

## I am the servant of Avraham. (24:34)

Eliezer was entrusted with a mission of the most crucial importance: finding the next Matriarch, the woman who, together with Yitzchak *Avinu*, would be charged with forming and maintaining the next link in *Klal Yisrael*. It was no easy task, and, clearly, without Divine manipulation, the success of this mission would not have been realized. Obviously, the selection of Eliezer to execute this mission is indicative of his virtue and sanctity. Avraham *Avinu* was acutely aware that nothing is achieved without Divine interplay, and Hashem would not interact with a person of base character. *Chazal*, however, teach us that there was another aspect to Eliezer's personality that played a pivotal role in his success: his wisdom. The *Midrash Rabbah* states: "It is written, 'The wise servant shall rule over a son who brings shame, and in the midst of brothers divide inheritance.'" This *eved maskil*, wise servant, is Eliezer. Wherein is Eliezer's wisdom manifest?

The **Sefas Emes** posits that Eliezer's wisdom was in understanding that the curse which Noach placed on the offspring of Canaan (as a result of his participation with Cham in debasing Noach) had doomed him to a life of servitude. He was a scion of this unholy family lineage. He had before himself two reactions: either rebel, or work with the situation and make every attempt at repairing the damage, perhaps emerging from the muck of his destiny. He understood (as the *Midrash* indicates) that he could become a slave to pagans, which would permit him to live a base life of indecency and immoral character. He said, "I am better off in the house of Avraham." If he was destined to be a slave, he may as well be a slave to Avraham *Avinu*, the preeminent spiritual leader of the generation, a man from whom he could learn to better himself.

Eliezer recognized his limitations; thus, by attempting to better himself, he was able to realize his full potential. Therefore, when asked to identify himself, he proudly replied, "I am the servant of Avraham!" As the *Mesillas Yescharim* says: "A person is obligated to know what his duty is in his (individual) world." One's goal in life must be to perfect himself according to his own level – and not search for areas that are foreign and unsuited to him. This is the reason that Eliezer is considered a wise man.

Judaism asserts that every soul enters this world with its own unique, positive purpose in life. Indeed, the *Arizal* writes that no two people have the same mission. The light that "Reuven" is meant to shine belongs to him alone, and "Shimon" cannot infringe upon it. It is very much like a biometric fingerprint; each of us has his own. Two people might have similar goals but each one has his own unique approach which is unlike any other.

When one understands his life's purpose and he executes it, he feels a unique sense of vibrancy and excitement, "I am doing my thing!" To know, realize, acknowledge and carry out one's mission in life is the most satisfying and energizing aspect of life. Otherwise, we go through life "doing," and "acting," but true happiness is achieved only when I am "doing my thing," "acting out my purpose."

When one is clear about his personal mission in life, he has no regrets concerning anything else that he should have done – and did not. Even if his mission is quite simple and, perhaps by some measure, boring, it is his and, through it, he validates his life. This is what Eliezer taught us. I may be a slave, but this is what Hashem wants me to be, so I will be the best!

Yet, despite his wisdom, *Chazal* say that Eliezer had a vested interest in Yitzchak's *shidduch*, matrimonial match. He had a daughter whom he had hoped would marry Yitzchak. He alluded to this in his conversation with Avraham – just in case Yitzchak did not find his intended in *Aram Naharayim*, perhaps they would keep it in the “family.”

Regardless of his own interests, however, Eliezer knew that, without Avraham's *z'chus*, merit, he would not succeed in finding the suitable mate for Yitzchak. He understood that acting in his own self-interest would be self-defeating for his mission. Therefore, he continually introspected to determine that he was acting in good faith, rejecting any personal bias that might have crept in. Eliezer serves as a lesson for all of us to acknowledge that success is based upon the realization that one is acutely aware that he is Hashem's agent and that he is on a holy mission to execute the command of the Almighty. He must constantly make certain that no personal desires meander into the equation.

We derive from the story of Eliezer and Avraham that even a lowly servant, who was not connected to us by birth, made a monumental contribution to the building of *Klal Yisrael*. The *Midrash* refers to Yitzchak *Avinu* as, *ben meivish*, “the son who brings shame.” This is Yitzchak, for he embarrassed the pagan nations when he offered his life on the altar of the *Akeidah*; yet, Eliezer ruled over Yitzchak, the son who shamed nations. In what way did Eliezer rule over Yitzchak?

Eliezer was as astute as he was righteous. He understood that Yitzchak and Avraham had distinct approaches to serving Hashem. Yitzchak served Hashem through the *Middas HaDin*, Attribute of Strict Justice, and through intense *Yiraas HaRomemus*, fear and awe of Hashem. Thus, Yitzchak is referred to as *Pachad Yitzchak*, the fear of Yitzchak.

*Pachad*, fear, extreme justice, are wonderful and sublime attributes, but how many people can really aspire to achieve them? The average person would be blown away if he lived under the intense scrutiny involved in *Middas HaDin*. Eliezer understood that, while the world needed *Middas HaDin*, it must be tempered with the *middah*, attribute, of *chesed*, kindness, personified by Avraham. Thus, he had to create a partnership of *chesed* and *din* in order to balance the relationship. He prayed for a woman who exemplified *chesed*, so that she could “sweeten” Yitzchak's *din*, for the ultimate good of their offspring – *Klal Yisrael*. We now understand the rationale for Eliezer's actions: by combining Yitzchak's *din* with Rivkah's *chesed*, Eliezer ruled over Yitzchak, thus meriting a share in *Klal Yisrael*'s future.