

In this week's parashah, Chayei Sarah, Avraham, widowed and aged, turns his attention to the task of assuring the future of his family by finding a partner for his son, Yitzhak.

In Chapter 24 of Genesis, he instructs his servant, whom the tradition identifies as Eliezer, to return to Avraham's homeland to find a wife for Yitzhak. Eliezer swears an oath to Avraham that he will not bring Yitzhak back to Nahor, but that he will attempt to find a wife for Yitzhak there.

The rest of Chapter 24 is devoted to the care and detail with which Eliezer fulfills this oath. He goes to Nahor, waits by the well, prays to Hashem, describing a test that he will devise: that the woman who offers to water his camels when he asks only for water for himself should be the fit wife for Yitzhak. As soon as he finishes his prayer, Rivkah, daughter of Bethuel, comes to well, and the narrative unfolds exactly as Eliezer had prayed.

Servants who embrace the mission of family, going above and beyondHe asks for water; she provides it, and offers and hurries to water his camels as well – an act of astounding generosity as well as physical stamina.

There is much that could and should be said of Rivka, but tonight, I also want to notice the devotion of this servant, Eliezer, who so took to heart the task he was assigned. Writing about this parasha, Dena Weiss notes that Avraham had only asked Eliezer to find any wife from his homeland, without specifications. Eliezer "could have merely completed his assignment and taken satisfaction in that. Eliezer's greatness is in his realization that though Yitzhak isn't there to command him, Yitzhak is the one to whom he is morally responsible. It is Yitzhak who is going to be most affected by the decisions that Eliezer will make, the woman that

he will select. Eliezer chooses to act in Yitzhak's best interest, even though it would have been easier and more expedient for him to obey the minimum requirement set forth by Avraham.

...Eliezer looks beyond the minimal scope of his obligation—a bride for the son of his master—to the real responsibility that he has—a woman of good character to be wed to Yitzhak. Eliezer is not concerned with doing what he has to, he is concerned about doing what he should.”

It is a rare friend, let alone servant who goes so above and beyond the bare description of the duties assigned, seeking out only to do a job, but to do it with the greatest devotion.

And it is with the awareness of the blurry distinction between task and passion that I turn out attention to wishing farewell to Dan Weber. Dan has worked for TBI for 11 years, as office staff, rabbinic assistant, communications and in all manner of tech support and operations. In his years here, many of you have experienced his sympathetic ear on the line when you've called TBI.

But it has particularly been in this past year and half of pandemic that we have seen how above and beyond Dan has gone. As we have needed to switch to providing virtual services and outdoor events, Dan has been the force behind the camera. Like Elizer, he has consistently gone above and beyond the task assigned, not only figuring out streaming for our services, but acquiring new cameras and sound equipment, training volunteers to use them and trying to create the best experience possible. It has been because of Dan that we have provided virtual services of a quality that is more typical of synagogues ten times our size.

Chayei Sarah blessing Dan

When we began think last winter about how we could provide outdoor services, Dan spearheaded the design of the *ohel*, the tent in our courtyard that so many of us have enjoyed. Again, he did not just create a functional structure to keep off the rain but designed the set up and lighting so that sitting under the *ohel* is a truly beautiful experience.

As a parting gift to Dan, we want to bless him on his future endeavors and with a new name. Dan never was named with a Hebrew name, so we will send him off from here names, and you can all participate in blessing him.

(Give blessing, ask for blessings - Daniel Shlomo ben Claudia v'Dan)

Dan, for years you have served this community, not only as a job but with with a passion for the community we are constantly striving to build and the experience we are striving to provide. We certainly respect that you must take some time to settled not a new position and differentiate yourself from here. I hope that in time, you will still feel that TBI is a spiritual home, and a place where you want to offer your skills. We wish you joy, success, peace and God's blessings on your endeavors going forward, as Eliezer found in his task.