

The story of the שידוך of יצחק and רבקה is the first recorded שידוך in history. There are many aspects of this story that are instructive and offer valuable lessons. The בית הלוי discussed one particular insight which highlights the subtlety and beauty of this story. When אליעזר makes his request of Hashem, he asks for guidance, expressing uncertainty about how to identify the right match. He says to Hashem, "If I ask someone for water and she offers not only to give me a drink but also to water my camels, she is the one You have chosen, the suitable שידוך, the life partner for יצחק."

The בית הלוי, in his distinctively precise and profound manner, explains that while אליעזר's request was grounded in שכל - practical sense - rather than something supernatural, there was also an underlying חכמה, a deep wisdom and intellect, in this request. אליעזר wanted to discern all of her מידות, to see if she was a בעלת מידות, a person of strong character. שכל and מידות go hand in hand, he explains.

First, he sought to see if she was a גומלת חסד - whether she would be willing to perform an act of kindness by giving a stranger water, especially since he asked to drink it from her pitcher. This act was no small kindness, and אליעזר wanted to see if she would willingly go out of her way to help, revealing her good nature.

Additionally, she needed to consider another factor. What if he was, in some way, unclean? Perhaps he would spit into the pitcher or even worse, he might have טרפות in his mouth. After she gave him water, what would she do with the remaining water? If she took it home, it would reflect a lack of שכל, given it might be contaminated. But if she spilled it out in front of him, it would be insulting.

The best solution, therefore, would be for her to offer to give the remaining water to the camels, then return to the well, refill the pitcher, and rinse it out discreetly. This approach would show both שכל and דרך ארץ - respect and sensitivity to the person she was helping. So, this was a clever ניסיון, a test to reveal her true character. And indeed, she passed with flying colors. She not only offered to water the camels but went back to the well repeatedly, showing an exceptional level of חסד and determination beyond what was expected.

In the end, אליעזר was able to say with full confidence, "This is the right person." And as we know, when we ask הקדוש ברוך הוא for שידוכים for our children, we hope that they will be בעלי דרך ארץ, that they will be עוסק בתורה, שכל, and that they will demonstrate חסד. These מידות are what we seek in our children as well, and we strive to show them not only by instruction but by example.

May we be zoche, bezras Hashem, to great נחת and success in all that we do, especially with our children and grandchildren, and all our descendants bezras Hashem.

