

"And she went down to the well and filled her pitcher and came up. And the servant ran to meet her and said, 'Let me, please, gulp a little water out of your pitcher.'" (24:16,17)

When one studies the narrative of the entire encounter between Eliezer and Rivkah, he assumes that the length of the text emphasizes Rivkah's kindness. Eliezer devised a system of testing this young girl to determine if she was worthy to be the wife of Yitzchak, to take her place as the second Matriarch of *Klal Yisrael*. Yet, one wonders why, after Eliezer saw that the water "rose up" to "greet" Rivkah, he still felt driven to test her. Does the water rise up for every individual? Did he need any greater indication that this was no ordinary young woman? How often do we find that "nature" alters its course out of respect for a unique individual?

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, offers a profound insight into the character of Rivkah *Imeinu*. At the moment when Rivkah came toward the water, she clearly exuded such moral perfection that the water rose up to greet her. The wife of Yitzchak, however, must be so refined in the spiritual/moral sphere that the water would rise up towards her at all times. Eliezer was searching for some type of guarantee that even in the future Rivkah would exemplify *chesed*, kindness.

How does he obtain such a guarantee? What determines Rivkah's true essence? This, posits *Horav Ezrachi*, is essentially what Rabbi Yochanan *ben Zakai* asked his disciples, "*Go out and see which is the good way to which a man should cling*" (*Pirkei Avos 2:14*). The great *Tanna* challenged his students to present him with the best quality for man to cultivate, one that would ensure his continued success. They responded with different virtues, each reflecting his own particular temperament and character. The answer of Rabbi Elazar *ben Arach* found favor: He asserted that a good heart, a *lev tov*, is the trait which is crucial in order to maintain consistency and continuity. All of the qualities which the other students expressed are included in a *lev tov*. One who has a good heart maintains a spontaneous love for the good everywhere, an intuitive grasp of the inherent good in everybody and every situation. The master plan for ensuring *chesed* -- and all virtue for that matter -- is to cultivate and enhance one's heart, to create a *lev tov*. Through a good heart, one can obtain the epitome of virtue. Thus, one sees and strives to connect only with that which is good.

Gemillus chasadim, the act of showing kindness, is a noble endeavor. Such behavior, however, will not necessarily continue. One can perform acts of kindness, one can go out of his way to assist others in all areas of need, but there is still no guarantee that this will endure. One who has a *lev tov* has a wellspring of good flowing from within himself. His heart overflows with goodness. It is not an external quality or action. It is an inherent part of his essence. One who has a *lev tov* is not merely a person who performs good deeds - he is a source from which good emanates. The one who performs *chesed* does so even at his own expense or inconvenience. One who possesses a *lev tov*, however, is never inconvenienced by doing good, for that is his life! The

gomer chesed, who performs acts of kindness, does so only when the need arises. In contrast, the *lev tov* seeks opportunities to help others.

This is the specific quality that Eliezer sought in a mate for Yitzchak, a woman who had a *lev tov*. Rivkah performed her kindness with alacrity and enthusiasm. She did not tire from the strain of drawing the heavy pails of water. This was her enjoyment! Rivkah demonstrated a character trait that was innate, a virtue that was intuitive, a goodness of heart that represented her essence.