TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



ויצא

לעילוי נשמת



אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה

ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה

ואשתו מרת גאלדא ב"ר יצחק אהרן ע"ה

ר'יעקב שמואל ב"ר צבי הלוי גרינספעלד ע"ה

ואשתו מרת חנה ב"ר דוד ע"ה

ר'שרגא פייביש ב"ר מרדכי צבי ערליך ע"ה

ר'יעקב ב"ר שלום הלוי פרידמאן ע"ה

ר'חיים דוד ב"ר אלכסנדר הכהן ריטשמאן ע"ה

ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

Yitzchok's Collections אוספי יצחק

ויצא

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")

"Luz"

In our parashah, Yaakov Avinu visits the city of Luz. "Luz" also is the name of a human bone which, say our Sages, never decays and from which man's body will be rebuilt at the time of techiyat ha'meitim. This bone takes all its nourishment from the melaveh malkah meal eaten on Motzai Shabbat. Thus, it derived no benefit when Adam ate from the Etz Ha'da'at–since that was not Motzai Shabbat – and it remained unblemished by that sin. As a result, it is not subject to the same mortality as the rest of the human body (see Mishnah Berurah 300:2 & Siddur R' Yaakov Emden).

By sitting down for one additional meal when Shabbat departs, we demonstrate that we are not sending Shabbat away like an unwanted

guest; rather, we are accompanying ("melaveh") the queen ("malkah") respectfully as she leaves.



On a deeper level, **R' Menachem Man shlita** (Yeshivat Ohr Etzion) explains in the name of **R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l** (1823-1900; chassidic rebbe in Lublin, Poland): When Leah gave birth to her third son, she named him "Levi", which shares a root with the word "melaveh." She said (29:34), **וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר עַתָּה הַפַּעַם יִלָּוֶה אִישִׁי אֵלָי** - "This time my husband **יִלָּוֶה** / will become attached to me."

Likewise, says R' Tzaddok, by accompanying the Shabbat on her way, we attach the Shabbat to the week ahead.

But where is Shabbat going? R' Tzaddok explains: Shabbat is the point of holiness which is inherent in every week. Hopefully, that point of holiness goes with us as we enter the work week ahead.

וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה' עַל־כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמֹד מִלֶּדֶת *"She conceived again, and bore a son, and she declared, 'This time אוֹדֶה / let me gratefully praise Hashem.' Therefore she called his name 'Yehuda'." (29:35)*

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 18b) relates that, after the Chanukah miracle, people started to mention Hashem's Name in their business contracts. They would write: "In such-and-such year of Yochanan, Kohen Gadol to the most lofty G-d . . ."

The Sages did not approve of this practice because most such documents eventually ended up in the trash. At last, the Sages were

able to stop this practice, and that day was declared a festival. Rashi z"l explains that the Sages viewed it as miraculous that they were able to talk the masses out of this practice.

R' Chaim Zaitchik z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) writes: We learn from this Gemara that it is miraculous that a person can break a bad habit. The reason is that, when a person becomes accustomed to doing something, especially if he does it for a long time, it becomes part of his nature.

By the same token, when a person has a lot of a good thing, he begins to take it for granted. He may still look back fondly at the first time he received that thing, but subsequent instances will not be anything special in his eyes.

Not so, our matriarch Leah! When her fourth child (Yehuda) was born, she pushed herself to not see the event as routine, and she gave thanks. (Ohr Chadash: Mo'adim p.422)



וַיִּדַּר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹקִים עִמָּדִי וּשְׁמָרַנִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ "***Then Yaakov took a vow, saying, 'If Elokim will be with me, will guard me on this way that I am going; will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear*** . . .'" (28:20)

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) writes: Many commentaries have asked – why did Yaakov say, "If Elokim will be with me," after Hashem already said (in verse 15), "Behold, I am with you"? He answers:

Verse 13 says, "Behold! Hashem was standing over him, and He said, 'I am Hashem . . .'" G-d appeared to Yaakov via the four-letter Divine Name that we pronounce "Hashem." That Name refers to the Divine Attribute of chessed / kindness. Yaakov, however, was not satisfied with the promise that Hashem would be with him, i.e., that Hashem's kindness would accompany Yaakov. Yaakov wanted to deserve G-d's

presence. Thus, Yaakov said, "If Elokim" – a reference to the Divine Attribute of din / justice – "will be with me."

R' Kluger adds: This explains why Yaakov concluded his vow (verse 22), "Whatever You will give me, I shall tithe to You [for charity]." Specifically through the mitzvah of tzedakah, one can deserve G-d's kindness [because we deserve to be treated by G-d as we treat others]. (Imrei Shefer)

וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל "***He will give me bread to eat . . .***" (28:20)

R' Meir Chadash z"l (1898-1989; mashgiach ruchani of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) related that he learned as a refuge during World War I how to look at events with the right attitude.

One day, he was trudging along a road with four friends during a torrential downpour. As they slowly made their way, the young men complained aloud about the deep mud that impeded their progress.

Suddenly, a farmer passed them and heard their complaints. Turning toward them, he rebuked them angrily saying, "This is not mud. It's bread." (Quoted in Ha'mashgiach Rabbi Meir p.68)

Consider money given to charity as though it were spent on a personal need or desire. Such money actually remains our own, safely invested in our Heavenly bank account, since we have not really parted with it. ~ R' Yehoshua Heschel of Monostrich zt"l

"The right temperature in a home is maintained by warm hearts, not hot heads. ~ Rabbi Paysach Krohn.

The Angels That Accompany Man

וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹקִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ ***"He dreamt, and behold a ladder stood on the ground and its head reached the Heavens; and behold, angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it."*** *(28:12)*

Rashi explains: The angels that accompanied Yaakov in Eretz Yisrael could not leave the Land. They went up to the Heavens, and angels of Chutz L'aretz/outside the Land came down to accompany him.

The gemara (Berachot 60b) teaches that every person is accompanied by angels, and before a person enters a restroom, he should recite: **הִתְכַּבְּדוּ מְכוּבָּדִים קְדוֹשִׁים מְשָׁרְתֵי עֶלְיוֹן, תְּנוּ כָּבוֹד לֵאלקי יִשְׂרָאֵל, הַרְפּוּ מִמֶּנִּי עַד שֶׁאֶכָּנֵס וְאֶעֱשֶׂה רְצוֹנִי וְאָבֹא אֲלֵיכֶם** '***Honor yourselves, honored ones, holy ones who serve Above. Give honor to the G-d of Israel, leave me alone until I enter and fulfill my desire, and then I will return to you***.'

Another version of this prayer appears in the **Tur**, as follows:

'***Honor yourselves, honored ones, holy ones who serve Above. Guard me, guard me. Aid me, aid me. Wait for me until I enter and exit, for such is the way of man***.'

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 3:1) states that today it is not customary to address the angels in this manner. Many poskim/halachic authorities explain that we do not consider ourselves to be sufficiently G-d-fearing to merit the company of angels.

If so, asks **R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l**, why do we recite Shalom Aleichem on Friday night? (That poem greets the two angels that the gemara says accompany man home from shul.)

He answers that the reason that angels accompanied our ancestors constantly in the time of the gemara was that our ancestors wore tefilin all day. We do not wear tefilin all day, so we are not

accompanied by angels. However, the Shabbat-day itself fulfills the role that tefilin fill on weekdays (i.e., being a sign of our covenant with Hashem); therefore, on Shabbat, angels accompany all of us in the merit of Shabbat just as they accompanied our ancestors on weekdays.

R' Yaakov Emden z"l (died 1776) disagrees strongly with the view that we are no longer accompanied by angels. He writes (in Mor U'ketziah ch.3):

It does not appear reasonable to assert that these angels accompany only the most pious people, and I can prove this from several places in the Talmud where it appears that angels accompany every person. For example, the gemara (Ta'anit 11a) states that if a person does not participate in the suffering of the community, the two angels that accompany him will testify against him. One learns from this that even a wicked person [who does not feels the community's pain] is accompanied by angels.

Furthermore, in Shabbat (119b) we learn that two angels accompany a person home on Friday night, one good angel and one bad angel. The gemara states that if one's house is not prepared for Shabbat, the bad angel says, "*May it be G-d's will that it be this way next week.*" From here, too, we learn that even one who is not extremely pious [i.e., he is not sufficiently prepared for Shabbat] is accompanied by angels.

Since the angels who come on Friday night are referred to as "good" and "bad," it seems to me that they refer to the yetzer ha'tov/good inclination and yetzer hara/evil inclination.

One of these angels teaches man to be good, while the other tempts him to do evil. [Therefore, again, the implication is that even those who are not extremely pious are accompanied by angels.] (Later, I saw in the **Zohar**, Parashat Toldot, that it says, "A person has two messengers and they are called the yetzer ha'tov and the yetzer

hara." Thank G-d, this is exactly as I had said on my own [above]. The same idea appears other places in the Zohar as well.)

Chazal say, "In the way that a person wants to go, they take him" [i.e., if a person wants to be good, Hashem assists him, and if he wants to sin, Hashem provides opportunities to sin]. It appears to me that the plural form ("_they_ take him") refers to the two angels that accompany a person all the time. Even when a person accepts the advice of one of the angels, good or bad, they both accompany him, and neither one leaves him. In fact, the Zohar says that these two angels eventually will testify against the person.

[Why, then, do we not recite the formula found in the gemara?] Because the prayer mentioned in the gemara was composed for a time when outhouses were located in the fields where no people were found. Accordingly, people needed protection and it was necessary to ask for mercy. Today, this is no longer necessary.

Some kabbalists and Sephardic poskim hold that, not only are we still accompanied by angels, we should also continue to recite the prayer as in the days of old. However, **R' Yaakov Chaim Sofer z"l** (early 20th century) writes that perhaps this recitation is intended only for those who study Torah full time. For others, it might appear to be presumptuous. (Kaf Ha'chaim 3:1)

R' Yosef Karo z"l (1488-1575; author of the Shulchan Aruch) was regularly visited by an angel known as a maggid. (This angel told R' Karo that he appeared to him in the merit of his study of mishnah.) The angel said, "When you enter a dirty place, I and all of my soldiers wait outside. You should know, however, that even more than we distance ourselves from you when you stand in a dirty place, do we distance ourselves from you when your thoughts depart from Torah study. Therefore, be very careful not to remove your thoughts from the Torah even for a moment." (Maggid Meisharim, Matot Masei)

וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא ***"He took from the stones of the place which he arranged around his head, and lay down in that place."*** *(28:11)*



R' Avraham Mordechai Alter z"l (the Gerrer Rebbe, known as the "Imrei Emes"; died 1948) once visited the town of Kielce, Poland, where he had several relatives. When he heard that his relatives were vying amongst themselves for the honor of hosting him, he said:

Chazal teach that the stones were fighting for the honor of being Yaakov's pillow, so a miracle occurred, and all the stones fused together and became one. How did this solve the problem? the rebbe asked. The stones could still fight over which part of the larger stone Yaakov would rest his head on.

The answer, he said, is that when there is unity, Jews do not compete for the chance to do an act of chessed / kindness. No one cares who performs the chessed, only that it gets done so that the person in need is cared for. *(Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)*

***"The word אהבה has a gematria of 13. When two people show each other true אהבה, the total is doubled to equal 26, which is the equivalent to the gematria of the name of Hashem* : י-ה-ו-ה.**

Thus, it is clear that when we share true love for each other, Hashem rests His Divine presence between us." ~ R' Chaim Vital Zt'l.

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאָה יַעֲקֹב אֶת־רָחֵל בַּת־לָבָן אֲחִי אִמּוֹ וְאֶת־צֹאן לָבָן אֲחִי אִמּוֹ וַיִּגַּשׁ יַעֲקֹב וַיָּגֶל אֶת־הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וַיַּשְׁקְ אֶת־צֹאן לָבָן אֲחִי אִמּוֹ ***"And it was, when Yaakov saw Rachel, daughter of Lavan his mother's brother, and the flock of Lavan his mother's brother, Yaakov came forward and rolled the stone off the mouth of the well and watered the sheep of Lavan his mother's brother."*** *(29:10)*



Why does the Torah reiterate so many times that Lavan was the brother of Yaakov's mother?

Rabbeinu Bachya z"l (Spain; 14th century) offers several explanations:

The Torah is informing us that everything Yaakov did for the evil Lavan, he did in honor of his own mother.

Alternatively: One might have thought that Yaakov obtained the strength to lift the stone off the well because of a desire to impress Rachel, whom he was seeing for the first time.

Therefore the Torah tells us that Yaakov's actions were motivated entirely by his desire to fulfil his mother's command that he travel to Lavan's home.

"When we find ourselves in a difficult situation, we should look back at how many hills Hashem has helped us climb, and that will give us the encouragement to go on and recognize that the salvation will happen." ~ The Chofetz Chaim.

וְהִנֵּה אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וּשְׁמַרְתִּיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־תֵּלֵךְ וַהֲשִׁבֹתִיךָ אֶל־הָאֲדָמָה הַזֹּאת כִּי לֹא אֶעֶזָבְךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם־עָשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ "***Behold, I am with you; I will guard you wherever you go, and I will return you to this soil; for I will not forsake you until I will have done what I have spoken to you.***" *(28:15)*

A chassid once came to **R' Yisrael Friedman z"l** (the Rizhiner Rebbe; died 1850) for advice. As he was waiting his turn to see the rebbe, the rebbe's young son, **Dovid Moshe** (the future **Chortkover Rebbe**), approached him and asked him what he wanted. "I need a yeshuah / salvation," the chassid said.

Young Dovid Moshe replied, "I'll wait here for you. I'd like to know what my father tells you."

A few minutes later, the man emerged and reported, "The rebbe assured me that Hashem will help."

"And what will be until He helps?" the boy asked.

"I really don't know," the man replied helplessly.

"Go back and ask my father," instructed little Dovid Moshe.

The man re-entered and repeated the boy's question. Said, the rebbe, "Hashem will also help until He helps. There is proof of this in the Torah. Hashem promised Yaakov that He would not abandon him "*until I will have done what I have spoken to you.*"

Does this mean that Hashem will abandon Yaakov after He has fulfilled His promises? Obviously not! Rather, it means that Hashem will not refrain from caring for Yaakov even before He is ready to keep His promises to the patriarch.

"Life is about mastering every circumstance that Hashem puts us in." ~ The Chofetz Chaim.

Letters from Our Sages



The following letter was written by ***R' Chaim Ozer Grodzenski z"l****, unofficial rabbi of Vilna, to* ***R' Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz z"l****, the "****Chazon Ish****," who was then living in Eretz Yisrael.*

With G-d's help! Thursday, 27 Shevat 5696 [January 1937]

Continuing from my previous letter, I am now immersed in the matter of shechitah. The wife of the Senate President proposed in the Sejm [the Polish parliament] to outlaw shechitah in Poland. This is a possibility that never occurred to our imaginations – that they might outlaw something that affects three million of our people. The situation is very serious and even dangerous. It is quite possible that they will obtain a majority in the legislature, although it appears that the cabinet will oppose the idea. It was my thought to decree a fast day in Eretz Yisrael and the entire diaspora, and I told this to a gathering of rabbis in Warsaw – to which I could not travel for various reasons. However, because of local political considerations, they do not agree to allow the whole world to raise a fuss. . .

This matter requires [G-d's] great mercy and tremendous effort here and in all countries. I have written to many places regarding this. Also in Eretz Yisrael it would be appropriate to rouse the populace and to pray before the Kotel Hama'aravi, and maybe also to decree a fast, and to do whatever else can be done. Let Poland know about the fuss that is coming from abroad. Even if they do not want to hear this, it will make a proper impression. . .

Several rabbis from Lithuania are there [presumably Warsaw] all the time. This costs a great deal. I have already spent 1,000 gold coins and I have no source from which to repay this debt. . . Your

brother Meir [i.e., R' Meir Karelitz z"l, later a leading rabbi in Bnei Brak] is in Warsaw all the time, and also Rabbis x and y [the names were deleted by the publisher] and other Lithuanian rabbis are standing guard regarding this matter.

Today is a day of prayer here [in Vilna]. Attached is the prayer text that I composed. May Hashem hurry to our salvation.

[Ed. postscript: The decree was eventually annulled.]

וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וְהִנֵּה־הִוא לֵאָה *"And it was, in the morning, that behold it was Leah!" (29:25)*

Rashi asks: "And at night, was she not Leah?" Rashi answers that Yaakov had expected Lavan to deceive him, and he had given certain passwords to Rachel so that he could recognize her on their wedding night. Rachel, seeing Leah's anguish, had conveyed those passwords to Leah so that Yaakov did not realize until the light of morning that he had been tricked.

R' Shalom Mordechai Schwadron z"l (1913-1997; the "Maggid" of Yerushalayim) offers the following analysis of Rachel's and Leah's actions:

What right did Leah have to marry Yaakov against his will? The midrash says that Leah told Yaakov: "Is there a book that doesn't have students? Just as you tricked your father and took the blessings, so I learned from you and tricked you."

R' Schwardon explains that Leah meant the following: You, Yaakov, reasoned that you were permitted to fool your father because it would honor Hashem if you received the blessings rather than Esav. In the same way, my intention was to enhance Heaven's honor by being one of the mothers of the Twelve Tribes and by not marrying Esav.

Alternatively, Leah may have argued more simply: "It was always said that Rivka's older son would marry Lavan's older daughter. Since you bought the birthright from Esav and took his blessings, you are the firstborn, and you must marry me."

This argument highlights the greatness of Rachel's act in telling her sister the passwords. If Yaakov "belonged" to Leah, then Rachel would belong to Esav. Nevertheless, Rachel accepted even this fate, all so that her sister would not be humiliated. This is consistent with the Sages' teaching that one should rather allow himself to be burnt rather than to humiliate another person.

Nevertheless, what right did Rachel have to fool Yaakov? R' Schwadron answers this question with the following story- within-a-story:

R' Yehoshua Brim z"l (20th century; rosh yeshiva of the Rizhiner Yeshiva) once heard of a woman who became widowed one week before Pesach. R' Brim immediately made all the necessary preparations for the widow's Pesach seder, even arranging for a young man to come to her home to conduct the seder.

On the night of Pesach, R' Brim informed his own family that he would be home late, as he wanted to stop at the widow's house to ensure that everything was in order. Discovering that the young man had not arrived, R' Brim himself sat down to conduct the seder. And he did not hurry; rather, he conducted the seder as he would have in his own home.

Finally, hours late, R' Brim arrived home. Hearing where he had been, his family was upset – true, he had performed a great kindness for the widow and her family, but what about his own family?!

R' Brim answered with the following story: **The Chazon Ish z"l** (died 1953) once had a hand in arranging a match for a certain young man, and he asked to be invited to the engagement party. When the party was about to begin, a delegation (including the young R' Brim) was

dispatched to the Chazon Ish's house to bring the sage. However, they found the sage deep in conversation with an elderly couple that was about to open a five-and-dime store. What was the conversation about? They asked him what products they should sell, what brand of needles they should stock, and similar questions.

Finally, the Chazon Ish was ready to leave. "Surely you are wondering," he said, "how I could keep everyone waiting for me. The answer is that the act of kindness that I was performing was as much your mitzvah, and the mitzvah of every Jew, as it was my mitzvah. It's just that I was fortunate enough that it came to me rather than to you."

"So, too," R' Brim told his family, "it was as much your mitzvah to help the widow with her seder as it was mine. It was, therefore, proper for me to make you wait."

Similarly, said R' Schwadron, Yaakov knew that Leah was pained by the rumors that she was destined to marry Esav, and by the fact that her younger sister (Rachel) was preceding her in marriage. Just as Rachel was obligated to help her sister, Yaakov was obligated to save Leah from her embarrassment by marrying her. (Lev Shalom)



וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת־דִּבְרֵי בְנֵי־לָבָן לֵאמֹר לָקַח יַעֲקֹב אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לְאָבִינוּ וּמֵאֲשֶׁר לְאָבִינוּ עָשָׂה אֵת כָּל־הַכָּבֵד הַזֶּה *"Then he heard the words of Lavan's sons, saying, 'Yaakov has taken all that belonged to our father, and from that which belonged to our father he amassed all this Kavod / wealth'." (31:1)*

Midrash Rabbah teaches: **כָּבֵד** - [literally, "honor"] refers only to silver and gold, as is written (Nachum 2:10), **בְּזוּ כֶסֶף בְּזוּ זָהָב וְאֵין קֵצֶה לַתְּכוּנָה כָּבֵד מִכֹּל כְּלֵי חֶמְדָּה** "***Plunder silver, plunder gold; the amount is limitless! Kavod*** . . ."

One might ask: This Midrash appears to contradict Pirkei Avot (Ch.3), which teaches, "'Kavod' refers only to Torah."

R' Eliyahu z"l (1720-1797; the Vilna Gaon) is quoted as answering: Throughout Tanach, the word "**כבוד**" is "full," i.e., it includes the letter "Vav". In only two places it is "lacking," i.e., it is spelled without a Vav. Those two places are in our verse and in the quoted verse from Nachum. - Kavod that is lacking, not genuine, comes from silver and gold. Kavod that is complete and genuine, comes from Torah Study.

וַיַּ֣רְא וְהִנֵּ֤ה בְאֵר֙ בַּשָּׂדֶ֔ה וְהִנֵּה־שָׁ֥ם שְׁלֹשָׁ֛ה עֲדָרֵי־צֹ֖אן רֹבְצִ֣ים עָלֶ֑יהָ כִּ֣י מִן־הַבְּאֵ֗ר הַהִוא֙ יַשְׁקוּ֙ הָעֲדָרִ֔ים וְהָאֶ֥בֶן גְּדֹלָ֖ה עַל־פִּ֥י הַבְּאֵֽר *"He looked, and behold — a well in the field! And behold, three flocks of sheep lay there beside it, for from that well they would water the flocks . . ." (29:2)*



Ramban quotes a midrash: This was a hint to Yaakov regarding his future. The well represents the Bet Hamikdash, and the three flocks represent the three pilgrimage festivals. It was during those three festivals that Yaakov's descendants would draw spiritual sustenance from the Bet Hamikdash. After the flocks were watered, i.e., after each of the three festivals, "they would put back the stone over the mouth of the well in its place" (verse 3), i.e., the source of divine inspiration would be sealed until the next festival.

R' Gedalyah Schorr z"l (1911-1979; Rosh Yeshivah of Torah Voda'ath) suggests that this midrash provides the source for the festive gathering called a "Ne'ilat Ha'chag" ,which some people hold on the last evening of a festival. Before the stone is put back on the well until the next festival, we attempt to draw some final bits of Divine inspiration from the holiday.

הַדּוּדָאִים נָתְנוּ־רֵיחַ וְעַל־פְּתָחֵינוּ כָּל־מְגָדִים חֲדָשִׁים גַּם־יְשָׁנִים דּוֹדִי צָפַנְתִּי לָךְ
"***The dudaim-flowers emitted a fragrance, and at our doors are precious fruits . . .*" *(Shir Hashirim 7:14)*



The midrash says, "The dudaim-flowers emitted a fragrance" — this refers to Reuven [who brought dudaim-flowers to his mother in our parashah]. "And at our doors are precious fruits" — this refers to the Chanukah candles.

What is the connection between Reuven and Chanukah? Also, why is the Chanukah menorah placed at the door?

R' Avraham Yoffen z"l (Novardok Rosh Yeshiva) answers: The Torah says (4:7), **לַפֶּתַח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ** "***Sin crouches at the door***."

All spiritual downfalls begin when one opens the door to the yetzer hara. This was the unique nature of the Greek oppression of the Jews. The Greeks did not try to force our ancestors to convert to a different religion; rather, the Greeks tried to entice the Jews to enter the halls of Greek wisdom. In this way, the Greeks hoped that their own beliefs would infiltrate into the Jewish belief system.

How did the Chashmonaim defeat the Greeks? They placed a candle at the door as a guard. **כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אוֹר** – "***For a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light***" (Mishlei 6:23). They refused to allow even a small amount of Greek influence to affect their lifestyle.

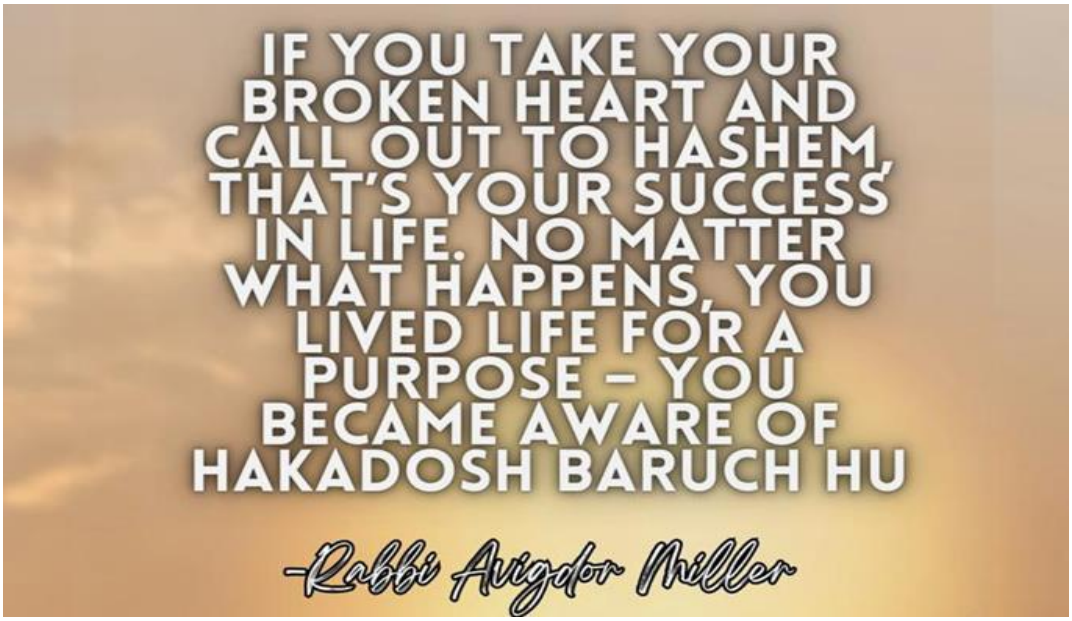
The Torah tells us (Bereishit 35:22) that Reuven sinned, but Chazal explain (Shabbat 55b) that Reuven's sin was extremely subtle. Nevertheless, Reuven repented, for he recognized that if the door to sin is opened even a little, if a Jews lets his spiritual guard down at all, his downfall inevitably follows.

וַיִּיקַץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְּׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאָנֹכִי לֹא יָדָעְתִּי "***Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, `Surely Hashem is present in this place and I did not know'.***" *(28:16)*



R' Reuven Halevi Horowitz z"l (early 19th century Polish rabbi) comments: "Yaakov" refers to a Jew when he is at a lowly spiritual state (in contrast to "Yisrael" which refers to a Jew when his spiritual state is elevated.) A Yaakov should awake from the stupor caused by excessive entrenchment in the materialism of this world, and he should repent. What is the most effective tool for accomplishing this?

Recognizing that Hashem is present everywhere – מְלֹא כָל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ "***The whole world is filled with His glory***" (Yishayah 6:3) – although we easily forget this fact. One should say to G-d, "I'm sorry! I would never have sinned if I had remembered that You were watching."



וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא '***He took from the stones of the place and arranged them around his head, and lay down in that place.***' (28:11)

וַיַּשְׁכֵּם יַעֲקֹב בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיָּשֶׂם אֹתָהּ מַצֵּבָה שָׁמֶן עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ '***Yaakov arose early in the morning, took the stone that he had placed around his head and set it up as a marker.***' (28:18)

R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z"l (1910-2012) writes: According to one midrash, there originally were three stones, but they fused into one stone. The three stones allude to the three pillars on which the world stands (Avot 1:2): **שְׁלשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוֹדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים** – Torah, the Temple service/prayer, and acts of kindness.

Some people think that it is enough to choose one of these pillars and to neglect the others; for example, to perform acts of kindness, but not to study Torah. That is wrong, however, as we learn from the fact that the three stones fused into one.

R' Elyashiv adds: When Moshe Rabbeinu came down from Har Sinai and saw Bnei Yisrael dancing in front of the Golden Calf, he smashed the Luchot.

It's understandable that he smashed the tablet which bore the commandment not to make idols, since Bnei Yisrael had made an idol. But why did he smash the second tablet, which bore the commandments between man and his fellow man?

The answer is as noted above: All parts of the Torah are one unit. They are not separable, and a person cannot choose which parts to follow and which parts not to follow. (Kitvei Ha'Grish: Avot)

"Just think – there is no one else like you. Cherish your specialness." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l.

וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹקִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ "***He dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward; and behold! angels of Elokim were ascending and descending on it.***" (28:12)



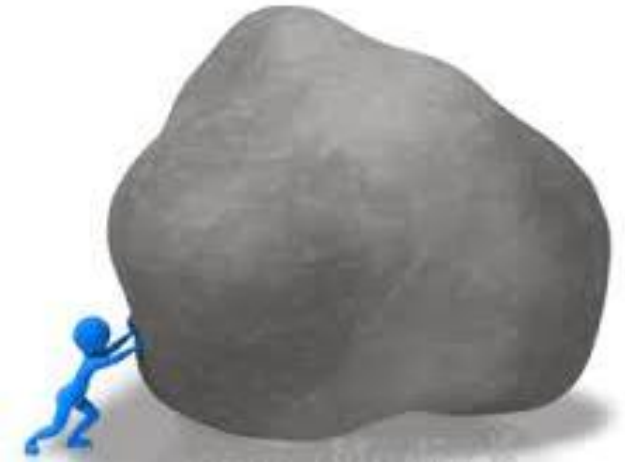
Rashi z"l writes: It says first "ascending" and afterwards "descending." Those angels who accompanied Yaakov in Eretz Yisrael were not permitted to leave the Land. They ascended to Heaven, and angels that were to serve outside the Land descended to accompany Yaakov.

R' Zvi Pesach Frank z"l (1873-1960; rabbi of Yerushalayim) cites an alternative explanation in the name of **R' Chaim Berlin z"l** (1832-1913; rabbi of Moscow and Yerushalayim): People covet seats on the eastern wall in a shul because that's where the aron kodesh is. If the aron kodesh would be moved to the western wall, that would be the most distinguished side.

Similarly, verse 13 says that Yaakov dreamt that "Hashem was standing over him." In the words of our Sages, Yaakov became "G-d's Throne." It follows that Yaakov's location was the more distinguished place. When angels traversed the ladder from Heaven to earth, where Yaakov was, they were actually ascending. When they left Yaakov and climbed to Heaven, they were descending. (Har Zvi Ha'shalem Al Ha'Torah)

"Even the local dullard knows something you don't. Learn from him, from her, learn from everyone." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l.

"***He looked and behold–a well in the field! And behold! three flocks of sheep lay there beside it . . . and the stone over the mouth of the well was large. When all the flocks would be assembled there, they would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep; then they would put back the stone over the mouth of the well, in its place. He said, 'Look, the day is still long; it is not yet time to bring the livestock in; water the flock and go on grazing.' . . . Yaakov rolled the stone off the mouth of the well and watered the sheep of Lavan his mother's brother.***" (29:2-3, 7, 10)



R' Yaakov Ariel shlita (Ramat Gan) explains: Apparently the well was covered with such a heavy stone because the people of Charan didn't trust each other, and the only way to prevent someone from taking more than his share of water was to cover the well with a stone so heavy that it took all of the shepherds together to move it. - However, the shepherds used this as an excuse to lounge around at the well, as if waiting for the other shepherds to gather, thus neglecting their duties and cheating their employers.

Yaakov, the man of truth, could not tolerate such behavior. Thus, although he was a stranger in town, he rebuked them. It was that burning desire for truth and honesty that gave Yaakov the strength to single-handedly roll back the stone that covered the well.

"It is more important to be 'glatt yosher' in one's dealings with people than to be 'glatt kosher' in what one eats." ~ R' Yosef Breuer zt"l.

Once, on Thursday of the week in which Parashat Vayetze was read, a chassid came to take leave of **R' Chaim Hager z"l** of Kosov (the "**Torat Chaim**"; 1795-1854). Before leaving, the chassid mentioned that he planned to be in the town of Zablutov, where R' Chaim's brother lived, for Shabbat Parashat Vayishlach.

"So you plan to be in Zablutov for Shabbat Parashat Vayishlach?" the rebbe repeated, but he made no other comment.

The trip did not work out as the chassid planned, and he was forced to return to Kosov. He appeared before R' Chaim, and he asked: "If you knew that I would not make it to Zablutov, why did you not say anything?"

R' Chaim responded, "You had to learn a lesson. We read in Parashat Vayetze (28:20), **וַיִּדַּר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹקִים עִמָּדִי וּשְׁמָרַנִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה** `***Then Yaakov took a vow, "If G-d will be with me . . .***'

What is added by the word, **לֵאמֹר**?

It means, `to say.' Yaakov took a vow that wherever he went and whatever he did, he would say, **אִם־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹקִים עִמָּדִי** `***If G-d will be with me***.' - Since you did not say, `I hope to be in Zablutov, if G-d will be with me,' I had a feeling that your trip would not succeed." (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

"A person who drives himself ambitiously to earn his livelihood is like the passenger who impatiently pushes the wall of the train in a vain attempt to make it move faster. - All of a person's income is determined on Rosh Hashana, so why should he wear himself to the bone struggling till he makes himself ridiculous?

What has been decreed for him will come to him, and even if he turns the world over, he will not receive a penny more." ~ R' Yosef Yozel Hurwitz zt"l.

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה ***"Yaakov departed from Beer Sheva vayeilech Charanah / and he went toward Charan."*** *(28:10)*

Rashi writes: Any word that requires a "lamed" at the beginning may instead have a "heh" at the end. [Here, for example, instead of "le'Charan," the Torah says, "Charanah."]

R' Zvi Elimelech Shapira z"l (1843-1924; the "**Bluzhover Rebbe**") asks: Why is the form with the "heh" better than the form with the "lamed"? Also, what is added by the word, "vayeilech / he went"? The verse would mean the same thing without that word!

He answers: Our verse was written with four extra letters: vav, yud, and kaf of "vayeilech" and heh of "Charanah." (The lamed of "vayeilech" is needed to convert "Charanah" to "le'Charan.")

These four letters are the end letters of the phrase (Tehilim 91:11): **כִּי מַלְאָכָיו יְצַוֶּה־לָּךְ** ***"He will charge his angels to you, [to protect you on all your ways]."***

This is precisely what Yaakov experienced! (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ ***"If He will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear."*** *(28:20)*

When the first winter arrived after **R' Pinchus David Horowitz z"l (the "Bostoner Rebbe"**) had settled in Boston, he had only the clothes on his back to keep him warm, and no coat.

There was an old Jew (Mr. Rosenblatt) in Boston who had been a chassid in Europe of R' Pinchus David's great-grandfather, **R' Moshe of Lelov**. One night, R' Moshe appeared in a dream to Mr. Rosenblatt and rebuked him, saying, "My descendant is cold, and you are sleeping?!" - After this dream repeated itself, Mr. Rosenblatt sought out the recently arrived immigrant from Yerushalayim. "Who are you?" he asked.

"A Jew from Eretz Yisrael," R' Pinchus David responded humbly. Only after he was pressed did he admit that he was a great- grandson of R' Moshe of Lelov.

Mr. Rosenblatt bought the Rebbe a warm winter coat, which he wore until it disintegrated. But he never threw it away.

"If my ancestor came all the way from heaven to bring me this coat, I cannot throw it away," he explained. (Shoshelet Boston)

R' Pinchus David Halevi Horowitz z"l -(The "Bostoner Rebbe")

R' Pinchus David arrived in New York in June 1915. While still living in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, R' Pinchus David designed what may have been one of the earliest Shabbat-clocks. Before long, he was recognized for the tzaddik and scholar that he was, and he was offered several rabbinic posts. He chose Boston, in gratitude to a Bostonian Jew who had helped him settle his immigration status.

In Boston, R' Pinchus David found a motley group of chassidim of various geographic backgrounds and different "styles" of serving Hashem. However, R' Pinchus David had no trouble catering to the needs of all of them. Eventually, he adopted the title "Bostoner Rebbe." Explaining why he did not choose the more distinguished title of one of his ancestors, R' Pinchus David said that this way, if he failed in his mission, people would say, "Well, what can you expect of an American rebbe?!"

As in many American cities, Boston in the 1920's had large congregations made up of elderly people, but very little religious participation by the youth. To remedy this situation, R' Pinchus David founded a talmud Torah in Boston. He later realized that a few hours of Torah study in the afternoon would not overcome the public school influence, and he therefore proposed a day school with a joint religious-secular program. However, this proposal was rejected by

his rabbinic colleagues, who felt that there was no place in a talmud Torah for secular studies.

R' Pinchus David never stopped acting and dressing like a Yerushalmi Jew. He introduced to the United States several customs which we take for granted, most notably shemurah matzah. He also introduced the idea of chalav Yisrael. R' Pinchus David frequently spoke out on family purity, telling people who found its laws irrational that ritual purity, just like the invisible force of electricity, is no less powerful just because one doesn't understand it. The Rebbe's work on behalf of kashrut even brought him death threats from the Mafia, which controlled many aspects of food production.

R' Pinchus David never stopped longing for Eretz Yisrael, and he made aliyah three times. Each time, however, the Hand of G-d brought him back to Boston. Eventually, he moved to Williamsburg (Brooklyn), becoming one of the earliest chassidic rebbes to settle there. (Source: Shoshelet Boston)



וַיֻּגַּד לְלָבָן בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי כִּי בָרַח יַעֲקֹב. וַיִּקַּח אֶת־אֶחָיו עִמּוֹ וַיִּרְדֹּף אַחֲרָיו דֶּרֶךְ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וַיַּדְבֵּק אֹתוֹ בְּהַר הַגִּלְעָד *"It was told to Lavan on the third day that Yaakov had fled. So he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days, catching up with him on Mount Gil'ad." (31:22-23)*

Rashi explains: The messenger had to travel for three days to tell Lavan, during which time Yaakov continued his journey. Thus, Yaakov was six days' distance from Lavan when Lavan got the news. Yet, Lavan caught up to Yaakov on the seventh day.

We may infer, therefore, that all the distance that took Yaakov seven days to cover, Lavan covered in one day. This is why the verse states: "He pursued him a distance of seven days," rather than, "He pursued him for seven days." [Until here from Rashi]



R' Moshe Miskin z"l (1860-1929; Mashgiach Ruchani of Yeshivas Toras Chessed in Baranovitch, Poland; better known as R' Moshe Midner) writes in the name of his grandfather, **R' Avraham Weinberg z"l** (1803-1883; first **Slonimer Rebbe**): No doubt, Yaakov expected to experience "Kefitzat Ha'derech," a miraculous shortening of his journey, as he escaped from Lavan.

Not only did that not happen, it was, instead, Lavan who experienced Kefitzat Ha'derech! Even so, Lavan could not harm Yaakov. [This teaches that Hashem can be counted on to bring salvation, though it may not necessarily unfold in the way a person expects.] (Kitvei Rabbi Moshe Midner)

An Astonishing Midrash

וְעֵינֵי לֵאָה רַכּוֹת "***The eyes of Leah were tender***" (29:17) therefore it says (Yirmiyah 31:15-16): **מִנְעִי קוֹלֵךְ מִבֶּכִי וְעֵינַיִךְ מִדִּמְעָה כִּי יֵשׁ שָׂכָר לִפְעֻלָּתֵךְ נְאֻם־ה' וְשָׁבוּ מֵאֶרֶץ אוֹיֵב. וְיֵשׁ־תִּקְוָה לְאַחֲרִיתֵךְ נְאֻם־ה' וְשָׁבוּ בָנִים לִגְבוּלָם** "***Restrain your voice from weeping . . . for there is hope for you ultimately . . . and the children will return to their borders.***"

The verse quoted from Yirmiyah speaks to Rachel. What connection does it have to Leah?

R' Yehonatan Eyebschutz z"l (died 1764) explains:

The gemara asks: The Torah does not speak disparagingly of animals (see Bereishit 7:8); how, then, can it speak disparagingly of Leah's eyes?

The gemara answers that the Torah is praising Leah. Her eyes were tender because she cried at the thought that, as the elder daughter, she might be expected to marry Esav, the elder son of her aunt Rivkah.

Chazal say that in the merit of these tears, Leah earned the right to be buried with Yaakov. This meant, however, that Rachel, Yaakov's favorite wife, could not be buried with him.

The above verses from Yirmiyah are Hashem's consolation to Rachel: "*I want you to lie by the side of the road so that you can pray for your children when they are taken into exile. Do not cry endlessly, however, for there is hope. The children shall return to their borders.*" (Midrash Yehonatan)



וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם ***"He lay down in that place." (28:11)***

Rashi writes: **בְּאוֹתוֹ מָקוֹם שָׁכַב אֲבָל י"ד שָׁנִים שֶׁשִּׁמֵּשׁ בְּבֵית עֵבֶר לֹא שָׁכַב בַּלַּיְלָה, שֶׁהָיָה עוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה** "***In that place he lay down, but for the prior 14 years he did not lay down at night for he was studying Torah in the house of [his ancestor] Ever.***"

R' Michel Barenbaum shlita (mashgiach of Mesivta Tifereth Yerushalayim in New York) asks: How is it possible for the Torah to omit such a detail regarding Yaakov' life?

He answers that the Torah is teaching us Yaakov's greatness. To him it was nothing to study Torah for 14 years without lying down in bed. To the contrary, it was obvious to Yaakov that one cannot go to the world of a Lavan without such preparation.

We are taught in Pirkei Avot: "*If you have studied much Torah, do not be impressed with yourself; for that reason you were created!*" A Jew must recognize that the goal of his existence is Torah study.

King David said (Tehilim 119:162), "*I rejoice over Your word like one who finds a great treasure.*"

The Chafetz Chaim explained: If one stood before a treasure of gems knowing that he had only a limited amount of time to gather the stones, would he waste a moment? This is how David felt, and everyone should feel, about Torah study. (Sichot Mussar)



וַיֶּאֱהַב יַעֲקֹב אֶת־רָחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֶעֱבָדְךָ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים בְּרָחֵל בִּתְּךָ הַקְּטַנָּה **"*Yaakov loved Rachel, so he said, 'I will work for you seven years, for Rachel your younger daughter'.*"** (29:18)

Why seven years? asks the **Zohar**. Why not ten months or a year?

The Zohar answers: Yaakov behaved wisely, so that no one should interpret his attraction to Rachel as a physical one.

R' Chaim Zaitchik z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buczacz, Ukraine; later in Israel) comments: A seven-year-long engagement is something that only a person who is like an angel could withstand. This tells us who Yaakov Avinu was.

Similarly, we see who Yaakov was from the comment that Rashi z"l makes on the verse (29:11), "*Yaakov kissed Rachel; and he raised his voice and wept.*" Rashi explains: "He wept because he foresaw with Ruach Ha'kodesh that she would not be buried with him in the Me'arat Ha'machpelah."

Only a person whose focus is on eternity thinks such thoughts when he meets his future wife for the first time, notes R' Zaitchik. (Ma'ayanei Ha'chaim)



"It is written in Tehillim 89:9 "וֶאֱמוּנָתְךָ סְבִיבוֹתֶיךָ" - This can be translated, "When one has emunah, it is like he is hugging Hashem, kiveyachol." ~ R' Moshe of Kobrin zt"l.



וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְאֶחָיו לקטו אֲבָנִים "***Yaakov said to his brothers, 'Gather stones!'***" (31:46)

Rashi z"l writes: הֵם בָּנָיו שֶׁהָיוּ לוֹ אַחִים, נִגָּשִׁים אֵלָיו לְצָרָה וּלְמִלְחָמָה "***Really his sons, who were like brothers to him since they were standing by him in trouble and in battle.***"

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l writes: The Torah is teaching that a parent can, and should, make his child into his "brother" in some respects by making him a partner in his work.

This begins when a parent says to a toddler, "You be my helper!" When a child sees himself as a partner with his parents, he does not feel like a burden is being imposed on him. And, as the level of importance of the tasks entrusted to the young "partner" increases, so does the child's own sense of responsibility increase. (Zeriah U'binyan B'chinuch p.27)

Letters from Our Sages

This letter was written by **R' Avraham of Slonim z"l (1809-1883), the first Slonimer Rebbe**, to a chassid.

Your letter reached me. May the good and merciful G-d please console you in the midst of the general consolation of Zion and Yerushalayim.

Regarding your overabundance of worry, it is already written [Mishlei 12:25], "*If there is worry in a person's heart, yesichenah*," which our Sages explained to mean, "He should remove it from his thoughts." One must strengthen himself very much with the stubbornness of a victorious warrior to remove worry from his heart and turn his thoughts to other things. How good it would be to be happy with one's lot in one's day-to-day life!

Our Sages say that sinners are full of mitzvot like pomegranates [are full of seeds]. But, are not all Jews full of mitzvot like

pomegranates? And, if these people are full of mitzvot, what makes them sinners? The answer is that [they are called sinners because] they are never happy, which leads them to fall prey to repulsive desires and, ultimately, to sin willfully. Thus, one must flee from sadness as one flees from a goring ox.

The correct and effective way to be spared from a black mood is to review the statement of our Sages, "Whatever measure He metes out to you, thank Him very much" [see Rashi to Devarim 6:5]. Everything the Merciful One does is for a good end. This attitude will "sweeten" the judgment and turn the attribute of strict justice to mercy.

A certain wise man engaged in business for many years but in the end, an act of G-d caused him to lose everything. Even so, he was happy with what he had. Someone asked him the reason, and he answered: I once had a neighbour who was of the same station as I was, but he loved money so much that I once heard him say, "If, G-d forbid, G-d would decree that I be poor, I would rather not have life."

I was alarmed by his foolish words, and I told him, "To the contrary! Life is more precious than anything, for as long as one lives, he has hopes for two worlds." And, I saw close-up how my friend received the fate he had wished on himself, while I, thank G-d, remain alive.

I now hope for eternal life in the World-to-Come, and in the interim, I fulfill the verse, (Yeshayah 12:1), "*I will thank You, Hashem, for You have been angry at me.*" (Yesod Ha'avodah – Michtevei Kodesh)

"A Jew cannot imagine just how joyous he will be in Heaven if only one forbidden thought will be detracted from his record." ~ The Vilna Gaon zt"l.

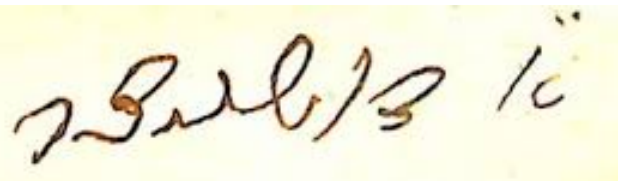
וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא "***He encountered the place and spent the night there because the sun had set; he took from the stones of the place which he arranged around his head and lay down in that place.***" (28:11)

Rashi z"l comments on the last phrase in the verse: "The word 'that' indicates a limiting statement; in that place he lay down to sleep, but during the preceding 14 years which he had spent in the academy of Ever [according to the midrash], he never lay down at night for he was constantly engaged in the study of the Torah."

[Ed. note: Contrary to popular perception, Rashi and the midrash which he is quoting do not say that Yaakov did not sleep for 14 years, which is not humanly possible (see Nedarim 15a). Rather, he did not lie down for 14 years. See further below.]

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005) writes: Our Sages speak of the Patriarchs and even of later sages in terms that seem unbelievable to us, for example that Yaakov did not lie down for 14 years. Likewise, when one sage of the Gemara wishes to dismiss a statement of another sage, it sometimes uses the expression, "He said that in his sleep." While this statement is meant to be dismissive, R' Wolbe writes, it indirectly indicates the sage's praise- that even in his sleep he spoke words of Torah.

[How can we relate to, or be inspired by, such feats, which seem beyond our reach?] R' Wolbe continues: There are still Jews who perform similarly super-human feats.



R' Wolbe writes that he personally knew **R' Elya Dushnitzer z"l** (1877-1949) of Petach Tikva, a student of the **Chafetz Chaim**, who did not lie down in a bed on a weeknight. He sat at his shtender and studied until he dozed-off, and then he took a short nap at his shtender and resumed learning.

Not so long ago, before electricity was widespread, many Torah scholars would learn with candles in their hands so that the dripping wax would keep them awake.

People who could perform such feats had no trouble picturing how Yaakov could avoid laying down for 14 years due to his desire to study Torah. (Shiurei Chumash p.90)



וַיֹּאמֶר הֵן עוֹד הַיּוֹם גָּדוֹל לֹא־עֵת הֵאָסֵף הַמִּקְנֶה הַשְׁקוּ הַצֹּאן וּלְכוּ רְעוּ

"He said, 'Look, the day is still long; it is not yet time to bring in the livestock. Water the flock and go on grazing.'

"But they said, 'We will be unable to, until all the flocks have gathered and they will roll the stone off the mouth of the well. We will then water the flock'." (29:7-8)

R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; 1194-1270; Spain and Eretz Yisrael) explains that Yaakov felt the need to rebuke the shepherds because it was abhorrent to him that they were standing around at the well, thereby depriving the sheep of grazing time and their employers of their honest services.

But, why, asks **R' Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman** (1886-1969; **the "Ponovezher Rav"**), did the shepherds apparently accept Yaakov's rebuke– as suggested by the fact that they responded appropriately instead of telling Yaakov to mind his own business.

The answer, says R' Kahaneman, is found a few verses earlier (29:4): **וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יַעֲקֹב אַחַי מֵאַיִן אַתֶּם "*Yaakov said to them, 'My brothers, where are you from?'***

When one senses that he is being rebuked with a feeling of brotherhood, he will accept that rebuke. (Quoted in *Savta Kook* p.99)



וַיֵּלֶךְ רְאוּבֵן בִּימֵי קְצִיר־חִטִּים וַיִּמְצָא דוּדָאִים בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיָּבֵא אֹתָם אֶל־לֵאָה אִמּוֹ
"Reuven went out in the days of the wheat harvest; he found Duda'im in the field and brought them to Leah, his mother." (30:14)



R' Ovadiah Seforno z"l (1470-1550; Italy) writes: Reuven saw that his mother was disappointed that she had stopped having children, so he brought her Duda'im, a flower whose smell promotes fertility.

R' Uri Weisblum shlita (Mashgiach Ruchani of Yeshivat Nachalat Ha'levi'im in Haifa, Israel) observes: Reuven was all of four or five years old at the time, yet he was already capable of feeling another's pain. - This is the same trait that Reuven exhibited years later, when he saved Yosef's life, intending to return Yosef to his father (Bereishit 37:21-22).

Midrash Rabbah teaches that in the merit of Reuven's concern for Yosef's life, the first life-saving Ir Miklat / City of Refuge, where accidental murderers were protected from avenging relatives, was established in Reuven's territory.

R' Weisblum adds: The Midrash teaches that the Duda'im were pictured on flag of the tribe of Reuven. This was not merely a historical reference; rather, it was a constant reminder to Reuven's descendants of the care for others that their progenitor exemplified. (*He'arat Ha'derech* p.157)

"The purpose of life is a life of purpose."





Are we supposed to think of the Conservative and Reform Jews as non-Jews or as not frum Jews?

The question is, what do you mean by that? Certainly, they're not frum Jews. But they certainly are Jews. As soon as a Conservative Jew or Reform Jew does teshuvah, he's a Jew; he doesn't have to go through any ceremony of conversion. So therefore, they certainly are Jews.

But there are 'Jews', and then there are Jews. In one sense, they're Jews. In a technical sense they are Jews because they were born from Jewish mothers. But the love that we have to feel towards our fellow Jews does not extend to Reform Jews. Because in the sense of sharing in the privileges of being part of the Jewish nation, no, they certainly have no share in those privileges.

Now, some people don't like to hear that, but I'm talking the truth. It's hard to love your fellow Jew. It takes work. Some people bandy the word 'love' around, they love 'everybody' they say. But the truth is that they don't even love their own brothers and sisters. That's the plain truth, they don't get along with their siblings and now they're willing to love everybody?!

The answer is that it's a phony. It's all a bluff. You know, it's hard to love a fellow Jew. It's very difficult. And now you want to go and extend it to everybody? Don't be ridiculous!

In order to love somebody like you love yourself, he has to be like yourself. And if he doesn't have your ideals, then you can't love him like yourself. Certainly, you should try to help them. Certainly. You have to help goyim too. And a fellow Jew who is not observant, if you can lead him back to Judaism, that's a very big mitzvah.

Of course we have pity on him and we care about him and so we'll try to bring him back. But to say that you have to love him like you love yourself? No, that's out of the question.



Is it right for a man to learn in a kollel and let his wife work?

The answer is, it depends where she works. If the environment is not beneficial for her, absolutely not. She should not lose her neshama for the sake of her husband's learning. However, if she can find a congenial place to work in even though the pay is not that much and they're willing to suffer privations for the sake of his learning, absolutely. It's an ideal.

When a girl marries a young man who sits in the kollel and learns, you have to know that home is not an ordinary home anymore. It's a kollel home. It's influenced by the spirit of Torah. Every day the husband goes off to the kollel and the wife goes off to work.

Now, if she goes off to work and he sits in the house reading a newspaper and goes off to kollel at 10:30, I don't approve of that. When she goes to work, he has to be in the kollel already. He has to work a full day too. He can't sit an hour at lunch, or you find him standing outside the yeshiva in the morning. His wife is working – he should work too. But if he is really working at learning and she is working making a parnassah, it's a beautiful beginning. And eventually, when he'll take over the earning of the livelihood, the

family will be established on a kollel basis. The children will already be established as kollel children. The children will have the attitude of kollel life and that'll remain all their lives even though he may go into business later with some profession.



How does one encourage a husband or a child without becoming just an ordinary nag?

And the answer is that it is the wisdom of a woman that builds up her house. – חַכְמוֹת נָשִׁים בָּנְתָה בֵיתָהּ.

Now, that's not an easy answer because you have to learn how to do it. You have to plan what you want to say. Sometimes you feel that you must say something on the spur of the moment. Don't! Wait until you can say it with cunning. And many times you'll accomplish what you wouldn't have accomplished otherwise.

Sometimes you might want your husband to go out and learn in the beis medrash at night and he's sitting with his feet up at the table reading a newspaper. That's how he's wasting his evenings. So, you have to wait for an opportunity and you let pass a remark, "What a nice neighbor Mr. Cohen next door. I see he's such a fine man; every night he goes out to learn in the beis medrash."

That's all; don't say any more than that. Just let those words sink in a little bit. I'll give you another suggestion as well. Sometimes when your husband does do one good thing, go out of your way to praise him. And that way you'll give him incentive to do it again. Whatever it is, you'll have to find tactful ways because the frontal attack usually doesn't succeed, and it only causes irritation.



Why don't you ever mention the source of your ideas, whether they come from Rav Simcha Zissel or from Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel of Slabodka or from Rav Isaac Sher?

The answer is that I don't want to burden these great men with my faulty expressions or my faulty explanations. Sometimes I might not say things correctly so why should I blame them?

But more or less the ideas originate from these great men and from the Chovos Halevavos and other sefarim. Only it's like the rain. The rain comes down into the earth and it gets lost. After a while it comes out someplace as a stream and the stream prides itself that it's the originator of fresh water. You forget that it's really rain, that actually it all came from the rain that fell down someplace else.

And so whatever you hear in this place was said by some great men only I forgot the source. And the wrong things were said by me.





Our Original Iron Dome

Our forefather, Yaakov, left his parents' house at age 63 to run away from Esav and to find a wife. He arrived in Charan at age 77. What took him so long to reach Charan?

The Midrash (Rabba 68:5) says that Yaakov made a detour. He went to learn in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, before continuing to Charan. Yaakov learned there for 14 years, with extreme diligence! During that time, Yaakov barely slept. He did not sleep in a bed. He

merely took short naps, as needed. As Rashi explains (based on Bereishis Rabbah 68:11) that the word, **ההוא**, '*in that place*', teaches us in that place he lay down to sleep. However, during the previous fourteen years, when Yaakov learned in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, he never slept regularly at night. He was consistently engaged in the study of the Torah.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l (Shmiras Halashon Sha'ar Torah; 9) asks, was this the proper time for Yaakov to be learning in yeshiva? He was already 63 and he knew that he was destined to father the 12 tribes. It was a very important mitzvah for Yaakov to go to Lavan's house immediately to get married!

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l answers that Yaakov knew Lavan would not give his daughters in marriage without receiving a lot of money in return. Meanwhile, Yaakov was penniless since Elifaz, Esav's son, had taken all his money. Yaakov knew that he would have to remain in Lavan's house for a long time, working for him, to earn the privilege of marrying Lavan's daughters.

Yaakov feared, correctly, the challenge of staying with Lavan for an extended time. Lavan was dishonest, deceptive, and his house was full of idols. Yaakov was concerned about the challenge of living in this impure and unholy place.

Obviously, Yaakov had no choice but to stay there. Yaakov was anxious about the influence it would have on him. Yaakov knew that his only protection was to diligently learn the holy Torah. He would be unable to do so in the house of Lavan. Therefore, Yaakov stopped enroute to learn Torah with intensity and extreme diligence.

He learned in this manner for 14 years, corresponding to the time that he knew that he would have to live in Lavan's house.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l teaches us a lesson from Yaakov's actions. Every father should ensure that his son be accustomed to learn Torah & perform mitzvos. The holy Torah will protect his son from

impure influences. If his son would later have to serve in the king's army, and not be able to learn, then Hashem would ensure that he would be successful and that the government officials would treat him favorably.

HaRav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l asked, *"What is true life? The Torah and mitzvos are our life and length of our days. Torah is the genuine life of a Jew".*

The Wisdom of Extraction

Dr. Yitzchak Dov Lefkowitz, father of the noted *askan* Reb Yisrael Lefkowitz, was a *talmid chacham* and physician in Europe, and subsequently in New York. Known as R' Berel, he knew the entire six sections of *Mishnayos* by heart. He treated such Torah luminaries as **R' Yerucham Levovitz**, Mashgiach of Mir; **the Satmar Rav, R' Yoel Teitelbaum**; and others. He also treated the **Chofetz Chaim's** second wife.

R' Berel was a student of the **Unsdorfer Rav, R' Shmuel Rosenberg**; **the Brezhaner Rav, R' Sholom Mordechai Schwadron; and R' Akiva Sofer** of the Pressburg Yeshiva. In 1914, R' Berel was drafted at the age of 24 into the Austro-Hungarian army for three years. In gratitude for his service to the military, R' Berel was granted free schooling toward a career in either engineering, law or medicine. He chose medicine, for there were few religious doctors in Europe, and he could be a valuable asset to his community. By the mid 1920's, Dr. Lefkowitz opened a medical office in Kosice, Czechoslovakia.

One day he was making his rounds in the local hospital, when a man ran towards him, his face white with fright. "Dr. Lefkowitz," he pleaded, "please help my daughter. She is a *kallah* and is supposed to get married in a week. Last Friday she swallowed a fish bone, and it is stuck in her throat. The doctors want to operate on her tomorrow. The scar on her jaw and neck from the operation would be horrible.

How can a *kallah* come to her wedding with a terrible scar? Perhaps you can get the bone out some other way."

Dr. Lefkowitz tried to calm the father; he assured him that he would examine his daughter. As he entered the room, he wished the frightened girl a mazel tov. After a thorough examination of her neck and throat, Dr. Lefkowitz realized this was not a simple situation. Indeed, he concluded, the young woman would need surgery.

The father was devastated. Dr. Lefkowitz tried to assure him that every *kallah* is radiant and that his daughter's appearance would be special regardless. They were kind words, but they rang hollow in the ears of the father.

Later that evening, Dr. Lefkowitz went to daven in the *minyan* with **the Stropkov Rebbe, R' Avraham Shalom Halberstam**. After *mincha*, the father of the *kallah* suddenly rushed into the *shul* straight to the Rebbe, crying and pleading that he help his daughter.

With a wave of his hand, the Stropkover Rebbe signaled everyone to step back and let him be alone with the father. The Rebbe closed his eyes and with his brow ruffled he swept his hand back and forth across his forehead. The Rebbe called the father closer to him and said, "Take a few people with you and go back to the hospital. All of you should then walk around the kallah's bed and say these words: **ננעצתא כמחט ננעלתא כתריס שייא שייא** – *You are embedded like a needle, you are locked [tightly] as a shutter. Go down, go down.*'"

Dr. Lefkowitz was incredulous. There was no way that bone could be dislodged except with surgery!

The Stropkover Rebbe motioned to Dr. Lefkowitz and called to him, "Berel," he said. "Bring me a *mesechta Shabbos*." When Dr. Lefkowitz returned with the Gemara, the Rebbe turned to *daf* 67a and showed him the last few lines on the page. - "For a fish bone [that is stuck in one's throat (see Rashi)], one must say, 'You are

embedded like a needle, you are locked [tightly] as a shutter. Go down, go down.'"

Still Dr. Lefkowitz was skeptical. He did not question the Stropkover Rebbe, but in his heart he was convinced that the *kallah* would need surgery.

Later that evening, the father carried out the Rebbe's instructions. By the next morning, the bone had become dislodged! None of the medical staff could believe it and Dr. Lefkowitz was left speechless and in awe.

Years later, when he was in America, Dr. Lefkowitz was studying the laws of visiting the sick (Yoreh Deah 336). He noted **R' Akiva Eiger's** first commentary on this section. He was astonished.

For the rest of his life he would quote R' Akiva Eiger's words verbatim to anyone who listened to this story. R' Akiva Eiger writes: "**The Maharil** tells us it is forbidden to experiment with any of the remedies mentioned throughout the Talmud because people are not able to ascertain the essence of the [Talmudic] remedy, and if people are unsuccessful in their efforts [with it], they will laugh and mock the words of the Talmudic Sages, except the advice regarding the bone [that is stuck] (see Shabbos 67a)…This utterance has been investigated and proven [successful], therefore only this [remedy] is permitted, but no other!"(**Echoes of the Maggid**)

"We humans tend to always want more. Therefore, it is easy to forget to feel grateful and happy with what we already have. - We should strive to feel a joy that is complete. Lack of joy with what we have is destructive both physically and spiritually." ~ R' Mordechai Gifter zt"l.



Besamei HaTorah by: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

וְהָיָה זַרְעֲךָ כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ ***Your offspring shall be as the dust of the earth*** (28:14).The Medrash asks: Why is Israel specifically compared to 'the dust of the earth'?

When it comes to dust, everyone steps on it, and yet, it remains silent… However, in the end, it settles, and it covers everything.

So too, it is the same with Israel. When they are in exile, everyone steps on them… However, in the end, when the redemption comes, Israel will rise up above the entire world. May the redemption come speedily in our days! (U'Matuk HaOhr)

Parshah Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

After their final meeting, Lavan returns to his place, and Yaakov went on his way (32:1). וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיָּשָׁב לָבָן לִמְקֹמוֹ.

The Meshech Chochmah explains that "Lavan returned to his place," meaning, the same wickedness he always had, and he was unchanged from his interaction with Hashem, or from his relationship with Yaakov. - However, Yaakov also went on his way, and he continued on his path of growth. - We aim to emulate Yaakov and always strive for growth!

"If you hear your mouth say you will do something, don't believe it – until you see yourself get up and start." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l

Short And Sweet Story of The Week by R'yoni Schwartz

The Chofetz Chaim, ZT"l, was so poor that he could not even afford fresh bread. Every week his wife would go to the bakery and with the little money she mustered together would buy each week the stale old bread from the prior week.

After some time, she was no longer able to pay upfront and started buying the bread on credit with the shopkeeper. One week, the shopkeeper refused to sell her bread until she paid off the money she already owed on her account. She then came home crying, upset that there would be no food for them.

The Chofetz Chaim came home hungry expecting to have his usual stale bread dipped in coffee. When he found out there was no food, he sat down, started to think deeply, and began banging on the table. As he was thinking he continued banging and suddenly proclaimed with a bang, "Satan… You want me to close the Gemara and become an ignoramus - You're not going to win! I'm going to fight you always!

Indeed, he kept fighting, and as a result, he went on to later publish the Mishnah Berurah, Sefer Sh'miras Halashon, and countless other Sefarim. He truly revolutionized halachic thought and transformed the Jewish mindset.

Comment: Yaakov Avinu faces something similar. Everywhere he turns at Lavan's house he encounters obstacles. Lavan lies to him countless times and tries to kill him - yet Yaakov remains strong.

We don't look up to those sitting in ivory towers, with wealth and power like Lavan, but rather to those battling in the foxholes, who have the courage to keep fighting despite the darkness, like Yaakov Avinu and the Chofetz Chaim. Spiritual heights are reached from how we react when we are most challenged. Remember that from our deepest depths we can rise to our greatest heights.

Splendid Quote with Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"We must simply make the effort and Hashem will create the success."



Yaakov Avinu peeled the bark near the sheep so they would have babies with spotted wool. Yet, what happened was that the *malachim* brought other spotted sheep from elsewhere in order to produce baby-spotted sheep.

Hashem doesn't need our help to make us succeed, so let's just trust in Him.

TORAH TAVLIN

Stories and Sayings, Wit and Wisdom From Our Torah LEADERS

תורה תבלין

When Yaakov Avinu woke up the morning after his big wedding, he was in for quite a shock. The Torah tells us, **וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וְהִנֵּה־הִוא לֵאָה** ***"And behold, she was Leah!"*** It wasn't who he thought it was! It wasn't what it was SUPPOSED to be! It wasn't who he WANTED! It wasn't Rochel - it was Leah!

R' Gamliel Rabinowitz *shlit'a* writes (Tiv HaShidduchim) that this reaction of Yaakov is not so uncommon. Everyone at some point in their marriage wakes up - and BEHOLD - things are not exactly how he or she thought it was meant to be! Not what he or she had in mind!

After the engagement, a chosson and kallah marvel at how similar they are to each other. It doesn't take all that long after marriage to discover that they are complete opposites in so many things!

The trick in life is to realize that everyone has that "***Behold, she was Leah***" in their relationship! It's perfectly normal!

We all must work hard to see the positive aspects of our spouses. With hard work and siyata d'shmaya may we, like Yaakov Avinu, merit to be builders of Klal Yisroel.



The Chosen Nation!

The Lost Diamond Ring

A repairman came to work in the home of **R' Baruch Ber Levovitz**. R' Baruch Ber respectfully greeted him with a warm "good morning" in Polish, as the repairman didn't have any outward signs of being a Yid. Had he thought he was a Yid, R' Baruch Ber would've instead greeted him in Yiddish.

The man told R' Baruch Ber, "I'm a Yid, and you don't have to greet me in Polish." R' Baruch Ber felt terrible that he had greeted him as if he thought he was a gentile and asked her forgiveness.

R' Baruch Ber pulled up a chair and sat there for a full hour, while the repairman was working. For the entire hour, R' Baruch Ber talked with him about the *chashivus* of a Yid.

At the end of the job, R' Baruch Ber revisited the initial, mistaken greeting, and asked him forgiveness for not addressing him respectably as a Yid.

He responded: "I've already told you that I forgave you. There's no reason to appease me further."

