

Mussar HaTorah

Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l

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Parashas Chayei Sara

“AND [ELIEZER] TOOK A GOLDEN NOSE RING ... AND TWO BRACELETS, WEIGHING TEN GOLD PIECES ... AND HE SAID, ‘WHOSE DAUGHTER ARE YOU?’” (BEREISHIS 24:23-24)

Eliezer did not even wait to confirm

RASHI POINTS OUT that the gifts Eliezer gave to Rivka had deeper, hidden meanings: they were allusions to the *mitzvah* of the half-*shekel*, the two *luchos* – Tablets of the Law – and the Ten Commandments that Rivka’s descendants, the Jewish people, would receive from Hashem at Sinai. The Torah tells us that Eliezer gave these gifts as soon as he recognized that Rivka was the maiden destined for Yitzchak. Eliezer did not even wait to confirm that she was indeed from the family of Avraham. As the next comment of Rashi explains, Eliezer had faith that Hashem was making him successful, in the merit of Avraham. The question now begs to be asked – why didn’t Eliezer just act in a conventional manner and make sure to ask her identity first and only then give her the gifts?

The Maharal from Prague explains that Eliezer did not want to speak and question Rivka regarding her family because he did not want to lessen his *kavana* – his concentration and pure intentions for the *mitzvah* he was doing. As soon as he saw the the moment was auspicious, that things were falling into place and he was succeeding, he immediately gave the gifts – gifts that contained hidden meanings that would have ramifications for generations. Eliezer did not want to have even a slight reduction in his *kavana*, so he gave the gifts immediately upon his certainty that she was the right woman.

Perhaps it would even improve his kavana

Would the few moments – literally, just seconds – that it would take to confirm that Rivka was indeed from Avraham’s family really lessen Eliezer’s *kavana*? Perhaps it would even improve his *kavana* by cementing the truth that Rivka was truly the proper partner for Yitzchak?

We are in danger of losing that moment

A few seconds, some fleeting moments in our lives, can spell the difference between success and failure, between channeling a flash of inspiration into an act that has repercussions for thousands of years, or having a lower level of spirituality for eternity. Perhaps intellectually the delay may have solidified his knowledge a bit more firmly, but the emotional state that Eliezer had reached at that moment would have been lost forever. Certain moments in our lives come only once and there are no second chances. Like a bolt of lightning on a dark black night, illuminating the landscape with absolute clarity for a split second, our emotions can be aroused to a pitch that moves us to act with the conviction of truth – there is no doubt of the reality we have now understood. We are in danger of losing that moment – and it may not come again.

When we are enthused to act, we must grab the opportunity immediately. Any delay can cause us – and even those much greater than us – to lose some of the excitement and enthusiasm – and every bit of *kavana*, excitement and fervor can make a significant difference. Let us seize these moments of inspiration and lock them in forever, by making the commitments, saying the prayer or doing the deed that we know we should.