TRANSLATED FROM VEHA'AREV NA 2)

YOU CALL THAT A DIVORCE?!

THE CHALLENGE: A father had serious concerns about his son's marriage and repeatedly urged him to divorce his wife, believing she was not a suitable match for him. Despite his father's repeated requests over many years, the son refused to listen and remained married to his wife.

After the father passed away, he left an estate worth $10 million to be divided equally among his five sons. However, he included a specific condition in his will regarding the son whose marriage he had opposed: that son would receive his $2 million inheritance only if he divorced his wife. If he refused to do so, he would receive just $2,000, and the rest of his children would be entitled to split the remaining money.

The son devised a plan. He took his wife to *Bet Din* and gave her a *Get*, thereby formally divorcing her. He then collected his $2 million inheritance. However, the very next day, he remarried his former wife!

His brothers were outraged and brought him to *Bet Din*, arguing that their father had clearly intended for him to separate from his wife permanently. They claimed that he had manipulated the condition in the will to obtain the money without actually fulfilling their father's wishes.

The son disagreed. He argued that his father had stipulated that he must divorce his wife, and that was precisely what he had done. Since the will did not explicitly state that he could never remarry her, he maintained that he was entitled to keep the inheritance.

Who is right?

THE SOLUTION: Rav Zilberstein ruled in favor of the brothers. The father's intention was clearly that his son permanently separate from his wife, rather than merely perform a formal divorce to satisfy the condition of the will. The father was opposed to this particular marriage and wanted his son to end it for good.

Therefore, the son could not fulfill the condition by divorcing his wife one day and remarrying her the next. Although he had technically performed a *Get*, he had not fulfilled the true intention behind his father's stipulation. Consequently, he is not entitled to the $2 million inheritance and has to return the money.

DVAR TORAH –The Value of True Friendship

And Hashem appeared to [Avraham] in the plains of Mamre, while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day (18:1).

Rashi explains that Hashem appeared to Avraham in the plains of Mamre because Mamre had advised him to perform the *Brit Milah*.

The *Midrash* (*Bereshit Rabbah* 42:8) tells that when Hashem commanded Avraham to circumcise himself, he discussed it with his three friends – Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre.

Aner and Eshkol discouraged him, saying it was too dangerous for a ninety-nine-year-old.

But Mamre urged Avraham to listen to Hashem, reminding him that Hashem had already saved him from the fiery furnace, famine, and war – surely He would protect him again.

The commentators are puzzled: how could it be that Avraham, the man who had passed ten tremendous tests of faith, needed his friend's advice to fulfill Hashem's word? Did Avraham really have any doubt?

The *Chizkuni* offers a powerful answer. Avraham had no doubts at all – he was fully committed to doing the *Milah* the moment Hashem commanded it. However, he chose to consult his friends not for guidance, but as a test. He wanted to see who among them truly feared Hashem and shared his values. Only Mamre passed this test, demonstrating genuine faith and loyalty. In recognition of this, Hashem revealed Himself to Avraham specifically "in the plains of Mamre" – honoring the friend who strengthened Avraham's mission.

Avraham teaches us the importance of surrounding ourselves with friends who encourage our spiritual growth and strengthen our connection to Hashem. True friends are not the ones who tell us what's easy or comfortable – they are the ones who inspire us to do what's right. Like Avraham, we should value and cherish the "Mamres" in our lives – the people who help us stay strong in our convictions and bring out the best in our faith.

DVAR TORAH – Why Was Sarah Rebuked for Laughing?

And Hashem said to Avraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I in truth bear a child, old as I am?'" (18:13).

The *Mefarshim* ask: In last week's *Parsha*, when Hashem promised Avraham that he would have a son with Sarah, Avraham also laughed. Why, then, was Sarah rebuked for laughing, while Avraham was not?