R' Baruch Ber went on to explain his actions with a story:

There was a woman who hadn't had children many years into her marriage. Eventually, she gave birth to a single daughter. When the daughter was older, her mother took out a ring that she received from her grandmother and gave it to her daughter, the great-granddaughter.

Sometime later, the great-granddaughter's neighbor asked to borrow the ring for a *simchah* she was attending. She was happy to lend it to her, and so she did.

The next day, the neighbor came and informed the lender that the ring had been misplaced and was nowhere to be found. "Not a problem," she said. "I got the ring from my mother, who got it from her grandmother, who didn't have a lot of money. It probably wasn't worth very much, so don't worry about it."

The next day, the mother heard that it was lost. She said: "That ring had been passed down to me from my grandmother. It was very valuable. Please ask your neighbor to search better for it."

The daughter returned and asked her neighbor to look for it again because she hadn't known its real value. The neighbor looked, but to no avail. The neighbor returned to tell her that the ring was nowhere to be found and ask for forgiveness yet again.

"I already forgave you," he said. "You don't have to ask again."

The neighbor responded very logically. "The first time you forgave me, you thought the item was very cheap. But once you knew that it had more value than you'd originally thought, maybe you wouldn't be so quick to forgive me. That's why I ask again."

After relating the whole story, R' Baruch Ber said to the repairman, "Till now, you hadn't known the value of a Yid, and therefore when

you forgave me, it was an easy forgiveness. Now that we've spoken and you've heard all about the value of a Yid, I have to ask you again for your forgiveness." (*Zichrono Li'brachah*, p. 411)

"I'll Pay $5,000,000"

R' Arieh Shechter was one of the founders of Arachim Seminar, a program that works to return Hashem's children to the right path.

At one of the seminars, he noticed a person leaving the building very emotional with tears in his eyes. R' Shechter approached the man and asked, "What was said that touched you so? Is there something that I can help you with?"

Without responding, the man pointed to the hall he had just left. "Go there. That's what touched me!"

R' Shechter went into the lecture room to see what was going on. There, the man's wife, a *giyores*, was speaking by the podium. She was relating how she'd recently become Jewish, and how she cherishes it. "Would I have five million dollars, I would happily give it up for the opportunity to be born a Yid. Its value is so great that I would do anything to merit that wonderful gift! How can it be that you were given this gift for free and you aren't making good use of it?!" she asked. The man replied, "That question is what touched me so. It truly moved me to tears."

Years later, the great *tzaddik*, **R' Yosef Yagen**, met several of the participants of that seminar. He asked them what part of the seminar kept them strong, and many of them confided that it was the speech given by the *giyores*.

Appreciating the gift of being a Yid protects us and gives us the ability to use that great gift and bring forth the most *kavod shamayim*.

"A Father to All"

The love that father has toward a child is unconditional. It's not limited to circumstances, settings, and environments. The same is true with the love that Hashem has toward his beloved nation, Klal Yisroel. **R' Zecharia Wallerstein** brings out this with an incredible story:

There was a *tzaddik* who showed respect and admiration for all Yidden—the non-observant equal to the observant. Many people were very disturbed by his conduct. "This is improper behavior. These people aren't religious, how can you serve them food…you have to teach them a lesson before doing so!"

He approached his Rebbe and asked whether he should continue behaving toward non-observant in the way he did. The Rebbe asked him, "Does a parent have infinite love for their oldest child? There are no boundaries to it. The love is inestimable.

"What happens when they then have another son. Do they love him too? Definitely so. The love that one has for the first one isn't diminished once the second arrives, neither is it any less toward the second.

"So it is with each subsequent child. But how can it be? Didn't you give the first child your all? So, how do you have anything remaining? What would be if you have a Down syndrome child; what would you do? You would only love him even more, so what's the answer?

"For love of a child, there are no limits. It can stretch to whatever you need. If you need, you can stretch it to what you need."

"If you have problems, see if some flaw in yourself might be responsible. If you find no flaw – you are flawed." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l.

Personal Identity - Mr. Charlie Harari



The grandchildren of a survivor once made a grand party for their grandfathers' ninetieth birthday. At the birthday party, each of the grandchildren brought a present to their grandfather.

The grandfather was enjoying the gifts of each of his grandchildren and showed each one personal affection.

The grandchildren bringing the presents lined up in age order. At the end of the line was a young child who took the present he had been holding in front of him and put it behind his back. When it was his turn, he hesitated to give it to the grandfather.

"Why are you hesitating?" the grandfather asked him.

"I just saw how my cousin made the exact box that I made, and I thought that you really don't need another one, so I'm hesitating to give it to you."

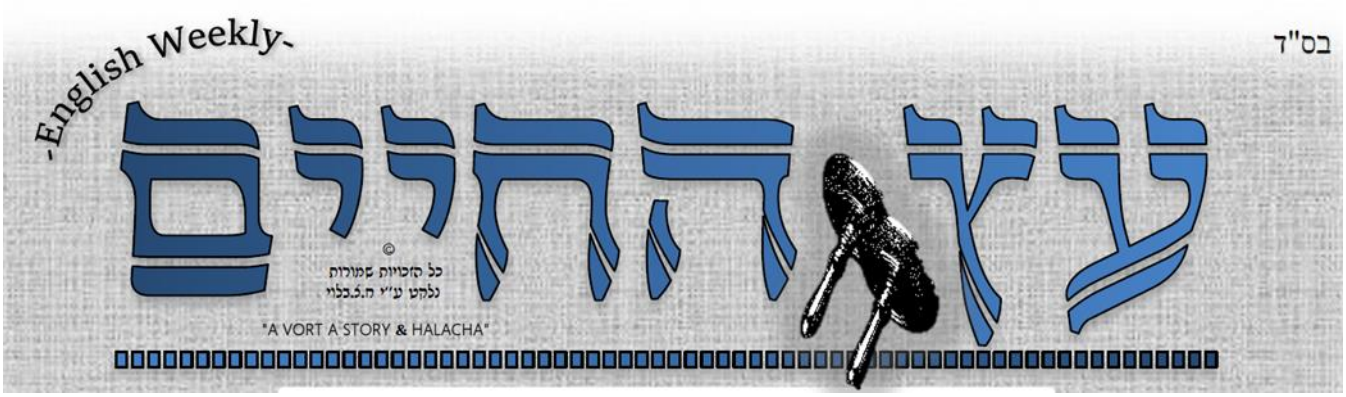
"It's true that I just got a box, but I don't have a box from 'you.' The box that your cousin gave me is not a box from 'you,' and therefore I'm happily waiting to receive this box that you're holding."

This applies to serving Hashem. Hashem has many Yidden doing mitzvos; yet he wants "our" mitzvos. What He needs is that "we" should do the mitzvos. He wants it from us. It's the connection that He wants, and that He can't get from anyone else.

It may seem at times that there are so many more people that are serving Hashem. It may seem that they are serving Hashem better than me…, so why should I bother doing mitzvos? But this understanding will only bring us to a new understanding. We know

that Hashem wants our mitzvos, and the fact that others also do mitzvos doesn't undermine the value of ours. It will allow us to properly cherish our mitzvos.

If Hashem is looking for the mitzvah itself, then the most special one is valued and the rest not. But since Hashem seeks to have a connection with each of us, the fact that He has a connection with one doesn't undermine the other. Each of them is greatly admired.



Gimpel Flips His Ladder

There was a tzaddik by the name of Rabbi Mordechai Levitin who was the chief Rabbi Aleppo, Syria. There was a Jew in his town that was extremely successful in business. The big issue was that he did not keep any of the **מצוות** .

One day, Rabbi Levitin approached him and tried to convince him to change his ways. "Please remember," he warned him, "a man's ultimate destiny is death, and you'll have to give an accounting for all your actions."

The rich man turned a deaf ear to the Rav and proclaimed, "Look how much wealth I have. I'm doing just fine!"

Rabbi Levitin explained to him that Hashem is just giving him the **שכר** in this world because Hashem does not wish to see his face in **עולם הבא** .

The man replied with a cynical smile, "What exactly would I be receiving reward for? I never did a **מצוה** in my entire life!"

Rabbi Levitin replied, "You are incorrect! There is one **מצוה** you did without you even choosing to do it! The **מצוה** of **ברית מילה**. You should know, all your success is only a result of the **שכר** of that one **מצוה**."

The man said, "Rabbi, if you believe that, I've got a proposition for you. I'll sell you that **מצוה**!" - Rabbi Levitin agreed and the deal was done.

When the rich man arrived back home, there was terrible news awaiting him. One of his ships had suddenly sunk and all of its freight, worth millions of pounds was lost. His biggest store went up in flames! The bad reports kept coming and within a few days the man was completely bankrupt.

He understood clearly what had just happened and he made his way back to Rabbi Levitin. He begged him to sell him back his **מצוה**!

Rabbi Mordechai Levitin would not give in so easily! - He finally agreed on condition that the man accept upon himself to **keep** all the **מצוות** . Only then would this **מצוה** too be added on to the rest.

He accepted upon himself to be a G-d fearing Jew. And from that day on he was **שומר תורה ומצוות**.

"If someone transgressed by speaking loshon hora or r'chilus, the antidote is for him to consistently speak words of Torah." ~ Vilna Gaon zt"l.

"Before you speak, you are the master of your words. After you speak, your words become your master." ~ Orchos Tzadikim ch. 21.

Yaakov Had a Dream



In the dream, he saw a **סולם** that was standing on the ground and the top of the ladder was going up into **שמים**. Yaakov saw how **מלאכים** were going up and down the ladder.

Listen to this incredible gematria! **The Ben Ish Chai** says that the gematria of the word **סולם** - **ladder**, is the same gematria as the word **- ממון - Money** = 136.

What is the lesson? What is the connection between a **ladder** and **money?**

The Ben Ish Chai brings the following idea: When a person makes money it can feel like they got all of their money because **they** worked – as if it was their " **כוחיו ועוצם ידיו** " that gave them all their successes.

For example, a person can think that they have money because of **their** intelligence and **their** good business acumen….

The part of ladder that is rooted on the ground; references to that feeling of being the one in control, causing it all to happen. However, the truth is that the result of our hishtadlus of every pound that we have is only because Hashem decided to give us all that money.

This is referenced by way of looking at the top of the ladder that's coming out from **שמים** and realising it's only coming from Hashem!

And what about the **מלאכים** going up and down the ladder?

These **מלאכים** are the ones that Hashem sends up and down the ladder. Meaning sometimes Hashem decides to **remove** the **שפע** of money that a person has and sometimes Hashem gives people a **שפע**

of money. This is how the world goes, a person can one day be wealthy and the next day a pauper. It's all **תלוי** on the **רצון הבורא יתברך שמו**.

The Ben Ish Chai takes it a step further *with a* mashal:There was once a ladder that was standing in Gimpel's home. One day the top rung of the ladder spoke up brazenly to the bottom rungs, "Hey down there!" he said, "You see how **חשוב** I am and how important I am?" "What's my proof?" he boasted. "Look at me, I'm on the top rung of the ladder! If I was put here, I **must** be the greatest and the most important part of the ladder!"

Suddenly Gimpel came home and flipped the ladder over, now the top rung was at the bottom and the bottom rung was at the top!

It was then that the *original* top rung realized that he had been boastful for no reason. He saw how from one moment to the next he went from the top to rock bottom.

However, the "new" top rung was smarter than that, and he realized that he had nothing at all to be boastful about, because he saw that just as in one second he went from being on the bottom to being the top, his owner can once again flip around the ladder at any moment if he wished.

The same is with our money or lack of money that Hashem has given us or has not given us, there is absolutely no guarantees we will keep our money and as well Hashem can give us all we need from one moment to the next!

The Master of the world can flip the ladder in a flash. Our 136 = **ממון** is like a 136 = **סולם**. Therefore, it's the most ludicrous thing in the world for someone to become arrogant because of the **ממון** that Hashem gave him – just like it was ludicrous for the top rung to feel choshuv!

Chazal tell us that the world is like a spinning wheel, a wheel by definition some part are on top and some parts are on bottom. The ladders and wheels of life can be flipped if that's the **רצון ה'**.

Therefore, if Hashem gives us money or lack thereof, know that it's not because of you and there is nothing at all to be boastful about, or be worried about - even for a moment!

Reb Yoel Rotenstein on The Parsha

וַיִּגַּשׁ יַעֲקֹב וַיָּגֶל אֶת־הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וַיַּשְׁקְ אֶת־צֹאן לָבָן אֲחִי אִמּוֹ "***Yaakov came forth and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and gave to drink the sheep of Lovon, his mother's brother.***"



In *Tefillas Hageshem* (the prayer for rain) we *daven* that Hashem should remember the merit of Yaakov when he rolled off the stone to water the sheep of Lavan.

The Question is: Why at the time when we need **רחמי שמים** and *daven* for rain do we mention the kindness of Yaakov, which according to Rashi, the effort that Yaakov made was equal to the effort it takes to remove a plug from a bottle?

The Answer is: We are not asking Hashem to remember the actual act that Yaakov performed, but rather *the way* in which he performed it.

When Yaakov removed the stone, it was with his *complete* heart. When a *chessed* is done with a complete heart, no matter how small, it has the power to impact for generations and that is why we mention this by the prayer for rain. [**סבא מסלבדקא**]



From Hashem

The Megaleh Amukos teaches that **ויצא** is *roshei teivos* for **וירא יַעקב צַורת אַ** - "**Yaakov saw the letter *alef*.**"

א represents the Alufo shel Olam, the Master of the World. He remembered that everything is directed by Hashem, the Master of the World, so he wasn't afraid.

We must know that everything is from Hashem; the good experiences and the difficult ones. Wherever one goes, and whatever happens, one should always keep in mind **וירא יעקב צורת א** that everything is from Hashem.

Someone was rambling about politics to a group of people. "The president is a fool… Do you know what he did…?"

A wise man in the group responded, "It states (Mishlei 21:1), **לֵב־מֶלֶךְ בְּיַד־ה׳ - *'A king's heart is in Hashem's hands*.**' Monarchs can't do anything on their own."

The man replied, "Yes, I know that *pasuk*, but I'm speaking *without* that *pasuk*. Put the *pasuk* aside, and recognize the truth, the president is a fool… and this minister is cruel…"

The wise man tried again, this time with a parable, "Someone prepared a delicious cholent, but then someone came along and threw in an entire package of salt, making the cholent inedible. He tasted a drop of the cholent and said, 'The truth is that this cholent is very tasty. Put aside the salty problem for a moment, and recognize that it is delicious…'

This is what you are telling me, 'Forget the *pasuk* and focus on the facts.' But the fact is that the cholent isn't good anymore, and the fact is that the hearts of kings are in Hashem's hands, and everything that happens is according to Hashem's will."



Another story is about a certain *chevrah kadisha* whose members had a custom to make a *l'chayim* after each *levayah*. The families of the *niftarim* were often upset. "We're crying, and they're enjoying liquor and hard drinks."

Some of those bereaved families complained to the rav of the city. The rav summoned the *chevrah kadisha* and asked them to explain their strange custom.

They answered, "We hear so much *kefirah* - heresy while we perform our mitzvah. Some people say that the doctors caused the death, others blame the family for not taking better care. But it's all false because the person died when it was destined for him to die.

We feel we must take some *mashkeh* and proclaim, **שהכל נהיה בדברו** ***'everything happened by His word***,' to remember that everything happens through Hashem's plan."

The rav was pleased, "But why must you drink alcoholic beverages?" You can make a *shehakol* over any other drink?" - They smiled, "If we merit to perceive this truth, don't we deserve a drop of whiskey and a *lechayim*?"

"True belief means giving oneself over to Hashem, trusting in Him totally and never doubting Him, no matter what the circumstances. This is the concept of faith – to cling to Him completely and unequivocally. Such attachment brings a person to complete wholeness." ~ Maharal of Prague.

Rabbi Frand - In the Merit of Yaakov's Walking Stick



There is a very fascinating **Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos** in this week's parsha. Before Yaakov went to sleep, he "***put the stones under his head.***" And when he arose "***he took the stone from under his head***" and made it into a matzevah, upon which he poured oil to anoint it as a mizbayach.

The Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos ask a simple question: From where did Yaakov obtain the oil? He was in the middle of nowhere. It is not like he could go to the nearest gas station and get a quart of oil. So where did Yaakov obtain this oil?

They answer that Yaakov had a walking stick with him. He had hollowed out the walking stick and filled it with oil. Why? Yaakov had been studying in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever for the previous fourteen years. He learned there the entire night.

Chazal say on the words וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא "***He slept there in that place***" (28:11), that it was only there that Yaakov slept at night, but for the previous fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, he learned the entire night without going to sleep.

They did not have electricity in the Yeshiva of Shem v'Ever, so how could Yaakov learn at night?

Obviously, he must have learned by candlelight, which requires oil. This, says the Daas Zekeinim, is where Yaakov obtained the oil. The ready supply that he kept in the hollow of his trusty walking stick was available whenever he needed it.

The Daas Zekeinim adds that this was the same supply of oil from which Moshe obtained the Shemen haMishcha (oil of anointing) to inaugurate the keilim of the Mishkan. And it was the same supply of oil that Elisha used, and it was this very Shemen that was in the jug of oil that the Chashmonoim found, which lasted for eight days during the story of the Chanukah miracle.

The sefer Darash Mordechai makes a beautiful observation: In Tefilas Geshem (the prayer for Rain recited on Shmini Atzeres), one of the stanzas is "**זְכוֹר טָעַן מַקְלוֹ וְעָבַר יַרְדֵּן מַיִם**" - ***"—Remember (Yaakov Avinu) who took his stick with him and crossed the Jordan's water.***

At first glance, this seems like a very strange expression. What is so significant about Yaakov's walking stick? Presumably, all desert travelers need a walking stick. Yaakov was not a youngster anymore, so he had a walking stick. What is the big deal? Why do we mention Yaakov's stick in Tefilas Geshem?

In light of the comments of the Daas Zekeinim, we can appreciate the special nature of this walking stick. This stick, with its hollowed-out chamber for storing olive oil, enabled Yaakov to learn Torah, day and night, for fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem v'Ever.

So, we very appropriately say, "Ribono shel Olam – remember the Torah of Yaakov Avinu that he learned with self-sacrifice and dedication." That is the **טָעַן מַקְלוֹ וְעָבַר יַרְדֵּן מַיִם**.

"The evil design of the yetzer hara is to make a person think that he has transgressed greatly, when in truth, he really has not. Thus, when a person is discouraged because of negative behaviour and actions, his depression prevents him from performing mitzvos and good deeds." ~ The Maggid of Mezeritch.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Brothers in Scorn

Yaakov's first encounter with his future wife Rachel was significant, encompassing varied emotions. Upon greeting her at a well, Yaakov feeds her sheep, kisses her, cries, and then identifies himself as the brother of her father. (29:11-12)

Such classification needs explanation. Yaakov was not a brother of Rachel's father Lavan: he was a nephew, the son of Lavan's sister, Rivka.

Why, then, did Yaakov refer to himself as a brother of Lavan? The Talmud in Megilah explains that Lavan's notorious reputation preceded him. He was nicknamed Lavan HaArami, or Lavan the charlatan. He was known not only to be avaricious, but to be unscrupulous as well. Yaakov wanted to lay the ground rules with his future bride.

"If your father will act conniving then I am his brother [meaning, I will act conniving as well]. However, if he acts honorably, I will respond in kind."

What needs clarification, however, is why begin a marital relationship on such a note. What precedent is Yaakov setting with such a powerful declaration?

Rabbi Meir Shapiro (1887-1933) was a leader of Polish Jewry in the years before World War II. In addition to being the chief Rabbi of Lublin, building and maintaining one of the world's largest and most beautiful yeshivos, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, he was also one of the first Orthodox members of the Polish parliament, the Sejm. He was a courageous leader whose vision and unwavering commitment to Torah values gained him the respect of Jews and gentiles alike.

During his first weeks as the leader of the Orthodox Jewish delegation, Rabbi Shapiro was approached by a Polish parliamentary deputy, Professor Lutoslawski, a known anti-Semite whose devious

legislation constantly deprived minorities of their civil and economic rights.

Standing in front of a group parliamentarians in the halls of the Sejm, the depraved deputy began. "Rabbi," he shouted, a sly smile spreading across his evil face. "I have a wonderful new way for Jews to make a living — they can skin dead dogs."

Without missing a beat Rabbi Shapiro shot back. "Impossible, their representatives would never allow it."

The Professor looked puzzled. "Whose representatives? The Jews'?" - "No," smiled Rav Meir, "the dogs' deputies."

Flustered, the vicious bigot tried one more. "Well, my dear Rabbi," he continued sarcastically. "Do you know that on the entrance gate of the city of Schlesien there is an inscription, 'to Jews and dogs entrance forbidden?'"

Rabbi Meir just shrugged his shoulders. "If so, I guess we will never be able to visit that city together."

Needless to say, nary an anti-Semitic word was ever pointed in Rabbi Meir's direction again.

Yaakov knew that to initiate his destiny in the confines of a hostile environment he should proclaim the rules loud and clear. He would not allow himself to be swayed, duped, or connived by even the master of deception and ridicule, Lavan the charlatan. In forging the household that would be the basis for Jewish pride and eternity, Yaakov had to make it clear to his future bride that he too could play hardball.

He sent a message of pride and awareness to his descendants. Though this Jew who sat in the tent would enter his new environment with brotherly love, if he needed to, he could just as well be a brother in scorn.

Parshah Pearls (Adapted from the P'ninei Torah)

They Arrived There Under Their Own Steam

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ וֵאלֹקֵי יִצְחָק ***"I am Hashem, the G-d of Avraham and the G-d of Yitzchak your father"*** (28:13).



The Torah does not write 'the G-d of Avraham and of Yitzchak', **the Besht** points out, but "the G-d of Avraham and the G-d of Yitzchak". And Chazal followed suit when they inserted in the first B'rachah of the Amidah 'the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak and the G-d of Ya'akov'.

The reason for this, he explains, is because Yitzchak and Ya'akov, much as they learned the traditions from their respective fathers, were not satisfied with that, but went on to pursue a deeper understanding of G-d under their own steam.

Bread to Eat and Clothes to Wear

וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ - ***"And He will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear"*** (28:20).

R. Shlomoh Yahalomi, the author of Peninei Torah, recalls how, in a Russian camp in Siberia, he often saw people swapping an article of clothing for a piece of bread, or a piece of bread for an article of clothing.

And that reminded him of this Pasuk, where Ya'akov asked for bread to eat and clothes to wear, as opposed to bread to wear and clothes to eat. [See also K'li Yakar on this Pasuk.]

Genuine Love

וַיִּהְיוּ בְעֵינָיו כְּיָמִים אֲחָדִים בְּאַהֲבָתָו אֹתָהּ ***"And they (the seven years) were in his eyes like a few days in his love for her"*** (29:20).

The question arises that the opposite would appear to have been more correct, comments the **Apter Rav**. The more powerful a man's love for a woman is, the longer the waiting period to marry her seems to drag on. If so, one would have expected each day to have appeared in Ya'akov's eyes like a year.

That would have been true, he replies, if Ya'akov's love for Rachel had been based on desire; only then, it would have been more apt to refer to it as self-love.

From the fact that the Torah speaks of "his love for her", it is clear that it was Rachel whom he genuinely loved (for what she was), and it is in that light that the seven years were "like a few days in his eyes", because he considered her worth far more than a mere seven years work, and the seven-year wait was a bargain!

The Greatest Pleasure

כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־אֵינֶנּוּ נָקֹד וְטָלוא בָּעִזִּים וְחוּם בַּכְּשָׂבִים גָּנוּב הוּא אִתִּי. וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן הֵן לוּ יְהִי כִּדְבָרֶךָ - ***"All that is not spotted and speckled among the goats ... is stolen by me. And Lavan said 'Fine, may it be like your words' "*** - "לוּ יְהִי כִּדְבָרֶךָ" (30:33/34).

The use of the word לוּ implies that Lavan hoped that it would be so.

The Chasam Sofer explains that Lavan did indeed look forward to finding just one spotted or speckled sheep among Ya'akov's flocks. For what would give Lavan a greater thrill than to catch Ya'akov at his own game, to be able to point a finger at him and show everybody that he too, was a swindler.

Nothing Ventured ... Nothing Lost

וַיָּשָׁב לָבָן לִמְקֹמוֹ. וְיַעֲקֹב הָלַךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ... ***"And Lavan returned to his place, and Ya'akov went on his way"*** (32:1-2).

For all the years that Ya'akov the Tzadik had spent with him, Lavan had gained nothing from that relationship, the **Meshech Chochmah** explains. The moment Ya'akov took his leave, Lavan returned to his place, back to square one, without having advanced one step forward.

On the other hand, Ya'akov Avinu continued on his way. Lavan had not deterred him one iota from moving forward on his spiritual life's journey.

As a matter of fact, the stark contrast between the two characters stands out from the final Parshah in the Sedra.

On the one hand we have Lavan, whose sole concern is his images, and who is otherwise totally unmoved by Ya'akov's departure (he cannot even bring himself to say 'goodbye'), in spite of the fact that everything that he owned was the result of the B'rachah that came with the advent of Ya'akov, as he himself admitted.

And on the other hand, we have Ya'akov, whose honesty and integrity in his dealings with Lavan, are reflected to a degree that belies the imagination, in spite of Lavan the swindler's concentrated efforts to impoverish him.

And so, at the end of the day, the Torah informs us, Lavan remained Lavan, and Ya'akov remained Ya'akov.

The Brisker Rav would speak about the importance of saying Tehillim. He said, "In the future when we discover what we could have accomplished with Tehillim, every person will rip the hair out of his head that he didn't recite more Tehillim.



וְעֵינֵי לֵאָה רַכּוֹת ***And the eyes of Leah were soft.*** (29:17)

Why were Leah's eyes soft?



Chazal (Bava Basra 123) explain that Leah heard the conversation of people who would talk among themselves. "Rivkah had two sons; her brother, Lavan, had two daughters. The older daughter is (apparently) promised to the older son, and the younger daughter to the younger son."

Leah asked concerning the nature of the older son's endeavors. (Obviously, if she were destined to marry him, it would be nice to know what type of life she was destined to have.) The response was: "The older son is an evil, base person, a thief who preys on the innocent."

When she asked about the younger son, the reply was: **אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֳהָלִים**; "***A simple, wholesome man abiding in tents.***" When she heard this, she wept copiously until her eyelashes separated.

Horav Nosson Wachtfogel, zl, derives from here a lesson concerning the enormous power of tears. It is well-known that prayers have an amazing effect on achieving one's goals. Hashem listens to sincere prayer. We now see that tears (prayer with tears) have an even greater effect, such that it is possible to abrogate a decree.

Leah Imeinu understood forty days prior to her birth a Heavenly decree had announced who her designated spouse would be. How

could she possibly change that decree? She was supposed to fall to Eisav, an eventuality that she dreaded. She did not give up hope. What was her secret "weapon"? How could she hope to extirpate what had been decreed prior to her birth?

With tears, one is able to achieve what prayer alone cannot. Chazal (Berachos 32) state: "*From the day that the Bais Hamikdash was destroyed, the gates of prayer have been closed. Although the gates of prayer are no longer open, the gates of tears are not closed.*"

While the depth of Chazal's statement obviously requires deeper clarification, one thing is clear: Through the vehicle of tears, one is able to penetrate Divine sanctuaries which otherwise are not accessible through prayer.

Leah did not simply cry once, twice; she cried incessantly, until her eyelashes fell off! Her tears supported her fervent prayer until, finally, Hashem accepted her plea to be free of the curse of becoming Eisav's mate. He removed her from Eisav's domain and placed her in the domain of the Avos ha'kedoshim, holy Patriarchs. Thus, she not only became a Matriarch, but she also became the progenitresses of six Shevatim, tribes, of Klal Yisrael. She achieved all of this through her tears.

What is so special about tears?

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains that tears are the sweat of the soul. Tears emanate from the heart. They are authentic. Real tears cannot be simulated. Prayer that is accompanied by tears has greater efficacy, because it has greater authenticity.

Throughout the annals of history, we have heard of gedolei Yisrael, Torah leaders, who have achieved their pinnacle of achievement due to their profuse weeping. Their copious tears ascended Heavenward and made the difference.

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, had an old worn-out siddur, an inheritance from his saintly mother, which he cherished and held close. He often

declared that whatever "little" he had achieved in his life was all b'zchus, in the merit, of this siddur. His mother had prayed constantly from this siddur. Her prayers were accompanied by her sincere weeping.

For what did she pray? – Neither for honour, nor for wealth; she beseeched the Almighty that her young son grow into a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, a G-d-fearing, ethically correct, Torah Jew. Her tears made the difference, and we -- in fact, the entire Jewish world -- are their beneficiaries.

וַיְהִי בָּעֶרֶב וַיִּקַּח אֶת־לֵאָה בִתּוֹ וַיָּבֵא אֹתָהּ אֵלָיו ***And it was in the evening that he took Leah, his daughter, and brought her to him***. (29:23)



True to his reputation as a swindler, Lavan did not keep his word to give Rachel Imeinu to Yaakov Avinu. He substituted Leah Imeinu for Rachel. This ruse would not have worked had Rachel not given over to her sister the designated signs that Yaakov had arranged with her.

The Patriarch knew what kind of thief his prospective father-in-law was. He did not, however, count on the extraordinary love that Rachel harbored for Leah.

The relationship between siblings should serve as a paradigm for the relationship between friends. When we speak of a relationship between two friends, the friendship between Dovid Hamelech and Yehonasan ben Shaul Hamelech comes to mind.

Yehonasan was acutely aware that his friendship with David meant forfeiting his right to the throne. Nonetheless, he said to David, -

וְאַתָּה֙ תִּמְלֹ֣ךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וְאָנֹכִ֕י אֶֽהְיֶה־לְּךָ֖ לְמִשְׁנֶ֑ה -"***You will become the king over Yisrael, and I will be your second man***" (Shmuel I 23:17).

Yehonasan relinquished the throne as a result of his love for David. From whom/where did Yehonasan derive this extreme level of love and devotion?

The Rema m'Panu (cited by **Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita**) teaches that he gleaned this from the actions of Rachel Imeinu and Leah Imeinu. He saw the love that permeated the relationship between these two Matriarchs, their devotion to one another to the point of self-sacrifice, and he was determined to emulate them and act accordingly.

Indeed, when David Hamelech eulogized his best friend, Yehonasan, he declared, נִפְלְאַתְךָ֥ אַהֲבָתְךָ֖ לִ֑י מֵאַהֲבַ֥ת נָשִֽׁים, -"***Your love to me is greater than the love of women***" (Shmuel II 1:26).

The Rema m'Panu explains this pasuk quite differently than its loose translation, "Your wonderful love to me – you learned to have it – מֵאַהֲבַ֥ת נָשִֽׁים – from the love (manifest) by the two women (sisters), Rachel and Leah." From them, from their devotion to one another, you derived how one should love his/her fellow.

Yet, we find family members who sever ties with one another (usually) over the most infantile and inane issues. Siblings have a connection to one another that is unlike any other bond. They are two (or more) parts of a whole.

The Arizal writes that the older sibling is a link in the connection to the souls of their parents and, through them, to Hashem. Thus, we have the obligation to respect our older siblings.

When a family connection is severed, we become shaken to the core, leaving a void in our lives, because our siblings are a part of our identity, a part of us. No one purposely, maliciously, seeks to create disunity within a family. It is usually the result of petty jealousy,

which is either the result of – or leads to – insecurity and low self-esteem.

What comes first depends on the individual situation and family dynamic. One thing is for certain: One who views life through the lens of envy has a distorted perspective and has lost a sense of reality.

As a noted psychologist observed, "There are three sides to every story: the two who are in disagreement – and the truth." Sadly, time inevitably solves the discord when one's time is up, and there is no longer anyone with whom to quarrel.

וַיַּעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וַיִּהְיוּ בְעֵינָיו כְּיָמִים אֲחָדִים בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אֹתָהּ ***So Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him a few days because of his love for her***. (29:20)

For some people life is far from a bed of roses. Yet, they persevere and forge ahead, often joyfully. Why?



They believe that achieving their intended goal far outweighs any form of hardship they have been forced to endure. Pain is relative. If the goal means enough to the person, the pain, discomfort, anxiety are all worth it.

Yaakov Avinu was an extraordinary masmid, diligent student of Torah. He did not waste a minute from Torah learning. During the fourteen years that he studied in the yeshivah of Shem and Ever, he did not lay down to sleep, so great was his desire to study Torah. Yet, he was prepared to accept backbreaking labour upon himself so that he could earn the right to marry Rachel Imeinu.

He himself described the labor, the burning sun beating down on him; the biting cold slicing through him for seven long years. Certainly, this took a toll on his Torah study.

What justified his experiencing seven years removed from Torah learning, seven years of pain and deprivation? Could he assure himself that, when he would return to his Gemorah, he would be the same person? Could he be certain that the seven years would not take their toll on him?

The Riva (Baalei Tosfos, as cited by Horav A. Henoch Leibowitz, zl,) explains that Yaakov's every minute was filled with joy, in the knowledge that his efforts would catalyze his marriage to Rachel. He was overwhelmed with joy at the opportunity to marry such a unique, righteous, selfless woman, whose virtue was without peer, a woman with whom he would be able to establish the foundation for the future of Klal Yisrael.

While it was true that he was sacrificing much for this unprecedented opportunity, it would be well worth it to him.

The Rosh Yeshivah derives from here that we must serve Hashem with abiding love and effusive joy, even when we are experiencing extreme pain and are compelled to toil incessantly. We do not realize the incredible spiritual plateau that we achieve and the outstanding and spiritual treasures that we unlock when we merit to overcome and triumph over our challenges.

We suffer -- and some of us suffer so much – but when we realize the phenomenal spiritual benefits which we accrue, it is well worth it.

Rabbi Akiva suffered a most brutal and painful death. Moshe Rabbeinu and the ministering angels had difficulty coping with Rabbi Akiva's horrible murder at the hands of the Romans. Rabbi Akiva, however, was filled with joy at having the opportunity for which he waited a "lifetime" to experience. Giving up his life to sanctify Hashem's Name amid such excruciating pain was an unparalleled experience for him for which the spiritual reward and benefits far outweighed anything that he had yet experienced.

There is a cliché in the secular world, "No pain, no gain." This means that one must put forth effort in order to see noticeable results. Perhaps the spiritual cliché should be, "With gain, there is no pain."



וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע ***Yaakov departed from Beer Sheva***. (28:10)

Chazal (Talmud Megillah 17a) deduce that Yaakov Avinu was sixty-three years old when he left his parents' home. Fourteen years later, when Yaakov was seventy-seven, Yosef was born. When Yosef stood before Pharaoh, he was thirty years old – making Yaakov one hundred and seven years old. We add to this seven years of plenty and two years of famine to reach a sum total of one hundred sixteen, which should have been Yaakov's age when meeting Pharaoh.

When Yaakov stood before Pharaoh, however, he stated his age as one hundred and thirty – leaving us with a discrepancy of fourteen years.

Chazal derive from this that Yaakov Avinu stopped at the Yeshivah of Shem and Ever for fourteen years of Torah study before moving on to the home of Lavan. These years were not included in the calculation.

Why are the fourteen years spent in the yeshivah not mentioned in the Torah? One would think that these years would have been quite significant in the life of the Patriarch.

We find a similar query with regard to a statement that Chazal make in the Talmud Yoma (28b), **אַבְרָהָם, זָקֵן וְיוֹשֵׁב בִּישִׁיבָה הָיָה**, "***Our Patriarch Avraham was an elder sitting in the yeshivah***."

In fact, Chazal go on to state that all of the Patriarchs spent their time studying Torah in yeshivah and disseminating it to the public. Would this not be of interest to those who study Torah? Should it not have been written explicitly in the Torah?

Apparently, the Torah finds it of greater significance to devote space to the actions and good deeds of the Avos, Patriarchs, rather than their Torah study.

Horav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, zl, asks these questions and explains that the good deeds performed by the Avos resulted from their Torah study. Thus, the Torah mentions the primary consequence, the purpose of their Torah learning. He explains this based upon a question posed to Chazal (Talmud Kiddushin 40b), "*What is more important, the study of Torah or the performance of mitzvos?*"

Rabbi Tarfon replied that mitzvah performance has greater significance. Rabbi Akiva contended that Torah study is more important. The Tananim that were present all spoke up and said, "***The study of Torah is more important, because the study of Torah brings one to the performance of mitzvos***."

In other words, the result of Torah study is that it provides the benefit of both: study and performance. Without knowledge, man cannot properly perform the mitzvos. Once he has completed his studies, he should engage in good deeds. (option cited by Tosfos.)

We derive from here that the advantage/benefit of Torah study is that it incurs mitzvah/maasim tovim performance: **גדול תלמוד שהתלמוד מביא לידי מעשה**; "***Study brings about action***."

Rambam (Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:5) asserts, "There is no mitzvah among all of the mitzvos that equals Torah study. Talmud Torah stands opposite all of the mitzvos because it catalyzes deed, i.e. mitzvah performance.

Thus, explains the Rosh Yeshivah, our Torah addresses that which is important. The deeds of the Patriarchs were the fruit of their devotion to Torah study. The Torah focuses on the product, the finished fruit, but, without Torah, there can be no fruit.

וְאוּלָם לוּז שֵׁם־הָעִיר לָרִאשֹׁנָה ***However, Luz was the city's name originally***. (28:19)

A man goes through life – and then he passes to the next world – the real world, the world of Truth. What is left of all the years that he spent on this world? - Nothing but memories: no money; no material assets; no distinction – only memories.

In order to perpetuate themselves, people build monuments, erect buildings, make tributes to their achievements. Why? So that they will be remembered.

We are so fickle. Everything is for one purpose: so that the next generation will not forget us. No one wants to be forgotten, but are we prepared to lead a life that will engender positive memories, so that we will impart to our children and all future generations an enduring legacy of value?

The barometer is quite simple: unless one lives a life worth remembering, he will be slowly forgotten, relegated to mausoleums of antiquity. This is how it has been throughout time.

People leave mementos. Wealthy people build cities, villas, skyscrapers with their names emblazoned on them, as if this will ensure their eternal perpetuation. Others erect monuments; some even place their picture on their headstones.

There was one city, however, the town of Luz, where this was not necessary. Why?

Because no one ever died in Luz. They lived on and on. Apparently, the Malach Ha'Maves, Angel of Death, had no permit to enter Luz.

Horav Sholom Yosef Elyashiv, zl, has a deeper understanding concerning the renaming of Luz to ***Bais Kail*** (Beth El):

During the tenure of our Patriarch, Yaakov Avinu, the goal of the average mindset was: How does one "establish" himself in the idyllic city of Luz? Imagine living in a city in which no one dies! It would be

– utopia! The quality of life in such a city must be outstanding. One would think that the real estate agents and power brokers of that era would have converged on Luz from all four points/directions in the world. Who would not want to set up shop in Luz? Real estate must have been at a premium. Who would not give up his life's savings to be freed from the clutches of the Angel of Death?

By the way, whatever happened to Luz? There is no zeicher, remembrance, of it. It is gone; it disappeared, as if it had never existed. Does it make sense that such an extraordinary city should become extinct as if it had never existed?

Rav Elyashiv explains that Yaakov changed all of that. He visited Luz and called out, "*He who wants to memorialize himself, to see to it that he perpetuates himself, should be cognizant of one vital fact: Every moment that he dedicates to Torah study will remain in his behalf forever. It will be an everlasting remembrance.*"

Torah is Hashem's Divine manuscript, His blueprint for life. Yaakov "changed" the name of Luz to Bais Kail. He told the people that if they truly want everlasting life, then it can only be in the "House of G-d," within the four cubits of halachah.

To think that Luz will save a person from the Angel of Death is ludicrous. When a person's time is up, the Malach HaMaves will find some way to "convince" the person to leave Luz. The angel might not be able to enter, but when one's time is up, the angel will find a way to perform his "ritual."

Nothing – absolutely nothing – can perpetuate a person's life like his connection with Torah. Bais Kail, the House of G-d, is the place where we can aspire to achieve eternity.

This is a powerful lesson to all of those who seek an avenue to perpetuate their existence on this world. Buildings, monuments, enclaves will not do it. A building devoted to Torah study is not your

common piece of real estate. It is a House of G-d! It is a true tribute to one's life, to one's values.

Eternity does not have to be about money. Torah study is one's Bais Kail, whether it is full time, part time, or even an hour a week. Time devoted to spiritual endeavors is everlasting. Every moment that one spends studying Torah, he accrues eternal merit.

Our Tanaaim, Amoraim, Rishonim, Achronim, Poskim, Rabbanim and Roshei Yeshivah are as alive and vibrant today as when they walked the halls of the bais hamedrash.

Luz is a figment of one's imagination. One cannot escape death. True life is only in Bais Kail.



וְאַחַר יָלְדָה בַּת וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמָהּ דִּינָה ***Afterward, she bore a daughter and she called her name, Dinah***. (30:21)

Everyone wants to get ahead, to rise to the summit of the spiritual ladder. What are we willing to sacrifice in order to achieve spiritual distinction? Are we willing to expend time and effort, give up financial security all for the purpose of spiritual achievement?

The answer obviously should be a resounding, "Yes." Nothing should stand in the way of spiritual ascendency. It cannot, however, be achieved on the "back" of someone else: a friend or even someone who is not a friend. Achieving closeness with Hashem cannot and should not be achieved at the expense of another Jew's feelings or sensitivities, regardless of the veracity and legitimacy – or lack thereof – of those emotions.

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, makes this observation based on the ethical behaviour of Yaakov Avinu, and of Rachel and Leah Imeinu.

Leah gave birth to six shevatim, tribes, sons, while Rachel gave birth to Yosef and Benyamin. Bilhah and Zilpah each gave birth to two sons. It was, however, not supposed to have been this way. Leah had a

seventh child, a daughter, Dinah. The root of the name is derived from din, judgment.

Rashi explains that Leah chose this name by design. Apparently, our Matriarchs were aware that there would be a total of twelve shevatim. Thus, when Leah became pregnant with a seventh child, she became concerned, lest she have seven sons, and her sister, Rachel, would have only one. This would mean that Rachel would have fewer sons than even Bilhah and Zilpah, who originally had maidservant status.

Leah made a judgment and prayed that Hashem change the gender of her unborn baby from male to female – resulting in a little girl, whom she named Dinah, after her "judgment."

Never assume someone already knows how much they matter. Even the strongest souls – the ones who smile easily, give freely, and seem unshakable – can carry quiet doubts inside. A few sincere words, a simple gesture, or a heartfelt reminder that their presence makes a difference can reach deeper than we realize. People rarely forget the moment they're reminded that they are seen, valued, and loved.

We often think kindness should be saved for moments of visible pain, but truthfully, everyone needs to hear it – especially those who seem to need it least. Many times, beneath their confident stride and calm face, is a human being who still wonders if they truly make an impact. When you tell someone, "You matter to me," you become a mirror that reflects their worth back to them. That reflection can reignite light where it was quietly fading.

So don't hold back your words. Say them while you can. Write the message, make the call, give the compliment, express the gratitude. You never know whose strength your voice might restore. A single moment of genuine affirmation can change the course of someone's day – or even their life. Remind people often that they matter, because love that is spoken becomes love that is remembered.

Inspired by the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810)

כִּי אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ אֶת־עֲבֹדָתִי אֲשֶׁר עָבַדְתִּיךָ ***For you are aware of my service that I worked for you***. 30:26)

Imagine in today's day and age, a man working for fourteen years – day and night – exposed to the elements – not for money to provide his family – but for the right to have a family!

Yaakov Avinu slaved for fourteen years – not to provide for his family – but just so that he could marry Lavan's two daughters, who came to the table without any dowry.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, observes that those fourteen years serve as the bedrock, the foundation, upon which the national existence and family life of the House of Yaakov are rooted. These fourteen years did not constitute an act of chivalry or romance. They provided the shining gateway to that precious treasure of human achievement: the Jewish family.

No more important unit in Jewish life exists than the Jewish family. That is where success begins, and, sadly, where a person's misfortune is rooted. - A strong, happy, loving family breeds success. An unhappy family, marked by depression and strife, sets the stage for misfortune.

These fourteen years that Yaakov devoted to working are the highest tribute that a man can make to his wife. Yaakov taught us how a Jewish husband regards his wife by how he slaved fourteen years for a suitable partner in marriage. Yaakov's actions defy the inane prattle concerning Orthodoxy's degradation of the Jewish woman in marriage.

Where else – what other religion – where, but in Orthodox Judaism, is the woman so venerated?

At the end of fourteen years, Yaakov was back where he started – only now he had familial responsibilities. His cares had multiplied. Fourteen years earlier, when he was alone and penniless, he had made a commitment to Hashem. Now, fourteen years later, he was still

penniless, but he had amassed the greatest Jewish treasure which money cannot buy: a family.

The Mashgiach considers this exemplary behaviour to be a demonstration of true l'shem Shomayim, acting purely for Hashem's sake.

L'shem Shomayim means that a person does not retain a vestige of personal interest for himself. Everything that he does is purely for the sake of glorifying Hashem. He applies the analogy of a community darshan, or maggid, who preaches weekly, neither for pay, nor for accolade, but simply to glorify Hashem.

What would happen if another darshan, speaker, came to town and offered his services? Would the present darshan desist and embrace him with open arms – even if it meant having another voice in town?

If the first darshan cried, "Foul," and refused to allow another speaker (truthfully this applies to another "entity": shul, minyan, school, business, etc.) It would indicate that his l'shem Shomayim was nothing more than a sham. He was acting purely for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. - It is very much like the humble man whose humility seems to come into question when someone does not give him proper respect.

Our Imahos acted purely l'shem Shomayim. Certainly, they each desperately wanted to be the progenitress of as many shevatim as possible.

Rachel sacrificed to procure the dudaim, fragrant flowers, from Leah, in the hope that, as a result, she would be blessed with child. Leah was willing to sell the dudaim, so that Yaakov would be with her that night. Nonetheless, they were each willing to give up their greatest yearning (to have another son) if it meant not hurting the other.

Leah was expecting a boy, but, if it were to cause an infringement on her sister's feelings, she did not want it. She would rather have a daughter than a son that would result in her sister's hurt feelings.

Furthermore, Rachel had waited patiently for seven years to marry Yaakov, and, in a split-second decision, she gave it all up just so that her sister, Leah, would not be hurt.

We all seek spiritual growth. We all want to glorify Hashem through mitzvah performance. We all want to perform good deeds, carry out charitable acts to help those in need and less fortunate.

If our aspirations and goals, however, might impinge on those of someone else, who, as a result, will be hurt, then our bein Adam la'Makom, relationship with Hashem (vis-à-vis our spiritual activities), is at the expense of our bein adam la'chaveiro, relationships with man.

Hashem does not want such activities from us, and neither should we.



וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה ***And Yaakov went out from Be'er Sheva and went to Charan***. (28:10)

In a well-known statement, Rashi teaches that the departure of a tzaddik from a community leaves a void. When the righteous person is in town, he comprises its glory, beauty and glow. When he leaves, its glory, beauty and glow leave with him.

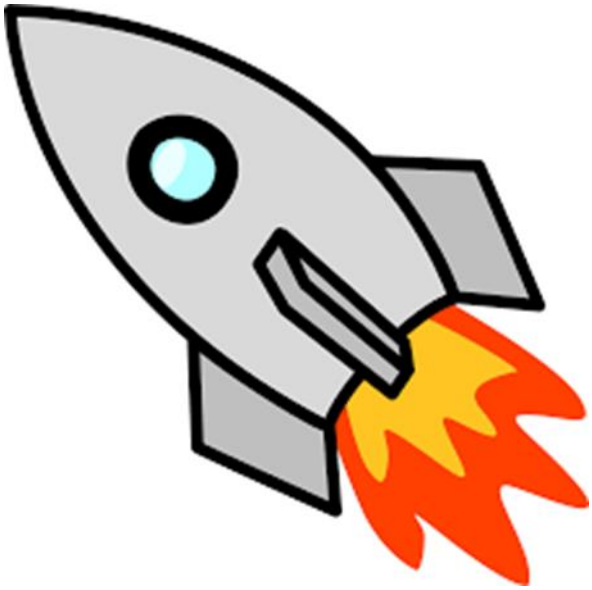
This is derived from the word **וַיֵּצֵא** (Yaakov), and "he (Yaakov) went out (from Be'er Sheva)." It is not necessary to write his point of departure. That is obvious, since he had been there until this point. All that is required for the reader to know is his destination – unless his departure creates a void.

The question is: although, undoubtedly, Yaakov's departure from Be'er Sheva impacted the community, what about Yitzchak and

Rivkah? They were both holy people who remained in Be'er Sheva. Yaakov was one out of three. - Rashi seems to be ignoring the fact that these two giants remained in Be'er Sheva.

Simply, we must say that each and every tzaddik contributes to a community's beauty. While two tzaddikim remain, the presence of one less holy person leaves an impressionable void.

Horav Gedaliah Shorr, zl (quoted by **Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl**,), offers another explanation which provides us with a window on how to survive spiritually in a world whose moral compass is antithetical to Torah dictate.



The Rosh Yeshivah made this observation at a time when the entire world was focused on the moon landing. It was a sensational moment in history, as man finally conquered space. Did he really, however, conquer it? Nothing about the moon had changed – it was still not human-friendly. Indeed, the only reason the astronauts were able to manoeuvre and survive in its hostile environment was that they brought a "mini-earth" with them: oxygen and food upon which to subsist. They brought pressurized spacesuits, weighted boots, and a whole array of scientific data-collecting devices, just for the short time that they would be there; without their complex life-support systems, they certainly would have died.

In other words, the astronauts brought earth up to the moon. This is exactly what Yaakov Avinu was compelled to do if he were to survive in the spiritually hostile environment of Charan.

The members of Rivkah's family were idol worshippers. Her brother was the paragon of a swindler. How could Yaakov maintain his spiritual status quo in such a place? Only if he brought Be'er Sheva's

hod, glory; hadar, beauty; and ziv, glow, with him. - Yaakov's body was in Charan, but his mind was ensconced in Be'er Sheva.

This is what Rashi means when he writes that when Yaakov left, he took the city's hod, hadar and ziv with him. He had to! Thus, he was able to build a spiritual cocoon around himself, so that he could survive Lavan's spiritual onslaught. As a result, Be'er Sheva was left devoid of these qualities.

Is it any better in our lives, when we leave the protection of our homes, our shuls, our yeshivos and enter the secular world that surrounds us?

While I will not identify exactly how the secular world differs from our lifestyle, because this dvar Torah is read by a vast audience, everyone has his or her opinion concerning what defines "secular" and what dictates "modern"; therefore, it is best left unsaid. Nonetheless, we must maintain a semblance of vigilance in our relationship with the outside world in order to protect ourselves and our children.

We must monitor this exposure by "wearing" the proper protective gear, so that the far-ranging effects of contemporary secular society does not leave us spiritually traumatized.

"The seismograph has taught us that a tremor in any part of the world can be felt by a sufficiently sensitive instrument everywhere in the world.

The same is true of a person's deeds. One should not think that his actions do not affect others. Everything one does in some ways affects everyone else in the world." ~R' Yehucham Levovitz zt"l.

וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמַר מַה־נּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם־בֵּית אֱלֹקִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמָיִם
And he became frightened and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the Abode of G-d, and this is the gate of the Heaven!" (28:17)



Rabbi Majer Szapira lays the cornerstone of Yeshiva Chachmej Lublin. 22nd May 1924

It was the 28th day of Sivan 1930; the crowd gathered to partake in the chanukas ha'bayis, dedication, of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. While it was not the first yeshivah in Poland, it was the most innovative. This was truly an auspicious occasion.

The Gerrer Rebbe, zl, the Imrei Emes, was given the honor of addressing the assemblage. He quoted the above pasuk, asking why a redundancy of the word zeh? this, occurs: zeh Bais Elokim v'zeh Shaar ha'Shomayim; "This is the Abode of G-d; this is the gate of the Heavens."

He cited the **Baal Shem Tov, zl,** who explained this pasuk based on a statement of Chazal in the Talmud Shabbos 31b. **חֲבָל עַל דְּלִית לֵיהּ**

דָּרְתָא וְתַרְעָא לְדָרְתָא עָבֵיד - "***Woe (what a waste it is) for he who does not have a courtyard yet makes a gate for his courtyard***."

Rashi explains that the Torah is the gateway through which one enters to avail himself of yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven. Therefore, it is incumbent that fear of Heaven should precede the study of Torah.

Yaakov Avinu studied Torah for fourteen years (after leaving home). Now, he has arrived at this holy site (Har HaMoriah), where he was privy to a Divine vision, experiencing the dream of the ladder with Hashem sitting on top.

The Patriarch said, "This place is the Abode of G-d. The other zeh, place, the yeshivah of Shem and Ever where I studied Torah for fourteen years, was merely the gateway to prepare me for yiraas Shomayim."

The Rebbe continued, "The yeshivah is an impressive edifice. Yehi ratzon, may it be the will of the Creator, that it should be both: the gate to the courtyard; and the courtyard. The students who toil in Torah should, likewise, be engendered with yiraas Shomayim."

עִם אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא אֶת־אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא יִחְיֶה... וְלֹא־יָדַע יַעֲקֹב כִּי רָחֵל גְּנָבַתַם ***With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live… Now Yaakov did not know that Rachel had stolen them***. (31:32)

Yaakov Avinu uttered the curse, because he suspected that one of the pagan servants had stolen the teraphim. Had he known that it was Rachel Imeinu who had taken them, he certainly would not have pronounced the curse.

Sadly, the curse took effect, catalyzing (in some way) Rachel's untimely death.

Every word that exits our mouth must be carefully weighed. One never knows… We find this occurring a number of times in Tanach.

One notable instance occurred when the brothers returned from Egypt and related to their father, Yaakov Avinu, the troubles that the Egyptian viceroy had caused them.

Imagine, had Yaakov issued a curse against this Jew-hating pagan (not knowing that, indeed, it was none other than his own son, Yosef), his curse might have been the catalyst for the Egyptian viceroy's death!

Horav Yitzchak Eliyahu Landau, zl, was a brilliant and pious gaon, who was a contemporary of **Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl**. Unfortunately, he was not blessed with biological offspring.

One day, the son of **Horav Itzele Volozhiner** (Rav Chaim's son) became seriously ill. Rav Itzele was beside himself in fear for his son's life. His father said to him, "Halevai (if only) Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu would experience your pain. Sadly, he has no children."

The child's condition worsened, and he passed away. Meanwhile, Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu was appointed Rav in Zaskowitz, a small town which bordered on Vohozhin.

In due time, the change of makom, place, engendered a change in his mazel, fortune, and he and his wife were blessed with a son.

When the child reached the age that Rav Itzele's son had become ill, this child, too, became gravely ill, and, in a short time, was on the verge of death.

When Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu heard about Rav Chaim's remark (years earlier) to Rav Itzele, he became overwhelmed with concern. He sat the entire night by his son's bedside, praying, pleading, beseeching Hashem to spare his child. He added, "This is not what Rav Chaim meant when he remarked to his son that Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu would have been pleased with your worry. He did not wish me to have a child that would become ill. He meant that I, too, should become a father! Please, Hashem, spare my child!" - The child lived.

One never knows the effect of the words that leave his mouth.

On a positive side, **Horav Shimon Pincus, zl**, relates that, prior to the bar-mitzvah of one of his sons, he was blessed with a daughter. The obvious question was: Should he make a separate kiddush, celebration, or, rather, merge the bar-mitzvah with the kiddush for his daughter. It would be economical both from an economic and time perspective.

After giving the matter some thought, he came to the conclusion that he should make two separate affairs. He conjectured: The idea of a kiddush is based upon the words of Yitzchak Avinu prior to sending Eisav to bring back for him matamim, delicacies, which he had been used to eating. The joy incurred as a result of eating those delicacies would create a spiritual bond between the two (father and son), thereby increasing the efficacy of the blessings.

Likewise, when one celebrates a milestone joyous occasion in the company of good friends, satiated with food and drink, the blessing of mazel tov and the various good wishes that are articulated by the guests represent a powerful force of benediction.

This is the power of the Jewish "word."

In the **Sefer Bais Elokim, the Mabit** (Horav Yeshaya D. Trani) writes that the power of a blessing uttered by a Jew is similar to that of a prayer. Thus, the power of a multitude of people all issuing a blessing, constitutes an incredible prayer on behalf of the newborn infant for whom the kiddush is being rendered.

Likewise, when one Jew blesses another on Rosh Hashanah night with the well-known, L'shanah Tovah Tikaseivu, "You shall be inscribed for a good year," it is a compelling merit for the individual who is the recipient of the blessing. We should never take a Jew's blessing for granted.

וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא ***He reached the place and spent the night there because the sun had set***. (28:11)



Darkness can be overwhelming. The symbolism inherent in darkness can be debilitating, since it evokes hopelessness; when there is no hope, there is no life. Hope is the candle that lights up the darkness, regardless of the size of the candle.

Sadly, consistent with the well-known proverb, too many of us are too busy cursing the darkness to seek out a candle to counteract the darkness. We are too intensely involved in complaining about the miserable hand that has been dealt to us to focus on the positive, in order to engender hope into our lives.

Yaakov Avinu had two seminal experiences which took place at night: the famous dream; and wrestling with the "man," who was Eisav's patron angel. He entered into each situation filled with fear and trepidation, and he emerged a stronger, more resolute person. His emunah, faith, in Hashem upheld him throughout the darkness of night, throughout the ordeal, lighting up his path.

Yaakov symbolizes triumph over adversity. He was the Patriarch who initiated Tefillas Maariv, the Evening service. He taught his descendants that, even in darkness, Hashem is with us, and we must entreat His favour. Yaakov taught us that, with emunah, we can light a candle and overcome the darkness.

One who has faith in his heart and a candle in his hand does not experience the darkness. The amount of darkness one experiences is commensurate with the amount of faith he maintains.

Our people are aptly called Bnei Yisrael, after the Patriarch who taught us to light up the darkness with our emunah in Hashem. With emunah in Hashem, our vision becomes clear, allowing us to see through life's ambiguities and adversities. This indomitable faith has carried us through the worst epochs of our tumultuous history.

I cite three vignettes, two of which are well-known. Nonetheless, they have a common lesson which should be reiterated: A Jew who has emunah does not experience darkness. He has a built-in generator that lights up the way for him.

Horav Ezriel Tauber, Shlita, writes that the sadistic Nazis were not satisfied with destroying Jewish lives; they resented the Jewish spirit. Thus, they did everything within their power to ravage and utterly abase the Jewish spirit. A Jew who died with pride was a greater anathema to them than a Jew who lived.

In order to carry out their diabolical goal, they hung a Paroches, curtain-- stolen from the Ark where the Torah scrolls of a destroyed synagogue had originally been placed -- over the entrance way to the gas chamber. Embroidered on the velvet were the words: זֶה־הַשַּׁעַר לַה' צַּדִּיקִים יָבֹאוּ בוֹ "*This is the gate of Hashem, the righteous shall enter therein.*"

Their hope was that the sight of the holy Paroches on the door of the gas chamber would provoke such hopelessness and despair in the condemned that they would abandon their faith as they made their final mortal walk. At the last moment of their lives, they would revile their Creator.

The Nazis did not know the Jewish spirit. Such human refuse is so distant from the spiritual dimension that they did not realize that, when the Jew came to this outrageous spot, he was filled with an indescribable spiritual revelation. - These words situated in that spot brought light to the Jew's darkness. He now saw clearly the beauty and inspiration of his faith.

Suddenly, their souls awoke within them, as a new strength coursed through their ravaged bodies. Their spirits soared as they went to their final destination with song and dance.

They were leaving a world where such filth dictates life and death and has the power to create such misery for humanity. They looked at the words, and they knew – clearly and without a doubt – that this gate, the gate to the gas chamber, was truly the gate that led to Hashem.

The gentile world that surrounds us does not realize the inextricable bond that exists between Hashem and His children – the Jewish People. Even those who have regrettably distanced themselves from Him still maintain a sort of relationship which even they themselves have difficulty explaining. Yet, it is there – often arousing them when they least expect it.

It occurred in Poland at the end of World War II. European Jewry had been decimated. Somehow, small groups of children had been housed by gentiles, many in monasteries, where the Abbots thought they were reclaiming a prize for their lord.

True, they had saved the physical lives of these children, but, if they could get away with it, they were not going to release these children to become Jewish – again! They had them, and they would baptize them. Unless incontrovertible proof was presented that these children were Jewish, they were remaining in the monasteries.

Horav Eliezer Silver, zl, the legendary head of Vaad Hatzalah, the relief and rescue organization that addressed the physical and spiritual needs of the survivors of the Holocaust, appeared together with **Horav Gorfinkel** of England at a monastery and demanded that the Abbot release the Jewish children that were housed in his facility.

The Abbot's response was simple: "Prove that they are Jewish."

"We will return at the children's bedtime, and we will then prove to you that these children are, in fact, Jewish."

The Abbot thought they had lost their collective minds. How could two or three minutes before these children retire for the night prove that they were Jewish?

Dozens of Jewish boys and girls were held "captive" in the monastery. I say captive, though they had not really been kidnapped, but the gentiles were never giving up a Jew whom they felt they could convert to their religion. This was part of their dogma. As long as Jews believed in Hashem, it impugned the integrity of their faith.

The Abbot knew quite well which children were Jewish and which were not. After all, he had been present when their parents, out of desperation, gave them these children, as they themselves were being deported to their deaths. There was no way the Abbot would return these children to their true faith. All proof of their religious identity had perished in the fires of the Holocaust.

The two rabbanim did not agree. They knew that Jewish parents imbued their children from the moment of birth with an indomitable faith, with a light against the world's darkness. They would prove to the Priest that a Jewish child does not lose sight of his faith, regardless of how dark it is, or how dark one makes it for him.

When the two rabbanim arrived at the prescribed time, the Abbot was waiting-with a mocking smile across his face. He was confident that no children would be leaving today. Nothing that could prove the children's origins had survived the flames.

The young eyes peered silently – almost longingly – from every side, watching as two bearded figures made their way to the room where they were gathered. A small group of children in their bedclothes – boys with no yarmulkes, their payos shorn, a group of young boys and girls who, for all intent and purposes, looked and thought like goyim.

Suddenly, one of the bearded figures walked to the middle of the room, climbed atop a chair and just stood there – smiling at the children. Then, in the din of the silence, his voice rang out, uttering just six words: "**שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹקינוּ ה' אֶחָד**!"

As if by some mysterious cue, the silence was broken as the thin voices cried out: "Mama! Mama!" Tiny forms jumped from their beds, "Mama! Mama! Where are you?" They had never forgotten the good night kiss their mothers had given them when they recited Shema Yisrael before retiring to bed. These were the last words that had been instilled years ago. These were the words for which they had been longing.

The Abbot hung his head in shame. He knew that he had been defeated. The light that had permeated their Jewish hearts had risen to guide these children back home.

Our last vignette is about **Rav Meir Feist, zl**, an individual whose life personified light, despite being plagued with what many would consider extreme darkness. Confined to a wheelchair since the age of four, when both of his legs had become paralyzed, he suffered from several other chronic diseases as well.

For more than half of his life, he had lived alone in the world, without the support and comfort of family and friends. Yet, he continued to amaze the medical world, who had written him off at age forty.

At age sixty-eight he was niftar, passed away, from an illness unrelated to his chronic health problems. This was a man who always manifested a joyful countenance: he never deferred to depression; he displayed incredible patience; and he actually felt that he was the beneficiary of eminent good fortune.

It could actually be said that happiness was an integral component of his being. How did he do it? - He understood that living a Torah life, ensconced in a Torah environment, was the most rewarding life

one could lead. There is no greater source of pleasure than that which emanates from connecting with the Torah.

This was the secret of his "happy" life. He understood that every day that he lived serving Hashem and learning His Torah was infinitely invaluable. Thus, despite his severe handicaps, his life was filled with joy. He saw no darkness – only light.



וַיִּגַּשׁ יַעֲקֹב וַיְגַל אֶת־הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר ***He stepped near and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well***. (29:10)

Rashi teaches כְּמִי שֶׁמַּעֲבִיר אֶת הַפִּקָּק מֵעַל פִּי צְלוֹחִית; לְהוֹדִיעֲךָ שֶׁכֹּחוֹ גָּדוֹל that Yaakov Avinu was able to roll the stone off the well with the same ease as one removes a stopper from a bottle opening.

Are Chazal that impressed with Yaakov's physical strength that they feel it is a necessary lesson to impart to us? Are we that interested in our Patriarch's physical prowess?

Furthermore, in Tefillas Geshem, we say, יִחַד לֵב וְגָל אֶבֶן מִפִּי בְּאֵר מַיִם ... בַּעֲבוּרוֹ אַל תִּמְנַע מָיִם , "***He dedicated his heart and rolled a stone off the mouth of a well of water… For his sake, do not hold water back***!"

What merit does Yaakov's physical strength serve for us? Last, if Yaakov Avinu had truly been that strong, why did he not employ his strength to -- once and for all -- put Eisav in his place? Why did he shirk from Elifaz when he came at his father's behest to eliminate Yaakov?

Horav Meir Chadash, zl, explains that our Patriarch was, indeed, a very strong man, but this strength was used only in pursuit of his avodas Hashem, service to the A-lmighty. He deferred his opportunity to be with his father, and chose instead to escape to Charan, because he did not want to chance a confrontation with Eisav. He was prepared to give away all of his money to Elifaz, rather than to battle with him. He used his strength only for such a noble

purpose as providing chesed, kindness, enabling the people to draw water from the well. He used his strength to overcome his strong desire to put Lavan in his place, when he had the opportunity to avenge his honor. He demonstrated his strength by not resorting to bloodshed, instead seeking avenues of compromise.

The merit that Yaakov used his physical advantage only for spiritual goals is what stands on our behalf. Our Patriarch understood that everything which is placed at our disposal is not for our personal advantage, but for the purpose of enabling us to help others and to further our own spiritual development.

מַה־פִּשְׁעִי֙ מַה חַטָּאתִ֔י כִּ֥י דָלַ֖קְתָּ אַחֲרָֽי *What is my crime? What sin did I commit that you were in such hot pursuit of me?* (31:36)



After over two decades of being cheated and surrounded by his evil father-in-law, Lavan, Yaakov Avinu left in the hope of finally having a home undisturbed by the nefarious machinations of his father-in-law. Lavan, of course, accused our Patriarch of every evil endeavor known to man. Yaakov's response? "What is my crime?" No screaming; no shouting; no malediction; just a relaxed and calm, "What did I do?"

How did he contain himself after so many years of suffering and degradation?

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, Shlita, explains that Yaakov did not respond to Lavan, because he was acutely aware that Lavan was merely a pawn, part of Hashem's Divine Plan. A Jew who lives with such awareness takes a blasé attitude to life's experiences. He knows that he does not call the shots; Hashem does. He might as

well accept what comes at him. Ranting and raving will not alter the sequel to his story.

So many factors are instrumental in Hashem's determination of what, when and how He will have the final curtain played out. We are not privy to all the factors, and certainly not to the decision-making process. We must, however, never lose sight of the big picture. Every decision that we make must take Hashem into consideration.

