

Then Hashem said to Avraham, “Why is it that Sarah laughed?”... Is there anything beyond Hashem?” (18:13,14)

Sarah *Imeinu* wondered how a woman of her age could possibly conceive and bear a child. Hashem's response is one that should be on our lips all of the time. Indeed, it should be the Jew's mantra: *Ha'yipalei mei Hashem davar?* “Is there anything beyond Hashem?”

Nothing is beyond Hashem's capabilities. The *Midrash* cites a meaningful *mashal*, parable. A man carrying two links of a metal chain that had snapped came to the blacksmith shop. “Can you possibly repair my chain?” The blacksmith looked at the man somewhat incredulously and asked, “If I can fashion a new chain from raw metal, is there a question that I can repair an old one?” In other words, if Hashem can create a new human being from nothing, is it difficult for him to rejuvenate the body of an old woman? Indeed, as **Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl**, declares, “It is the obligation of every true believer to believe unequivocally that everything in this world, everything which we refer to as the laws of nature, are all the manifestation of Hashem's will. Everything is the product of the Hand of G-d.

“Thus, even if the ones who were blessing her with a child appeared to be Arabs, she should have responded, ‘Amen, so be it G-d's will.’ Nothing is beyond Hashem, regardless of the circumstances. The problem is not in Hashem: the problem is that we do not fully believe. The One Who created the world can certainly sustain it and all of its inhabitants.”

We have no right to give up hope, says **Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl**. The venerable *maggid* was on a trip in which nothing seemed to be going his way. A fellow traveler was concerned for him. The *maggid* said, “It will all work out. We never give up hope. It is not our privilege.” He explained his comment with the following story. During the war, he was separated from his wife and children. Only after the war did he discover that he alone was all that was left of his family. Alone in the world, he was understandably depressed. Seeking solace and words of encouragement, he went to the address of the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah leader of the generation, the *Chazon Ish*, who welcomed him with a warm smile and a listening ear. The *Chazon Ish* himself did not have any biological children, although he was a spiritual father to many. He related the following story to Rav Galinsky.

Leipzig was the city in which much of European commerce came together. Wholesalers, brokers, buyers, would converge from all over to buy and sell their wares. A wealthy Jewish businessman, who would annually make the trip, became too ill to travel. He asked his wife to replace him. After much coaching and convincing, she reluctantly agreed to make the trip. He gave her a pouch of money with which to purchase goods for their retail business at home. She made the trip and commenced her business dealings. One can only imagine her travail when she went to retrieve her money pouch to find that she must have somehow lost it. She turned to the other Jews that had come to Leipzig for business opportunities, inquiring if they had found her money pouch.

One man, who appeared to be G-d-fearing and learned, was walking around overtly happy. Apparently, he had found a money pouch containing within it enough money to sustain his family for the entire year. The distraught woman went over to him and asked if “perhaps” it was her money pouch that he had found. He replied, “What difference does it make? The *halachah* in this case is clear: If one finds an item in a city that is predominately not Jewish, he may keep it, because the owner certainly was *meyaeish*, gave up hope of ever finding it.” The woman argued that she had not given up hope of finding it. When two Jews have a legitimate dispute, they go to the *Rav* or *Bais Din*. The woman, and the man who found her money pouch, went to the *Rav* of Leipzig, where the man smugly presented his claim to the money pouch based upon his knowledge of *halachah*. The *Rav* listened to him, then raised his voice, “Is this woman the owner of the pouch? Is it her money? No! It belongs to her husband. She is only an agent on a mission. An agent has no right to give up hope!”

Rav Galinsky understood the meaning of the story. We are all here on a mission. The true Owner is Hashem. We do not have the privilege of giving up; rather, we must believe with deep faith that a solution to our problem will materialize.

What about those of us who have been blessed, who did not have to journey through the path of adversity to see our hopes and prayers realized? Do we appreciate what we have? Do we pay gratitude with the same passion as the one who drank from the cup of bitterness before it turned sweet? Perhaps the following story will be illuminating and inspiring.

A *mohel*, ritual circumciser, who had successfully performed thousands of *Brissim*, was called one day, “*Mazel tov! Mazel tov!* We have been blessed with a healthy son and would like to have you perform the *Bris*.” The joy in the father’s voice was so palpable that the *mohel* was spurred to ask, “If I may ask, how long did you wait for this child?” The father enthusiastically responded, “Twenty-two years! Our joy is overwhelming. We are so fortunate to have been blessed by the Almighty!”

The *Mohel* was now truly excited. This would not be just “another” celebration. It would be beyond special.

The day of the *Bris*, the *mohel* arose extra early and went to the *mikveh*, immersing himself in the water with extra special care. He was preparing for a *Bris* that was twenty-two years in the making. His *davening* was filled with noble thoughts, concentrating on every word. After all, he was to officiate at a *Bris* where the parents had waited twenty-two years for this child. As soon as the *mohel* entered the hall where they would have the *Bris*, he met the child’s father. They warmly embraced.

Twenty-two years is an incredible amount of time to wait for a child. Thus, the *mohel* figured that the hall would be tumbling with unusual excitement. Surprisingly, it was no different than the thousands of *Brissim* at which he had officiated. When the father recited the blessing, one would have expected the assemblage to declare, “*Amen!*” with unusual fervor; they did not. After the

ceremony, one would have expected the excitement to be palpable; it was not. The “clincher” came when a young man of about twenty years old went over to the father and said, “I will take the three younger ones home; Naomi will watch the other four girls. So, that leaves the five older ones to help clean up.” Something was wrong (or very right). The man had fifteen children! How could he imply to him that this was his first child? For five days, the *mohe*l had been excited beyond anything he had previously experienced. How could the father have misled him so?

Unable to conceal his feelings, the *mohe*l expressed himself to the father. “I am sorry if my excitement misled you, but I never meant any deception,” the father replied. “You asked me how long we had waited for this child, and I told you. We have been married for twenty-two years, and every child is a precious gift from Hashem. Every child brings with him/her an enormous potential, which we, as parents, acknowledge and nurture. Does one have to Heaven-forbid be childless for a lengthy period in order to realize the extraordinary blessing of each child?”

In order to be *makir tov*, pay gratitude, one must first be *makir*, recognize, acknowledge, the *tov*.