

דרכים בפרשה חיי שרה

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אולי לא תאבה האשה ללכת אחרי אל הארץ הזאת (כד:ה)
Perhaps the woman shall not wish to follow me to this land. (24:5)

The Torah discusses Eliezer's search for a wife for Yitzchok. Avraham Avinu had him take an oath that he would not take a girl from the daughters of Canaan. Eliezer then asked *אולי לא תאבה האשה ללכת אחרי אל הארץ הזאת* – *Perhaps the woman shall not wish to follow me to this land*. Avraham responded that if she would not wish to follow, Eliezer would be absolved of his oath. However, Avraham's orders were clear: under no circumstances should Eliezer bring back a girl from Canaan.

Rav Hirsch explains (based on the Derashos HaRan) that Avraham's issue with Canaan was not their idolatrous ways. Avraham's own family had worshiped idols back in Charan as well, and Avraham himself had proven that a sin of idolatry – which is based on intellectual perversion – can be remedied. Rather, his issue was that Canaan was severely lacking in morality, ethics and modesty, which can potentially affect a person's entire nature. A woman like that could never be a proper spouse for Yitzchok.

Eliezer then went off on his mission, eventually arriving in Charan, at the well. Having observed Rivkah and watching how she passed his 'tests', he followed her back to her parents' home. Once there, Eliezer refused to eat anything until he knew that the matter was solved and that Rivkah would accept the marriage proposal. Eliezer repeated the entire story to her father, Besu'el, and to her brother, Lavan, not sparing any details – in the hope of convincing them that this marriage is the will of Hashem, and that they would not be able to prevent it (Radak). The Torah records the conversation in its entirety, thus demonstrating the importance of even an ordinary conversation of a servant of the Avos.

Rashi, however, notes a deviation from the original conversation with Avraham. The *pasuk* mentions once again how Eliezer had raised the issue that perhaps a girl would not follow him back. Looking closely at the *pasuk* (24:39), *אולי לא תלך האשה אחרי – perhaps the woman will not follow me*, Rashi notes the following change: initially, the word *אולי* – perhaps – is spelled with the letter *vav*. This time however, it is missing the letter *vav* and is spelled *אלי*. Although it still means the same thing, it could be read as if to say "ailai", to me. Thus, the Torah is pointing out that Eliezer was actually hoping that the *shidduch* would not come to fruition, and that Yitzchok would end up coming, "to me", i.e. to marry my daughter. Rashi concludes by telling us that Avraham's response to such an idea was that as a Canaanite, Eliezer was cursed – while Yitzchok was blessed, so the two could never unite.

Seeing that this conversation is a mere repetition of the first, the Kotzker Rebbe asked why the Torah would only point out Eliezer's personal reservations the second time around. Why didn't the Torah mention this already earlier (24:5)?

The Kotzker answers that in Eliezer's conscious mind, he was completely sincere; he would do what was best for Yitzchok. Subconsciously, however, he had this desire for the Charan trip to end unsuccessfully. Once he had met Rivkah, those dormant thoughts rose up to the surface. The Kotzker refers to this as *negiyus* – personal bias. When one has a personal stake in something, they may or may not realize it, but there will be no possible way for them to act 100% altruistically without an ulterior motive. Therefore, the Torah displays how Eliezer initially kept the thoughts at bay – but later reveals to us that in the end, the *negiyus* inevitably resurfaced.

I would like to suggest another possible answer. The first time the Torah mentioned the word *אולי* in its complete form, Eliezer was standing in front of his master and Rebbe, Avraham Avinu. At that moment, while accepting the mission, he accepted it with the full intention to complete the job in a perfect manner. If you would have asked him at that point whether he would ever entertain a thought of perhaps trying to take Yitzchok for his own daughter, he would have answered emphatically: "*Chas v'shalom!*" It was only after he departed from his Rebbe that the local influences were able to have an effect on him, causing him a slight change of heart. With the new "*hashpa'as hamakom*" (local influences) and lack of "*hashpa'as harav*" (influence of his rebbe), he was suddenly facing a *nisayon* to not fully carry out his orders.

There are a few takeaways from here that are worthy of noting. When Chazal tell us "*Asei lecha rav*" – make for yourself a rebbe, the reason is of course to know how to direct oneself and to lead a *Torah'dika* life. But the litmus test to see if one has succeeded in this mission is found at a time when they are no longer in their Rebbe's presence. At that point, if the influence is still there, they will know that they have succeeded. The constant question must be: "What would my Rebbe advise in this particular situation?" The successful *Rebbe-Talmid* relationship leaves the *Talmid* with the ability to think on his own.

We can use this message as well when it comes to "*hashpa'as hazman*" (influences of the times). During the Yomim Nora'im, everyone is strongly considering various forms of self-improvement and the like. This is no doubt the influence of the time of year. The question that remains is: what happens as the year progresses and we move further away from that time? Are we still committed to those resolutions or are they perhaps just like the resolutions of previous years gone by?

As we are now just six weeks after the Yomim Noraim, we can all re-evaluate, and gently remind ourselves of those commitments; we can all try to determine whether we are still on target for our goals or not. May we be *zoche* to always feel the influence of *kedushah* in our lives at all times and in all places. **מרכי אפפול, Good Shabbos**