The issue of secular education was once raised in Lithuania. The government felt that the Jewish school children should have their secular education during the morning hours together with gentile children. During the latter part of the day, if the Jewish children desired to study Torah subjects, they were free to do so. The primary times of the day, when the children's minds were sharp, should be devoted to secular knowledge.

Obviously, two things were wrong with this demand: the child's minds would not be functioning at their optimum acuity in the afternoon; studying secular subjects together with gentile children would be damaging to their spiritual health. The problem quickly reached crisis proportion.

The Ponevezer Rav, zl, Horav Yosef Kahaneman, was a very wise man, and he knew that the only way to overturn this decree was with sharp logic. The Lithuanian ministers were not moved by tears – only rationalism.

The Rav asked to meet with the education minister. He asked that a dispensation be made on behalf of the Jewish children, so that they could learn secular studies in the afternoon.

The education minister was very understanding, listening respectfully to the Rav present his case. He then asked, "Rabbi, you have not explained to my why the Jewish children are unable to study secular disciplines together with our wonderful Lithuanian children.

Is there something different in the way you teach secular studies so that you must study separately?"

"Yes, we count differently than you. For example, you begin counting with zero, one, two, etc. We begin nothing with "zero." Every subject, every issue, every occurrence, begins with the number "One," the One G-d in whom we believe!" It is a basic tenet of our belief that nothing "just happens." Every occurrence in life is pre-ordained by the Almighty.

The sooner we learn to accept this verity, the less complex life will be.

וַיִּקַּח֙ מֵאַבְנֵ֣י הַמָּקֹ֔ום ***He took from the stones of the place***. (28:11)



The Midrash disputes how many stones Yaakov Avinu took. Rabbi Yehudah posits that the Patriarch took twelve stones. Rabbi Nechemiah contends that he took three stones. The Rabbanan say that he took only two stones.

Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl, offers a homiletic understanding of Rabbi Nechemiah's position that there were three stones.

He suggests that "stones" are a metaphor which alludes to the three Patriarchs, who are the foundation stones upon which the world is built. Each Patriarch represents his individual approach towards serving the Divine.

Avraham Avinu represents the middah, attribute, of chesed, kindness. Yitzchak Avinu characterizes avodah, service and devotion to Hashem; Yaakov embodies Torah.

Our Patriarch Yaakov arrived at the makom Hamikdash, place where the Bais Hamikdash would one day be constructed, and he encountered three stones. Chazal teach that the stones began to debate one another. "Upon my head, the tzaddik will rest his head," they each declared. When Hashem saw the stones becoming embroiled in controversy, He immediately fused them together to form one stone.

What is Chazal's message? What lesson does the debate among the stones and Hashem's fusion of them impart to us?

Rav Abramsky explains that the stones represent the three Patriarchs who began to contend with one another. The issue was: Which of the three foundations upon which the world rests is the most significant? Where should the tzaddik place his head, his primary avodah, service to Hashem? On which one of the three media represented by the stones should he place his greatest focus?

Avraham claimed that chesed is the prime vehicle for achieving distinction and for inspiring the world. Yitzchak felt that avodah should be characterized by prayer and intense spiritual devotion. Yaakov insisted that it is through Torah that one can make his most significant contribution toward maintaining the world.

Hashem settled the dispute by fusing them all together. His message to them was straightforward: One who seeks shleimus, spiritual perfection, is compelled to complete and perfect himself in all three foundations. One who exemplifies only one – or two – will not succeed in attaining perfection.

Yaakov arose in the morning, anointed the stone with oil, and declared, "This stone which I have set up as a pillar shall become a House of G-d" (Bereishis 28:22). He taught that one who strives to erect a veritable sanctuary for Hashem must embody and perfect himself in all three areas: Torah, avodah and gemillus chassadim.

וַיַּשֵּׂג לָבָן אֶת־יַעֲקֹב ***Lavan overtook Yaakov.*** (31:25)



Imagine how Yaakov Avinu must have felt when Lavan caught up with him. He made an attempt to escape. He knew that if Lavan overtook him, he had little chance to remain alive. No one could best Lavan. So Yaakov kept on running, while Lavan continued his pursuit.

The Midrash teaches us that, while Yaakov was running from Lavan, unbeknownst to him, another enemy, his brother Eisav, was also in pursuit. Armed to the teeth with four hundred trusted soldiers, Eisav was finally free to rid himself of Yaakov. His brother would pay a hefty price for appropriating the blessings.

Chazal say that Lavan chose not to kill Yaakov for two reasons. First, Hashem had warned him to stay away. The Almighty gave Lavan an offer that he could not refuse. He was told, in no uncertain terms, to stay away from Yaakov.

Second, Lavan heard that his other nephew, the one who was so dear to his heart, Eisav, was also after Yaakov. Eisav did not travel light. His entourage was comprised of four hundred killers, whose sole purpose in life was following their master Eisav's command. If he said, "Kill," they killed – regardless of who the designated victim was.

Lavan was concerned that, if he killed Yaakov before Eisav arrived, Eisav would claim that he was redeeming his brother's innocent blood! How dare Lavan harm his only brother?

Lavan did not harm Yaakov, because he feared Eisav's reaction. Eisav handpicked four hundred men who certainly put fear in the hearts of anyone who came within their proximity. Yaakov must have trembled, knowing that when they would meet, he would be in serious

peril. Little did he realize that these four-hundred men, by their very presence, were responsible for sparing Yaakov from the wrath of Lavan.

We may think that we are being besieged by the enemy, when, in fact, Hashem is manipulating this enemy for our benefit. Man is hopelessly bewildered concerning the ways of Hashem. Indeed, just when one thinks that he is beginning to understand what is taking place, Hashem throws us a curve, just to demonstrate how myopic we are.

We grope around, thinking that we actually see; yet, essentially, we either see what we want to see or what Hashem allows us to see. The big picture, the whole story, remains elusive, because this is something to which man is not privy.

The Yalkut teaches that the dog is, by nature, insolent and brazen. In order to curb his brazenness, Hashem created the dog to be "poor," relegated to relying on human beings for food and sustenance. Thus, the dog will serve his master with fidelity and appreciate the favor that he receives.

We are being taught that poverty is, at times, a favor. Hashem knows the nature of each individual and, apparently, some people cannot handle the test of wealth. It might go to their heads, which will lead to arrogance. The shoresh, source, of their neshamos, souls, is such that the fewer opportunities they have for confronting the challenge of insolence, arrogance, brazenness – the better for them. - Essentially, poverty is a favor in disguise.

The Chafetz Chaim comments that people wonder why some are created with a silver spoon in their mouths, while others barely subsist from meal to meal. He explains that what we see before us is merely one frame of a large picture. We do not take into consideration that there is much more to see, as we are not invited to be part of the holistic viewing audience.

He compares this to a visitor who entered a shul for the first time and is surprised with the manner that aliyos, honors when being called up to the Torah, are being apportioned. Men whom he feels are distinguished are not receiving the more important aliyos, while those whom one might consider to be of lesser significance are being called up to the more esteemed aliyos.

The gabbai, individual charged with apportioning the aliyos, replies, "You were not here last week, when it was their turn to receive the more eminent aliyos."

We are allowed on this world for one lifetime, which, regardless of its length, is never sufficient. During our short stay, we expect to receive the answers to all our questions. Perhaps the soul of the poor man had been here "earlier" and proved that wealth had been too much of a challenge. Hashem has done him a favor by "easing" the burden of his challenge; thus, He keeps him away from the money.

There are many questions, and, for each question, there is a proper answer. For the most part, that answer is: "You do not see the whole picture. There is so much more to the equation than you have the ability to grasp."

When the **Chasam Sofer** was a teenage student, he "dormed" at the home of a certain family. One day, a soldier stationed in the area asked the Chasam Sofer to teach him to speak Hebrew. In return for this service, he agreed to polish the Chasam Sofer's shoes every day. The Chasam Sofer agreed to the arrangement, despite his puzzlement at this request.

Years later, when the Chasam Sofer was already the distinguished Rav of Pressburg, Hungary, it happened that he was asked to adjudicate a dispute between two wealthy members of the community. As expected, only one of the disputants emerged victorious. The other disputant left the bais din, court, enraged with the verdict and dead set upon taking revenge against the rav.

He was so upset that he conjured up a libelous story about the Chasam Sofer, asserting that he was subversive to the secular government. As a result, the Chasam Sofer was subpoenaed to appear in court before the magistrate to answer charges of sedition.

On the appointed day, the Chasam Sofer appeared in court. It was a military court – no jury. As soon as he entered the court, the chief magistrate came over and said, "You have nothing to worry about. I will take care of everything.

When the judge saw the Chasam Sofer stare at him incredulously, he explained, "The rabbi does not remember me. I was the man to whom you taught Hebrew many years ago. I never forgot the favor. Now I have the chance to repay you."

As the Chasam Sofer left the courthouse, he commented about himself, "This is the meaning of the pasuk **וְהַסֹּרֹתִי אֶת־כַּפִּי וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֹרָי וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרָאוּ**, '***You will see My back, but My face may not be seen***'" (Shemos 33:23).

At times, man sees Heavenly endeavors which are inexplicable. He neither understands why Hashem acted in this manner, nor perceives a reasonable purpose in these actions. Everything is sealed before him; with his limited perception, he is unable to penetrate the maze of events which are clearly Heaven-sent. Later on, Hashem's intent becomes clear.

The panai – My face, up front, when events occur – are beyond our comprehension. Achorai – My back – later on, when we are privy to the consequences of those early endeavors, we begin to grasp the reason for Hashem's actions.

"Every man can attain the highest level. It depends on nothing but your own free choice." ~ R' Nachman of Breslov zt"l.

עִם אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא אֶת־אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא יִחְיֶה ***With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live***. (31:32)

Yaakov Avinu made a statement, ascribing a premature demise to the one who had taken Lavan's terafim, idols. He was unaware that Rachel Imeinu had taken them. As a result of our Patriarch's words – albeit without malice and unwittingly – he catalyzed a tragic impact on his beloved wife.

The Chafetz Chaim derives from here a compelling lesson concerning the gravity of one's words. Yaakov certainly did not want to harm Rachel, but words, once they exit the mouth, cannot be recanted. They are gone, and, sadly, in this situation, they left an indelible mark.

Yaakov was very careful about which words left his mouth. Imagine, says, **Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita**, that upon hearing the demands the Egyptian viceroy was placing on his sons, Yaakov would have uttered a curse against him. His son, Yosef, would have died!

The brothers returned home and related to their father the humiliation which they endured, as they had been accused of spying. Now, the viceroy wanted them to return with Binyamin.

Yaakov must have been beside himself with rage at the insolence of this "pagan." - One curse – and he would have been gone!

He kept his calm, said nothing – and, as a result, Yosef lived out his full life.

David Hamelech says in Sefer Tehillim 119:62, חֲצוֹת לַיְלָה אָקוּם לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ עַל מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ, "***At midnight I arise to thank You for Your righteous ordinances***."

Why did David arise specifically at midnight – as opposed to any other time of the night?

In Midrash Rus, Chazal comment concerning the meaning of מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ, "*Your righteous ordinances*." Mishpatim – the justice

(punishments) meted out against Ammon and Moav, and tzdakos – the righteous manner that You act with my grandfather, Boaz, and grandmother, Rus. This refers to the encounter at "midnight," when Rus covertly entered the threshing floor where Boaz had retired to bed. Instead of cursing her, he blessed her for coming.

Let us envision the scenario in the perspective of the debauched culture that reigned at the time. Boaz's generation was morally deficient. The threshing floor was a place in which immoral encounters could take place. It was secluded, and the people who spent the night there were not necessarily the community's spiritual elite. Boaz sensed movement in this close proximity. He looked up and saw a young woman. What does a person do in such an instance, under such circumstances?

One assumes that this woman is up to no good. His first reaction was to curse her! Not only did Boaz not curse her, but he also went as far as to bless her! As a result of this "change of pace," David praised his grandfather for not cursing his grandmother.

Who knows, had Boaz reacted in the opposite way, David Hamelech may not have been born!

The words that come out of a person's mouth have an element of kedushah, sanctity, to them. Under certain circumstances, strong words with dual connotations can have a far from desired – and even a deleterious – effect.

An incident occurred during the hafganos, protests, in Yerushalayim, concerning the building of a swimming pool which would cater to mixed swimming. Obviously, to establish such a venue that undermines the very underpinnings of kedushas Yisrael, the holiness and morality of our nation, in the Holy City was a knife thrust into the heart of Torah observant Judaism. People took to the streets to protest this infamy.

One day, Horav Yehudah Tzedakah, zl, who was Rosh Yeshivah in Porat Yosef, approached **Horav Ezra Attiyah, zl**, the Rosh HaYeshivah, with the suggestion that it might be appropriate to send the students of the Yeshivah to a hafganah that was taking place that day.

Rav Attiyah asked, "Are you not aware that it might become physical and the mishtarah, police, will beat the protestors with sticks and truncheons? Is it appropriate to send students to a scene of unrest where they might be hurt?"

"It is worth suffering for kedushas Yisrael," Rav Tzedakah countered. - "Would your response be the same if it were your son who was beaten by the police?" was the Rosh HaYeshivah's reaction to his senior lecturer.

That evening, a hafganah took place, and Rav Tzedakah's son was injured by the police. When they came to inform Rav Tzedakah of what had happened, he replied, "I know. I already knew in the morning that this would happen… It is shegagah ha'yotsei mipi ha'shalit, "'Like a decree that is already issued by the ruler.'"

This was a reference to Rav Attiyah's question concerning his son. As soon as the great tzaddik uttered the words, "And if it would be your son," it was as if he had foreshadowed its occurrence.

The holier one is, the greater his spiritual stature, his words are commensurately valued and rendered significant.

"I heard from my teacher [the Baal Shem Tov zt"l] that when Heaven wants to punish someone who deserves punishment, they first take away his bitachon, because when one believes in Hashem and in His hashgacha with all his heart and soul, no power in the world can harm him." ~ Toldos Yaakov Yosef.

וְרָחֵל לָקְחָה אֶת־הַתְּרָפִים וַתְּשִׂמֵם בְּכַר הַגָּמָל וַתֵּשֶׁב עֲלֵיהֶם ***Now Rachel had taken the terafim, put them into the camel's packsaddle and sat on them***. (31:34)

There is no question that the yetzer hora, evil inclination, maintains a powerful hold on man. As much as we try to extricate ourselves from its grip, it is very difficult. It is a never-ending battle from which we often do not emerge triumphant.

Is there a strategy for overcoming the blandishments offered up by the yetzer hora with which it ensnares us? Why do some fall prey, while others survive the battle, often unscathed?

In Mayanei HaChaim, Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, shares with us his secret for success: Lavan was searching for the terafim, his little idols, unaware that his daughter, Rachel Imeinu had hidden them in the saddlebags of the camel upon which she was riding.

The question which many commentators touch upon is an obvious one: Why did she bother hiding them? Why did she not smash them, burn them, throw them into a river?

Ibn Ezra explains that, by burning them, she was attributing significance to them. When one is compelled to destroy something, it is an indication that that item has value, is of consequence. This is the last thing that Rachel wanted to do. The terafim were nothing. They were meaningless.

An idol's relevance is determined by the way it is treated by intelligent people. If it is treated as a non-entity, it has no significance. If, however, a person feels that the idol must literally be destroyed, it shows that he attributes an element of distinction to it.

The Midrash Tanchuma states that one does not recite the Motzoei Shabbos Havdalah prayer over a candle belonging to a gentile. The simple reason for this halachah is that a candle owned by a gentile has not "rested" on Shabbos. Second, by using a candle that belongs

to a gentile, one lends distinction to the gentile. With regard to Hashem, he has no relevance.

Rav Zaitchik suggests that herein lies the "strategy," the maneuver for overcoming the yetzer hora; Just as Rachel was compelled to contend with her father's terafim, each and every one of us is challenged by his own personal avodah zarah, idol. It is called the yetzer hora. Yes, the evil inclination within each and every one of us is an idol to which we regrettably defer. This is worship!

One does not have to 'genuflect' before the idol to be considered to be an idol worshipper. If one has no control over himself, if his yetzer hora exerts its dominance over him, he is a slave to an idol – no more and no less! - The key to winning the war against the yetzer hora is to apply Rachel's strategy: denigrate it; deprive it of its value; devoid it of significance, diminish its relevance.

Sadly, we find this stratagem to be difficult. When the yetzer hora waves the "carrot" in front of our eyes, we are prepared to do anything. The yetzer hora entices us with kavod, honor, tempts us with the fulfillment of our most base desires, convinces us that we can have it all.

But what does "all" really mean? Is it of value? Is honor real? Does living out our fantasies really make for true self-satisfaction?

It is all a game to which the unknowing give relevance. If we would apply even a modicum of intelligence, we would see how meaningless and purposeless it all is. When we have reached that point, the yetzer hora becomes putty in our hands. After all, the yetzer hora has only the significance which we give to it.

If Hashem Guides even the smallest blade of grass, how much more so does he guide every detail of your life? ~ Baal Shem Tov.

וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־קֹלוֹ וַיֵּבְךְּ ***And he raised his voice and wept.*** (29:11)

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, relates that he once visited the **Steipler Gaon, Horav Yaakov Kanievsky, zl**, and the Gaon's countenance was illuminated. The Steipler was the essence of Torah, and, undoubtedly, this was Torah related – which it was. "Sit down; I want to share a chiddush, original thought, with you.

When Avraham Avinu sent Eliezer to seek a wife for Yitzchak, he did not send him empty handed. The Torah details the wealth of gifts that Eliezer brought with him to 'seal the deal.' - Clearly, Yitzchak Avinu sent his son with no less. Yet Yaakov Avinu bemoaned the fact that he came with nothing more than his *makeil*, cane.

How are we to understand this? - Rashi explains that Eisav had dispatched his son, Elifaz, in pursuit of Yaakov, with one mission: 'kill my brother.'

When Elifaz caught up with Yaakov, he was faced with a quandary. On the one hand, he had his father's mission to carry out. On the other hand, having been raised b'cheiko shel Yitzchak, in Yitzchak's lap, he could not execute the deed. - 'What should I do concerning my father's command?' he asked Yaakov.

'Take all my possessions. Since a poor man is considered like a dead man, you will have carried out your mission.' - Thus, Yaakov was left in abject poverty.

Let us view this scenario in perspective. Elifaz was far from being a saint. He was morally profligate, and became the father of Amalek, the archenemy of our people. Clearly his DNA was deficient. Yet, Yitzchak found reason to reach out to him, to the point that Rashi writes, godal b'cheiko shel Yitzchak.

This is actually how Yitzchak saved Yaakov's life, and, by extension, the entire Klal Yisrael. He raised Elifaz, and this early childhood influence made the difference!

"I have young, dejected students who come to me. They have been rejected by the system, having been dismissed from their yeshivah. Why? They acted inappropriately. How? They wasted time and did not occupy themselves with Torah study. They acted foolishly. Is this a reason to throw them into the street? Are we prepared to drown them in the river, to throw them in front of a speeding train? - As long as they are not hurting anyone else, they should be allowed to remain in the yeshivah!

Yitzchak raised Elifaz, and the benefit was that, instead of becoming a murderer, he became a thief! "

The Chazon Ish was wont to say that a yeshivah that dismisses a student who is not up to par with the school's spiritual and academic standards is tantamount to a hospital that prematurely sends home a seriously ill patient. Rather he should die at home than at the hospital. It might hurt the hospital's 'numbers'. There is no concern for the patient – only for the hospital's mortality record."

This is a powerful lesson, especially in light of the numbers of young men and women who do not "fit" into the system. Every school wants to be the "mainstream A+" yeshivah or Bais Yaakov. To chas v'sholom keep a student that is not "perfect" would be bad for business. The school has standards; the parent body expects that these standards be upheld – until it happens to their own child. Then all the rules are suspended.

Should not every Jewish child be considered like our own child?

When the Chason Ish, the leader of his generation was told of bad news or faced a troubling situation, he would often comment, "Nu, Hashem must be eager for us to daven!"

הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה׳ ***This time I will give thanks to Hashem***. (29:35)

Rashi explains that Leah Imeinu's present expression of gratitude coincided with the birth of her fourth son, Yehudah, because she now realized that she had received more than her equal share.

Since Yaakov Avinu had four wives and was destined to have twelve sons, each wife would be expected to have three sons. With the fourth son, Leah had taken more than her share.

In the Talmud Berachos 7b, Chazal make what seems to be an enigmatic statement. "***From the time that Hashem created the world, no one had come forth and thanked Hashem until Leah came along and offered her gratitude***."

Does this imply that Avraham Avinu, Yitzchak Avinu and the matriarchs did not offer gratitude? How are we to understand this?

Obviously, the commentators explain this, each in his own manner, thereby teaching a lesson concerning the significance of hakoras hatov, gratitude.

The Ksav Sofer offers a practical understanding of Leah's gratitude: The Avos and Imahos, Patriarchs and Matriarchs, certainly expressed their gratitude to Hashem for the many nissim, miracles, which they had experienced. Leah went one step further: She thanked Hashem for what is a natural experience.

Childbirth, albeit dangerous, is considered natural. There is pain involved; unquestionably, things can go wrong, but this could occur anytime, anywhere.

One must praise Hashem **על כל נשימה ונשימה**, "For each and every breath," because each breath, although accepted as natural, is a miracle. One lives only through the will of G-d.

Leah taught us the critical importance of recognizing G-d in teva, nature. Do not wait for the miracle to occur before you say thanks.

Life is a miracle, and we must learn to appreciate and savour it – not simply take it for granted.

Perhaps we might take this further, along the same lines. A young couple marries and is shortly thereafter blessed with a child. This is cause for great celebration, as both parents are "treated" to something new, something transformative. They are no longer a couple; they are a family. They are now parents. What a wonderful blessing for which they are thankful.

Shortly thereafter, number two is born. The joy is definitely great, but less of a novelty than number one. When number three arrives with no complications, the excitement is beginning to be taken for granted.

Leah taught us that everything is a gift from Hashem – regardless how often and with what ease. We thank Hashem for number four in the same manner as we expressed our gratitude for number one.

When Hashem's blessings arrive with comparative ease, we begin to take them for granted. How different things would be if the "ease" was not there, if the blessing had involved some sort of adversity.

We must never take our blessings for granted. Every gift that we receive from the A-lmighty is accounted for on a Heavenly computer. There is a reason behind everything that occurs. Nothing should be taken for granted. Everything should be appreciated.

"If you can't control yourself from feeling angry, at least you can keep silent. Then the anger will be barren and bear no fruit (such as insults, disputes, etc.). This will also quiet the feelings of anger, since silence to anger is like water to fire." ~ R' Eliezer Papo zt"l.

וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה "***And he dreamt and behold! A ladder was set earthward, and its top reached heavenward.***" (28:12)



It is interesting to note that the vision of a ladder whose legs are on the ground, while the top reaches the heavens, occurred only to Yaakov and not to the preceding Patriarchs, Avraham and Yitzchak.

Horav Shlomo Margolis, Shlita, attributes this phenomenon to the different lives that they lived. Avraham initiated Tefillas Shacharis, the morning prayer. He understood that life has its challenges, its trials and travail. The sun shone for him. He succeeded in life, overcoming whatever challenges may have stood in his way. He was accepted by those around him. Indeed, he was recognized as G-d's emissary, His prince. He was admired and revered. His prayer, the prayer recited when the sun shines, reflects his life's endeavor.

Yitzchak's prayer was Tefillas Minchah, the afternoon prayer, recited as the sun's rays begin to wane. He experienced his share of life's problems. The sun did not shine as brightly for him as it did for his father. Yet, he persevered, serving Hashem no matter the circumstances of his life. His tefillah, recited as the sun begins to set, reflects his life.

Yaakov Avinu's tefillah was Tefillas Arvis, the evening prayer. His life was one of darkness. It started in the womb with his twin brother, Eisav. He suffered from the corrupt Lavan; from the misfortune of his daughter, Dinah; from the troubles of Yosef,

which included the imprisonment of Shimon and near loss of Binyamin.

Yaakov did not live a carefree life. The one time he asked for respite, a change from his daily troubles, Yosef's anguish came upon him.

Yaakov's prayer, recited at a time of darkness, reflects the notion that one can and should trust and pray to Hashem, regardless of the overwhelming darkness that envelops him. Yaakov taught us that the "odds" mean nothing to a Jew. He can overcome anything.

The ladder also represents this idea. Even when one is on the "earth," on the lowest rung of the spiritual ladder, having sunk to the nadir of depravity, he can still rise up and reach the zenith of spiritual purity. He can either climb the ladder or stand there and watch as others accomplish what he reneged from doing.

Yaakov succeeded, despite the darkness of life's challenges. He was shown that man can overcome anything: be it physical or spiritual darkness. He has to trust in Hashem and be willing to climb the ladder.



וַיֹּאמֶר אֶעֱבָדְךָ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים בְּרָחֵל בִּתְּךָ הַקְּטַנָּה ***And (Yaakov) said, "I will work for you seven years, for Rachel your younger daughter***." (29:18)

Chazal teach us that Yaakov Avinu was taken to task for offering to remain in Lavan's employ and not seeking to return home to his parents. He ended up being away from home for a total of thirty-six years, of which he spent fourteen studying Torah in the Yeshivah of Ever.

For the duration of time he spent studying Torah, he was not criticized for failing to honor his parents. For the next twenty years that he spent in the house of Lavan and two years traveling, Chazal feel that Yaakov was derelict in regard to fulfilling the mitzvah of

Kibud Av v'Eim. His punishment was that Yosef was separated from him for the same number of years.

This punishment apparently was to be a lesson; he was to experience what it is not to have his son at home. Perhaps he would understand what his parents underwent when he was gone.

The punishment does not really seem to equal the transgression, because Yaakov did not go for a pleasure trip. He was compelled to run for his life from his evil brother, Eisav. On the other hand, he should have returned as soon as possible. He seems to have taken time off to start a family before returning home.

In contrast, Yosef was thought to be dead, the victim of a wild animal. There is a "slight" difference between the emotion which a parent feels at the death of a child, r'l, and one which he feels when the child leaves for an extended period of time.

Perhaps the parallel between the two is that it is not up to us to determine what is easier for our parents to handle. Regardless of the circumstances, we are not permitted to cause them any sort of pain. Every person is different and, consequently, reacts differently to a given situation. For one parent the pain of having a child leave for a long time – and not knowing where he is – is similar to the agony of losing him.

We are required to honor our parents. We do not define what constitutes honor. The Torah does that for us. Honoring parents properly is not as simple as we might think. Moreover, one should view the chance to honor his parents as an opportunity, a unique privilege. Indeed, it is an honor for the individual to have been granted the chance to honor his parents.

This applies even if the task of honoring his parents is an incessant toil for him. This applies equally if the parents do not appreciate what one is doing for them, due to illness or plain self- centeredness.

Even if one's parents publicly humiliate him, he may not retaliate. - According to the **Rambam**, he should not even feel bad about it!

Although honoring one's parents is a form of expression of gratitude to them for all they have done on our behalf, we may never assume that if they are currently doing nothing for us – or even embarrass us – that we are no longer obligated to honor them.



וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה' עַל־כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמֹד מִלֶּדֶת *She conceived again, and bore a son and declared, "This time let me gratefully praise Hashem; therefore she called his name Yehudah, then she stopped giving birth*. (29:35)

In his commentary on this pasuk, **Ibn Ezra** makes a compelling statement. He interprets Leah's "gratitude" as if she were saying, "I have had four sons. I, therefore, thank Hashem, for I want no more."

It is as if she were saying, "I have enough; Hashem has been very kind. I am now grateful for everything that He has given me." Therefore she stopped giving birth.

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, z'l, infers from Ibn Ezra that Leah caused her own inability to bear additional children. She claimed that she had had enough. Thus, she stopped conceiving and giving birth. Whether it is to be perceived as a punishment or reprimand -- or simply an educative lesson -- there seems to be a relationship between Leah's expression of gratitude and her ceasing to give birth.

Horav Ezrachi explains that Leah's offer of gratitude to Hashem was deficient and can, therefore, be viewed as sinful. In areas of the spirit, one never has enough. One should never be satisfied with what he has attained. Leah said she had had enough. Hashem responded: Enough. She had forgotten that it was not that long ago that she had prayed for a child. She had forgotten the elevated esteem she had experienced when she was blessed with a child.

One never says to Hashem, "I have had enough of Your favours." For, Hashem might just agree!

This explanation is not meant to denigrate Leah's sense of hakoras ha'tov, appreciation. Certainly, she had a remarkable sense of appreciation to the A-lmighty. The manner in which she expressed her gratitude, however, was lacking. Indeed, later on when she gave her maidservant, Zilpah, to Yaakov, she was blessed with more children. She realized that something was amiss, and she sought to correct it.

Our overwhelming responsibility to grow spiritually demands that we are never satisfied with what we have already attained.



וַיַּשֵּׂג לָבָן אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְיַעֲקֹב תָּקַע אֶת־אָהֳלוֹ בָּהָר וְלָבָן תָּקַע אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּהַר הַגִּלְעָד
And Lavan came up with Yaakov. And Yaakov pitched his tent on the mountain and Lavan with his brethren pitched in the mountain of Gilaad. (31:25)

Lavan was intent on destroying Yaakov. What prevented him from executing his diabolical plan?

Chazal tell us that Lavan feared two things: First, Hashem told Lavan to stay away from Yaakov. Second, Lavan was aware that Eisav was coming toward Yaakov with an army of four hundred men. If Lavan had killed Yaakov, his brother Eisav would have sought revenge. Lavan was not prepared to risk his life to kill Yaakov.

What an incredible statement! The four hundred men who were apparently viewed as the enemy were, ironically, actually his savior in disguise.

Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, takes this lesson a bit farther. We are plagued with pain, affliction, and illness, periods of anguish that to the human eye are nothing more than what they seem. We do not understand the ways of Hashem. We cry, moan and hope that the

suffering will soon go away. Do we ever think that perhaps that suffering might be helping us?

If we could view this painful occurrence through Heavenly vision, we would see an entirely different picture. We would see good, not bad; happiness, not sorrow; joy, not pain.

Who would ever imagine that an army of four hundred armed soldiers, prepared for war, could be a source of deliverance?

While the human eye sees trouble, the Heavenly perspective presents a picture of salvation. Lavan realized this. - Perhaps we should also open our eyes.



וַיִּדַּר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹקִים עִמָּדִי וּשְׁמָרַנִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ ***Then Yaakov took a vow, saying, "If Hashem will be with me, will guard me on this way that I am going; will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear***. (28:20)

The Midrash Tanchuma notes that Hashem responded to all of Yaakov's requests, with the exception of his request for parnassah, livelihood.

Hashem said that He would be with him, protect him from his enemies, and guarantee his safe return home. He did not acquiesce to Yaakov's simple request for bread and clothes, explaining, "If I guarantee his food, what will he pray for?" In other words, Hashem "held back" His assurance regarding Yaakov's livelihood, to ensure that Yaakov would continue to supplicate Him for it.

This is an incredible statement when you consider that Yaakov Avinu was not requesting luxuries. He simply desired basic sustenance so that he could devote himself completely to spiritual pursuits.

Hashem, however, desires that His servants constantly trust in Him to provide for subsistence. Once one is assured of his daily bread, he will not readily turn to Hashem. - Necessity motivates prayer.

This idea applies to the b'chir ha'Avos, select of the Patriarchs, as well.

Mussar HaTorah infers a valuable lesson from Chazal. When we are lacking something, it is because Hashem desires that we pray for it. One should never say, "I have enough; I need no more." Hashem waits for our prayers. By turning to Him, we circumvent those times when we need to be reminded of the Source of our good fortune.



וַיִּקַּח מֵאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו ***He took from the stones of the place, which he arranged around his head***. (28:11)

In the Midrash, Chazal render this pasuk to mean that Yaakov Avinu took several stones, which began "quarrelling," each one vying for the tzaddik to rest his head on it. "Alai yaniach tzaddik es rosho," "Upon me shall this tzaddik rest his head."

Noticing this argument, Hashem combined them all into one stone upon which Yaakov would rest.

Horav Zaidel Epstein, z'l, derives a profound lesson from here. Jewish tradition disapproves of machlokes, conflict, regardless of its goal, even if the dispute is about upon which stone the tzaddik should rest his head. As long as the "alai", "me", is the initial focus, if the goal is that it should be "me" and not the other person, it is wrong. Whenever a disagreement divides two people - regardless of the reason - Hashem will not condone it.

What did Hashem do? He transformed all the stones into one stone. Once they became one equal unit, there was no longer any room for the "alai," me.

Even though Yaakov would rest his head on one specific part of the stone, all had an equal share throughout the one unified stone.

The only way one can protect himself from the tragic effect of machlokes is through harmony, in which the individual feels that he

and his friend are one. He must share with him in life's happy and sad moments, celebrating his joy and lamenting his sorrow, as if they were his own.

Unity is the only antidote for discord.



וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹקִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ "***And he dreamt, and behold a ladder was set earthward... and behold angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it***." (28:12)

The story of Yaakov Avinu's dream captivates the mind of every Chumash student. Indeed, it has been the source of countless commentaries.

As he flees from his brother Eisav, Yaakov stops enroute to lie down. Resting, he falls asleep and has a dream in which he sees Heavenly angels "going up and down" a ladder which stretches from Heaven to earth.

At first glance, something seems wrong with this dream. One would expect Heavenly angels to first descend from Heaven and then go up again. Why do they "start" their journey on earth and go upward?

Horav Moshe Swift, zl, declares that it would be a false projection of religion to have the angels "begin" their descent from Heaven. It reflects a misconception of the significance of Malachim, angels, to suggest that their origin is found in Heaven.

Angels are not made in Heaven; they are made here on earth. Angels are created by virtue of man's mitzvos and good deeds. These mitzvos catalyze their existence and stimulate their "ascent" to Heaven.

Angels are all around us; our mitzvos keep them going. In a home in which Torah observance reigns supreme, angels are created to go up and descend with blessings.

Children grow up with the tzelem Elokim, image of Hashem, on their faces, with the nobility of character as an intrinsic aspect of their features.

Only when our home becomes a Bais Elokim, a house for Hashem, do we create a ladder for the angels to go up and come down, stimulating blessings in our home.



אִם־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹקִים עִמָּדִי וּשְׁמָרַנִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה ***Then Yaakov took a vow, saying, 'If Hashem will be with me, and guard me on this path***. (28:20)

Yaakov seems to be asking Hashem for something that Hashem had already granted him. Hashem had previously told Yaakov, "I will not forsake you." What compelled Yaakov to question his future relationship with Hashem?

Horav Nissan Ha'Meiri, Shlita, suggests that Yaakov was asking that Hashem grant him and his descendants the resolve to maintain perspective of the true source of blessing.

Regrettably, when one falls on "tough" times, he tends to blame his lamentable state upon Hashem. When the situation changes and he is blessed with success, he attributes this newfound good fortune to his own wisdom and capabilities.

In contrast, Yaakov was secure in Hashem's benevolence towards him. His concern was in regard to his own nature. Would he accede to the blandishments of the yetzer hara, evil inclination, and attribute his success to his own proficiency? Or would he have the necessary fortitude to overcome the natural tendency to exaggerate his own self- importance? Yaakov, therefore, asked Hashem "to be with Him," to grant him always that inner strength to recognize the true source of his success -- Hashem.



וַיִּקַּח֙ מֵאַבְנֵ֣י הַמָּקֹ֔ום וַיָּ֥שֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָ֖יו וַיִּשְׁכַּ֥ב בַּמָּקֹ֖ום הַהֽוּא "***And he took from the stones of the place and placed them at his head, and he lay down to sleep there***." (28:11)

Rashi cites the Talmud in Chullin 91a which states that the twelve stones began arguing with each other, each urging Yaakov to rest his head upon it. Hashem immediately merged them all into one large stone.

The Gerer Rebbe (R.'A.M.), z.l., questions this consolidation. Yaakov could rest his head upon only one area of the stone. He insightfully suggests that when the stones merged, they blended into one stone with such harmony that they were no longer distinguishable from one another. - Every aspect of the consolidated stone was a fusion of all the stones together.

This is the essence of "achdus," unity. We should strive for a harmonious blending of personalities, such that as a community we respond as one. Through the undermining of jealousy and other manifestations of intragroup discord, we merit the appreciation of - מִי כְעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בָּאָרֶץ -"***Who is like Your nation Yisrael, one People in the land***..."



וַיַּחֲלֹ֔ם וְהִנֵּ֥ה סֻלָּ֖ם מֻצָּ֣ב אַ֑רְצָה וְרֹאשֹׁ֥ו מַגִּ֖יעַ הַשָּׁמָ֑יְמָה וְהִנֵּ֗ה מַלְאֲכֵי֙ אֱלֹקִ֣ים עֹלִ֔ים וְיֹרְדִ֖ים בֹּֽו "***And he dreamt, and behold a ladder was set earthward... and behold angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it***." (28:12)

Yaakov Avinu's dream contains profound implications which express the Torah's perspective on life. The ladder serves an important purpose. The angels either ascend to Heaven or descend to the earth.

Horav Mordechai Ilan z.l., suggests that this is the nature of Am Yisrael. The Talmud in Megillah 16a states, "This nation (Am Yisrael) is compared to dust and also to stars. When they descend

(spiritually) they descend to the dust, and when they ascend, they can reach the stars."

Moreover, the Midrash states concerning this ladder, "Hashem showed Yaakov the meaning of "a ladder set up on the earth" as referring to Korach who was swallowed up by the earth, while "its top reached up to Heaven" refers to Moshe who ascended to Hashem to receive the Torah."

Hashem showed Yaakov two extremes, the apex of spiritual distinction and the nadir of depravity. There is no "standing still" on the ladder of spirituality. One either goes up, or he goes down. Furthermore, one who stands still is viewed as slipping.

Our purpose in life is to grow spiritually from day to day, reaching heights not attained the previous day.

Yaakov's dream carries with it a timeless message. Even one who has sunk to the "earth" should not yield to depression. He should not think, "I can never make it." Rather, he should look up to the top of the ladder, for it is attainable, but only if he works at it.

Likewise, one who is at the top should not feel he has "made it" and relax complacently in his spiritual well-being. He should look down and reflect that man can always fall, if he does not continually work to maintain his spiritual achievement.



תְּנָה אֶת־נָשַׁי וְאֶת־יְלָדַי אֲשֶׁר עָבַדְתִּי אֹתְךָ בָּהֶן וְאֵלֵכָה ***"Give (me) my wives and my children for whom I have served you and I will go***." (30:26)

Yaakov did what few people ever do. He literally slaved for fourteen years to acquire his wives and, ultimately, his children. He never broke down in desperation or depression. He kept on going, resolutely warding off the temptations of his environment. He never deferred to deep-seated anger at his father-in-law for cheating him. He raised a decent family and infused in them a nobility of spirit

and pride in being the sons of Yaakov, the future progenitors of Am Yisrael.

The interesting point to note is that when it was all over and Yaakov was preparing to leave, with what was he left? What had he acquired during all the years of hard labor? What did he have to show from his "tenure" in the house of Lavan?

He had his family! He had the love and respect of his wives and children. He had the knowledge that he had imparted a Torah legacy to children who would carry on his work. - This is indeed a remarkable acquisition.

The narrative of Yaakov in the house of Lavan is the story of life. We enter this world with nothing, and we leave with nothing. Our material acquisitions are for naught. Only our spiritual assets have value.

Our families whom we cherish, whom we have reared in the Torah way, remain ours. These are our only real achievements and possessions.

If we have transmitted a legacy of Torah to our children, then we are eternally attached to them. They become our link to the future.

It is imperative for us to make every effort to see to it that our children receive the proper and correct spiritual upbringing, so that they remain ours!

The Chasam Sofer z'l teaches: When a person thinks about Hashem, Hashem will think about him. As it states (Mishlei 3:6), בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ דָּעֵהוּ 'with everything you do, remember Hashem.' And if you will do so וְהוּא יְיַשֵּׁר אֹרְחֹתֶיךָ, 'He will give you success in all your ways'. - For if you think about Hashem, Hashem is thinking about you, to help you.
~ R' Elimelech Biderman Shlita

מַלֵּא שְׁבֻעַ זֹאת וְנִתְּנָה לְךָ גַּם־אֶת־זֹאת בַּעֲבֹדָה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲבֹד עִמָּדִי עוֹד שֶׁבַע־שָׁנִים אֲחֵרוֹת. וַיַּעַשׂ יַעֲקֹב כֵּן *'Complete this week and this one also will be given to you for the work which you will do for me for another seven years. And Yaakov did so.'* (29:27-28)

We may be puzzled by Yaakov's passive acquiescence to Lavan's proposal. Surely, Lavan had no legal or moral claim for Yaakov to work another seven years to receive Rachel as a bride, which their original contract had stipulated.

After seven years, Lavan acted reprehensibly towards Yaakov by putting Leah under the chupah in place of Rachel. Yaakov clearly owed Lavan nothing since he had explicitly stated his desire to marry Rachel. - Why did Yaakov accede to Lavan's manipulation without objection?

Horav Dovid Feinstein, z'l, suggests that Yaakov's actions were motivated by his sensitivity to Leah's feelings. He knew that Leah's self-esteem would be destroyed if he were to protest working seven years for Leah in place of Rachel. - Imagine Leah's despondency, her feelings of dejection, over this hypothetical reaction.

Horav Feinstein notes the great demands that the Torah places upon us in our relationships with our fellow man. Rather than demean Leah, Yaakov was willing to dedicate an additional seven years of his life to working for the unethical Lavan in an atmosphere entirely antithetical to Torah.

Inherent in the arrangement, Yaakov was giving up another seven years of Torah study! Yaakov did not view these seven years as unnecessary "bitul Torah", cessation of Torah study since its performance was critical to Leah's continued self-esteem.

How much more so should we be ever vigilant in our speech and actions in order not to cause harm to another person's feelings.

וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ "***And He will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear***." (28:20)

Yaakov does not want much, only the bare necessities to render life possible.

The Alter of Kelm Z"l questions Yaakov's request. Was Yaakov not aware that Hashem provides every individual's needs? **The Rambam** states clearly that Hashem does not allow anyone to go without his basic needs fulfilled. Why then was Yaakov insecure regarding his material sustenance?

He suggests that herein lies a profound lesson. Upon leaving his father's home, Yaakov was occupied with the changes about to take place in his spiritual surroundings. Until recently his father's protective influence dominated his life. He was now entering a new world filled with cheating, sin, and immorality. He feared that the effect of his new environment, the pressures of his new vocation, and the daily relationship with people such as Lavan would have an adverse effect upon him.

His request of Hashem was "I beg of Hashem that I should continue to realize that my constant source of sustenance is Hashem. He is the one that gives me my daily bread and clothing.

Yaakov's greatest fear was one that affects all of us, that we may forget the origin of all blessings. In the hustle and bustle of our daily routine, let us not forget that it is not our power and strength that is responsible for what we have, but that it is Hashem that provides us with everything that we have.

In seeking wisdom, the first step is silence, the second listening, the third remembering, the fourth practicing, and the fifth teaching others. ~ R' Shlomo Ibn Gabirol (1021-1058)

וַיִּֽחַר לְיַֽעֲקֹ֖ב וַיָּ֣רֶב בְּלָבָ֑ן ***"And Yaakov's anger was kindled against Lavan." - "And Yaakov was angry and argued with Lavan.***" (31:36)

The Chidushei HaRim notes that the traits of anger and indignation are mentioned solely in regard to Yaakov. The Torah does not apply this concept to the other two Patriarchs. He describes Yaakov as the Patriarch who excelled in the attribute of emes (truth), serving as the paradigm of "truth for truth's sake" - the essence of truth. He was therefore the only one who appropriately exhibited anger and indignation. - These are emotions which emanate from a source untainted by any form of self-serving interests.

Horav Shimon Schwab z'l explains that when the deceitful Lavan kissed his children and grandchildren (32:1), they were influenced by him. This trait was transmitted to us, and now we must constantly fight the evil inclination of sheker (falsehood).

The Chazon Ish writes in one of his letters that a person does not naturally hate falsehood. Only Yaakov was unique, states the **Chofetz Chaim**; he was the only one not kissed by Lavan. Because Yaakov is the personification of truth, a Lavan cannot kiss him!

We must always be sure that our indignation originates from a pure source. Likewise, we must respect the statements made by our Torah leaders. We should not be provoked to anger as a result of personal prejudice, vested interests, or guilty conscience.

'Take this rule in your hand: whoever has the potential to fall very low has the potential to rise very high.' ~ The Divrei Shmuel.

'We have so much greatness that even if we live a thousand years we would not exhaust our potential.' ~ R' Avigdor Miller zt"l.

וַיִּקַּח֙ מֵאַבְנֵ֣י הַמָּקֹ֔ום וַיָּ֖שֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָ֑יו וַיִּשְׁכַּ֖ב בַּמָּקֹ֥ום הַהֽוּא "***And he took from the stones of the place and put it under his head***." (28:11)

"*All those stones were from the stones of the Altar. This refers to the Altar upon which his father Yitzchok was bound as a sacrifice to Hashem.*" (Pirkei D'R' Eliezer 35)

This Midrash pinpoints the problem facing Jewish youth as they struggle for spiritual survival in today's society. It is very hard for a child to battle alone against scepticism and apathy unless he knows that his father before him laid his head on the same stone, sacrificed and triumphed for the very same ideals.

Furthermore, Chazal in Midrash Rabba comment along the same lines, that when Yaakov rested his head on the stone, he recited the famous verse in Tehilim (121): אֶשָּׂ֣א עֵינַ֣י אֶל־הֶ֭הָרִים מֵאַ֣יִן יָבֹ֣א עֶזְרִ֑י - "***I lifted up my eyes to the mountains , from where will come my help***."

Chazal say "Do not read the word as meaning "**הָרִים**" - mountains, but rather read it "**הורים** " - parents.

There is a wonderful dual meaning in that word. One does not look at a mountain, one looks "up" at a mountain. Happy and secure is the child who does not look at his parents, but instead looks up to them as role models and sources of inspiration and guidance.

Whatever education a child receives in school, must be supported and enhanced in the home. The Torah objective of an educational institution can best succeed when the home and school complement each other.

"It's not one's circumstances that determines one's mood; it's one's mood that determines the circumstances." ~ The Baal HaTanya zt"l

וְכֹל֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר תִּתֶּן־לִ֔י עַשֵּׂ֥ר אֲעַשְּׂרֶ֖נּוּ לָֽךְ׃ "***And of all that you will give me I will give a tenth of it to you***." (28:22)

Yaakov vows that from everything that he will receive from Hashem, he will give one tenth to charity. It may be noted from this verse that the mitzvah of charity does not apply only to monetary matters, but the mitzvah applies to anything one receives as Hashem's gift. –

If one is blessed with wisdom and knowledge, it is imperative for him to share this gift with others who are not as fortunate as he.

Rabbi Shimon Shkop Zt"l remarked that just like one who is generous with his money merits that his possessions will increase, so too, if one is "charitable" with his skills and talents, he will be similarly blessed by Hashem.

It has been noted by many, that only after volunteering and sharing their time in tutoring others, did they themselves succeed in Torah study. This is obviously in the merit of giving charity.

Reb Yisrael Salanter would say, "Business ethics is the highest level possible. There is nothing greater."

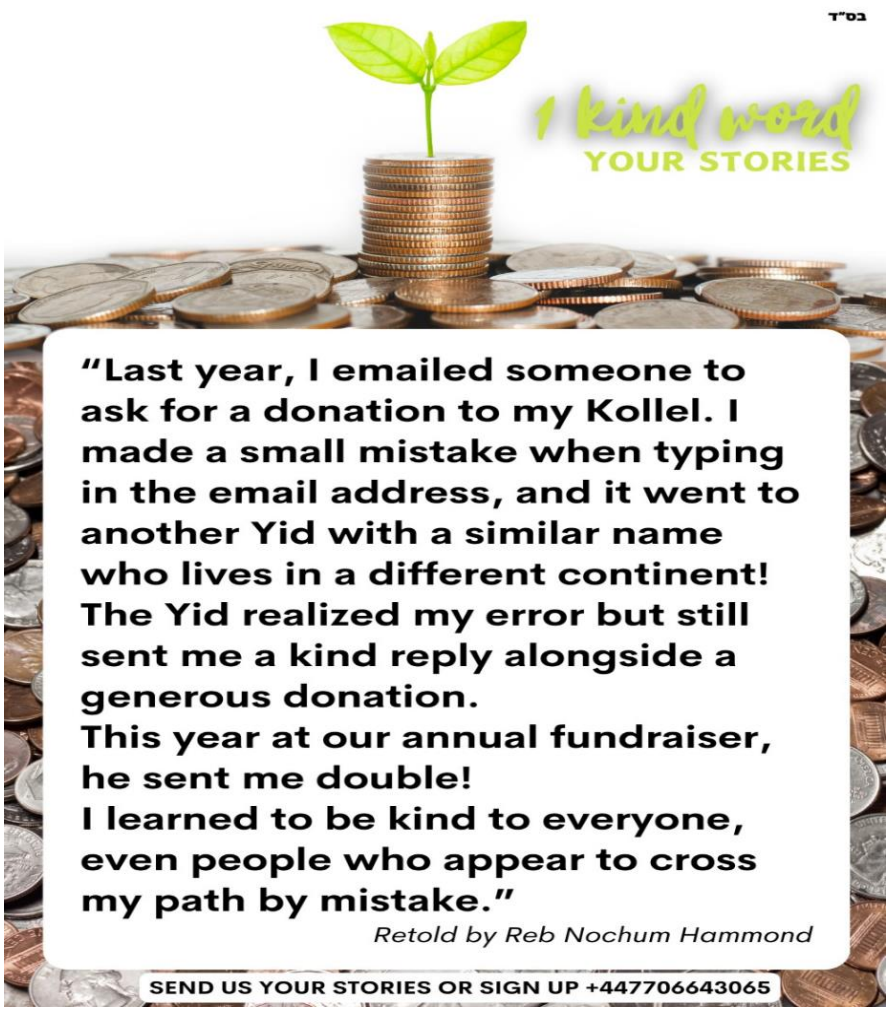
A student asked Reb Yisrael Salanter, "Rebbe, in your world view, which person is greater: a Torah student who studies eighteen hours a day or a store owner who does honest business, and only studies one hour each day?"

Reb Yisrael answered cleverly, "Surely the store owner who deals honestly in business is on a higher level. However, since he is on such a high level, it is a shame that he only learns for an hour a day. It would be appropriate for such a person to study Torah eighteen hours a day…"

Rabbi Shmelke and Rabbi Pinchos asked the Magid of Mezeritch, "How is it possible to fulfill the Talmudic obligation of blessing Hashem for misfortunes with the same joy as when one blesses Him for good fortune?"

The Magid advised them to put the question before R' Zushe who was extremely poor and frequently lacked the basic necessities. Thought he had many difficulties in life, he was always happy. They went to the study hall where they found R' Zushe, and told him that the Magid said he would explain how it is possible to bless the Almighty with joy over misfortune.

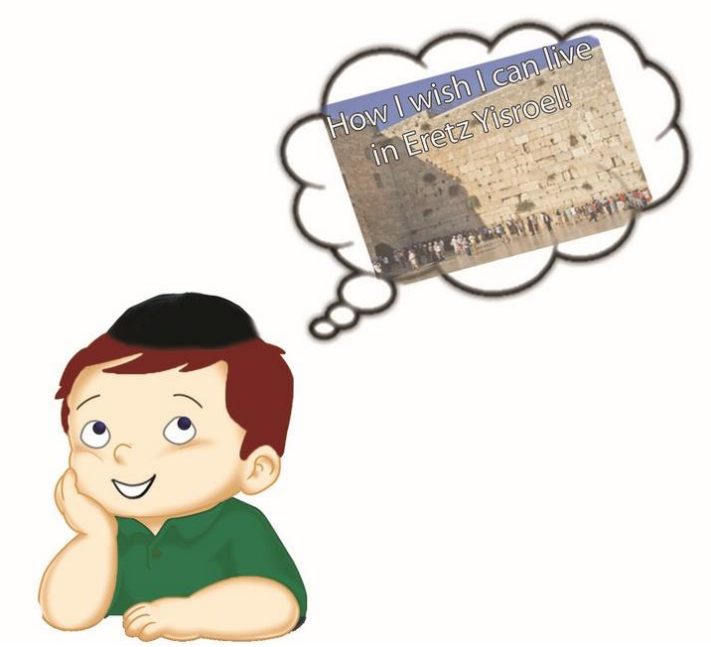
"I'm surprised that our Rabbi sent you to me about this," replied R' Zushe. "You should rather ask someone who suffered some misfortune in his life. I have never experienced anything bad in my life. Only good things have happened to me." ~ Midor Dor



'All the wealth in the world doesn't compare to a moment when a Yid has yishuv hadaas (serenity and peace of mind).' ~ R' Moshe of Korbin zt"l

Whoever enjoys Shabbos, his heart's desires will be fulfilled. ~ Shabbos 118. I wish you all a very enjoyable Shabbos, this week and every week!

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick



In this week's parsha, Hashem tells Yaakov, הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה שֹׁכֵב עָלֶיהָ לְךָ אֶתְּנֶנָּה וּלְזַרְעֶךָ "***The land upon which you are lying I will give to you and your children.***" (28:13)

Rashi says that these words indicate that Hashem took the entire land of Eretz Yisroel and folded it up under Yaakov. Hashem did this to let Yaakov know that the land of Eretz Yisroel was given to him forever.

Why did Hashem give Yaakov the land when he was leaving it?

The Beis Av explains that as Yaakov was leaving Eretz Yisroel, he had a tremendous yearning for it. Since Yaakov had a strong yearning for Eretz Yisroel, Hashem gave it to him forever. [**ספר טללי אורות**]

The Baal Shem Tov was known to do things ordinary people didn't understand. Once, he told one of his students to go to a particular island. The fellow caught the ferry to the island and waited all day for something special to happen. Nothing did, and he caught the ferry back in the afternoon.

When he returned to his master, he said that he had gone where instructed, but was unsure why, because nothing special had happened.

"Did you do anything on the island?" asked the Rebbe.

"No," he replied.

"Did you eat anything there?"

"Well, yes, I brought food along, but lunch was uneventful."

The Baal Shem Tov said, "From the Six Days of Creation, no bracha or mention of Hashem has been said on that island. There were sparks of holiness trapped there. When you made your bracha, you freed them, and elevated them to Heaven!"



The Ohr HaChaim says the words וְהִנֵּה־הִוא לֵאָה׳ - ***Behold it was Leah***׳ (29:25) refer to a Chazal that the women ululating (that Sefardic style of high-pitched noises used at weddings to show approval and "cheer on" the bride and groom) were actually trying to let Yaakov know the truth.

In their noisemaking, what they were really saying was, "Leah hee, it is Leah." However, Yaakov didn't get the message and he proceeded with the wedding.

Clearly, it was divinely ordained, but how could Yaakov have missed it?

The answer is that despite his expectation that Lavan would try something like this, Yaakov was so focused on his life with Rachel that he didn't hear the clues he was given. He ignored the signs around him because he never imagined that Leah would bear half of his twelve tribes.

Many of us go through life with self-imposed blinders on, trying to see things as we want them to be, instead of as they are. We can't fathom that Hashem may have other plans for us, as he did for Yaakov and Leah.

If we keep ourselves open to all possibilities and realize that we may not know what's best for us, we can hopefully hear the messages when they come and see the truth. If not, we are simply fooling ourselves.



Nachal Novea Mekor Chochma Breslev Tsfat

Torah Learning

An incredible true story spread like wildfire among the Jewish People last week after one very brave soldier opened up after nearly dying.

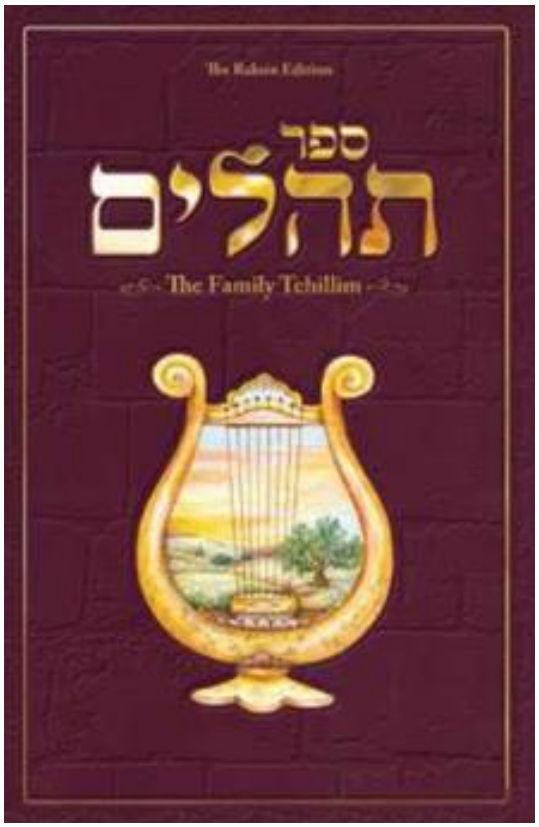
The soldier, a secular and tattooed young traditional Jew fighting in Gaza, was hanging between life and death. For a short time, he was clinically dead. Then, he miraculously gained consciousness. And when he came back, he had a message:

While he was dead, the soldier says he saw the "Beis Din Shel Maalah." He says that the malachim were trying to bring him up to the next world but that he was tied to this one by a long string of Torah learning scholars, pulling him down toward his life.

When he awoke, it was clear to him: It was the mitzvah of Torah learning that saved his life.

It is a story that has sent chills down the spines of all who have heard it, especially those who know the previous painful history of division between sects of the Jewish People.

The Villager Who Always Read Tehillim



In the **Baal Shem Tov**'s time a certain Jewish community was under a decree of destruction issued by the Heavenly Court. The Baal Shem Tov summoned two of his colleagues, hidden tzaddikim named Reb Mordechai and Reb Kehos, to join him in constituting a beis din, to consider how to nullify the decree.

However, when the Baal Shem Tov experienced aliyas haneshama, he learned that the decree was final and not to be annulled. Returning past the chambers of Gan Eden, he passed a chamber that shone with unusual brilliance. This was the chamber of a villager who said all of Tehillim five times every day, and the words of his Tehillim sparkled.

The Baal Shem Tov traveled to the home of this villager and said to him, "If you knew that by sacrificing your share in the World to Come you could save a Jewish community, what would you do?"

"If I have any share in the World to Come, I give it up," was his prompt response.

The decree was annulled. It had been the custom of this villager to say Tehillim always, incessantly. While chopping wood he kept reciting Tehillim, and so too while doing any work. It is quite conceivable that he wasn't scrupulous about his immediate environment, even saying Tehillim where one should not, since he was uneducated. But he didn't know the din and his intentions were pure, so his Tehillim was effective. *[The Weekly Farbrengen.]*

Thoughts that Count for Our Parsha

וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה ***And behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven*** (28:12)

If a person thinks that he has already perfected himself and "reached heaven," it is a sure sign that in fact, he has a long way to go. For it is only when an individual considers himself lowly and "on the earth" that he is able to ascend to greater spiritual heights. ***(Toldot Yaakov Yosef)***

וְהִנֵּה ה' נִצָּב עָלָיו ***And, behold, Hashem was standing over him*** (28:13)

Rearranging the first letters of the above Hebrew verse results in the word "**עָנָיו**" meaning one who is humble. For it is precisely through humility, self-abnegation and acceptance of the yoke of Heaven that a person attains a sense of G-d's closeness. ***(Ohr HaTorah)***

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

Bill Counting

HaRav Yehoshua Leib Diskin *zt"l* was a Rav in various cities in Europe before moving to Yerushalayim in 1878 and becoming a Rav there. When he was still in Europe, certain members of the city falsely accused him of accepting bribes. They brought false witnesses against him who testified that he was seen accepting bribes.

At the trial, Reb Diskin's lawyer called the prosecution witness to the stand and said, "Are you sure you saw R' Diskin accept a bribe?"

The witness answered, "Yes, I saw him accept a bribe and then count the money."



The defence lawyer said, "Are you sure you saw him count the money?" and the witness answered positively.

"Are you one hundred percent sure?" said the lawyer, and the witness again answered positively.

The defence lawyer then said, "Your Honor, with your permission, I'd like to show you what type of person we're talking about." The lawyer then proceeded to remove a huge wad of bills from his pocket. He handed the wad of bills to the judge and requested that he split the pile in two.

The defence lawyer then pointed to the larger pile of bills and turned to R' Diskin and said, "Will the esteemed Rav please tell me how many bills are in this pile?

R' Diskin immediately replied, "632." The defence lawyer turned to the judge and asked him to count the money, and the judge proceeded to do so, and counted 632 bills.

The defence lawyer then asked the judge to divide the wad of bill again, and proceeded to carry out the same steps. Again, R' Diskin was able to pinpoint the amount of bills without counting it. - The lawyer repeated the process a third time.

The defence lawyer then turned to the judge and said, "Your Honor, I think we're discussing someone who would be extremely unlikely to be counting bills!"

The judge dismissed the case. [**Revach L'Neshama**]

Parsha Pearls

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה 'And Yaakov came out from Be'er Sheva and went to Charan.' (28:10)

We can call Vayeitze as "the *parsha* of Yaakov Avinu." At the end of last week's parsha, Yitzchok and Rivka tell Yaakov to go to Lavan, who lives in Charan.

This week's parsha starts with the words: "*And Yaakov came out from Be'er Sheva and went to Charan.*"

Since this is the beginning of "the parsha of Yaakov Avinu", and the beginning of everything in the Torah has a great significance, we learn that fulfilling the *mitzva* of his father and mother was of prime importance in Yaakov Avinu's life.

Every morning, after saying *Bircas Hatorah*, we say that honoring one's father and mother is one of the *mitzvos* from which a person benefits even in this world.

Besides from the great blessing of *arichus yomim* that the Torah promises in return for honoring one's father and mother, Shlomo Hamelech tells us in Mishlei (6:23) - **כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אוֹר. - *A candle is a mitzva and Torah is light.***

Rashi explains this verse in the following way. The fulfillment of the *mitzva* of one's father becomes a 'candle' for that person that will illuminate for him in a dark place. And the fulfillment of the *torah* (instruction) of one's mother is his 'light'.

"If you find yourself in company, it is better that you be told: 'Speak, why are you so still?' rather than that you speak, and your words be burdensome to them, and they will tell you: 'Be quiet.'" ~ Orchot Tzddikim.



Lavan Here. Lavan There. Lavan is Everywhere! by Michael Winner

This week's parsha begins with Yaakov leaving Eretz Yisroel, running for his life from Eisav, to live with his uncle Lavan. When he arrives, Lavan welcomes him and brings him into his home. After working for Lavan for a bit, Lavan, always wanting to be "fair," asks Yaakov what he wants as payment for his service. Yaakov answers, "I want to marry your youngest daughter, Rochel." No problem!

Yaakov works seven years, prepares to marry Rochel, and in the end, Lavan pulls a fast one, and switches Leah in her place. As a result, Lavan gets yet another seven years' work from Yaakov to finally marry Rochel.

With this, the foundation of the nation of Israel is built. After many more years of work and success, Yaakov sees clearly that Lavan is now openly hostile to him, and when commanded by Hashem, finally leaves without Lavan's permission.

After a several days chase, Lavan catches up to Yaakov, yells at him for leaving so quickly and suddenly, claims that everything that belongs to Yaakov really belongs to him, and then demands that Yaakov make a peace treaty with him, warning him not to be an aggressor in the future.

It seems that **Rav Moshe Sternbuch**, one of the heads of the Eida HaChareidis (B'datz) in Yerushalyim has been warning people about upcoming events, even before Simchas Torah. Nobody knew exactly what he was talking about, obviously, but it seems, that he had some feelings "in the cosmos" that we were unable to feel.

Shortly after Yom Kippur, he said, "*We do not know what the coming year potentially has in store for us, and if we are not worried, that means that our emuna is deficient. Every Jew must realize that any calamities in Eretz Yisroel, G-d forbid, will spread to the whole world eventually, and we have to increase our emuna so that we will have the strength to face any eventuality.*"

Right before Sukkos, at a bar mitzvah, he started speaking in a similar vein saying, "*People are very cold today. It's very dangerous. Especially this year, it's such an important year, when we don't know what's going to happen. There could be all sorts of surprises. We can be sure that decisions are being made for us now - it's impossible to speak about the situation which we're in today.* "

He said that we can only merit redemption when we come to the simple and absolute realization that "***we have no one to rely on except our Father in Heaven***." This, he explained, is practically impossible to achieve if we fill our time with what's happening in the army, politics, news, etc., since in our mind, we begin to think that these are what will bring about our redemptions. We should keep updated based on what we need to know, but more than that we should stay away from. Rather, we need to use our time more appropriately, now more than ever.

Lavan started off nice to Yaakov. However, slowly, but surely, he started turning against him. He tried this trick and that trick to stunt Yaakov's growth, but Yaakov was successful, nonetheless. In the end, Lavan accused Yaakov of aggression and demanded a peace treaty warning him against "further aggression."

Nothing is new in this world. Today's Lavan is no different than yesterday's Lavan. We cannot expect Lavan to save us from Lavan. Only Hashem can save us from Lavan.



Seven Building Years

וַיַּעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וַיִּהְיוּ בְעֵינָיו כְּיָמִים אֲחָדִים בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אֹתָהּ

'***Yaakov worked for Rachel seven years, and they were to him like a few days because he so loved her***.' (*Bereishis* 29:20)

R. Aharon Kotler wrote a well-known article about study of *Tanach* in which he brings many examples of how Torah narratives cannot be explained superficially. One example is our *pasuk*.

The Torah recounts to us that Yaakov had to wait seven years in order to marry Rachel. And it says about this, "***They were to him like a few days because he so loved her***." This seems strange, because we know that human nature is exactly the opposite. The more a person wants something and is waiting for it, the longer the passing days seem to him, until he attains his desire. - A day seems to him like a year.

We must say that the Torah is telling us here that *Yaakov Avinu* sanctified and purified himself and prepared himself for building the Jewish people.

To illustrate the point, let's say a man is in desperate need of a million dollars. If he hears that a hundred days from now he will receive a million dollars, he will be happy. However, each day he waits feels like an eternity to him. He sees the days of the interim period as separating him from the million dollars.

Now let's change the story a little. A man needs a million dollars. He is offered a job that carries a salary of ten thousand dollars a day.

So at the end of a hundred days, he will have a million dollars. The days pass quickly for this man.

What's the difference between the two men?

When a person needs a million dollars and is told to wait around for a hundred days until he receives it, they are just empty days of waiting. All those days do is separate him from the money. But if the hundred days are not a waiting period, but rather a means to earn and obtain the money he needs, then the days are not empty. They are not getting in his way.

On the contrary, each day is a day of building, of advancing toward his goal, and they pass by very quickly. Each of the hundred days is a day he is happy about, because if he skips one day he won't achieve his goal, which is the complete sum of a million dollars.

That's how it was with *Yaakov Avinu.* During the seven years preceding his marriage, he built himself. Thus, every day that passed was a day he was happy about. It was a day of preparation for building the Jewish people. This is why it says, "*They were to him like a few days because he so loved her.*"

This love was Yaakov's holy and pure desire for the Divine unification of **יחוד קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתיה** that will result from his marriage to Rachel. Every day that passed added another brick to the building. The seven years were seven years of building toward the goal he so desired, so they passed by quickly. "***They were to him like a few days***."

