



The Little Things Count

By Yakov Abrahams (22)

Adapted from Rabbi Abraham J. Twersky ZT"l's Living Each Week

"שָׁתָה אֲדָנָי וּתְמַחֵר וּתְרַד כֹּדֶה עַל-יָדָהּ וּתְשַׁקְהוּ." (24:18)

"Drink, my lord,' she said, and she quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and let him drink."

In this Pasuk, Rivkah, a three year old girl, gives a thirsty man a drink and helps give water to his camels. At first glance, there's nothing glaringly significant about this event. It seems like nothing more than a simple act of Chesed. However, this event ends up changing the course of Rivkah's life and is her first step towards becoming the Matriarch of Bnei Yisrael. Perhaps her generous act was more than just a small Chesed, and really reveals something deeper.

It is human nature to take things for granted. We tend not to pay much attention to the small things in life. Modern media captures our attention with either big, exciting news, or awfully bad news. It's either a new

revolutionary medicine, or a huge robbery. They'll capture our attention with an exciting basketball game, or a mystery murder. Unfortunately however, it's unusual that you'll find the media publicizing a kind deed. This is because a small act of kindness is something that is less likely to capture the public's attention, something that may not be of as much value in our minds as, say, the score of last night's game. How significant can such a small deed be anyway? Can it really be as important as my fantasy football matchup? I mean, with fantasy football there's serious "gelt" on the line, but that can't be true by a small act of chessed! Or is it?!

When we take a deeper look into human nature, we'll find that we tend to get tired quickly of the things we do day in and day out, and we forget that life doesn't consist of firework displays all the time. As Rav Abraham J. Twerski ZT"L puts it: "Most often, the only things that shine outdoors are street lights; rather boring, but providing the necessary illumination. Come to think of it, for all their dazzling brilliance, how much useful light do fireworks provide? Our task is to do what is right and proper. How much impact any given act will have is not for us to consider, because that is out of our hands. Hashem wants us to do the 'little things' too. One young girl gives a thirsty man a drink of water, and changes the course of history forever." Rav Abraham J. Twerski ZT"L, in his brilliant wisdom, teaches us the essential lesson that it is the little things that matter most.

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Walk, Don't run

By Natan Solomon ('22)

In Parashat Chayei Sarah, the greatness of Avraham Avinu and Yitzchak Avinu appear in their own unique circumstances. However, on the surface, it appears that Yitzchak is the least relatable of the Avot. Clearly Avraham relates to us through the Middah of Chesed and his tremendous belief in Hashem. Also, Yaakov was the image of an ultimate father who merited all his children to be Tzaddikim and one of the forefathers of the Jewish people. How does Yitzchak Avinu relate to us?

At first glance, it appears that Yitzchak's shining moment is Akeidat Yitzchak, which was Avraham's test. The spotlight was taken off of Yitzchak and was given to Avraham. This should have been Yitzchak's defining moment, yet it was overshadowed by Avraham. The Gemara (Pesachim 88) tells us that each of the Avot is related to the Beit HaMikdash in a unique way. During Akeidat Yitzchak, the Passuk refers to the mountain as a "Har," which symbolizes that upwards battle one may have to improve. In Yeshayahu, the Passuk refers to the Beit HaMikdash as the "House of the God of Jacob." Lastly regarding Yitzchak, when he goes out to Daven it says, "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field." The connection of Avraham and Yakov to the Beit HaMikdash as it is referred to as "Har Habayit." What is the connection of Sadeh?

Throughout Yitzchak's actions in his lifetime, it appears that he is a carbon copy of Avraham. For example, following in the path of Avraham, Yitzchak dug up all the wells that Avraham previously had. Also, Yitzchak established Mincha, which during the times of the Beit HaMikdash was the Tamid Shel Bein Ha'Arbayim

which was basically the same as the Tamid Shel Shachar. Clearly, it seems that Yitzchak is merely chasing after Avraham's legacy trying to keep up. However, the difference between Avraham and Yitzchak is that Avraham had tens of thousands of followers whereas Yitzchak had maybe one. When Avraham started the monotheistic movement, there was an abundance of excitement at the start of the movement. When it came to Avraham, he built the mountain which hit a plateau during the times of Yitzchak. Although Yitzchak didn't help grow the movement, he was vital to the operation because he maintained the movement that Avraham Avinu started.

We should learn from Yitzchak to always strive to improve instead of staying stagnant. Improving involves working on ourselves slowly. Instead of running to change yourself to one extreme, we should walk slowly and improve ourselves step by step. If Yitzchak had just decided that Avraham's movement was fine without him, Judaism would not be as we know it today. Rather, Yitzchak knew that he always had to improve and therefore was the glue of the Jewish people and held together the movement of Avraham Avinu. Be'Ezrat Hashem, we should try to emulate Yitzchak Avinu and improve ourselves through the study of Torah, fulfillment of Mitzvot, and all aspects of life.

Why is Much of Sefer Daniel Written in Aramaic?

By Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Why Aramaic?

One of the striking features of Sefer Daniel (and Sefer Ezra) is that a large portion of it is written in Aramaic. What is the advantage of writing most of Perek 2 in

Aramaic? Why then is Perek 1 written in Hebrew? Why does Perek 2 begin in Hebrew? Moreover, why in Perek 8 does Sefer Daniel return to Hebrew?

