

The man took a gold nose ring, its weight was a beka and two bracelets on her arms, ten gold shekels was their weight. (24:22)

The gifts which Eliezer gave Rivkah *Imeinu* were not ordinary jewelry. They symbolized something important, a message to her concerning the destiny of her future progeny. The *beka* is a half-*shekel*, which symbolized the amount that every Jew was mandated to contribute annually towards the *Bais Hamikdash*. The two bracelets symbolized the two Tablets of Law, and the ten-*shekel* weight alluded to the Ten Commandments. The *machatzis hashekel*, half-*shekel*, contributed by all Jews, is certainly an important *mitzvah*, but is it on par with the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandment? Why did Eliezer use the half-*shekel* as the gift that would send a message to Rivkah?

The *Kli Yakar* asks a more striking question: The implied message of two gifts seems to contradict one another. *Beka* is a half-*shekel*, with the term *beka* meaning “to split” (a *shekel* in half). Thus, the first gift implies a whole object that is split in half. The second gift, the bracelet that were *tzemidim*, connected together as one, implies two separate objects that became unified. The two gifts essentially imply lessons that are paradoxical to one another.

The *Kli Yakar* explains that Eliezer sought to impart to Rivkah the Torah’s outlook on Jewish life as it would be lived in her future home with Yitzchak, who was to be the next Patriarch. On the one hand, eschew material bounty; one can never satisfy his “urge for monetary indemnification.” Whatever one amasses, it is never enough. *Mi she’yeish lo manah, rotzeh masaim*, “He who has one hundred (coins) (immediately) wants two hundred.” *Ein adam yotzei min ha’olam v’chatzi taavaso b’yado*, “A person does not leave this world and half of his desire in his hands.” No matter how much a person amasses, it is only half. He wants more. The pursuit of material bounty, the drive to achieve affluence is never-ending, never satisfying and has the potential to create a *beka*, split, between friends – regardless of how long and how strong their bond has been.

Conversely, the pursuit of spiritual accomplishment, the desire to increase and achieve in one spiritual cache, brings people close, creating an enduring bond by uniting individuals to achieve a common goal. I think that it all breaks down to one’s focus. Spirituality is not a personal thing. It is a *Klal Yisrael* achievement. Affluence, however, is personal. Each person wants to have his share of the pie.

Thus, Eliezer was teaching Rivkah the kind of home she was entering – and the type of home she would be charged in establishing. It would be a home that would live for spiritual growth, not for the physical and material allure that takes a person captive and never releases him.

Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita, applies the *Kli Yakar*’s exposition to explain why Eliezer gave Rivkah engagement gifts which presented contrasting messages. He taught her that material

pursuit can ultimately divide people. It can destroy a home when husband and wife are not on the same page, or when the wife drives the husband to “do more – earn more, because we need/I want more.” The second gift focused on the goals and objectives of a Torah home, one in which Torah observance and studying Torah in tandem with spiritual ascendancy reigns paramount. Such a home is a united home, one in which harmony and respect are dominant, because husband and wife are not out merely to satisfy themselves or keep up with the neighbors. They are interested in building a sanctuary for Hashem.

Perhaps we may apply homiletic license to expand on the above. Even when a couple's goals and objectives are Torah/spirituality-oriented, it is critical that they both are on the same page. For a young man to forgo a life of affluence and instead devote himself to full-time Torah study is a privilege. Those who consider it a sacrifice rarely achieve distinction, because Torah study is a way of life – not a sacrifice. It is how Jews are supposed to live.

The problem arises when two young people decide that they want greater meaning in life than a spacious home, luxurious furniture, fancy cars, etc. They want enduring value which they can transmit to the next generation – and all was going well, until “Mrs.” became enamored with her neighbor's home etc. “Why do we have to have a boring *Yom Tov* with your parents – when we could be with Mickey Mouse in Orlando? Why must you always be learning? Our neighbors are also observant, and ‘Mr.’ spends so much ‘quality’ time with their children. All you do is learn with our kids. What will they remember about their father? You are no fun.” [This can also go the other way, when the husband falls prey to the allure of wealth, thereby “encouraging” his wife to alter her focus on life.] I am sure that the reader knows where I am heading. The two *tzemidim*, bracelets, were connected in order to teach that both parents must be on the same page; otherwise, it can lead to a *beka*, a split, whereby the new focus in their home is not Torah, but the religion based upon opulence.

Horav Ovadia Yosef, zl, was the revered *Sephardic Gaon* who restored the crown of *Sephardic Jewry* in our time. Together with his *Rabbanit*, they raised an enviable family - all dedicated to Torah dissemination of the highest calibre. Such a family does not just happen. It is not that one must be poor to grow in Torah; it is just that while one may be materially comfortable, it should not be the focus of his life. At the age of 22, when *Rav Ovadia's* name circulated on the list of *shadchanim*, it was obvious that a *ben Torah* of his calibre would certainly spend his life absorbed in Torah pursuits. To find a young woman who would not only appreciate his uncommon greatness, but would share his life's goals would be extremely difficult. For him, looking for a *shidduch* was like mining for a diamond. His *Rabbanit's* name, by the way, was Margalit, gem.

Growing up in the home of a distinguished *Chacham*, *Rabbanit Margalit Fattal-Yosef* understood quite well the significance of leading a Torah life. Nonetheless, her friends (and friends play a critical role) were not into the learning scene. A talented and charming girl, they felt she could do better. The *chosson* could not promise her much in the way of material sustenance. He would learn and learn; eventually, he would take a position as a *Rav* or *Rosh Yeshivah* – not enough to

compare with the homes of her friends. Finally, after a long talk in private, the *kallah* emerged from her meeting with her *chosson* and said, "Yes, he is for me." What did he promise her that convinced her to acquiesce to his lifestyle? "He promised to share his merits with me," she said. In other words, the spiritual wealth accrued by *Rabbanit* Yosef far outdistanced anything that her friends could ever dream of having.