"We must know that faith is not something that can merely remain in our thought; rather, it must permeate the totality of our lives." ~ Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Reward for Silence - Silence is Golden

וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וְהִנֵּה־הִוא לֵאָה *'And in the morning she turned out to be **Leah**.'* (*Bereishis* 29:25)

אֲבָל בַּלַּיְלָה לֹא הָיְתָה לֵאָה, לְפִי שֶׁמָּסַר יַעֲקֹב סִימָנִים לְרָחֵל, וּכְשֶׁרָאֲתָה רָחֵל שֶׁמַּכְנִיסִין לוֹ לֵאָה אָמְרָה: עַכְשָׁו תִּכָּלֵם אֲחוֹתִי, עָמְדָה וּמָסְרָה לָהּ אוֹתָן סִימָנִים
But at night, it was not Leah [to the best of Yaakov's knowledge]. This is because Yaakov gave signs to Rachel [by which to identify herself], and when Rachel saw that they are bringing Leah to him, she said, "Now my sister will be humiliated!" So, she went and gave her those signs. (*Rashi*)

Rachel kept quiet when Leah was being married off, instead of her, to Yaakov. Let's talk a little about the virtue of silence.

One of the Torah's principles, about which people have been speaking a lot lately, is the prohibition on *lashon hara.* The truth is that since the **Chofetz Chayim** revolutionized our awareness of this important matter, people pay a lot of attention to it, and try hard to avoid transgressing this prohibition. - The Chofetz Chayim changed the world for the better.

We know that *lashon hara* is a serious sin, and this is true. But we need to know that besides the prohibition itself to speak bad about people, there is more to silence than this. Silence is a general trait. The virtue of keeping silent is not just when there is some *lashon hara* that could be said.

There is an amazing story about the **Rebbe of Rozhin**, one of the great Chassidic leaders of about 150 years ago: It was his custom that at the *tisch* he held with his Chassidim, he would not speak *divrei Torah*. He would just sit in silence.

It is recounted that a non-Jew once entered the Rozhiner's *beis midrash* on *Shabbos* night and found them sitting there at the *tisch.* After he walked out, he was queried regarding what he had seen there. He replied, "I saw a long table with Jews sitting on both sides.

At the head of the table was an old man. He was silent, and everyone was listening…"

This is a wonderful description. The beautiful word that was spoken at the *tisch* was… **silence**!

It is written: תֹּלֶה אֶרֶץ עַל־בְּלִימָה – **Hashem keeps the world up on nothing**.(*Iyov* 26:7.)

There is nothing that holds the world up; it is suspended in space, on nothing. However, *Chazal* interpret this verse *Midrashically* and associate the word **בלימה** with **בולם** , which means to shut. Thus, they say that the world keeps up its existence thanks to those who "**shut**" their mouths at the time of a quarrel.

Hashem keeps the world going in the merit of someone who keeps silent. This is the foundation of the whole world.

A person can acquire greatness in an unexpected way. He is not toiling in Torah and *mitzvos*. He just keeps quiet at the time of a quarrel. He doesn't even do anything. This is in accordance with *Chazal's* teaching: הָא הַיּוֹשֵׁב וְלָא עָבַר עֲבֵירָה נוֹתְנִין לוֹ שָׂכָר כְּעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה ***Whoever refrains from committing a sin is granted reward as if he did a mitzvah***. (*Makos* 23b)

When a person speaks, he has the ability to say forbidden things and he has the ability to say permitted things. But he has another ability altogether - **to remain silent**. In fact, the most beautiful deeds ever done were deeds of silence.

What was *Rachel Imeinu's* great deed, by which merit the Jewish people was saved from destruction and brought back from exile? What great act did she do?

The answer is that she remained silent. She did not tell Yaakov. And the power of this silence reverberates until the end of time.

It is true that Rachel did other wonderful things, but the main thing she did was simply remain silent.

Every person has this wonderful, amazing ability: he can restrain himself.



Every driver knows the first rule of driving: if there is no power of restraint (i.e., brakes), then don't get in the driver's seat in the first place! This is because restraint, the power to stop, is the most important thing in a car — as it is in other areas of life as well.

I wish to emphasize that I am not speaking about *lashon hara*. I am speaking generally about a person's ability to remain silent. Sometimes it is necessary to remain silent even when no *lashon hara* or other prohibition is involved.

To demonstrate this point, let's imagine that Rachel, instead of keeping quiet, would have told Yaakov that her father was trying to sneak Leah in, and said, "Watch out!"

What sin would this be? Would it be *lashon hara*?

On the contrary, she would be doing a *mitzvah*. Yaakov wanted Rachel to have private signs between her and him so that he would marry the woman of his choice. She would only be honoring her promise and saving Yaakov from anguish by telling him what he needed to know.

[Parenthetically, Rachel did not lose out in the end, for it was from her that *Klal Yisrael* was built. *Rachel Imeinu* was the *akeres habayis*, the mainstay of the home. Everything was due to her, because she brought in Leah, and also Bilhah and Zilpah. She built Yaakov's entire household.]

Getting back to the point: Since Rachel would have transgressed no prohibition by telling Yaakov, why didn't she tell? Because her sister would end up being embarrassed. Rachel knew how to use the

"brakes." She knew how to remain silent at times when other people would feel the need to speak up and react.

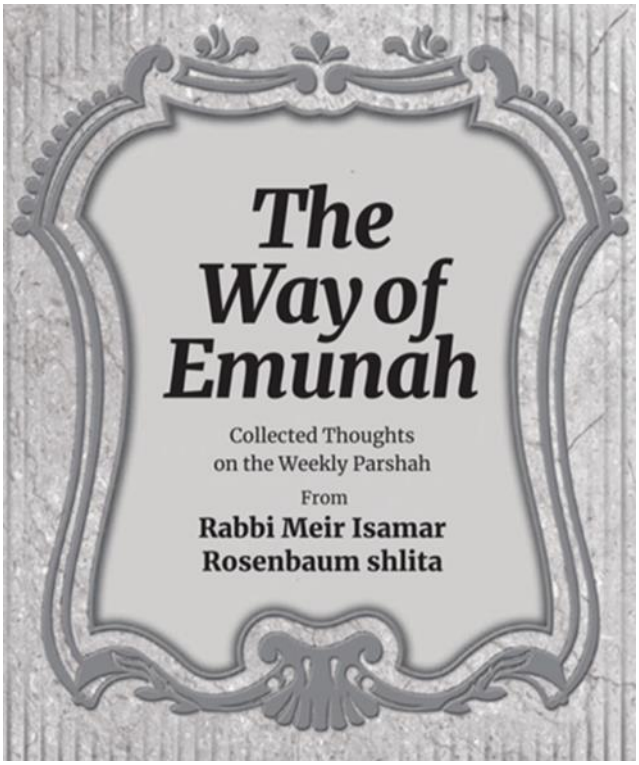


Rav Laizer Yudel Finkel ZT"L was the last Rosh Yeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Poland. The vast majority of the students of the Mirrer Yeshiva escaped Nazi-occupied Europe to Kobe, Japan and then to Shanghai. The Rosh Yeshiva eventually re-established the Mirrer Yeshiva in Jerusalem and a large percentage of the students that were in Shanghai rejoined him, including his son-in-law, **Rav Chaim Shmulevitz ZT"L**, who eventually succeeded him.

Since the founding of the State of Israel, fixed-term military service has been compulsory for its citizens. Those learning Torah in Yeshivas have often received exemptions from mandatory military service through a special government arrangement organized by Israel's founding prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.

To obtain this "*learning Torah is his profession*" exemption (Toraso Umanuso), a statement attesting to that fact needed to be signed by the Rosh Yeshiva of each Yeshiva institution. Rav Laizer Yudel, with tears in his eyes, would tell each student that asked for his signature on the statement that "Torah is his profession" the following:

"***I have never told a falsehood in my life. I am signing that your profession is to study Torah. Please learn diligently and commit yourself to it, so that I am not a liar.***"



Avoiding Unnecessary Speech Helps One Concentrate on Tefilah

The most ideal form of tefillah is when one davens with devotion and concentration. In order to do this properly, one must avoid using his mouth for mundane, unnecessary speech. If one sanctifies his mouth by not using it improperly, he will be able to daven properly.

This concept is found in **Sefer Orchos Tzadikim** (Shaar Hashtikah) where it is stated: "*Be very careful when you open your mouth to watch your tongue. Just like you would watch gold and silver and gems in a safe in your room with a double lock, so should you watch your words.*

Look at how early people were careful with every word they ever said. If one does this, he will do a lot to be able to daven with kavanah. - The main reason people cannot have kavanah is because of the pointless words they instilled in their hearts.

And silence is also a large 'fence' to keep in yiras shomayim because it is impossible to fear Hashem if one has a heart full of empty words.

This is all the more true if one speaks a lot of pointless words before davening. One who does so is causing harm to himself. When he davens, he will have lots of frivolous thoughts in his head that will make it impossible to concentrate."

Similarly, it is written in **Igeres Haramban**: "*Remove all matters of this world from your heart at the time of tefillah, prepare your heart before Hashem, purify your thoughts, and think about each word before it leaves your mouth. You should do this all your days.*

If you do so, you will never sin your words, actions and thoughts will be upright, and your prayers will be pure, healthy and clean, said with concentration and accepted by Hashem…"

The Benefit of Thanking Hashem



The following story is related in the introduction to **Sefer Shomea Tefillah**, which was written by a distinguished resident of Yerushalaim:

The author writes that several years after his wedding, his financial situation was very bad. He had many debts and barely any food in his house. On Shabbos, he had no chicken. Instead of gefilta fish, he only had sardines. This all affected his mood and he felt very down.

He fell into depression and didn't even want to leave his house. This even affected his learning and davening. He became cold and unfeeling and just did these things by rote. He adds that he is a naturally shy person and didn't feel comfortable speaking over his problems with anyone, which only added to his depression.

He knew that he had only one place to turn. He had to beg Hashem for help. But he was so depressed that he was unable to daven with concentration.

He began frequenting the kever of **Rav Shimon Hatzadik**, where he would beseech Hashem to help him emerge from the darkness and return to an illuminated life where he could serve Him with joy.

One day, when he was returning from Rav Shimon Hatzadik's tzion, Hashem sent a thought into his head that literally changed his life.

He thought: Until now, I only complained to Hashem. All I did was tell Him what I was lacking in my life and what parts of life were hard for me. Have I ever thanked Him for what I do have? It's true that I don't have money and that I am in debt, but boruch Hashem, I have a good wife and children. It's true that I have barely any food to give them, but boruch Hashem, they are alive and healthy. They have the ability to hear, see and speak, etc. Many people don't even have that. They would pay a fortune for any of those things. Boruch Hashem, I didn't have to pay a penny for them. Hashem gave me life and health for free. I should be thanking Him, rather than constantly complaining!

From then on, he became a changed man. He began to see the good in every situation and to thank Hashem for it. This new mindset helped him emerge from his depression and to become a happy person. - Soon thereafter, his financial situation improved, and he was able to support his family.

He learned from this that a person must have a positive mindset and to recognize Hashem's kindness. One should focus on what he does have and see His goodness and compassion at all times.

כִּ֣י לֹ֤א אֶֽעֶזָבְךָ֙ עַ֣ד אֲשֶׁ֔ר אִם־עָשִׂ֖יתִי אֵ֣ת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּ֑רְתִּי לָֽךְ׃ וַיִּיקַ֣ץ יַעֲקֹ֔ב מִשְּׁנָתוֹ֙ וַיֹּ֣אמֶר
'For I will not forsake you until I have done…And Yaakov awakened from his sleep, and he said …' (28:15-16)

Tefilah B'Tzibur is a Segulah for Parnassah

The Baal Haturim says that the last letters of the words וַיִּיקַ֣ץ יַעֲקֹ֔ב מִשְּׁנָתוֹ֙ וַיֹּ֣אמֶר spell out the word "**צבור**". This is a hint that a person's prayers are best heard when he davens with a tzibur. **Sefer Divrei Yisroel** adds that this explains the connection to the previous pasuk. Hashem said that he will not forsake Yaakov, meaning that He will provide him with parnassah (as is stated in Bereishis Rabbah 69:6).

The pasuk then hints that davening with a tzibur is a segulah to obtain this parnassah.

Accomplishing Through Thoughts

Sefer Darchei Emunah (Pekudei, Ois 5, page 123) writes that his father-in-law, the **Shomer Emunim zy"a**, would often speak words of chizuk, especially to people who felt that they were unable to concentrate and daven properly.

He would tell them that they have to realize that Hashem is the ultimate good and He can do anything. One only has to ask, and He will give. Every Jew has the power to ask Him for whatever he needs. In fact, even thinking thoughts of prayer can accomplish great things. One merely has to be aware of his power.

In this vein, the **Be'er Mayim Chaim** writes that Hashem listens to our thoughts and even a good thought is endlessly powerful. In this way, one can constantly be connected to Him through one's thoughts.

Like a Bird

"Just as a bird will soar ever higher only as long as it vigorously beats its wings but will begin to fall and descend to earth as soon as it stops its energetic activity, so too it is with man.

As long as he is actively engaged in a vigorous program of character refinement and self-improvement, he will soar to ever-higher spheres of spiritual attainment. When he discontinues his determined efforts, however, and slackens in his quest for self-improvement, he will begin to fall from his previously high plateau of spiritual attainment." ~ R' Yisrael Salanter zt"l.

Joy With Trembling



Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir zy"a (quoted in Maamar Yechezkel, Erech Olam Hazeh, Ois 2) said that navigating this world is comparable to walking across a river during the thaw. One cannot dawdle and dance on the ice, lest it break under his feet with him falling into the icy water. One also can't angrily jump too strongly on the ice for the same reason. Rather, one must walk quickly – without too much joy or too much anger.

So too, in this world one must be happy but not overly jubilant. One should fulfil the dictum of being גִּילוּ בִּרְעָדָה – ***joyful with trembling***.

He concludes by saying, "This is a fundamental rule for all of Yiddishkeit."

Making Good Use of Parnassah

Sefer Maaseh Hatzadikim quotes Sefer Irin Kadishin (page 49) as relating that **Rav Mordechai of Chernobyl zy"a and the Ruzhiner Rebbe zy"a** both attended the Chanukas Habayis of the kloiz in Zhitomir.

Rav Mordechai first made a l'chaim and gave a bracha to all those present. The Ruzhiner Rebbe then gave his bracha and said, "Hashem should give you gezunt, parnassah and ehrlichkeit!"

One chasid then said, "Rebbe, ehrlichkeit is the main thing (and you should have said that first.)" The Ruzhiner turned to Rav Mordechai and said, "He is a fool. When Hashem created the world, He created

everything man would need, and He then created man. Hashem first created parnassah so that man could be ehrlich. This shows that one must first have parnassah to be a yarei shomayim.

That is why Yaakov first asked Hashem to give him 'bread to eat and clothing to wear', and then asked to 'return in peace…and Hashem will be to me as a G-d." **וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ... וְהָיָה ה' לִי לֵאלֹקִים**

Serving Hashem With Sleep

My ancestor, **Rav Meshulim Zusia of Chernobyl zy"a** said that his grandfather, the **Tchechoiver Rebbe zy"a** would say the following in the name of the **Apter Rov zy"a**:

Yaakov Avinu spent 14 years in the bais medrash of Shem and Ever. Rashi states that for all those years, Yaakov was so immersed in Torah and avodas Hashem that he never slept at night. He did not know that he could serve Hashem even when he slept.

When he reached this place and fell asleep, he had a dream that foretold that he would merit much greatness. When he awoke, he realized that he could even serve Hashem while he slept. He then proclaimed that Hashem was in this place – i.e., even in his sleep – and he did not know that previously.

"If your mind strays while praying, do not give up trying to concentrate. As soon as you realize you are not concentrating on what you are saying, at that very moment begin concentrating." ~ Vilna Gaon.

Thought of the week: Hearing is listening to what is said. Listening is hearing what is not said.

He Could Not Hold Himself Back

יֶשׁ־לְאֵל יָדִי לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּכֶם רָע וֵאלקֵי אֲבִיכֶם אֶמֶשׁ אָמַר אֵלַי לֵאמֹר הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ מִדַּבֵּר עִם־יַעֲקֹב מִטּוֹב עַד־רָע *'I have the power to inflict harm upon you, but the G-d of your father…Beware with Yaakov either good or bad.'* (31:29)

The Chiddushei Harim quotes **Rav Bunim of Peshischa zy"a** as asking why Lavan told Yaakov that he was commanded not to harm him. He answers that Lavan was so proud that he merited receiving a Divine revelation that he couldn't hold himself back from telling Yaakov – or anyone else he met - about it.

From our Sages

וַיִּתֶּן־לוֹ אֶת־רָחֵל בִּתּוֹ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה *'And he gave him Rachel his daughter to him for a wife.'* (28:28)

How did Jacob marry both Rachel and Leah, when the Torah prohibits a man from being married to two sisters at the same time?

The lineage of the children of a non-Jew (Lavan) is determined by their mother; Rachel and Leah were the daughters of two different women. Accordingly, Rachel and Leah did not have the legal status of sisters. (**Bechor Shor**)

The Chofetz Chaim once asked someone how his financial situation was. The person replied, "It wouldn't hurt if it would be a little better."

"It would hurt!" the Chofetz Chaim told him. "What the Almighty does for you is for your best interests." ~ Chayai Hamussar.

Rabbi Shlomo Landau – He 'Can' do Anything



Here is perhaps, one of the most incredible stories that have come out of Israel. It was said over by R' Yitzchok Horowitz, a well-known journalist, who just a few days ago, was attached to a battalion of soldiers in Gaza.

Early one morning, they davened shacharis together, and even had a Sefer Torah. One of the soldiers asked if he could receive an *aliyah*, so that he could recite **ברכת הגומל** – to give gratitude to Hashem for saving his life.

After davening, he goes over to Yitzchok Horowitz, and he says, "You can't imagine how many miracles we have experienced." But here's the one that *'takes the cake'*:

"We were in Shati refugee camp located in the northern Gaza Strip. We were sitting there, and we were eating lunch. Now I don't know if you know this, but one of the standard issue military food rations in the Israeli army is tins of tuna in oil – lots of it. They are barely edible. So, what we soldiers usually do (not in actual war time) is that we take a match, light it, and stick it in the can, to burn off most of the oil, which turns the tuna into smoked tuna, and this makes it much more palatable.

I was so used to doing this, that I forgot that we were in an active war zone, and this is exactly what I did. The whole can of tuna flared up.

One of the soldiers next to me shouts, "Are you out of your mind? What are you doing? We have live munitions here, and you are

lighting a fire – are you meshugge? The whole lot could explode and kill us all!" - He panicked, and he snatched the can off me, and he hurled it as far away from us as he could.

After a few seconds, there was a tremendous explosion! We all thought that we were being attacked and started firing in the direction of the explosion.



When there was a lull in the shooting, we see a white flag of surrender appearing from underneath the ground before us! A whole bunch of Hamas terrorists were appearing with their hands up in the air.

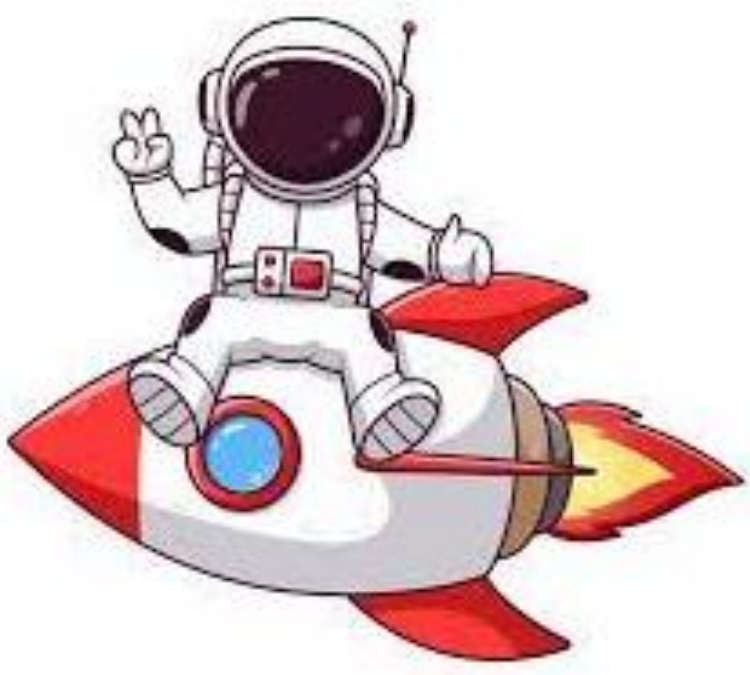
It turns out, that the can of flaming tuna landed inside of the opening of a tunnel and ignited their ammunition! They had been waiting for the opportunity to come out of the tunnel on a raid! They assumed that we had noticed them and were on our way down to kill them!"

Once again, Hakadosh Baruch Hu came through, and saved them in the most miraculous and remarkable way imaginable. An expression of Hasgacha Pratis and the Yad of Hashem.

"Emuna is the ability to see the world as it truly is, with all its challenges and difficulties, and still believe that Hashem is in control." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Astronaut Lesson



וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה – The pasuk says that Yaakov departed from Beer Sheva and went to Charan. Although it would have been sufficient to say that he went to Charan, Rashi explains it tells of Yaakov's departure from Beer Sheva to teach that a tzadik's departure from a place leaves a void. As long as he is in the city, he constitutes its glory, splendor and beauty and when he departs, the glory, splendor and beauty depart with him.

The Ohr Gedalyahu offers a novel explanation, beginning with the question of how to serve Hashem when you leave the walls of Beis Midrash.

This can be explained by man surviving on the moon. The astronauts who traveled to the moon had to adapt to the environment there. How did they do this? They survived there because they brought with them objects from earth such as oxygen, food and spacesuits in order to sustain gravity.

To survive spiritually in Charan after being surrounded by kedusha in Beer Sheva where he learned and was around his holy parents, Yaakov took the kedusha required. Now that he was going to Lavan and Besuel, he brought the glory, splendor and beauty along with him.

This is what is meant in Rashi when he says that when Yaakov departed, the glory, splendor and beauty departed with him, meaning he took it along with him to spiritually survive in his new environment in Charan.



When the talmidim of Mirer Yeshiva came from Shanghai in China, to America, they wondered if it was possible to transplant Torah into this foreign secular land, or if Torah could only flourish in Europe.

They sent a delegation led by **Rabbi Leib Bakst** (Rosh Yeshiva Detroit) to **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein Zt'l** To ask him this question.

Reb Moshe answered them that the answer can be found in Rashi at the beginning of the sedra. (28:17)

When Yaakov Avinu passed Har HaMoriah, and he didn't recognise it, but then he wanted to go back, and he experienced 'Kefitzas Haderech' to get back. However, Rashi says that this was not the normal **קְפִיצַת הַדֶּרֶךְ** where one would speedily reach their destination in a much shorter time span than usual, but rather '***neker Har HaMoriah***' – The mountain was uprooted and brought to Yaakov Avinu! **שֶׁנֶּעֱקַר הַר הַמּוֹרִיָּה וּבָא לְכָאן, וְזוֹ הִיא קְפִיצַת הָאָרֶץ הָאֲמוּרָה בְּשִׂחִיטַת חֻלִּין, שֶׁבָּא בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לִקְרָאתוֹ עַד בֵּית אֵ-ל, וְזֶהוּ וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם** [i.e., the mountain moved toward him] (He didn't have to travel at all!)

Why was this miracle done in this strange way?

Reb Moshe Feinstein explains that some people think that they can only serve Hashem in their own surroundings – Their own personal Beis Hamikdash. But you must know that wherever a person wants to serve Hashem, He will uproot the Beis Hamikdash and bring it to them. You can serve Hakadosh Baruch Hu from anywhere in the world.

Chabad.ORG

From our Sages

וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם – *'And he lay down in that place.' (28:11)*

Here he lay down to sleep, but during the fourteen years of his seclusion in the Holy Land, when he studied under Eber, he did not lie down. . . Here he lay down to sleep, but during the entire twenty years he spent in Laban's house he did not lie down. ~ (**Midrash Rabbah**)

וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה – *'A ladder stood on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.' (28:12)*

This is prayer. ~ (**Zohar**)

מַלֵּא שְׁבֻעַ זֹאת וְנִתְּנָה לְךָ גַּם־אֶת־זֹאת – *'Fulfil her week, and we will give you [Rachel] also.' (29:27)*

From this verse is derived the practice of the week of celebrations following a wedding ("Sheva Berachot"). ~ (**Avot d'Rabbi Natan**)

וַיֶּאֱהַ֥ב גַּם־אֶת־רָחֵ֖ל מִלֵּאָ֑ה – *'And he loved Rachel more than Leah.' (29:30)*

The Hebrew words **וַיֶּאֱהַ֥ב גַּם־אֶת־רָחֵ֖ל מִלֵּאָ֑ה** also translate as "and he loved Rachel more **from** Leah"—i.e., he loved her even more because of her noble deed in giving over the identifying signals to Leah, lest her sister be shamed. ~ (**Kedushat Levi**)

וַתַּ֣הַר עוֹד֮ וַתֵּ֣לֶד בֵּן֒ וַתֹּ֗אמֶר עַתָּ֤ה הַפַּ֙עַם֙ יִלָּוֶ֣ה אִישִׁ֔י אֵלַ֕י כִּֽי־יָלַ֥דְתִּי לֹ֖ו שְׁלֹשָׁ֣ה בָנִ֑ים
'And [Leah] said: "Now this time will my husband be joined (yilaveh) to me, because I have borne him three sons"; therefore was his name called Levi.' (29:34)

A woman who has one child, carries it on her arm; when she has two children, both her arms are full; when her third child is born, her husband has no choice but to help her out. . . . Thus Leah said: "Now this time will my husband be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons." ~ (**Chizkuni**)



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

● **What does the posuk mean, that Ya'akov also loved Rochel more than Leah?**

וַיָּבֹא֙ גַּ֣ם אֶל־רָחֵ֔ל וַיֶּאֱהַ֥ב גַּם־אֶת־רָחֵ֖ל מִלֵּאָ֑ה (29,30) "*And he came also to Rochel, and he also loved Rochel more than Leah.*"

When Lavan tricked Ya'akov by switching Leah for Rochel at the wedding, not only did Rochel remain silent about the switch, but she even gave to Leah the secret signs that Ya'akov had given her to prevent such a trick, so that Leah would not suffer any

embarrassment on the wedding night. It was therefore only natural that Leah would love Rochel tremendously for her actions. And conversely, it would have been natural for Ya'akov not to love Rochel, since she had wronged him in giving over the signs, thereby allowing Leah to deceive him.

Therefore, the posuk relates that on the contrary, even though Rochel wronged Ya'akov through her actions, even so, "he also loved Rochel more than Leah", that is, not only did Leah love Rochel, but "he also loved Rochel" even "more than Leah" loved her.

● **How did Leah help to increase Ya'akov's love for Rochel?**

וַיָּבֹא גַּם אֶל־רָחֵל וַיֶּאֱהַב גַּם־אֶת־רָחֵל מִלֵּאָה (29,30) "***And he came also to Rochel, and he also loved Rochel from (more than) Leah***."

Another way to explain this posuk, and in particular to explain the seemingly superfluous word "also" in the phrase "and he also loved Rochel", is that initially Ya'akov loved Rochel for herself, for her beauty. But when he married Leah because of Lavan's trickery, and Rochel had known about it and kept quiet allowing Leah to trick Ya'akov, this was a very big thing, and through this Ya'akov recognised Rochel's good deeds. And thus through Leah he loved Rochel even more.

This then is the explanation of the posuk, that apart from the love that he had for Rochel for herself, "he also loved Rochel from Leah". That is, he also loved Rochel because of Leah's tricking him, which caused him to increase his love for Rochel.

"You cannot add more minutes to the day, but you can utilize each one to the fullest." ~ R Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

● **Why did Leah name this son Yissachar?**

וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה נָתַן אֱלֹקִים שְׂכָרִי.. וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יִשָּׂשכָר (30,18) "***And Leah said: G-d has given my reward…and she named him Yissachar.***"

We can explain why she called him Yissachar according to the teaching of Chazal that in the future Hashem will give 310 worlds as an inheritance to every Tzaddik. As it says in Mishlei 8:21 "To give an inheritance to those who love me, there is (**יש**)". From here it is clear that they learned from the gematria of the word ישthe matter of the 310 worlds.

Now, the commentaries asked that in fact each Tzaddik deserves 620 worlds, corresponding to the 613 mitzvos of the Torah and the 7 mitzvos of the Rabbis. But since they must give half to their wives, there remains only 310.

But now it seems that we can explain slightly differently, and say that those tzaddikim who are not supported by others, but rather they benefit only from the work of their hands, they take their complete reward of 620 worlds. But since there are tzaddikim who benefit from others, and therefore they must give half of their reward to those who support them, therefore there remains only 310 worlds. Thus, Chazal are teaching that in the future Hashem will give as an inheritance to every Tzaddik at least 310 worlds, and not less than this amount. But there are tzaddikim who will inherit 620 worlds, and that is those who do not benefit from others.

Each of the tribes who benefited only from the work of their hands will have 620 worlds. But Yissachar, Leah saw with the Divine Spirit would make a partnership with Zevulun, as it says in Devarim 33:18 "Rejoice Zevulun in your going out, and Yissachar in your tents". Therefore, to Yissachar there will be only 310 worlds, because the second half belongs to Zevulun, who supported them. And therefore she called him Yissachar - **יש שכר**, which means a 310 (world) reward.



◣ Power of Our Actions - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

וְהִנֵּה֙ מַלְאֲכֵ֣י אֱלֹקִ֔ים עֹלִ֥ים וְיֹרְדִ֖ים בּ֑וֹ - '***And behold, angels of Hashem were going up and down.***' (28:12)

The Midrash teaches: The angels were going up and going down with Yaakov; they were dancing with him. When Yaakov Avinu saw that the angels were "dependent" on him and his actions, he said, "If I would have known how big of an impact my actions have, I would have never slept". The Chiddushei Harim comments on this midrash: If a Jew would realize how far his actions can reach, he would never "ignore" even a single good deed or opportunity to serve Hashem. Through his actions he can add shefa and simcha in the upper worlds.

◣ Spiritual Slumber - Reb Aryeh Leib of Plotzk

וַיִּיקַ֣ץ יַעֲקֹ֔ב מִשְּׁנָת֖וֹ וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אָכֵ֔ן יֵ֥שׁ ה' בַּמָּק֣וֹם הַזֶּ֑ה וְאָנֹכִ֖י לֹ֥א יָדָֽעְתִּי - "***And Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said: 'Hashem is surely in this place, and I did not know it.***'" (28:16)

Many people go through life as if asleep. The pasuk tells us otherwise: וַיִּיקַ֣ץ יַעֲקֹ֔ב מִשְּׁנָת֖וֹ - when a Jew will wake up from his spiritual slumber, וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אָכֵ֔ן יֵ֥שׁ ה' בַּמָּק֣וֹם הַזֶּ֑ה - and he will recognize and proclaim that there is a G-d who runs this world, וְאָנֹכִ֖י לֹ֥א יָדָֽעְתִּי - he will then realize that although he does not have all the answers, Hashem will see to his needs and care for him on this world!

◣ Always Humble - Sefas Emes

וַיִּיקַץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְּׁנָתוֹ. וַיִּירָא "...***And he became frightened.***" (28:16,17)

The Torah is telling us how modest Yaakov was. When someone has a dream in which Hashem appears to him, he usually develops an arrogant manner, but when Yaakov awoke, the Torah tells us, "He became frightened."

◣ Ability To Enjoy the Blessings - Maharshal Of Lenchne

וַיִּדַּר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי... וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ
"***Yaakov vowed: 'Hashem will be with me, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear...'***" (28:20)

It's obvious that bread is meant to be eaten and clothing to be worn. Isn't Yaakov's statement redundant?

Not at all. Yaakov prayed not only for bread, but for good health in which to enjoy the bread, since many people have plentiful food but cannot eat because they are ill. - Yaakov prayed not only for clothing but for prosperity, so that he would not have to pawn his garments, and for peace of mind so that he would be able to put them on.

◣ Thinking Of Others - Sassover Rebbe

וַיִּדַּר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי... וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ
"***Yaakov vowed: 'Hashem will be with me, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear...'***" (28:20)

It is quite obvious that one needs bread to eat and clothing to wear. However, Yaakov did not make the request for himself alone. He asked for enough food and clothing so that he might share with others.

◣ Looking Presentable - Koznitzer Rebbe

וְשַׁבְתִּי בְשָׁלוֹם אֶל־בֵּית אָבִי - "*...and I will return in peace (b'shalom) to my father's house*." (28:21)

By changing the position of the letters of the word **בשלום**, the word malbush (**מלבוש** -" clothing") is formed. - Yaakov, our father, asked not only for spiritual clothing (clothing of holiness) but also for respectable clothing.

◣ True Wealth - Reb Simchah Bunim of Pshischa

וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן־לִי עַשֵּׂר אֲעַשְּׂרֶנּוּ לָךְ - "*...and of all that You shall give me I will surely give the tenth part to You*." (28:22)

Yaakov said to G-d: "Only that of which I am willing to give one-tenth to charity will remain truly mine, entrusted by You to me by virtue of my pledge to tithe it. All other money is not really mine and will not remain mine." - For the only possessions we can truly call ours are the ones we give away to charity.

◣ Shielded By Charity - Sefas Emes

וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן־לִי עַשֵּׂר אֲעַשְּׂרֶנּוּ לָךְ - "*...and of all that You shall give me I will surely give the tenth part to You*." (28:22)

Yaakov was instructing future generations that if, G-d forbid, one finds himself in a time of distress, he should give charity.

"Today, everyone can witness Hashem's wonders. Divine Providence is present in every detail; We must simply be careful not to overlook it." ~ Shem Mishmuel.

◣ Fulfilled Love - Apter Rav

וַיִּעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וַיִּהְיוּ בְעֵינָיו כְּיָמִים אֲחָדִים בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אֹתָהּ "...***and they [the seven years] felt like just a few days in the eyes of Yaakov because of his love for her.***" (29:20)

Shouldn't the reverse be true, i.e., that a day would seem to Yaakov like years because of his love for Rochel?

The wording is meant to convey to us the profound spiritual nature of the love that bound Yaakov and Rochel to one another. - In a love based on physical desire, the couple wants the time of separation to pass quickly because each day they are apart, seems like a year. However, in a spiritual love, devoid of self-seeking desire, it's unimportant whether the object of affection is near or far.

The spiritual love between Yaakov and Rochel had already found fulfilment, therefore the 7 years seemed to Yaakov only a few days.

◣ Justifiable Anger - Chiddushei Harim

וַיִּחַר לְיַעֲקֹב וַיָּרֶב בְּלָבָן - "***Yaakov became angry with Lavan.***" (31:36)

Anger was really not part of Yaakov's personality. However, we do read: תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב - "*Give truth to Yaakov.*" And it is difficult for a person of truth to stand by and see conniving and not get angry. - We learn from this that one must know when and how to be angry.

"Everything can be taken away from me – except for Hashem, he is always with me." ~ Rabbi Aharon of Karlin (1736-1772)

"When a Jew stumbles and falls, he falls directly into the lap of Hashem." ~ The Ishbitzer, Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Leiner



There is a famous story of a Yid named Mr Davis a rich man living in the most upscale way. People wondered in what merit to have that both his daughters marry great Talmidei Chachomim like the Bloch brothers?

The answer is that as much as he had wealth, he made sure to show that all was meaningless to him aside for honoring the Torah. As happened in the famous story with Rav Elchonon Wasserman **זצוק"ל הי"ד**.

Rav Elchonon once came to raise money by the house of Mr. Davis and since his boots were muddy, he went and knocked at the side door instead of coming to the front door of the mansion. His daughter heard someone knocking and when she opened the door, she saw that it was none other than Rav Elchonon Wasserman!

They told their father, and he came running to the door crying bitter tears. He pleaded with Rav Elchonon to come through the front door where all the ministers would enter. "Please", he begged, "Come into my home with your muddy boots. I want my children to see that it's not the clean couch or clean carpets that get us anywhere in life! I want my children to see that kavod HaTorah is of utmost importance to me! Please, please, I beg of you come through the front door!"

"We often see Tefilloh as a way to solve our problems. However, Tefilloh itself is the purpose. - Challenges arise to inspire us to turn to Hashem in prayer." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

It was shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when a Rabbi Feldman, a *mispallel* in a Flatbush Shul, noticed a surprising sight. A Yid who was clearly a very recent émigré from Russia was coming to *Shacharis* on successive weekdays morning, and *davening* with a *tallis*…but no *tefillin.*

When asked, the Yid, who gave his name as Zishe, simply said, "I don't have *tefillin.*" Rabbi Feldman offered to lend him a pair of *tefillin,* but Zishe refused. "*Tefillin* are very precious. I am afraid to borrow them."

Along with some other regular *mispallelim,* Rabbi Feldman proceeded to purchase a pair of *tefillin* and gave it to Zishe as a gift the next morning.

Deeply touched by the gesture, Zishe expressed his gratitude and then rolled up his sleeve and donned the *shel yad* – putting it on precisely in the way dictated by *halachah.* With great enthusiasm, he emotionally made the *brachah* of *lehaniach tefillin* by heart – clearly enunciating each word aloud and then wrapping the *retzuah* around his arm. He then did the same with *shel rosh,* again making the *brachah* of *al mitzvas tefillin* by heart, securing it in place, and then reciting the *Baruch shem,* before wrapping the *retzuah* around his fingers.

With tears rolling freely, Zishe proceeded to *daven* the entire *davening* with what was obviously great *kavanah.*

Rabbi Feldman waited until Zishe had put away his *tefillin* after *davening* and then posed the question.

"Reb Zishe, when is the last time you put on *tefillin?*'

"Sixty years ago," he replied. "It was the day of my bar mitzvah. It was the first time – and until today, the last time – I put on *tefillin.* It was also the last time I saw my father. It was less than an hour after my father, who was *moser nefesh* to procure *tefillin* for me,

put the *tefillin* on me, that the KGB came and took the *tefillin*…and my father…. away."

"If you only put it on once before in your life, how were you able to put it on so naturally today, and recite the *brochos* by heart" Rabbi Feldman asked

Zishe became very emotional.

"What do you think, I left even one day out? Every day I put on *tefillin!* I did not have the [physical] *tefillin* so, every morning, I pictured in my mind that I am putting on *tefillin,* and in my mind and heart I recited the *brachos,* every day I *davened* with *tefillin* – not on my arm and my head but in my mind and heart."

"The Russians were able to take from me my *tefillin;* they were able to take from me my father; but my heart they could not take from me," Zishe concluded.

~~~~~~

After reading this story in Hamodia Prime, I am left inspired to concentrate, even more, on my tefillin laying, …. and to share this wonderful story with you.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos

Yearn to Give

Spend generously on your wife. And if funds are limited, let her see your desire to give. As Rabbi Akiva told his wife: "If I had the means, I would place upon you a golden ornament engraved with the image of Jerusalem" (Nedarim 50a).

And indeed, the Gemara later testifies that he fulfilled that very promise. (Shabbos 59b) ~ Olam Hamiddos.
~~~~~~

The Weekly Vort

One Small Kindness

In the 1950's, the philanthropist Mr. J.C. Cohen of Florida, established a charitable foundation. One man was appointed to oversee his contributions and serve as a gatekeeper for the various collectors. It was thus practically impossible to directly approach Mr. Cohen.

Each time **R' Aharon Kotler** traveled to Florida, he would pay a visit to Mr. Cohen's secretary, hoping to raise money for the Lakewood Yeshiva; and each time he came away without success. Mr. Cohen's secretary was polite, but firm in his refusal to commit funds to the Yeshiva.

On one fundraising trip to Florida, R' Aharon took R' Y. Yitzchak Spiegel along. One afternoon, R' Y. Yitzchak davened mincha in a local *shul* where he spotted a young boy reciting *kaddish* after *davening*, obviously struggling with the pronunciation of the words. Feeling pity for the poor young orphan, he introduced himself and gently offered to teach him how to recite the *kaddish*. The boy's eyes lit up as he gratefully accepted the offer. He explained that he had recently lost his mother and had trouble reciting the *kaddish* properly. R' Y. Yitzchak sat with him and patiently went over every word of the *kaddish* until the boy felt confident that he could recite it clearly.

The boy thanked R' Y. Yitzchak profusely. "You know," said R' Y. Yitzchak, "I didn't catch your name." The boy replied, "My name is Cohen." "Are you related to Mr. J.C. Cohen?" asked R' Y. Yitzchak. The boy confirmed that J.C. was indeed his father. When R' Y. Yitzchak asked if he could introduce him to his father, he eagerly obliged.

As they entered the Cohen home, J.C. looked inquiringly at R' Y. Yitzchak. His son exclaimed, "Dad, this man just taught me how to say *kaddish*!" J.C. thanked R' Y. Yitzchak, explaining, "I recently lost

my wife, Dora. I didn't realize my son was having such a hard time with the *kaddish*. It was very kind of you to take time from your trip to teach a child you don't even know." J.C. then inquired why R' Y. Yitzchak had come to Florida. He explained that he had come with this rebbe, R' Aharon Kotler, to raise money for a new building for the Yeshiva. J.C. agreed to meet with R' Aharon, saying, "I usually let my secretary take care of my donations, but this time, I am anxious to meet your rebbe. Thanks to your great kindness to my son, you've certainly caught my attention."

The result of that meeting was a $72,000 donation (then a huge sum) towards the purchase of a new building for the Lakewood Yeshiva… in memory of J.C.'s wife, Dora. Until today, when walking into Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, one can see a sign "In Memory of Dora Cohen." (Visions of Greatness, Vol. 7)



All-Encompassing Ruling

Giving a Halachic ruling encompasses more than we may think. **R' Yisrael Salanter** once visited a household to help a widow determine whether her milk was kosher after a possible mix-up. After ruling leniently, someone challenged him, suggesting he might have been overly permissive.

R' Yisrael responded, "The Torah commands us to care for the orphan and the widow. If this milk is declared non-kosher, she may be unable to afford more, and her children might go hungry. My leniency fulfils the mitzvah of helping the downtrodden."



In another episode, this one with **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzinski**, R' Chaim Ozer tested a young rabbi, asking, "What do you need to know to be a rabbi?" The young man confidently responded: "Kashrus, Shabbos, and Nida." R' Chaim Ozer gently corrected him: "You forgot the most important thing. A rabbi must know how to care for orphans, widows and the community. It's not just about halachic rulings; it's about understanding people and their struggles."

Here is one last story on this topic. A widow with ten children came to a great rabbi with a question about her chicken, which might be non-kosher. The rabbi's students, analyzing the halachic sources, declared that the chicken was unquestionably *treif*. The rabbi, however, looked at the chicken, then at the woman, and declared that the chicken was kosher. The students were shocked and asked, "But Rebbe, what about all the halachic sources including the Shach and Taz that forbid it?" The rabbi replied, "You were looking at the chicken, but I was looking at the widow. You must understand not only the halacha but the person asking the question and the impact your ruling will have on their life."

"A single moment of accepting Hashem's will when one feels they should be angry and resentful is more powerful than a hundred prayers." ~ Chasam Sofer, Reb Moshe Sofer (1762-1839)

Torah Power



The gemara Shabbos 119b tells us that the world continues to exist only in the merit of the words of Torah the schoolchildren utter as they study - **הבל תינוקות של בית רבן**

R' Aharon Kotler asks that if a *katan* is exempt from mitzvos, that means he is not fulfilling the mitzva of *limud hatorah*. If that is the case, then how does the world exist on their Torah?

The answer is that the existence of the world is not for the mitzva of learning Torah but for the learning itself. Learning Torah is so powerful whether it is a mitzva or not.

Rabbi Aron Litwin - Psychotherapist and Founder of Mekimi Uk



You can often tell the essence of an event by what you come away with. For example, you can go to a wedding and come back with an earache from the loud music, or you can go to the wedding of someone like Reb Yitzchok Henry and come back with five divrei Torah, three great stories, a big bear hug, and an overwhelming feeling of warmth. That's the kind of event it was—one that filled you not only with joy but with spiritual inspiration and love.

I had the privilege of hearing a beautiful and profound idea at the wedding of the youngest child of Reb Yitzchok Henry, a man who, to me, feels like a brother from another mother. He truly embodies the phrase, "Friends are the family we choose for ourselves." His warmth, wisdom, and kindness have made him a brother in spirit, and I am grateful for the friendship we share.

At the wedding, Rabbi Dovid Roberts gave a heartfelt and beautiful compliment, comparing Reb Yitzchok to the legendary Maggid of Jerusalem, Reb Sholom Schwadron. He praised the way Reb Yitzchok crafts his beautiful stories and divrei Torah, bringing the ideas to life and making them so practical. The way he conveys Torah resonates deeply with all who hear him, and his words are filled with meaning that inspire action in daily life.

During the chassuna, Reb Yitzchok called me out and pointed to Mechel Haffner, a dentist by trade, but a Yid who has written three sifrei Torah and learns diligently. Mechel was sitting quietly on the side, immersed in his learning of Mishnayos. Reb Yitzchok pointed at him with his usual humility and said, "This is how a Yid should look." His words were filled with admiration and respect, and they struck me deeply.

Reb Mechel came over and shared with us that the Asufei Yitzchok is a "Sefer Torah" Reb Yitzchok has written, and it is his gift to Klal Yisroel. He then continued to share a beautiful vort that resonated with all of us. Reb Yitzchok asked me to transcribe the vort and of course I obliged!

This was the final vort that Mechel's father told him before he was niftar. His father heard it from Reb Gedalia Rabinovitch, who cited one of the Belzer Rebbes, who offers a deep insight into the words of Yaakov Avinu in Parshas Vayetzei. - Yaakov Avinu says to his wives, רֹאֶה אָנֹכִי אֶת־פְּנֵי אֲבִיכֶן – '***I can see your father's countenance***.' 31:5 And the pasuk continues, עַתָּה קוּם צֵא מִן־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְשׁוּב אֶל־אֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתֶּךָ

" ***Now, arise, go forth from this land and return to the land of your birth***.". 31:13 **וְיַעֲקֹב הָלַךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ** – 32:2

On a simple level, the meaning of these words is straightforward: Yaakov is telling his wives that he has come to the realization that the time has come for him to leave Lavan's household and return to his own family. However, there is a deeper interpretation based on the teachings of Chazal.

The deeper meaning is that a person is not permitted to gaze upon the face of a rasha (wicked person). **אָסוּר לְאָדָם לְהִסְתַּכֵּל בְּצֶלֶם דְּמוּת אָדָם רָשָׁע** – (Megilla 28a). In this context, Yaakov was saying, "Now that I can look at your father's face—who was a rasha—it signals that it is time for me to leave, for it's as if my life here has come to an end."

In other words, Yaakov is pointing out that he can now see Lavan's face without fear or hesitation, and this signifies that he has accomplished his mission. Once he can gaze upon the face of a rasha without being spiritually harmed, he recognizes it is time for him to move on, as he has become too familiar with the mundane world.

This interpretation teaches us about the profound spiritual sensitivity we must have in our interactions with others, and how Yaakov's awareness of the significance of his environment ultimately helped him know when it was time to take the next step in his journey.

Reb Yitzchok is a person who radiates sensitivity and warmth, someone who has an innate ability to sense the subtle feelings of those around him. I am truly blessed to have shared in his special simcha, and to be able to call him not only a friend but a brother. May Hashem continue to bench him and his family with many more occasions of simcha until moshiach bekorov. Amen!



Chessed Or Customer Service?

I once heard from my Rebbe **מו"ר הרב אריה וולדן שליט"א** the following **יסוד**.

The German beasts **ימ"ש וזכרם** were known to have the greatest etiquette and manners. They would ask in German, "It's good, isn't it?" They would **כאילו** show interest in the other fellow's opinion. However, with those very same word of "politeness" as they were murdering and torturing Yidden. They would "ask", "It hurts, doesn't it?"

From here we see that their "etiquette" was all one big sheker, and it had nothing to do with any inner goodness whatsoever.

We think that when we go into a shop and the nochri behind the counter speaks to us in such a mannerly way it's because he's such a kind fellow. However, the **גמ'** says that it is impossible for a nochri to do a chessed from the goodness of his heart. The Mahrsha explains it's because only Yidden can emulate Hashem who is the epitome of a **נותן** who gives without any personal interest. We yidden can emulate that. Whereas a nochri will always have ulterior motives, since he is not created with the same level of Tzelem Eloikim.

So too, we should never assume that the great way in where we were treated by a nochri has anything to do with the fact that he likes us. It's called "customer service" it has nothing to with what the Torah calls middos Tovos.

Lavan hugged and kissed Yaakov he then said, "Ok, you can come stay by us". Sounds like a giant baal chessed. no? We all know the truth that Lavan had 100% personal interests in every act of chessed that he did. The hug and kiss were to feel where Yaakov was hiding the gelt. Disappointed, and let down, he invited Yaakov home, what personal intention did he have in this? The answer is, Lavan knew that Yaakov was a shepherd and that would be a tremendous help for him as well.

We see how Lavan lived 100% in a self-centered life. Me me me! Every act that he did was, "What can I get out of the other person! What can we learn from Lavan?

The answer is we need to do the opposite of Lavan. We have to train ourselves to be able to do chessed **without** any need to get any personal gain from doing a chessed for another Yid.

Someone just told me a story about a Yid who received a large yerusha and people recommended him to invest the money this way and that way. He turned down every idea and he said, "I want to use this money to do chessed for people"! What did he do with the money? He opened a gemach!

Another story a choshuveh person told me recently was about a girl who worked for weeks to say over something to her class, she memorized it many times. A few days before her turn to deliver the speech another girl came one day and had nothing to say. In a flash, the girl who worked for weeks pulled over the girl whose turn it was that day and gave her over her entire speech!!!!!!! Me K'amcha Yisroel!

Here is another story: When my father זצ"ל was learning in Ner Yisroel the canteen in Yeshiva worked as follows; before Shabbos you paid money and they gave you a ticket to be used on Shabbos to receive a soda bottle. What would my father do? He would buy a ticket and then on Shabbos he would specifically sit near a bochur who could not afford a soda bottle. Once he got his soda bottle, he would drink a tiny bit in a cup and then he would tell the other

bochur, "Would you like the rest of my drink I am not in the mood of having anymore". - This is real kindness, doing it in a way that the other person feels the most comfortable.



Bitachon Power - Spring Hill Times

The Quote: "It says in Mishlei (29:25), A person's fear will cause his falling, whereas the one who trusts in Hashem will be elevated. Which means that where no problem previously existed, a person's fear will cause a problem to develop. In contrast, if a person trusts in Hashem he will be rescued from a problem that already existed.

The Lesson: What makes this so incredible and amazing is that Hashem loves each and every one of us so much that He even gave us an incentive not to worry or be afraid. Hashem made it that if we rely on Him and trust in Him and we do not worry and do not have anxiety, that itself will protect us from harm from coming are way. It's a win-win situation. We get a close kesher with Hashem we gain a worry-free-life and we have the BEST protection shayach in the gantza velt!!

Did you know that אהבה is gematria אחד?

The reason is because the more ONE feels connected with another person, the more אהבה you will have toward the person. It is pashut. Therefore, the same applies toward Hashem, the closer connected we feel to Hashem, the more אהבה we will have and feel toward Hashem as well!

Another point is that the more you love someone, the more you will shower praises on them. So too, the more you love Hashem, the more you will praise Hashem as well, you will praise what Hashem made you will not stop praising His Torah hakedoshah, His world, His everything, His people! Also, the more you love someone the more you will not be worried that they will harm you chas v'shalom. So too by loving Hashem that itself will take away a lot of our worries.

Besides for loving Hashem in our hearts, there is also a way to show Hashem we love Him with our actions. - The Mesilas Yesharem tells us the secret.

The regular day-in-day-out acts that we do in our Avodas Hashem is definitely required. However, that does not necessarily show our true love to the Hashem. Which actions show that we really want a close relationship with Hashem and that we "live" Hashem? It's the little additions that we put effort into our Yiddishkeit that are sort of not even expected of us.



There are hundreds of examples that each person can think of, where in their life they can show true love and dedication to Hashem. These small "extras" can be phrased, "***The cinnamon mint tea moments of our life***." What do I mean?

Rav Shmuel Barron Shlit"a coined this phrase and brought out this Yesod from the Mesilas Yesharim with an incredible Mashel:

The Mashal: There was once a yid who came home late one night from his friend's Chasuna. He was on the phone talking to someone about the wedding and he said, "You won't believe it, they had my favorite tea in the world by the Chasunah - cinnamon mint tea. I had one cup, then I had a second cup and then I gulped down a third… I must have drunk twenty cups of cinnamon mint tea…"

Meanwhile, his son was sitting in the next room, and he overheard the entire conversation. A few weeks later the father was not feeling well and all that they had in the house was some cheap simple tea. The father was lying in bed asked his son if he could make him a tea. The son dashed out of the house without his father knowing and bought a box of cinnamon mint tea. He ran home, prepared the

tea and handed it to his father. The father thanked the son, made a bracha and took a sip. The father could not believe what he was tasting. He was utterly shocked! He said to his son, "Cinnamon mint tea? How did you know it's my favorite tea?! " - I am sure he wanted to give his son a big kiss on his cheek…

This is the yesod: Doing the unexpected is extremely valuable and that is what the Mesilas Yesharim says shows true Ahavas Hashem.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Designated Eater

Yaakov spends a night under the stars and dreams of a ladder ascending to heaven. There are angels going up the ladder and others going down. In the dream Hashem appears to Yaakov and assures him that, וְהִנֵּה אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וּשְׁמַרְתִּיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־תֵּלֵךְ - ***"Behold, I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go"*** (28:15).

When Yaakov awakes and realizes the sanctity of his habitation, he, too, makes a commitment. Yaakov pleads with Hashem for food, shelter, and warmth. He wants no more than the basic necessities of life. In return, he pledges to build a house of the L-rd and give charitably. It is a wonderful commitment, one that Jews take seriously until this very day.

But Yaakov's request for "bread to eat and clothes to wear" seems more poetic than practical. Of course, bread is made to eat and clothes are made to wear! Is there anybody who eats clothing and wears bread? Why did Yaakov not just ask for bread and clothing?

Sender Laib Aronin of Skokie, Illinois, gave me a beautiful sefer, A Student Looks At The Siddur. In it he quotes Shmuel Weintraub, a survivor of Bergen-Belsen and other death camps, who tells a story that I'd like to re-tell with fictitious characters.

In Auschwitz, there were two inmates on different ends of the camp. Chaim was healthy enough to eat only half of his bread ration

for a few days and so he stored the stale pieces for a time in the imminent future when he knew his strength would wane.

Dovid, at the other end of the camp, had no strength to save bread. He ate all that he had every day and hoped it would be enough to survive. What he did manage to scrounge was scraps of cloth, which he sewed ever-so-stealthily to make an extra blanket in dire foreboding of the coming winter.

Months later, things got worse in Auschwitz. The nights were freezing and the rations dwindled. Dovid's blanket was of little use, for he was starving. Chaim's bread was worthless, for he was freezing. Each of the two heard about the other's needs. They also knew of their extra stashes.

Dovid and Chaim had to trade their precious commodities to keep alive. The bread was bartered to keep Dovid warm, and the blanket was bartered to keep Chaim from freezing. But it did not help. Unfortunately, Dovid starved, and Chaim froze.

Yaakov Avinu knew that the world is filled with commodities. But the greatest blessing is to use the gifts for the purpose that they are intended. Bread was given to eat. Clothes to wear. All too often, we find that food and clothes are going for purposes not intended. Sometimes they are just wasted, and sometimes they are used to make extravagant statements.

Yaakov had a proper perspective on life and asked for everything to fit into that perspective. And when the commodities of life are put in focus, man's needs follow easily as well. [See K'li Yakar.]

"Hashem sometimes places challenges in our lives to inspire us to turn to him in prayer, and through prayer, those difficulties can be lifted!" ~ Sefer Pele Yoetz.

Short And Sweet Story of The Week by Yoni Schwartz

There was a nine-year-old in Los Angeles who loved **Rav Ovadiah Yosef, ZT"L**. When he heard the Rav was visiting, he made his father promise to take him to see the Rav. However, when his father had to be out of town, his heart was broken. When his mother saw how much he was crying, she took him to an event where the Rav was speaking. However, once they arrived, his mother realized that it was a lecture at a men's yeshiva. Being a woman wearing only jeans and a T-shirt, she had no way to get in. Heartbroken, little teardrops began inching down the sides of his little cheeks.

Then they sensed a regal presence approaching. It was the Rav himself! He passed by them and entered the building. Reading between the lines, Rav Ovadiah understood something was up, so went back out and spoke to them. He then told them, "Follow me."

Getting a personal escort by the Rav, the boy's face was shining like a menorah. Rav Ovadiah brought them inside. The scene was unforgettable: a massive hall packed to the brim with black hats, with people nearly fighting over every seat. Rav Ovadiah cleared out the entire first row, sat them down in the middle, and began his lecture by saying, "Praiseworthy is a mother who brings her child to shiurei Torah. We're proud to have them here."

"People who habitually feel unhappy would be better off not spending a lot of time contemplating how they feel…. Do not increase your sadness by feeling sad that you feel sad…. View your sadness as a challenge. Anyone can behave in a positive manner when they are in a state of joy. It is a sign of courage and strength to behave in a positive manner even though you feel sad." ~ R' Zelig Pliskin.

Torah Temimah

״הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ פֶּן תְּדַבֵּר עִם יַעֲקֹב מִטּוֹב עַד רָע״, בִּשְׁלָמָא רַע — לְחַיֵּי, אֶלָּא טוֹב אַמַּאי לָא? אֶלָּא שְׁמַע מִינַּהּ: טוֹבָתָן שֶׁל רְשָׁעִים — רָעָה הִיא אֵצֶל צַדִּיקִים - 31:24 / Yevamos 103b

Hashem warned Lavan not to speak to Yaakov even for good things because anything he might perceive as good really isn't as far as a tzadik is concerned.

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

וַיַּחֲלֹם ... "***He had a dream***..." (28:12)



In this week's Parsha, in the midst of Yaakov Avinu's travels, the sun prematurely set, and Yaakov went to sleep. He suddenly had a dream. The pasuk says that when Yaakov woke up from his dream he was immediately spurred to action. He recognized the holiness of the place and the importance of the moment.

What is the significance of this? What can we learn from Yaakov's reaction?

Later on, in Parshas Miketz (Bereishis 41:5), the Torah records that Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, also awoke from a dream. It was a very sobering and intriguing dream. What was his reaction? **וַיִּישָׁן** - he just went back to sleep.

Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlit"a cites **Rav Aharon of Karlin zt'l** who observes the difference in conduct between Yaakov Avinu and Pharaoh. When Pharaoh dreamt, he wasn't affected. He wasn't moved. He wasn't inspired. He fell back into a stupor. He went back to sleep. However, when Yaakov dreamt, he became alive. He became motivated. He became ignited. He became inspired. There is an incredible lesson that we can learn from here: A Jew doesn't just dream. A Jew doesn't fall back asleep. A Jew accomplishes. A Jew acts. The reason why the pasuk told us about Yaakov's reaction to his dream is to teach us the importance of being a dreamer.



Parsha Points to Ponder – R' Ozer Alport

In his dream, Yaakov saw a ladder that stretched from earth to heaven, upon which angels were ascending and descending. How many rungs did the ladder have?

The **Radal** interprets a Midrash as saying that there were three rungs on the ladder in Yaakov's dream. The **Rambam** quotes a different Midrash that says it had four rungs, which is also the opinion of the **Kli Yakar** and **Megaleh Amukos**. The **Rema** (Megillas Esther) quotes an opinion that maintains it had seven rungs. Rashi writes (Bereishis 47:28) that Yaakov called all his sons together before his death to reveal to them the **קץ** – the time when Moshiach will come.

From where did Yaakov learn this secret? The **Daas Z'keinim** writes that by counting the number of rungs on the ladder in his dream, he was able to calculate when Moshiach will arrive, which implies that there were many more rungs on the ladder.

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



Marriage Needs Preparation

The "Longest" Possuk In The Torah

At the conclusion of last week's *parsha*, we were told that Yitzchok and Rivka had commanded their son Yaakov to go to Padan Aram to take a wife. And so Yaakov dutifully obeyed his parents and left his home to begin his journey; no delays, he left immediately. **ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע** – And Yaakov left his father's home in Be'er Sheva, **וילך חרנה**, and he went to Charan.

Now that's a very short *possuk*, but actually we know that it took fourteen years to get to the end of that *possuk*. It took Yaakov fourteen years to fulfill his parents' command! - That *esnachta* on the word Be'er Sheva, that *trop* that means a stop, was a *very big stop*. The way to read the *possuk* is **ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע**, and then you wait fourteen years, and then you complete the *possuk*, **וילך חרנה**, and he went to Charan.

Now the question we should be asking is this. We know that **זריזין מקדימין למצוות** – people who are energetic in serving Hashem, they do a mitzvah as soon as they can (Pesachim 4a). **מצוה הבא לידך אל תחמיצנה** – When the opportunity to do a mitzvah comes your way, don't push it off (Rashi Shemos 12:17). And here's Yaakov, a man full

of energy for the service of Hashem, and without any permission he took fourteen years off from the mission that his parents had sent him to fulfill.

Yaakov Was An "Alter Bachur"

And he was no spring chicken either, Yaakov Avinu. He was already a man in his sixties, an *alter bochur*, and he had to get married and start building a family. And yet we see that he "got lost" on the way for fourteen years. Now we know what happened; we know where he went. He made a detour to the Academy of Shem and Ever (Megillah 17a). It sounds wonderful and idealistic, fourteen years in the yeshiva, but actually it's a big question. Because it isn't mentioned that his parents had commanded him to go there. It's not stated anywhere. It merely states that they told him to go to Charan to find a wife. - So what was Yaakov doing here, disobeying the will of his parents?

So we'll say as follows: Marriage is a remarkable undertaking, it's not easy. And therefore in order to be a successful husband or wife, you must prepare yourself to become an expert in character and attitudes.

By the way, before I continue, I must tell you that I'm speaking to the women as well. Whatever I say for the husband applies to the wife as well. Because we're talking now about the career of two people learning how to live together in harmony, and both men and women have to be prepared for that career. And really every woman is a little *meshuga*. And every man is *meshuga* as well. So how can two *meshuga'im* live with each other unless they are prepared?!

I'm serious! One wrong word can cause trouble forever and ever. In order to assume the role of a husband or wife you need preparation. A cat can become a husband without preparation, but a Jew has to study, and he has to graduate as a certified husband. Because it's such a responsible role that it takes no end of preparation. If he would really put in as much time as he needs, he would go to

the *chuppah* from the old age home! And therefore Yaakov had to prepare himself as best as he possibly could.

Perfection is what we're in this world for. And the purpose of getting married is to help you achieve perfection.

And so what better place in the world for the study of this career of *shleimus*, than the city that was founded with the sole purpose of *shleimus*? And that was the city that Shem built, *Ir-Shalem*, the city that housed within its walls the *yeshiva shel Shem v'Ever*.

And it was in this City of Perfection that this great man established a *yeshiva,* a place to pass down the great ideals, the wisdom of living life successfully. Shem and his son Ever passed down the traditions that had been inherited from Noach, and from the previous generations. There was a great deal of wisdom that had been passed down, and it was to this City of Perfection that the *mevakshei Hashem* turned to receive those great traditions. And it all took place at the Academy of Shem v'Ever. And so you understand already that it was a very remarkable institution, this yeshiva of Shem v'Ever.

The Detour *Was* Kibbud Av

And therefore when Yaakov took a detour from his trip to Charan, it wasn't a detour at all. Because even more vital than the career of marriage itself, are the tools for succeeding in this career. And so when Yaakov Avinu was told to get married, he didn't go directly to Charan, like his parents had commanded. He stopped for fourteen years at this yeshiva of Shem and Ever. And the reason he did this was not because he was disobedient, *but because he was so obedient to his parents* – and so, when they commanded him to get married, he understood that preparing himself at Yeshivas Shem v'Ever was included in their command.

Now fourteen years is a long time. And Yaakov didn't waste any of it. You know that for those fourteen years Yaakov never slept on a

bed; not even on the floor. When he tired, he would lay his head on his elbows and sleep, that's all. That's what *chazal* tell us (Medrash Rabbah 68:11) And then he would get up and continue studying, and perfecting himself, in preparation for the building of our people.

And therefore if we would be able to study along with Yaakov Avinu – even just a little bit – to prepare for our married lives the way Yaakov prepared for his, that would be a great success for us. It would put us on our feet – in situations where many people today are stumbling.

Let's Be Realistic

The truth is that some things have to be studied today that weren't needed in the time of Yaakov Avinu; some things didn't have to be taught at Yeshivas Shem v'Ever, because society hadn't been corrupted like it is today. Western culture has introduced so many falsehoods and foolish ideas into the minds of the youth, that if we want to prepare for marriage today we have to study things that Yaakov didn't need.

So before we begin our trip to the Academy of Shem v'Ever to study along with Yaakov, we'll introduce our topic with a fundamental *yesod* of marriage, and that is to *be realistic*. You need to be realistic if you want to have a successful marriage. Don't expect that in your marriage you're going to have a glorious career of high living, of exciting fun, of endless enjoyment. You must be realistic, which means, don't expect that it's going to be always smiles, and all joy. When a *chosson* looks at his *kallah*, he imagines a lifetime in this emotion that he is experiencing now. And the *kallah*, perhaps, also.

But you have to realize that you're marrying a human being, who has certain elements of greatness in him – every person has greatness in him – but you must expect ordinary characteristics too. You must expect that in certain aspects, it will be quite commonplace, nothing glamorous. When you have to live with a person every day, even at

first if you had a certain admiration, the superficial expectations fly out of the window. Like the world says, "when you marry, romance flies out of the window." And then you begin to settle down, and you begin seeing things that you didn't expect.

And therefore, anybody who marries looking forward to a life of romance will be bitterly disappointed. Because actually there is no romance in married life. And when people marry for unreal and imaginary concepts, they are bound to be disappointed. And that's why many marriages turn out to be unhappy – because it never was going to be what they hoped it would be. The truth is that when people marry they should be ready for hard knocks.

Marriage Is A Roller Coaster

Marriage is like life, and when you enter life, you are going to take it with all its details, with its ups and downs. There is some smooth driving, and sometimes there are crowded highways. And sometimes the road is bumpy and uncomfortable. It's a roller coaster. There will be periods of unhappiness, and times you climb to heights of joy.

There is no such thing as a smooth marriage. The definition of marriage is friction; two personalities, each one with rough edges. And there's no question that there is going to be tests and ordeals ahead. It's very important to keep this in mind because it's a very important principle that many people overlook – be realistic. Don't expect too much. Once a person gets married, he must know that he has to accept everything for better or for worse. Whatever you have, that's yours for life, and make the best of it.

