

Most of this week's *Parashah* describes Eliezer's ultimately successful search for a wife for Yitzchak--*i.e.*, Rivka. *Midrash Rabbah* relates that through this mission, Eliezer ceased to be accursed, which he was as a descendant of Noach's son Cham (see *Bereishit* 9:25), and he earned the title "blessed." Thus we read that Rivka's brother, Lavan, welcomed Eliezer into their home with the words (24:31), "Come, blessed of Hashem!" (Since the Torah records Lavan's words, we are meant to learn something from them.)

But Eliezer served Avraham in many ways, notes R' Avraham Yoffen *z"l* (1887-1970; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Novardok Yeshiva in Bialystok, Poland; New York; and Yerushalayim). For example, he went with Avraham to rescue Lot. Also, our Sages say that he disseminated Avraham's Torah teachings. What then is unique about this mission that it changed his status from "accursed" to "blessed"?

R' Yoffen explains: This mission was the ultimate test for Eliezer because it required him to act solely in Avraham and Yitzchak's interests, and against his own interests. Our Sages, quoted by *Rashi z"l* (24:39), say that Eliezer had a daughter and hoped that she would marry Eliezer. But Avraham rejected that idea and sent Eliezer to find a wife from Avraham's own family. Eliezer went as instructed and performed his mission perfectly, despite having the power to derail the mission. One small negative word from Eliezer about Avraham or Yitzchak, even "accidentally," would have done the trick, but Eliezer made sure that did not happen. Through his selflessness, he passed the ultimate test. (*Ha'mussar Ve'ha'da'at*)

Shabbat

The Torah relates (*Bereishit* 2:2), "On the seventh day, *Elokim* completed His work which He had done, and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done." What does it mean that *Hashem* completed His work on the seventh day? Didn't He create everything in six days? *Rashi z"l* explains: "What did the world lack [at the end of the six days of Creation]? *Menuchah* / rest! When *Shabbat* came, *Menuchah* came, and thus the work was completed."

R' Eliezer Kashtiel *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Bnei David in Eli, Israel) asks: What does it mean that *Hashem* rested? Was He tired? Obviously not! Moreover, rest usually is a means to an end, *i.e.*, one rests in order to regain his strength so he can continue his work after he rests. Is that all that *Shabbat* is--a time to rest up for the coming week's work?

R' Kashtiel explains: The word *Menuchah* actually has another meaning--destination or destiny. When something reaches its destination or its destiny, we say that it has come to its *Menuchah*. (See, for example, *Yeshayah* 11:10, where the day of *Mashiach's* arrival is described as a "glorious *Menuchah*.")

It follows, continues R' Kashtiel, that when *Rashi* writes that the world lacked *Menuchah*, he means that when the six days of Creation ended and the physical world had been completed, it still lacked a destination, *i.e.*, a purpose. Of course, *Hashem* had a purpose for which He created the world, but that purpose is concealed; it is not obvious to us. One cannot, for example, readily see the need for many of the things that were created during the six days of Creation. But the world's destiny, the purpose for which everything was created, will be revealed eventually--specifically, in *Olam Ha'ba* / the World-to-Come. And until then, when *Shabbat*--a taste of *Olam Ha'ba*--comes along, we can sense a little bit of that destiny and purpose. On *Shabbat*, we can find *Menuchah*!

(*B'nefesh Ha'Shabbat: Bereishit*)

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“And Efron’s field, which was in Machpelah, facing Mamre, the field and the cave within it and all the trees in the field . . . was confirmed as Avraham’s as a purchase . . .” (23:17-18)

Why is it significant that Avraham acquired “all the trees in the field”? R’ Avraham Zuckerman z”l (1915-2013; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Bnei Akiva Kfar Ha’ro’eh) explains:

According to *Halachah* (see *Bava Batra* 5:4), one who purchases three trees in a field acquires certain rights to the field itself. Likewise, if one sells a field but retains three trees for himself, he retains certain rights to the field. The Torah is emphasizing that Avraham acquired this field, the location of *Me’arat Ha’machpelah*, entirely! *(Luchot Even)*

“See, I stand here by the spring of water . . .” (24:13)

