

BLESSING IN DISGUISE

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In Pashas Vayera, Sora, the 90-year-old wife of Avraham, receives a most surprising piece of information from an even more surprising source. She is told by Arab nomads, who had found obliging accommodation in Avraham's house, that in one year she will have a child. Instinctively, she reacts in disbelief to this prediction. She laughs.

Immediately, Hashem appears to Avraham. He is upset. "Why did Sora laugh? Is there something that is beyond the Almighty? At the appointed time I shall return, and behold Sora will have a son (Genesis 18:12-13).

Hashem's ire must be explained. After all, Sora was not told by Hashem that she will have a baby. She was informed by what appeared to be Arab wanderers. And though the Talmud explains that the three nomads were indeed angels sent by the Almighty, they did not identify themselves as such. So what does G-d want from Sora?

A man once entered the small study of the revered the Steipler Gaon, Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievski with a plea. "I'd like a blessing from the Rav. My daughter has been looking to get married for several years. All her friends are married and she would like to get married too, but nothing is working. Can the Rosh Yeshiva bless her to find her bashert? (appropriate one)," he asked.

The Steipler turned to the man and asked, "Is this your first daughter?"

"No," replied the distraught parent, "Why do you ask?"

"When she was born did you celebrate with a kiddush?" (a celebratory party in a religious setting)

The man was perplexed. "No. But, that was 27 years ago," he stammered, "and she was my third girl. I may have made a l'chayim while the minyan was leaving shul, but I never made a proper kiddush. But what does a missed kiddush 27 years ago have to do with my daughter's shidduch (match) today?"

"When one makes a kiddush at a festive occasions," explained Rav Kanievski, " each l'chayim he receives is accompanied by myriad blessings. Some are from friends, others from relatives, and those blessings given by total strangers.

Among those blessings are definitely the perfunctory wishes for an easy time in getting married. By not making a kiddush for your daughter, how many blessings did you deprive her of? I suggest you

make your daughter the kiddush that she never had."

The man followed the advice, and sure enough within weeks after the kiddush the girl had met her mate.

At the bris (circumcision) of his first son (after ten girls), my uncle, Rabbi Dovid Speigel, the Ostrove-Kalushin Rebbe of Cedarhurst, Long Island, quoted the Ramban (Nachmanides) in this week's portion.

The reason that Hashem was upset at Sora was that even if an Arab nomad gives the blessing, one must be duly vigilant to respond, "Amen." One never knows the true vehicle of blessing and salvation. Hashem has many conduits and messengers. Some of those messengers' divinity is inversely proportional to their appearance.

We have to do is wait, listen, and pray that our prospective exalter is the carrier of the true blessing. And then, we have to believe.

Quite often, we have ample opportunities to be blessed. Whether it is from the aunt who offers her graces at a family gathering or the simple beggar standing outside a doorway on a freezing winter day, blessings always come our way. Sometimes they come from the co-worker who cheers you on at the end of a long day or the mail carrier who greets you with the perfunctory "have a nice day" as he brings today's tidings. Each blessing is an opportunity that knocks. And each acknowledgment and look to heaven may open the door to great salvation. The only thing left for us to do is let those blessings in. Good Shabbos.

Dedicated to our Beloved Mother Shirley Eskowitz - Sarah bas Reb Moshe by Marilyn & Jules Beck
Good Shabbos!

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