And if you accept that, if you're willing to accept that *marriage is not a bowl of cherries*, then you're ready to prepare for marriage along with Yaakov Avinu.

There's No Opportunity Like Marriage

And so, when looking for the model of how to regard our spouse and how to do it right, we should turn to Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself.

Because we find many times in the Tanach and most prominently in Shir Hashirim that the relationship of Hakodosh Boruch Hu to His people Yisroel is compared to the relationship of a *chosson* and a *kallah*, or a husband and a wife. And that *mashal*, that comparison, is not just a poetic expression. It's for a very important purpose. Because the mitzvah of **והלכת בדרכיו** demands that we walk in His ways, and we learn from the way that Hakodosh Boruch Hu deals with His people how a man should deal with his wife and how a wife should regard her husband.

Our Model For Love

Now, the most basic and fundamental aspect of Hashem's relationship to the Am Yisroel is His love for us. It's repeated again and again in the Torah, Nevi'im and Kesuvim. **אהבתי אתכם אמר השם** – "I love you" says Hashem to us (Malachi 1:2). And that becomes our model for married life.

Love, No Matter What

And therefore, the command "**ואהבת לרעך כמוך**" is one of the most important obligations in married life. And it's made so much more crucial because it's so frequent, the opportunity to fulfill or transgress it is all the time. And so the Jew who wants to serve Hashem, even in a moderate way, must make up his mind that this is going to be a major target of his life's aspiration, to always generate feelings of love for his spouse. When a man gets married, he must make up his mind that *no matter what,* he's going to love his mate, and she should also have that in mind.

And it's the small things, the constant interactions, that are your opportunities for loving your spouse. It requires constant politeness; just like you feel differently when you're asked to do something with the word "Please," so *you* always should do the same. You say, "Chanaleh, could you please hand me this-and-that." And when your wife hands it to you, you say "thank you."

When his wife comes and says, "Chaim, I need money to buy shoes for the children, please." "Please," she says. She's not begging, but she's going out of her way to always be polite. And when he says, "Here it is," she says, "Thank you." Of course it's all superfluous because that's his job, he has to supply that money, and she's going to bring your supper to you. But by saying "please" and "thank you," you are lubricating the relations of life. And therefore, politeness should always reign supreme in the house. Always do things in a way that demonstrates a certain regard for your mate. Of course, you'll tell me you know all about it, it's *d'varim p'shutim*. You know all about it, but are you *doing* it?

Hashem Loves Short Fat People

And I always tell you that one of the most effective ways of achieving this love and loyalty to a spouse, is by saying it with your mouth. **אהבתי אתכם אמר השם** – "I love you *says* Hashem" (Malachi 1:2) He *says* it! And because Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "I love the Am Yisroel" and therefore you must also say "I love my spouse". You see your husband, a fat, old fellow, waddling in the street, short and fat, so you say, "I love that man." Say it even if you don't mean it at first. You have to work on it. And if you do it, little by little, you'll gain that feeling. The fact that he's your husband obligates you to concentrate on him more than on anybody else.

Hashem loves fat, short people! If they are Jews, *shomrei Torah*, He loves them intensely; He loves them more than anything in the world. So the fact that he's your husband, and you know his faults more than anyone else doesn't mean that he's deprived of that right. Hashem loves you despite all your faults as well. And He loves your husband as well despite his faults. And therefore you should love him too, and you should say it too. *Halevai* you should love him a fraction of what Hashem loves him! You see your wife walking in the street, and she just gave you a good tongue lashing when she walked out of the house. You're still angry at her and now you see her

heading down the block with the shopping bags. It's a wonderful opportunity. You should still say, "I love that woman, and I'm being *m'kayeim* **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**." You have to work on it, and Hakodosh Boruch Hu will give you reward by awakening a true love in your heart! And you can help her with the bags as well, no harm.

A husband and wife should be a source of consolation to each other. Life is full of troubles; it's hard to be a woman, it's hard to be a wife and a mother. It's not easy. So when a husband comes home and he says a few kind words, it's like balsam on a wound – and what a tremendous mitzvah! Always try to encourage your wife. Tell her how nice she looks, how nice and clean the house is, tell her how good her cooking is, how clean she keeps the children. When your wife cooks a supper and you say "Chanaleh, it's a delicious supper," do you know how encouraging that is?! You might think it's nothing; but you should know that for her, it's everything.

Don't Pour Salt On The Wounds

Always praise her, always! It costs no money at all, but it's the very best of gifts. Practice praising your wife. Many people don't even think about it at all; it never enters their mind that they have this obligation. It's a *chiyuv* to look for opportunities to encourage and praise your wife as much as possible.

And she should look for opportunities to encourage him. If he's a Kollel man she should praise him, she should make him think that he's a big *lamdan*, in her mind at least. Whatever he is, she thinks he's a star! He should be considered by her an *oived Hashem*. Her words to him should be chosen words, always encouraging him. He comes home from work, he's worn out, he had trouble from competitors, his boss was mean to him, it's not easy to make a living. And so the wife has to encourage him; even a few kind words could be a big *mitzvah*. But suppose she is careless and she lets her tongue wag, and she says things that hurt his feelings; it's salt on the wounds. And the error is not only that they cause *machlokes*, but it's an error

in *nitzchiyus* because it's the great error of not walking in the ways of Hashem.

The Mop In The Crazy House

So let's say you come in from work on *erev Shabbos* and your wife is all discombobulated. The children are running all over the place, the bathtub is overflowing, it's overflowing into the hallway. And she's busy trying to mop the floor at the same time that she's keeping the children away from the oven. And *chas v'shalom* you come in and you say, "What is this? A crazy house?!" Oh no, that's terrible. It's terrible.

You have to come in and say some nice words. "I see you're working hard to bring in *Shabbos kodesh*. Chanaleh, you can't get a bigger mitzvah than that!" or something like that, words of encouragement. Be like Hakodosh Boruch Hu and encourage her.

Who Is Most Important To You?

Every man should be overflowing with praise for his wife. Always tell her how how good she looks. Even when your wife is very old, and she's wrinkled, and she's toothless, make certain you don't acknowledge any change in her appearance. A woman will ask, "Do I have *many* wrinkles?" An old great-grandmother, with a foot in the grave already, looks in the mirror to see if she has another wrinkle. It's important to them. Now, if you're smart enough to say, "You look as nice as you looked when I married you," you're going to get Olam Habah for that.

Now He's Ready For The Chuppah

And now we understand why Yaakov's detour of fourteen years, was anything but a detour. It was there that he accomplished this great preparation for his marriage that would produce the Bnei Yisroel. And that's why when Yaakov came out of Shem v'Ever and he finally finished up this possuk, **וילך חרנה** – He came to Charan, he was full

of knowledge that prepared him for his new career as a husband and father of the Am Yisroel.

And in our lives as well, we are all building our own *beis hamikdash* in our own homes, in our own marriages. And just like Yaakov prepared with great intensity for his marriage, if we were wise, we would do the same.

Now, what we spoke about tonight is only a drop in the bucket of the information a person needs to be successful in marriage; we merely scratched the surface of the great ideals and principles that Yaakov studied for fourteen years in Yeshivas Shem v'Ever. But even this drop in the bucket is enough for us to emulate, and by emulating the path of Yaakov, we are walking in the ways of Hashem and fulfilling **והלכת בדרכיו** all the days of our lives, which is the true secret to a successful marriage.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein Zt'l



"Whether you are going up or down a ladder, you are always looking up. Hashem is on the top of the ladder. You have good days and bad days. You go up the ladder and down the ladder. But always look up and stay focused on Hashem because the entire ladder leans on Him. He is the only stability that we have in life!"

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar



A Contemporary Yosef Mokir Shabbos

As a young bachur in yeshivah ketanah, I was once invited to someone's home for Shabbos. I was vaguely acquainted with my host, a simple, honest, but impoverished Jew replete with yiras Shamayim and sterling middos, who barely eked out a living as a handyman doing odd jobs in the community.

Initially, I politely turned down his kind offer, aware that he was hard- pressed for money and unable to bring myself to take food out of his mouth, but he repeatedly begged me to come and bring a friend along, since he had no guests for Shabbos and what was a Shabbos without guests?

Unable to withstand his entreaties, I accepted, but not before I made one of my yeshivah buddies promise to save me a portion of yeshivah food in case I came back starving.

On Leil Shabbos, my friend and I knocked on our host's door, proud of ourselves for doing this mitzvah. Kiddush, surprisingly, was recited over a bottle of fine wine, and after we bit into the luscious challah, our host's wife served three platters of expensive fish, while our host urged us to taste each one. After the fish, he began singing beautiful zemiros in soulful tunes and spiced the conversation with abundant, rousing divrei Torah. The chicken soup was thick and savory, and the main course featured assorted spicy meats, chicken, and bowls of steaming side dishes, kugels, and vegetables. Our host kept plying us with more and more food until we were sure we would burst!

We thought it was over, but then our hosts brought out roasted liver, and the pungent aroma itself made us feel heady. He offered to serve me, but I insisted I couldn't eat another bite. With a wink, he replied, "The Gemara says [Megillah 7b], Ravcha l'besumei schiach. There's always room for dessert. Just a taste!"

By the end of the seudah, my friend and I were so stuffed we could barely stand, yet our host wouldn't let us go without sending us off with tzeidah laderech, so we'd have "something small" for Shabbos morning.

He escorted us to the door, thanking us effusively for being his guests. Never in my life had I seen so much food at a Shabbos seudah, I staggered home I couldn't help but wonder how he did it. To say that and as he wasn't wealthy was a gross understatement, but maybe his parents were wealthy? Or perhaps he simply concealed his wealth behind his simple demeanour and dress?

The mystery niggled at me all Shabbos. Glimpsing him in shul on Sunday morning, dressed in his simple, faded workman's attire, I couldn't resist. As soon as davening was over, I pulled him aside and, as politely as I could, asked what was likely the most impolite question I'd ever asked anyone in my life.

"How can you afford such a splendid Shabbos seudah with food, wines, and meats fit for a king?"

His answer left me open-mouthed in amazement.

"I'm a simple man, and I work hard throughout the week, scrimping and saving my pennies l'chavod Shabbos. I'm very careful not to waste a single shekel during the week, because I want everything to be for Shabbos. On Thursday, I empty my pockets, without leaving anything for the coming week. Then on Sunday, I start over again.

This past week, I earned a bit more than usual, so I bought an extra type of fish and the roasted liver."

A chill ran up my spine as I regarded this "simple Jew," who was anything but simple, in awe and admiration—a contemporary Yosef Mokir Shabbos! I wondered if he would ever stumble upon a jewel like Yosef in the Gemara....

Seven years later, I discovered that he did. I was attending an event when I spied my old friend the handyman, dressed in fine, expensive at- tire, clear testimony that his financial status had improved. Remembering that long-ago conversation and my subsequent musings, I approached him and asked, "Did you also find the jewel, like Yosef Mokir Shabbos?"

He chuckled good-naturedly. "I didn't find a jewel, but I did stumble across something else. If you remember from your visit, I live on the ground floor of a terraced apartment building, with one wall bordering a mountain. Several years ago, my wife asked me to hang up a picture in the house. I took a nail and started hammering it in, when, to my shock, part of the wall gave way, and I discovered a hollow behind it. Intrigued, I broke the wall large enough to climb inside, discovering a giant empty space in the mountain that's at least three times the size of my house! Apparently, the contractor must have dug the space for construction purposes but then sealed it off with a simple wall.

"Realizing we'd stumbled upon a modern-day diamond mine, we hired workers to clear out debris, and we built several rental apartments in the space. The income from the rent is more than enough to support the family and allow me to stop working and devote my days to limud haTorah and chessed projects!" ~ (Rav Meir Klein)

"Prayer is a longing of the soul. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart."

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita

וַיַּעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וַיִּהְיוּ בְעֵינָיו כְּיָמִים אֲחָדִים בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אֹתָהּ – '***So Yaakov worked for Rachel seven years, but they appeared to him like a few days because of his love for her***.' (29:20)

His longing and importance to get married to Rachel was such that the seven long difficult years seemed to be of a short duration.

Seven years' work by anyone's reckoning, is a very long and extended time. And Yaakov worked very hard by day and by night!

Many ask the question that really the nature of a person should be the opposite – When a person is longing for something, then every minute seems like an hour, and every hour seems like a day etc. Time seems to drag on. And yet here the pasuk says the opposite – that the long period of time appeared to go quickly.

Mashul: A man works in a factory. Let's say that he gets £100 at the end of a day's work, he might think, "I've worked jolly hard all day long, and all I get is £100. However, if he gets £3000 at the end of the day, he may say, "What did I do already, I've only worked for one day, and just look how much money I have earned." - The money he received for the work that he did, will make the effort seem insignificant. - Depending on the prize that a person gets for his efforts, will determine the attitude to the length of time spent.

For Yaakov Avinu to be able to take a wife and build Klal Yisrael with Kedusha, was so valuable for him, that even seven long years seemed like a short time. The amount of work that he had done seemed insignificant in his eyes, for the value of this prize.

This gives us a very important perspective in life. – there are times when our avodas Hashem can be challenging and difficult, but if we would realize the value of the prize, the difficulties would seem insignificant.



Leah Was Commended For Recognizing "I Have Received More Than I Deserve"

Upon the birth of her fourth son, Yehudah, Leah said, "This time I will thank Hashem" [Bereishis 29:35]. Rashi quotes the Rabbinic explanation that she expressed special gratitude because she had now given birth to more than her share of Tribes. "Now that I have received more than my portion, it's time to express my gratitude to G-d".

What is the meaning of the statement that Leah received more than her share? Our Rabbis explain that Leah made a simple mathematical calculation. She divided twelve future tribes by 4 wives, and arrived at the result of 3 tribes per wife. Now that she had her fourth son, she offered praise to G-d. The Rabbis praise Leah for her recognition that she owed a debt of gratitude to the Almighty.

Although Leah's recognition that she owed a debt of gratitude is certainly praiseworthy, this teaching of our Rabbis doesn't seem to make sense. Who deserves more praise — the person who receives his or her proper share and feels indebted to G-d, or the person who receives more than his or her fair share and feels indebted to G-d? Obviously, the first person is more deserving of praise.

I saw a very interesting observation from Rav Dovid Kviat (Maggid Shiur in the Mir Yeshiva, New York): The praiseworthy aspect of Leah's behavior here was that she viewed what she received as "more than her fair share".

It is the nature of human beings to view that which they receive in life as something that they had coming to them. "This is what I deserve." If my friend is earning $30,000 a year and I am earning

half a million dollars a year, it may not be so easy to recognize my great fortune. It is easy to think "I'm smarter than him, I'm more clever than him, I earned this on my own — it was coming to me!"

The novelty of Leah's comment is that we see that a person has the ability to step back, look at a situation objectively and come to the conclusion that "I am getting more than I deserve". This is not our normal tendency. The normal tendency is to view life as either "I am getting less than I deserve" or "I am getting my fair share."

The rare person, who lives their life with the attitude that "I have gotten more than I deserve," is indeed a praiseworthy person.

The Term Brothers Represents Yachas Not Yichus

At the end of the parsha, when Lavan ran after Yaakov and they eventually made a peace covenant with one another, the Torah records: וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְאֶחָיו לִקְטוּ אֲבָנִים, וַיִּקְחוּ אֲבָנִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-גָל - "***Yaakov instructed his brethren: "Gather stones!" So they took stones and made a mound, and they ate there on the mound***." [31:46].

Rashi is bothered by the fact that the Torah says Yaakov instructed his brethren (אֶחָיו). Rashi explains it to mean his sons and says they are called 'brothers' for they were like brothers to him, who would come to the fore in trouble and in case of war against him.

The Medrash Rabbah on which Rashi's comment is based is a bit more explicit. The term "אֶחָיו" in the lexicon of the Chumash is not strictly defined by blood relationship but on commonality. Individuals who mutually admire one another, share values, and come to each other's aid even if it involves risking their lives are called brethren, whether or not in actuality they are truly brothers.

When Yaakov anticipates trouble from Lavan, he called his "brothers" – meaning those who loved him and shared the same goals in life as he did and who were willing to risk their lives for

him. Rav Matisyahu Solomon in paraphrasing this Medrash says "Ben" (son) is a "yichus" (blood relation), "Ach" (brother) is a "yachas" (relationship).

We find the same idea in Parshas Lech Lecha. When Avraham heard that Lot was captured, the pasuk states he heard "that his brother was captured" [Bereishis 14:14]. Of course, Lot was not really his brother – he was a nephew, but since Avraham was prepared to risk his life to rescue Lot, he is called in Biblical lexicon "achiv" (his brother).

The Torah is teaching us how to relate to another Jew. We need to view him and treat him like a brother.

This is what Yaakov meant in our parsha. The relationship that he had with his sons was a relationship of "ach", meaning he knew that he was able to count on them for self-sacrifice and that they were totally committed to a common agenda and common goals.

Analyzing Yaakov's Claim That He Was Lavan's "Brother"

וַיַּגֶּד יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל, כִּי אֲחִי אָבִיהָ הוּא - Yaakov told Rochel that **he was her father's brother,** and that he was Rivka's son; then she ran and told her father." [29:12].

Rashi comments on the implication of the message that "he was her father's brother", when in fact Yaakov was Lavan's nephew, not his brother.

In his second comment, Rashi says that Yaakov was saying, "If he comes for deceit, I am his brother in deceit; but if he is a decent person, I am also the son of Rivka, his decent sister." In other words, apparently Yaakov was telling Rochel that he was prepared to go tit for tat, punch for punch, toe to toe against anything her father Lavan was prepared to throw at him.

This appears to be a very strange comment by Rashi. Baruch Hashem, I have the privilege of teaching young men who are in the stage in life when they are seeking appropriate marriage partners. Many times a young man who is beginning to date comes to me for advice on how to conduct himself on a first date.

The first thing 196erect tell such young men is not to be embarrassed to say, "I need to use the bathroom." After that, I might suggest what to do and what to discuss. I never ever tell a young man, "On the first date, do not ever say to the girl 'your father is a swindler and I can match him in deceitfulness!"

This comment of Rashi is amazing. Yaakov is meeting Rochel for the first time. He has barely had time to say "*Shalom Aleichem*" and the first thing that comes out of his mouth (according to the Medrashic interpretation given by Rashi) is, "I am as big a swindler as your father is!" What is the meaning behind this inexplicable comment?

The other problem with this statement is that if we read the ongoing story, we see how Lavan actually swindled Yaakov repeatedly. Yaakov, in fact, complains later to his wives that Lavan had switched his salary ten times (according to the Medrash it was a lot more than ten times), trying to undercut his advantage each time. The whole time, Yaakov never reacted to Lavan's deception. What happened to his bravado that "I can go toe to toe with your father in deception?"

Yaakov seems to take Lavan's abuse lying down. If I were Yaakov, I would have walked away from Lavan the first time he cheated me. Yaakov stayed in this abusive environment for twenty years, without ever pulling a fast one on his father-in-law in retribution for all of Lavan's trickery. On the contrary, he was an extremely loyal and extremely dedicated employee throughout! Yaakov acted throughout like the "Tam" he was — a naïve *Yeshiva bochur* who was repeatedly manipulated by his uncle/father-in-law. Yaakov's

statement to Rochel that "I am your father's brother in trickery" seems to be nothing more than a bluff.

I heard an amazing interpretation from the current **Tolner Rebbe** of Jerusalem, based on a Gemara [Bava Basra 89b] that discusses the prohibition of making measuring utensils in ways which could lead to deception. The Gemara elucidates; if you make it this way, the seller can cheat the buyer, if you make it this other way, the buyer can cheat the seller. After an extensive technical discussion about the matter, the Gemara states: "Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai says, concerning all of the above, 'Woe to me if I reveal the halacha, and woe to me if I don't reveal the halacha'."

The Gemara explains Rabbi Yochanan's dilemma. If he reveals the details (of what should not be done because it could lead to cheating) it will benefit the thieves (who may learn new ways to cheat); and if he does not reveal it, the thieves will think that the Rabbis are not onto their methods of deception and will continue to try to fool them.

The Gemara then asks what the bottom line was: Did Rabbi Yochanan reveal the halacha or did he not reveal it? The Gemara concludes that he did reveal it, based on the following *pasuk*: "…the ways of Hashem are straight; the righteous will walk in them, and the sinner will stumble over them." [Hoshea 14:10]. This is the nature of Torah. Torah can be a potion of life, or it can be a poison of death. Torah knowledge can be used for righteous purposes, or it can be used for evil purposes. The righteous use their Torah knowledge for righteousness, and the wicked use it for evil.

The Tolner Rebbe notes that Rabbi Yochanan was hesitant to remain silent, lest the thieves think that Torah scholars are naïve and unaware of the tricks of the trade of the wicked. The Tolner Rebbe points out a universal human character trait: When I meet another person, the thing that will impress me most about him

is if I think he understands my business well. If I am in real estate or some other business, yes, I can have respect for the Rav, or the Rosh Yeshiva, or the Rebbe. But if I go into that person and see that he knows real estate just as well as I do, then I have tremendous extra respect and *198erech eretz* for him.

I am greatly impressed when I see someone else who has expertise as great as my own — or perhaps even greater — in a field that I understand well. If a doctor goes into a Rav with a medical *shaylah,* and he sees that the Rav knows medicine as well as he does, he is very impressed with that Rav.

Rabbi Yochanon ben Zakkai was afraid that the swindlers would have no connection whatsoever with the Rabbonim. They would have total contempt for Rabbis who spend their entire time sitting in the Beis Medrash bent over pages of the Talmud. Rabbi Yochanon ben Zakkai said, "I want to show the robbers that I know how to swindle as well as they do. That will impress them. Then they will respect me. We never know. Maybe the swindler will be lost, but if he has *198erech eretz* for the wisdom of *Rabbonim*, maybe it will have a subtle positive impact on his children, and they will come back.

Rabbi Yochanon's message was, "I want to have a connection with every type of Jew — even a thief, even a robber!" The fact that I daven a long *Shmoneh Esrei,* or that I know every Tosfos in Shas will not overly impress a thief. This is not "currency" with which thieves will be overawed. What is "currency" by the thieves? It is when I know the tools of their trade.

What does this teaching in Bava Basra have to do with our parsha?

Rav Chaim Vital writes in the Sefer haGilgulim that Rav Yochanon ben Zakkai was a "Gilgul" of Yaakov Avinu. With this bit of insight, we can better understand the comment of Rashi regarding Yaakov's boast to Rochel.

Yaakov meets Rochel for the first time and tells her, "I am your father's brother in trickery." This is not to say, "I intend to swindle him." Yaakov never swindled Lavan. Yaakov was not the type to swindle. However, Yaakov was telling Rochel, "I want you to know that your father is going to respect me. He is not going to respect me because I learned in the Yeshiva of Shem v'Ever for 14 years without sleeping one night. That does not mean anything to him. Rather, he will be impressed that I am as shrewd and insightful into the ways of thievery as he is. He will respect me, and therefore maybe I will have a chance to have a positive influence on him!"

Yaakov wanted to impress Lavan. That was the hidden message behind "I am his brother." This explains why, throughout the entire parsha, when Lavan tricks Yaakov left, right, and center, Yaakov does not retaliate. "I am his brother in swindling" only means "I know the ways of swindling" — not that I intend to use them. Heaven forbid that I should actually engage in thievery.

The Rambam writes (in Igros HaRambam), "that which our Rabbis interpreted 'I am his brother in deception' only means he could demonstrate it to Lavan once or twice. However, deception becomes addictive. Once someone gets into the practice, it becomes second nature to him. It is a slippery slope. Once someone begins to descend it, it is very hard to stop. Yaakov merely stated that he knew the profession. He never intended to use it. However, Lavan could not stop himself. He was a compulsive swindler who could not act otherwise.

"I am his brother in thievery" does not mean he intended to cheat Lavan. That would be a contradiction to his entire essence. It means, "I know the profession; your father will respect me. I can hopefully have an influence over him, because I am "in charge" when it comes to deception, not your father."

In the Merit of Yaakov's Walking Stick



There is a very fascinating **Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos** in this week's parsha. Before Yaakov went to sleep, he "put the stones under his head." And when he arose "he took the stone from under his head" and made it into a *matzevah*, upon which he poured oil to anoint it as a *mizbayach*.

The Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos ask a simple question: From where did Yaakov obtain the oil? He was in the middle of nowhere. It is not like he could go to the nearest gas station and get a quart of oil. So where did Yaakov obtain this oil?

They answer that Yaakov had a walking stick with him. He had hollowed out the walking stick and filled it with oil. Why? Yaakov had been studying in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever for the previous fourteen years. He learned there the entire night. Chazal say on the words "He slept there in that place" (Bereshis 28:11), that it was only there that Yaakov slept at night, but for the previous fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, he learned the entire night without going to sleep. They did not have electricity in the Yeshiva of Shem v'Ever, so how could Yaakov learn at night? Obviously, he must have learned by candlelight, which requires oil. This, says the Daas Zekeinim, is where Yaakov obtained the oil. The ready supply that he kept in the hollow of his trusty walking stick was available whenever he needed it.

The Daas Zekeinim adds that this was the same supply of oil from which Moshe obtained the *Shemen haMishcha* (oil of anointing) to inaugurate the *keilim* of the*Mishkan*. And it was the same supply of oil that Elisha used, and it was this very *Shemen* that was in the jug

of oil that the Chashmonoim found, which lasted for eight days during the story of the Chanukah miracle.

The sefer Darash Mordechai makes a beautiful observation: In Tefilas Geshem (the prayer for Rain recited on Shmini Atzeres), one of the stanzas is "**זְכוֹר טָעַן מַקְלוֹ וְעָבַר יַרְדֵּן מַיִם** - "Remember (Yaakov Avinu) who took his stick with him and crossed the Jordan's water. At first glance, this seems like a very strange expression. What is so significant about Yaakov's walking stick? Presumably, all desert travelers need a walking stick. Yaakov was not a youngster anymore so he had a walking stick. What is the big deal? Why do we mention Yaakov's stick in Tefilas Geshem?

In light of the comments of the Daas Zekeinim, we can appreciate the special nature of this walking stick. This stick, with its hollowed-out chamber for storing olive oil, enabled Yaakov to learn Torah, day and night, for fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem v'Ever. So we very appropriately say, "*Ribono shel Olam* – remember the Torah of Yaakov Avinu that he learned with self-sacrifice and dedication." That is the "**טָעַן מַקְלוֹ וְעָבַר יַרְדֵּן מַיִם**"

Lavan Crosses Yaakov's Red Line by Calling Him a Thief

Yaakov works for Lavan for many years. Lavan tried to steal him blind. Finally, Yaakov is given a message from the *Ribono shel Olam* that it was time to leave so he told his wives, "We need to get out of here!" Yaakov leaves with his family. Lavan realizes that his *terafim* (idols) are missing and chases after Yaakov. Lavan catches up with him and accuses him: "Why did you steal my gods?"

Finally, Yaakov gets angry at his father-in-law and lets him have it: "…What is my transgression? What is my sin, that you have pursued me? When you rummaged through all my things, what did you find of all your household objects? Set it here before my brethren and your brethren, and let them decide between the two of us." [31:36-37]

He goes on to movingly describe his own devotion and dedication to his job in the employment of Lavan, and how Lavan took every opportunity to detrimentally switch his wages and steal from him.

Think about this. Lavan has been cheating Yaakov and giving him a hard time for twenty-plus years. On the night of Yaakov's wedding, Lavan switches daughters on him. Yaakov woke up the next morning and it does not say he lost his temper. All the years that Lavan swindled his son-in-law, it never says that Yaakov got angry at him or expressed resentment. Here, at the end of the parsha, finally "*Va'Yichar Yaakov*" (Yaakov became angry). If it would have been you or me, we would say this is a buildup of twenty years of frustration. It was the straw that broke the camel's back, and Yaakov finally lets his father-in-law have it, like he should have done 20 years earlier.

Why, over here, does Yaakov finally get angry and let loose with a long *shmooze* which Lavan clearly deserved a long time prior to this incident? Why here? Why now?

Rav Yosef Salant, in his sefer Be'er Yosef, makes a beautiful observation. Until now, it was personal – between me (Yaakov) and you (Lavan). The switching of the daughters, the financial trickery—this was all personal and Yaakov was prepared to deal with it on his own. "But when you bring all of your men and you accuse me of 'Why did you take my gods?' you are calling me a thief in front of all of these people! This is a *Chilul Hashem*! The *Gentiles* will think - 'Yaakov is a *Ganaff* '. Here I draw the line. This is it!"

Yaakov protests that this is an accusation which goes to the heart of his personality. "I am Mr. *Emes L'Yaakov*. I will not tolerate this *Chilul HaShem*you are falsely creating by accusing me of stealing from you." Therefore, here he explodes in anger and sets the record straight. "There is one thing I am not. I am not a thief!"

A Ladder Is Perfect Representation of the Jewish People

The pasuk says, "And Yaakov left Beer Sheva and he went to Charan…" Yaakov had a dream about a ladder whose feet were on the earth and which stretched all the way up to the heaven.

The Medrash says that when the verse refers to the ladder "emplanted on the earth" it refers to the fact that Yaakov was shown Korach about whom it is written, "and the earth opened its mouth (to swallow Korach)". The Medrash goes on to say that when the pasuk says that the head of the ladder reached the heaven, it refers to the fact that Yaakov was shown Moshe about whom it is written "Come up to HaShem in Heaven."

What does this Medrash mean? Rav Mordechai Ilan comments that what G-d showed Yaakov was the essence of the nation who would descend from him. Klal Yisrael is like a ladder.

The Talmud in Megilah says, "This nation is compared to the dust and compared to the stars — when they go down they descend to the dust; but when they go up they ascend all the way to Heaven." A ladder is the perfect representation of the Jewish people. No one ever remains standing on a ladder. It is either used to go up or to go down. People sit on chairs, on sofas, or beds. Those are pieces of furniture used for stationary positioning. No body ever uses a ladder for simply standing.

That is what the Jewish People are all about. We are a nation that cannot remain stagnant. Either we will ascend and achieve wondrous heights or we will go in the opposite direction — to the dust!

This is what the Medrash means by saying that G-d showed Korach and Moshe to Yaakov. They were the two ends of the spectrum. On the one hand there was a person who was consumed with jealousy and what was his end? "The earth opened its mouth…" Because he was not ascending, he descended to the greatest depths possible. On the other hand, there was a Moshe Rabbeinu [our teacher], who

demonstrated the far outer limits of what a human being is capable of achieving.

There is no standing in the middle. Stagnation itself is descent. Klal Yisroel (and indeed life in general) is a ladder with feet on the ground and the top reaching toward the heavens. It is up to the individual to decide which direction he will be heading — up toward Heaven or down to the greatest depths. This was the dream that Hashem showed Yaakov about his future nation.

The Simile of the Dust of the Earth

At the beginning of the Parsha, Hashem blesses Yaakov with the words "I am Hashem, G-d of Avraham your father and G-d of Yitzchak; the ground upon which you are lying, to you will I give it and to your descendants. Your offspring shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out powerfully westward, eastward, northward, and southward…" [Bereishis 28:13-14].

The simple understanding of the blessing "Your offspring shall be as the dust of the earth" is that Yaakov's descendants should be so plentiful that their numbers will be comparable to the dust of the earth. The Medrash, however, sees in these words more than just a blessing of being plentiful and bountiful. Out of all the similes that one might pick, the terminology "like the dust of the earth" is somewhat peculiar.

This is different than the blessing elsewhere that we should be "like the sand of the sea" (k'chol haYam) [Breishis 32:13]. The phrase "k'afar ha'Aretz" literally means like the dust of the ground. The dust of the ground is that which we walk on. Is it not peculiar that Jews are blessed by being told that they will be like the dust that people trample?

There are so many more picturesque similes to use (as we find elsewhere). "Like the stars in Heaven" [Bereishis 22:17] is a majestic

comparison. Stars are unreachable. They are beautiful. They sparkle. "As many as the stars in Heaven" is a very inspiring and poetic blessing. But "k'afar ha'Aretz" is almost like saying "you should be like dirt." Is this a blessing?

Even the expression "k'chol haYam" — like sand of the sea — seems more appropriate. In our minds, we do not think of the sand on the seashore as something we trample upon. We associate sand of the sea with beautiful white sandy beaches. Even sand has quite a different connotation than "you should be like dust."

The Medrash explains the very powerful significance of this choice of words. This is more than just a blessing of multitudes. The blessing of "k'afar ha'Aretz" represents the history of the Jews. Everybody tramples over the dust of the earth, but in the end the dust of the earth always remains on top. That same dust ultimately covers those who trample it.

"From dust you are taken and to dust you will return" [Bereishis 3:19]. In the final analysis, the dust of the earth is always on top. This is the analogy and the blessing of "Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth." Yaakov is told that his children will be trampled upon and spat upon, like the dust. But in the end, like the dust, they will remain on top.

Tosfos suggests the very idea introduced by the Medrash above: Just like dust (afar) is never destroyed and always remains, we pray that our descendants should always remain and not be destroyed.

We express this aspiration with the words "may my soul be like dust to everyone." That which Hashem promised Yaakov collectively for his descendants, we request on an individual basis as well.

Never let your sense of morals get in the way of doing what's right.

The Twelve Stones Become One: Inverted Symbolism?

In Parshas Vayetzei, Yaakov took "from the rocks of the place". Rav Yehuda teaches in the Medrash that Yaakov took 12 stones, symbolic of the Almighty's decree that the Jewish people would be founded based on a family consisting of 12 Tribes. Yaakov said to himself, "My grandfather Avraham was not able to fulfill this decree; my father Yitzchak was not able to fulfill this decree. If these 12 stones that I am placing under my head will merge into a single stone, I will take it as a Divine Sign that I will be able to fulfill this decree." In the morning, when Yaakov saw that the 12 stones had indeed merged into one, he knew that he would be the progenitor of a single nation emerging from a family of 12 sons.

Rav Simcha Schepps, z"l, asks a question on this incident. It would have been more logical to request a symbolic sign that he would be the father of a 12-tribe nation by taking a single stone and having it turn into 12 stones by the next morning. Yaakov's symbolism seems counter-intuitive. Twelve stones joining to form one stone appears to symbolize just the reverse of the sign he was looking for.

Rav Simcha Schepps answers his question by citing a second Medrash. When G-d told Avraham "I will make you into a great nation" [Bereishis 12:2] Avraham asked Him (according to the Medrash) "but you already have 70 nations who are descended from Noach, what will be so special about another nation?" The Almighty answered Avraham — "The nation that will descend from you is the nation about whom it will be said "For which is such a great nation?" (ki mi goy gadol) [Devorim 4:7] – that is the nation that will emerge from you."

What is the meaning of "goy gadol" (literally, big nation)? The biggest "goy gadol" in the world today is the Chinese. There are more Chinese in the world than any other people. The second largest nationality is the Indians. There are approximately 12 million Jews in the world. Never have we ever been the "goy gadol". So what is

the interpretation of the aforementioned Medrash? What is the nature of this peculiar dialog between Avraham and the Almighty?

The answer is that there is a special connotation to the world "gadol". "Gadol" does not mean 'big' as in numerically large. **Rav Dessler** points out that the interpretation of "gadol" is revealed to us by its first appearance in the Torah [Bereishis 1:16] "es haMaor haGadol" (the great light, referring to the sun). "Gadol" means the ability to give to others. The sun is not called "gadol" because it is so big. The sun is called "gadol" because it provides light and heat for the entire universe.

Likewise, when Moshe Rabbeinu tells G-d "You have begun to show "Gadlecha" to your servant" [Devorim 3:24] what does "Gadlecha" mean? Rashi explains in Parshas V'Etchanan "this refers to the Attribute of your Goodness" (zu midas Tuvecha). The Almighty is the ultimate Giver.

Similarly, when we praise G-d in Shmoneh Esrei in the expression "haKel haGadol" the word Gadol does not mean "big", it means He is the Master of Kindness and Goodness. Another similarity is the meaning of "and Moshe became a Gadol and went out to see his brethren's suffering" [Shemos 2:11]. Since Moshe was a "gadol" he wanted to become aware first hand of how his brethren were suffering and see how he might be able to help them.

The technical definition of "gadol" is the capacity to do for others, to help others, to be concerned about others. When we talk about an "Adam Gadol" (a person who is a gadol), we are not speaking merely about erudition. It is not merely defining someone who knows the entire Torah. Every Gadol who we can think of was a person that was always concerned about the community. That is the definition of a Gadol.

Now we understand the dialog between Avraham and G-d. There are plenty of nations in the world. There are 2 billion Chinese and a billion Indians. However, G-d promised Avraham that he would make him

into a nation that is "gadol", meaning a nation of people that care about others and have the capacity to give.

So too Yaakov Avinu says, "If I take 12 stones and they become one, this symbolizes a nation that has unity amongst themselves." If there is unity between people (achdus), the members of this nation are not just concerned about themselves but they are concerned about others as well. When people are only into themselves, there is disunity. There is no achdus.

Yaakov knew that the appropriate sign that he would be the progenitor of the "Goy Gadol" promised to Avraham is for him to take 12 stones that would turn into one, demonstrating this property of unity and the capacity for caring for one another.

You've Got To Have Heart

When Yaakov first arrived in Aram Naharaim, the following incident occurred. "And he saw, and behold, there was a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lay there beside it, for from that well they would water the flocks, and the stone over the mouth of the well was large." [Bereishis 29:2] Yaakov came upon this scene in the middle of the day. All the shepherds were standing around with the sheep. Yaakov inquires why they are all there in the middle of the day. He tells them that they should give the sheep to drink and go out to graze them in the pasture. Rashi elaborates that Yaakov told them that they were not doing the job that they were hired to do. They were supposed to by grazing sheep – not sitting around by the well.

Picture that scene! Now picture the following scene…

One of us passes by a construction site. It is one o'clock in the afternoon. There are a bunch of bricklayers that are supposed to be laying brick. They are sitting around talking, idling away their time. We go over to them and say "Guys, this is not right. It is the middle

of the afternoon. You should not be sitting around, you should be laying bricks!" Just try that one time! Anyone who has ever wondered what mortar tastes like between his teeth should try that — he will find out very quickly.

But here, Yaakov, despite being a newcomer to town, immediately starts lecturing the shepherds on proper work ethics. The interesting thing is that they accepted it from him. They started explaining the special circumstances, etc. How did Yaakov accomplish that?

There is one word in the pasuk [verse] that explains how Yaakov was able to accomplish that. "And Yaakov said to them: 'My BROTHERS (ACHAI), from where do you come?'" [29:4]. In these few words, our patriarch Yaakov was able to convey his love for every human being. If one can convey that emotion to people, it will be possible to give 'mussar' [chastisement] that they will accept.

People will not accept 'mussar' when they feel "What business of yours is it what I am doing or not doing?" But if one can convey a sincere honest feeling of brotherhood and friendship, then one can get away with saying anything and people will accept it. They recognized that for Yaakov, "My brothers" was not a figure of speech – he meant it. That was his ability – to demonstrate to people that he was sincerely concerned about their welfare. Once the shepherds felt that, they accepted whatever he had to say.

I recently read a story about the **Ponevitzer Rav**, (R. Yosef Kahaneman, 1886-1969). Rav Kahaneman had a meeting with a certain wealthy individual at 3:00 in the afternoon. The Rav had tried to set up an appointment and the person promised him exactly 15 minutes between 3:00 and 3:15. The Ponnevitzer Rav was driven to the businessman's office building. To make a long story short, they got lost along the way, and when they pulled up to the building at two minutes before three, there were no parking spaces available.

Clearly, if they started looking for parking in the middle of downtown, it could be 3:15 before they would get into the building.

There was only one available space in the parking lot, but it had a sign "Reserved for the President". The driver was hesitant, but the Ponevitzer Rav instructed him "Pull in over there." The driver protested, "But that's the man's parking spot." The Rav responded, "Trust me. Pull in over there."

They ascended up the elevator, they made it to the office at 3:00 on the nose. The Ponnevitzer Rav was in the middle of his pitch to the President of the company, when an aide suddenly burst into the office and said, "Do you know that these Rabbis parked in your parking spot?" The aide was furious at the Chutzpah of the rabbis.

The Ponnevitzer Rav turned to the aide and said "Reserved? Nothing in this world is reserved. Everything in this world is a gift. If you need it, then it is yours to have. G-d gives you things that you need for a certain amount of time. He can take it away from you. He can give it to your children. He does not have to give it to your children. Nothing in this world is reserved! Not his parking spot, not his money, not his health – it is all a gift. We are just guardians of the gift. When we have a gift, we are supposed to do what G-d wants with it. Nothing is reserved."

The wealthy man looked at the Ponevitzer Rav and smiled. He then wrote out a check. The Ponevitzer Rav went over to him and kissed him, like he did with so many Jews. His words were accepted.

I wonder to myself, what if I would try such a stunt? What if I would park in the man's parking spot, and then lecture him that nothing is reserved? He would make me pay for the parking spot, instead of writing out a check!

How did Rav Kahaneman get away with it? The answer is that for anyone who knew the Ponevitzer Rav, of Blessed Memory, this would not be a question. His warmth, his friendship and his concern shone

through. People accepted mussar from him, because they knew that the man was genuine. They knew there was real concern for their welfare.

When people feel "My brothers" (achai), then they will accept real mussar. The problem is that we who give mussar do not feel the "Achai" in our hearts. We do not feel the kinship and concern. If we would, we could say anything to anybody, and they would accept our words.



The parsha begins with Yaakov leaving Be'er Sheva and going to Haran. It continues by saying, "**ויפגע במקום**" meaning that Yaakov "encountered the place." Rashi explains that as well as its simple meaning, **ויפגע** can also be understood as an expression of prayer. From here our Rabbis learned that Yaakov instituted ma'ariv, just as Avraham had instituted shachris and Yitzhak had instituted mincha.

This Rashi deserves some explanation. Firstly, why was Yaakov, of all the Avos, the one who merited the establishment of the night prayer? Also, how did Rashi understand "encountering" to mean prayer? Prayer is so lofty. How can Rashi make it as casual as "encountering"? You can't just happen to "bump into" G-d!

The reason that Yaakov Avinu is associated especially with ma'ariv, the night prayer, was because his life in particular was about connecting to G-d even in the darkest of times. Yaakov had to flee from his family, deal with Lavan harasha, his daughter was attacked, his wife died in childbirth, his son was lost for many years, etc.

Additionally, during Yaakov's life, his nation suffered greatly, going into the exile in Egypt that brought about its enslavement.

During such difficult times, it could seem that G-d was trying to keep His distance from him. Yaakov Avinu teaches us that even a person in such circumstances can cry out and reach G-d. This is why the Torah uses the words, "and he encountered." A person can connect to G-d whenever he wants. Even when G-d seems to hide Himself, a Jew can still bond intimately with his Maker. This is the essence of ma'ariv.

Throughout history, Jews have cried out to G-d. There is a story of how, during the Spanish Inquistion, a man lost his entire family and his whole estate. He had to flee his home and hide in the forest. At one point, he got up and poured out his heart to G-d. He said, "Oh G-d! You have taken away my wife, You have taken away my children, You have taken away my parnassa… You've taken everything from me! But one thing You can't take… The connection I have to You!"

This is our inheritance from Yaakov Avinu. A Jew, wherever he may be, no matter who he is, and at any time, with any problem he may have, can just turn to G-d, with sincerity and with the knowledge that Hashem is there to help him, and he will certainly be heard. As Dovid HaMelech wrote in Tehillim, "Close is Hashem to all those who call Him, to anyone who calls to Him in truth."

May we all take advantage of our powerful inheritance from Yaakov Avinu to call to G-d whenever we're in trouble!

"Our friends do not always need to receive advice. Often, they only need an attentive ear to listen to them, with a strong hand to support them, and an open heart to understand them." ~ Lubavitcher Rebbe, Reb Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

עם אשר תמצא את אלהיך לא יחיה...ולא ידע יעקב כי רחל גנבתם 32:31

"With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live, and Yaakov did not know that Rochel stole them."

Lavan accused Yaakov Avinu of stealing his Avodah Zara, his gods. Yaakov denies stealing them, and declares that wherever Lavan will find his gods, the one who took them shall not live. The Posuk then continues to say that Yaakov was unaware that his wife, Rochel Imeinu, was the one who stole them.

Rashi says that it was from this curse that Rochel Imeinu died. Avrohom Avinu destroyed the gods of his father, Terach, and we do not see any harm befalling him as a result of his actions. What was improper about Rochel Imeinu's act of stealing her father's gods that caused her death? The following Divrei Torah will expound on this topic, and perhaps support the P'shat offered in the closing paragraph.

עם אשר תמצא את אלהיך לא יחיה 32:31 – משכיל לדוד .

Yaakov said that one who stole the gods would not live. Had Yaakov said that the stealer would "die", Rochel would have died instantly. Rather Yaakov said that the stealer shall not live, which implies that the perpetrator would die in the near future, but not immediately. Therefore, Rochel died on the road.

עם אשר תמצא את אלהיך לא יחיה 32:31 - מדרש הגדול

Yaakov said that the perpetrator should not live for he did not know that Rochel was the one who stole them. That which comes out of the mouth of a Tzaddik is as if it came from Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and therefore death was decreed upon Rochel. Rochel was pregnant at the time with Binyamin and therefore did not die immediately. Bereishis 35:18

ויהי בצאת נפשה כי מת As soon as Rochel gave birth to Binyamin, she died.

ספר החסידים- Rochel Imeinu died on the way because of Yaakov Avinu's curse. What did Rochel Imeinu do that was improper that she should deserve to die? The great Tzaddik, Yaakov Avinu was available to her. While she believed that what she was doing was virtuous, she should have asked Yaakov if she should take Lavan's Avodah Zara. When there is a wise and pious individual available, one should always seek his advice.

זוהר- If a Tzaddik utters a curse, although he does not mean it, nonetheless, the Satan takes those words and uses it to prosecute the individual who was cursed. We learn from this that one should never say that which will give an opening for the Satan to utilize in order to prosecute another.

מעין בית השואבה - Rochel knew that even after she stole hers father's Avodah Zara, he could have easily obtained more Avodah Zara. If so, what did she hope to accomplish by stealing his Avodah Zara? Rochel stole the Avodah Zara so that there should at least be a short period of time that her father would not serve Avodah Zara. She knew her father had some good character traits and hoped that they would overcome his evil traits. A life without Avodah Zara gave her father a chance for Hakodosh Boruch Hu to speak to him. During that short period of time that he did not serve Avodah Zara, he was Zoche to have Hakodosh Boruch Hu speak to him. Hakodosh Boruch Hu told him not to chase Yaakov. Unfortunately, Rochel was mistaken, as her actions did not put him on the proper path of Avodas Hashem.

מעין בית השואבה - **The Zohar Hakodosh** says that Rochel was punished for causing her father anguish. Why was she punished for causing pain to her father, while Avrohom Avinu destroyed his father's Avodah Zara, presumably causing him anguish, and we do not see that Avrohom was punished for it? Destroying Avodah Zara is a

Mitzvah, and it supersedes the Mitzvah of honoring one's parents. The difference between Avrohom and Rochel was that Avrohom destroyed the Avodah Zara, while Rochel only took them. Had Rochel destroyed it, she would not have been punished for it.

Bas Ayin



In honour of the **Bas Ayin's** yahrtzeit (12th of Kislev) let's take a few moments to tell some praises of this great tzaddik: The Bas Ayin arrived in Tzefas on Rosh Chodesh Elul. His original plan was to move to Yerushalayim immediately after Simchas Torah. But on Hoshanah Rabba he heard a woman tell her son, "Yerachmiel! Close the roof of the succah because tomorrow we will say Geshem and pray for rain. It will certainly rain and everything will get wet." The Bas Ayin said, "I see there is deep and sincere emunah here in Tzfas, therefore I don't want to leave the city."

The Bas Ayin was in Tzefas by the terrible earthquake of 5597/1836; almost a thousand people perished. The earthquake happened when he was in his beis medresh, together with his community. He told everyone to come to his side of the beis medresh. They did so, and then the roof over the vacated half of the beis medresh collapsed. The Bas Ayin threw himself to the ground, and prayed.

Afterwards, people asked him why he needed to pray down on the ground and he replied, "I saw that the stones were falling

horizontally, and not downwards. This meant that the samech mem (the Satan) was executing this disaster. When this occurs, the only protection is total humility. That's why I fell to the ground." (Today, when one visits the Bas Ayin's beis medresh, he will see that the ceiling has two levels. This is from the earthquake, when half the ceiling collapsed.) When one studies the sefer Bas Ayin, he will see that the primary theme repeated throughout the sefer is humility.

The Bas Ayin is buried in a cave, in the old cemetery of Tzfas. To come to his kever, one needs to bow down. Tzaddikim said that this exemplifies the Bas Ayin's humble ways; one must bow down to come to his grave.

The Bas Ayin teaches that the Chanukah menorah is placed below ten tefachim, because this requires a person to bend in order to light it, and if one wants miracles, he has to be ready to lower himself.

The Hardships are for our Benefit



The Chofetz Chaim, in his sefer, Machanah Yisrael, relates the following mashal: There was once a wealthy landowner poritz) who owned many taverns. He rented them out for three hundred rubles a month.

Once, he had to travel, so he appointed a manager to run his estates and to collect the rent for him. This manager was a rasha and immediately raised the rent to five hundred rubles a month. One Yid, who was renting an inn, tried very hard to raise the

money, but at the end of the month he only had 480 rubles. He gave them to the manager, promising that the following month, he would add the twenty rubles that were missing. But the manager didn't forgive him. "For each ruble that is missing, you will receive a lashing", and he hit him with a whip twenty times. The Yid returned home, crying and bruised. His wife asked him what happened, and he told her the entire story. Eventually, the wealthy poritz returned. The Yid immediately went to him and told him how he suffered while he was away. "The manager raised the price to 500 ruble, and he beat me twenty times, because I paid 480…" The poritz was very upset when he heard this, and he said, "For each beating, I will obligate the manager to pay you one hundred ruble. The manager owns a large territory in the city that is worth four thousand rubles. You can have half of it."

That night the Yid returned home crying. His wife asked him, "What happened? Did the manager beat you again?" "No. This time I am crying that he didn't hit me more. If he would have hit me another twenty times, the manager's entire estate would be mine." Whenever we suffer, there is always a purpose. As the Midrash teaches, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu says, "When I give you suffering in this world, remember how much goodness I am giving you in Olam Haba." There are hardships, but they are always from heaven, and always for our benefit. One of the benefits of hardships is that after the problem passes, Hashem will always send us great blessings.

In this week's parashah, Leah said that she bore children as a result of her suffering. When Reuven was born Leah said, "She called his name Reuven, because…Hashem saw my affliction…" (29:32). When Shimon was born Leah said, "Hashem heard that I was hated, so he also gave me this child…" (29:33).

She attributed the good that she received to her suffering. This is a pattern, which Hashem placed into the world: after suffering,

come special blessings. The Torah tells us, "Rachel saw that she wasn't having children, and she was jealous of her sister. She said to Yaakov, 'Give me children, or I am like the dead.' "Yaakov became angry with Rachel, and he said, 'Am I in Hashem's place, who refrained you from [from bearing] children?" (30:1-2).



Bederech tzachus, **Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zy"a** said that Rachel wanted to get Yaakov Avinu angry. She saw that Leah was having children due to her suffering, so she aroused Yaakov's anger upon herself, so she would also merit having children.



This was said bederech tzachus (not an actual explanation, rather an enchanting way to remember that after hardships the blessings come) however, we will now share a true explanation, written by the **Beer Mayim Chaim**.

He teaches that Rachel did indeed suffer shame, and in this merit, she had children. The Beer Mayim Chaim writes, "Chazal tell us that yesurim (strife) cleanses a person from sin. There is no greater yesurim than being disgraced… Rachel thought, 'The maidservants [Bilhah and Zilpah] are having children, while I remain barren." As a result of Rachel's shame, she gave birth to Yosef, because after one suffers from shame and disgrace, good things happen to him.

Tefillos from the Heart



Someone came to **Rebbe Yisrael of Koznitz zy"a**, placed a gold coin on the table for a pidyon and said, "Someone stole a lot of money from me." "I promise, I didn't do it," the Rebbe of Koznitz replied. The man placed another gold coin on the table and told some more details about his misfortune. The rebbe said, "I need fifty gold coins." The Yid turned to his wife and said, "Let's get out of here. We will pray ourselves and Hashem will help us." The rebbe said, "You've just received your salvation." Because there is nothing greater than a tefillah which comes from one's heart. It is important to go to tzaddikim, to ask them to pray for us, as the Gemara teaches, "When someone has an ill person in his home, he should go to a chacham, and the chacham will pray for him" (Bava Basra 116). But we must know that an even stronger form of tefillah, are the tefillos which emerge from the depths of each person's own heart.

The Noem Elimelech (Haazinu) writes, "Tzaddikim have the ability to bring you parnassah and other bounties with their prayers and with their pure words. Certainly then, this will also occur when one prays from the depths of his own heart."

The Ramban writes that when "Yaakov became angry at Rachel and said, 'Am I G-d who prevented you from having children' (30:2) the tzadekes (Rachel) saw that she couldn't rely on Yaakov's tefillos, so she began to pray herself… and Hashem heard her prayers' (30:22)." Because when one prays, from the depths of his heart, his tefillos are answered.

Rashi writes, "The stones were fighting with each other. One stone said, 'The tzaddik should place his head on me,' and another stone said, 'He should place his head on me.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu immediately turned them all into one stone…" (28:11).

The Vilna Gaon zy"a asks, if a miracle was going to occur anyway – that all stones became one – why couldn't a greater miracle happen, and have the stones turn into a comfortable cushion? The answer is that softness doesn't emerge from a dispute.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



When people are going through hard times, they sometimes ask, why doesn't Hashem save me? Did He forget me? Where is Hashem when I need Him? They forget that Hashem is the one who is creating the hard times. They shouldn't ask "where is Hashem?" because Hashem is the One who did it.

This simple and obvious concept is surprising. We are so aware of Hashem's compassion, that it is hard for us to imagine that the hardships come from Him too. He is our source of salvation; how can we consider Him the cause of the hardships? But the truth is that everything, even hard times, comes from Hashem. Surely everything that happens is for the good, and Hashem loves us and doesn't want us to suffer.

But there are times when we deserve and need castigation, for reasons that He knows. Even at these times, Hashem cares for us and minimizes the punishment to the lowest degree possible. But it

is a mistake to ask, "Where is Hashem?" Because who gave us these troubles, if not Hashem?





Reb Michoel Ber Weismandl zt"l, who saved many people from the holocaust, had an idea which would enable him to save thousands more, but there were those who prevented him (as is sadly known). Reb Michoel Ber was devastated and he poured out his broken heart to **Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch zy"a** (the Maharyatz).

The rebbe listened in silence and let Reb Michoel Ber say everything that was on his heart. Then the rebbe said one statement, which Reb Michoel Ber later admitted, changed his entire outlook. The rebbe spoke slowly, pausing between each word, so Reb Michoel Ber would grasp the message fully. The rebbe said, "And… who… did… all… of… this?" This too was from Hashem. Those people who prevented the salvation were certainly punished, because they had free choice to do better, but the results couldn't have been changed.

Ultimately, Hashem decided (for reasons that are beyond our perception) that what happened, needed to occur – as devastating as it may be. Yaakov Avinu worked loyally for seven years to marry Rachel, but at the last moment Lavan cheated him, and brought Leah to the chuppah. Yaakov was very upset and said to Lavan, "mah zos

asisa li? Halo veRachel avaditi imach velamah rimisani — what did you do to me? I worked for Rachel! Why did you deceive me?" (29:25).

It seems that Yaakov had all the reason in the world to be upset (especially since this deceit resulted in many spiritual tragedies, as the holy sefarim tell us) nevertheless, the **Yid HaKadosh of Peshischa zy"a** says that Yaakov erred when he complained. He should have known that what happened was from Hashem. This doesn't exonerate Lavan in any way. He was certainly punished for his deceitfulness, but we must know that everything that happens is from Hashem.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

לב:א- וישכם לבן בבקר וינשק לבניו ולבנותיו ויברך אתהם

And Lavan arose early in the morning; he kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them (32:1) Why does the Torah tell us about the blessing of Lavan to his children? What value can there be to the blessing of the wicked Lavan, father of fakers? **The Sforno** states: "Our Chachamim have said (Megillah 15a), "Even the blessing of a common man should not be treated lightly.'



The Torah tells us of Lavan's blessing to his daughters to teach us that a father's blessing is, without a doubt, given with all his soul and is worthy to be accepted, reflecting as it does the 'image of Hashem' within the father who blesses, similar to 'That my soul may bless you'." This is to say, that a father's blessing, even if he is as wicked as Lavan, has a purpose,

for a father blesses with all his soul and the power to bless is given by the One Who created him in the image of Hashem and it is effective. Even Eisav when he brought the food to his father said: 'So that your soul will bless me' for he knew that the blessing of a father comes from his soul, and therefore it has the power to take effect.

Indeed, there are those parents that have the custom to bless their children on Shabbos night. In connection to this **Rebbe Dovid Frankel** would show the words of this Sforno as brought in the sefer Zechor L'Dovid.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rabbi Eli Mansour once related that long ago on Shabbos nights, **the Arizal** used to attend a Parshah Shiur given by the **Alshich Ha'kadosh**. One of the things the Alshich is known for is his beautiful commentary on Chumash. That evening, the Alshich explained from the Pesukim that Lavan tricked Yaakov Avinu in not less than 100 ways, and he actually went through each way that he tricked Yaakov! Each time the Alshich said over one of Lavan's tricks, the Arizal uncharacteristically laughed. After a while, someone asked the Arizal why he was laughing. The Arizal explained that Lavan himself had walked in to hear the Alshich's Shiur and is sitting with us. Each time the Alshich states how Lavan tricked Yaakov, Lavan laughs out loud and says, "That is true! It's amazing that the Alshich knows that!"





Rav Ozer Alport - Parsha Points to Ponder

After Rochel attempted to express the depth of her pain at her inability to conceive children, saying that without kids she was like a dead person (30:1), Yaakov became angry at her. What was wrong with Rochel's expression of pain that upset Yaakov? (Even Yisroel)



Dayan Yisroel Yaakov Fisher writes that Yaakov was upset at Rochel's statement that if she was unable to have children, she considered herself like a dead person, which revealed that she believed that the entire purpose of her existence was to bear offspring. This was incorrect, because, the purpose of a woman's creation is not solely to have children, but to perfect herself and to assist her husband in reaching his own spiritual completion. Because Rochel trivialized her true essence and life mission, Yaakov responded sharply to her statement.

Yaakov Avinu is famous for his middas emes, his attribute of truth. He revealed this deep truth that no matter what happens with a Yid, Hashem is with him and listens to his prayers and cares for his needs.

Torah U' Tefilah- Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

While on his way to Lavan, Yaakov stops to sleep, and he dreams of what is referred to as his ladder. When he awakes, he refers to the area in which he slept as 'the Gates of Heaven' (28:17). Why does he not call it 'the doorway to Heaven'?

The Netziv differentiates between a gateway and a doorway. A doorway is an entry way available only to a few exclusive people who are given access to the home behind it. A gateway is an entrance way available to all who want to enter. The Gates of Heaven are open to all who would like to enter!

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

זוהר חדש –שכרך הרבה מאד . Your (Avrohom Avinu) reward is very great." Hakodosh Boruch Hu told Avrohom that his reward was very great for he was the first one to know Hashem, and spread His Name throughout the world. Hakodosh Boruch Hu took one letter from His Name and placed it on Avrohom's head.

As we learned in Megilah 15b– "*In the future, Hakodosh Boruch Hu will place a crown upon each and every Tzaddik in Olam Habah.*" The letter placed upon the Tzaddik's head is the letter ה ,the letter with which the world was created, as it says in Menochos 29b – Bereishis 2:4 בה–בהבראם with the letter ה, Hakodosh Boruch Hu created the world. The letter ה was added to Avrohom's name, which made him complete with that special letter from Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

"Our limited minds cannot fully understand Hashem's ways, but with simple faith, we can trust that everything He does is for our good. In time, we'll see that even challenges were for our benefit." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

ברכת הרי"ח - ויקח מאבני המקום וישם מראשתיו 28:11 We can explain this Posuk based upon a **Zohar Chadash** in Parshas Lech Lecha on the words, **שכרך הרבה מאד** . "**שכרך**" – "Your (Avrohom Avinu) reward is the letter **ה**. **רבה מאד** – "Which is very great."

The reward that Avrohom received, of having the letter **ה** added to his name, was not given to Yitzchok or Yaakov, for although they as well were very great individuals, Avrohom was the first. Yitzchok and Yaakov were a continuation of Avrohom. It says in Sefer Yetzira that letters of the Aleph Bais are called **אבנים** , stones. The Shem Havayah is the same Gematria as **מקום**.

There is a Gematria formula where you multiply each number by itself to get the total. The Shem Havayah, of **י-ה-ו-ה** – is calculated: 10x10 = 100, 5x5 = 25, 6x6 = 36, 5x5 = 25 for a total of 186, which is the same Gematria as **מקום**.

ויקח מאבני המקום And Yaakov took from the letters of the Shem Hashem, **וישם מראשתיו** and placed it upon his head as a crown. Yaakov elevated himself to the level of which Chazal tell us that each Tzaddik will receive a crown from Hashem – the letter **ה** from His Name.

Parsha Pages

בראשית כח:יב וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה

In the works of the Kabbalists, it is noted that the word **סולם** has the numeric value (136) the same as **ממון** money. It is known that with the proper use of money (materialism) one can inherit the best of this world and the best of the world to come. And the connection is emphasized by the image of the ladder that is set in the earth and also reaches to the heavens.

בראשית כט:ל וַיֶּאֱהַב גַּם-אֶת-רָחֵל מִלֵּאָה

Yaacov also loved Rochel for another reason, the reason "from Leah", that which Rochel did for Leah. (Rochel passed the signs to Leah in order that she should not be embarrassed). Thus, due to the act of kindness and expression of her soul, Yaacov now fully appreciated and loved Rochel.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Tefillah, Again and Again

ויפגע במקום means tefillah. **פגע** is also a slang word, which means nudnick (in Yiddish **א פעגער**), someone who continues to request over and over again, until it becomes bothersome.



Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l taught that tefillah is called **פגע** to imply that one should pray and pray to Hashem, over and over again, even until he is like a **פעגער**, a nudnick. Don't worry that you're asking too much and too often because Hashem enjoys each prayer. The **Me'iri** writes, "don't be embarrassed to ask." Keep davening and requesting, over and over again, until you receive your needs.

"Little children won't let you sleep; big children won't let you live." ~~ Talmud, Nedarim

Living Jewish



וַיִּקַּח֙ מֵאַבְנֵ֣י הַמָּקֹ֔ום וַיָּ֖שֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָ֑יו וַיִּשְׁכַּ֖ב בַּמָּקֹ֥ום הַהֽוּא
And he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head *(28:11)*

Why didn't Yaakov choose something softer to use as a pillow?

Said he: "A stone of Eretz Yisrael is more precious than all the pillows and cushions I will ever use in the Diaspora."

וְהָאֶ֣בֶן גְּדֹלָ֔ה עַל־פִּ֖י הַבְּאֵ֑ר ***"There was a large stone on top of the well" 29:2***

Yaakov Avinu found three shepherds sitting by a well that had a large stone on top of it. Yaakov asked them, "Why aren't you giving water to the sheep?" They told him that they don't have strength to take the stone off by themselves. "We can't [do that] until all the shepherds come, and then we will roll the stone off the top of the well."

What was Yaakov Avinu's question? He saw the large boulder on the well and he probably understood that it was too heavy for them to remove it. Why did he ask them why they were waiting and not giving water to the sheep?

One of the **Gerer Rebbe's zt'l** answered, Yaakov Avinu's question was, "Why aren't you trying? I know that it's hard, I know that the stone is heavy, but try… Perhaps you will succeed."





The Sfas Emes zt'l said that the large stone over the well represents the yetzer hara that prevents people from tefillah. It's a heavy stone, it's hard to remove – indeed, it's very hard to daven with kavanah – but try to remove it. Perhaps you will succeed.

There's a rule in life; every hardship has a benefit, a good side. The stone on top the well is an example of this principle. The stone seems negative; the sheep were thirsty, and the stone prevented them from having water. But the stone served a positive and beneficial purpose. It prevented a greedy shepherd from taking all the water for himself. The stone couldn't be removed until all shepherds arrived, so no one shepherd could take all the water for himself. Also, the stone prevented someone from throwing something into the well and contaminating the water. It was negative because it troubled the thirsty sheep, but it was also positive, for the reasons mentioned above. And it is always like that. All hardships contain a silver lining. Every deterrence and hardship we endure is for our benefit.

"Everything in this world can be imitated except for the truth." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe.

ואחר ילדה בת ותקרא את שמה דינה 30:21

Rashi writes that when Dina was conceived, she was originally a male. However, Leah knew prophetically that Yaakov was destined to have 12 sons. At that point in time, she had already given birth to six sons, and the maidservants Bilhah and Zilpah each had two sons. Leah was therefore concerned that if she gave birth to yet another male child, her sister Rochel would only be able to have one son, and in this sense would be even lower than the maidservants. To prevent this from happening, Leah petitioned Hashem to change her fetus from male to female, which is how Dina came to be born.

The **Targum Yonason ben Uziel** writes that the mechanism by which Dina was transformed was through an in-utero transfer. At the time that Leah conceived a son, Rochel was also pregnant with a girl. In response to Leah's entreaties that her sister have at least as many sons as the maidservants, Hashem miraculously switched their two fetuses, with Rochel going on to give birth to Yosef and Leah giving birth to Dina. The Gemora (Berachos 60a) explains that the name Dina is derived from the word דין- judgment – to hint to the judgment that Leah made in asking Hashem to transform her fetus into a female.



Although it seems that Leah's self-sacrifice in willingly giving up a son who was already in her womb cost her the opportunity to mother an additional one of the 12 tribes,

Rav Shimshon Pinkus notes that Hashem rewarded her magnanimity by giving her even more than she initially relinquished.

The Daas Z'keinim (41:45) writes that when Dina gave birth to a daughter. This daughter was sent away and through a tremendous

miracle of Divine providence, she was wedded to none other than her uncle Yosef. Yosef and his wife Osnas had two sons, Menashe and Ephraim, who are counted as two of the tribes in Israel. According to this account, it turns out that through Leah's noble gesture of giving up the right to mother one of the tribes, she actually gained, as she became the progenitor of not one, but two additional tribes.

Rav Pinkus points out that the Torah stipulates (Shemos 22:3) that if a thief steals an item, he is required to pay back the owner double the value of the object that he stole. If the Torah mandates a double punishment for wrongdoing, the reward for a mitzvah should certainly be double as well, a lesson that we see illustrated by Leah and Dina.

The Source

When Lavan hears that Yaakov is coming he runs out to greet him. They embrace and Lavan gives Yaakov a kiss. Rashi (29:13) says that the hug and kiss were not out of love; rather Lavan thought that Yaakov was hiding jewels in his mouth.



R' Zilberstien asks from where Rashi knows that the embrace and kiss was not a sign of affection? We know that Lavan loved money, and was a conniving fellow, however, we should give him the benefit of the doubt maybe he was just excited about seeing a member of his family?