R’ Yehoshua Heschel Singer z”l (1848-1925; rabbi in Buffalo, NY) writes: The symbolism of Eliezer’s searching for a bride for Yitzchak at a spring is that it alludes to the verse (*Mishlei* 27:19), “As water reflects a face back to a face, so one’s heart is reflected back to him by another.” This is meant to teach a bride and groom that each of them holds the key to acquiring the other’s eternal love. *(Mishneh Zikaron)*

“Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, ‘Please tip over your jug so I may drink,’ and who replies, ‘Drink, and I will even water your camels,’ she will You have designated for Your servant . . .” (24:14)

“She said, ‘I will draw water even for your camels . . .” (24:19)

“Let it be that the young woman who comes out to draw and to whom I shall say, ‘Please give me some water to drink from your jug,’ and who will answer, ‘. . . I will draw water for your camels, too . . .” (24:43-44)

“So I drank and she watered the camels also.” (24:46)

R’ Pinchas Zalman Horowitz z”l (1832-1906; Krakow, Galicia) writes: Drawing water and watering the camels, *i.e.*, giving each of the camels water to drink, are two separate processes--the latter being substantially more difficult than the former. In verse 14, we see that Eliezer prayed that he find a girl who would not only draw water for the camels, but who also would water them.

In verse 19, we see that Rivka offered only to draw water; she did not offer to water the camels. However, verse 46 relates that Rivka did, in fact, water the camels. This teaches us that Rivka practiced the *Middah* / trait taught in *Pirkei Avot* (ch.1): “Say little and do a lot.”

In verse 44 we read that when Eliezer retold the story to Rivka’s family, he did not mention that he had prayed to find a girl who would water the camels, only that he had prayed for a girl who would offer to draw water for the camels. Eliezer changed this detail because he did not think Rivka’s family would appreciate hearing that he had such grand expectations.

(Ahavat Torah)

“Sarah’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah’s life.” (23:1)

A *Midrash* relates that the sage Rabbi Akiva was once lecturing, and he saw that his audience was dozing off. Seeking to awaken them, he asked, “Why did Queen Esther rule over 127 provinces?” And he answered, “Let Esther, the descendant of Sarah who lived for 127 years, come and rule over 127 provinces.” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R’ Raphael Ohana z”l (1850-1902; “*Shelucha D’Rabbanan*”--for short, “*Shadar*”--traveling fundraiser for the Jewish community of Teverya, *Eretz Yisrael*) explains: Rabbi Akiva was trying to get his audience’s attention by alerting them to a difference between the verses relating to Sarah and Esther, respectively. Regarding Sarah, the verse says, “Sarah’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years”--beginning with the greatest number and ending with the smallest. In contrast, *Megillat Esther* (1:1) says, “And it came to pass in the days of Achashverosh--the Achashverosh who reigned from Hodu to Cush, over seven and twenty and one hundred provinces”--beginning with the smallest number and ending with the greatest.

What is the reason for this difference? R’ Ohana answers: Esther, as a descendant of Sarah, inherited her good qualities from her ancestor. When one transfers the contents of one container to another, whatever was on the top of the first container will be on the bottom of the second. Thus, the order of the words is reversed. *(Sefer Parashat Re’eh)*

“Avraham arose from the presence of his dead, and spoke to the children of Chet, saying.” (23:3)

R’ Eliyahu Hakohen z”l (1640-1729; Izmir, Turkey) writes: The phrase, “Avraham arose,” seems superfluous. However, it indicates that the Hittites did not come to Avraham to ask what he needed in his time of distress. He had to arise and go to them. *(Chut Shel Chessed)*

“Then Avraham arose and bowed down to the members of the council, to the children of Chet.” (23:7)

R’ Yaakov Moshe Charlap z”l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim’s Sha’arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) writes: Avraham Avinu was in mourning. His wife, who died free of sin (see *Rashi* z”l to 23:1) and who had attained a higher level of prophecy than Avraham’s (see *Rashi* to 21:12), lay awaiting burial. Avraham was definitely in what we would consider a stressful situation. Nevertheless, the Torah tells us, Avraham did not neglect his manners, and he remembered to behave courteously towards the Hittites, who stood between him and burying Sarah. *(Mei Marom: Nimukei Mikra’ot)*