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Toldos: Meaning and Mazal

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"And these are the descendants (generations) of Yitzchak the son of Avraham; Avraham begot Yitzchak (Bereishis 25:19)."

The great Chassidic master Rav Yechiel of Alexander (1853-1910) explains that this pasuk speaks to the great humility of Avraham and Yitzchak. *"And these are the generations of Yitzchak"* – in Yitzchak's view his greatest accomplishment was that he was *"Yitzchak the son Avraham."* *"Avraham begot Yitzchak"* – in Avraham's view, his greatest accomplishment was that he was the father of Yitzchak. The humility of these Patriarchs was so great that they felt their greatest life accomplishment was their connection to the other. But in fact, we know otherwise. Avraham and Yitzchak each had their own accomplishments, blazed their own trails and actualized their personalized destiny. Although they were father and son, Avraham and Yitzchak were dramatically different people. Each had their own unique traits and made their own unique contributions.

The Dubno Maggid shares a beautiful parable. There was once a man who felt he had no *mazal* (we loosely translate this as "luck" but in reality it means providence or destiny). He had been unable to find a spouse, had no family and constantly struggled with his livelihood. He remembered learning as a young child that each person has an angel assigned to oversee his/her *mazal*. And so this individual decided to set out on a journey to find the angel in charge of his *mazal*. As he was travelling he came across a tree that looked lifeless and withered. The tree sighed and asked the man to where he was travelling. *"I am going to find my mazal,"* replied the man. *"When you find your angel can you ask him why I am unable to sprout leave and bear fruit?"* asked the angel. The man obliged and continued on his way. A short while later he came upon a young, beautiful, princess holding her head in her hands and weeping. The man asked her what was wrong. The princess explained, *"For years, I have been looking for a prince to marry me and despite all attempts I have been unable to find a match."* The man explained that he was headed to find out about his compromised *mazal* and would be happy to ask about the princess' as well. The journey came to an end and the traveler found his angel but he spent all of his time inquiring about the *mazal* of the tree and the princess that he forgot to inquire about his own circumstances. On the way home he passed the tree. *"I asked the angel why you can't bear fruit and he explained to me that there is buried treasure underneath your roots and it is interfering with the ability for your roots to draw nourishment from the soil."* *"Thank you,"* exclaimed the tree, *"I have a proposition. If you dig up the treasure, you can keep it, become fabulously wealthy and I will be able to bear fruit."* *"I wish I could, but you see I don't have time, I must continue to look for my mazal,"* explained the man. He then found the princess. *"Princess, I have important news. The reason you haven't found your soul mate is because you have only been looking amongst royalty. Any man you marry will become great by virtue of his connection with you. Find someone who is good, kind and upright and you will make him into a prince,"* explained the traveler. *"Wonderful,"* said the Princess. *"You seem like a special and good-hearted man – would you marry me?"* Princess, *I am flattered by your offer explained the man, but I cannot yet settle down, you see, I am still looking for my mazal."*

The Dubno Maggid is teaching us a profound message. We often spend so much time chasing our *"mazal"* that we miss the opportunities to actualize our *"mazal."* We get so caught up in the frenetic pace of life that we forget the beautiful opportunities for magnificent life treasure right in front of us. We get so caught up in running here and there that we don't see the beautiful family and friends who are often vying for our attention. We get so caught up in completing the journey that we sometimes forget why we embarked on the journey to begin with.

Like Avraham and Yitzchak we each have a unique identity that is waiting to be actualized. Like our Patriarchs and Matriarchs we each have something unique to contribute. Sometimes we have to stop looking and start doing.

We just marked, Rosh Chodesh the beginning of the month of Kislev. Every Rosh Chodesh is an opportunity to regroup, start again and rededicate ourselves to personal growth and life accomplishment. In just a few short weeks we will celebrate the Yom Tov of Chanukah. We celebrate the rededication of the second Temple and we celebrate the ability to rededicate ourselves. May we each be blessed with beautiful *mazal* and may we possess the wisdom to appreciate, understand and maximize it.