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## Parsha Page

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**“And Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem blessed Avraham (‘bakol’) in everything.”  
(Beraisheet, 24:1)**

The meforshim (commentators) wrestle with what “bakol” actually means.

Rashi tells us that the gematria (numerical equivalence) of the letters of “bakol” is 52 (bet= 2, kof=20, lamed=30), which is the equivalent of the gematria of “ben” or son (bet=2, nun=50). This explains why it is necessary to mention this verse now. It serves as a nice segue into the next story of the matchmaking of Yitzchak and Rivka, as the son now needs a wife.

Ibn-Ezra first tells us that the pshat (simpler meaning) of “bakol” or “in everything” is that Hashem blessed Avraham in long life, wealth, honor and children, all of which are “chemdat ha’adam” or things desired by people. Ibn-Ezra then quotes the drash (deeper meaning) of “bakol” from the Gemara Bava Batra 16b, where it says that Avraham was blessed with a daughter whose name was “Bakol.” Ibn-Ezra succinctly refutes this by saying that if Avraham really had a daughter named Bakol, the pasuk should have read that Hashem blessed Avraham “bi-Bakol” or literally, *with* Bakol.

Ramban has a fascinating explanation of the meaning of “bakol” and this so-called daughter of Avraham. Ramban too quotes the Gemara Bava Batra. In the Gemara, Rabbi Meir says that Avraham was blessed in *not* having a daughter, because if he had one, it would have been difficult for Avraham to marry her off to anyone except for the local cursed Canaanim, who were idol worshippers. Avraham’s alternate choice would have been to send her outside of Canaan to marry, which was also undesirable. Therefore, Avraham was blessed in that he never had to face this difficult dilemma. Rabbi Yehuda disagrees and says that the blessing of Avraham was that he did indeed have a daughter, because Hashem did not want Avraham to lack in anything at all, and so he completed Avraham’s life by giving him what he was missing, a daughter. The Gemara continues, saying that Acherim (Others) say that Avraham had a daughter, and that her name was Bakol (this is the part of the Gemara referred to by Ibn-Ezra).

Ramban tells us that what the Acherim (Others) had to add to the discussion about the meaning of “bakol” was not merely to tell us the name of Avraham’s supposed daughter, because it would be wrong to minimize and limit the great and generalized blessing that Hashem gave to Avraham down to a single flesh and blood daughter named Bakol. Ramban tells us that what the Acherim were saying was something much more profound: that “bakol” refers to a middah (attribute) of Hashem called “Kol” or All, so called because this attribute is the foundation of everything. Ramban brings various textual supports for this difficult idea, first from Yeshayahu 44:24 “I am the Eternal that makes All (Kol)” and also from Kohelet 5:8 “And the plenty of the land is in All (BaKol),” that is to say that all of the abundance of the world comes into being because of this middah or attribute of Hashem, called “Kol,” making it the source of blessing itself. Kol is the eighth of Hashem’s thirteen attributes, according to Ramban. Related to this, there is another attribute that emanates from the attribute of Kol called “Bat,” or literally “Daughter” and with this middah, Hashem controls and guides the world. (The relationship between “Kol” and “Bat” is further hinted at in the Hebrew word for bride, “kallah,” which shares a shrosh (root) with “kol.”) Ramban explains that the attribute of “Kol” was “like a daughter” to Avraham, because Avraham was a man who governed and conducted his life with chessed (kindness). According to the Ramban, this was precisely what the Acherim meant when they said that Avraham had a daughter and her name was “Bakol,” that Avraham was blessed not with a daughter of flesh and blood, but that because Avraham emulated the chessed of Hashem, Hashem blessed him with His own powerful attribute of Kol, which encompasses the very essence of bracha (blessing). By “adopting” chessed, Avraham was blessed with the keys to blessing itself.

Larry Domnitch

This week's Torah portion Chaye Sarah can certainly be called the shidduch (matchmaking) portion, as it details the events leading to the union of Isaac and Rebecca.

