

# ELEVATE EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

And it will be, [that] the maiden to whom I will say, 'Lower your pitcher and I will drink,' and she will say, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels,' her have You designated for Your servant, for Yitzchok, and through her may I know that You have performed loving kindness with my master." (Breishis 24:14)

We have already been treated to an awe inspiring portrait of Avraham reaching out to heat stricken idolaters, showering them with honor, and pleading with them to allow him to provide a token measure of food. All this was followed by a grand festive meal because Avraham is idealized as someone who, "Says little and does much!"

This all begs a question about Eliezer's test at the well. Why would the maiden he is seeking be required to declare in advance that she is going to feed his animals? Let her agree to give him water and then see if she over delivers on her offer. Then she would be a more perfect fit for Avraham's family. Why must she say a lot and then do a lot?

A seemingly extra detail in the actual narrative may pry open the door to offer a peak at an answer. Remarkably so, Rivka makes that declaration just as Eliezer had hoped. Then after he actually drinks from the pitcher the first thing she does is pour the water into the water trough and then it's off to the races to feed the ten camels. Why do we need to know that she first poured the remaining water into the drinking pool for the animals? Maybe we detect that she is concerned not to be wasteful, which is also a supreme Torah-value. That's nice too but maybe there is much more.

What exactly was Eliezer testing for? He was actually boxing her into a corner. If he would ask her for water from her jug, how could she refuse? After she would give him to drink, what should she do with the rest of the water? It's effectively PAGAM- tainted! She can't bring it home. The sun is setting. She has to get back home with fresh water. If she spills it into the watering trough in front of him there is a good chance he will be offended by her action. That's not an option either.

In a split second after his offer she must come up with a solution that was preserve his dignity. In that moment she must make the only real choice but it requires an enormous investment of effort. She must declare in advance that she is going to feed all of his camels and then when she spills the pitcher into the watering trough, it is just a part of her promise.

Watering the ten camels was all part of a cover up to protect his honor. In order to come up with that scheme on the spot she would have to have in place a unique combination of important qualities.

Sure she would have to possess a heart filled with Chessed, and she would also have to be very smart. She needs to be dutiful as well, in order to follow through on her original promise, doing as she said.

Most necessary, perhaps, she would have to have an instinctive sense of the inherent dignity of every human being, just as Avraham who had lavished his guests with honor. If Rivka was to help build a family whose mission is to lift up and enlighten all humanity, this value is critically important.

This past Friday an old friend called and asked me if I had time for a two minute story. I just listened and when he was done he wished me a good Shabbos and hung up. A week later, I remain in awe! While exiting a Shul in Brooklyn on Thursday eve he espied a non-Jewish fellow with his sweatshirt hood pulled over his baseball cap and preoccupied with his phone. He also noticed that the fellow was wearing extra-large baggy pants and they parked way below his waistline. My friend felt an urgent need to gently point out to him that his pants were hanging very low. He did. The fellow grunted in vague acknowledgment.

After going a block he said that he felt compelled to turn back and approach the fellow once again. He told him emphatically, "You are a prince! I want to let you know that you are a very important person. You are a prince!" A block away again, curiosity overcame him and turned to look back. Incredibly so, the fellow had pulled up his pants! By appealing to the inherent dignity of a man one is able to **elevate everything about him.**