

And I said to my master, “Perhaps the woman will not follow me?” (24:39)

Life is not always a bed of roses. Disappointments are part of the Heavenly-designed world in which we live. How one reacts and responds to disappointments is the barometer of his acknowledgement that it is Hashem – not he – who runs the world. Accepting disappointment -- and, in fact, growing from it -- is the mark of a great person.

When Avraham *Avinu* sent his trusted student/servant, Eliezer, on a mission to find a suitable mate for his son, Yitzchak (*Avinu*), he set forth one critical criterion which was non-negotiable: Under no circumstances was Yitzchak permitted to live with the prospective bride's family. The *kallah* must be willing to pull up roots and move to Avraham's home. If the girl was unwilling to move, he would free Eliezer from the oath that he had made to Avraham prior to his leaving on this mission.

Rashi observes that Eliezer would have wanted Yitzchak as a son-in-law. He, too, had a daughter whom he felt worthy of Yitzchak. Thus, when he said *ulai*, “perhaps,” which is also spelled as *eilai*, “to me,” he was alluding to his master, “Perhaps the two of us can work out an arrangement whereby Yitzchak would marry my daughter.” To Eliezer's chagrin, Avraham dismissed the match. He gave a very good reason: “My son is blessed. You, on the other hand, are a descendant of Canaan/Cham, who was cursed by Noach. It is not possible for one who is blessed to unite with one who is cursed. Despite his despicable lineage, Eliezer was a great person, and, quite possibly, his daughter could have been a wonderful young woman, but Avraham's criteria for family lineage superseded their personal achievements. (I do not think that our Patriarch was advocating taking a spouse whose lineage is illustrious or, at least, impressive. He was simply stating that curse and blessing do not unite; Cham and Avraham do not constitute a *shidduch*).

Eliezer was much more than the manager of Avraham's household. He was Avraham's *talmid*, student, who is characterized in the *Talmud* (*Yoma* 28b) as a mirror image of Avraham in his Torah learning and righteousness. He transmitted Avraham's Torah teachings to others. For sixty years he labored as Avraham's faithful servant. Thus, he felt that he was fit to be Yitzchak's father-in-law. Let us imagine what coursed through his mind when Avraham told him that despite his extraordinary service, virtue and erudition, he did not make the grade, because he was an *arur*, descendant of a lineage that was accursed. Such disappointment would have destroyed and probably turned off most people.

Not Eliezer, explains *Horav Avraham Pam, zl* (quoted by Rabbi Sholom Smith in *Message from Rav Pam*). Eliezer is the classic example of a person faithfully performing his job with devotion and commitment – despite the disappointment and frequent heartache. Eliezer is teaching us a powerful lesson in living life. Life does not always go as planned. How many have received an exemplary and often very expensive education, only to see a competitor (who probably cannot hold a candle to him) receive the position, the raise, the desired class. This *parsha* is about *shidduchim*,

matrimonial matches. I am probably opening up a can of worms by stating that this is one area in which disappointment reigns, where what makes sense and what should be – “does not” and “is not”. How often does the girl with everything but... money, pedigree, etc. wait – and wait? Make no mistake; she will marry her *bashert*, Heavenly-designated spouse, and he will be outstanding, but the wait and the challenge to her and her family’s *emunah* and *bitachon*, faith and trust, can, at times, be overwhelming.

Eliezer, *eved Avraham*, teaches a lesson which applies to us all: life is filled with disappointments. This is all part of Hashem’s *nisyanos*, tests. We must rise to the occasion, withstand the pressure, and roll with the punches. It is all part of demonstrating our spiritual mettle, our *emunah* in Hashem. So, the next time disappointment glares down at you, stare back, or ignore it, and go about your endeavor as if nothing has happened. Eliezer did that. This is what Hashem wants of us. It is all part of life.