The Chofetz Chaim found a source for Rashi's explanation at the end of the parsha. When Lavan confronts Yaakov about leaving without telling him, he says

(31:28) "You left without letting me kiss my sons and daughters". Also, at the end of the parsha (32:1) the pasuk says "Lavan got up early and kissed his sons and daughters".

In both situations, Lavan kisses his sons and daughters, and not Yaakov. If Lavan was so fond of Yaakov, then he should have kissed him when they parted ways, just like he kissed him when they met.

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

ויקח מאבני המקום וישם מראשתיו וישכב במקום ההוא (28:11)

Rashi writes that before Yaakov went to sleep, he placed stones around his head to protect him against a potential attack by wild animals. The stones began to fight with each other, as each one desired to be the one upon which the righteous Yaakov would actually rest his head. To appease them, Hashem miraculously combined all of the rocks into one large stone. However, this is difficult to understand. Since Yaakov's head would still only lie on one small part of the overall rock, how were the stones which occupied positions upon which he was not sleeping mollified by this solution?



Rabbi Samuel Margolies (1880-1917) of Congregation Anshe Emeth, 1904-1917 (Park Synagogue)

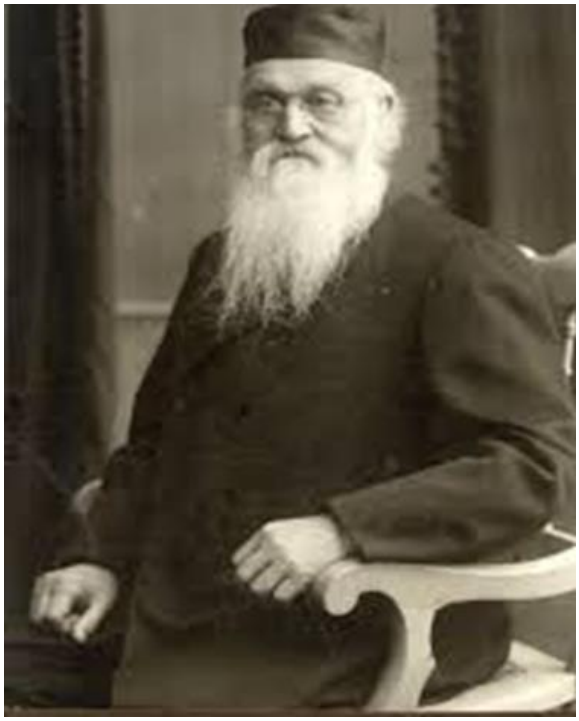
Rav Shloma Margolis answers that when Yaakov initially placed twelve discrete rocks around his head, each rock viewed the others as separate and distinct, and they therefore fought over which one would merit supporting Yaakov's resting head.

Once they merged into one stone, they now viewed themselves as one entity, in which case there was no longer any reason for disputes, even for those parts of the new rock upon which Yaakov did not place his head. All of the stones recognized that they

were now united as one, and there was no longer any purpose to jealously quarrel and compete with the other stones.

My dear cousin **Shaya Gross z"l** adds that this concept also applies to marriage. Just as a person views his entire body as one united entity and does not get upset at his stomach if it is hungry or at his foot when it is in pain, so too if each spouse views the other as connected to him or her as part of one larger unit, they will intuitively understand that it is senseless to fight with one another.

Unfortunately, human nature is such that we are all born selfish, primarily focused on fulfilling our own needs. At the same time, Hashem expects us to move beyond these innate tendencies and feel compassionate and helpful toward others. What is the secret to overcoming our natural propensity toward self-centeredness?



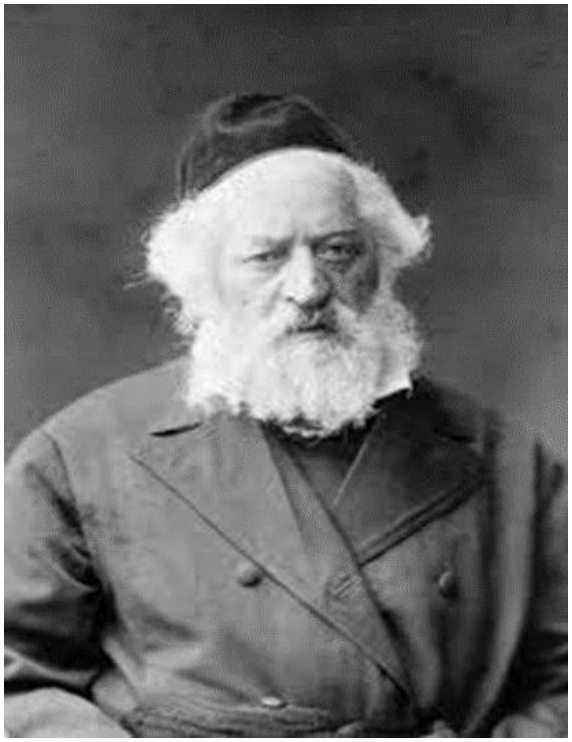
In the introduction to his work Shaarei Yosher, **Rav Shimon Shkop** explains that rather than try to deny our innate focus on ourselves, each of us should instead work on expanding our definition of who "I" am. Most people are able to extend their definitions of self to include their families, while more magnanimous individuals manage to also include their friends and neighbors, and truly great people are able to enlarge their concept of self to incorporate all Jewish people, and all of Hashem's creations. By striving to expand our perspectives to include as many people as possible and to view them as part of who "I" am, we will automatically find it easier to get along with them, just as we are naturally at peace with ourselves, and just as Yaakov's stones resolved their dispute by merging into one larger entity.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Strength of Emuna

Rashi comments on **ויגל את האבן**; Yaakov rolled the stone off from the well, it is to tell us **שכחו גדול**; that the strength of Yaakov was great. Why is it necessary for us to know how strong he was?

The Gemara tells a story of R' Chanina Ben Dosa'a daughter who mistakenly poured vinegar into the lamp and lit the Shabbos light with it. Since vinegar doesn't burn, she was sad that it would soon be extinguished. He retorted that the one who commanded oil to burn can also command vinegar to burn. This light then continued to burn the entire Shabbos. How did it light? Not like most of us think- that there is a certain chemistry behind the candles that keep it burning, rather it all stems from Hashem.

A worker who got locked into a walk-in freezer in which the handle broke off tried with all his might to open the freezer, to no avail. Feeling his body on the verge of death, he then called out to Hashem and said only you can save me, **אין עוד מלבדו**. He then gave the freezer door one last try, after which it miraculously opened.



A woman with a sick child came to Dr. Kushalefsky, the medical expert of **R' Yitzchak Elchonon Spector**, on Erev Shabbos. He told her to administer various amounts of drops of different medicines. The Doctor went to the house on Motzaei Shabbos to discover the child recovered. The mother said I put the paper with the prescription on it in the hot water kettle and said 'May the one who told this medicine to cure tell these waters to cure'- and so it was.

With this we can answer our question. It is not referring to Yaakov's physical strength rather it is telling us that Yaakov's Emuna was so

strong. There was no difference to him between a rock that weighed a pound or 1,000 pounds. Hashem is the one who gives strength. This is how Rashi is to be understood- **להודיעך שכחו גדול** - that Yaakov's strength in Emuna was so strong.

Truly Thankful – Rabbi Y Richtman

The gemara in Brachos (7b) makes a amazing statement. When Leah named her son Yehuda as an expression of thanks to Hashem, she was the first person to thank Hashem since the creation of the world. This is very difficult to understand, because didn't the avos and imahos also thank Hashem for what he gave them?



R' Schwab explains that the first three sons Leah had were named with a teffilah in mind. Namely, that Yaakov should consider her to be his main wife. However, even after 3 sons nothing changed, and yet she thanked Hashem. Leah, at this point, did something that was never done before, and that is to thank Hashem even though she didn't receive what she yearned for.

"When you have a problem speak to Hashem. Every word of prayer is saved and never lost. Even if the answer isn't immediate, know that every tear and word is stored by Hashem, to be fulfilled at the right time when needed." ~ Rabbi Shimshon Pincus.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

ויאמר יעקב לאחיו לקטו אבנים לא:מו ***And Yaakov said to his brethren, "Gather stones"*** (31:46))

רש"י – הם בניו לאחיו - ***To his brethren – these are his sons*** (Rashi) However, further on at the end of the chapter (31:54) the Posuk states, **ויקרא יעקב לאחיו לאכל** ***And Yaakov invited his brethren to eat***, and here Rashi explains, – **לאחיו: לאוהביו שעם לבן** ,"***To his brethren – to his friends who were with Lavan***", suddenly these were not his children.

Why does Rashi change his explanation? First he translates "brethren" as his sons, and at the end the intent is for his friends and not his sons? Rather, when they were discussing establishing a border, Yaakov immediately called his sons and instructed them not to cross the border, and even Lavan did not cross it. However, when they were discussing sitting down to eat with the wicked Lavan – here Yaakov did not want his sons to join in a friendly meal with that wicked individual, therefore he only invited his friends and not his sons. (Umatok HaOhr)



Cheap Get Away

At the end of the parsha, when Lavan says goodbye to his family, the pasuk says "vayashkeim ba'boker".These are the same words the Torah uses when Avraham sets out on the mission of Akeidas Yitzchok. The idea of "vayshkeim ba'boker" is that the person got up early. Why does the Torah need to emphasize when Lavan got up to say goodbye to his family?

We know that Lavan was not one to share his money. Being that he was the grandfather of all of these children, when he is leaving some of them might ask for presents. In order to avoid this, he made sure to wake up early and to give everyone a goodbye kiss while they were still sleeping.

Good Investments



The Bal Haturim (28:12) finds many interesting gematrias for the word "sulam" (ladder). The gematria of the word is 136,which is also the gematria of the word "momon" (money) and the word "oni" (poverty). What is the connection between a ladder, wealth, and poverty?

A ladder is unique in that it has the ability to take you to very high places and it can also take you to very low places. Wealth has the same capability. If one uses his money in the way Hashem intended, it can elevate him greatly as is described throughout Tanch and Chazal. However, if the money is misused it can destroy its owner.

This is also true regarding poverty. One who views his poverty as a way to come closer to Hashem, by having to strengthen his Bitachon, he becomes great. There is, however, the danger that one may allow his condition to provoke anger towards Hashem, in which case he has fallen. With this understanding we can truly appreciate the connection of the Baal Haturim.

Life is too short. Your potential is too big, and Hashem's love is too great to live ordinary!

The Eternal Bone

On Shabbos we receive a **נשמה יתירה**, additional soul. In fact, the word **ביני** in , **ביני ובין בני ישראל** which speaks about Shabbos, is an acronym for **בשבת יש נשמה יתירה**.

For this reason, the **Baal Haturim** as well as the **Daas Zekanim** point out that the last letters of **וביום השביעי שבת וינפש** spell **שתים** since we receive an additional soul. Furthermore, **וינפש** alludes to this as it is rooted in **נפש** . Moreover, in **לכה דודי** we say **פני שבת נקבלה**, where the initials spell **נפש**.

After Shabbos, our **נשמה יתירה** leaves. Indeed, **R' Tzadok Hakohen** (1823-1900) would faint every Motzai Shabbos when his **נשמה יתירה** would leave him as he actually felt it. To comfort us in dealing with the loss of our **נשמה יתירה**, we have a Melave Malka.

The Kadmonim say that the limb **נסכוי** stays in existence until **תחית המתים**, resurrection of the dead, even after all the bones rot. This limb only derives pleasure from the food of Melave Malka. Another name it is known by is the **לוז** , Luz bone. Is it any coincidence that we find this word **לוז** written by Yaakov—**לח ולוז** and **ואולם לוז** —who never died— **יעקב אבינו לא מת** as the **לוז** is eternal, never dies?

We also find a hint to the other name of this bone— **נסכוי** —by Yaakov in **ויצב יעקב...נסך ויצק**, Yaakov set up a pillar…he poured a libation and oil upon it. The **לוז** bone is nourished exclusively at Melave Malka since it didn't have pleasure from the sin of Adam. This is because he sinned on Erev Shabbos and the **לוז** bone only gets nourished on Motzai Shabbos by Melave Malka. Consequently, the curse of **ואל עפר תשוב** to dust shall you return, doesn't apply to this bone. As a result, **תחית המתים** stems from it.

The Neshamos of the Sheep

There are those who remembered events from a previous lifetime. It is known that the **Yismach Moshe** (1759-1841) showed the mark on his shoulder that remained from the hit by Yaakov when he was one of his sheep. **The Apta Rav**, author of the Sefer Oheiv Yisrael, (1748-1825) would sing a melody that Yaakov would play on his flute to gather his sheep.



The sheep that Yaakov rescued from Lavan, says the **Zohar**, contained the **נשמות**, souls of the Jewish people. These **נשמות** needed to be rectified as they were the **נשמות** from the **דור המבול** and **דור הפלגה**. This is also hinted to in the Midrash in this week's Parsha that says Yaakov had 600,000 herds of livestock as this is the number of **נשמות** of Klal Yisrael in each generation.

The purpose of Yaakov's work by Lavan was to redeem these **נשמות** from under the domain of Lavan who wanted to uproot everything—**ביקש לעקור את הכל** as we say in the Haggada. Is it any coincidence that we are called **צאן** as in **צאן מרעיתו**, sheep of his pasture?

Understanding The Words of Tefillah

Rav Eliezer Tzvi of Kaminka zy"a writes: "One should daven word by word, understanding and concentrating on the meaning of the words as much he can. This brings a person to dveikus with Hashem because every tefillah is made up entirely of emunah and bitachon and is full of ahavas Hashem."

Rabbi Menachem Nissel - A Special Encounter



On my most recent trip to America, it was highly stressful ever since my plane landed in New Jersey on Friday morning. After deplaning, I began walking around in a haze, quickly trying to make phone calls to my family back in Israel before Shabbos began. Before long, a man came over to me with a request. "Excuse me, sir. My name is Mohammad and I am from Pakistan." I wondered if I should remain standing where I was, as I felt quite uncomfortable. But, I decided to do so. "If you are able to," continued Mohammad, "I am in need of exactly fourteen dollars to get to Manhattan." I paused, taking in the fact that I had just landed and this was my very first greeting and introduction to America.

"Sure," I said, as I grabbed hold of my wallet. I ended up giving him twenty dollars and told him to buy a cup of coffee with the extra cash. But then Mohammad told me something that opened my eyes.

"You probably think I am a conman trying to get money out of you," he said. Mohammad then began detailing his life story. "I am originally from Pakistan, after which I moved to England. But things have not really worked out there, and so now I am here." I was at first slightly doubtful about the story, though after asking him questions about cricket and life in England and hearing his intelligent answers, I was reassured of his story.

"Ever since I have gotten here to America," Mohammad went on to say, "life has been very difficult. Just for the last hour, I have been walking around asking for fourteen dollars. First I went to my Pakistan friends, and they didn't give me anything. Then I went to

whoever I thought was Muslim, but I still didn't get anything. Frustrated, I started approaching just about anyone in the airport. But then I finally said to myself, 'You know what? Let me ask a Jew. I am sure they will help me.' I just want to thank you. This is the second time this has happened to me, and both times the only one who helped me was someone Jewish. That just says something about you people."

Our standing reputation as the nation of G-d who leads lives filled with kindness and the commitment to making a kiddush Hashem leaves an indelible impact wherever we go. It paints a positive image of a Jew in the eyes of those who observe us, and ensures that Hashem, His Torah and His nation are held in the highest regard.

Rabbi Fischel Schachter - Remember Me?





It was just days after the great **Rav Yaakov Galinsky** had gotten married that he was called upon by the **Chazon Ish**. "I need you to take care of something very important," the Chazon Ish urged. Hundreds of children from Teheran had been forcibly locked into Israeli kibbutzim and anticipated to be acculturated and secularized

in line with an irreligious lifestyle. Only after due arbitration was it agreed that already Orthodox, religious children would be allowed to be released into stable religious homes and avoid steeping themselves in a future that stood antithetical to their values. But there was one hindrance.

Agency officials in charge of overseeing the Teheran children refused to allow any religious children to be released except for those who had been documented as 'religious.' A detailed, authoritative list had been compiled in Europe and would serve as proof for which children would be allowed to leave. But it wasn't in the hands of the religious leaders, unfortunately, but rather with those who had placed the children into kibbutzim. It was thus far from simple to obtain the list and begin any process as hoped for.

But the Chazon Ish's instructions to Rav Galinsky were clear. "Go and ask for the list," he said. It was a far-fetched request, though Rav Galinsky went along with it.

Stealthily making his way to the army base, he was met by a number of soldiers who abruptly and accusingly stopped him. "Do you belong here?" they asked. It appeared as if Rav Galinsky was trying to secretly obtain something, which he in fact was. But Rav Galinsky only shrugged when asked what he was up to. Presuming that he was looking for someone who spoke Yiddish, the officials summoned one of their executive officers who could interrogate Rav Galinsky in Yiddish.

As soon as Rav Galinsky caught sight of the officer, he sprung into an outburst. "Chulit!" he exclaimed, a clear reference to the officer's name. The officer was offset, his eyebrows burrowing in confusion and seriousness. "How do you know who I am?" inquired the officer. "Allow me to remind you,"

"Years ago, I was arrested while living in Russia. Every day, they used to feed me only a morsel of food and beat me. It was a terrible and terrifying situation. With me was a list of all the Jewish children

who were later brought to Teheran. I was forced to relinquish that list with all the names.

"A few days later, I was told that I would be sent to Siberia, though my frail condition was concerning to the officers. It didn't appear as if I could even make it there alive. They decided to thus give me a bowl of plain noodles, which I could have devoured within minutes.

"But then, I heard a heart-breaking outcry coming from nearby. It was you, Chulit. You had just been brought to those terrible living quarters and knew it would soon be your turn to be sent to Siberia. You cried about your ominous future and begged for just a morsel of food. Hearing you cry broke my heart, and I decided that I would share half of my noodles with you, which you so graciously accepted."

Chulit, now a reputable soldier, looked at Rav Galinsky. It all came back to him, and he indeed remembered. "Remember…?" whispered Rav Galinsky. "I gave you the noodles… I saved your life… Please give me the list of those Jewish names back." And sure enough, Rav Galinsky was given the list.

There will be times in life where matters not only look dismal but are dismal. Life is challenging and crushing. Yet all the while, that very situation may be paving an unknown road that will later turn out to be our ticket to where we want and need to get. In hindsight, it is no less than our source of blessing and life. It is a most depressing and dejected moment, yet all the while, it is in the process of becoming our most promising and positive moment.

The Meor Einayim (Shabbos) teaches that when one studies the sefarim of a tzaddik, it is considered as though he is at his gravesite.

Mrs. Feigy Lieberman - Meet Rachel and Leah

ועיני לאה רכות ורחל היתה יפת תאר ויפת מראה - *Leah's eyes were tender, while Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance (29:17)*



In this week's Parasha, the Torah tells us about the differences between Leah and Rachel. While Leah was older and thereby destined to marry Eisav, she cried profusely wishing not to do so. Tears swelled up within her eyes and streamed down her cheeks, leaving them red and soft. Rachel, on the other hand, was known to be destined to marry Yaakov and is depicted as beautiful and beloved by her husband.

On a symbolic level, Rachel represents someone who is lovely, sweet, calm and charming. She glows with a special aura. The numerical value of Rachel is in fact 238, the same as the words, "*Vayehi ohr*," let there be light. Whenever Rachel walks into a room, a charming and glistening light accompanies her. Leah's name, on the other hand, comes from the word "*Nil'ah*," meaning weary. She represents someone who faces great challenges in life and will never have an easy and calm ride. On a personal level, we have both combinations of Rachel and Leah within ourselves. Part of us is Rachel who possesses a calm personality and is graced with an internal and external beauty. The other part of us is the Leah, always struggling and fighting to achieve that which we cry and yearn for.

When a boy and girl look to get married, they are sure that they are marrying a Rachel. "He is so perfect" and "She is so perfect," they tell themselves. It is only after marriage that we realize that the other person is human and that they, just like ourselves, have

imperfections. We come to recognize that there is a Leah in our life. And that is when we start panicking. All of a sudden, our expectations of the other person turn out to be untrue. But the real truth is that Leah is the person who is actually right for us in our lives. It is Leah who forces us to step out of our own narrow world, think beyond ourselves and grow from our challenges into the greatest person we can become.

While we might wish that everything always goes smoothly and our marriage be perfect, we may often experience ups and downs. But that is exactly the way our marriage becomes that much stronger. By facing those formidable challenges and surmounting them, we grow together and enjoy many years of life as beloved husband and wife.

Yaakov's Brothers Written by H Jackson

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יַעֲקֹב אַחַי מֵאַיִן אַתֶּם ***"And Yaakov said to them [the shepherds]: My brothers, where do you come from?"*** (Bereishit 29:4)

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky asks why Yaakov calls these shepherds whom he had not met before 'My brothers'? He explains that Yaakov wanted to rebuke them (for slacking on the job) and we know that one should only give rebuke in a calm, gentle and friendly manner so that the recipients of the rebuke are aware you are only trying to benefit them (Rambam, De'ot 7:7). Therefore, Yaakov preceded his rebuke with words of brotherhood and friendship.

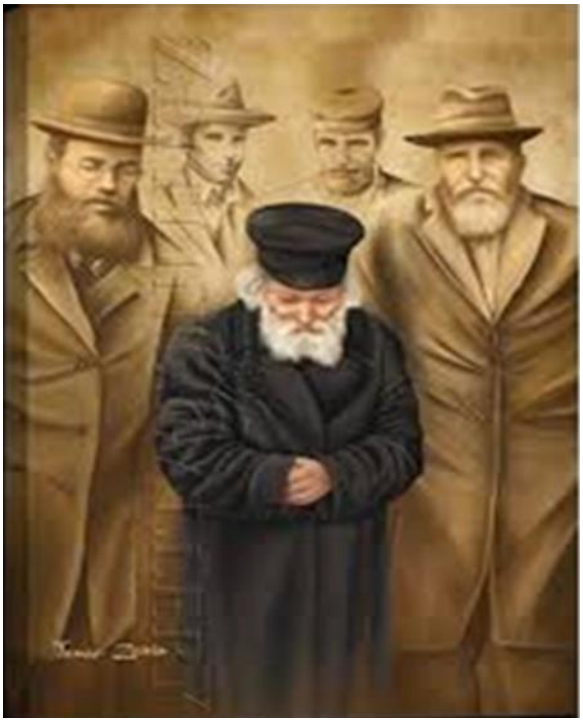
Later in our Sidra the Torah states **וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְאֶחָיו לקטו אֲבָנִים** ***"And Yaakov said to his brothers: 'Gather stones!'*** *and they took stones and made a large mound [as a witness to his oath with Lavan]" (Bereishis 31:46).* Rashi teaches: The expression "his brothers" actually refers to his sons, but he called them 'brothers' because they were standing by him in troubled times.



From here we learn an important fundamental in educating children and students. It is not sufficient, explains **Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Bloch**, for a father or teacher to simply hand down relevant knowledge; rather, they should also show the children and students how to take action themselves. The reason for this is that they should not always feel under the influence of their seniors, but also as partners in actualising potential.

This idea complements the words of Rabbi Chanina (in Gemara Berachot 64a) : "Don't read 'Banayich = your children' but 'Bonayich = your builders'" – because even they should be builders and partners to the deed itself.

From Galus to Galus Written by D Fine



The Chofetz Chaim asks a rather pertinent question in our sedra. The years of galus were already being counted when Yaakov lived in Lavan's home. If so, why did HaShem make Yaakov go down to Egypt and continue the galus there; why not stay with Lavan?

The Chofetz Chaim answers that this is because the galus of Lavan is too hard. The galus of someone who pretends to be your friend is much harder than the galus of an enemy who makes it obvious that he's your enemy. The tortures that the Jews faced in Russia were awful

and unbearable – but we have lost many more Jews to the 'friendly' tide of assimilation in America than that of the Jews in Russia. In Vayishlach, Yaakov prays 'please save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav' (32:12) – 'my brother' refers to the Lavan-type 'friendly galus,' whilst 'the hand of Eisav refers to the overtly anti-Semitic galus.' And Yaakov put the friendly galus first in his prayers – for that is the galus which poses the most danger to the Jewish People…

Torah Tavlin

At the outset of the parsha, Yitzchok and Rivka understood the need to keep their sons, Yaakov and Esav, apart. Yaakov was sent to hide by Rivka's brother, Lavan, where he worked for seven years for Rachel's hand in marriage and another seven years for Leah. These two monumental events in Yaakov's life shaped the future for him and his descendants. Interestingly, Hoshea HaNavi mentions these completely separate events in the same posuk which would seem to link them together. What do they have to do with each other?

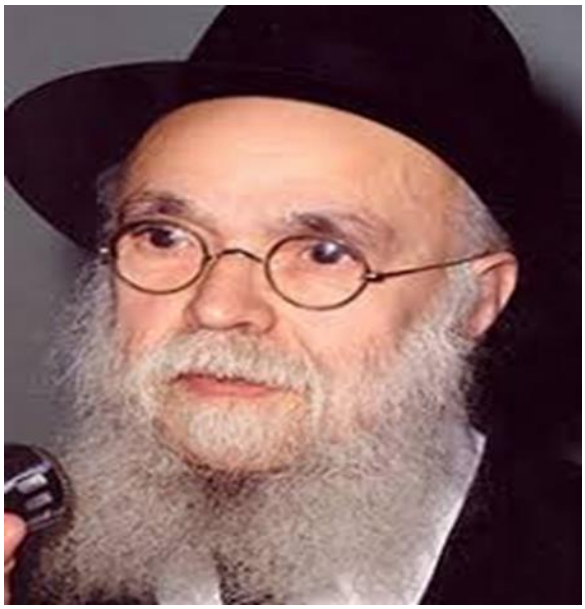


R' Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l (Taama D'Kra) explains that Chazal state: "A person is judged only according to his deeds at the time of his judgment and not according to his future deeds." (Rosh Hashana 16b) Even though Yaakov Avinu was correct in using trickery to con Esav out of the berachos, nevertheless, the fact that he used it at all to achieve his goal caused him tremendous heartache later. The Navi connects these two events to show that even someone of Yaakov's caliber who if judged on his overall deeds in life would surely be in the highest echelon of righteousness, yet, Yaakov's deception opened the gate for Lavan to

trick him back which required him to work for an extra seven years. While one would assume that the end justifies the means and it doesn't matter how one achieves his righteous goals, one cannot forget that he may have to pay for those very means.

R' Chaim Kanievsky is quoted as saying: "The Chazon Ish zt"l, would tell the Baal Koreh to lain the name 'Yissachar' as 'Yissaschar' only in Parashas Vayeitzai. A possible reason could be that Yissaschar gave the 'shin' in his name to his son Yov, to change his name to 'Yoshuv' as Yov was the name of an Avodah Zara at the time. Once he had given over the shin after this week's parsha, we refer to him as 'Yissachar' - without the shin."

Was Leah hated??? Written by D Fine



Rav Pam notes something well worth thiking about in our sedra. The pasuk (29;30) tells us that Yaakov loved Rachel more than Leah. The next pasuk tells us that HaShem saw that Leah was hated. Where did we see that Leah was hated; all we know is that Yaakov loved Rachel more, but who says that Leah was hated? And is it really fitting for the great Yaakov avinu to hate anyone, let alone his wife?

The answer is that since Yaakov loved Rachel more, Leah **felt** that she was hated. Rav Pam used to apply this to teachers to tell them that if they favour anyone in their class, then the other kids (and their parents) will feel that they are hated, and rightly so. .

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein

One of the key components of Yaakov Avinu's dream in this week's *Parsha* is the ascent and descent of angels from heaven to earth on a ladder. Yet the obvious question begs. Why allude to the angels traveling up and down specifically on a ladder? Why not allude to their travel along a road or up and down steps?



Hashem chose ladder for a very specific purpose. Whenever traveling along a road, a person looks downwards toward the road as they move along. The same is with steps. When descending a stairwell, a person looks down at the steps to monitor their movement.



When it comes to a ladder, however, whether you go up or down, you are always looking up. Hashem thus meant to emphasize to Yaakov Avinu, that despite the many travails and tragedies he will undergo, he will always be looking up. He will be able to handle it and he will make it through. And that is because, as the Torah itself attests, "Hashem was standing over him" (*Bereishis* 28:13). At the top of the ladder stood none other than Hashem, supporting and shouldering Yaakov Avinu.

In the world we live today, unfortunately, there is a lot of pain. Boys and girls have difficulty getting married; once married, there are challenges with infertility; once there are children, there is heartache when, for those who choose, they sadly leave the fold

of *Yiddishkeit*. Then there are illnesses, addictions, and emotional distresses that affect Jewish communities worldwide. At no point in life is there no potential for trauma or tragedy.

But what we must remember throughout it all is that when a ladder is placed against a wall, the part of the ladder that rests on the wall is the top. And Hashem told Yaakov Avinu before he went into his dark and deep exile, "I am at the top of the ladder. You are going to go up and you are going to go down, but you need to know that the whole ladder is leaning on Me. Whichever way you are moving, whether up or down, just keep your head up. Because I am right above you, supporting you and protecting you."

Thanksgiving - Written by Fredrick Rivenson

As one may remember, our patriarch Yaakov had four wives: Rachel, Leah and their two maid-servants, Bilhah and Zilpah. Rachel and Leah, through prophesy, knew that Yaakov would have 12 sons, each establishing their own tribe, and thought that as Yaakov had four wives, each wife would give birth to three sons. However, as it turned out, Leah was had four sons. At the birth of her 4th son, Leah named that child "Yehudah" -"Judah", meaning, "Now I will praise Hashem". She gave special thanks because Hashem had given her more than her share. That is why Jews are called "Yehudim", implying that we are all descended from Yehudah, no matter what specific tribe each of us may belong to. We see in the Purim story, that Mordechai is



called "Mordechai, the Yehudi", despite the fact that he came from the tribe of Benjamin.

We are all Yehudim because we always thank Hashem for giving us more than our share. The Jew is ever conscious of Hashem's graciousness and mercy. To us, our health and prosperity, our life itself, is neither a given nor is or based on one's own efforts. Instead we thank Hashem for everything. Our strength lays in our readiness to be a willing receptacle of Hashem's talents, blessings, and responsibility while ascribing nothing to ourselves. No matter how much or little one may think he or she has, all he or she has is a gift from Hashem. Hashem is the Creator and Ruler of all things. He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.

Not just on Thanksgiving Day, but every day, we must remember to thank Hashem for all he provides.

Torah Tavlin



R' Zalman Sorotzkin zt"l (Oznaim L'Torah) would say: **וַתֵּ֣רֶא רָחֵ֔ל כִּ֥י לֹֽא** 30:1 - **יָלְדָ֖ה לְיַעֲקֹ֑ב וַתְּקַנֵּ֣א רָחֵ֔ל** The Medrash states that before the Mabul (flood), the custom was for a man to have 2 wives. One for childbearing and the other as a concubine. The latter was required to drink anti-fertility potions, lest her pregnancy lessen her beauty. When Rachel saw that only Leah was bearing children, and the knowledge that she was considered **יפת תאר ויפת מראה** - the prettier sister, led her to suspect that the cause for this was that Yaakov was giving her anti-fertility potions to preserve her beauty. She demanded that he stop doing this so she

can also bear children. Yaakov was angry that she suspected him of this and explained that it was not him but Hashem that was not letting her conceive."

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

לָמָּה נַחְבֵּאתָ לִבְרֹחַ וַתִּגְנֹב אֹתִי וְלֹא־הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי וָאֲשַׁלֵּחֲךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשִׁרִים בְּתֹף וּבְכִנּוֹר ***Why have you fled secretly, and concealed from me, and not told me? I would have sent you away with joy and with songs, and with drum and with harp.***

It is interesting that the first time we find the notion of Simcha - Joy, in the Torah, is when a startled Lavan discovers that his son-in-law Yaakov, had gathered his daughters and their children to escape his clutches. Lavan rushes out to intercept them and exclaims, "Why didn't you tell me? I would have sent you off with 'simcha' - gladness and with songs!" Yaakov was wary of Lavan's idea of simcha. Lavan's version causes strife, jest and mockery. Yaakov's idea of simcha hearkens back to his early days of joy, when he first married Leah and Rochel. Yaakov wished to avoid any semblance of the simcha of Lavan.



Wedding pictures play a vital role during a marriage. They bring people simcha, joy. These pictures are frequently looked at during the early years of marriage, but after a while they are relegated to a coffee table or an upper shelf where they are only taken down for a pre-Pesach dusting. My machshava is that there are times in married life when things are not the way they should be. That is the time to take out the chasuna pictures and look at them.

Look at how happy you were, filled with joy and gratitude to Hashem. Recall your dreams and how you planned to establish your new home in peace and harmony. Do everything possible to increase shalom bayis. Look at the joy in the eyes of your parents and grandparents who were zoche to be at your wedding. Look at the distinguished Rabbanim and Roshei Yeshivah who took time from their schedules to take part in the simcha. Look at your friends and relatives who came from far and near to dance at your wedding. You will then relive the joy of your wedding day and ask yourself the question: does it pay to throw out all that simcha because of a few petty arguments or a few unkind words? This is the true purpose of chasuna pictures; reminding the chosson v'kallah of the true joy that should not be forgotten. May we be zoche to a long life of joy and thankfulness to Hashem for all the chessed He does for us.



R' Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg zt"l would say: וישכם יעקב בבקר - We read how after Yaakov Avinu slept and had his great dream, he arose early in the morning, in anticipation of a great new day in his life. In contrast, towards the end of the parsha, we find the same words, **וישכם לבן בבקר** - and Lavan arose early in the morning, to get away from Yaakov and everything he represented as quickly as possible, and go back to his despicable lifestyle. Yaakov and Lavan were at opposite ends of the spectrum. Each was in a rush to get to where he felt his life should be. We must take this lesson when we arise each morning. There are those who will energize themselves each morning leaning towards Lavan's lifestyle, goal and purpose. We must balance this approach by rising

early like Yaakov Avinu, looking forward to a day of Hashem's blessing and protection, a day of purpose, a day of successfully meeting any challenges that face us, a day of fulfilment." (Hakhel)

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה' עַל־כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה

Do you want to know the secret to happiness in life? It's pretty clear. It has nothing to do with how much you have, how successful you are, or how well-respected you may be to others. Happiness comes from the amount of appreciation you feel. A person can be confined to a wheelchair but is constantly focused on his beautiful family and dozens of grandchildren who bring him so much joy. He is focused on all that he has and not on what he is missing, and he is happy! Alternatively, someone can be healthy and wealthy, on a fancy vacation in Europe, focused on the bad weather, the lack of cordiality of the trip leaders and the low-level quality of the food in the hotel! This person is miserable simply because he chose to focus on the negative! In this week's parsha we learn about Hakaras Hatov. When Leah had her fourth child she named him Yehuda. She said, "This time I will thank Hashem."



The Sassover Rebbe zt"l explains what Leah meant. Leah was asking herself a question: "Only this time, I should thank Hashem? Only when I get more than my share with a fourth shevet? No. I must thank Hashem constantly, every minute of the day for every tiny kindness that He does for me!" She called him YEHUDA, which means APPRECIATION because she wanted a

constant reminder, 24/7, that she must thank Hashem at all times. Her child Yehuda - the symbol of gratitude - will be before her eyes always, and this will allow her to choose gratitude as a way of life. The next posuk tells us that Rochel was jealous of her sister. Rochel? The one who gave away her simanim to Leah; the one who gave away her husband to Leah? She is now jealous of Leah for having her fourth child? How can this be? Oh no, that would not befit our great mother Rochel. Rochel was "jealous" of the great level of gratitude that Leah reached! She realized that Leah had achieved the ultimate level of joy and happiness, real Dveikus in Hashem - and that is what she was jealous of.

וַיֶּאֱסֹף לָבָן אֶת־כָּל־אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתֶּה 29:22 ***So Lavan gathered all the people of the place, and he made a feast***

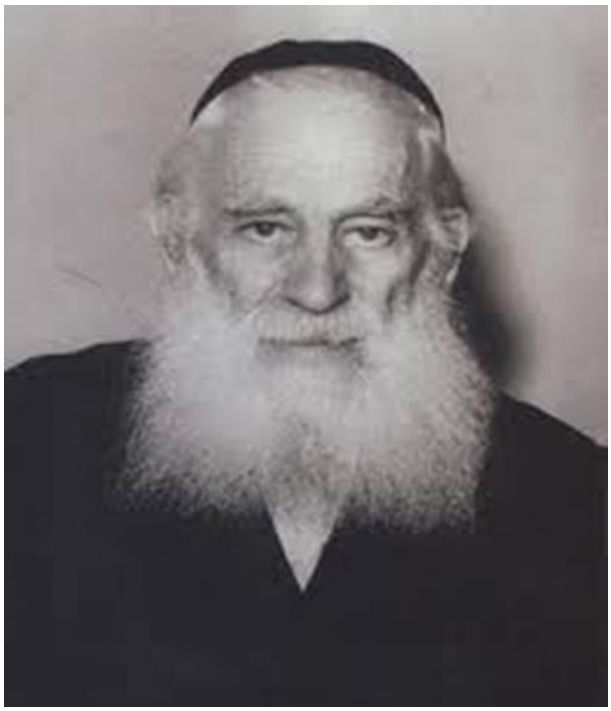


A renowned rich man once came to **R' Shlomo Zalman of Volozhin zt"l** in his private study and confided in him. "Rebbi, everyone thinks I am rich and have all the money in the world. The truth is that times are tough, and I am really very tight. The problem is that my daughter's wedding is coming up soon and everyone is expecting to be invited to a huge bash, like I've done in the past. My reputation is on the line, but I just cannot afford it. What should I do?"

R' Shlomo Zalman pulled out a Tanach and opened it. "Twice in Tanach, do we find the mention of a wedding where guests were invited. Once by Lavan, where it says, 'Lavan gathered all the people of his place and made a feast.' The second is by Boaz, where it says, 'And he took ten men, from the elders of the city.' Lavan, as we know,

was a trickster, whose only intent was to fool people and cheat them. For him, it was no problem to invite everyone and host a grand old party. Let people think I am rich and famous - even if I have no real way to pay for it! Boaz, on the other hand, was quite wealthy and could have made a massive affair. Instead, the Tzaddik that he was took ten elderly men - who probably didn't eat much anyway - and made a small wedding! Why? Because the righteous and responsible thing to do is not to show off and deceive people with one's wealth, or lack thereof. The correct thing is to live within your means."

Unfortunately, this important life-lesson is lost on many people who feel like they have to project an air of affluence to the world, when in reality, they have trouble paying their bills. Why do people wish to deceive others, much like the way Lavan deceived the whole world regularly? Why don't people live with what they have and not always try to "keep up with the Joneses!" And for that matter - why do the Joneses have to show off - just because they can afford it? The rich should take the less-fortunate into consideration and the less-fortunate should not try to act rich. Nobody wins!



On one of his fundraising missions, the Ponovezher Rav, **R' Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman zt"l** travelled to the city of Haifa to visit a few wealthy benefactors. He had to provide food for his students, and the conditions at the yeshivah had become intolerable. He had no choice but take up the "walking staff" and go door to door raising money. The plan was for the Ponovezher Rav to remain in Haifa for two days, seeing potential donors and hoping for generous donations. As far as a place

to sleep at night, he wasn't overly concerned; surely someone in the city would invite the distinguished Rav into his house. Ironically, everyone had the same thought, and no one considered that the illustrious Ponovezher Rav had nowhere to sleep. And so he was left without a bed to sleep in. The student who accompanied the Rav questioned the Rav about this, assuming that they would have to check into a hotel. What alternative did they have?

But R' Yosef Shlomo staggered him when he replied with equanimity, "A hotel? Why should we stay in a hotel? It's a pity to waste valuable Yeshivah money on a hotel. The little we have raised is meant for the talmidim. We will sleep on park benches!" And so they did!

Yaakov Avinu did not intend to sleep out in the open, with his head on a bunch of rocks. Hashem caused the sun to set early, forcing him to stop traveling. He davened Maariv, instituting this prayer for all future generations, and with no other choice, he laid down to sleep.

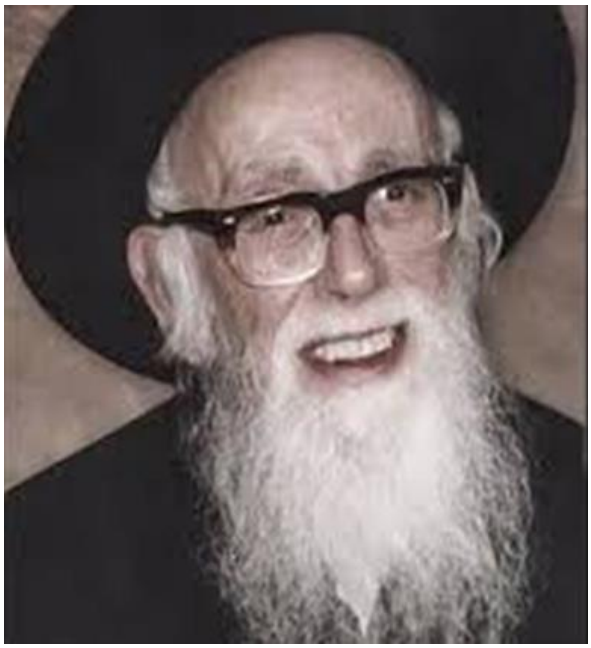
From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה' עַל־כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה

After Leah gave birth to her fourth son, she was overcome with joy and gratitude. In her mind, this was more than she could have ever dreamed of, and she wished to express her appreciation to Hashem. Therefore she called her child "Yehuda" - which stems from the word **הודאה** (thanks).

The Maharam Shick zt"l provides a deeper insight into her words. In fact, Leah didn't just say, **הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה'** - This time I thank Hashem - but rather she asked it in the form of a question: This time? Only this time, must I thank Hashem? No! I must thank Hashem constantly, consistently and continuously! I must always remember the chessed that Hashem did for me, He gave me four sons, more than my share! **עַל־כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה** - For this reason, she named him YEHUDA, so that his entire life should be a reminder

to thank Hashem for His great kindness. We are called YEHUDIM for the very same reason. A Jew must constantly remind himself to thank Hashem for the millions of chasadim that He receives every day. It is so easy to forget, to get bogged down with the daily aggravation of life. But if we would just sit down and make a list of all our problems on one side and all of the wonderful things in our lives on the other, we would see that we have many more reasons to thank Hashem than complain!



R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l said that the way to relieve oneself of stress and anxiety is by keeping a little **פינקס** - a small notepad, handy, to write down every chessed one enjoys throughout the day - even the most minor "kiss" from Hashem! Every time something good happens, write it down and then in **מודים** thank Hashem for this kindness. This will change your life. Not only will you become happy and grateful, but because the more you thank, the more Hashem will shower His kindness upon you!

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

Leah names her sixth and final son Zevulun. Zevulun is her crowning glory - she now is mother to half the Shevatim. Zevulun is also the first Shevet entrusted with the task of supporting those who learn Torah. His mission is unique for although his time is spent in material pursuit, it is considered a spiritual endeavour since his wealth is used for the support of Torah.

The Meshech Chochma points out that the name "Zevulun" comes from the word **זבל**. Zevel literally means "waste" - the stuff used as fertilizer to nourish the ground. Without fertilizer the ground will

not be able to maximize its production of vegetation and fruits, and the earth's potential will be wasted and untapped.



R' Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l points out that fertilizer has both positive and negative qualities. On the one hand, it improves and prepares the earth to allow it to sprout forth and grow. On the other hand, it has a terrible, disgusting odour and one may not daven or make a beracha in its presence! This concept is applicable to Zevulun. Zevulun was entrusted with supporting Torah. He has the great privilege of preparing the world for Torah and helping it thrive. He must remember though that if he uses his material wealth for his own personal use and glory, then it stinks! He becomes someone that people will run away from! Such a person has truly missed his calling. His material success will eventually become his downfall, since the only purpose it was given was so that he may use it for a spiritual purpose. How unfortunate it is when people are blessed with material wealth and use it to glorify themselves by living such high lifestyles just to impress others. They can barely keep up with themselves! They are so enamoured with their success that their lives become one big stinky rat race! We must be extra vigilant in these times of abundance, that we do not use what we have to glorify ourselves but rather for the purpose it was given, which is to glorify Hashem and His Torah.

"Prayers truly from the heart open all the doors in Heaven." ~~ Nachman of Bratslav

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וְהִנֵּה־הִוא לֵאָה 29:25

When Yaakov Avinu woke up the morning after his big wedding, he was in for quite a shock. The Torah tells us, **וְהִנֵּה־הִוא לֵאָה** - "And behold, she was Leah!" It wasn't who he thought it was! It wasn't what it was SUPPOSED to be! It wasn't what he WANTED! It wasn't Rochel - it was Leah!

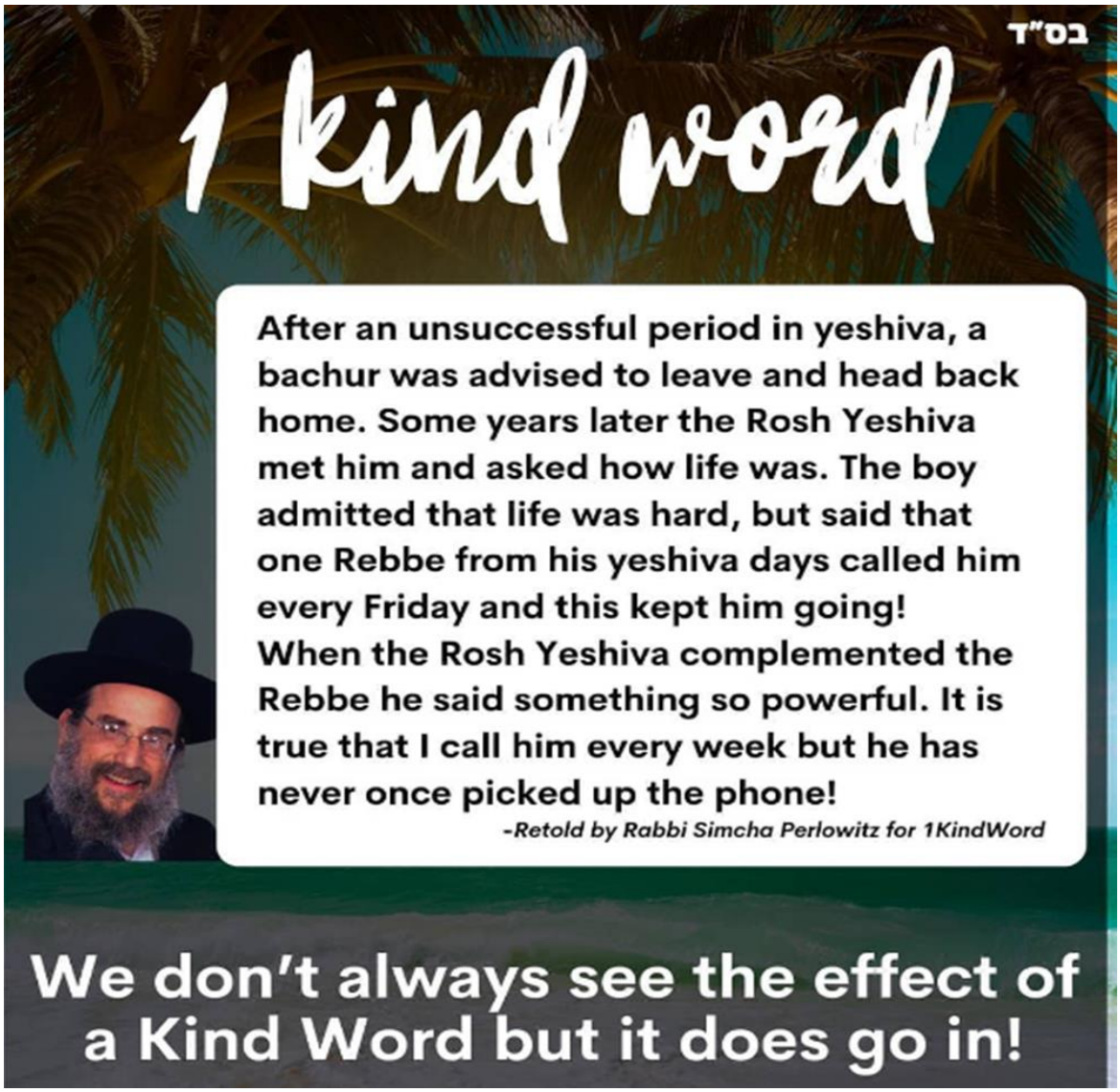


R' Gamliel Rabinowitz Shlit'a writes (Tiv HaShidduchim) that this reaction of Yaakov is not so uncommon. Everyone at some point in their marriage wakes up - and BEHOLD - things are not exactly how he or she thought it was meant to be! What he or she had in mind! After the engagement, a chosson and kallah marvel at how similar they are to each other. It doesn't take all that long after marriage to discover that they are usually complete opposites.

I once heard about a kallah teacher who did an interesting activity with a group of kallahs that she taught. She asked each one to write down what they especially admire about their chosson, what made them get engaged! She sealed them in an envelope and after 10 years she called them up for a "reunion refresher course." After exchanging pleasantries and speaking about the challenges of marriage she gave each woman her letter. As each one read what she had written so many years prior, they were shocked to reveal that the trait that they had admired most in their chosson was the one thing that made them crazy now!

One woman had loved the fact that her husband was so friendly and beloved by so many. Ten years later, though, his social life was seriously impinging on their time together and relationship as a couple!

Another woman had loved the fact that her chosson was the strong silent type, but now he was suffering for his lack of emotional connection. The trick is to realize that everyone has that "Behold, she was Leah" in their relationship! It's perfectly normal! We all must work hard to see the positive aspects of our spouses.With hard work and siyata d'shmaya may we, like Yaakov Avinu merit to be builders of Klal Yisroel.



R' Avraham Bick ZT"L (Bikurei Aviv) would say:

וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ 28:11- In two places in the Torah, we find the miracle of Kefitzas Haderech, and both are in connection to marriage. We find it here with Yaakov, when he went to Charan to get married; and we find it when Eliezer, Avraham's servant, went to find a wife for Yitzchok. Both reached their destination speedily. This is intended to teach future generations that when it is time to get married and it seems there is no money for a proper dowry, for furniture, linen, clothing, etc., what is needed is Bitachon - a pure trust in Hashem that in a split second He will work things out. There is nothing too difficult for the Almighty."

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger



One who was born and raised atop a mountain is unaware of his altitude until he descends to the bottom and looks up at the peak. So it is with a prideful person; he does not realise the heights of his hubris until he goes down to the depths. Only then will he know from where he came… - Harav Meshulem Feivish of Zabarzh

A Wise Man would say: "A truly rich man is one whose children run joyously into his arms when his hands are empty!"

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

29:35 -וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה' עַל־כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה
Rashi says: **שנטלתי יותר מחלקי, מעתה יש לי להודות :הפעם אודה**- Upon the birth of her fourth child, Leah said, ***"Now that I have received more than my portion, I am thanking Hashem."***

Why now? The Medrash says that Leah saw with Ruach Hakodesh, that Yaakov Avinu was destined to have four wives and twelve shevatim. She understood this to mean that each of the four wives would be ENTITLED to three children. But now that she gave birth to her fourth child, she davened and thanked Hashem because she received more than she was entitled to.

Doesn't it seem strange that Leah would wait until her fourth child to thank Hashem and not thank Him for each one individually? Furthermore, in the gemara **ברכות ז.** it says that none of her predecessors ever thanked Hashem before Leah. Why not?

I had a beautiful machshava which I truly feel is a lesson in life. Leah made a cheshbon. She figured that she deserved only three children. However, now that she gave birth to a fourth child, she realized that her cheshbon was wrong. In fact, she realized that she wasn't ENTITLED to anything! Therefore, she said, הַפַּעַם - "Now I am thanking Hashem, not only for this child, but for ALL my children."

Everything we have is a gift from Hashem and we aren't entitled to anything. Leah taught us that even things which seem natural are precious gifts, something her predecessors did not realize. She named her son יהודה - which includes the letters of the name of Hashem - a name that every Yid is called - because we have to thank Hashem for every breath we take.

When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.

וַיֶּאֱסֹף לָבָן אֶת־כָּל־אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתֶּה...וַיְהִי בָעֶרֶב וַיִּקַּח אֶת־לֵאָה בִתּוֹ וַיָּבֵא אֹתָהּ אֵלָיו 29:22-23

In the annals of history, Yaakov Avinu's wedding night will likely go down as one of the most unusual of all time. After working for seven years to marry his beloved, his future father-in-law throws a grand party, invites the whole town to a feast - and then promptly switches the bride with her sister! Yaakov has no idea and first learns of it the next morning.

It is hard to imagine a more freakish scenario - ever! But as our Sages tell us: **שבת קל. - *"There is no wedding (contract) that has no issue."*** Even in the case of Yaakov Avinu, the **בחיר** (choicest) of the Avos, there was some mishap that was bound to occur. If it could happen to him, it could surely happen to us - we just have to learn how to deal with it.

One night, people standing outside the home of the **Steipler Gaon, R' Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky ZT"L**, were witness to a sight that had never been seen before: A young woman in a white flowing wedding gown was being escorted into the house, where she spent a few minutes in deep discussion with the Gaon himself. As was well-known, the Steipler did not allow women into his private room, and if a woman wished to receive a blessing or advice, she needed to submit a paper with her request. This occurrence was most unusual.



Only later, **R' Chaim Kanievsky Shlit'a** revealed the sequence of events. That very evening, this bride, and her groom, had been wed in a beautiful ceremony in one of the local Bnei Brak wedding halls. After the chuppah, the couple was led to the Yichud Room amidst joyous singing and dancing from the many guests in attendance. As

soon as they were inside the private room, the chosson and kallah sat down at a table where food and drink were prepared for their enjoyment. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a huge black mouse scurried out of a corner and ran directly between the feet of the chosson and the kallah. The two jumped out of their chairs and the kallah began shrieking uncontrollably. Her newly wedded husband attempted to calm her down once the mouse had dashed out of the room, but it was to no avail. She screamed and cried and shrieked at the top of her lungs until people outside the room were forced to come in and see what was going on.

Amidst her sobs, she tearfully explained that the sighting of a black mouse in the yichud room could only mean one thing: it was a **סימן רע** - an evil omen that this shidduch was doomed! No amount of calming or logic was helpful and the kallah went right on weeping in obvious distress. She refused to leave the room and enter the ballroom for the festivities, and she wouldn't listen to her parents, her family members - even a local psychologist was brought in to try to talk to her. Nothing that was said could change her mind and she went on crying and repeating in a panic-stricken voice that this is surely a sign the shidduch was never meant to be and that she was cursed. Eventually, someone suggested that they speak to the Steipler for advice, and he sent back a message that she should come right then and there to his home for a personal consultation.

When she arrived, he began to speak in a soothing tone of voice. "You should know," began the Gaon, "I think you are one-hundred-percent correct in your assessment of the situation. Seeing a black mouse in the yichud room is certainly not a good sign, and no matter what all the psychologists and therapists are telling you, they are wrong, and you are right!"

The Steipler continued along this vein, until the woman stopped crying. The room was perfectly still and the young kallah was staring into the face of the Tzaddik. "But now, you must listen to what I

have to say. Our Sages, in their infinite wisdom, have decreed that 'there is no wedding (contract) that has no issue.' This is an immutable fact which cannot be disputed. Now, I have been told that from the moment your shidduch was commenced, everything has been smooth and clear. No arguments between the prospective in-laws, the families get along with one another just fine, and certainly there is only joy and happiness between the chosson and kallah. There are no problems, no issues."

Here the Steipler raised his voice. "But there must be an issue! Chazal have told us that there must be an issue! It cannot be otherwise! Therefore, the Ribono shel Olam sent this mouse to scurry around on the night of your wedding for one reason and one reason only: to create some sort of issue! But that's it - that is the only issue! From here and on, you will see only joy, happiness and peace in your home, all the days of your lives!" The relieved kallah returned to the hall and the wedding was especially joyous.

Torah Tavlin

R' Yehoshua Horowitz ZT"L of Dzhikov (Ateres Yehoshua) would say: *"As much as we must stay away from wicked people, there is what to learn from them as well in order to enhance our Avodas Hashem. Just as a rasha will not stop or rest until he has fulfilled the object of his desire, so too, every Jew must never stop or rest in his* pursuit *of Torah and Avodah.*

This is what the sons of Lavan were implying when they said, 'And all that is from our father, he (Yaakov) made for himself this great honor.' In other words, Yaakov became a great and honorable Tzaddik by being relentless in pursuit of what he wanted - a concept he learned from Lavan, their father."

29:19 וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן טוֹב תִּתִּי אֹתָהּ לָךְ מִתִּתִּי אֹתָהּ לְאִישׁ אַחֵר שְׁבָה עִמָּדִי

And Lavan said, "It is better that I give her to you than I should give her to another man. Stay with me."

When Yaakov asked Lavan for the hand of his daughter Rachel in marriage, Lavan seemed to be very agreeable and amenable - a little too agreeable: "It is better that I give her to you, than I give her to another man." It is remarkable that this swindler never even tried to bargain with Yaakov and gave in immediately to whatever Yaakov suggested. He did not try to demand more than seven years' work for Rachel, although he knew that Yaakov would pay any price for her. And when Yaakov stipulated his terms for tending to Lavan's sheep, Lavan said, "Agreed! If only it would remain as you say."

This is unusual behaviour for a pathological liar and swindler like Lavan. In every other case, he couldn't help himself from trying to deceive and fool his adversary; yet here, with Yaakov, he never even attempted to bargain!



R' Zalman Sorotzkin ZT"L (Oznaim L'Torah) provides a brilliant insight into the mind of a deceitful practitioner. Honest men bargain for good terms because they take their agreements seriously. They plan to uphold their end of the bargain so they want to make sure they get the best deal. Lavan, however, would agree right away to any offer from Yaakov, because he never had any intention of honouring it. All he cared about was ensuring that his new employee would be satisfied with the terms and do his work well and in good faith. Later, once the man was firmly entrenched in his

net, he could "play" with him in whichever way he wished. He would switch the work; change the wages; alter the deals.

This was Lavan's modus operandi in business and it was the same when he took Yaakov's terms for marrying Rachel. He knew right away that he was going to substitute Leah and demand another seven years of work for Rachel. Why must he negotiate and drive a hard bargain? We would be wise to recognize a dishonest businessman before it's too late. Remember the rule of thumb: if the terms of a deal sound too good to be true - it most likely is!



R' Yisroel Friedman ZT"L of Tchortkov would say: "Why is it that when one wishes to harm another person, he curses him or gives him an ayin hara (evil eye) and very often, the curse comes true? On the other hand, many people bless others on a daily basis, but it takes quite some time for the good fortune to become a reality - or it never does! The answer is that when one curses another, he puts all his heart and soul into hurting that person. One must bless another with all his might, instead of using it to curse!"

We don't always understand why Hashem does what He does. But just knowing that everything is caused directly by Hashem, and it's always the best thing for us, can get us through any situation.

וַיֶּאֱסֹף לָבָן אֶת־כָּל־אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתֶּה...וַיְהִי בָעֶרֶב וַיִּקַּח אֶת־לֵאָה בִתּוֹ אֹתָהּ אֵלָיו וַיָּבֵא 29:22-23

On the night that Yaakov was to be wed to Rachel, Lavan made a grand feast, invited the townspeople, celebrated the nuptials with much food and wine - and then promptly switched the bride and tricked his son-in-law!



The Medrash tells us an amazing thing: apparently, the people of Charan were aware of Lavan's treacherous tendencies and they were "in on the plot" to switch Rachel with her sister Leah. To avoid the wrath of Lavan, though, they couldn't come right out and tell Yaakov what was going to happen, so they decided to do the next best thing; they sang a tune with the words, ***"Hay Liy; Hay Liy ...."*** What they were actually saying was, "*It is Leah; It is Leah.*" They hoped to alert Yaakov to the deception of Lavan, but alas, Yaakov did not understand what they were trying so hard to hint to him. He thought that this was the way they normally sang in Charan. Only the next day, did he realize that they were warning him.

In his Sefer Ben Yehoyada, **Chacham Yosef Chayim of Baghdad ZT"L**, explains why a smart person like Yaakov did not get the hint. He attributes the "song" that the people of Charan sang to the ululations that women of Sephardic descent (from Arab countries) traditionally chant. This ululation is the well-known high pitched, wavering sound resembling a howl that is commonly used to express celebration, especially at weddings. In fact, the word "ululation" comes from the "lyrics" of the song sung in Charan to warn Yaakov, ***"Hay Liy, Hay Liy."*** So why didn't Yaakov figure it out?

Because this "song" is not sung by men; only women traditionally make this ululation sound, and thus, it is fair to assume that in Charan as well, it was the women who were singing loudly. However, since **קול באשה ערוה** - *the singing of a woman is forbidden for a man to hear*, Yaakov paid no attention to the chants of the womenfolk, and as a result, he totally missed the clever warning they were attempting to impart to him!

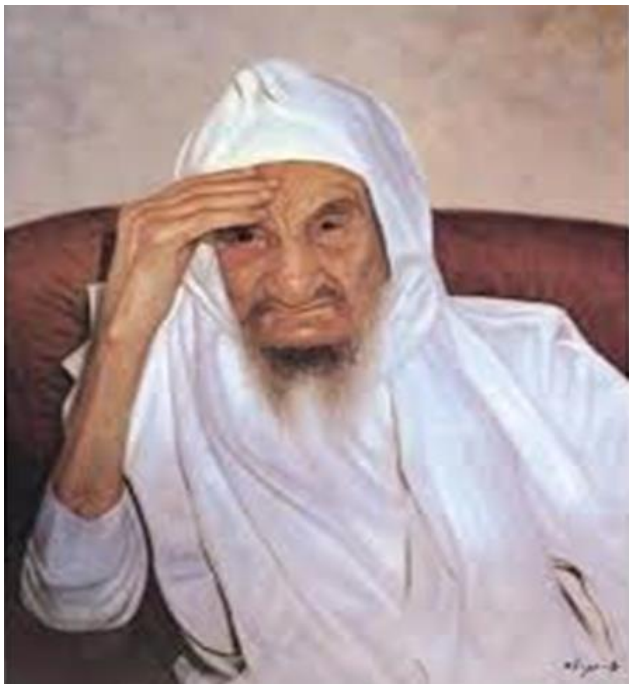
There was once a rabbi who accepted a call to become the spiritual leader of a community in Houston, Texas. Some weeks after he arrived, he had an occasion to ride the city bus from his home to the downtown area. After boarding the bus and paying the driver, he discovered that the driver had accidentally handed him too much change. As he considered what to do, he thought to himself, "I should give the quarter back. It would be wrong to keep it." But then another thought came to him. "Oh, forget it, it's only a quarter. Who would worry for such a little amount?"



The entire ride, he grappled with his conscience. When his stop came, he paused at the door, and then handed the driver a quarter. "Here, you gave me too much change." The driver looked at him. "Aren't you the new rabbi in town?" The rabbi nodded, taken by surprise at the question. "Well," said the driver, "Lately, I've been thinking about where to worship. I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you too much change. See you in shul on Shabbos." The rabbi got off the bus and swooned. "Thank you Ribono Shel Olam," he said. "I almost sold away a Yid for a quarter!"

How exacting must a Jew be in his daily and business affairs? Let us learn from our patriarch, Yaakov Avinu, who made it very clear to Lavan that no matter what happened during the 20 years he worked for him, every single penny was accounted for! As Jews, we too, must be exacting in our dealings with others, since the "others" are watching us. Always be on guard and remember that you carry the name of Hashem on your shoulders when you call yourself a Jew.

וַיִּשָּׂא יַעֲקֹב רַגְלָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ אַרְצָה בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם: וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה בְאֵר בַּשָּׂדֶה 29:1-2



Two daughters of **R' Yisroel Abuchatzera ZT"L** were once in Paris to participate in a family wedding. While staying there, they took a taxi to the city center on personal matters. Along the way, the name of their holy father came up. The cab driver could not help overhearing and concluded that his two passengers were indeed relatives of the renowned Baba Sali. When they reached their destination and wished to pay, he refused to accept any money. "Allow me the honour of serving members of the **Baba Sali's** family for free," said the driver. " I would not dream of taking money from you."

The daughters were intrigued and asked for an explanation. The driver was happy to oblige. "I know that your father is a holy man, for I have a first-hand experience to prove it. Many years ago, when I lived in Morocco, I served as the chauffeur of the president of our community in northern Morocco. The Baba Sali, was once a guest of our community and when he wished to return to Arpud, the president asked me to drive him home in his car, a journey of some

seven hundred and fifty kilometres. I was familiar with the long road. It was an endless desert terrain, and I equipped the car with all the necessary supplies. After traveling for a few hours, the engine suddenly began to overheat. We had to stop and wait until it cooled off. I was surprised that a new car should get overheated so quickly and opened the hood of the car to inspect it. To my dismay, I discovered that all the water in the cooler had evaporated, and without water to cool off the motor, the car would not go far. We had no water and found ourselves stranded in the midst of a vast desert. I began to panic for the chances of finding water were nil and the chances of another car passing by in this desert, were also slim. Our prospects looked very bleak indeed.

The Baba Sali remained inside the vehicle, but after a few long minutes, he stepped out of the car and asked what the matter was. I described our situation to him and urged him to get back into the car if he did not want to bake in the blazing sun. I climbed in myself, seeing that there was nothing to be done.



The saintly Baba Sali sat down inside the car and sank into deep thought. A few moments later, he turned to me and said, "Are you sure there is no water around here? I believe that if you start walking forward about two hundred meters, on the right side of the road, you will find a well-spring of fresh water." Now, I know this area very well; I travel it frequently and I am certain that there is no well in the entire vicinity. However, the tzaddik insisted that I do what he advised. I dared not be disrespectful and started walking in the hot sun. After a few

moments of walking, I discovered, to my utter astonishment, a fresh spring of clear water gushing by the side of the road.

As you can imagine, I was overjoyed. First, I quenched my thirst and then filled a large container of water which I brought back with me to the car. The Baba Sali greeted me with a smile. He didn't say a word; he didn't need to. I could see that he knew. I poured some water for him, and he recited a blessing and drank his fill. I poured the rest of the water into the cooler and within a few minutes, we were ready to continue on our way. But before we began driving, I went to the spring and erected a sturdy signpost above it so that I would be able to find the spot in the future, and also so that others could enjoy it as well. The rest of the journey continued uneventfully, and we reached Arpud without mishap. I took my leave of the tzaddik heartily and set out for the long return trip home.

All along the way, I kept on thinking about the marvellous spring and its mysterious appearance. When I neared the spot, I decided to stop and take a drink of its cool, refreshing water. I approached the place. I knew exactly where it was as it was distinguishable by the signpost I had erected there earlier . I stopped the car, got out and approached the spot, bucket in hand, full of excitement. But no matter how much I looked - it was gone! I searched high and low for a long time, but the spring had vanished. There was no sign of it to be found anywhere! I returned to the car very disappointed. But then, throughout the long ride, I thought about the spring. I had plenty of time to digest the miracle that I had experienced first-hand. I realized that the Almighty had created a spring of water in the midst of the desert especially for the Baba Sali, just to save him from perishing.