"Now Abraham was old, well on in years and G-D blessed Abraham with everything" (Genesis 24:1).

Abraham's life in his old age was one of honor, prosperity, and spiritual greatness. Nothing was lacking except a match for his son Isaac, the woman who would be the next Matriarch of the Jewish people.

Finding a wife for Isaac required some traveling which was extremely difficult for Abraham in his old age. The responsibility was given to his trusted servant Eliezer.

Eliezer was a man of distinction and a scholar in his own right. He was a disciple of Abraham, who taught his master's teachings to others. The very name, Eliezer, means, "G-D is my help." Whom he would find for Isaac would profoundly impact history.

Abraham told Eliezer to search in the region of Aram Naharayim the area of his own origins. It was an area where acts of 'chesed' (kindness) were common practice. Only a woman reared in such an environment, possessing such qualities could be a proper 'shidduch' for Isaac.

Eliezer set out upon his journey with ten camels and soon reached the city of Nahor within Aram Naharayim. The Midrash relates that the time of the journey was miraculously shortened. As he arrived at the city perimeters he stopped by a well where he planned to wait and find Isaac's match. He knew that an individual's true character could be judged at a well, where one lacked the pretensions of being surrounded by family. Most importantly, he knew that the criterion of kindness could be best judged at a well. Often in the Bible shidduchim took place at a well where bountiful opportunities exist for one individual to assist another.

Eliezer sought G-D's help: "See, I stand here by the spring of water and the daughters of the townsmen come out to draw. Let it be to the maiden to whom I shall say 'please tip over your jug so I may drink,' and who replies 'Drink and I will even water your camels,' she will be the one 'You' have designated for 'Your' servant Isaac" (Gen. 24:13,14). As he was praying, Rebecca appeared. "And it was when he had not yet finished speaking that suddenly Rebecca was coming out--she who had been born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, the brother of Abraham" (Gen. 24:15). Her lineage is traced for a second time here in the Torah, identifying her as being from the same family as Abraham.

At that point, Eliezer requested Rebecca's assistance and he was helped with zeal, compassion and sensitivity. The Torah detailed Rebecca's actions. Upon Eliezer's request for a drink (Gen. 24:17) she graciously lifted a heavy pitcher to his mouth, allowing him to drink effortlessly. As she lowered the jug, she offered to provide water for the camels with the remaining contents. "She continued to run", hastening back and forth filling pitchers until they were fully satiated. (Gen. 24:21) During these moments Eliezer watched Rebecca in astonishment wondering if G-D had indeed answered his prayers so swiftly. As she completed the tasks at hand he knew she was the one.

Eliezer requested lodging and Rebecca brought him to her family's home. He related to her family the purpose of his journey. Upon hearing Eliezer speak about the marriage proposition, Rebecca emphatically agreed to accompany him on his journey back to the Promised Land to marry Isaac.

Isaac and Rebecca met and they married: "He married Rebecca, she became his wife, and he loved her" (Gen. 24:67). In total, an entire chapter of 67 sentences are devoted to this match.

At the time of the marriage, Abraham was 140 years old. He would live an additional 35 years, which was time that was no doubt filled with acts of immeasurable greatness. Yet, the Torah's narrative of his life ends here. With Abraham's final recorded mission fulfilled, Isaac and Rebecca now enter center stage as the next generation of Hebrews.

Parshat Chaye Sarah delves into the meaning of the Shidduch, as it also demonstrates the important qualities one should look for in one's prospective match. What causes one couple among multitudes to unite? Eliezer's search was brief. That Rebecca's immediate appearance was no accident is conveyed in the very language describing the events.

The Torah emphasizes this mission to find a match; its detailed description denotes its great importance. It also possesses profound messages for us today. We all have potential future generations and legacies to leave behind, and thus every marriage is very significant. When one finds one's bashert (true match) it should not be seen as a mere event or occurrence. Rather, the union should be seen as the guiding Hand of Providence, paving the way for the future, as exemplified by the match of Isaac and Rebecca.

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