The *Chizkuni* offers two answers. First, he explains with a *Mashal*: A woman wanted to rebuke her daughter-in-law but feared that doing so directly would create tension between them. Instead, she rebuked her own daughter in her daughter-in-law's presence, allowing the daughter-in-law to understand the message without being directly embarrassed. Similarly, Hashem rebuked Avraham indirectly through His words to Sarah, allowing Avraham to understand the message without being publicly embarrassed.

The *Chizkuni* offers another distinction based on the wording of the *Pessukim*. Regarding Sarah, the Torah says that she laughed "saying" (*Leimor*), implying that she intended to repeat the news to others mockingly. Avraham, however, laughed "within himself" and had no intention of sharing his reaction with others. Sarah's laughter was therefore more deserving of rebuke.

The *Ohr Hachaim* offers a different explanation. Avraham laughed immediately upon hearing Hashem's promise, expressing amazement at the extraordinary news. Sarah, however, laughed after experiencing physical changes that indicated she was becoming young again. According to the *Ohr Hachaim,* Sarah's reaction suggested that she only accepted the possibility of having a child after seeing physical evidence, rather than relying on Hashem's promise from the outset. This explains Hashem's response: *"Is anything too difficult for Hashem?"* (18:14).

These explanations teach us that not every outwardly similar action has the same meaning. Avraham and Sarah both laughed, yet their intentions and circumstances differed. Hashem looks beyond our actions to the thoughts and attitudes behind them. We should therefore strive to strengthen our Emuna by trusting Hashem even when we cannot yet see how His promises or plans will unfold.

INSIGHT ON THE HAFTORAH – A Mishkan in the Home: The Power of Hosting a Tzaddik

In Parshat Vayera, Avraham Avinu teaches us the greatness of *Hachnasat Orchim* by eagerly welcoming and serving his guests. In the *Haftorah*, we encounter the Shunamite woman, who demonstrates a similar devotion by preparing a special room for Elisha Hanavi. She tells her husband: *"Let us make a small walled upper room and let us place there a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp"* (Melachim II 4:10).

The *Dorshei Reshumot* point out a remarkable hint: The first letters of *Mitah* (bed), *Shulchan* (table), *Kisei* (chair), and *Ner* (lamp) spell *Mishkan* (משכ"ן), the Tabernacle. The *Zohar* explains that these items correspond to spiritual rectifications associated with the *Shechina*, the Divine Presence. By preparing a room for Elisha, the Shunamite woman was doing more than providing physical comfort; she was creating a place where holiness could dwell. Indeed, the *Gemara* (*Berachot* 10b) teaches that hosting a Torah scholar is comparable to offering the daily sacrifices. Her home became a miniature sanctuary through her hospitality toward a *Tzaddik*.

The *Chida* also explains why the woman specifically mentioned the bed and the table first. The *Zohar* teaches that she detected a special fragrance of *Gan Eden* associated with Elisha's bed, reflecting his extraordinary holiness. Furthermore, *Chazal* teach that no fly ever crossed his table, demonstrating his remarkable purity. These signs helped her recognize that Elisha was no ordinary guest, but a holy man whose presence would bring tremendous spiritual blessing into her home.

The *Chida* writes that there is another beautiful hint in the verse. The final letters of the words *Mitah*, *Shulchan*, *Kisei*, and *Menorah* can be arranged to spell *Hana'ah* (הנאה), meaning pleasure or benefit. The woman intended to provide Elisha with comfort and enjoyment, yet ultimately, she and her husband were the ones who benefited. In reward for their hospitality, Elisha promised them a son, despite their advanced age and previous childlessness (Melachim II 4:16–17).

We often view hospitality as an opportunity to help another person, but welcoming a Torah scholar into our home can transform the home itself into a place of holiness. The Shunamite woman focused on giving Elisha comfort, without expecting anything in return, and ultimately merited a blessing beyond what she could have imagined. When we open our homes to those who embody Torah and holiness, we do more than perform an act of kindness – we invite the values of Torah into our own lives and create an environment in which the Shechina can dwell.

SHABBAT SHALOM!