

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

Rashi notes that the word *u'lai*, perhaps, is usually spelled with a *vov*. Here it is spelled without a *vov*, which allows for the three letters, *aleph*, *lamed*, *yud* to be read as *eilai*, to me. By using this (three letter) spelling, the Torah seeks to convey Eliezer's personal hope. He, too, had a daughter whom he would have loved to marry off to Yitzchak. Therefore, when Eliezer asked Avraham what to do if by chance the girl refused to go with him, he was not simply asking a question; but rather hoping that she would not return with him. This implied his hope that Yitzchak will come “to me,” (*eilai*) and that Eliezer would merit to have Yitzchak as his son-in-law. Avraham *Avinu* replied, “My son is blessed (*baruch*) and you, being a Canaanite, are cursed (*arur*) and the accursed cannot unite with the blessed (*ein arur misdabeik b'baruch*).” The question is obvious: Why did the Torah not insert this vignette regarding Eliezer's personal wish earlier when the servant was taking leave of his master? Why is it only brought up now that the *shidduch*, match, between Yitzchak and Rivkah had been successfully concluded? The *Kotzker Rebbe*, *zl*, explains that to the best of his personal knowledge, Eliezer was sincere. Unknowingly, he subconsciously wanted his mission to fail, so that he could have Yitzchak for his daughter. It was only after the *shidduch* was a *fait accompli* that Eliezer reflected on his original conversation with Avraham and realized his true motive.

The *Kotzker's* Torah thought is well-known, and I quote it only as a segue to addressing a form of self-deception, and/or vested interest that affects some people. First and foremost, self-deception, or lying to oneself, blinds one from seeing the unvarnished truth. When one views an issue/situation through the lens of self-interest, his vision is impaired. He sees only himself. The only way to see with clarity is to look through a clear, unadulterated lens, such as the Torah. *Toras emes*, the Torah is truth in its purest form. When one's perspective is shaped and guided by the Torah, there is no room for self-interest. The Torah penetrates the workings of the human psyche so that the person can understand right and wrong and how his personal bias is causing him to see/think that wrong is right.

One of the areas in which well-meaning, good people fall prey to self-interest is when they need help and refuse to ask, or accept the advice, and physical/emotional support of a friend, mentor or parent. I was reading a wonderful article concerning the twelve-step recovery program employed by AA, Alcoholics Anonymous. This is not the venue to discuss the program. I just would like to take the liberty of quoting an inspiring story from this article.

At the core of recovery is the recognition that one cannot do it on his own. We all must rely on A) G-d; B) a friend/sponsor. We can only find the strength to persevere if we connect with, and remain attached to, G-d. Obviously, there is much more to be said. I think the most important fact is that at some point one must concede that he/she cannot do it alone. If not, this by itself itself, is one of the most egregious forms of self-deception – refusing to ask, and/or accept help is inexcusable. Now

for the story:

A young girl and her father were walking along a path in the forest. Suddenly, they came across a large tree branch that lay across their path. The girl asked her father, "If I try, do you think I can lift the branch and move it out of the way?" Her father replied, "I am certain that if you use all of your strength, you could do it." The girl tried her best, huffed and puffed, but was unable to lift the branch. She looked at her father disappointedly, and said, "You were wrong. I cannot move it." The father was unmoved. "Try again with all of your strength." Again the young girl tried. She was red in the face, but still unsuccessful in moving the branch. "Dad, I told you I cannot do it!" Finally, her father saw that she was missing the point. "I advised you to use all of your strength. You did not use all of your strength. Why did you not ask me to help you?"

Using all of our strength means exactly that: applying and seeing every available option. To use all of our strength means conceding that we are dependent, that we need help, guidance, encouragement, and are unable to navigate the sea of life alone. A popular motivational speaker said, "Ask for help, not because you are weak, but because you want to remain strong." I think it could be amended to say, "Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but rather, a sign of strength."

Asking for help does not violate our desire to be independent. We fear letting down those people who rely on us. They think that we are the rock of strength. An inability to ask for help, will ultimately lead one to become overwhelmed and exhausted. Then he is broken. Asking for help might simply mean talking to someone who will listen. Everyone goes through "stuff" as they say in contemporary vernacular. One does not and should not have to make the journey alone. This is why we have parents, rabbis, *rebbeim*, and caring friends, who are blessed with common sense, who are there to listen and help. After all, they too, at times, have "stuff."