From that time on," concluded the taxi driver, "I became an ardent admirer of the Baba Sali. I consider it a great honour to be of some service to him or to his family."

וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב וַיִּקְרָא לְרָחֵל וּלְלֵאָה הַשָּׂדֶה אֶל־צֹאנוֹ 31:4

A Jew from Tel Aviv had a situation that required a special meeting with the Posek Hador, **R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ZT"L**. The meeting was set for 4:00 pm in Jerusalem. R' Shlomo Zalman arrived at the correct time, but the Jew in question was late. The Rav therefore got up and left. At 4:15 pm, the Jew from Tel Aviv arrived and waited for a long time, until he finally returned home. A few hours later, he telephoned R' Shlomo Zalman and asked why he had not waited for him. "We agreed to meet at 4:00 pm, but you weren't there," replied the Gaon.

The man apologized, saying that it was difficult to arrive at the exact time when travelling from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, as the buses don't always keep to their fixed schedule. R' Shlomo Zalman's reply was so pointedly true: "My friend, if you had left a half-hour earlier from Tel Aviv, you would have arrived in Jerusalem at 3:45 pm, and you might have waited for 15 minutes. But that's not what you did. You left later and thus arrived late, because you didn't want to waste your time. Yet, why did you think that you could waste my time?"



The Sages tell us that when Yaakov was in the field working for Lavan, he summoned Rachel and Leah to come to him. Even when he planned to leave Lavan, his intentions were sincere: he did not want to stop working, watching over the flocks of sheep, as he was still "on the job" and his time belonged to his employer. Every minute counts and thus he called his wives into the field so he could speak with them there, and not stop watching the herd for even an instant.

Hashgacha Pratis

Yaakov Avinu's life was one that was dependent upon the intervention of divine providence. This can be clearly reflected in his dealings with Lavan and Esav, who both would have killed Yaakov if not for the influence of divine intervention. Similarly, Yaakov would have never been able to endure his arduous journeys over treacherous terrain, as well as his flights from pursuing agitators, without the assistance of the Almighty.

We, too, experience divine intervention in our daily lives - sometimes we just don't see it until after the fact. It is only then that we recognize how truly great Hashem is to us, His beloved children.

One man would routinely drive his car to work, and he made it a habit to bring along Torah Tapes (in the days before CDs) to listen along the way. Various lecturers and maggidei shiurim were his daily companions as he weaved his way through rush hour traffic, often not minding the lengthy commute to work just so that he could gain another bit of inspiration from the shiur he was listening to.

One occasion, this fellow was concentrating on a particular Mussar Shmuess being broadcast in his car by the famed Baal Mussar, **R' Don Segal Shlit'a.** It was a mesmerizing lecture and although he had both hands on the wheel and his eyes locked on the road before him, his mind was more absorbed in the shiur he was listening to than it was on getting to his destination. Of course, he knew the road well, as he travelled it every day. What he didn't see was that a speeding and reckless jeep had pulled up right behind his vehicle and seemed impatient to pass him.

Without weighing the risks carefully, the jeep pulled into the oncoming lane and began to speed up, hoping to clear the car in front of him before the oncoming traffic would force him back into his lane. The man in the lead car, however, never saw him coming and as he found himself driving a bit too close to the right-hand side of the

road, his instincts told him to pull the steering wheel to the left, a casual countermeasure.

At that exact moment, when he would have turned his vehicle directly into the jeep speeding dangerous close to him on the left, he heard a loud beep which caused him to turn his head. Seeing the jeep so close to his car, he braked hard and allowed the reckless jeep to pass him by.

His heart was pounding, and he was breathless at the thought of the collision that he so narrowly averted. He needed to catch his breath and collect his thoughts, so he slowed down. His mind was carefully reviewing the whole scenario, and one question suddenly jumped out at him: who had beeped?

Mentally reviewing the incident, he realized that it wasn't the oncoming car; he had not honked his own horn; and the sound he had heard did not come from the offending jeep, as he would have known if it was. In fact, he realized now, it hadn't sounded like a normal car horn at all. So where did the sound emanate from and who had alerted him to the lifesaving near-miss?

As he sat in his car, he rewound the tape and let it play again. Sure enough, moments later he heard a beep - the same beep that had saved him from a major collision! Apparently, years earlier, when R' Don Segal was giving his lecture, a car drove by and made such a loud beep that it was picked up by the recorder. No doubt that the people who were listening to the speech at that time thought it a nuisance. But ultimately, Hashem had been orchestrating events so a Jew - ten years later - would be spared!

"A true Jew is distinguished by three characteristics: sympathy, modesty, and benevolence." ~~ Sayings of the Fathers, 5:22

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

There are many people who have a lot; and yet they are very poor! There are those who have little; and yet they are extremely wealthy. Why are they wealthy? Because they appreciate whatever they have.



In truth, the essence of a Jew and his connection to his Creator, is dependent on this middah of Hakaras Hatov. True Hakaras Hatov is recognition (Hakaras) of the One and only Source of Goodness (Hatov) - which is Hashem. The more a person sees Hashem in his life, the more appreciation he will feel. For this reason, a Jew is called a "Yehudi" and the very first words that he speaks when he wakes up in the morning is "Modeh Ani.".

R' Shimshon Pincus ZT"L points out that we say "Modeh Ani" and not the more grammatically correct "Ani Modeh" because the first word that a Jew should pronounce upon opening his eyes should not be "Ani" - making it all about himself, but rather a way to say thank you to Hashem for giving him back his life each morning.

In- Laws

It has become customary for a bride and groom to find fault with their in-laws for any number of perceived "grievances" that they claim are perpetrated against them. However, no matter how much one might want to complain about his shver or shvigger, all will agree that no one had a more difficult time with his father-in-law than Yaakov Avinu had with Lavan!

From the moment they met on the fateful day that Yaakov saw Rochel at the well, Lavan never ceased to take advantage of the pure

and innocent soul that was Yaakov Avinu. He tricked him into working many extra years for him; he changed his wages on a number of occasions; he even switched his wives, forcing Yaakov to marry both of Lavan's daughters. Lavan, the evil father-in-law, the one who attempted to "uproot everything," serves as a lesson to us all to be wary and alert to those who wish to do us harm.



Before the great **R' Yonason Eibeschutz ZT"L** became renowned as a brilliant scholar, ultimately rising to the post of chief rabbi. He was already famous as a child prodigy due to his wisdom and wit. His cleverness once got him in trouble, however, as retold in the following anecdote: When young Yonasan reached marriageable age (15!), he was suggested for the daughter of **R' Shamshon Wertheimer ZT"L**, a learned Torah scholar.

As is customary, R' Shamshon arranged to meet with the young man in order to familiarize himself with him and test his Talmudic ability. It just so happened that he was scheduled to have business interests in Prague, and taking advantage of the opportunity, he made up to meet Yonason - who was residing in Prague then - informally during his stay. When the two did meet, the young prospective groom displayed a breathtaking wealth of knowledge, sparkling wit, and deep intelligence which so impressed R' Shamshon, that he agreed to the match immediately. He asked for a few days to travel home and obtain the consent of his wife and daughter before "closing the deal." Before leaving for home the following morning, R' Shamshon asked Yonason if he can talk to him once more.

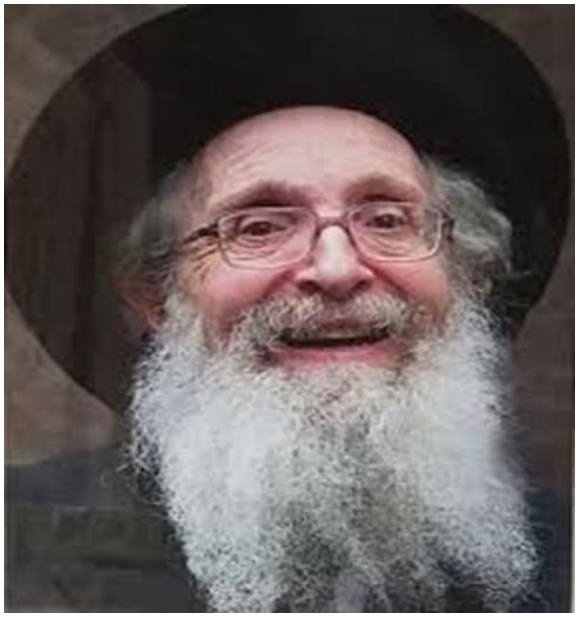
"I know we spoke already, but I'd like to test you one more time," said R' Shamshon. The young genius nodded amiably but then said, "In that case I would like to test you as well." R' Shamshon's eyes widened in disbelief at the boy's impudence. "What do you mean?" he asked impatiently. "Well," replied the youth with a smile, "the reason why a bochur is tested before his engagement is to fulfil the words of Chazal that a person should not give his daughter to marry an ignoramus.

The test, therefore, is to determine whether or not the proposed chosson is learned or not. Yet, in the very same gemara in Masechta Pesachim, Chazal tell us that a person should sell everything he owns to marry the daughter of a Torah scholar. Therefore, it would seem that the prospective chosson ought to test the father of the proposed girl to see what he's like."

R' Shamshon was floored! "However," the young man quickly continued, "we rely on the premise that the girl's father has already been tested by his father-in-law before his own engagement, and on the basis of the first test he can be considered a talmid chacham." "Okay, so why would you want to test me," inquired R' Shamshon "if I was already tested once before?"

Young Yonason Eibeschutz's eyes sparkled. "Since you want to test me a second time," he replied, "I conclude that you don't rely fully on the first test. If so, why should I rely on the first test you were given before your engagement? I need to test you a second time to make sure your daughter is indeed a bas Talmid Chacham!" ***P.S. It didn't work out!***

"Anger in a home is like rottenness in fruit." ~~ Talmud, Sota 3b



וַיַּעֲקֹב הָלַךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ וַיִּפְגְּעוּ־בוֹ מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹקִים 32:2

Before one of his trips to America, fundraising on behalf of the Mir Yeshivah, the Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel ZT"L** approached a certain kollel member and asked if he could possibly drive him to Bnei Brak in order to receive a blessing from the Ponovezher Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Eliezer Menachem Mann Shach ZT"L**, which he would do quite often before travelling abroad. Of course, the yungerman was excited and jumped at the opportunity, and even mentioned to a relative - a bochur learning in a different yeshivah - that he was going to Bnei Brak that day with R' Nosson Tzvi. His relative begged him to take him along on what was to be undoubtedly a memorable meeting between two gedolei hador.

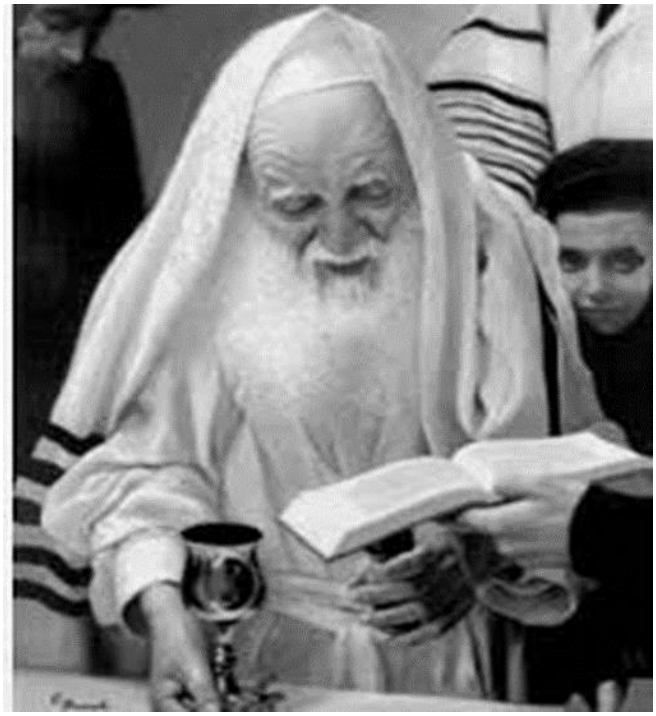


Ten minutes before they were to set out for Bnei Brak, as the yungerman pulled his tiny Israeli car up to the Mir Rosh Yeshivah's home, he saw another of the Roshei Yeshivah, **R' Aryeh Finkel Ztl**, hurrying toward the home. He walked up to the car and said, "I heard that you will be driving the Rosh Yeshivah to see Rav Shach, and I was wondering if I could come along as well." Well, why not, as it would be an even greater honour for the driver with two Roshei Yeshivah in the car.

Another two minutes went by and suddenly they noticed a man running down the street headed right for the home of R' Nosson

Tzvi. Stopping in front of the car, **R' Binyamin Carlebach Shlit'a**, another of the distinguished Roshei Yeshivah of Mir, asked the driver, "Do you think it's possible for me to come along with you to Rav Shach? I heard that you were taking the Rosh Yeshivah and I would love to come along." Well, now it would definitely be a tight squeeze in the tiny automobile - there were three Roshei Yeshivah, the driver and his relative - but he said that they can try to make it work. R' Nosson Tzvi came out of his house and saw how the traveling party had grown exponentially. He immediately invited R' Aryeh to take the front seat, since he was the oldest of all those present. Then, without the slightest hint of pretension, R' Nosson Tzvi climbed into the backseat and moved over to the middle to make room for the other passengers to join him. With R' Binyamin Carlebach on one side, and the bochur from Brisk on the other side, with the Mir Rosh Yeshivah literally sandwiched between them, they drove for the next 45 minutes from Jerusalem to the home of Rav Shach in Bnei Brak. After they had concluded the visit with Rav Shach, R' Nosson Tzvi asked the driver if he would mind making another stop.





It turns out that the **Manchester Rosh Yeshivah ZT"L** was in town and R' Nosson Tzvi wanted to invite him to give a shmuess later that

week in the Mir Yeshivah. So, they all got back into the cramped car and drove to the next stop, a few blocks away. After that, R' Nosson Tzvi made one final request: to take him to the home of a certain widow whom he wished to visit in order to give her a bit of chizuk, and so they all squeezed in once again and drove to her house. While the Rosh Yeshivah was inside, the driver quietly walked over to the Brisker bochur, and handed him a few shekel. "Listen, I feel terrible that the Rosh Yeshivah has to sit so cramped in the backseat. Do me a favour, and when we pass the 400 bus stop, I will stop at the corner and you jump out. Use this money and take the bus back, so that the Rosh Yeshivah doesn't have to endure another torturous drive back."

His relative was only too happy to oblige, as he was feeling bad for causing the Rosh Yeshivah to sit so uncomfortably. When R' Nosson Tzvi got back into the car and took his middle seat in the back, the car drove off and headed towards the city's exit.

A single minute went by before R' Nosson Tzvi suddenly hooked his arm into the arm of the bochur squeezed in on his side and with his free hand, clamped down on the bochur's arm. The boy looked stricken for a moment and turned to the Rosh Yeshivah, but R' Nosson Tzvi was staring straight ahead, with a beatific smile that belied a total understanding of the entire situation. As the car approached the bus stop, the driver slowed and came to a stop. He waited for a moment, expecting the bochur to open the door and jump out of the car. But he didn't. Looking into the rearview mirror, he caught his eye and said,"Nu .... out!"

At that point, the Rosh Yeshivah spoke up. "He can't get out," he said in his usual slow lilting incantation. "Why ... why not?" asked the driver, confused and at least a bit annoyed at his uncooperative relative. R' Nosson Tzvi again smiled and replied, "Because he is stuck!" Not relinquishing his grip on the boy's arm, they drove all the way back to Jerusalem arm in arm!



When R' Sholom Schwadron ZT"L was 75 years old, he made the final trip of his life to England. One day, as he was walking down the street, he suddenly tripped and fell. The next day, in his own room, he fell again. R' Sholom was distraught. "Why did I fall?" he asked himself over and over again. "Why did this happen to me?" His family tried to explain that this was common for an elderly man, but R' Sholom wouldn't listen. Suddenly, he stood up and exclaimed, "I must talk this over with the **Manchester Rosh Yeshivah**! He will know why!"

A short time later, R' Sholom came back smiling. "We have decided together that my falling was caused by a lack of gratitude! A friend of mine is making a wedding in the U.S. and I owe it to him to attend his simcha. Although my lack of strength prevents me from travelling - but gratitude for all he has done for me comes first. I should have gone!" That very day, R' Sholom made arrangements and took the next flight to the U.S. The joy that he brought to the simcha was immeasurable and unforgettable. The very next day R' Sholom flew back to Europe although it took him almost a full week to recuperate from his trip.

The concept of gratitude is so powerful that it is literally ingrained in the name of every Jew: Yehudi. When Leah thanked Hashem for her fourth child, she named him Yehudah. We, too, thank Hashem each day for all the good He does for us and thus, we are "Yehudim" - the Chosen and Thankful Nation!

A wealthy American businessman landed in Israel's Ben Gurion Airport late one night and hailed a cab.



He owned an apartment not far from the airport and gave the driver his address. The taxi sped off. The driver made a show of being busy with a number of the cab's utilities, including talking on his radio to the dispatcher and adjusting the dials in his car. It was well after they had driven out of the confines of the airport and were already on the highway, when the driver announced, ***"Oh, I forgot to put on the meter***. No matter, if you like I can take you to your destination for just seventy dollars."

The businessman cringed inwardly. His apartment was no more than a twenty-minute drive from the airport - he'd done it many times himself - and the cost of such a trip should not run him more than $20.00 maximum. He knew that the driver was attempting to take advantage of him, believing him to be a foreign tourist who was unfamiliar with the length of the trip and the normal cost it would entail.

Finally, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a shiny crisp one-hundred-dollar bill and held it up so the driver could see it. With the slightest nod of his head, the driver consummated the deal as only a seasoned veteran of such negotiations can, and now focused on the road ahead. The minute they pulled up in front of his apartment, the businessman removed his bags and began searching on the seat for something. "I seem to have dropped the bill I was holding," he told the driver, who looked back over the seat in an attempt to locate the $100.00 bill. The man looked between the seats, on the floor and under the mats, but he could not find it. "Perhaps you have a

flashlight?" he asked the driver who had become impatient to receive his exorbitant fare. The driver shook his head and urged him to hurry up. But the businessman continued to look every which way until he straightened and said, "Listen, I have a flashlight inside. Let me go in and get it and I'll be right back!" The businessman hurried inside with his bags and retrieved the flashlight. But by the time he walked back outside, the cab had driven off! The driver figured that if the $100.00 bill was somewhere inside his cab, he would go home and find it himself.



The next morning, the businessman approached his Rov, **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein** with an urgent shailah. He described the previous night's events and then added, "I decided to teach the driver a lesson. I knew that he was trying to cheat me and would probably drive off thinking he made $100.00 on me. But the truth is, I never left any money in the cab so instead of making money, he didn't even get his fare! He no doubt learned his lesson - but was I wrong?" The businessman felt a bit remorseful and wondered if he was required to locate the cabbie and pay him his fare.

R' Zilberstein ruled that in fact, the businessman was not required to track down the cabbie and pay him even the normal cost of the fare. He based his ruling on the Yaavet'z who holds that a person is permitted to subvert the truth in order to save himself from being cheated by an unscrupulous person and incurring a loss.

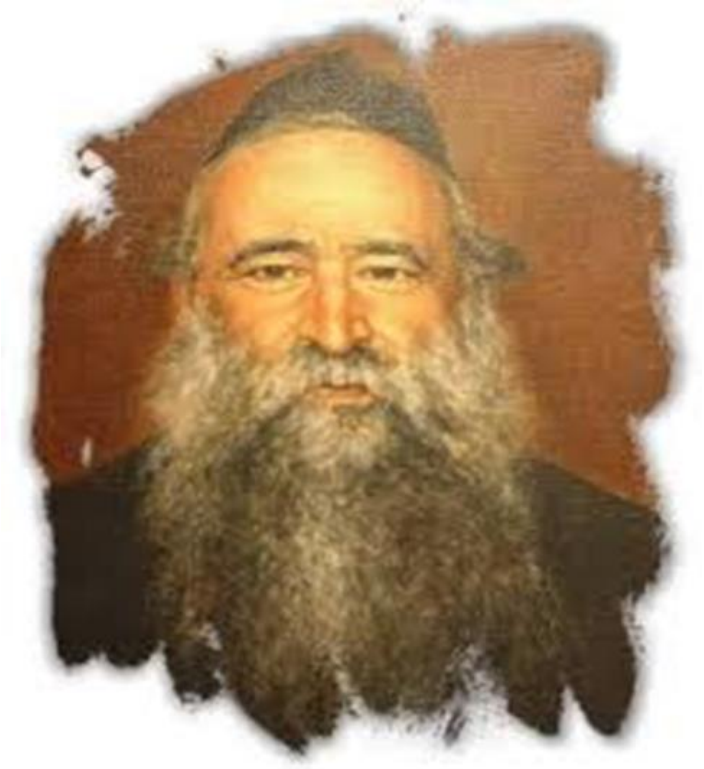


R' Meir Premishlaner ZT"L would say: "A dream tells a lot about the person doing the dreaming. It often uncovers the hidden thoughts buried within a person. Thus, Yaakov Avinu dreamed about a ladder that reached into the Heavens and he literally saw 'Hashem standing upon it.' This was what was on his mind during the day. Pharaoh, on the other hand, dreamt about seven fat cows and seven skinny cows .....!



R' Nosson Shapiro ZT"L (Toras Nosson) would say: "When Leah's fourth child, Yehudah, was born, she gave special thanks to Hashem for giving her more than her share (Rashi). If one takes the first letter of each of Leah's first four children – **ראובן שמעון לוי יהודה** - and the second letter as well, from Reuven the firstborn (**בכור נוטל פי שנים**), it spells out **ישראל**. By taking more than her share, Leah was in truth, the mother of a controlling majority of Bnei Yisroel."

For twenty years, Yaakov Avinu shepherded the flocks of sheep belonging to Lavan. Honest and devoted to a fault, Yaakov could easily declare that he never lost an animal nor was one ever stolen, injured or miscarried. He withheld himself from sleep and accepted unfair wages just to perform his job faithfully, even under extreme outdoor conditions: "By day heat consumed me and frost by night."



After he was released from a Siberian prison, where he was sentenced to five years of hard labor, **R' Yechezkel Abramsky ZT"L** would often relate the following: "Every morning, in temperatures that often plummeted to 40 degrees below zero, we were forced to take off our shoes and run barefoot in the snow. From this torture alone, men fell like flies. I looked toward Heaven and cried, 'Master of the Universe, You have taught us that, 'All is Heavenly-directed except cold and heat.' Cold and heat are in man's own hands since man can guard himself from the elements by donning a coat or removing a sweater. This reason, however, no longer applies to me, for my captors not only fail to provide me with clothes, but force me to remove whatever I am wearing. My obligation to guard my health, therefore, returns to You. Please protect me, Hashem, for I trust in You!" R' Yechezkel concluded: "As a child, my mother always bundled me up warmly due to my frailty and yet, while in the midst of that Siberian cold, I never once took sick or even caught a cold."

When a close relative of R' Akiva Eiger ZT"L got married, the family celebrated Shabbos Sheva Berachos together in a catering hall where they ate the meals. On Friday night, as R' Akiva Eiger was being escorted into the bright and festive hall, he commented to the person next to him, "Why is it so dark in here? How can anyone see anything in here?" The people around him were surprised. In fact, the hall was extremely bright and well-lit with radiant candles throughout. They couldn't understand why the Rov would think it was dark.



One man, though, decided to find out. He found the owner of the catering hall and inquired about the lighting. Instantly, the man turned red and blurted out the story. A few minutes after shekiah, the candles had gone out in the hall, and he panicked. Not finding a goy to relight them, when no one was looking, he relit the candles himself, on Shabbos. He felt terrible. Now the man understood. R' Akiva Eiger's eyes were so pure that they couldn't physically see light that was derived from an impure source.

The posuk tells us that Leah's eyes were "weak" from crying. Just the thought that she may be forced to marry a wicked man like Esav caused her to grieve and cry incessantly, to the point that even her eyes became soft and weakened.

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הֲשָׁלוֹם לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ שָׁלוֹם 29:6

Yaakov Avinu arrived at the well of water in Charan. When he saw the shepherds congregating there with their flocks of sheep, he walked over to them and greeted them with pleasantries. He then inquired about the welfare of Lavan and how he and his family were faring. Chazal learn out from Yaakov's words and actions, the importance of greeting others in a pleasant and friendly manner.



An amazing story is told about how one man's friendly overtures to the neighbouring gentiles did more than simply extend his good wishes, but in fact, it saved his life. Near the city of Danzig, Poland, was a small village by the name of Prochnik. The village maintained a mix of Jews and gentiles who lived together in relative harmony. The Rov of Prochnik, was a respected Chassidishe Rebbe, by the name of **R' Shmuel Shapira ZT"L**, who was well regarded by all the townspeople. It was the Rebbe's custom to take his daily morning stroll through the streets of the village, accompanied by his tall son-in-law.

As befitting his stature, R' Shmuel would walk about dressed in a tailored black coat, wearing a top hat, and carrying a silver walking cane, and he cut an impressive sight to all those that beheld him. During his morning walk, it was the Rebbe's custom to greet every man, woman, and child, Jew and gentile, whom he met on his way with a warm smile and a cordial "Good morning." Of course, when the Rebbe would greet them, every person would respond in kind, and it was deemed an honour to have spoken with the rabbi.

Over the years, R' Shmuel became acquainted with many of his fellow townspeople this way and would always greet them by their proper title and name. Near the outskirts of town, in the fields, he would exchange greetings with Herr Muller, a Polish Volksdeutsche (ethnic German). "Good morning, Herr Muller!" the rabbi would hasten to greet the man who worked in the fields, as per the halachah that one should attempt to be first to give "Sholom" to his friends and acquaintances. Herr Muller was extremely honoured by the Rebbe's greeting, and would elicit his own "Good morning, Herr Rabbiner!" with a good-natured smile.

Then the war began. The rabbi's strolls stopped abruptly. Herr Muller donned an S.S. uniform and disappeared from the fields. The fate of R' Shmuel and his entire family was like that of much of the rest of Polish Jewry. His family was shipped off to perish in the death camp of Treblinka and, after great suffering, R' Shmuel arrived in Auschwitz.

One day, during a selection at Auschwitz, R' Shmuel stood in line with hundreds of other Jews awaiting the moment when their fates would be decided, for life or death. Dressed in a striped camp uniform, head and beard shaven and eyes feverish from starvation and disease, the rabbi looked like a walking skeleton. "Right! Left, left, left!" The voice in the distance drew nearer. Suddenly the rabbi thought he recognized the voice and had a great urge to see the face of the man with the snow-white gloves, small baton, and steely voice who thought he could play G-d. The man who decided who should live and who should die. As he stood before the German, he lifted his eyes and heard his own voice speaking: "Good morning, Herr Muller!" A moment's surprise before a loud, "Good morning, Herr Rabbiner" was heard. Unlike the usual clipped and shrill official tone, a human voice responded beneath the S.S. cap adorned with skull and bones. "What are you doing here?" asked the Nazi. A strange question, indeed, thought the Rebbe. A faint hint of a smile appeared

on the Rebbe's lips. Without another spoken word, the baton moved to the right - to life.

The following day, the Rebbe was transferred to a "safer" camp, where he survived the remainder of the war. The Rebbe would recount this tale and would add in his gentle voice, "This is the incredible power of a simple good-morning greeting. A man must always greet his fellow man. One never knows what can come out of it."

וַיִּשַּׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־קֹלוֹ וַיֵּבְךְּ 29:11



The moment Yaakov saw Rochel for the first time, he burst into tears. Rashi tells us that he cried out of embarrassment; when Eliezer the servant of Avrohom, came to this same well years earlier and saw Rivkah, he brought with him gifts of gold and silver jewellery. But Yaakov had nothing with which to give Rochel, since all his earthly possessions were stolen from him by his brother Esav's son, Elifaz. It caused him great consternation not to be able to provide, or even bring a gift, for his future betrothed, and for this he wept.

It was well-known that the famous **Mahara"l of Prague, R' Yehudah Loewy ZT"L** went to great lengths to ensure that any husband and wife experiencing marital problems would not, G-d-forbid, get divorced. When a young couple was once struggling under a terrible financial burden, R' Yehudah did all that he could to help them out

of their woes. He told his son-in-law, **R' Yitzchok Katz ZT"L**, why this meant so much to him.

When the Mahara"l was fifteen, he was engaged to be married to the daughter of a wealthy man, R' Shmelke Reich. He was young, though, and his future father-in-law wanted him to continue learning in the prestigious yeshivah of the Maharsha"l until he turned eighteen. Unfortunately, during that time, R' Shmelke lost his entire fortune and was left with nothing to offer his future son-in-law. He wrote a letter to the young chasan and explained the situation. "I understand if you wish to terminate the shidduch. Now that you are eighteen years old, you are free to pursue any shidduch that you please."

The Mahara"l received this letter and was saddened by it. Immediately, he wrote back, "My dear father-in-law, I have no intention of going back on this shidduch and I intend to marry your daughter when the time is right, and things become more financially stable. However, if she feels that she does not want to marry me, I totally understand and release her from the shidduch!" Back and forth this went and in the meantime, the chasan remained in the yeshivah and continued his studies full time. The situation remained unchanged for a full ten years. The Mahara"l was offered many proposals but he turned them all down and continued to wait. He was one of the oldest bochurim in yeshivah and was even referred to by the other students as "R' Leib Bochur". Meanwhile, his kallah, the daughter of the once rich and respected Reich family, decided that she must do her part to support her poverty-stricken parents and opened up a small bakery from which she eked out a meagre livelihood. She, too, refused any other marriage proposal and placed her trust in the Almighty that He will enable her to marry her "basherter."

Ten long years passed thus, and war broke out in the surrounding provinces. Marauding soldiers would frequently pass through local

towns wreaking havoc on the citizens and people stayed off the streets when they would ride through.

A lone horseman was riding past the bakery belonging to the Reich family and smelling the scent of fresh bread wafting through the air, stuck out his sword and speared a freshly baked loaf that was cooling near the door to the shop. He continued riding, enjoying his "catch" until he realized that a young woman was chasing after him, arms waving frantically. He slowed his horse to face her as she began crying and pleading with him. "Please, your honour, I am a poor woman who must sell these loaves of bread to support my family. I beg of you not to take this bread without paying for it as it will cause me, and my family, a great loss if I do not sell it." The haughty knight softened a bit at her words, but still shrugged, "I have no money to pay you for this bread." Then, he reached down and pulled out an old leather saddle. "Here, I have an extra saddle. Take this in lieu of payment." He laughed at his joke and threw the saddle down at her feet. Then he rode off.

She picked up the saddle and noticed a tear in the leather. She stuck her hand in and to her amazement, pulled out a fistful of gold coins. She ran to tell her father, and he sent off a letter to the Mahara"l stating that Hashem had provided for them and had let them know that the time was right to complete the shidduch.



A wise man was asked, "What is anger?" He gave a beautiful answer – "It is a punishment you give to yourself, for somebody else's mistakes!"

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

"ונתן לי לחם לאכל ובגד ללבש" ***"He will give me bread to eat and garments to put on."*** **(28:20)**

The words *"le'echol"* — "to eat" — and *"lilbosh"* — "to wear"— seem extra?

There are people who have food in abundance and a wardrobe full of clothing yet are unfortunately bed-ridden and unable to enjoy their delicacies or garments. Yaakov prayed for good health so that he could enjoy his food and wear his clothing. To him *"gezunt"* was a primary objective. **(שפתי כהן)**

Vedibarta Bam

"וכל אשר תתן לי עשר עשרנו לך" ***"Of whatever you will give me, I will give a tenth to you."*** **(28:22) -** Wouldn't everybody make such a deal with Hashem?

The famous Jewish philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore lived in nineteenth-century England. Queen Victoria once asked him, "What is the extent of your wealth? How much do you own?" Sir Moses told her it would take him a few days to do a proper accounting. When Sir Moses told her the extent of his wealth, she became upset, saying, "You're not telling the truth. Everyone knows that you have much more." Sir Moses explained that he considered as *his* wealth whatever money he gave away to *tzedakah*. Anything else that he possessed was only temporary and could be confiscated or lost.

Yaakov was alluding to this thought and said to Hashem, " **וכל אשר תתן**" — "Whatever you will give" — "I realize, that '**לי**' — 'for me' — I will only have the ten percent which I will give away to *tzedakah*." **(מעינה של תורה - קומץ המנחה)**

Vedibarta Bam

"ויאמר לו לבן אך עצמי ובשרי אתה" ***"And Lavan said to him; 'Surely you are my bones and flesh."*** **(29:14) -** They were two separate individuals. How could it be that Yaakov was Lavan's bone and flesh?

There are three partners in the forming of man. Through the father he receives veins and bones; through the mother, flesh and blood; and through Hashem, the *neshamah (Niddah* 31a).

Yaakov was related to Lavan through both of his parents. Yaakov's mother was Lavan's sister, and his grandfather, Avraham, was a brother to Lavan's grandfather Nachor. Thus, he was a nephew through his mother and a second cousin through his father, Yitzchak. Consequently, through the paternal relationship, they were of "one bone," and from the maternal relationship, they were of "the same flesh." (**קול אליהו**)

Vedibarta Bam

"ויאמר לבן טוב תתי אתה לך מתתי אתה לאיש אחר" **-** ***"And Lavan Said: 'It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man.'"*** **(29:19) -** Why was Lavan so eager for Yaakov to marry Rachel?

Lavan knew that Yaakov was a great *tzaddik*. He also knew that his daughter Rachel was a great *tzaddeikit*.

Lavan was sure that if Yaakov would marry another woman, and Rachel would marry another man, Yaakov would make his wife a *tzaddeikit* and Rachel would make her husband a *tzaddik*. If this were to happen, Lavan would have to contend with four *tzaddikim*. Therefore, he would rather that Yaakov marry Rachel so that there would only be two *tzaddikim*. (**ר' בונים מפשיסחא זצ"ל**)

Vedibarta Bam

"ויאסף לבן את כל אנשי המקום ויעש משתה" *"And Lavan gathered all the people of the place and made a feast."* (29:22)

When a person plans a wedding, he first prepares the meal and afterwards the guests arrive. Why did Lavan first invite the people and afterwards prepare the meal?

Yaakov worked for a period of seven years before Lavan permitted him to marry his daughter. Lavan enjoyed free labour and decided to switch Leah for Rachel, so that Yaakov would work another seven years for nothing. When the first seven-year period was coming to an end, Lavan began planning a wedding.

He called together all the people of the city and told them: "You all remember very well the difficulty our city had with water before Yaakov came. There was only one well, and all the shepherds had to gather together to uncover it. Luckily, since Yaakov has arrived, our city has been blessed, and we now have a greater supply of water.

"Yaakov is planning to marry my daughter and leave the city, so we may all have to suffer again. If you agree to cooperate with me, I have a plan which will keep him here for another seven years. I will fool him and give him Leah instead of Rachel. I know he wants Rachel very much, so he will stay here for seven more years, and our town will be blessed through him." Everyone approved the plan.

Lavan told them that in order for him to be sure that nobody would reveal the secret, everyone must go home and bring their valuables as a guarantee. Lavan took these valuables to the storekeepers in exchange for all the food needed to make a lavish wedding. Consequently, after first gathering together all the people, he was able to make a beautiful meal without spending a penny of his own.

When the wedding was over, the people came to claim their valuables. Lavan sent them to the storekeepers. The storekeepers told them that they could get back their valuables if they would pay

for the food which was given to Lavan in exchange. As they wanted their possessions, reluctantly they paid all of Lavan's bills.

It is, therefore, very befitting that he became known as *"Lavan Ha'Arami"* — "Lavan the Aramean" (with a pun on *"HaRamai"* — "the Swindler"). Not only did he fool his son-in-law, Yaakov, but he also cheated the entire city where he lived. (**שער בת רבים**)

Vedibarta Bam

"ויאמר הן עוד היום גדול לא עת האסף המקנה" ***"Lo, it is still the middle of the day, it is not yet time for the cattle to be gathered together."*** **(29:7) -** The word *"hein"* (**הן**)— "lo" — seems superfluous. Would it not be sufficient to say, "it is still the middle of the day"?

In the *alef-beit* there are 22 letters, which are divided into three sections. "**א**" to "**ט**" are the singular numerals. "**י**" to "**צ**" are the tens, and "**ק**" to "**ת**" are the hundreds. In the singular section the first and last letters can be paired to equal ten, i.e., **10** = **ט** + **א**. The second and second to the last letters, **10** = **ח** + **ב** etc. The only letter that remains alone without a pair is "**ה**". In the tens section, the first and last can be paired together to equal 100, i.e., **100** = **צ** + **י**.

The second and second to the last, **100** = **פ** + **כ** etc., The only letter which remains alone without a pair is the "**נ**".

The prophet says of the Jewish people, *"seh pezurah Yisrael"* — "Israel is a scattered sheep" (Jeremiah 50:17). Presently, we are in *galut*, eagerly awaiting the coming of *Mashiach* who will gather us together and end the *galut*. The *pasuk* is hinting that as long as we are in the category of "**הן**" — separate entities, not united together — the *galut* will continue, *G*-d forbid, and *Mashiach* will not come to gather Hashem's sheep. (**ר' נפתלי מראפשיץ זצ"ל**)

Vedibarta Bam

"ויבא גם אל רחל ויאהב גם את רחל מלאה" ***"And he also married Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah."*** **(29:30)**



Would it not have been sufficient to say **ויאהב את רחל** — "***And he loved Rachel***"?

Originally, Yaakov wanted to marry Rachel, but Lavan fooled him and gave him Leah instead. Yaakov suspected a trick and therefore arranged secret signs between them. When Rachel saw that her father was going to substitute her sister Leah for her, she became concerned lest her sister be embarrassed. Therefore, she conveyed the secret signs to Leah.

When Yaakov became aware of this, his love for Rachel intensified because the way she conducted herself with Leah convinced him even more of her righteousness and good nature. The Torah confirms this by saying: "*Vaye'ehav gam et Rachel*" — "And he loved (also) Rachel more" — "*MiLeah*" — "*through* (because of what she did for) Leah." (**אמרי שפר**)

Vedibarta Bam

"ותקרא את שמו יוסף לאמר יוסף ה' לי בן אחר" ***"She called him Yosef saying, 'May G-d give me another son.'"*** **(30:24)**

Since the word "*acheir*" can also mean "different" it would have been better to say "*od bein*" — "an additional son"?

Yaakov was destined to have 12 sons. When Leah became pregnant for the seventh time, she was concerned that if she should have another son, her sister Rachel would be inferior to Bilhah and Zilpah, because she would have only one son while they

each had two. Leah therefore prayed for Rachel and, through a miracle, the female in Rachel's womb was transferred to Leah and the male in her womb was transferred to Rachel. Thus, she gave birth to Dinah, and Rachel gave birth to Yosef (see Niddah 31b, Maharsha).

Hence, when Yosef was born, Rachel prayed to Hashem that He give her "*bein acheir*" a *different* type of son, one who would be conceived and carried in her womb from beginning to end.

(מצמיח ישועה)

Vedibarta Bam

ויקרא לו לבן יגר שהדותא ויעקב קרא לו גלעד: ויאמר לבן הגל הזה עד ביני ובינך היום על כן קרא שמו גלעד ***"And Lavan called it 'Yegar-sahaduta,' but Yaakov called it 'Gal'eid.' And Lavan said, 'This heap of stones is a witness between me and you this day.' Therefore he called it 'Gal'eid.'"*** **(31:47-48)**

Originally, Lavan called it "*Yegar-sahaduta*"; why did he change his mind and call it "*Gal'eid*"?

While Lavan was eager to reach a peace treaty with Yaakov, he wanted it to be done in his language. Yaakov refused and told Lavan, "If you want a treaty with me, it must be in my language and on my terms." Seeing Yaakov's persistence, Lavan yielded and agreed that everything be done in accordance with Yaakov's conditions.

An important lesson can be learned from this: Unfortunately, there are Jews who think that they must compromise in order to find favour in the eyes of society. Torah teaches us never to be ashamed of our customs and ideals. Seeing our sincerity and devotion to Torah, the world will yield and respect the Jew for his beliefs.
(מיוסד על ספורנו)

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

A *rav* was once visiting someone in a certain hospital. The patient, a local rabbi, was undergoing treatment for a severe heart condition, *R"l*, and it reached a point where his doctors informed him that there was not much more they could do for him, and his time left was very limited.

The rabbi requested that congregants from his *shul* come to him to make a *minyan*, so that he could *daven* in a group of ten men one more time. However, it proved to be difficult to summon ten people on such short notice, and they were only able to gather nine. Since time was of the essence and they did not know what to do, they turned to the rabbi's doctor for help, who was also gathered there and was Jewish himself, hoping he would be able to help them complete a *minyan*.

The doctor realized that there was another patient of his in the hospital that was also Jewish, and through great effort, had the other patient transferred— with all his medical equipment, into the room of the rabbi. This patient was already in the hospital for many months on advanced care, and not sure if he would ever be able to leave the hospital. He was in desperate need of a heart transplant, but there just wasn't any available for him. They were about to start *davening*, but before they could start, the patient that just arrived said in disbelief, "Today is the *yartzeit* of my father, and I didn't think it would ever be possible for me to be able to say *Kaddish* with a *minyan* in my condition, but now that there is a *minyan* gathered, I would like to say *Kaddish* as a merit for his *neshamah*."

All those gathered were moved by the *Hashgacha Pratis*, Divine Providence of the events that led to this man to have a *minyan*, and everyone answered *amein* with deep *kavanah*. After *Kaddish*, the doctor checked on the rabbi's heart monitor and announced, "I am witnessing a miracle from *Shamayim*, because the *rav's* condition is improving before my eyes, and he is no longer in danger!"

Just a few days later, the rabbi's health had been restored and he was able to return to his home. Just as miraculously, a short while after, a heart became available for the other patient who had said *Kaddish*, and soon was also well enough to return home, in complete health!

The visiting *rav* was convinced from this amazing story which displayed Hashem's guiding hand to help others who want to do His *mitzvos*, and the *yeshuos*, salvations, that come about through them!

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

In this week's *parshah*, Yaakov was standing at the well and when Rachel came, he single-handedly removed the heavy stone off of the top of the well— something which would regularly take three people to remove. The simple understanding would be that Yaakov was a physically strong person.

In *Tefilas Geshem* (the Prayer for Rain which we recite on Shemini Atzeres) we ask for rain in the merit of this action. However, if it is merely a display of physical prowess, it isn't something which bears merit! Why would we cite this instance in our requests for rain?

R'Yitzchak Zilberstein therefore explains that this particular display of strength from Yaakov refers particularly to Yaakov's gathering of all of his ***inner strength***— with Yaakov focusing on a goal and then attaining and accomplishing it. We see from this that a person has the ability to overcome tasks that are seemingly impossible, all he needs to do is focus.

A fool raises his voice in laughter, a wise man smiles in silence.

V'halachtah B'drachav - The Ways of Hashem



The famous Novardik Yeshivah had a *seder* of learning that was only five minutes long. This was scheduled during the rest of their day of learning. It was done to teach some very valuable lessons about time. Firstly, if someone came even *one minute* late, they lost twenty percent of their learning for that time. It taught the *chashivus*, importance of five minutes and not to squander time. It also showed that five minutes set aside per day add up to many hours over a year, and that entire *seforim* could be learned in such a short amount of time. The value of time in general was learned from this *seder* as well.

Once, when the ***Chasam Sofer*** was asked how he became such a *Gadol BaTorah*, a Torah giant, he answered that he became a *gadol* in five minutes— by using his spare minutes throughout the day to learn, he became great!

Parshah Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

In this week's *parshah*, when Yaakov comes to the well (29:7-8), a very awkward thing happens: Yaakov, a complete stranger, chastises the shepherds and they listen to him. Why do they accept his rebuke? He was a foreigner!

The *Ponovezher Rav* explains that Yaakov started off his conversation by calling them "*Achai*", *my brothers*. By offering this expression of warmth and care, the shepherds felt that Yaakov's intentions were only for their best interests. Therefore, they were able to accept his words.

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



While on his way to Lavan, Yaakov stops to sleep, and he dreams of what is referred to as his ladder. When he awakes he refers to the area in which he slept as וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמָיִם 'the Gates of Heaven' (28:17). Why does he not call it 'the doorway to Heaven'?

The Netziv differentiates between a gateway and a doorway. A doorway is an entry way available only to a few exclusive people who are given access to the home behind it. A gateway is an entrance way available to all who want to enter. The Gates of Heaven are open to all who would like to enter!

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

On Shabbos nights, the ***Arizal*** used to attend a *Parshah Shiur* given by the ***Alshich Ha'kadosh***. One of the things the *Alshich* is known for is his beautiful commentary on *Chumash*.

That evening, the *Alshich* explained from the *Pesukim* that Lavan tricked Yaakov *Avinu* in not less than 100 ways, and he actually went through each way that he tricked Yaakov! Each time the *Alshich* said over one of Lavan's tricks, the *Arizal* uncharacteristically laughed. After a while, someone asked the *Arizal* why he was laughing. The *Arizal* explained that Lavan himself had walked in to hear the *Alshich's Shiur* and is sitting with us. Each time the *Alshich* states how Lavan tricked Yaakov, Lavan laughs out loud and says, "That is true! It's amazing that the *Alshich* knows that!"

L'Maaseh

Rabbi Aryeh Ginzberg relates a story: "A few weeks after I arrived in *Eretz Yisroel* in 1974 to learn in *Yeshivah*, I received a heartfelt letter from a *Kollel* fellow I knew. The letter detailed the difficulties that he and his wife were undergoing, as her last three pregnancies had ended in miscarriages and doctors could not identify the cause.

The couple had heard about a *Mekubal* who dispensed bottles of water which were rumored to prevent miscarriages. Since I was the only one he knew living in *Eretz Yisroel* at the time, he asked if I could try to obtain a few bottles of this water from the *Mekubal* and send them to him. In those days, the trip would have taken at least six hours. Moreover, with the inevitable long lines by the *Mekubal*, I could expect the trip to take all day. I wasn't sure what to do. Should I give up an entire day of learning in *Yeshivah* for this act of *Chesed*? When I asked the *Mashgiach* of the *Yeshivah* for advice, he recommended that I present the question to a *Posek* in

Mei'ah She'arim, who at the time was not known outside of the small circle of *Talmidei Chachamim* in Yerushalayim. His name was **Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv.**

I went to see Rav Elyashiv and when he heard my *She'eilah*, he said, 'I am not personally familiar with the practice of dispensing water as a *Segulah*, nor with the people who do so. However, there is a concept in *Chazal*, that if a *Tzadik* makes a decree, *Hashem* carries out the decree. Therefore, if a true *Tzadik* decrees that if one drinks from a certain cup of water and *Brachos* will come from it, then I strongly suggest he drink to the very last drop!'

I then asked who, in his opinion, fits *Chazal's* description of a '*Tzadik*'. Without any hesitation he said, '**The *Steipler Gaon***', who was the father of **Rav Chaim Kanievsky** and also **Rav Elyashiv's** *Mechutan*. Since the *Steipler* lived in Bnei Brak, which was less than an hour from Yerushalayim, Rav Elyashiv suggested I travel there to obtain a *Brachah* for this young couple.

I immediately travelled to Bnei Brak, with a letter from Rav Elyashiv which introduced me and stated the purpose of my visit. When I showed the letter to the *Gabbaim*, I was immediately allowed to be seen by the *Steipler*. After the *Steipler* read the letter, he smiled and said, 'You are coming from Rav Elyashiv. Do you know who Rav Elyashiv is? ***All of his Halachic decisions come from Shamayim!***' The *Steipler* then gave his *Brachah*. On the ride back to Yerushalayim I contemplated the words that the '*Tzadik* of the generation' had just shared with me, that the unassuming man in Mei'ah She'arim was completely and totally dedicated to *Torah*, and his *Halachic* decisions come from *Shamayim* itself. At that moment, I decided to spend as much time as I could with this great and holy man and absorb what I could from him. I visited with Rav Elyashiv several times a week, and ultimately, I was *Bentched* with the great *Zechus* of having a regular learning *Seder* with him every *Motzaei Shabbos*!

Incidentally, approximately twenty years later, I was granted the honour of reciting a *Brachah* under the *Chupah* at this young couple's oldest daughter's wedding, as the *Brachah* from the *Steipler* was fulfilled about a year after I went to him!

Parshah Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

The *Medrash* states that after the destruction of the *Bais HaMikdash*, it was only in Rachel's merit that we are guaranteed to return to *Eretz Yisroel*. Rachel gave up the opportunity to marry Yaakov by giving Leah the signs from Yaakov, so that she would not be shamed by not knowing them. Why is Rachel's merit even greater than Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and Moshe?

Rav Sholom Schwadron, *zt"l*, explains that her greatness was giving Leah the signs without her even realizing what was happening. Leah never knew that Yaakov was originally going to marry Rachel. Rachel taught Leah the signs without her realizing what their true purpose was for. We now understand how great her act really was. This should inspire us to try to emulate this style of *Chesed*, to help others in discreet ways.



Rav Avigdor Miller, *zt"l*, was able to find inspiration in what many others would often take for granted. He used to carry apple seeds in his pocket because he was able to see the wisdom of Hashem inherent in each small seed which would grow into a large apple tree.

There is a saying, "Anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but only Hashem can count the number of apples in a seed!"

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



In Yaakov's dream he saw a ladder which stretched from the land to the heavens (28:12).*Rashi* notes that the ladder was standing at an angle.

Rav Moshe Shternbuch (*Ta'am V'Da'as*) notes that the ladder represents man's progress in life; sometimes he is moving closer to *Hashem* and sometimes he is distancing himself. If the ladder was standing straight up, one could concern himself with seeing that there is someone higher than he is and become dejected, or he could see a person below him and feel sufficient with his own growth. By the ladder standing at an angle, there is never anyone directly above or below him to compare himself to.

This teaches that each person should focus only on himself and his own spiritual growth.

L'Maaseh

Rav Moshe Yaakov Ribicov, *zt"l*, was a very holy *Tzadik* known as the *Sandlor*, the Shoemaker. The *Sandlor* lived in Tel Aviv, and the ***Chazon Ish*** considered him to be the head of the thirty-six hidden *Tzadikim*, in whose merit the world is sustained.

The *Sandlor* was a simple Jew who kept to himself and concealed the righteous things he did. The *Sandlor* was once invited to attend a *Bris Milah*. However, when he entered the room, he raised his head, looked around, and yelled out, "I do not see him! I do not seehim!" He immediately left the room. He was referring to Eliyahu *HaNavi* who attends every *Bris*.

This made everyone anxious, and it was enough to delay the *Bris* while they investigated why Eliyahu *HaNavi* would not attend this *Bris*. Many hours went by, and finally the matter was resolved. Somehow, there had been a mistake at the hospital, and the child who was supposed to have the *Bris* had been switched for a *goyish* baby. The parents had not been aware of this, and they may never have known of the error for some time, if even at all.

Once the problem was corrected and they brought the true, Jewish child, they called the holy *Sandlor* to attend the *Bris*. This time when he entered, his face lit up and he announced, "Now I see him!"

Make Sure the Boy Doesn't Have Payis



Rabbi and Mrs. Landau were concerned about their daughter Miriam's growing frustration in meeting her intended match. Miriam was only 21 years old, a successful teacher in a school in Yerushalayim, and very popular amongst her circle of friends in the neighborhood of Bayit Vegan.

When Rabbi Landau mentioned the latest suggestion of a young man proposed by a neighbour, Miriam simply did not feel like meeting the young man. Not that she wasn't interested in getting married; she just wanted to make sure that the young man was "in the ball park" of what she was looking for in a future mate. She did not want to experience another evening of disappointment and frustration. Miriam did not turn down their neighbour's suggestion… she just asked her father if he could informally meet the young man first. "You already know in your sleep what kind of boy I am looking for," Miriam told her father. "Meet

him first, and if you think it's worthwhile for me to meet him, then I will…"

Miriam then reminded her father, "And please don't forget to make sure that he doesn't have peyos hiding behind his ears!" Rabbi Landau smiled; he knew his daughter's likes and dislikes well. He felt Miriam's suggestion was fair and called their neighbour to arrange to meet the young man at his yeshivah. First, however, Rabbi Landau asked for information about the boy – Yehoshua Mandel – and found that "on paper" all the facts seemed to fit perfectly into the prototype of whom Miriam wanted to marry.

Rabbi Landau met Yehoshua, and the two went outside for a walk. They spoke about a variety of topics, and after twenty minutes, parted ways, as Yehoshua left to attend his afternoon seder. Rabbi Landau waited on the sidewalk as Yehoshua turned to enter the yeshivah. Perfect, he thought to himself, as he scrutinized the boy's head – no peyos behind the ears!

A week later, Miriam and Yehoshua met. She was far from disappointed! Six weeks later, they were engaged; the wedding took place two weeks before Pesach. Pesach was spent at the Landaus in Bayit Vegan, Shavuos at the Mandels, and Sukkos brought the young couple to the Landaus once again.

On the first night of Yom Tov, as Yehoshua left the house to learn in a local yeshivah, Rabbi Landau noticed tufts of hair growing behind his ears. He couldn't help but ask Miriam about this – after all, it was so important to her NOT to marry a boy with peyos like that, and now this?!?

Miriam burst out laughing, as she explained: "Yehoshua has had peyos behind his ears since he was a young boy. The day he was supposed to meet you for the first time, he needed a haircut. Normally, his roommate in the yeshivah gave him haircuts. But that day his roommate wasn't there, so Yehoshua had to go to a barbershop.

'Before he noticed what was happening, the barber had accidentally cut off one of his peyos! The barber apologized, but it was too late. Yehoshua asked the barber to cut off the other one as well, as he was too embarrassed to meet you with only one. He kept the peyos short until after the wedding, as he would have looked unkempt trying to grow them back.

"After the wedding, when Yehoshua told me he was going to grow the peyos back again, I had to laugh. It was something that mattered so much to me before we met but mattered so little to me after we were married. You see, I had always associated peyos with overly serious, somber personalities. Once I got to know Yehoshua, I realized how silly I'd been. And when Yehoshua explained to me how he'd 'accidentally' lost his peyos on the day he met you, we both just marvelled at the hashgacha pratis involved!"



A Mother's Prayer – by Yair Hoffman

The Chazon Ish, Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz zt"l (1878 – 1953) was not just one of the Gedolei HaDor and the leading recognized Posaik HaDor in his generation, he was also an incredibly empathetic Gadol who was deeply moved and concerned with mothers whose sons had strayed from the ideal course.

He composed a special Tefillah for these mothers to insert in the Tefillah of Shmoneh Esreh – specifically in Shma Koleinu. What follows is the Hebrew Tefillah and an English translation.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ וֵאלֹקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּרַחֵם עַל בְּנִי
וְכוּ' וְתַהֲפֹךְ אֶת לִבָּם לְאַהֲבָה וּלְיִרְאָה אֶת שְׁמֶךָ וְלִשְׁקֹד
בְּתוֹרָתְךָ הַקְּדוֹשָׁה, וְתָסִיר מִלְּפָנָיו כָּל הַסִּבּוֹת הַמּוֹנְעוֹת אוֹתוֹ
מִשְּׁקִידַת תּוֹרָתְךָ הַקְּדוֹשָׁה, וְתָכִין אֶת כָּל הַסִּבּוֹת הַמְּבִיאוֹת
לְתוֹרָתְךָ הַקְּדוֹשָׁה, כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ' וְכוּ'.

May it be Your Will, Hashem our G-d and the G-d of our fathers that You have mercy upon my son _____ ben _____ (mother's name) and change his heart to love and fear Your Name and to be diligent in the study of Your Holy Torah; Remove from before him all the reason that prevent him from diligence in Your Holy Torah and prepare all of the reasons that bring a person to the Holy Torah, for you listen to the prayers of your nation. Blessed are You Hashem who hears prayer. (Kovetz Chazon Ish)

Fascinating Insights – Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

Attitude of Gratitude

When Yehuda was born, Leah was especially grateful as **נטלתי יותר מחלקי**, I took more than my share. It should be the same with each of us as whatever we have is more than we deserve. For this reason, we are called **יהודי**, from the term **הודאה**, to be grateful for all we have and say I took more than my portion.

Indeed, this is the attitude we begin our day with **מודה אני** — thanking Hashem. As someone once put it, "We thank before we think" (referring to **מודה אני** as we say this immediately when we awake).

We should constantly ask ourselves, "What am I grateful for now?" We always have what to be grateful for at any given moment. Our health, food, beautiful weather, just being alive… is not something to be taken for granted.

There is so much to appreciate: the air we breathe, which is in abundant supply. Water, which is plentiful. The sunlight, wind, rain, trees, gardens, mountains, seas, moon, stars, fire, heat, cold, snow, dew, use of our limbs, the ability to see, hear, smell, taste, feel, the faculty of speech, thought, memory, the variety of food of every taste and colour, the body's secretions and chemistry. The materials that compose our clothing and supply our homes. Utensils, grains vegetables, fruits, meat, chicken, fish, minerals, electricity, light, wood, coal, petroleum and all the resources of the earth. For many, this is as if it doesn't exist. If the happiness of life passes by unnoticed, it also passes by not enjoyed. It is when one is about to leave the world that he looks back with regret at all that he possessed but failed to enjoy.

There is an expression, "The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our own blessings."

Let us think what Adam had to do until he found bread to eat: He ploughed, sowed, reaped, gathered the stalks together, threshed the stalks, winnowed the chaff from the grain, selected the other waste from the grain, ground the grain into flour, sifted the flour, kneaded the flour into dough, baked the dough and then afterwards ate the bread. We arise in the morning and have all these labours already prepared for us.

Now let us think of the exertions involved for Adam to have a garment to wear. Adam sheared the wool, cleaned it, disentangled it, spun it into threads and wove the threads. Then he had a garment to wear. All of this is already performed for us! We must have an attitude of gratitude!

R' Ovadia Yosef said that nowadays even when things are tight, everyone is wealthy compared to the way he lived when he was a child. He wrote, "I never had a suit. My father bought my Shabbos clothing second-hand. I had a long jacket that probably had been worn by twenty people before me. At that time, the bus company

Mekasher provided transportation from Beis Yisrael to the Old City for a half-grush (currency). I didn't want to waste the coin, so I walked—rain or snow. All the half-grush coins that I saved funded my wedding. When we were young, we took dry bread and water to school every day, often with a tomato, which we rubbed into the bread. That's all we took for an entire school day, to hold us over until dinnertime. If someone was eating bread with an egg, we thought he was a millionaire. I once brought cream, which they sold in a small container, and that day was a holiday. For dessert, we were often given a teaspoon of coffee grains with sugar."

A 109 year-old-Holocaust survivor who lost her entire family in the holocaust was having hip surgery. After the surgery she was walking in the corridor at the hospital where she met someone who came to visit her. When asked how she was doing, she replied, "Great. This time it took them only three tries to find the right vein. I'm surrounded by doctors that are looking after my health and many have come to visit me!" We should internalize that, ***"At the root of complaining is thinking the situation could be better. At the root of satisfaction is being aware that the situation could be worse."***

What is a truly wealthy person? Although many may take for granted what they are born with, let us take a look at what we possess so we can appreciate it. Eyes to see which is more sophisticated than the best camera. Teeth to chew and grind up the food. Hands to take care of our many tasks. Feet to walk with. With this we can grasp **איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו**, one who is happy with his lot is a truly wealthy person, as the **Chida** tells us **עשיר** is an acronym for **עֵינים, שִׁינים, יָדים, רַגלים**, eyes, teeth, hands and feet. To see how wealthy we are, we must see all that we have that money can't buy (children, being married, health, just being alive and so on).

There was a secular woman that was so excited because she was soon about to buy her dream car. This is all she would talk about. She finally bought and couldn't contain her excitement as this is what

filled her conversations. Soon after she bought it she came into work looking upset. A colleague asked her if she got into an accident, since she wasn't talking with excitement about her newly purchased car. She answered that she didn't get into an accident, but she was driving when suddenly a nicer car passed her and that became her new dream car. This new car made her present car nearly worthless to her.

This trait of being happy with our lot is that of Yaakov's as he said **יש לי כל**, I have everything. There are those that are wealthy and abundant possessions yet in truth have nothing. With this we can explain **יש מתעשר ואין כל** there are those who seem to be wealthy but really have nothing since they lack the trait of **כל**, gratitude.

Shabbos Stories for Parshas Vayeitzei

Saved by Shemittah By Rabbi Yoel Gold



If there was ever a picture in the dictionary of a Jewish farmer, it would be Ira Zimmerman. From a very, very young age, he was going to work with his father in the fields. He became a tractor driver and this is what he did for a living, he would use his combine harvester to harvest fields.

Ira has a passion for using his farming skills to promote Torah and Mitzvot, which is why he volunteers his time to harvest the wheat for Matzah Shmurah every year. He also volunteers a ton of his time and efforts for Keren Hashviit, an organization that helps farmers keep the laws of Shemittah.

Seven years ago - which was the 6th year of the Shemittah cycle - it turns out that that year it rained in Israel very late into the

harvesting season. All the center of Israel was no good for Matzah Shemurah and the north was also raining in the fields, so the only option left was to go to the south of Israel.

Fortunately, Ira and his friends, found a field in the south of Israel, next to the Gaza border. The only problem was that no farmer wants to work in a field next to the Gaza border. The tension between Israel and Gaza was palpable. They were at the brink of war. But then because Ira grew up in that region, he knew the region well and even though it is a little hard, a little risky, sometimes they shoot over the border and sometimes they throw stones, he decided to do it and just keep going.

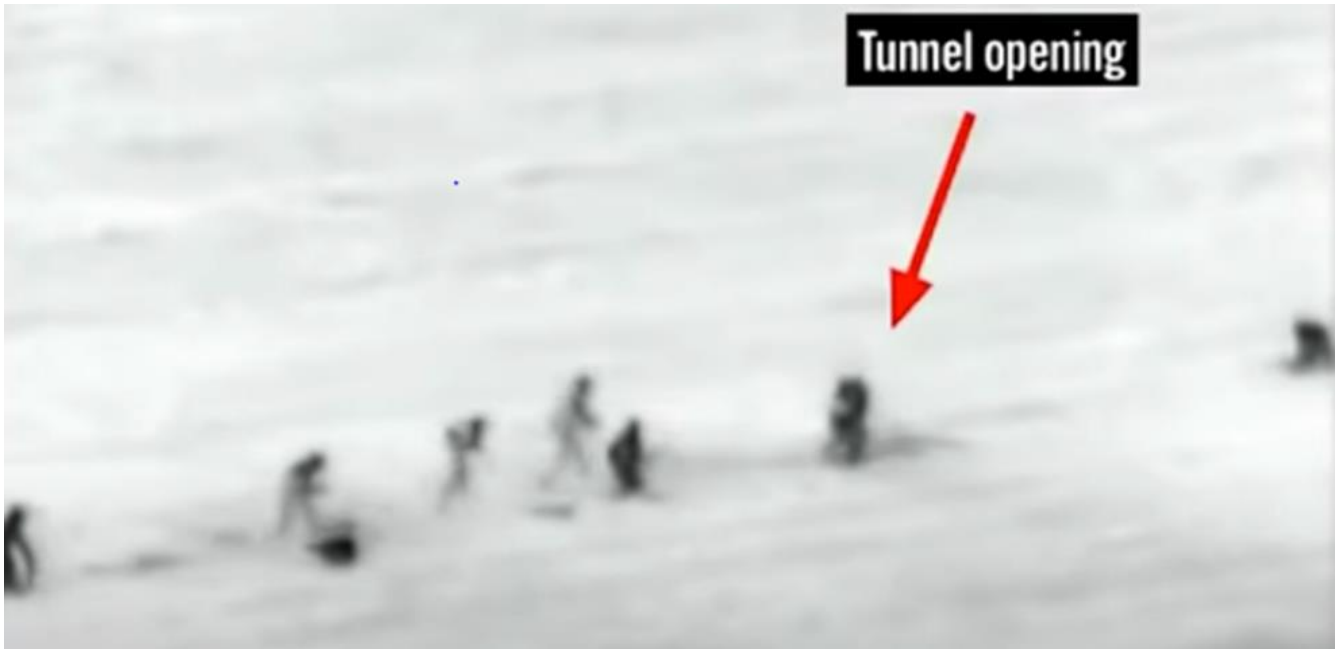
The problem is that the Kibbutznik, the owner of the farm site, said, you cannot take it now, it's not ready yet, it's still a little green, you need to wait another one and a half to two weeks. It was getting too close to Rosh Hashanah and the start of the Shemittah year, so Ira decided that they cannot wait as next year is Shemittah so they need double the usual amount and they were worried that the rain may come and if it starts to rain the whole field is useless, so they will take it all now.

They worked overtime from dawn to dusk from sunrise to sunset. They tried their best to harvest the field as fast as possible as they didn't want any rain to ruin any of their chances to take the wheat to be used for Matzah Shemurah. In addition they needed double the amount of wheat they would usually harvest, this year they would need to take three thousand tons.

While they were in the field on the tractor, Ira remembers his partners saying that he can feel the ground beneath them shaking. It felt kind of unstable. But it wasn't like something unusual because it's a field with a big truck, there are holes, it's understandable to feel a little unstable. Within two or three days, they managed to harvest the entire field. They sent shiploads of the wheat to all the

major cities in Israel for those bakeries to have for Matzah Shmurah and also to store away for next Pesach for Shmittah.

Two days later, that specific field was all over the news. Thirteen terrorists were caught trying to penetrate the Sufa Kibbutz. The Hamas terrorists dug a tunnel, and they came up exactly where Ira and his partners were working with the combine harvester for the Matzah Shmurah. The terrorists were hoping that that week the wheat would have ripened and grown in the field so it would cover them, so they wouldn't be seen. But because Ira and his partner risked their lives by working overtime to harvest every strand of wheat for Matzah Shmurah, and to store for the next year due to Shemittah, the terrorists were exposed right away.



Israel Defense Forces photo showing terrorists exposed on the field that Ira Zimmerman had harvested the wheat for the Matzah Shemurah bakeries.

The IDF was able to see them in the cameras and right away they were able to kill them. There is only one Mitzvah that Hashem gives an explicit promise of **ברכתי את וציויתי** - ***"He will enforce His blessing unto those who keep the Mitzvah of Shemittah."***

It was thanks to the Mitzvah of Shemittah, that this miracle was able to happen.



"Tizku L'mitzvos"

Do we understand just what life really is? Well, here's a story about a Yid who truly understands the meaning of life. It was told by Rabbi Boruch Bodenheim shlit'a, a Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Boruch - Passaic Torah Institute (PTI). There is a Yid in Yerushalayim known as Tizku L'mitzvos (may you merit to fulfill more mitzvos). He received this nickname by spending his days raising money for poor people, saying to his donors, "Tizku L'mitzvos," as he walks around the various shuls and yeshivos raising money.

One rainy day, my good friend Rabbi Moshe Ginian was driving in Jerusalem and saw Reb Tizku L'mitzvos standing at a street corner, totally drenched from the pouring rain. Moshe offered him a ride, which he gladly accepted.

