

## AVRAHAM INSTRUCTS ELIEZER TO FIND A WIFE FOR YITZCHAK

Chapter 24

- 1) Avraham was old, coming with days, and Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything.

2) Avraham said to his slave [i.e., Eliezer], the elder of his household, who was in charge of everything he had, "Please place your hand under my thigh.

4) ...Go to my land and to my kindred, and you shall take a wife for my son, for Yitzchak.
- (א) וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וְה' יָרָךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל.

(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל עֲבָדוֹ זָקֵן בֵּיתוֹ הַמְּשִׁל בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ שֵׁם נָא יָדֶךָ תַּחַת יִרְכִּי.

(ד) כִּי אֶל אֶרֶצִי וְאֶל מוֹלַדְתִּי תֵלֵךְ וְלָקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי לְיִצְחָק.

### Consider the following questions:

1. Why do we need to know that Avraham was old (verse 1) at this point? What does this have to do with Avraham's commanding Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak?

2. What is the meaning of the unusual expression "coming with days"?

3. Why is it relevant to know that Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything? How is this connected to finding a wife for Yitzchak?

4. Why do we need to know that Eliezer was (a) the elder of his [Avraham's] household, and (b) in charge of everything he had?

5. How could Avraham tell Eliezer (verse 4), "Go to my land ... and **you shall take** (וְלָקַחְתָּ) a wife for my son" when this was not fully under Eliezer's control? After all, the girl's family could refuse to cooperate.

6. Why does Avraham use the double language, "for my son, for Yitzchak" when Eliezer was well aware that Yitzchak was Avraham's son?

The Zohar (Sefer Bereishis 221b) explains that when God wants to take back a person's soul, all the days of that person's life gather before Him to be judged before he dies. This is why the Torah says of Yaakov: *Yisrael's days to die drew close* (Bereishis 47:29) – meaning that all his days, without exception, drew close before Hashem. Not a single one was pushed away because a sin was committed on that day. We see from here that when a *tzaddik* nears his death, his days gather around him, each one prepared to testify about the Torah and mitzvos fulfilled on that particular day.

Based on this, we can explain the phrase, "coming with days." Avraham was a prophet, and he sensed the presence of the days of his life gathering around with their spiritual splendor. **[This answers Question 2.]** He thought this was a sign that he was going to die soon – especially since Avraham was old. (He did not realize that these "days," these spiritual entities, gathered around him simply because of his great holiness, **not** because he was about to die.) Believing that he

did not have much longer to live, he decided that he must attend to the vital matter of finding a suitable wife for Yitzchak. **[This answers Question 1.]**

Since Avraham felt that he was unable to do this mitzvah himself (because of his advanced age), he had to send Eliezer. But surely it would be only natural for Avraham to be concerned that by doing so the mission was less likely to succeed: The girl's parents might be insulted that Avraham himself had not come, or at least sent important people in his place, instead of sending a slave. Furthermore, the girl's parents might be wary of sending a young and beautiful girl in the care of a strange man on a lengthy journey through desolate regions, and think it improper that Avraham would ask this of them.

The Torah immediately addresses these concerns: First of all, the Torah tells us, "*Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything.*" Avraham had faith that everything would work out because Hashem had blessed him at every stage of his life; He had always been with him, and surely would be with him once again. Therefore, he could send Eliezer instead of going himself and the mission would nonetheless be concluded successfully. **[This answers Question 3.]**

The Torah continues by describing Eliezer as "*the elder of his household* (זֶקֶן בֵּיתוֹ)." Eliezer had grown up in Avraham's household. Avraham knew him to be of upright character, to the point that he had attained the position of being its trusted elder. In addition, the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 59:8) says that Eliezer's countenance was extremely similar to Avraham's, indicating that his character was noble and exalted, comparable to Avraham's own. For this reason, Avraham was not concerned about Eliezer traveling with Rivkah.

Finally, the Torah tells us that Eliezer was *in charge of everything he [Avraham] had*. Avraham's great wealth and fame was known the world over. Since Eliezer was the administrator of all the possessions of such a prominent person, he would be considered a highly important person in his own right, even though he was a slave. It would certainly not be beneath the girl's dignity to be escorted by Eliezer. **[This answers Question 4a and 4b.]**

We also asked why Avraham uses the phrase, "*Go to my land ... and **you shall take** a wife for my son, for Yitzchak,*" when this was not fully under Eliezer's control. The answer is that the words "*and you shall take*" are part of the oath that Avraham insisted Eliezer swear, but rather a promise that Avraham made to him to encourage him to do so: "*Swear to go to my land, and I promise that *you shall* succeed and *take a wife for my son, for Yitzchak.*"* **[This answers Question 5.]**

Avraham uses the double expression "*for my son, for Yitzchak*" to hint at two separate reasons why he is so confident that his family will not refuse Eliezer's request that their daughter come to Eretz Canaan and marry Yitzchak. "First," Avraham said, "since the wife is for *my son* (who is a member of their family, too), they will not turn you away. And second, after the *Akeidah* God told me explicitly that the girl intended *for Yitzchak* had been born to my niece Milkah and her husband Besuel. Since you will merely be retrieving the *wife* who is already designated *for Yitzchak*, you can rest assured that the matter will basically take care of itself; you will not find it difficult." **[This answers Question 6.]**

### THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508 – 1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title "HaKodosh" (the Holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. He simultaneously focuses on both the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all using one or two concepts.

These sheets are drawn from the Alshich on the Torah published by Feldheim and are in memory of Yental Bas Yitzchok, Mrs Jean Silkin. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich's true greatness.