

monuments right next to where he was standing. He gave a start of surprise. The name on the monument was Ragola! Chaim looked at another nearby monument. That one also said Ragola. The two monuments bore the names of Sheila's grandparents - her grandfather, who had died in 1910, and her grandmother, who had died in 1928. Sheila had truly returned to her roots

TORAH GEMS

הקרה לא לפני היום ועשה חסד עם אדני אברהם (כד-לב)

Eliezer, the servant of Avrohom, was dispatched to find a suitable mate for Yitzchok. He beseeched *Hashem* to make his mission successful and devised a test whereby he would ask the maidens who had come to water their flocks to give him a drink. The maiden who would offer water not only for him, but for his camels as well, would be the one designated by *Hashem* to be Yitzchok's wife.

Rivka was the daughter of a wicked man, the sister of a wicked man, from a place that was wicked. She was reared in an atmosphere of idolatry. Yet, Eliezer made no attempt to try and discover whether she possessed even a minimal awareness of the true G-d. How could he have turned a blind eye to this facet of her life; how she would respond to a diametrically opposite existence in the home of the *Avos*?

R' Yehudah Zev Segal ZT"l, the **Manchester Rosh Yeshiva**, explains: Eliezer was concerned with uncovering one all-important fact: how strong was the girl's attribute of *chesed* - kindness. A person is what his *middos* are, for it is *middos*, more than anything else, which determine how dedicated one will be to *Hashem* and His *mitzvos*. Rivka, with her magnanimous efforts on a strangers behalf, demonstrated the quality of her *middos*. Additionally, she responded to Eliezer's request with *zerizus* - alacrity. To Eliezer, there was no doubt that this young girl was a fitting receptacle for the lofty teachings of Avrohom. If her lowly upbringing had deprived her of the opportunity to attain *Yiras Shomayim* - *Fear of Heaven*, she certainly had the potential for it. Attaining *יראת ה' Heaven* is a minor achievement compared to developing superlative *middos*, which Rivka had done.

ותקם רבקה ונערוהיה ותרכבה על הגמלים ותלכה אחרי האיש וכי' (כד-סא)

When Eliezer traveled with Rivka to bring her to Yitzchok, the *posuk* describes the way they traveled: "*And Rivka and her maidens arose and rode on the camels and they went after the man.*"

Although Eliezer was to keep a watchful eye on the females traveling with him, he did not ride behind them. Instead, he rode ahead of them and kept in close proximity to them.

R' Pesach Elyohu Falk Shlit"l quotes the *Medrash* that Rivka and her maidens traveled behind Eliezer rather than ahead of him because *tznius* - modesty, in conduct dictates that females are not observed by males nor in a position to be easily observed. Furthermore, the *gemara* (ברכות סא) states that it is wrong for a man to walk behind even his own wife for this is considered a lack of *tznius*. We find that Manaoch was deemed an *Am Ha'aretz* - ignorant person, as it states *למה יתכן מנה מנוח* - "And Manaoch walked behind his wife." He was an ignoramus as he did not know such an elementary *halacha*. Every step taken by the servants of the *Avos* reflected on the morals and conduct that prevailed in the home of their master, as *Chazal* say, "*There is more to learn even from the talk of the servants of the Avos than from the Torah of future generations.*"

Many of our brethren emulate the ways of non-Jews in many *tznius*-related matters. This is incorrect conduct as even the *gemara* (נעקקי כג:) writes that a man should enter a door first, so that he does not walk behind his wife. Sadly, keeping up with the prevailing culture of our neighbors is so ingrained in our psyche that we will do things for which *Chazal* label one an *Am Ha'aretz*.

לעשרת הדברות הכתובים בהם.

זיהו מה דרמו אברהם איבנו לרבקה. כלומר, אם את חפצה בו בגלל עדקותו ושלמותו, גם אילו היה עני השולח רק דבר מניט הרי טוב ויפה הדבר, ואם לאו, אל תקרבי לפתח ביתי. אכן רבקה אמנו הבינה היטב את הרמז וקבלה אותו, והסכימה להינשא ליצחק מפני שהוא היה איש קדוש אשר מסר את נפשו בשביל הקב"ה, כדי לזכות עמו לבנים מקבלי התורה.

מעשה אבות.... סימן לבנים

נשיא אלקים אתה בתוכנו במבחר קברנו את מתן איש ממנו את קברו לא יכלה ממך מקבר מתן וגוי' (כג-ו)

Chaim Hertz, fresh out of law school, had managed to find a position with an old, established firm. Chaim had always enjoyed working with wills, and now he was assigned to this department. As Chaim thumbed through the files to get acquainted with his new clients, one folder caught his eye. Sheila Ragola was a non-religious Jewish woman who had remained a spinster all her life. Her only family was a nephew, Mark, and a niece named Cindy, also completely assimilated. As Chaim read through Sheila's will, he was disturbed to find that Sheila had requested that she be cremated upon her death.

How could he make her understand the importance of a proper burial, as prescribed by Jewish law? Every time Chaim met with Sheila to make changes to her will, he would suggest that she reconsider her decision about the cremation. But Sheila refused to change her mind. "Cremation is the cleanest way to go," she said firmly. Chaim refused to give up. He continued to work on Sheila. Every time he visited her, he renewed his plea. And in fact, after some time, it seemed that his tactic was working. Chaim continued to grow more hopeful. But then Sheila grew senile, and the discussions ended. Chaim still had not persuaded her to change her mind; it seemed as if he never would.

One day, when Chaim was meeting with Mark about a last supplement to Sheila's will, he decided that he would have to be firm about the issue. "As an executor who is responsible to deal with Sheila's estate after her passing, I hereby state that I will not participate in any cremation because it is not in accordance with Jewish law. One may not fulfill a wish if it is not in agreement with Jewish law," Chaim said firmly.

Mark was silent for a moment. "You know, I got the impression from my aunt during the last few times that I visited her that she was also moving away from cremation. She felt the need to reconnect with her Jewish roots. Maybe we ought to do the burial anyway, even if it wasn't actually changed in the will."

Chaim was delighted at this turn of events. He called someone he knew who worked in this field and explained the whole situation to him. "I actually have two spots available in an old cemetery on the other side of the city I think I can accommodate you with this, if you're agreeable to that suggestion."

Chaim discussed the situation with Mark, who agreed to the idea. He quickly bought the plot and took care of all the necessary paperwork. Eight months later, Sheila Ragola died at the age of 93. As soon as the nursing home informed Chaim of Sheila's death, he began to make all the arrangements necessary for a proper burial. Mark was contacted, and a small funeral was arranged for the following day.

After the eulogies were completed, the small group made their way to the cemetery for the burial. As the burial procession came to the location of the burial plot, Chaim happened to glance at one the