

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

פרשת
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Extreme Generosity

Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנחם | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

In this week's Parsha, Eliezer goes to find a wife for Yitzchak. He asks Hashem for the following sign: "The girl that I say to her, tilt your pitcher towards me so I may drink, and she responds to me, drink, and also your camels should drink, this shows she is for your servant Yitzchak." (24:14) The Seforno explains Eliezer's sign as, "It is fitting for someone who is making a request to ask for less than he needs, so as not to trouble the person. The appropriate response from a generous person is to add to his request, and either supply enough for his needs or more. This sign reflects on her character that she is worthy of marrying your servant Yitzchak." It is clear from the Seforno that the only thing Eliezer needed to see was her offering to give his camels as well.

Based on this, the rest of the storyline is difficult to understand. The Torah tells us in the next few Pesukim that this is exactly what happened. "She said I will also give your camels to drink...and she ran...then she ran again to the well to draw water and give all his camels to drink. Upon seeing this the man was astonished, and stayed quiet to see if Hashem had made his way successful or not." (24:19-21) These Pesukim are difficult to understand. What was Eliezer waiting to see, didn't Rivka already fulfill the conditions of the sign, as she said that she would also give his camels to drink? The Seforno

sheds light on these Pesukim, and offers the following explanation to explain Eliezer's behavior, "He was shocked by the extent of her Zerizus to do kindness. He was silent, and did not tell her, 'Don't trouble yourself,' which would have been appropriate. The silence was for the purpose of being able to discern from her kindness and Zerizus, as to whether Hashem allowed him to be successful. If her actions were fully motivated by kindness or it was all for reward." In other words, when Eliezer saw the extreme nature of her Zerizus he began to become suspicious and question her motives. Granted she exhibited the signs he had asked for, but if her actions were motivated by payment then it would not be a fulfillment of the signs he requested, which reflect her generosity.

We can derive from this Seforno two important lessons. Firstly, we see that when someone has a Middah and it is taken to the extreme it is a cause for concern, and the true motivations need to be investigated. Secondly, we see from here that the true Middah of generosity can't co-exist with asking for payment. If it could, then Eliezer should not have been concerned, because even if Rivkah would have asked for money, it doesn't mean she is not generous, as perhaps she has a dual motivation.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

In this week's Parsha, Lavan runs out to greet Eliezer (24:29). The Seforno explains that his intention was "To see a wealthy visitor who had come to the city and not to invite him into his house." The next Pasuk then says "And it was that when he saw the nose rings and bracelets on his sister...He said come (he invited him into his house)." (24:29-31) The Seforno comments that Lavan thought it was not appropriate to deny the good that his sister received, and therefore he invited Eliezer into his house.

Upon initial analysis this expression of gratitude from Lavan seems out of character. Lavan is identified as a Rasha by Chazal, which means he clearly has bad Middos. In addition, he was only interested in Eliezer's money originally, and he was unwilling to do Chesed for him and invite him into his home. How can we explain Lavan's sudden change in behavior?

It must be that this Middah of Hakaras Hatov is so deeply rooted in the Neshama of a person, and even exists by a Rasha. Therefore, although Lavan was not motivated by Chesed or Rachamim to invite Eliezer into his home, he couldn't bring himself to deny the good. It was this Middah that allowed him to do the Chesed of inviting Eliezer into his home. If Lavan was capable of this Middah of not denying the good, despite his wickedness, then surely we are capable of this Middah.

Sometimes, even though we know that Hashem loves us, we feel that we cannot reciprocate. Knowing the power of Hakaras Hatov that exists within a Rasha, and certainly with us, we can realize that we have the ability to reciprocate the love.



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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Eliezer set out to Charan on a quest to find a girl from Avraham's family worthy enough to marry Yitzchak, he asks Hashem to show him the girl who is destined for Yitzchak, as well as specific signs of the girl's kindness that would prove she is worthy of Yitzchak. Additionally, he prays to Hashem that he should then find out as well that she is indeed from Avraham's family, a necessary condition for her to marry Yitzchak. A girl immediately appears and proceeds to fulfill the signs Eliezer had laid out. Eliezer gifts the girl with expensive jewelry and asks her which family she belongs to. Rashi says that Eliezer first gave her the jewelry because he had Bitachon in Hashem that in the merit of Avraham he had indeed succeeded in finding Yitzchak's future wife. (Bereishis 24:10-23)

The question arises: If Eliezer indeed had Bitachon in the success of his mission why does it say that he waited anxiously to see if Hashem had made his mission successful? We see from here that even though Eliezer was on such a high level he didn't think that seeing the fulfillment of just the signs would be enough to assure him that Hashem had indeed granted him success. However, by actually experiencing the fulfillment of his signs, his Bitachon was strengthened to the point that he was already sure of his success even before he asked the girl to which family she belonged. We see from here, that experiencing Hashem's Hashgacha is far more powerful in strengthening one's Bitachon than all of the logical proofs of its existence. It is critical for us to take note, retell, and relive our own stories of Hashgacha Pratis in order to feel in our hearts the Emunah that we already know in our minds, thereby bringing us to ever higher levels of Bitachon.