



The Greatest Act of Kindness

Parshas Chayei Sarah

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

It was during the days of the Aliyah of the Yemenite Jews, in the nineteen-fifties, an operation dubbed "Magic Carpet", also known as operation "On the wings of eagles". Forty eight thousand Jews were brought to four camps in Israel: Rosh Ha'Ayin, Beit Lid, Ein Shemer and Atlit. The camps were not the best situation to raise children.

My father, Rabbi Yisrael Grossman O"BM, learned of their miraculous arrival to Israel, he could not remain indifferent: So many of Jews have come to Israel, what will be with the youth?

He drove in a truck to the campsite in Rosh Ha'Ayin, got on the roof of the truck and announced: "Whoever has children which they wish that they be raised as Jews should send them with me. I will care for them, tend to all their needs, and vouch for their future".

Thirty children gathered around my father, and he took them all with him to Jerusalem. His first stop was at our small apartment in Jerusalem. The other children were taken in by good neighbors. Five of the children were left to stay at my parent's small apartment; only forty square meters in size.

I shared a room with Refael, an immigrant from Yemen a sweet boy with a pure heart. We, as children, had to accommodate. It was difficult, but we did it gladly; wholeheartedly.

Some of the neighbors looked on in bewilderment. They said these children may carry disease with them, but my father did not listen. He told us: "The greatest act of kindness you can do, is when it is uncomfortable, when the timing is not good and you don't want to do it. Such an act, specifically, is one by which a Jew is measured as being a descendent of Avraham Avinu and following in his path".

I was reunited with Refael five years ago. He asked me one question: "How did you agree as a child to host me, someone with a questionable medical history, in your room?".

As an answer I read to him verses from our weekly Parsha: "Behold, I am standing by the water fountain, and the daughters of the people of the city are coming out to draw

water."¹ Eliezer is standing at the edge of the well. He is Avraham's emissary, sent to find a wife for Yitzchak. He is not only a servant, but he acts as a matchmaker as well.

A matchmaker's trade often requires that he conceal some of the details, with the objective of closing the deal. When we take a look at the verses we see Eliezer does just the opposite. He seems to be placing obstacles and causes more complication. He stands at the well waiting for a girl to come along and bring him water for himself as well as his livestock.

Think of it: Eliezer was Avraham's servant, he was a warrior as well, and he was certainly a big strong man. He must have been able to bring water by himself. Why should a young girl bring water to him? Why is he creating unnecessary complications?

Eliezer knew that real acts of kindness were the ticket of entry into the household of Avraham. In last week's Parsha we learn of Avraham's hosting the angels.² He was ill, but nevertheless hurried to host them in the most fabulous way he could. A genuine act of kindness is one which is done when least convenient. Eliezer knew that a girl that would oblige his request and commit an act of kindness, even when the timing was not proper and even when it was not convenient, was the proper girl to become a bride in the house of Avraham.

In those days my father introduced to us time and again the concept of helping the immigrant children who have come from Yemen, yearning to come to the State of Israel. This personal example of self-sacrifice for the children of Israel was etched deeply in my heart. My father knew how to perform acts of kindness; even when it was not convenient. He could have easily exempted himself from this task, but chose not to.

Refael told me fifty years after living in my house that in the merit of my influence he is today an observant Jew.

¹ Beresheit, 24, 13.

² Beresheit 18.