

And she said, “Drink, and I will even water your camels.” (24:46)

Rivkah is lauded for her incredible sensitivity and kindness in offering water to Eliezer. This was the finishing touch upon which her selection to be Yitzchak *Avinu's* wife was predicated. Imagine, someone has been wearily trudging through the sun-baked wilderness. His throat is parched; he is sweating profusely. He badly needs water. Would the person who reaches out to him with a jug of water be considered especially kind or, simply a decent human being? *Horav Eliyahu Dushnitzer, zl*, explains that Rivkah's greatness shone forth when she offered to water the camels as well. Eliezer had asked for a drink for himself. Rivkah immediately poured him a drink and then offered to provide water for his ten camels! Camels drink a lot. To provide for them meant running back and forth to the well numerous times. It was this sensitivity to others – even to animals – that exemplified Rivkah's character. Kindness means more than providing what one asks. Kindness means looking and appraising oneself of what someone needs. Thinking of others, regardless of who or what they are, indicates the loftiness of one's character.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, related the following vignette concerning *Rav Dushnitzer* when he was the *Menahel Ruchani* Ethical Supervisor, of Yeshivas Lomza in Petach Tikvah: A man who was totally secular in his faith and commitment to Judaism walked by the *yeshivah* on *erev Yom Kippur*. He noticed that outside of the *sheirutim*, the room which housed the bathroom facilities, there stood an elderly *rav* sporting a long, white beard, tearing toilet paper. Why would a man who appeared to be a distinguished person stand outside the lavatory tearing toilet paper on *erev Yom Kippur*? The man could not contain his incredulity, so, he approached the *Mashgiach* and asked what and why he was doing this? The *Mashgiach*, in his quiet, humble manner, replied, “Tomorrow is *Yom Kippur*, and we will be having many guests joining us for the *tefillos*. As a result, it is expected that this area will be used and paper will be needed. Thus, I am making sure that the necessary paper is available.”

The man who related this incident to *Rav Sholom* said, “With each rip of the paper, he was ripping my heart! To see such an eminent person care for others on a day when he surely had much more to do for himself, inspired me to begin reflecting on my life and how I had wasted it. Immediately after *Yom Kippur*, I made an appointment to meet with the *mashgiach* and asked him to help me while I could still save myself and my future generations.” All this happened because a holy man cared about the “little things” that people needed.

We take much for granted – especially those things which we have deemed to fall under the rubric of “little things,” “unimportant things.” The following story is a classic demonstration of how far our sensitivity should extend – even to those who are no longer with us. When our sensitivity is flawed, it affects our subconscious to the point that the little flaw will manifest itself later under different conditions. At that point, it will no longer be a little flaw, but a major failing.

The *Klausenberger Rebbe*, *z'l*, traveled with a group of his *chassidim* to the *kever*, grave, of the holy *Tanna*, *Rabbi Yehudah Bar Ilai*, which is located in Ein Zeisim, northern *Eretz Yisrael*. *Chazal* refer to him usually as *Rabbi Yehudah*. He was known not only for his extraordinary erudition, but also for his strict and meticulous adherence to *Halachah*. While visiting the *kever*, the *Rebbe* and his entourage *davened Minchah* at the same time/*zman* when *Klausenberger chassidim* usually *daven*. (The *zman* to which they adhere is somewhat later than what is the accepted norm. The time for *Minchah* recital is connected with *plag Minchah*, one and a quarter hours, *sha'os zemanios*, *halachic* hours, which are based on the length of the day, sunrise to sunset, divided by twelve. The *chassidim davened* at a relatively late time, in accordance with the *Klausenberg* custom.)

When they concluded *Minchah*, the *Rebbe* and his *chassidim* returned to their cars. Suddenly, the *Rebbe* began to shake and was visibly upset. He refused to eat and gave no reason. The *Rebbe* was no longer a strong, young man – his body having suffered terrible privation during the Holocaust years. The *chassidim* attempted futilely to convince him to eat something. He refused and remained silent. Something was clearly wrong. When they arrived where they were staying for the night, the *Rebbe* separated from his *chassidim*. In the late morning, after that had completed *Tefillas Shacharis*, the *Rebbe* continued fasting. During the early afternoon, the *Rebbe* announced that he wanted to return to *Rabbi Yehudah's kever* to *daven* an early *Minchah*. They did so, and after *Minchah*, the *Rebbe* finally broke his fast and returned to his calm, affable manner.

The *chassidim* asked the *Rebbe* for an explanation. This was not the *Rebbe's* usual demeanor. Something had occurred which spurred his sudden, tense reaction, followed by fasting. The *Rebbe* explained that he was upset with himself for acting insensitively toward the *neshamah*, soul, of *Rabbi Yehudah*. "We *davened Minchah* at *Rabbi Yehudah's kever* in accordance with the *plag Minchah z'man* which we keep. However, *Rabbi Yehudah* clearly states in the *Mishnah* that the *z'man* of *plag Minchah* is earlier. [*Rabbi Yehudah* was of the opinion that *Minchah* may be recited from half an hour after *chatzos*, midday, until one and one quarter hours before *shkiyah*, sunset. His counterparts held that *Minchah* may be recited until *shkiyah*.] Imagine, how his holy *neshamah* must have felt when we *davened Minchah* by his *kever* after the *z'man*. Thus, we had to return to his *kever* so that we could *daven Minchah* earlier – at a time that coincided with *Rabbi Yehudah's halachic* opinion."

It requires a truly great person to be sensitive to those things which the average person might view as small or insignificant.