

TORAH IS REAL GEMILAS CHASSADIM

by Rabbi Label Lam

She descended to the spring, filled her jug and ascended. The servant ran towards her and said, "Let me sip please, a little, from your water jug." She said, "Drink my lord" and she hurried, and lowered her jug to her hands and gave him drink. When she finished giving him drink, she said, "I will draw (water) even for your camels until they have finished drinking." So she hurried and she emptied her jug into the trough and kept running to the well to draw (water) and she drew for all his camels. (Breishis 24:16- 20)

Rivka may not have known but she was auditioning for the position of Matriarch of the Jewish People. What was her test and how did she display her worthiness? Does she get the job because of her extra sensitivity and concern for animals?

The Mishne in Pirke Avos. There it is recorded there that Shimon HaTzadik was from the remnant of the Men of the Great Assembly and he used to say: "On three things the world stands on Torah, Service (Avodah), and Acts of Kindliness (Gemilas Chassadim)." What is "Gemilas Chassadim"? How is it different from just plain "Chessed"? Why not one word like the other pillars?

The Rambam says the main display of Gemilas Chessed is Levaya – escorting the guest. Giving food and drink feeds the animal soul while escorting a person affords dignity to the human being.

The Name of the letter GIMEL spells "Gamal"- a camel. What is the specialty of a camel? We all know that a camel is best suited to travel across arid lands because he can drink and store large amounts of water and remain for long periods of time removed from his source. He fuels up and is then able to be cut or dislocated from his source.

What is the first time that Gamal is mentioned in the Torah? Not by Eliezer and his 10 camels. The verse reads, "And the child (Yitzchok) grew and was (vayigmal) weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Yizchok was (higamel) weaned. (Breishis 21:8)

Why did Avraham make such a great celebration to honor the day that Yitzchok did not need to nurse from his mother Sara? Why does the Holy Torah bother to record it? Why did Avraham not make a party or a feast upon any other occasion? Gemilas Chassadim is a complete program to bring a person to maturity, giving him the ability to give. That escorts, builds, and dignifies a man in his life.

Rivka "emptied her jug into the trough" before running to fetch more water for the camels. Of all the

matters in the universe why is it that this detail is included? Why did she first announce her intention to feed the animals before spilling the water into the trough and getting into high gear? What does this add? In a similar way Rivka preserved the inherent honor of the man Eliezer. He had requested a drink. She could have poured into another vessel or into his mouth but rather she gave him to drink from the jug directly in the most dignified fashion.

After this stranger drinks from her jug a new dilemma is born. Can she deliver home a jug out of which a stranger has just partaken?! It's PAGAM! Rivka was alert to the fact that to spill out the water in front of him is insulting. Therefore Rivka cleverly announced her intentions first before emptying the jug into the water trough to spare him even a moment of personal discomfort.

Only then did she launch into her heroic activity to care for his ten camels, fueling them like ten Mack Trucks and all by hand. The whole giant effort may have included a desire to be economical as well as to quench some creaturely thirsts but it may have been mostly motivated by a desire to maintain to the dignity of the stranger. She was not tested on Chessed alone but rather Gemilas Chassadim which is the same numerical value as Torah, 611, because Torah is Real Gemilas Chassadim.