

Hashem is My Helper

One night last week my wife was teaching a class and I was doing bedtime with the kids. I had an 8pm phone call and the kids were running late. I explained to the kids that I had to be done by 7:55 sharp and we won't have time to read a book. We're just going to brush our teeth and I'll tuck them in, then I have to go make my call.

My 5-year-old daughter turns to me and says, "But, Daddy, you also have to say *shema* with us. Hashem is the most important."

If a 5-year-old, in their pure and simple belief, can feel that way then we too have the ability to internalize Hashem's direct and essential role in our lives recognizing that He is most important.

In our parsha Chayei Sarah, we see that Eliezer demonstrates time and again that Hashem is most important and he relies only on Hashem for the success and progress of his mission.

One of the fundamental rules in studying Torah is taking note of how much space is allotted to a particular matter. Sixty-six pesukim are devoted to Eliezer's mission of finding a wife for Yitzchak – a remarkable amount and a clear indication that we must pay close attention to Eliezer's journey and the many lessons learned from it.

The Midrash Rabbah (60:1) describes Eliezer's journey to have been one made in darkness. Rav Eliyahu Dessler understands this to be a reference to Eliezer's state of mind while undertaking his task. Eliezer considered himself to be embarking upon a mission of great difficulty – a dark path – whose success was by no means assured.

Rav Dessler expresses amazement. Eliezer's task was in fact one of little difficulty. As the agent of his great master Avraham, and the custodian of his considerable wealth, Eliezer was almost certain to meet success in his quest for a wife for Yitzchak.

Indeed, the Sages teach that even the daughters of kings were content to serve as mere handmaidens in the home of Avraham. The remotest connection with the household of Avraham was desperately sought by the daughters of nobles. Surely then it should pose no challenge to find a bride for Yitzchak, a great man in his own right, and the sole heir to Avraham's extensive estate. Why then did Eliezer imagine his path to be one of darkness?

Rav Dessler explains that this underlines the difference in approach between an ordinary person and one trained in the household of Avraham. Many people turn to Hashem for aid only when in distress. When beset by difficulties, they beseech Hashem for His assistance. Only then do they recall His existence.

When all is well, however, these people rely upon their own devices, and forget that success lies always in the hands of Hashem. Eliezer, the great disciple of Avraham, learned from Avraham that even when circumstances seem favorable, even when the path is bright and the way clear, we depend entirely upon Hashem's aid.

Eliezer was not deluded by the apparent ease of his mission. Rather, he acted as though his path was shrouded in darkness, for he knew, having absorbed the lesson from Avraham, that even when success seems assured, it cannot be achieved unless one will trust in Hashem.

As soon as Eliezer arrives at the well to search for a wife, he prays to Hashem (Bereishis 24:12).

Why did Eliezer have to pray for his mission's success when Avraham already prayed for this in pasuk 7 saying, [Hashem] *will send His angel before you and you will take a wife for my son?*

The Or HaChaim explains that Eliezer was confident in Avraham's prayer being accepted, but Eliezer added a prayer that *he* should be considered worthy of having the matter carried out through him. For sometimes even though a prayer was accepted by Hashem and He is willing to fulfill a request, the prayer is held back from being fulfilled because the messenger to whom the matter has been entrusted is considered unworthy of having it fulfilled through him. Thus, even though Hashem had surely accepted Avraham's prayer, it was still possible that Eliezer would be deemed unworthy of being the one to carry out the matter.

We then see that before Eliezer even finished his petition to Hashem, while he was still in the midst of praying, Rivkah was already leaving her home and approaching the well.

The Midrash (60:4) teaches that only three people were answered by Hashem immediately. The ground split open as soon as Moshe Rabbeinu finished davening for the ground to swallow Korach and his people. Shlomo HaMelech was answered with the *Shechinah* (Divine presence on earth) coming down from heaven after Shlomo finished the construction of the first Beit Hamikdash. And now Eliezer was answered before he even finished his prayer.

It therefore appears that Eliezer's prayer was even greater than that of Moshe or Shlomo, since they were only answered after finishing praying, whereas Eliezer was still in the middle of his when Rivkah came out.

The Or HaChaim says that *Rivkah was coming out* (24:15) - רִבְקָה יֵצְאת - means that Rivkah was being brought out to the spring by a force other than herself. That is, because of Eliezer's prayer, Hashem caused her to come out at that very moment, not a moment earlier, and not a moment later.

Rashi writes in parshas Bo (11:4): הקב"ה יודע עיתיו ורגעיו - *Hashem knows His times and moments precisely*. People have to prepare in advance to ensure that they don't miss a time. For example, if someone has a flight to catch, he'll make sure to arrive at the airport by a certain time so he doesn't miss the plane. The pilot of the flight, however, doesn't have to arrive by a certain time, because he's in charge of the flight - it can't leave without him. Hashem is the pilot in charge of this world, so He was able to have Rivkah come out at exactly the right moment.

So confident was Eliezer that Hashem intervened to show him Yitzchak's future bride, that he presented her with lavish gifts even before asking who she was. Then, once Rivkah shared who her family was and agreed to host Eliezer and his camels, he bowed to Hashem praying again.

With everything that happened, Eliezer ascribed it all to the grace of Hashem. We see that Eliezer asked Hashem for His help before searching for a potential bride for Yitzchak and after he believes he found her in Rivkah. This is a tremendous lesson to not only acknowledge Hashem's involvement in our lives, but to speak with Him every step of the way, before, during, and after our endeavors.

