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Mindful Mission

Avraham Avinu instructs his servant, Eliezer, to seek out a wife for Yitzchak Avinu in *Aram Nahara'im*, his birthplace. Eliezer is described as, *"zekan beito hamoshel bechol asher lo*—the elder of his house, who ruled over all that was his." *(Bereisheet* 24:2*)* Yet Avraham Avinu makes his loyal servant swear to be faithful to his instructions! In *Lev Shalom*, Rav Shalom Schwadron *zt"l* asks the obvious question, if Avraham Avinu relied on Eliezer enough to manage all his possessions, clearly, he considered him trustworthy! So why did he make him prove his devotion with an oath?


Rabbi Shalom Schwadron zt"l

To answer his question, Rav Schwadron tells a well-known story about Rav Yisrael Salanter *zt"l* who once visited an inn. As Rav Salanter looked like a respectable rav, the inn keeper asked him to slaughter some chickens for him, but Rav Salanter did not respond. A short while later, Rav Salanter asked the inn keeper to borrow a sizable sum of money. The inn keeper hesitated, "How can I lend you money if I don't know you or know that you are trustworthy?" "Ah," said Rav Salanter. "For money you need to know if I am honest and ethical, but to slaughter your chickens you would trust me automatically?" Rav Schwadron is teaching us a valuable lesson about setting priorities. Avraham Avinu was willing to trust Eliezer with his physical assets, however, when it came to his spiritual legacy, the foundation of building the Jewish people, he needed to emphasize the magnitude of the mission by making Eliezer swear. Indeed, when Eliezer repeats the story to Rivka Imeinu's family, he specifically mentions that he swore to be faithful to his master, underscoring the fundamental nature of his task.

Rav Schwadron shares another powerful example highlighting the importance of defining our priorities. The Brisker Rav *zt"l* was once asked why he is so meticulous about how he performed mitzvot. Why the extreme concern if the mitzvah was done correctly with the proper intent once the mitzvah was already done? The Brisker Rav responded, "Imagine someone had a million dollars in his pocket. When he leaves his house, he will check that it is there, when he walks down the steps he will check again and throughout his day, wherever he goes,

he will keep on checking to ensure that the money is still there." The Brisker Rav explained that for him, a mitzvah is like a million dollars, and he must keep checking to make sure he does every one correctly.

In *Yemei Zikaron*, Rav Soloveitchik *zt"l* shares another lesson from this event. Every person is sent to this world with a *shelichut*, a mission to accomplish. The Gemara teaches that when a child is born, he is made to swear that he will be righteous and not evil-minded. Just as every soul must swear to complete his mission with devotion, Avraham Avinu requires Eliezer to guarantee his loyalty.

With this oath, we learn to value eternity. Additionally, we are reminded that we are all sent from Above, charged with a purpose to fulfill with faith and integrity. ■





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