

Gevura With Chessed

Who is a *gibbor* (mighty person)? Ben Zoma asks this famous question in Pirkei Avos 4:1. He answers, "One who conquers his *yetzer [hara]* (evil inclination)." To take a little deeper look into this question and answer, let us go back to the source of *gevura* - Yitzchak Avinu, our Holy Forefather who brought the trait of *gevura* down to earth. Just as Avraham Avinu had his own unique *middah* (character trait) of *chedsed*, which he developed and used to accomplish his purpose in this world, so too Yitzchak Avinu had his own unique *middah*: *gevura*.

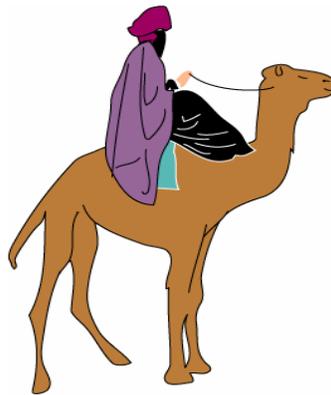
The Ofter Rav, in his sefer, "Ohev Yisrael" explains that Yitzchak Avinu used his *middah* of *gevura* to show that there is a *din* and *dayan* (Heavenly Judgment) on all of our deeds. He taught people to fear Hashem and His Judgments. In this way they would not sin, and thereby be spared Hashem's harsh punishments. However, the root of Yitzchak's *gevura* was actually *chedsed*. As the verse states, "These are the generations of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham" (Bereshis 25:19). Yitzchak was the son of Avraham. His strength was rooted in the *chedsed* of his father Avraham. His teaching and demonstrating *gevura* was a great *chedsed* for people. He made them aware of Hashem's *middos ha'din*, so they will avoid terrible punishments.

Perhaps we can draw a parallel to the second blessing of the Amida prayer. This blessing is called *gevuros*, and it corresponds to Yitzchak Avinu. Our sages relate that the *beracha* lists Hashem's greatest *gevuros*. There is no more difficult feat than *techiyas ha'mesim* (giving life to the dead), and this is mentioned several times in the blessing. If we take a close look, we see that all of *gevuros* mentioned in the blessing have a common denominator: they are all *chassadim* (acts of kindness). Bringing rain, dew, feeding all living things, giving life to the dead, supporting the fallen, healing the sick, freeing captives; these are all wonderful *chassadim*. Hashem uses his tremendous might, not to destroy, rather to perform the greatest acts of loving kindness on earth.

What can we learn from this? Let us return to the *Mishna* in Pirkei Avos. Who is a *gibbor*? One who conquers his *yetzer*. In the area of *bein-adam-li'chaveyro* (mitzvos between man and his fellow man), the *Yetzer Hara* tells us to take, take, and take some more. Only think about yourself. Take advantage of others for your own sake. This is the opposite of *gemilus chassadim*. *Chessed* is give, give, and give. Help others whenever and however you can. The *gibbor* who con-

quers his *yetzer* uses *gevura* for *chedsed*, to overcome his desire to take, and instead gives to people. And so, we have three examples of using *gevura* for *chedsed*: Yitzchak Avinu who taught *gevura* as a *chedsed*, the Almighty, who uses His *Gevura* to perform the greatest *chassadim*, and the *gibbor* of the *Mishna*, who overcomes his *yetzer hara* in order to do *chedsed*.

Kinderlach . . .
Everyone wants to be a *gibbor*. It is not difficult. Just take the time to think what you are doing. When Imma brings out a plate of cookies, be a *gibbor*! Let your brother have the extra one. When you are on a crowded bus, be a *gibbor*! Give up your comfortable seat to someone older than you. When you are in a rush to leave the house, be a *gibbor*! Take the time to properly make your blessings after eating. When Imma says that it is time to go to sleep, be a *gibbor*! Jump right into bed. Be a *gibbor*! You are in good company. Hashem and Yitzchak Avinu will be very proud of you.



Hashgacha

"This is very puzzling, Abba."
"What is it Chaim? Perhaps I can help you."
"Besuel, the father of Rivka was a wealthy man, correct?"
"Yes."
"He had a house full of servants to cook, clean, and draw water, correct?"
"Right again."
"Then why was his daughter Rivka at the well, with a water pitcher on her shoulder? That was a job for the servants."
"Very perceptive, Chaim. This event was totally out of the ordinary. The Malbim points out that it was Hashem's *hashgacha pratit* that caused Rivka to go out to the well. She had never gone there before in her life. She surely had never drawn water in her life. As you said, that was a job for the servants. Her sole purpose in going to the well was to meet

Eliezer, the *shaliach* (messenger) of her future husband, Yitzchak."

"Fascinating. Now that you pointed that out to me, Abba, I see *hashgacha* in the other details of the story also. Eliezer prayed to Hashem just as he reached the well. He asked Hashem to be kind to him and send him a sign when the right one came along. 'I will ask the maiden to pour me a little water from her pitcher. If she will say, "Drink, and I will also bring water for your camels," then I will know that she is a suitable wife for Your servant, Yitzchak' (from Bereshis 24:12-14)."

"That is exactly what happened!"
"Yes, Chaim. Hashem guided the events just as Eliezer had requested."
"Abba, Hashem's *hashgacha* was so clearly visible in those days. I wish we could see His Hand nowadays."

"We can, Chaim. We just need to look a little closer. He is more hidden in our times. However, He still makes His Presence felt. We have all experienced some event in our lives that was very unlikely to happen. Perhaps we were facing a big expense, and we did not know where the money would come from. Or we could not find a suitable *chavrusa*, having exhausted all of the normal search methods. Or, we were tangled in a terrible *machlokes* (disagreement), and did not see a way out."

"They all sound like pretty difficult situations."

"Almost miraculously, the money came from a totally unexpected source. Or the *chavrusa* came via someone who did not even realize that we were looking. Or the *machlokes* suddenly calmed down as quickly as it arose. It could be that Hashem, in His own subtle way, is letting us know that He hasn't forgotten us (so to speak)."

"May we use this as a motivation to not forget about Him, either."

"Amen."

Kinderlach . . .
Hashem loves you, pays attention to you, and takes care of you. He is supervising your life. Sometimes you can sense this, sometimes you cannot. When you do perceive the *hashgacha*, take note of it. Perhaps even write it down. Review it periodically, and use this as *chizuk* to strengthen your *emunah*. Hashem remembers you. Don't forget about Him.

Parasha Questions

- What caused Sara's death? (Rashi 23:1)
- What is the source of the name Machpela? (Rashi 23:9)
- Which gifts did Eliezer give Rivka? (24:22)
- Why did Lavan run? (Rashi 24:29)
- Why could Eliezer's daughter not marry Yitzchak? (Rashi 24:39)