

A Positive ‘Super-Spreader;’ Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, OBM

Many people search for all sorts of segulos to marry off their children. But is the best segulah hiding in plain sight in this week’s parshah?

The Segulah Craze

In recent years, there has been a lot of talk about the large group of Jewish young men and women that need a Shidduch. Many parents worry about the future of their children, and this has given rise to an entire new genre of *segulos*.

One such segulah is to buy a glass cup. When the parents buy this cup and designate it to be broken under the Chuppah, they begin the practical wedding preparations, and thereby create a vessel for the blessing.

Another segulah is to purchase a Tallis for a future groom. It is common for the groom’s family to buy the bride her Shabbat candlesticks, while her family buys the groom a Tallis. So, by purchasing a Tallis, her family creates a physical vessel for her blessing.

Another famous segulah is to pray at the resting place of Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel, in Amuka near Tzfas. Rabbi Yonatan was a rabbi during the era of the Mishnah, and according to tradition,

a prayer at his gravesite is conducive to finding a shidduch.

School tuition is another segulah. There is a tradition, based on a Midrash, that paying tuition for the Jewish education of another child will bring you the merit of [getting married and] having your own children to educate.

The Kallah's chair is another one. This is a segulah in which the prospective bride sits on a bride's chair at a wedding, supposedly to bring her good luck in this regard. A more traditional segulah is actually to celebrate with the bride and bring her joy - and earn G-d's reward, measure for measure, in your own joyous wedding.

And finally, there are all sorts of prayers which are recited for forty days. This concept is based on a statement of the Talmud that forty days before the creation of child a voice calls out from heaven saying, "the daughter of so-and-so will marry so-and-so."

There are all sort of these forty-day-prayer segulos. For example, some people will recite the entire Song of Songs for forty consecutive days. Others recite the Song of the Sea, based on the Talmud's teaching that creating a Shidduch is as difficult as splitting the sea; by thanking G-d for splitting the sea, they hope for their own personal splitting of the sea as well.

The First Shidduch

In this week's parsha, we read about the first Jewish shidduch: Yitzchak and Rivkah.

This match didn't come about easily. The groom was in Canaan,

in the future Land of Israel, while the bride was in Charan, on the border of modern-day Turkey and Syria. In an era before internet, photographs or even a postage system, Eliezer was dispatched to Charan to bring a bride home to the Land of Israel.

When Eliezer was given the mission, he wondered aloud,

“What if she won’t want to come with me to this land?” Who is to assure us that she will agree to leave her family to follow a servant who tells her about a rich groom whom she never met?

But Avraham was not worried:

“Hashem, the G-d of the heavens, who took me from my birthplace and promised this land to my descendants – He will send his angel before you and you will be successful in finding a wife for my son.”

Avraham’s answer sounds exactly like the response of any believing Jew who says, “G-d will help.”

But how could he have been so sure of himself? He didn’t merely hope and pray and believe. He sounded confident that the trip would be successful. How did he know?

The First Segulah

Rashi points out an interesting change in their conversation:

At the start of their conversation, Avraham made Eliezer swear by “the God of the heaven *and* the God of the earth.” But later, when questioned about the success of the

mission, he says only, “Hashem, the *G-d of the heavens* who took me from my birthplace...”

Rashi explains that Avraham was telling Eliezer that when he left his birthplace, Hashem was only a G-d of the heavens, so to speak. He was not well-known on earth. But in the years that followed, Avraham had brought the world to recognize G-d, making Him the ‘G-d of the earth’ as well.

The Rebbe says that this is the answer to our question:

Avraham was confident in the success of the mission because of the merits he had earned when making G-d famous throughout the world.

G-d had practically been forgotten in society at large. But Avraham had made it his business to remind the world that there was a Creator and a Ruler. Rashi says that he made G-d’s name “a household name”; it became a normal topic of discussion. After Avraham’s efforts, even young children recognized that there was a Creator to the universe. And in that merit, he felt assured that G-d would bless his child with a good shidduch. (*Sichos Kodesh, 5739. Volume 1 Pg 242*)

So, this week’s parshah teaches us the best segulah for a shidduch:

Spread the belief in one G-d, just like Avraham our forefather. Teach the world that there is a Creator Who loves them and Who is interested in their wellbeing. Teach them that they can pray to Him. Teach non-Jews about the Seven Noahide Laws and Jews about the 613 Mitzvos. Make G-d’s name ‘commonplace.’

A Super-Spreader

Last week, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks passed away. Over the recent decades, perhaps more than anyone else, he worked to spread G-d's name in the world, to make His name 'commonplace.' He was a super-spreader of G-d's name.

Shortly after he became Chief Rabbi In 1993, England was horrified when two ten-year-old children kidnapped and murdered a two-year-old child. This entire country - and the entire world - was deeply shaken by the event.

Rabbi Sacks wrote an article in the newspapers, calling for schools to place a greater emphasis on teaching morals and ethics. He said that the family unit had fallen apart and children didn't see proper role models in their parents, so society at large had to take responsibility to raise the next generation and teach them to be responsible adults. "Let's start now," he said, "even though it will take two decades to see results."

Prime Minister John Major read the article and was very impressed. He invited Rabbi Sacks to his office and had a conversation with him about how his ideas could be best implemented. Soon, Rabbi Sacks became the 'spiritual mentor' of many British leaders and politicians.

Rabbi Sacks shared an interesting story about these relationships.

One the occasion of Yitzchak Rabin's funeral, Rabbi Sacks traveled back from Israel on private jet together with the Prime Minister, Prince Charles, the opposition leader, and others.

Minding his own business, he took out a chumash and began to read the weekly parshah, but the Prime Minister took interest in his reading and asked him to share something. So, for a long while, Rabbi Sacks delivered a class on the weekly parshah to the British government. He said that they were profoundly interested in what he had to share, and a very meaningful conversation ensued.

Keep the Message Going

Rabbi Sacks lived with the motto of publicizing the name of G-d and making Him a household name, not only among Jews but among gentiles as well. He said that this mission - to bring G-d to the world at large - he received from the Rebbe.

And this week's parsha tells us, the Rebbe says, that spreading knowledge about G-d is the best possible segulah for marriage, and for all other blessings as well.

Let's keep the message going. Be a positive super-spreader.