



"Avraham was old, well on in years" (Beraishis 24:1). The Gemara (Yoma 28b) explains from the redundancy that the word זקן Zakayn here does not mean 'old', but rather it indicates that Avraham was 'an elder' or 'a Torah scholar' as the word is used elsewhere (see Vayikra 19:32). The Gemara continues that this same word זקן is used by Yitzchak, Yaakov and Eliezer indicating that each was a Torah scholar as well. Regarding Eliezer the Gemara continues that he had mastery over all of the Torah of Avraham and that he would teach Avraham's Torah to others like one who draws water and gives others to drink. Finally, the Gemara concludes that Avraham Avinu fulfilled the entire Torah Sh'Bichtav and Torah Sh'B'Al Peh before it was formally received by Moshe at Har Sinai, which would include Mitzvos D'Rabanan.

In Pirkei Avos we are taught, "Who is wise? He who learns from all people" (Avos 4:1). In the Gemara (Makkos 10a) there is a statement in the name of Rebbe Yehudah Nasi, the editor of the Mishnayos, who said, "Much Torah have I studied from my teachers, and I have learned more from my colleagues than from them, and I have learned more from my students than from all of them".

Based on these sources, and others, the Panim Yafos explains that there is a relationship between the wisdom that a Torah scholar receives from Hashem and the students that he teaches. There is a conduit of wisdom that Hashem provides Torah scholars based on the needs of their students. Accordingly, the more students one has, the more wisdom is needed to teach each student according to their individual needs and answer their specific questions. Torah teachers will 'learn from all people' because Hashem will provide the wisdom needed to assist these individuals. Conversely, if a person is not learning Torah with an intention of imparting that wisdom to his children and students, that conduit of wisdom from Hashem will narrow and become clogged. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 91b) similarly states that one who withholds Halachic knowledge from a student will be cursed.

Thus, the Pasuk begins, "Avraham was an elder, well on in years" and ends by saying "and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything", meaning that Hashem blessed Avraham with all the Torah knowledge he needed to teach Yitzchak, Eliezer and all the other 'souls that he made' (see Beraishis 12:5) throughout his life, bringing them 'under the wings of the Shechinah'.

I was once at a wedding, standing next to a friend of mine who is a Rosh Yeshiva, when one of his Talmidim asked him why Avraham would reject Eliezer's daughter for his son Yitzchak (see Rashi to Beraishis 24:30), saying that Yitzchak was blessed and Eliezer was cursed, if the Gemara states that Eliezer had mastery over all of the Torah of Avraham and that he would teach Avraham's Torah to others. The Gemara (Pesachim 49a) indicates that Yitzchak should do whatever is necessary to marry the daughter of a Talmid Chacham. Who better for Avraham to choose than the daughter of Eliezer?

The Rosh Yeshiva then turned to me, introducing his student to me, implying that I had permission to address his question. I told the student a story about my father, the Rebbe zt"l, that out of character, instructed his Gabbai to write a letter to a couple saying that they should no longer come to the Rebbe with their problems and he would not see either of them. Understandably, the Gabbai felt uneasy about fulfilling this request of the Rebbe and procrastinated. The Rebbe followed up for several days in a row with the Gabbai that the task was completed and eventually took a paper and pen to the Gabbai and dictated word for word what the Gabbai should write. The Rebbe took the stamped envelope himself to the mailbox and mailed the letter.

After the Rebbe zt"l had passed away, this Gabbai and this husband happened to meet, and the Gabbai looked visibly uncomfortable. The husband told the Gabbai that until he received that letter from the Rebbe he did not have Parnasah, or children, or good health and after receiving that letter from the Rebbe everything improved. The husband understood that the Rebbe was forcing the couple not to rely on him, but rather to make their own Hishtadlus and rely on Hashem.

When Lavan greeted Eliezer for the first time he said "Come, blessed of Hashem, why should you stand outside..." (Beraishis 24:31). The Midrash (Beraishis Raba 60:7) on this Pasuk explains that since Eliezer served Avraham faithfully, he transformed from 'cursed' to 'blessed'. Eliezer could have sabotaged the mission, returned to Avraham absolved of his promise and attempted to convince Avraham to take his daughter for Yitzchak over the daughters of Eshkol, Mamre and Anayr (see Rashi to Beraishis 24:8). However, it was because Eliezer was faithful to his Rebbe and followed his Rebbe's instructions against **what he perceived to be** his own best interest, that he was able to transcend his own personal 'cursed' status and become 'blessed'. Avraham understood what his student Eliezer needed to reach his true potential.

May it be His will that everyone, with the help of their Rebbeim and with Siyata D'Shmaya, should reach their potential and rectify all that is 'cursed' into that which is 'blessed' and in that merit bring about the Geulah Shlayma, speedily in our days.