Some Aramaic Basics

Here is a bit of background (from Da'at Mikra) regarding Aramaic to help us develop some answers. Aramaic emerged as the lingua franca for international communication beginning with the rise of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrians adopted Aramaic as their second official language in the 740's BCE. Approximately 500 BCE is when Darius made Aramaic the second official language of Persia. Thus, we are not surprised to find Aramaic spoken in Nevuchadnetzar's court instead of a native Babylonian language such as Akkadian.

Before Churban Bayit Rishon, our ancestors in Judea spoke Hebrew. During the siege of Yerushalayim, the Assyrian Ravshakeh addressed Jewish commoners in Hebrew, so they could understand his demeaning words (Melachim II 18:28). Jewish leaders asked him to speak Aramaic so that commoners would not comprehend his words (ad. loc. Pesukim 26).

It seems reasonable to assume that Jews continued to speak Hebrew until their exile. Daniel likely did not know Aramaic when he was exiled to Babylon.

Abarbanel's Explanation

Abarbanel (in the introduction to his commentary to Sefer Daniel "Mayanei HaYeshu'a") explains that the beginning of Sefer Daniel is written in Hebrew since it is written to his people, Am Yisrael. Daniel also records the Malach's communications (beginning in Perek 8) in Hebrew since it is the language that Hashem spoke to Adam HaRishon, the Avot, Moshe Rabbeinu, and our Nevi'im.

However, continues Abarbanel, Daniel records the communications and interactions with the Babylonian leadership in Aramaic, the language of these dealings. Abarbanel explains that Daniel was concerned that if he translated from the conversations to Hebrew then inaccuracies would inevitably creep in.

Questions on the Abarbanel

One may ask then why does the Torah not record Yaakov Avinu's talks with Lavan and Moshe Rabbeinu's communications with Paroh in the language in which they presumably occurred, Aramaic and Egyptian respectively? One might respond that the Chumash is dictated word by word from Hashem and thus there is no fear of imprecise translation. However, why then are communications recorded in the Nevi'im, such as Ehud's talks with Eglon Melech Mo'av or Yiftach's communications with Melech Amon, not presented in their original language. One might respond that Daniel, part of Ketuvim, involves less immediate divine impact than the words of Nevi'im and therefore a risk of inaccuracy prevails. Alternatively, Daniel is written in a time of Galut during which he must act in a more natural manner and reduce his reliance upon Hashem's intervention. The question then arises as to why Daniel in Perek 7 records his first communication with the Malach in Aramaic. Abarbanel answers that it is written in Aramaic since the Malach delivered this communication while the Babylonian Empire remained intact. The Malach's words recorded in Hebrew in Perek 8, although presented in the third (and last) year of the Babylonian ruler Belshazzar, were communicated as the duration of Babylonian rule was on the verge of expiring.

It would seem then that Abarbanel shifts his explanation for Sefer Daniel's use of Aramaic. Instead of its aim being

to accurately portray the occurrences, the idea is to convey a mood of Babylonian dominance.

Abarbanel's approach, however, does not explain why Daniel Perek 6 records Daniel's interactions with King Darius the Mede in Aramaic .

Da'at Mikra's Approach

Da'at Mikra interestingly suggests that the sections of Sefer Daniel are intended to impact non-Jews as well as Jews. Just as Yirmiyahu 10:11 states a message to be delivered to non-Jews in Aramaic so too Daniel's messages are universal in nature and thus are expressed in Aramaic, the lingua franca.

One could question this suggestion as there are many lessons in the Torah that apply to all of humanity, such as the first eleven chapters of Sefer Bereishit, which are not written in Aramaic. In addition, unlike Yirmiyahu 10:11, there is no directive from Hashem or a Malach to direct this message in Perakim two through seven of Sefer Daniel.

A New Suggestion from TABC Talmidim

A number of TABC Talmidim including Jacob Becker, Zachary Becker, Ezra Lebowitz, and Yaakov Suldan note that to properly learn Tanach it is insufficient to merely study it. One must make a complete immersion including a full emotional engagement . Accordingly, beginning the Sefer in Hebrew offers the view of a Hebrew-speaking Jewish young man freshly exiled from Yehuda to Bavel. He speaks, thinks, and writes in Hebrew.

However, as he becomes more acculturated he becomes comfortable in Aramaic. Of course, Daniel does not assimilate, as he resolutely avoids eating Nevuchadnetzar's food as we learned in Perek 1 .

However, Daniel, at the beginning of Perek 2, which according to Rashi occurs in the thirteenth year since Daniel arrived in Bavel, has become proficient in Aramaic and in the ways of the Babylonian royal court. Daniel handles himself with skill and aplomb in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Daniel introducing the readers to the story in Hebrew and seamlessly transitioning to Aramaic conveys his comfort, and competence in the Babylonian royal court. Daniel's interactions with Darius the Mede of Perek 6 is also presented in Aramaic to express the ease of Daniel's move from the Babylonian royalty to Darius.

In Perek 8, however, Babylonian hegemony is coming to an end as the seventy years of exile set forth by Yirmiyahu HaNavi have been completed. Daniel shifts back into Hebrew as we transition from being entrenched in Galut to redirecting ourselves to our return to Eretz Yisrael.

Conclusion

We do not learn about Daniel, we walk alongside Daniel! We accompany him throughout his darkest moments sharing his deep fears and rejoicing with him in his moments of triumph. Part of the secret of Jewish continuity is to fully connect with our role models of our glorious past. The shifting of Sefer Daniel from Hebrew to Aramaic and then back to Hebrew helps us achieve exactly this lofty but crucial Torah goal.

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