

And suddenly Rivkah was coming out ... and her jug upon her shoulder ... The servant ran towards her and said, “Let me sip, if you please, a little water from your jug.” And she gave him to drink... When she finished giving him drink, she said, “I will draw water for your camels until they have finished drinking.” (24:15,17,18,19)

Eliezer prayed to Hashem that Rivkah should offer drink to both him and his camels. Rivkah did more than offer both man and animal to drink; rather, only when Eliezer finished drinking, did Rivkah say that she would now give his camels to drink. In relating the incident to Lavan and Besuel, however, Eliezer did not underscore the fact that Rivkah distinguished between man and animal. Instead, he simply informed them that Rivkah was thoughtful and pleasing in that she not only gave him to drink, but she also quenched the thirst of his camels. Despite her murky roots, Rivkah *Imeinu* exemplified refinement. *Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl*, observes that her refinement was especially manifest in the manner that she distinguished between man and animal. She refused to give both of them to drink simultaneously. It was only after Eliezer had completed his drink that she offered to draw water for the camels. This *adinus*, refinement, indicated that she could not understand how one could even mention both man and beast together – let alone simultaneously.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that one does not have external refinement unless his intrinsic character is refined as well. External etiquette is different from refinement that stems from inner *kedushah*, sanctity. We find people who, for all outward appearances, come across as cultured and refined, but, when the wrong trigger is pushed, their true selves emerge in all of their irascible glory. Thus, as Avram *Avinu's* primary disciple, Eliezer had achieved untold heights of spiritual elevation, but he did not pick up on the contrast between man and animal. His inner *kedushah* did make the grade as evinced by the *Avos* and *Imahos*, Patriarchs and Matriarchs. In fact, not only did he himself not discern a variance between man and animal, the fact that Rivkah offered him and his animals separately went completely over his head. One can recognize and appreciate *kedushah* only when he himself possesses this attribute. One cannot cherish what he himself does not value.

How did Rivkah demonstrate her refinement? It was her speech, the words she chose and the manner in which she expressed them, that indicated her extraordinary character. Speech is the mirror of one's inner self. Crude speech will not be detected in one who is refined. Speech alone is not always a complete representation of one's true self. People may choose different styles of communication in various contexts. Thus, it is essential to consider other aspects of their behavior and values before forming judgments about their character.

The society one lives in plays an influential role on one's character and certainly on his manner of

communication. We live in a period, in a country in which the decline of refinement reflected in language and civility is noticeable, not only in the average citizen, but even (or perhaps especially) in its secular leadership. Within the moral bankruptcy that prevails, it is almost pithy to write about speech. The media no longer has any shame, as its style of communication has become consistent with its base character. Just as one was able to distinguish Yaakov *Avinu* from his evil brother, Eisav, we should in every aspect of our lives reflect a glaring divide between “us” and “them.”

Where does it begin? As always- in the home. Children learn acceptable language from their parents. What they hear is what they speak. When they see that anything goes, they consider it a barometer for their self-expression. We must never forget that our children are not only watching; they are also listening.