חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

RADOMSK · CHAYEI SARA, TIFERET SHLOMO

Why Eliezer insisted on speaking before eating

Tiferet Shlomo

Food absorbed from the table of a tzaddik (righteous one) carries holiness that strengthens a person's service of the Creator, while food from the sitra achra (the other side) dulls the heart like deadly poison; Eliezer, fearing the food of Lavan's house, protected himself by first speaking divrei Torah (words of Torah) — praise of Avraham Avinu (Abraham our forefather) — which itself draws holiness into food. His declaration "I am Avraham's servant" also teaches that even one who stands on the highest spiritual rung must remain lowly in his own eyes, "equal to the ground," rather than let his heart grow haughty over others. AI SUMMARY

And he said, "I will not eat until I have spoken my words," etc. And he said, "I am Avraham's servant." It is known, the words of our Sages, of blessed memory, that they would put poison into his food; therefore he said, "I will not eat until I have spoken my words."

The above comes to hint at this, based on the known greatness of the level of one who benefits from the table of a talmid chacham (Torah scholar) among the tzaddikim (righteous ones), whose holiness of food brings extra holiness upon a person, to assist him in the service of the Creator. Not so food that comes from the sitra achra (the other side, i.e., the forces of impurity) — it dulls a person's heart, and it is like a deadly poison to a man who walks uprightly.

Therefore, in truth, they did not put any poison at all into their food; rather, their food was before this servant like a deadly poison. For he was accustomed to eating from the table of Avraham Avinu (Abraham our forefather) and Sarah Imeinu (Sarah our foremother), she who prepared and cooked the food from the side of holiness, and "all who tasted of it merited life." Therefore, when the servant came to the house of Lavan and Betuel, he feared for his soul from their food, lest it dull his heart like a deadly poison. For this reason he did not wish to eat until he had spoken divrei Torah (words of Torah), for divrei Torah bring holiness into the food.

For this he said, "I am Avraham's servant" — and this itself is divrei Torah, for speaking in praise of the tzaddik is like divrei Torah. And through this he was saved.

Eliezer said, "I am Avraham's servant." The point here is that a person must always recognize his own lowliness, so as not to raise his heart above his brothers — even though he may truly be a person of high spiritual stature, he should nonetheless not let his heart grow haughty.

This is the hint in the Gemara: the roofs and upper chambers of the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple) were not sanctified except insofar as they were level with the ground. The hint here is that the height — the roof — is not sanctified except to the extent that it is equal to the ground of the courtyard, meaning: one who maintains a posture of lowliness is "equal to the ground," as it is written, "and I am but dust and ashes."

So it was with Eliezer: even though he stood at the highest rung, drawing and giving others to drink from the Torah of his master, he nevertheless

acknowledged this and was not ashamed to say, "I am Avraham's servant" — meaning, "I am but a servant to the servants of Hashem."

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5)

