

EVERY DROP MATTERS

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"After these things, the word of G-d came to Avram in a vision, saying, 'do not fear, Avram, for I am your shield, and your reward is extremely large.' And Avram said, 'L-rd G-d, what will you give me, when I go childless, and the heir who will inherit my house is Eliezer of Damascus?'"
[15:1-2]

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki provides a homiletic explanation of 'Damascus' [Damesek] from the Talmud, which says something other than that Eliezer came from the city itself: Eliezer was he who drew [Dal] and gave to drink [Mashkeh] from the Torah of his teacher to others.

This is a fascinating way to understand the word, and yet it seems to make little sense in context: Avram is complaining that he has no descendants, and is unhappy that Eliezer will inherit his house. Why would he, then, praise Eliezer at this moment? Furthermore, the Talmud also tells us that students are like children, and here Eliezer is held up as the ultimate student!

The Maharam MiPiltz explains that Avram is identifying the precise defect in Eliezer, which rendered him unfit to extend the Jewish people into a second generation. Eliezer lacked his **own** Torah. All he could do was take Avram's words and transmit them to others.

Within the Jewish people, we find something quite different. Each of our forefathers was known for a particular characteristic: Avraham for kindness, Yitzchak for fear, Yaakov for truth. Eliezer could only transmit teachings received from others, and this was insufficient to fill Avram's place.

Just as every letter in a Torah scroll is different, so too every Jew is different. And just as every letter is necessary, every **Jew** is necessary. Everyone has his or her individual contribution to make... it's something we inherited from our ancestors!