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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

## PLEASE WALK IN MY SHOES!

### PARSHAS CHAYEI SARA

After Succos, many travelers had difficulty getting flights leaving Israel to return home, due to the terrible tragedies that occurred in Israel on October 7th. Some had to travel in roundabout ways, through different countries. One family was returning to London. There were not enough seats on the flight for their entire family. One of their children had to go by himself on a different flight. That child's family noticed that there was another religious family on their child's flight. They asked that family if they would watch their child. Of course, they agreed. In London, the customs agent was incredulous that a family had entrusted their child with "strangers". He was also shocked that this family had accepted the responsibility of a stranger's child. The couple told him that although they did not know the other people, they were all family. That is, all Jews

There is an enormous quantity of items being sent to the Israeli soldiers and to the families that were displaced from their homes. The help that they are receiving from Jews around the world is unbelievable and so heartwarming. Groups are leaving their jobs for a week to bring supplies, to physically help on farms and in stores, to visit the wounded and to give encouragement. Some of the displaced families are living in hotels. Signs were posted to help them: "Who can do their laundry? Who is available to babysit? Who can cook a meal?" Someone who is not Jewish cannot comprehend that we are all one People and that we are there for each other.

Our forefather, Avraham, had sent Eliezer, his trusted servant, to find a wife for Yitzchok in Avraham's hometown of Charan. **Rashi** (24:42) says that Eliezer miraculously arrived in Charan on the very same day that he left. He had his camels kneel near the well on the outskirts of the city. Eliezer davened to Hashem to speedily send the ideal wife for Yitzchok. Eliezer asked Hashem to clearly show him the prospective bride. The girl who would offer a drink of water to Eliezer and then would offer water to his camels, would be the

*"I asked her and said,  
"Whose daughter are you?"  
She replied, 'The daughter  
of Besuel, son of Nachor,  
whom Milkah bore to  
him.'" I placed the ring on  
her nose and bracelets on  
her hands." (Bereishis  
24:47)*

suitable bride for Yitzchok. **Rashi** (24:14) explains that these acts would indicate a girl who is exceptionally kind, making her suitable to join the family of Avraham. In the middle of Eliezer's prayer to Hashem, Rivkah was already at the well. **Rabbi Yonoson Eybeschutz** zt"l (quoted in Love Your Neighbor by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin) says that the Torah (24:15)

emphasizes that Rivkah carried her water pitcher on top of her shoulder to publicize that she had a pitcher available for anyone who needed to borrow it. Eliezer must have noticed this fact. **Rashi** (24:17) says that Eliezer also noticed that the water of the well miraculously rose-up to "greet" Rivkah. Seeing that miracle, Eliezer ran towards Rivkah. He asked her for a drink. She quickly gave him a drink, exhibiting the beautiful trait of *zrizus*, fulfilling a mitzvah with quickness. Then she offered to give water to Eliezer's camels, "until they will have finished drinking" (24:19). That was a unique act of kindness as camels can drink up to 30 gallons of water! Rivkah also performed this mitzvah with quickness. With such a confluence of events, pointing to the fact that Rivkah was the "chosen" bride for Yitzchok, Eliezer was completely confident that Rivkah was indeed the intended bride.

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Even before confirming her identity, he gave Rivkah golden jewelry that had deep spiritual allusions (see **Rashi** 24:22). When Rivkah said that she was from Avraham's family, that confirmed to Eliezer what, in essence, he had already known. The **Radak** says that at that point, Eliezer bowed to Hashem, showing his gratitude to Hashem for having listened to his prayer.

Eliezer went to Rivkah's house to find lodging. He retold the events of the day to Rivkah's family, to her father, Besuel, and to her brother, Lavan. He started by telling them of his miraculous, swift journey. Interestingly, Eliezer switched the order of one part of the story. He said that he had asked Rivkah who she was and then he presented her with the jewelry (24:47). **Rashi** explains Eliezer's reason for changing the order as he told the story. He did this in order that Besuel and Lavan not catch him by his own words and say, "How could you give her the gifts before you knew who she was!"

How do we understand this **Rashi**? **Akeidas Yitzchak** (quoted in Artscroll Bereishis) gives one explanation. Eliezer said that he had come on a special mission to Avraham's family to find a wife for Yitzchok. Had he admitted that he had given the jewelry to Rivkah before knowing to which family she belonged, this would have contradicted his previous assertion, since people do not give away gifts purposelessly.

This explanation is a little hard to understand. Wasn't it obvious from Eliezer's story that Hashem's hand was at work? There were so many miracles which clearly indicated that Rivkah was Yitzchok's intended bride. Even Besuel and Lavan realized that, as they said, "This is from Hashem (24:50)." **Rashi** explains that they

meant, it is evident that the matter is from Hashem since, according to your words, Hashem brought her and you together. So, why did Eliezer feel the need to switch the order of events when he spoke to Besuel and Lavan? **Rabbi Alter Henach Leibowitz** zt"l (in Chidushei Lev by Rabbi Binyomin Luban) has a beautiful insight to explain this. Had Eliezer retold the story in the correct order, Besuel and Lavan would have thought that Eliezer was a liar. They would not have believed that Eliezer had given the jewelry before she told him who she was. They could not have believed that Eliezer had such trust in Hashem since they, themselves did not put their trust in Hashem! By nature, a person judges others by the level that he, himself, is on and based on his own feelings. Thus, **Lavan and Besuel could not have imagined that Eliezer had acted so due to his trust in Hashem, since they did not have that trust themselves!**

We see a similar idea illustrated in the **Talmud** (Shabbos 88A). A Saducee told Rava, a Talmudic sage, that the Jewish People acted too hastily, without thinking, when Hashem offered them the Torah. They responded, "We will do, and we will hear". The Saducee asserted that this was an impetuous response. How can you accept something upon yourselves before knowing what it is that you are accepting? Rava said that the Jews' response came from their total trust in Hashem. They had seen, firsthand, the miracles that Hashem had performed in Egypt and when Hashem had taken them out of Egypt. Since the Saducee himself did not trust in Hashem, he couldn't fathom how others could.

**At times, we judge people negatively, based on our standards and our level of understanding. We cannot be so quick to judge a person unfavorably. Unless we walk in a person's shoes, we cannot judge them.**

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*Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.*

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