



דרכים בפרשה

חיי שרה

אולי לא תאבה האשה ללכת אחרי אל הארץ הזאת
Perhaps the woman shall not wish to follow me to this land

The Torah discusses Eliezer's search on behalf of Avraham, to find a wife for his son Yitzchak. 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 will not wish to follow, Eliezer would be absolved from his oath. However, under no circumstances shall he bring back a girl from Canaan.

Rav Hirsh explains (based on the Drashos HaRan) that Avraham's issue with Canaan was not because of their idolatry. Avraham's own family had worshipped 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 had a lack of morality, ethics and modesty which affects a person's entire nature. A woman like that would never be a proper mate for Yitzchak.

Eliezer then went off on his mission arriving in Charan, at the well. Having observed Rivkah and watching how she passed his "tests", he followed her back to her parent's home. At her home, Eliezer refused to eat anything until he knew that the matter was solved and that Rivkah would accept the marriage proposal. Getting right to the point, Eliezer repeated the entire story to her father, Besuel, and to her brother, Lavan, not sparing any details, in the hope of convincing them that the marriage is the will of HaShem, and 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 talk with Avrohom. The possuk mentioned once again how Eliezer said that he had raised the issue that perhaps a girl would not follow him back. Looking closely at the possuk (24:39), אולי לא תלך האשה אחרי, - *perhaps the woman will not follow me*, Rashi notes the following change. Initially, the word אולי - "ulai" (perhaps) is spelled with the letter "vav". This time however, it is missing the letter אלי "vov". 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 *shiduch* 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 Canaani, Eliezer was cursed and Yitzchok was blessed so the two could never unite.

Seeing that this conversation is a mere repetition of the first, the Kotzker Rebbe wonders why the Torah is pointing out his private thoughts only now. Why didn't the Torah mention this already earlier (24:5)?

The Kotzker answers that to Eliezer's own personal knowledge, he was completely sincere; he would do what was best for Yitzchak. Subconsciously however, he had this desire for his trip to Charan to end emptyhanded. 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 describes how he went out,



but shows us that in the end, the wrong intention was there all along.

Similarly, we find that the gemara in Masechta Gittin (45a) tells us that Rav Ilish was thrown into jail and was contemplating whether or not to try and escape. A bird came and said to him "Ilish -- flee; Ilish -- flee". Rav Ilish asked his cell-mate what the bird was saying. The cell-mate told him that the bird was telling him to escape. Rav Ilish reasoned that the bird was a raven, and could not be trusted. He discounted the bird's message.

Then a dove came along and said "Ilish -- flee; Ilish -- flee". Rav Ilish again asked his cell-mate what the bird was saying. The cell-mate again told him that the bird was telling him to run away. Rav Ilish said that this bird was not a liar and therefore he decided to run away.

Rav Akiva Eiger, in the *Gilyon HaShas*, cites the *Seder Olam*, which records based on the *Sefer Aruch* that Rav Ilish was an expert in understanding the conversation of birds. However, it seems from the Gemara that Rav Ilish did not understand the conversation of birds -- since he first needed to confirm with his cell-mate.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l explains that Rav Ilish did in fact understand the birds, and he knew they were telling him to flee, but since that is what he wanted to hear -- as a result of his own personal *negiyus*, he knew that he could not trust himself. Since he knew that a person hears what he wants to hear and he knew that he wanted to flee, he didn't want to rely on his own hearing to interpret the birds' message. Therefore, he turned to an objective party.

I would like to suggest another possible answer to our question. The first time the Torah mentioned the word אולי "ulai" 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 if he would entertain a thought of perhaps accepting

Yitzchak for his own daughter, he would have answered emphatically, "*chas v'shalom!* It was only after he moved away from his rebbe, no longer standing in his presence, that the local influences could have an effect on him, causing him a change in heart. With the new "*hashpa'as hamakom*" (local influences) and lack of "*hashpa'as harav*" (influence of his rebbe) now working against him, he was suddenly singing a different tune.

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 one's self and live life. But the litmus test to see if one has succeeded in this is when they move away from their rebbe. 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/her own.

We can use this message as well when it comes to "*hashpa'as hazman*" (timely influences). During the Yomim Nora'im, everyone is thinking to themselves of great lofty thoughts of improvement and great achievements. 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, gently reminding ourselves of those commitments, making sure that we are still on target for our goals. May we be zoche to always feel the influence of kedusha in our lives at all times and in all places.

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפעל



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