

Date: 21 Cheshvan 5786 (November 12, 2025)

Torah Portion: Chayei Sarah

Topic: Rivkah's Deeds

As it is written (Gen. 24:17), “The servant [Eliezer] ran toward her [Rivkah] and said, “Let me sip, if you please, a little water from your jug.” The Midrash explains why Eliezer ran specifically toward Rivkah as opposed to any other of the young women present. Rashi writes that Eliezer ran toward Rivkah because he saw the water rise up to meet her. However, the Midrash states that he ran toward her because of her good deed. Eitz Yosef explains that the rising of the water was not, in and of itself, proof of her suitability. Rather, this miracle indicated to Eliezer that she must be one who performs good deeds, and which is why he ran to choose her for his test.

Ramban writes that the Midrash infers the rising up of the water from the verse's use of the word וַתִּמְלֵא (va-te-ma-le), “and she filled,” as opposed to וַתִּשָּׂא (va-tish-'av) “and she drew” (24:20), from which we can deduce that the miracle did not repeat itself on those trips. The water rose only when Rivkah took water for herself. When she watered Eliezer's camels, she was obliged to *draw* the water from the well.

Nachalas Zev explains that the reward for a mitzvah is based on the amount of effort one expends in its performance (Avos 5:26). It was therefore to Rivkah's benefit that she *not* be spared the difficulty of drawing water for Eliezer's animals. Rivkah understood this, and therefore said to Eliezer, גַּם לְגַמְלֵיךָ אֶשְׂאָב (gam lig-mal-**lei**-cha esh-'av), “I will ‘draw’ water even for your camels” (v. 19). She knew that when she toiled to perform a mitzvah, there would be no miraculous Divine assistance.

By saying that Elieze ran toward Rivkah's good deeds, the Midrash indicates that the miracle he saw performed on her behalf was not yet enough to convince him that she would make a suitable wife for Yitzchak. What he wished most to see in the woman who would be Yitzchak's bride was a desire to perform acts of kindness for others. This he witnessed when she laboriously drew water herself, without Divine assistance, for the use of his camels.

Eliezer said, “Let me sip, if you please, a little water from your jug.” The Midrash notes that Eliezer did not indulge himself excessively and asked for only a minuscule amount of water with which to quench his thirst.

As it is written (Gen. 24:21), “The man was astonished at her, reflecting silently to know whether YHWH had made his journey successful or not.” Eliezer was squinting and looking at Rivkah to determine “whether YHWH had made his journey successful or not.” He was completely focused on Rivkah as he waited to see if the scene would unfold as he had prayed, thereby demonstrating that Hashem had helped him succeed in finding a wife for Yitzchak.

Eliezer did not test Rivkah with difficult or artificial conditions. He simply presented a small request. And her true character will reveal itself in her response to the small, unprepared moments. This is because the righteous are known by how they respond to needs immediately, without delay, calculation, or self-importance. Eliezer, by asking for water, was not motivated by personal thirst, but rather by a desire to reveal her *soul-nature* (i.e., inner character). And Rivkah's response will show whether kindness flowed instinctively from her. This was a moment of a soul-recognition test, not a social one.

Shalom