



# The Blessing of Adoption

There are many couples who try to bring children to the world but are unfortunately met with no success. When they finally decide to adopt a child, they often hear the following statement from their family and friends: "You know, once you adopt you are likely to get pregnant."

Many people will tell you that they know such a couple, but no proper research has been done to verify if there is any truth to the statement. Nonetheless, it is a very commonly repeated saying.

For many couples, it is a hurtful comment. It seems to infer that the only reason they adopted a child was to have a biological one. Moreover, it implies that an adoptive child is not good enough - while they love their adoptive child no less than other parents love their biological children. These hurtful feelings have been expressed even by those parents who themselves experienced this miracle and had biological children after adopting.

Now, the Talmud has a discussion on the topic of common sayings, "*minah hani mili d'amri inshi*," in which it attempts to find a source in Torah for common sayings and proverbs. Perhaps we can draw from that tradition: despite the fact that there is no scientific evidence to the statement, people continue to repeat it - despite the efforts of many to "kill" the saying. Perhaps, ultimately, there is a source in the Torah for this concept.

Last week, we read about the birth of Isaac, but the story really began a bit earlier.

At first, three angels told Abraham that within one year, Sarah would give birth to a son. However, the miracle did materialize immediately. First, Abraham moved to Gerar, which is between Gaza and Beersheba, and Sarah was kidnapped by King Abimelech. Abimelech was then punished by G-d with the closing of all the orifices in his body, and he experienced the dream in which G-d told him to return Sarah and to beg Abraham to pray for him. Abimelech followed instructions, and Abraham prayed for Abimelech and his household, after which they regained control over their bodies.

Then, in the very next verse, the Torah states that G-d remembered Sarah and gave her a child. Rashi points out that is not a coincidence; “the passage was placed close to it to teach us that if someone prays for a fellow and he has the very same need, his needs will be answered first.” (21:1)

The Rebbe points out that this is quite remarkable. 30 years earlier, God had already promised a son to Abraham. Nonetheless, the promise was not fulfilled. But when Abraham prayed for Abimelech, Sarah became pregnant immediately. That’s an unbelievable message, the Rebbe says, about the power of prayer for others. (Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 1 pg. 474).

But this week, in Parshat Chaye Sarah, we read about something even more special.

This portion focuses on the story of Isaac and Rebecca’s marriage. After Sarah died, Abraham called his chief of staff and commanded him to travel to Haran (modern-day Turkey) to bring a bride from Abraham’s family for his son.

Eliezer immediately sets off on his way. As soon as he arrives in Haran, he heads for the local well, which is the gathering place of all the locals. He turns to G-d with a prayer and a deal. He would ask a local young woman for a drink of water. If, in return, she would even

offer a drink for his camels, he would know that she is to be Isaac's bride.

Before he managed to finish his prayer, his plan was fulfilled. Rebecca came out and the entire story played out. It was so striking that even her father, Betual, and her brother Laban were forced to agree that it was G-d's hand (24:7). The very next day, Rebecca joined Eliezer for the return trip to Canaan.

Now, when describing her arrival in Canaan, the Torah seems to insert a superfluous verse. "Isaac was coming from *Beer Lachai Ro'i*, for he dwelt in the south country."

What is that verse about? What is the connection to the story at hand? Had the Torah omitted the verse, the story would have been perfectly understood. Right afterwards, the Torah says that Isaac went out to pray in the field, when Eliezer and Rebecca arrived on the camels from their journey. What exactly does this verse add to the story?

Rashi tells us something amazing.

"Isaac had gone to bring Hagar to his father Abraham, so that he marry her."

Where exactly is *Beer-Lacha-Ro'i*?

The Torah mentioned it only once before:

When Abraham banished Hagar from his home upon Sarah's request, and she wandered into the wilderness lonely, depressed and pregnant, angels appear to her and told her that she would give birth to Ishmael. She then called that place, no less and no more: *Beer-Lachai-Ro'i!*

Rashi explains, therefore, that Isaac had gone there to bring her back to Abraham (the Talmud says that after Abraham saw his son getting married, he decided that he wanted to be married as well — Bava

Kama 92b).

This brings us to an often overlooked, but amazing insight:

Abraham just lost his wife, but he is fully invested in finding a spouse for his son Isaac. He is willing to give away his entire fortune to draw Rebecca to Canaan. At the very same time, Isaac is fully invested in finding a wife for his father, and makes a personal journey to *Beer-Lachai-Ro'i* to bring her back!

Last week, we read about the virtue of *praying* for a friend, but this week we read not about prayers but about deeds. Abraham sends his servant to find Isaac a wife, while Isaac decides to get up on his own and travel personally to find a spouse for his father. And perhaps that's why Eliezer found Isaac's spouse in such a miraculous and easy fashion.

Maybe that's why adoptive parents sometimes merit biological children afterwards. When a couple chooses to adopt a child whose parents cannot raise him/her for whatever reason, G-d pays them back measure for measure and gives them children of their own.

This is a message not only to childless parents. The Rebbe would often say that there is a counterpart to the commandment to be physically fruitful and multiply — a commandment to be fruitful and multiply in a spiritual sense. Just as you can adopt a physical child, you can adopt someone in a spiritual way; in other words, you can bring him closer to God. That is a spiritual birth.

This week, the International Conference of Shluchim is taking place in New York, at which thousands of Chabad rabbis have gathered. They are the adoptive parents of thousands of spiritual children, who they have drawn closer to G-d, to Torah, and to mitzvot. Some of them have gone to the farthest corners of the world to find those lost children and to adopt them.

In 1950, the Rebbe sent the first Chabad rabbi to Morocco, and nobody dreamed that 70 years later, there would be a Chabad Rabbi in every corner of the world. Chabad does not provide any financial support to the young couples moving out. They go armed with three hundred years of Chasidic tradition and the Rebbe's personal inspiration to love every Jew unconditionally.

My friends, when we set ourselves aside to care for others and we don't just pray — we get on a plane and travel a half a world away like Isaac to adopt another Jewish child, G-d looks after us and takes care of us in all aspects of our lives, both materially and spiritually.