



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Smart Chesed

וְהָיָה הַנְּעִרָה (כתיב הנער) אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלָיָה הֵטִי
נָא כְדָךְ וְאֲשַׁתָּה וְאִמְרָה שְׁתֵּה וְגַם גְּמִלִיךְ אֲשַׁקֶּה
אֵתְּהּ הַכֹּחֶת לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק וְבָה אֲדַע כִּי־עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד
עִם־אֲדֹנָי: (בראשית כד:יד)

And it will be, [that] the maiden to whom I will say, 'Lower your pitcher and I will drink,' and she will say, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels,' her have You designated for Your servant, for Isaac, and through her may I know that You have performed loving kindness with my master." (Bereshit 24:14).

Avraham's servant Eliezer embarks on a mission to find a shidduch for Yitzhak. Eliezer asks Hashem for a sign that the girl he selects is in fact the most appropriate match. If Eliezer meets a young woman at a well and she offers him water as well as offering to provide water to his camels, then he will be certain that she is fit for Yitzhak.

On its face, it appears as if Eliezer is focusing on the prospective wife's middot (character traits). Is she someone who is sympathetic not only to individuals but to the well-being of animals as well. The Beit Halevi offers a deeper insight into the behavior of Rivka.

In order to provide Eliezer with water, there were no paper cups available at the time. Rivka had to allow Eliezer to drink directly from the vessel. She was unaware of his cleanliness. Perhaps his germs and saliva would

get mixed in with the remaining water in the vessel. How would she react? If she spills the remaining water out in front of Eliezer, it would be embarrassing to him. If she would carry the vessel home and then pour it out it would be a waste of time and energy. If she would allow her family to drink that water, it may not be hygienic. What is Rivka to do? She offers the animals to drink the remaining water. It is both sympathetic to the animals and the most eloquent resolution to deal with the rest of the water in the vessel from which Eliezer drank.

In fact, Rivka tells Eliezer:
וְתָכַל לְהִשְׁקֹתוֹ וְתֹאמַר גַּם לְגַמְלֶיךָ אֲשַׁבֵּב עַד
אִם־כָּלוּ לְשָׁתוֹת (בראשית כד:יט)

And she finished giving him to drink, and she said, "I will also draw for your camels, until they will have finished drinking." (Bereshit 24:19).

Rivka does not just state (as Eliezer does) that she will provide water to the camels. She adds, "until they finish drinking". She is even willing to refill the vessel if they are still thirsty. That statement highlights that she does not want to embarrass Eliezer by wasting the water. She is authentic about her concern for the camels and will even refill the vessel to satisfy their thirst.

The lesson we learn from Rivka's behavior is that to engage in chesed is important and commendable, but at the same time, we have to act in a wise manner. To always consider the impact our actions may have on the recipient and on others. Our intention

may be commendable, but we need to ensure that the end result is positive as well. Rivka exhibited “*smart chesed*”. May we be able to do so as well when we engage in helping and providing for others. ■

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