When recounting the events of what happened, Eliezer said he *came today* - וָאֵבֹא הַיּוֹם (24:42) – which Rashi says means that he embarked that day and arrived that same day. From here we see that the earth contracted for him, that his lengthy journey was miraculously shortened.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky asked: The Rambam (Yeshodei HaTorah 8:1) writes that miracles only take place to fill a specific need. So why was nature changed here?

Rav Chaim explained that our Sages tell us *a person must hasten with alacrity to perform a mitzvah* (Pesachim 4a) and it was important enough to require a miracle to allow Eliezer to perform the mitzvah of betrothing Rivkah to Yitzchak on that very day.

A young man from Brooklyn recently told Rabbi David Ashear that he was given information about a potential *shidduch* for him in Miami. After all of the investigative work was completed, it was determined that they would be a great match. He was ready to fly there, but the Rabbi from Miami that he was corresponding with told him he would not be allowed into any shuls there unless he goes into quarantine first for two weeks in Miami. Unfortunately, this young man lost his father this year and is very careful to never miss minyan to say kaddish for him.

He told the Rabbi, "Please allow me to attend davening, I have antibodies," but the Rabbi said, "You're still not going to be allowed in." So they hit a wall, an impasse. The young man refused to go to Florida unless he would have a minyan. The Rabbi then said in a joking way, "Well maybe if you come by private plane, then I'll let you into my shul."

Obviously, that was something seemingly impossible. But after he hung up the phone, this young man called an acquaintance of his and asked him if he knew of anyone with a private plane, by any chance, who might happen to be going to Miami in the near future, who might happen to let him on their plane?

The acquaintance said, "You wouldn't believe it, but I do know someone. I'll call them now and find out." He called him back a few minutes later and said, "It just so happens that these people I know are flying this Sunday to Miami and are returning Thursday. And when I told them that you need to attend minyan to say kaddish, they happily agreed to bring you along with them."

The young man is singing the praises of Hashem. He needed the impossible and in one second Hashem arranged it for him. Hashem miraculously eased his journey, in a way contracting the earth to make the travels work out, even for just the prospect of meeting the right *shidduch*.

Similarly, once it was agreed by Lavan and Betuel that Rivkah could be a wife to Yitzchak, even before Rivkah herself agreed, *Eliezer prostrated himself to Hashem* (24:52). From here we see, says Rashi, that we give thanks over good tidings. Although Rivkah had not yet consented to go with Eliezer, and his mission was not yet assured of success, he gave thanks even over this positive development, the good tidings, according to the Be'er BaSadeh.

Eliezer spoke with great emunah to Lavan and Betuel. He was not going to beg or behave in an undignified manner. He spoke straight and to the point. Eliezer was not embarrassed to thank Hashem in the presence of other people because he knew that Hashem is the One who counts most and He always comes first. He knew that everything was being orchestrated by Him, and therefore, He should receive the first thank you.

Rabbi Ashear writes on this point that the format is simple: We should ask Hashem for help before everything we do, know when we're doing it that Hashem is in charge acting for our best, and thank Hashem afterward for whatever the results are.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe draws a parallel between the mission of Eliezer and the mission that every Jew is charged with. Each one of us is an emissary of Hashem, and our mission is to make this world a dwelling place for Him. We accomplish this by elevating the material of our world to a spiritual level through utilizing the world for the fulfillment of mitzvos.

How do we accomplish this? By always having in mind that it is not our individual talents and strengths enabling us to succeed, but the power of the One who sent us, Hashem.

In truth, each one of us is an emissary of Hashem and each one of us possesses unique abilities that can be used to make this world a dwelling place for Him. But we must always bear in mind that the strength we utilize comes from Hashem.

Rabbi David Lapin writes that while Eliezer was occupied in the higher purpose of finding Yitzchak's wife, one of the four Matriarchs, he was accompanied by a Divine angel-force. It was in these times that he was experienced by others as an energized, vital and vivacious man rather than as a humble servant.

Interestingly, Eliezer's name is never mentioned in the parsha. He is referred to as the *servant* of Avraham, the *man*, and eventually called *Baruch Hashem*, but his name is not written. We learn from this that this account was not about Eliezer the person, rather it was about the mission itself.

When one is living one's life for higher purpose and acting in the interests of others without self-interest, one is supported, and even accompanied, by an invisible force much bigger than oneself says Rabbi Lapin. When an individual operates on such a level of spiritual awareness, others experience it too and such individuals radiate an aura of sanctity and serenity.

Even though his name is not mentioned, its message is essential. The name אֱלִיעֶזֶר (Eliezer) is a contraction of the words אֱלִי - עֶזֶר – *my G-d is my aid*, Hashem is going to help me! - the ultimate message for us to internalize.

Imagine living a life of Divine energy felt by those around you. How would that feel?

The term אִישׁ (*Ish* - man) used to describe Eliezer when he was on his mission, is a combination of the Hebrew words אֵשׁ (*Aish* – fire or energy) and Hashem's name represented by the letter י (*yud*). An אִישׁ (*Ish*) is a person whose passion for the Divine purpose he is working for radiates a fiery energy that is palpable to all who meet him.

Reaching great heights does not depend upon our natural talents and capabilities. Everything we accomplish is a gift from Hashem, and He will give us whatever we need to succeed.

Is there something that you've been trying to accomplish that you can try to fully rely on Hashem and know that He will help you achieve the best possible results for your benefit?

Shabbat Shalom!