

שליחות של אליעזר

הרב שמחה קוק

In this shiur, I would like to focus on the story of Eliezer the *eved* of Avrohom- his mission to find a spouse for Yitzchok Avinu. Why is this mission so important and the story of how it transpired so significant that the Torah repeats it with all its details? Initially, the *pesukim* go through how Avrohom sent him to *Padan Aram* and then when Eliezer finally meets Besu'el and Lavan, the Torah goes through his recounting of the story.

Rashi (24: 42) quotes a statement of R. Acha, “*yafeh sichoson shel avdei Avos lifnei haMakom miTorasan shel bnei hem, sh'harei parsha shel Eliezer kefula baTorah v'harbeh gufe Torah lo nitnu elah b'rimezo.*” This means that the stories of the servants of the Avos are more “*yafeh*” than the actual *halachos* of the Torah, as seen by the story of Eliezer which is recorded twice in the Torah whereas many *halachos* are only hinted to [for example, with an extra letter]. Again, what is so significant about this story that the Torah repeats it? As well, why is it more important than the *nesinas haTorah*?

Another *kashya* that bothered me is the following: Why did Rashi bring this *Chazal* on the *posuk* of “*v'avo bayom,*” which is the middle of the story where Eliezer recounts how he came to the well and asked Hashem to point him in the right direction? Why didn't Rashi bring it before, when Eliezer starts recounting his story?

I heard a *teretz* to the first *kashya* from Moreinu V'Rabbeinu HaRav Yaakov Weinberg zt"l. He was *medayok*, as was his wont, from the *lashon* of “*yafeh*” in that *ma'mar Chazal*. *Yafeh* means beautiful, not *choshuv*. Of course, the Torah is more *choshuv* and one *tag* and one *halacha* has more *chashivus* than the story of Eliezer. However, The Ribono Shel Olam, *kaviyachol*, derives more pleasure from the *maasim* of the *Avos* than He does from giving us the Torah.

What does this mean? When a person figures out something, when he figures out the *ratzon Hashem*, then he fulfills his *tachlis* in the world and that is why Hashem derives more pleasure from it. When Eliezer lived through this saga he was constantly trying to project Avrohom Avinu into his actions. “What would Avrohom have me do? How would he approach this?” By extension, he was really trying to fulfill *ratzon Hashem* because everything Avrohom Avinu did was calibrated to what HaKadosh Boruch Hu wanted. HaRav Weinberg points out that when we learn Torah, this is exactly what we are doing. We learn Torah to figure out *ratzon Hashem* which is the most precious thing to the Ribono Shem Olam. This struggle is so cherished to HaKadosh Boruch Hu that He recorded the story of Eliezer twice for us to understand this lesson.

To answer the second question of why Rashi waited until that point of the story to quote this *Chazal*, we need to examine the retelling of Eliezer's journey. Are there differences between the two versions? What are the differences? What can we glean and learn from these differences as to the *gadlus* of Eliezer?

While Eliezer was traveling, he was probably concerned with how he would be successful in his endeavor. He even expressed concern to Avrohom about finding the right girl and the possibility that she might not want to come. Even if she did want to come, how was he

going to pry her from the hands of her family who may not want her to go? All of these considerations weighed on him.

When Eliezer reached *Padan Aram*, he immediately met Rivkah and saw from her actions and *middos* that she was Yitzchok's *bashert*. Then, he met Lavan and was struck by two things. First, he *chapt* that Lavan was avaricious and greedy, which he saw from Lavan rushing over to him. Lavan then said, "*bo beruch Hashem*," and told Eliezer that he had cleared the house of *avodah zarah*. Eliezer realized that Lavan believed in Hashem despite designating some power, so to speak, to his *avodah zarah*.

These were the two weak spots in Lavan that Eliezer could leverage to make sure Rivkah could come with him. Eliezer created a strategy in which to appeal to Lavan's avarice as well as invoking the *ratzon Hashem* in order to take Rivkah back to Yitzchok.

He told Lavan how Avrohom his master has immense wealth, from gold and silver to slaves, sheep, and cattle. He mentioned the fleet of camels which in today's vernacular is equivalent to a fleet of cars. He also mentioned the donkeys which are beasts of burden that we can compare to having a fleet of trucks. Lavan is drooling from hearing all of these descriptions of the perspective son-in-law's fortune. Eliezer reassured Lavan that Avrohom already signed his inheritance over to Yitzchok, as Rashi explains.

Eliezer then told Lavan how he expressed worry to Avrohom about the girl coming. However, when he actually spoke to Avrohom he phrased it as, "maybe she will not want to come back with me," and to Lavan he said it in a way to imply that maybe others will not let her go. [Eliezer, at that point, knew that Rivkah wanted to come.] Eliezer also added to the reassurance which Avrohom had offered him. Originally, Avrohom simply stated that Hashem would send a *malach* in front of Eliezer but Eliezer added that Avrohom promised him that Hashem would also, "*v'hitzli'ach darkecha*."

Eliezer went on to tell Lavan how the whole trip was accomplished in one day. This was said to show Lavan how the Ribono Shel Olam made it happen because He wills it to be successful. That is why Rashi quotes the aforementioned *Chazal* on this *posuk*. This *posuk* shows us Eliezer's intention to convey to Lavan and Besu'el that Rivkah leaving with him to marry Yitzchok is from Hashem and you should not interfere with it.

Eliezer also added to his thanks towards Hashem. He added that Hashem brought him to their house for the marriage to take place, not that he was merely knocking on the right door. He added an extra nuance to yet again invoke *ratzon Hashem* into the marriage proposal.

Their response to these overtures was, "*Mei'Hashem yotzo hadavar*." They expressed how they could not stand in the way of *ratzon Hashem* and Eliezer should take Rivkah and go. But, they had one ace left up their sleeve- *bechira*. Even if Hashem wanted her to go, she could still choose not to. They pulled this stunt to keep him waiting, but finally Eliezer pushed back and said that the *ratzon Hashem* is for him to return with Rivkah to Avrohom. So, they said they must ask Rivkah first because she can have *bechira* against even *ratzon Hashem*. Obviously, she decided she wanted to go and Eliezer successfully completed his mission.

Perhaps we can understand why the Torah repeated this whole story in the following way. Maybe there are many different lessons we can learn from the astuteness of Eliezer, and from his mission to fulfill *ratzon Hashem*, and how he used his intuition to overcome the obstacles of dealing with Lavan and Besu'el to accomplish his mission.