



WORDS TO THE WISE

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When the Going Gets Tough

I was recently speaking to someone who was going through a tough time. He expressed his frustration, he was doing so much good, he was doing a lot to help others, yet was facing unprecedented challenges in his life. He wondered out loud, "What does G-d want from me?"

I saw an interesting point in the *Kedushas Levi*, the work on Chumash by R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. He comments on the story where *Eliezer* saw *Rivka* by the well, and the verse says, "He ran to greet her." *Rashi* explains, based on a midrash, that he ran to her because he saw the water from the well rise for her, a miracle and a sign that she was someone extraordinary. The *Ramban* explains how *Rashi* discerned this. The word for drawing water is *sho'ev*. The word *sho'ev* is used later when *Rivka* draws the water for the camels. Here, the verse simply states *Va'timale*, and her pitcher filled, implying that it filled on its own, without her needing to draw the water.

If that's the case, a question remains: Why didn't the water rise for her the second time, when she went to fill water for *Eliezer's* camels? The *Kedushas Levi* explains- the difference is that the first time, when the water rose, she was filling up the water for herself. The second time, however, she was filling it up to help someone else, which is of course a great mitzvah. The goal of a mitzvah is not the result but rather the performance itself. For *Rivka* to get the most out of her mitzvah she needed to exert effort to perform the mitzvah. Her mitzvah was specifically designed to be more difficult than her regular tasks, to make it greater.

We can face many challenges when we try to do good, especially when we try to do good for others. The message of the *Kedushas Levi* resounds. Sometimes the difficulty we face when we try to do good is precisely the point. The *Ramban* (Ber. 22:1) teaches that *Avraham* was given his 10 challenges, *nisyonos*, to enable him to put his ability to action. Sometimes we are challenged precisely because we are doing good things. Difficulty requires a greater effort. A greater effort transforms our actions, and in turn, us, great.