"Now is my opportunity," thought Moshe, "to inquire about this man's unique story - and his nickname." They made small talk until he felt comfortable enough to ask, "Please tell me, I see you in various shuls raising money for poor people. How did you get involved in this?"

Reb Tizku L'mitzvos began his story. "I used to be a very successful electrician. A few years ago, my wife passed away. A couple of months later, I was accidentally hit by a bus and went flying, landing on my head. When I awoke, I was paralyzed. I went home weeks later, being told I'd be paralyzed for life.

When my youngest child got engaged, I gave them my apartment and moved in with one of my married children. I felt so good, so fortunate that all my children got married. Still, I couldn't move. One day, I looked up to the heavens and said, 'Hashem, you did not give me life for no reason. I can't move, so what am I here for? If you give me the ability to walk again, I will dedicate my days to mitzvos; I will spend my days raising money for your needy children.'"

"The next day," he said, "I miraculously was able to move my right arm ever so slightly and the following day my left arm; the next week my right leg and the one after that, my left leg. Slowly, very slowly, my ability to move returned. After months of intensive rehabilitation, I was able to walk and use my arms and legs again. I was fully mobile!

"So, I got on a bus and travelled around, starting to raise money to fulfill my pledge to Hashem to devote my life to doing mitzvos. Hence my refrain 'Tizku L'mitzvos,' as I have been raising funds for the needy over the last ten years. I have very little money of my own and I live in my married daughter's apartment but undoubtedly, I am the wealthiest person! I feel so fortunate that all my children are married and healthy and well, and that I have constant opportunities to help the needy."

Rabbi Ginian was going through a difficult period financially at the time and wasn't sure what to do. Meeting "Tizku L'mitzvos" was a clear message from Hashem: "Don't worry about your finances - you have wonderful children who keep Torah and mitzvos; you are the wealthiest person! This is why you are alive - Tizku L'mitzvos!"



The Admor, Harav Yekutiel Abuchatzeira Shlita was asked "What special minhagim and traditions did your ancestors bring over from Morocco?"

He answered, "Only one- **אהבת ישראל**!" - 'They loved and blessed every single Jew. They felt a kinship with every Yid. They empathised with their suffering and their problems, and they celebrated their joy.'

Rabbi Yehoshua Zitron - The Illiterate Millionaire



Following the Second World War, one man moved from Europe to America and attempted to gain a job to support his family. He didn't speak a word of English, so it was a significant challenge. However, that didn't stop him from searching for a job within the Jewish community, where the language barrier wouldn't be a hindrance to hiring him. But that was to no avail either.

At that point, he figured to himself that he'll be the attendee in one of the local shuls who would put all its different affairs in order and see through all that is needed to keep it clean and organized. After approaching one of the directing members of the local shul, it looked promising that he would be able to earn the job. "Just tell me," asked the board member before leaving, "do you speak English?" "I don't," the fellow responded. "Do I need to know English for this job? I'm just organizing and cleaning the shul." But the main members of the shul did not like that answer.

The man, though, couldn't understand the concern. Why did he need to know English in order to put books away, sweep floors and organize and arrange the shul's seating? "If people will come inside and need to ask you something, we need you to be able to respond in English." And with this, it was crystal clear. The fellow couldn't even obtain a job within the Jewish community, being a janitor of all things in a shul.

At this point, he borrowed a small amount of money from his friend and purchased a pushcart and some items. His plan was to go door-to-door and attempt to sell whatever houseware items the local

townspeople were interested in purchasing from his collection. And thus began his small, private business. He bought some houseware, loaded in into his pushcart and went from house to house and sold it as a drop higher of a price than he purchased himself. And quite to his surprise, he was successful. He sold his items one by one, little by little. Eventually, his clientele base grew, and he was able to buy two pushcarts and higher someone else to also go door-to-door and work under him.

This eventually turned into five pushcarts, and from there, his business continued growing surprisingly until he decided to close the pushcart business and open a storefront which sold these same houseware items. He became very successful and continued opening one store after another. Within a few years, he had several chains of stores.

One day, he was invited to partner with another large corporation and do business together with them. After reviewing all the details, he decided to go through with the joint venture. And there he sat along with the members of the other company in a luxurious skyscraper in Manhattan. After reviewing the documents, all that was left was to sign it and seal the merger.

The man began looking through all the paperwork and appending his signature where indicated. Yet, seeing this, the other partner stood up and waved him down. "Don't just sign the paperwork. I want you to read everything and agree to it all." The Jewish businessman let out a smile and let his future partner know that it was no problem, he was just going to sign it as he'd been doing. But the other partner was adamant. "I refuse to go into business until I know that you read it. I want everything to be straight, clear and on the table." Finally, the Jewish businessman explained. "I would love to read this all…" "So go ahead," said the other partner. "Take all the time you need. "But that's not the problem," the frum man continued. "I don't know how to read."

The partner was stunned. "You don't know how to read? You are a multi-millionaire and have tons of employees working under you. What do you mean that you don't know how to read?" "Exactly that," he replied. And then the other partner continued. "Do you understand that you have made so much money, and if you knew how to read, you would have made even more?"

The Jewish businessman knew what to reply. "Do you know what would have happened if I knew how to read? Or even better, if I knew how to speak English properly? If I knew, I would be a janitor. Because I couldn't get a job years ago, even as a janitor, I am where I am today."

In life, our biggest failure could be our biggest success, and our biggest downfall, our biggest windfall.

Rabbi Uri Lati - A Giant in Torah

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was once on a bus when an Israeli female soldier boarded, and looking for a seat, found her place right next to him. Faced with this, Rav Shlomo Zalman was in a quandary. If he would get up and move seats, it would be an insult to her. And yet, on the other hand, to remain there posed certain hashkafik considerations. What should he do?

He pressed the signal to indicate to the bus driver that he wanted to get off the bus. As the bus slowed down, Rav Shlomo Zalman got off and waited for the next one, which came fifty minutes later. Why did he do all of this? So as not to embarrass another person. While taking into account the sensitive viewpoints of remaining seated next to her, one might say that it's also not respectful to the rabbi to inconvenience himself and get off the bus for this. But, once this was a value and principle Rav Shlomo Zalman held firm too, it made no difference. He needed to do something. But what to do? Nothing at the expense of embarrassing someone else. And if it

meant getting off and waiting close to an hour for another bus to take him to the very same destination the first bus was taking him to, so be it.

That is what a man with Torah care and character does. That is how a Jew remains firm in his convictions and principles and yet doesn't in any which way show disregard for the respect and dignity another deserves.

That was Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l. His life and legacy are a guidepost for us all.

Torah Tavlin

When Yaakov Avinu woke up the morning after his big wedding, he was in for quite a shock. The Torah tells us **וַיְהִי בַּבֹּקֶר וְהִנֵּה־הִוא לֵאָה** ***"And behold, she was Leah!"***

It wasn't who he thought it was! It wasn't what it was SUPPOSED to be! It wasn't who he WANTED! It wasn't Rochel - it was Leah!

R' Gamliel Rabinowitz writes (Tiv HaShidduchim) that this reaction of Yaakov is not so uncommon. Everyone at some point in their marriage wakes up - and BEHOLD - things are not exactly how he or she thought it was meant to be! Not what he or she had in mind!

After the engagement, a chosson and kallah marvel at how similar they are to each other. It doesn't take all that long after marriage to discover that they are complete opposites in so many things!

The trick in life is to realize that everyone has that "Behold, she was Leah" in their relationship! It's perfectly normal!

We all must work hard to see the positive aspects of our spouses. With hard work and siyata d'shmaya may we, like Yaakov Avinu, merit to be builders of Klal Yisroel.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Check-Up

Fleeing from his brother Esav, Yaakov travels to his uncle Lavan in Charan; as he nears the town, he sees a peculiar sight. He sees a field and in the middle of it, he spots a well with a large rock placed upon its mouth. Three flocks of sheep with their shepherds nearby are standing near it, waiting to be watered. But the shepherds are just standing and waiting. It seems that they have no work to do and are about to take the sheep back to their pens. The flocks are crouching and waiting for something. Yaakov is very curious. So Yaakov greets them, ***"My brothers!"*** he begins. "Where are you from?"

They tell him that they are from Charan. Yaakov inquires about the welfare of Lavan and his family, and then Yaakov asks the question. ***"The day is yet large; it is not yet time to bring the sheep back. Why don't you water the sheep and continue grazing?"*** (Genesis 29:4-7) Rashi explains the verse in detail. "If these are your sheep," Yaakov asks, "then why don't you give them their water? And," Yaakov continues "if you are working for someone else, then why are you just sitting here?"

The shepherds explain to Yaakov that they would like to water the sheep but unless a large group of shepherds arrive, they cannot. It is impossible to lift the rock and draw water. Therefore, they sit and wait each day until enough shepherds arrive to give lift the rock (Genesis 29:8). It seems to be a fair and understandable exchange except for one word. Yaakov began the conversation with a term of endearment. "***My brothers!"*** No pun intended, but Yaakov did not know these shepherds from Adam!

Why did he begin his question with words that seem to show an affinity that could not have yet been forged? He just met these men, why does he call them brothers?

I recently heard a wonderful story about someone I know dearly: A prominent Chassidic Rebbe was not feeling all that well so his doctor

recommended that he go for a comprehensive cardio-vascular examination including a stress test, echocardiogram and a slew of other tests would be beneficial. He recommended a prominent cardiologist, Dr. Paul Fegil (not his real name), who headed the cardiology department of a large medical center in Manhattan.



Waiting for the doctor to arrive, the Rebbe felt very uncomfortable in the unfamiliar surroundings. He barely responded to the nurse's questions pertaining to his medical health and history. The nurse was frustrated as the Rebbe almost refused to discuss his symptoms. It got worse. When the nurse began attaching electrodes to all parts of his chest, he began to sweat. He became so nervous that the monitors and other meters connected to the wires began to pulsate wildly.

The nurse was astounded by the very erratic movements on the heart monitor. Never having seen lines jump off the monitor like that, the nurse quickly ran out of the examining room to summon the esteemed cardiologist immediately. Meanwhile, the Rebbe was still sweating profusely as his heart was pounding wildly.

Suddenly, the door opened and in walked Dr. Fegil. He was a distinguished looking man with graying hair a warm smile and a small leather yarmulke on his head. He stood at the opening, and exclaimed to the Rebbe. "Sholom Aleichem! Rebbe! HaKol B'seder? Is everything OK?" Hearing those familiar words, the Rebbe became startled. He picked up his head and saw the doctor. He could not believe it Dr. Paul Fegil was one of his own! Almost magically, the bells and whistles that were muddling the monitor suddenly stopped.

Immediately all the readings showed a sign of a very normal heart beat! Minutes later the Rebbe told the nurse every one of his maladies and his entire medical history as well!

Dr. Fegil looked at the nurse and laughed. "Sometimes a few haimishe words can fix more problems than open-heart surgery!"

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, explained that Yaakov approached a group of shepherds whom he had never met. He wanted to admonish them in a gentle manner while finding out what was transpiring at the well. After all, he was puzzled, why were they just sitting around waiting. However, Yaakov was smarter than just to criticize. He knew that unless he both called and considered them as brothers, they would turn a deaf ear.

It was only after they explained to him that until all the shepherds gathered to lift the rock, they could do nothing, did Yaakov understand that his complaints were unjustified. But Yaakov had no problems presenting his critique to the shepherds for one simple reason. He began with one simple exclamation. "My brothers." Yaakov approached them by exclaiming, "Brothers! Where are you from?" The moment he initiated the concept of brotherhood, any suggestion — even criticism — would be allowed. Criticisms, even constructive ones, are difficult, but Yaakov taught us a lesson: Before you can espouse your druthers, make sure that you are talking to brothers!

Torah Temimah יבמות קג

"הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ פֶּן תְּדַבֵּר עִם יַעֲקֹב מִטּוֹב עַד רָע" בְּשִׁלְמָא רַע — לְחַיֵּי, אֶלָּא טוֹב אַמַּאי לָא? אֶלָּא שְׁמַע מִינַּהּ: טוֹבָתָן שֶׁל רְשָׁעִים — רָעָה הִיא אֵצֶל צַדִּיקִים

Hashem warned Lavan not to speak to Yaakov even for good things because anything he might perceive as good really isn't as far as a tzadik is concerned.

Parsha Potpourri by Oizer Alport

ויאמר לבן לא יעשה כן במקומנו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה (29:26)

A young yeshiva student was once in the house of the **Tchebiner Rav**, and the Rav began to tell him about a young woman whom the Rav believed would make a good match for him. The young man asked if it would be possible to see a picture of the young woman before rendering a final decision about meeting her. Overhearing the conversation from the kitchen, the Tchebiner Rebbetzin demonstrated her quick mind and remarkably sharp wit in rebuking him for his request by calling out, **" לא יעשה כן במקומנו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה."**

In this verse, Lavan was defending his decision to switch his daughters against Yaakov's accusation of deceit by maintaining that the local custom was that the younger daughter may only get married after her older sister has been married off.

However, saying the verse with the Rebbetzin's Polish pronunciation, it can mean, "Our custom is that we do not give a picture (she pronounced the word for picture – **צורה** – the same as the word **צעירה** – the younger daughter) before you meet the girl (the word for a young woman – **בחורה** – is pronounced similar to the word **בכירה** – the older daughter)."

A clever and subtle rebuke that quashed the young man's his out-of-place request, and provides a potent and relevant message in light of the recent trend toward soliciting photographs of potential shidduchim and evaluating prospective spouses through such superficial lenses.

"The best weapons of a Yid are his prayers." ~~ Nachman of Bratslav

Parshah Pearls *Adapted from Ma'ayanah shel Torah*

The First to Admit

וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה׳ ***"This time I will thank Hashem*** ..." (29:35).



Since the day that G-d created the world, nobody had thanked Him until Leah arrived, says the Gemara in B'rachos. How is it possible, asks the Tuv Gittin, that not one of the Avos, who initiated Tefilah (Avraham, Shachris; Yitzchak, Minchah and Yaakov, Maariv), ever thanked Hashem?

It depends, he answers, how one translates the word 'hoda'ah'. The question is valid if one translates it as 'thanks'.

Strictly speaking however, the word means 'admitting', in which case the question falls away completely.

Because what Leah really meant was that although she initially viewed Yaakov's dislike of her as a bad situation, she now realized that in reality, it was entirely to her advantage, since on account of it, she earned the merit to bear more than her share of the tribes (as the Torah indicated when it wrote earlier "And G-d saw that Leah was hated, so He opened her womb"[Pasuk 31]). So, Leah was the first to admit that what Hashem had done was an act of kindness, even though it had initially appeared otherwise.

Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently.

Parshah Pearls - When One Wakes Up

וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמַר מַה־נּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה ***"And Ya'akov woke up ... and he said 'How awesome is this place ...*** " (28:17).

In Parshas Mikeitz the Pasuk describes how Par'oh woke up, and how he promptly went back to sleep and had another dream. Here, comments **R. Meir from Premishlan**, you have the difference between a Jew and a gentile. No sooner does a Jew wake up than he thinks about G-d and how to serve Him. A gentile on the other hand, has more important things to do. He needs to sleep some more, so he turns over on the other side and goes back to sleep.

Parsha Points to Ponder by Oizer Alport

Rashi writes (29:25) that in order to prevent potential trickery by Lavan, Yaakov gave certain simanim to Rochel that only she would know. When Rochel realized that her father intended to send Leah under the bridal canopy instead of her, she feared the humiliation her sister would face and shared the simanim with her so that she could pass for Rochel.

Even if Leah knew the secret simanim, why wasn't Yaakov able to recognize that her voice was not that of Rochel?

The Chizkuni answers that Yaakov was so holy that even on his wedding night, he spoke to his new wife so minimally that he was unable to recognize that her voice was different than Rochel's.

Rav Yehuda HaChassid suggests that they did not speak at all, explaining that Leah pretended to be embarrassed to avoid having to talk and risk revealing her true identity. However, the Midrash states that they did converse and when Yaakov called her "Rochel," she responded.

The Bechor Shor writes that although Yaakov was betrothed to Rochel for 7 years and lived in close proximity to her, he

intentionally limited his interactions with her and was not sufficiently familiar with her voice to discern that Leah's voice did not match. The Midrash says that Rochel hid under Yaakov's bed on the night of his marriage to Leah, and when he spoke to her, Leah remained silent and Rochel responded so that Yaakov would not recognize Leah's voice.

The Maharsha explains that the fact that Leah knew the secret signs that Yaakov gave Rochel tricked him into assuming that she was Rochel and not correctly identifying her based on her voice, similar to the fact that Yaakov's hairy hands deceived Yitzchok into thinking that he was Eisav despite the difference in their voices (27:23).

The M'rafsin Igri posits that since they were sisters, the voices of Rochel and Leah were so similar that Yaakov was unable to differentiate between them.

Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin - The Right Thing To Do

וַיִּשַּׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־קֹלוֹ וַיֵּבְךְּ ***"Then Yaakov kissed Rachel and he raised his voice and wept"*** (29:11)

When Yaakov first met Rachel, he cried. Rashi brings two reasons why he cried. He wept because he foresaw that Rachel would not be buried with him in the Cave of Machpelah. Another reason he wept was because he had come empty-handed. He wanted to give Rachel a gift of jewellery just as Eliezer, his father's servant, gave his mother, Rivkah, when they first met.

When we analyze these two reasons, it seems that the first reason is a serious one and we can understand why Yaakov was brought to tears. This is something which touches a person's spirituality and the hereafter. However, the other reason seems almost trivial. Giving Rachel jewellery doesn't seem to involve such important spiritual consequences. Giving and receiving jewelry usually involves

pleasures of this world, here and now, which doesn't occupy the mind of Yaakov Avinu.

Rabbi M. Blum explains that giving Rachel a gift at that time was the proper thing to do. Acting in a nice way, making a person feel good, is as important as any spiritual endeavour. It is as worthy to cry about acting in an unbecoming way as it is to cry about one's eternal partner. This point is very important when discussing the relationships between husband and wife.

When two people get married, all the relatives and friends bless the new couple with a blessing of building a loyal household in Israel, dedicated to all of the Torah ideals of life. May they have beautiful children, etc. Although these blessings are important, we mustn't forget the foundation of all foundations of marriage.

We should hope that the bride and groom act respectfully towards each other, and may they show good character to each other.

These things don't seem important to many people and it is something that people usually disregard. However, this subject is of the highest priority. This is the root of peace in the home and if they don't act with respect and good character, not only will they not have a hereafter together, they will have no present together. -

How to Connect to Hashem

וְהִנֵּה ה' נִצָּב עָלָיו ***Behold, Hashem was standing over him*** (28:13)

Rearranging the first letters of the above Hebrew verse results in the word "anav," meaning one who is humble. For it is precisely through humility, self-abnegation, and acceptance of the yoke of Heaven that a person attains a sense of G-d's closeness. (Ohr HaTorah)

[R' Yedidye Hirtenfeld's whY I Matter parsha sheet]

Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin - I Can't Accept That

וַיֹּאמֶר הֵן עוֹד הַיּוֹם גָּדוֹל לֹא־עֵת הֵאָסֵף הַמִּקְנֶה ***"Behold the day is still long; it is not time to bring back the sheep."*** (29:7)

Yaakov came to Haran to find a wife as his parents commanded him. He comes to a well which is covered by a large stone, and sees the shepherds just waiting around, wasting time. He first asks them about the welfare of Lavan and his family, and then goes on to ask them, "Why are you just lolling around not doing your job? It's not time to go home." To us, it seems that Yaakov is out of line in criticizing the shepherds. What business is it to him what they are doing? They are not his workers!

The Sforno points out that a righteous person cannot bear to see wrongdoing. When Yaakov saw them not doing their job, it pained him to see someone stealing from his boss. Therefore, he gave them some constructive criticism. To follow this one step further, when we see something wrong and do not react, that misdeed becomes light in our own eyes. Therefore, it is easier for us to fall into that same trap. Many times, we see things which are incorrect, such as disrespectful behaviour, or business practices which are less than honest or ethical.

If we have the ability to say something and be heard, we should consider the right way to do it rather than just overlook it. This way we will have fulfilled the mitzvah of rebuking someone and we will be less prone to be influenced by that behaviour. Of course, we cannot always say something; each situation must be judged separately. Yaakob Avinu is teaching us that we should try not to get used to unacceptable practices, so that we will always remain with our proper standards of conduct.

Quality means doing it right when no one is looking.

Share The Wealth

***וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן־לִי עַשֵּׂר אֲעַשְּׂרֶנּוּ לָךְ "And of all that You will give me I will give a tenth of it to You"* (28:22)**

Yaakov vows that from everything that he will receive from Hashem, he will give one tenth to charity. It may be noted from this verse that the mitzvah of charity does not apply only to monetary matters, but the mitzvah applies to anything one receives as Hashem's gift. If one is blessed with wisdom and knowledge, it is imperative for him to share this gift with others who are not as fortunate as he.

Rabbi Shimon Shkop remarked that just like one who is generous with his money merits that his possessions will increase, so too, if one is "charitable" with his skills and talents, he will be similarly blessed by Hashem.

It has been noted by many, that only after volunteering and sharing their time in tutoring others, did they themselves succeed in Torah study. This is obviously in the merit of giving charity. (**Peninim on the Torah**)

A Tale of Two Butchers

Melbourne has often been named one of the most liveable cities in the world. Lesser known, but most important, is that this "shtetl" is famous for its kindness—it's *hachnasat orchim*—generously hosting and caring for its guests, and for the enormous compassion that the people have for each other.

Twenty years ago, the local kosher butcher shop, Continental Kosher, had a fire. Unfortunately, a good deal of their supplies and equipment were burned beyond use.

Yankel Unfanger, the owner of Melbourne Kosher Butcher, did not hesitate to immediately offer space in his own butcher shop so that Continental Kosher could continue its business by selling their goods

out of his store. Of course, Continental Kosher was extremely grateful and took him up on his offer.

Imagine that you sell fruit. Do you want people to buy fruit from your store? Of course, you do! Would you allow another person to sell the same product in your store? Of course not! People might end up liking his quality of produce more and start buying their Golden Delicious apples from the other person. Nevertheless, this was not the thought process of this holy Jew.

Fast-forward 20 years later.

Melbourne Kosher Butcher has a fire! It was a crazy story. It began from an electrical fire. People called to offer help. Some brought money, some even brought flowers.

Solomon's Kosher Butcher, another butcher in town, offered help, but since they are moving locations, it wasn't practical.

In comes Steven Lewis from Continental Kosher Butcher (who had the fire 20 years ago) to the rescue! He offered space in his shop and anything else that he could do to help his fellow Jew and former saviour, Yankel Unfanger.

His offer was kindly and gratefully accepted.

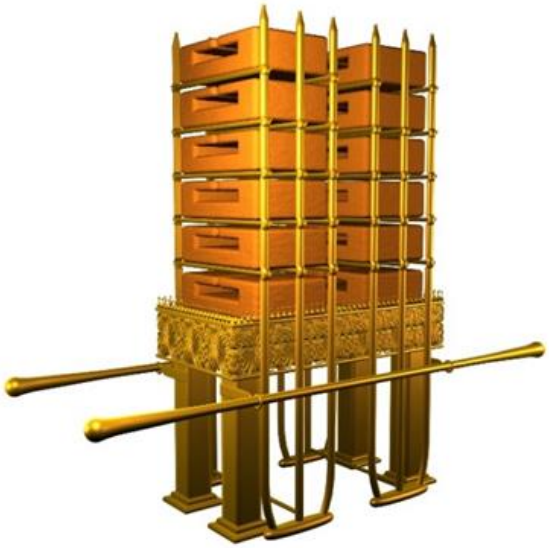
Pirkei Avot teaches: "If I am only for myself, who am I?" (Avot 1:14). We can only grow in this world by giving to others.

The butchers of Melbourne not only shared their livelihood, they shared their pots and pans, space and time. They had a charitable and abundant mindset, realizing that if I give, I am G-dly. They understood the meaning of everything coming from Hashem. The more we give of ourselves, the more Hashem will give to us, and it doesn't take anything away from us.

We can sometimes worry that if we give to others, then we will have less for ourselves. But in truth, the more charitable we are—the more we open the flow—the channel of abundance comes our way.

Melbourne, Australia, is ahead of its time. I am guessing that when the Redemption dawns, one of these two butcher shops is where it will all begin, with these two holy men spearheading the way.

Fresh Bread



וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל ***"He will give me bread to eat"*** (28:20)

According to Rabbi Yehoshua (Midrash Rabbah 70:5), Yaakov was asking for the Lechem Hapanim - the twelve loaves which were placed weekly on the table in the Mishkan and the Beis Hamikdash. Why would Yaakov ask now for Lechem Hapanim?

Possibly, the reference to the Lechem Hapanim was an allegory: The twelve loaves were baked on Friday and placed on the table Shabbat morning. They remained there until the following Shabbos morning. Normally, bread which is exposed for eight days becomes stale, but these loaves miraculously remained fresh. When they were removed, they were just as warm and fresh as when they were first put on the table.

Yaakov spent his life studying Torah in the home of Yitzchok, and later in the Bet Midrash of Shem and Ever. Now he was preparing to go out into the world and encounter Laban and his contemporaries. Unfortunately, many succumb to the temptations and challenges of the world. Yaakov feared that dealing with the world might influence him to modernize and change his approach to Judaism.

Therefore, in his prayer to Hashem, he asked for the lasting power of the Lechem Hapanim. He was alluding that in the future, his devotion to Torah and mitzvos would not change. ***(Vedibarta Bam)***

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld- *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*



Imagine the scene, you get married you get your very first job, you work hard through the month and you are excited to come back and show your wife your very first paycheck. You are excited to come back with the money that you earned during that month and after the month you don't get paid you wait another month 2 months and 3 and 4 it turns into 6 and then 10, you're going crazy!

We find in this week's Parsha, something remarkably similar with a quite different reaction. Yaakov loved Rachel he wanted to marry her; she was the love of his life. Lovon convinces him to work for seven years and after seven years of work, he could marry her! Finally, the wedding arrives and its Leah!

Now we would expect, and we would justify Yaakov Avinu to go totally crazy with Lovon, how can you do this to me, yet the Torah tells us a very different reaction, behold it was the morning Vuhiney Leah! He got tricked it wasn't Rachel, it was Leah in the end Vayomer el lovon and he says to lovon (no Loshon of he went crazy or mad), he just says to Lovon "mah zus ossu li" why did you trick me?

Unbelievable! He does not scream at he does not get upset about what is going on over here what a reaction!!

The Ramban in Igeres Harmban writes, the way you must learn to speak is always Bnachas - is always calmly. The Torah is teaching us in this week's Parsha, an insight into sensitivity into somebody else's feeling, maybe he was justified maybe he had the right to scream but Yakov Avinu understood that for me that's not correct.

I want to tell you an amazing story one of the **Belzer Rebbis ztl**. He had a room where he met with people. People use to come from far

and wide, 100's of people use to come and line up to speak, to get Eitzes and blessings from the Rebbe. How it worked was, the Gabbi let in a certain amount of people, and he would close the door and they would then leave from another door, and he would then allow for the new group, as the Gabbi was closing the door and nobody else can enter the room.

The Rebbe saw one of the Chassidim slip into the room, he did not want to wait any longer the Rebbe motioned to him that he has to go back to the beginning of the line! Can you imagine he already waited hours now he has to wait a few more hours to start all over again, but it was worth it, and he went back the beginning of the line.

After a few minutes, the Gabbi comes and says the rabbi wants to see you, he goes right to the front and the Rebbe said to him something unbelievable!

The Rebbe said to him, "I sent you to the back of the line because you did something wrong and I wanted to show you that you did something wrong. You slipped in. You did something that you shouldn't have done, but I brought you in now because I wanted to explain to you something.

I don't always have to be right and therefore come, what do you need what can I help you with?

That is penetrating insight into human nature. Sometimes people do things to us, people say things to us, people react to us and if we weren't to have a reaction, we are totally justified to shout at them and scream and insult them whatever it may be.

Here the Torah is telling us, that however much Yaakov was right, maybe he could go crazy with his father-in-law. For seven years I worked for Lovon for this girl, but no vyumar el Lovon. It teaches us the sensitivity of how we have to learn to speak to other people. ***Have a wonderful Shabbos!***

Berina Yikzoru

"And he said, I will work for you seven years for Rachel….And Lavan said, better that I give her to you, than I give her to another man" (29, 18-19).

Rav Itzele of Volozhin Zt'l explains, "Come see Lavan's deceit. Yaakov asks him specifically to work for Rachel for seven years and what does Lavan answer?

He answers in deceit. "Titi" - I will give" (which in small gematria is 9 and equals the small gematria of Leah's name) "Her to you", "Mititi – rather than give" (which in small gematria is 13 and equals the small gematria of Rachel's name) you Rahel. Rahel I will give to another man… (The letters of "Titi" total the number 810 and 8+1+0=9 which is equal to Leah (36, 3=6=9). The letters of Mititi total 841, 8+4+1=13 which is equal to Rachel (238, 2+3+8=13).

SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

Mussar – Introspection

How important is it to keep your word? Let us look at the example of Yaakov Avinu. For 22 years, Yaakov was in mourning, believing that his beloved son Yosef had died.

In addition, he recognized that Klal Yisrael had to consist of 12 Shevatim to ensure its viability. Without Yosef, there were no longer 12 Shevatim. Therefore, in addition to the grief he had for Yosef, he also grieved for the fact that he had failed in his life's mission of building the Jewish people.

The Bais HaLevi asks: Why did Yaakov despair? Why didn't he simply marry an additional wife so that the 12th Shevet could be born? The Bais HaLevi answers that Yaakov had taken an oath to Lavan that he would not marry any additional wives.

Even though that oath could have been annulled, Yaakov did not consider that to be a workable option as it would have led Lavan to believe that Yaakov did not keep his word, and that would have been a severe Chillul Hashem. Yaakov felt that it was so important to avoid the Chillul Hashem of Yaakov appearing to not keep his word, that it was worth the risk of jeopardizing the future of Klal Yisrael. **("Living Kiddush Hashem" by Rabbi Shraga Freedman**)

Chizuk – Inspiration

Once on a market day, one of his Gentile customers mistakenly left behind a herring he had purchased. Not remembering who the customer was, **the Chofetz Chaim** tried, but was unable to find out who the customer was. It pained the Chofetz Chaim greatly. Feeling guilty about this "robbery" he gave every one of his Gentile customers a free hearing on the next market day.

On another occasion, the Chofetz Chaim was examining his scales in his usual way and found that a small, but noticeable amount of salt had clung to one of his scales. Enough salt in his mind, to mean that a customer who had purchased the salt did not receive all of the salt that he paid for and therefore had been cheated according to Torah law. Immediately, the Chofetz Chaim began seeking the individual who had bought the salt and discovered it was a Gentile woman from the village of Kuzkuitsizna, a few miles away from Radin. The Chofetz Chaim did the best he could to locate her but unfortunately, all efforts proved fruitless. It was a market day and among the hundreds of farmers who had gathered in Radin from all of the surrounding villages, it was impossible to identify this particular woman.

As such, the Chofetz Chaim hired a wagon driver to go to Kuzkuitsizna and distribute little packets of salt each of the amount of the "cheating" to all the women of the village. Therefore he could be sure that the woman from the village he had cheated would receive what was owed to her - and his mind could be at ease.

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

וַיֶּאֱסֹף לָבָן אֶת־כָּל־אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתֶּה "***So Lavan gathered all the local people and made a feast***" (29:22)



The Midrash Rabbah states that in order to finance the wedding feast, Lavan borrowed clothing and vessels from the people who lived in his neighbourhood. He then took the clothing and vessels and used them as collateral in order to secure a loan. With the money that he borrowed, he arranged a lavish feast.

After the feast, Lavan went around to each of his guests and told them, "Since I hosted you and you partook of the food, please go and redeem your items.'

The words of this Midrash, said the **Chofetz Chaim**, are hinted to in the verse: The prevailing custom in the world is to first prepare a feast and only afterwards invite the guests. Lavan, however, did just the opposite, as the verse states, "So Lavan gathered all the local people and made a feast." -He first invited the guests to give him their belongings, and then he arranged a lavish feast for them.



The sefer Aleinu Leshabeach tells the story of a boy who was waiting at a bus stop in Jerusalem and saw a suitcase. figuring that it had been mistakenly left there. He opened it to find the owners name, and was astonished to see that it was full of money. He waited a few moments to see if perhaps the owner would return to look for it and then he brought it home and put up signs hoping that the owner would come. Later that day a man from Bnei Brak knocked on the door and provided identifying information about the suitcase. The boy returned it to him and the man thanked him.

"Thank you so much", he said, "these are my savings and was on my way to buy an apartment for my daughter who has started dating. You saved me from what would have been a catastrophe."



The man went home and told his wife what happened. The wife was so impressed by what the boy did that she began inquiring about him and they asked if he would consider going out with their daughter.

Not long thereafter,they were married. The money the boy returned ended up going to purchase his own apartment!

One of the greatest discoveries a man makes, one of his great surprises, is to find he can do what he was afraid he couldn't do.

Maasei Emunim - A Story About Amen and Tefillah

You Don't Lose Out from Tefillah Betzibbur!

Even decades after his passing, the wondrous figure of **Rav Yaakov Yosef Herman**, one of the builders of chareidi Jewry in America, is still a shining example for so many. His unbelievable dedication and his agreement to forfeit everything that was dear to him in order to keep a mitzvah, withstood the test many times, with great success.

In the story of his life, 'All for the Boss', authored by his daughter, there are many stories about him, all of which share the common thread of mesirus nefesh to uphold every detail of Torah and mitzvos. A special chapter in this book is dedicated to his tefillah and his mesirus nefesh for the halachos of tefillah. Rav Yaakov Yosef was very scrupulous about davening with minyan, which was no minor feat at the time.

For a large part of his life, he was in the fur business, and he needed to travel great distances by train and ship. This should have meant that he often davened alone. However, the number of times he ultimately davened on his own could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

One year, when he returned from a long trip to Europe, he entered the house in great spirits. "Ah, there is nothing that can withstand a person's willpower!" – he declared with satisfaction to his family. And lest someone think that his joy was due to his success in business, he continued with a glow in his eyes:

"I was in transit for many days, and I only missed davening with a minyan twice!" Do not think that this came easily. Not at all! Before every trip, he sat in his office with a map of his projected route on his desk. He invested a lot of time planning his route so that he would not find himself without a minyan. Even while on the route, he was

always tense, lest the worst-case situation would occur – he would find himself davening alone.

During his trip to Europe, Reb Yaakov Yosef caused a revolution on the passenger ships that he travelled on. He made sure that there was a minyan three times a day, until he became known as Mister Minyan.

Early in the morning, he would go from cabin to cabin where there were Jewish passengers, knocking on their doors and urging them to gather for minyan for Shacharis. But on his way back to America, while still in Europe, a serious problem arose. He needed to spend a few days in the German city of Leipzig, and from there, he needed to travel to his destination, London, where he needed to be the following night. But then re realized that if he would travel according to his original plans, he would have to pay the steep price of missing Maariv with a minyan.

Although the trip to London was very important to him, it didn't enter his mind to pay this price of losing out on minyan. He worked to find out what options he had, and when someone told him, half seriously half-jokingly, that there was another option, he chose it without hesitation. The other option was flying by plane. It was 1931. At the time, civil aviation was in its infancy, and only very adventurous people allowed themselves to take the risk of flying.



Aside for the risk involved, plane trips were very expensive. Reb Yaakov Yosef was neither adventurous nor rich, but in his view, this

situation presented him with no choice. Missing a minyan was not an option he was ready to consider.

He boarded the plane and landed in London late in the evening. From the airport, he hurried to the home of his friend, **Harav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler**, later known as the Michtav M'Eliyahu. Rav Dessler had previously stayed in the Herman home for a long time, and he felt tremendous hakaras hatov to Reb Yaakov Yosef. Now, when Rabbi Herman asked him to obtain a minyan for him, Rav Dessler was happy to comply.

It was already very late, but Rav Dessler did not give up. He got dressed and left the house and began to knock at the doors of his neighbours. After going from door to door, he finally was able to gather a minyan, and only then, did Reb Yaakov Yosef allow himself to breathe a sigh of relief. "This was real hachnassas orchim!"

Reb Yaakov Yosef thanked his host before going to bed, expressing his gratitude as if the Rav had saved his life. In a letter that Rav Dessler sent to his father, he marveled at Reb Yaakov Yosef's scrupulous adherence to davening with minyan, even while traveling. He described not only how he had not lost anything from this expensive flight – and had even profited from it!

When Reb Yaakov Yosef arrived in London, he learned two things. The first was that if he would have travelled according to his original plan, he would have gotten to London many hours later, and he would have missed a rare business opportunity that was waiting for him just as he arrived.

The second: At the time, it was only possible to enter London with a valid entry visa, and it emerged that the visa that he had was not valid. Arriving by plane required the same procedure, but remarkably, the unusual sight of a Jew travelling on the plane, which was, as noted, largely reserved for the adventurers, captured the attention of the immigration official in the airport. He asked how this had happened and the explanation that was given shocked him

so much that he agreed to grant Reb Yaakov Yosef entry without the requisite visa.

Had he travelled the normal way, he would have been held up until a new visa would have been issued, and aside for that, the cost of the new visa would have made the trip as expensive as it had been for him to fly.

Reb Yaakov Yosef was ready to lose it all in order to daven with minyan, but from Above, he was guided not only that he did not lose out, but he also gained. He avoided all kinds of delays and extra expenses, and also took advantage of a special opportunity for his business.



Question: Should I continue praying for something that I desire to get, even though I've been praying for so long already and I haven't seen any results?

Answer: Yes, ***קַוֵּה אֶל־ה׳ חֲזַק וְיַאֲמֵץ לִבֶּךָ וְקַוֵּה אֶל־ה׳ Hope to Hashem, be strong and He will give your heart courage, and hope to Hashem.*** (Tehillim 27:14).

Never give up hope. Keep talking to Hashem.

Now, there are two benefits. First of all, by continuously repeating your request, maybe Hakodosh Boruch Hu will consider you worthy just because of that – just because of your turning to Him all the time. Maybe He'll consider you worthy and grant your request.

And even if, chalilah, Hakodosh Boruch Hu sees fit to ignore your requests, you have gained immensely! Because prayer changes a person. When you call out to Hashem from the bottom of your heart, you're actually talking to Somebody, and you become more aware that He is standing in front of you and listening. And that's one of the greatest benefits that you could ever gain – more awareness of Hashem.

That's why davening to Hashem is so important. When a person stands up to say shemonah esrei, he's standing before the King. We don't see Him, but He sees us. He hears every word.

When people daven, and they daven again and again, they should know that they're learning a great lesson – the great lesson of believing in Hashem. And there's nothing greater in life than coming to a true belief in Hashem. And therefore, if Hashem will listen to you and grant you your request, very good. And if He won't, it's also good, because you have gained immensely.

Maaseh Avos Siman L'Banim

While learning in the Ponovezh Yeshivah back in the early 1960's, an Israeli bochur, one of the brightest and most respected in the yeshivah, got engaged and married to an American girl in Bnei Brak. The wedding was festive and during one of the ensuing nights of Sheva Berachos, **the Ponovezher Rov, R' Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman zt"l**, was invited to attend. He happily participated in the simcha and while they were waiting for the chosson and kallah to arrive, the Ponovezher Rov sat down at the head table and began conversing with a number of family members.

One of the American uncles of the Kallah innocently asked the Rov, "So, tell me Rosh Yeshivah, what does the chosson do for a living?"

Instantly, the Ponovezher Rov responded, "Why, he is a very successful builder (kablan) here in Israel."

The uncle raised his eyebrows in surprise. A builder? Here, in Israel? At such a young age? He was mightily impressed.

Immediately, he stood up and ran over to his wife who was sitting and talking with a group of women. "Did you hear? Your sister's daughter's chosson is a builder. And a successful one at that! Did you know that?"

His wife admitted that she did not and she, too, was impressed. They were under the impression that he was just another yeshivah student who sat on a bench all day, with no source of income to speak of. The fact that he was a working man, was truly surprising. Instantly, she stood up and went over to her sister - the machatenista - and kvelled. "Wow, I am really impressed. Your new son-in-law is a builder here in Israel. That is amazing!"

The mother-in-law wasn't aware of this tidbit of information and hurried over to her husband to verify this report. He had not heard anything of the sort and was shocked when he learned that his new son-in-law was not a full-time yeshivah student learning in Ponovezh, but rather a kablan who apparently spent the day working on construction sites.

He ran over to his new mechutan, the father of the boy and asked him if it was true. His blank expression said it all – he had no idea that this was the case. As far as he knew, his son was one of the top bochurim in the Ponovezh Yeshivah.

While all this hullabaloo was going on, R' Yosef Shlomo was watching from his seat with amusement. He realized that perhaps now was a good time to clear the air and he stood up from his seat at the dais and cleared his throat.

"Morei V'Rabbosai, I think an explanation is in order. The uncle of the kallah asked me what the chosson does for a living, and I told him that he is a successful builder. Everyone here seems to be shocked and in wonderment about this information, and I honestly

do not understand why. Do we not recite every day in davening, **וְרַבּ שְׁלוֹם בָּנָיִךְ** and our Sages expound on this posuk and explain, **אַל תִּקְרֵי בָּנָיִךְ אֶלָּא בּוֹנָיִךְ** - do not refer to these people as sons, but as builders?

He looked at the uncles and aunts and proclaimed, "This chosson is truly a builder - quite a successful one - for he shares a part in building the world with his Torah learning!"

Our chosson together with his esteemed colleagues in the Yeshivah and all throughout the city of Bnei Brak, are literally building our city - and what more, they are protecting it as well.

Our chosson has the most valuable and important job in the world. He is not just building the city of Bnei Brak - he is literally protecting the world!"

Short And Sweet Story of The Week With Rabbi Mordechai Levin

Around fifty years ago, in Bnei Brak, there was a young lady who was mentioned to a fine, budding Talmid Chacham as a possible shidduch (marriage match). Both sides were extremely interested. However, as is customary, the parents of the learning boy asked for a handsome sum as a dowry. They wished for their son to be able to continue learning undisturbed, and not need to worry about supporting his young family. The father of the young lady appreciated the request and even had the means to provide such a large sum. However, he had planned to divide the sum amongst all his daughters, not give it all to this one daughter. As he was therefore about to say no to the suggested shidduch, his friend suggested that he go discuss the question with **Reb Yisroel Yaakov Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon, ZT"L.**

The Steipler immediately answered that he should agree to the shidduch, and commit to the entire requested amount. The father attempted to explain that he had other daughters that he was also

concerned about etc. The Steipler cut him off, saying once again that he should do the shidduch, and bid him adieu. The father got the message and faithfully followed the advice of the Gaon. A short while later, the young couple happily announced their engagement. The father kept his word. He had money invested by a well-known, trusted individual by whom many people in the area invested their savings.

He went to him and requested a withdrawal of his entire investment, explaining that he needed it for a shidduch for his daughter. A short while later, due to a sudden downturn in the market, this investor's private fund took a huge hit. Unfortunately, many good people lost their entire life's savings. The grateful father told everyone that because he listened to the Steipler, even though it was hard for him, he now had his money and a beautiful shidduch. If he had not followed Hashgacha, and had not listened to the Gadol who enjoyed a special Hashgacha from Hashem, he would have neither his money nor the shidduch!

Put Out the Fire



The Chofetz Chaim once spoke at a major gathering of the Agudat Yisrael. He stressed that it was incumbent upon every individual to be involved in increasing Hashem's honour in his place of residence: One who was able to teach children, should teach children; one was able to give a class (shiur), should give a class; and one who was adept at speaking with people, should do that. Everyone should do what they could according to their ability.

Several hours later, the Chofetz Chaim surprisingly asked to speak again. He explained that after his first speech, he heard that some people were saying that the Chofetz Chaim himself is a great tzaddik and he can fulfil what he was saying, but who were they to be able to give shiurim or speak to people.

They argued that first they needed to teach themselves – with this argument they nullified the initial words of the Chofetz Chaim. In response to this argument, he gave the following analogy.

On one occasion a powerful non-Jewish landowner came to visit one of his Jewish workers. The worker hurried to serve him tea, but the water in the tea was full of sand! The worker explained that the water in their city was full of sand. The landowner explained that it is possible to clean the water by filtering it and thereby making it drinkable. The worker agreed to that in the future.

A short time later, a fire broke out in the city but nobody did anything to extinguish it. The furious landowner demanded an explanation from the worker. The worker explained that they did not have any clean water with which to put out the fire, and so they could not put it out. Now even more angry at the stupidity of the worker – "to drink tea, we need clean water, but when there is a fire, we put it out with whatever water we have!"

Said the Chofetz Chaim, in this generation there is a fire raging the streets, the generation is getting destroyed – in such a situation, it is not feasible to say, "who am I and what am I"? With whatever 'water' one has – whether it be clean or dirty – full of sand or totally pure – we must run to put out the fire!

Concluded the Chofetz Chaim, in this generation we are all obligated to do whatever we can to increase the honour of Hashem in the world.

L'Maaseh



The wife of **Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, zt"l**, Rabbanit Tzviyah, once related that when her husband was a Dayan in Yerushalayim, someone from southern Israel came to visit their home. As the man was preparing to leave, Rav Eliyahu thought of joining him in his car to go visit the **Baba Sali**. He asked his wife if she would like to make the trip together with him, and suggested that they could return later by bus.

She checked the bus schedule and saw that it would work if they could be in Ramle on time to catch the eleven o'clock bus back to Yerushalayim. However, catching that bus in Ramle meant that they would have to leave Netivot on an eight o'clock bus that night.

They decided to make the trip, and took a ride with their visitor. When they arrived at the Baba Sali's home, the Baba Sali's wife greeted them at the door, and apologized, but she said she couldn't invite them in to see her husband.

Rabbanit Tzviyah was very disappointed that they had made the trip for nothing. But quickly, her distress ended. The Baba Sali called to his wife and asked her to let them enter. He said, "I've been waiting for Rav Mordechai for days already!" The Baba Sali's wife opened the door, and allowed them to come in.

Rav Eliyahu went into the Baba Sali's study and Rabbanit Tzviyah sat down with the Baba Sali's wife, who began to cry. She said, "My husband hasn't eaten this entire week, not since the end of Shabbos. He said there is a terrible, heavy decree hanging over the Jewish people, and he's been fasting to try and annul it. Please ask your husband to persuade him to eat. He hasn't eaten for five days already!"

After some time had passed, the door to the Baba Sali's study opened, and the two Rabbanim came out. The Baba Sali's face was shining, and he said to his wife, "The decree has been canceled! Let's eat with our guests!" His wife immediately set the table and served a beautiful meal. The two Rabbis sang and praised Hashem, and at seven-thirty, Rabbanit Tzviyah began to signal to her husband to finish and say Birkas HaMazon, because they needed to leave in time to catch the eight o'clock bus out of Netivot.

Although the Baba Sali was sitting further away from Rabbanit Tzviyah, he seemed to know what she was saying. He instructed Rav Eliyahu, "Tell your wife not to worry. You'll get back to Yerushalayim in good time."

He continued the meal for another hour, singing and praising Hashem. Then, they finally Bentched and finished the meal. It was eight-thirty at night, long after the bus to Ramle had come and gone.

When they left the Baba Sali's house, Rav Eliyahu said to his wife, "Come, we'll take the late bus to Ramle and see what we can do from there." She told him, "The bus that leaves now doesn't get to Ramle until eleven-thirty, which is half an hour after the last bus from Ramle departs for Yerushalayim." Rav Eliyahu replied, "Don't worry about that. At least we'll be closer to Yerushalayim."

They took the eight-thirty bus to Ramle and arrived there at eleven-thirty. Rav Eliyahu then suggested, "Let's see what's happening with the bus to Yerushalayim."

His wife responded, "It was supposed to leave at eleven. I don't think we should bother." But Rav Eliyahu was insistent.

They went to the bus stop and saw, incredibly, the bus to Yerushalayim was still sitting there, full of passengers!

Rav Eliyahu asked the driver, "Can we board?" The driver answered, "There's no point. The bus won't start." Rav Eliyahu then asked, "Then why are all the passengers still here?" The driver responded,

"They have already paid, so they're waiting it out. But for you, there's no point in boarding. The bus has broken down."

Rav Eliyahu said, "We're getting on anyway," and he got on the bus together with his wife. They settled into their seats and then Rav Eliyahu said to the driver, "Try starting the engine again."

The driver turned his key in the ignition, and to everyone's amazement, the bus started very smoothly, even though it hadn't worked for the past half hour!

In shock, the driver exclaimed, "Are you Eliyahu HaNavi?"

"No." Rav Eliyahu said. "I'm Eliyahu Mordechai!"

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

ויזכר אלקים את רחל ***Hashem remembered Rachel****. (30:22)*

Rachel *Imeinu* was *mevater*, relinquished, that which she deserved in order to preserve her sister's esteem. If Yaakov *Avinu* would have discovered that Leah had been exchanged for Rachel, it would have posed an embarrassing situation for Leah. To spare her the shame, Rachel gave up what was hers.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz adds that Rachel's actions to spare her sister from humiliation also breached the trust Yaakov had in her.

The Patriarch knew that Lavan was a swindler who would find some way to break his word at the very last moment. Thus, he made a pact with Rachel, giving her special signs which only she would know. Rachel shared those *simanim* with Leah. Rachel gave up everything – her husband, her self-respect, her position in Matriarchal status – all so that her sister would not feel the pain of humiliation.

When ***Horav Itzele Ponovezher, zl***, left *Yeshivas Slabodka*, the *Rosh Yeshivah*, ***Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl***, reverently called the *Alter m'Slabodka*, was challenged with finding a *Rosh Yeshivah* to fill

his shoes. He turned to ***Horav Isser Zalman Meltzer zl***, who had developed a reputation as a brilliant mind whose analytic rendering of the subject matter was without peer.

Rav Isser Zalman considered the position, then demurred because he felt it would cause his mother-in-law, the widow of *Rav* Feivel Frank, undue pain. Apparently, his brother-in-law, ***Horav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, zl***, who was the oldest son-in-law, had yet to assume a rabbinical leadership position. *Rav* Moshe Mordechai was a brilliant Torah scholar who simply had not connected with the right position. He did not want to cause his mother-in-law any undue ill will. Thus, *Rav* Isser Zalman suggested to the *Alter* that he hire both himself and *Rav* Moshe Mordechai as *Roshei Yeshivah*. The *Alter* agreed, and the two brothers-in-law reigned as Slabodka's *Roshei Yeshivah*.

After a few years, it became obvious to *Rav* Isser Zalman that he and *Rav* Moshe Mordechai had disparate approaches toward elucidating the *sugya*, Talmudic topic, and, since two kings do not reign as one, he offered to leave.

It was exactly at that point that the opportunity to open a branch of Slabodka availed itself in the city of Slutzk. *Rav* Isser Zalman left to establish the *Slutzker Yeshivah*. His *vatranus* led to his imbuing with his Torah such *talmidim* as his future son-in-law, ***Horav Aharon Kotler, zl***, and ***Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl***, two individuals responsible for the burgeoning of Torah both in America and *Eretz Yisrael;* two *gaonim*, who each became the *gadol hador*, pre-eminent Torah giant of his respective generation.

Horav Aryeh Levin, zl, was the *chazzan*, led the services, during the *Yamim Noraim* in the *Zaharei Chamah, vasikin minyan*, in Yerushalayim. One year, the board informed him that a relative of the *shul's* largest donor was coming to the Holy Land. The donor wanted this relative to lead the services.

Without the funds contributed by this donor, the *shul* would suffer. *Rav* Aryeh was upset, but he could do nothing about it. He went to speak with his *Rebbe*, the ***Leshem, Horav Shlomo Elyashiv, zl***, who told him, "The pain you suffer in this world is greatly beneficial for the soul."

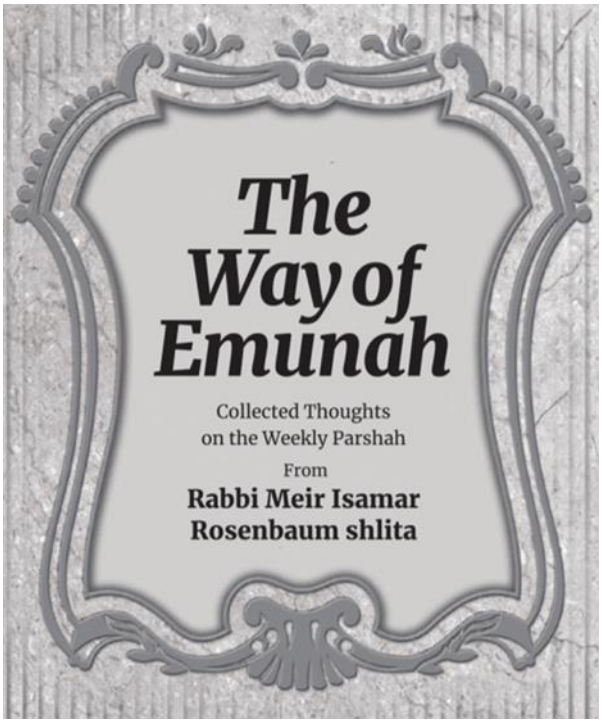
When *Rav* Aryeh returned home, he found two students who had recently emigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* from Slabodka. They had established a small group of *yeshivah* students who were paving the way for the *yeshivah's* branch in Chevron. Would he do them the honour of leading the services on *Yamim Noraim*?

This was the beginning of the famed melody, sung in Chevron for years to come, which was amalgamated with the *nusach* made famous by ***Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl***.

Horav Simchah Shlomo Levin asked why it had taken so long before Rachel *Imeinu* was rewarded by Hashem for her act of yielding to her sister. By the time Rachel had her first child, Leah had already given birth to six of her own, which were supplemented by the two sons of Zilpah. Her unprecedented action of forgoing her right to marriage to save her sister from humiliation should have generated an earlier reward. Rachel had suffered enough.

Rav Levin explains that, upon occasion, one may elevate himself to the point that he places his fellow's need before his own. This, however, is not an indication of his innate personality.

Only after a considerable period of time elapses – and he continues supporting his act of *vatranus* – does his/her true nature emerge and come to the fore. Rachel *Imeinu* acted in a manner that earned her accolades and served as a merit to protect the Jewish nation in later times. Her patience and forbearance added to her *vatranus* to make it shine, such that it became her hallmark.



The Prohibition to Speak Mundane Words in a Bais Knesses or Bais Medrash

וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמַר מַה־נּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה ***And he was frightened and he said: How awesome is this place***. (28:17)

The Shlah writes about this pasuk:

When a person is in a holy place, it is appropriate to stand with fear and awe and to respect its sanctity. He should feel the fear of Heaven upon him in regard to what he says, thinks and does. Therefore, one who speaks mundane words in a bais medrash or bais knesses, even if it is not the time for learning or tefillah, he is casting off the fear of Heaven from upon him, and this is forbidden."

The Way of Emunah - How to Stop The Yeitzer Hara From Obstructing Tefillah



The Sefas Emes asks why it says that "the big rock" was on the mouth of the well, rather than simply saying that it was "a big rock".

He answers that the yeitzer hara can be compared to a big rock that obstructs a person and tries to trip him up at all times. It is "the big rock" referred to in this pasuk. The yeitzer hara always is a big hindrance to us, but it

is even bigger when it is "on the mouth of the well". This refers to how the yeitzer hara stuffs up a person's mouth and does not allow him to daven to Hashem because it knows how powerful tefillah is.

The power of tefillah is seen from how the pasuk describes "the mouth of the well" as having "all the flocks surrounding it." This means that all of one's actions are gathered around his tefillos.

To counter this, we ask Hashem before we daven Shemonah Esrei: "Hashem sefasai tiftach. Hashem open my lips." The truth is that a person can only have the ability to overcome the yeitzer hara and open his mouth in prayer if he works on it. That is why tefillah is called an "avodah of the heart". If one works on himself until he feels a yearning in his heart to daven, he will be able to do so.

Chazal say that when Yaakov rolled the stone off the well it was like removing a cork from a bottle. This hints to the fact that a tzadik knows that a mouth needs something to cover it and protect its contents, just like a cork covers a bottle and guards whatever is inside it.

While it is good for the mouth to usually be covered, the covering must be removed for tefillah, just like the covering on a bottle is removed to enjoy its contents.

This also is hinted to by the fact that the pasuk uses the term: "Vayigash Yaakov. And Yaakov approached." The same word is used regarding when Yaakov approached Esav and Chazal say (Bereishis Rabbah 49:9) that he approached him with three things: Appeasement, prayer and warfare. So too, this pasuk refers to three things – the three prayers we recite every day -which we use to battle the yeitzer hara and remove its "big stone" from our mouths.

When we serve Hashem beyond our nature, Hashem performs miracles for us beyond the rules of nature. ~ Ksav Sofer.

Concentrating on The Meaning of The Words of Shemonah Esrei Leads to Parnassah

Sefer Roeh Even Yisroel writes that **Rav Itzik'l of Pshevorsk zy"a** once said: "People are always looking for segulos for parnassah. I say that the best segulah for this is to concentrate on the meaning of the words of Shemonah Esrei."

This idea is found in the words of Chazal (Kiddushin 82A), who say: "Ask for it from the one who owns all wealth." - One must exert his own efforts for parnassah, but hishtadlus does not help for ashirus, wealth. Rather, there is only one hishtadlus that helps to become rich and that is tefillah.



Big Small Achievements

QUESTION: What should a person do if he wants to become great but he realizes that he lacks the motivation to accomplish it to the fullest extent that he desires?

ANSWER: Look. Here's a man who would like to become a millionaire. He's walking in the street, and he sees a measly twenty dollar bill lying in the gutter. Now, twenty dollars won't make him a millionaire, but will he pass by? No. Even a millionaire will stoop down and pick it up.

And the answer is, every little bit is valuable. If you're able to control your character at least one little bit, a little *tikkun*, that's

already valuable. If you keep quiet a little bit – if instead of talking a thousand words a day, you'll talk 999 words, it's already a big achievement.

And therefore, it's only because people don't realize how great is the achievement in ruchniyus, they don't realize that when it comes to the spiritual achievements of improving your character even the smallest amount is worth doing, that's why people don't grab the opportunities.

And therefore, nobody should disdain that; just because he cannot become a *tzaddik* like Moshe Rabbeinu doesn't mean he shouldn't bend over and pick up the twenty-dollar bill anyhow.

Rabbi Yitzchak Tuvia Weiss, Zt"l



Rabbi Yitzchak Tuvia Weiss, Zt"l (26 August 1926 – 29 July 2022) was born in the town of Pezinok near Bratislava in Czechoslovakia. His father, Rabbi Shlomo, was a Magid Shiur and disciple of the Shevet Sofer.

Since there were not enough children in the town to maintain a Talmud Torah, Yitzchak attended the state school and studied Torah with a private teacher. In 1939, 12-year-old Yitzchak was sent on a kindertransport organized by (mechasidei umois haolam)

Mr. Nicholas Winton was born in Hampstead in 1909 to Jewish parents. He was a British Jew who succeeded singlehandedly in rescuing 669 children just weeks before World War II broke out.

Most of Rabbi Weiss's family remained behind and perished in the Holocaust. Rabbi Weiss tried to meet with Winton after the story

of his rescue became known in the last few years, but Winton passed away before he could meet him.



In a letter he wrote to Winton's family, he said that "he had succeeded in saving my life as well as a large number of other people. His noble memory, courage and devotion will be with us forever and can serve as a consolation to you."

Rabbi Weiss was taken to the house of the Sassover Rebbe in London, who hosted him together with other children from the kindertransport. In London he studied at Rabbi Moshe Shneider's yeshiva together with Yibadel Lechaim Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch shlita, who is the posek of the Eda Chareidis.

Later he studied in Gateshead and after his marriage continued his studies in Gateshead Kollel under Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler. When Rabbi Dessler left to become Mashgiach in Ponovezh, Rabbi Weiss served as head of the Kolel in his place, receiving his semicha from Rabbi Shakovitzky and Rabbi Rabinoff zts'l.

Rabbi Weiss moved to London where he taught in Yeshivas Haramah of Rabbi Elyakim Schlesinger and later become the rabbi of the Etz Chaim shul in London. During this period, he was close to the Shatzer Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom of Shatz.

In 1967 Rabbi Weiss moved to Belgium, where he lived for 37 years. He served as a rebbe at the Etz Chaim yeshiva there and later became a dayan for the local community. He also held a position as rav of the Gerer Beis Midrash and the Avreichim Beis Midrash.

Rabbi Weiss had warm ties with many of the gedolim, including the rebbes of Gur and Satmar and the Skulener and Pshevorsk rebbes.

He also maintained ties with the Steipler and wrote many letters to him and had a warm relationship with Rabbi Chaim Kanievski. Rabbi Weiss would often visit Rabbi Chaim in Bnei Brak and a few years ago Rabbi Chaim made a visit to Rabbi Weiss as well and spoke with him in learning. Rabbi Weiss also maintained a relationship with Rabbi Meir Zvi Bergman, son-in-law of Rabbi Shach, and Rabbi Shmuel Auerbach, whom he collaborated with on various issues.

After the passing of Rabbi Yisrael Moshe Dushinsky in 2003, Rabbi Weiss was called to serve as Gaabad (leader) of the Eda Charedis in Jerusalem. Initially he lived near the Dushinsky shul in Arzei Habirah but later settled in the Givat Moshe neighborhood.

During his tenure at the Eda Charedis, he established the Peer Hatorah yeshiva for youths from the community, later changing the name to Chochmas Hatorah. He served as a rosh yeshiva, giving shiur klali and other monthly shiurim. He also established a special tzedaka fund for needy families and would give special support to parents marrying off children including covering the costs of the wedding night. Yehi Zichro Boruch.

Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman - The Tricky Yetzer Hara

Reb Yehudah of Nasod zt'l was once on a train in a private compartment, and an old woman came aboard. Fearing the prohibition of yichud, the Rav jumped off the moving train.

His students asked him, "Why were you moser nefesh? What were you afraid of? She's an old woman!"

He replied, "I wasn't afraid of her. I was afraid of the aveirah of yichud."

~~~~~~

Chassidim would come to **The Koznitzer Magid zt'l** to receive counsel and his brachos, but he didn't admit women to his room. Once, when the gabbai wasn't around, a woman arrived. Not knowing the court's customs, she entered the Koznitzer Magid's room.

The Koznitzer Magid hurried to the window and was ready to jump out. Fortunately, just then, the gabbai returned and prevented the Koznitzer Magid from jumping.

Later, the gabbai asked, "The woman was old, and you're ill. What were you afraid of? Why did you have to risk your life and jump out of the window?"

The Koznitzer Magid replied, "When the yetzer hara takes control, he can make an old woman appear young and a sick person healthy."

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez **לעילוי נשמת יהושע ע״ה בן ברוך הלוי נ״י**

וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה *'And he dreamed, and behold! a ladder set up on the ground and its top reached to heaven.'*



Yaakov Avinu dreamt of a סֻלָּם - a ladder, on which malachim were going up and down.

The Baal Haturim points out that the gematria of the word **סולם** = 136, which is also the gematria of **ממון** - money. The ladder in Yaakov's dream symbolised money. What is the message?

Up untill now, for 77 years, Yaakov just sat and learned Torah. He had never handled money in his life. For the first time ever, he was entering the world 'outside the beis medrash'. Yitzchok had sent off

Yaakov with tremendous wealth, and Elifaz came and took it all from him. He would have to travel to Lavan peniless, work hard for him and make money on his own. - The Mal'achim going up 'the ladder of fortune' and the Mal'achim descending 'the ladder of fortune' was a lesson for Yaakov Avinu for the future.

The Mishnah says in Pirkei Avos **מַעֲשְׂרוֹת, סְיָג לָעשֶׁר** – '***Giving maaser is a protection for wealth***' (3:13).

This was the message of the סֵ֫לָּם which is the roshei teivos of **מָסֹרֶת, סְיָג לַעשֶׁר** ! (Sefas Emes)

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez לעילוי נשמת יהושע ע״ה בן ברוך הלוי נ״י

וַתֹּ֣אמֶר הִנֵּ֤ה אֲמָתִי֙ בִלְהָ֔ה בֹּ֥א אֵלֶ֖יהָ וְתֵלֵ֣ד עַל־בִּרְכַּ֑י וְאִבָּנֶ֥ה גַם־אָנֹכִ֖י מִמֶּֽנָּה ***And she (Rochel) said, "Here is my maidservant Bilhah. Come to her and I will raise the children she bears, and I will build myself from her." 30:3***

Realising that she was unable to have children of her own, Rochel gave her maidservant Bilha to Yaakov for a wife, hoping that just as Sarah merited to have a child after giving her maid Hagar to Avraham for a wife, so too she would merit children.

And what exactly did Rochel see in Bilha that made her feel sure that through her, she would merit children?

Says the Rabeinu Efrayim: She saw that all of the wives of the Avos had something that she was missing… A ה in all their names- **שרה הגר רבקה לאה זלפה**

רחל was the only one without the letter ה in her name- which she knew held within it the secret of the bracha of having children. And so she especially chose **בִלְהָה** who had 2x ה in her name – one ה would help Bilha, and the other ה would help Rochel!

Kindness Is Saying Good Morning by Rav Mordechai Burg



It was the first day of Yeshiva, and Reuven came to Shacharis. He did not put on Tefillin. He did not open a Siddur. He just sat there with a completely blank look on his face. He did not hide in the back of the Shul. He sat right in front of the Mashgiach of the Yeshiva, Rav Daniel Glanz, and myself.

After davening the Mashgiach and I wished Reuven a warm good morning. He did not respond. He just looked at us with the same blank face and walked away.

I was confused, to say the least. I had interviewed Reuven six months earlier, and he had seemed like a completely different person. Warm, engaging, a beautiful smile. Not the type to come to davening and just sit there. Certainly not the type to completely ignore someone who was speaking to him. I chalked it up to jet lag and adjusting to Yeshiva. Leaving home and coming to Israel for the year is always challenging. I didn't make too much of it.

The next day and the day after that, the scene repeated itself. Reuven came to davening. He did not put on Tefillin. He did not daven. He sat with a blank look on his face. He sat right in the front of the Shul. The Mashgiach and I wished him a good morning. He completely ignored us.

I don't take these things personally. Clearly, he was going through something. As Rabbeim, it is vital that we respect the boundaries of our talmidim. If he did not want to talk, I wasn't going to push him

to do so. If he did not want to say good morning that was ok. I decided to give Reuven space. I stopped saying good morning.

The Mashgiach took a different approach. Every day after davening, as Rav Glanz was wrapping up his Tefillin, he said good morning to Reuven. Every day Reuven ignored him. The Mashgiach and I would make eye contact and shrug our shoulders. Reuven would not open up to anyone. He was going through Yeshiva completely silent. He had the same blank look on his face throughout the Yeshiva day. He rejected any overtures to talk. But Rav Glanz was relentless. He never stopped saying good morning.

Months went by. Nothing changed. Reuven continued to come to davening but never said a word. He did not put on Tefillin. Until one fateful morning. Rav Glanz was wrapping his Tefillin after davening, and Reuven was walking by. Rav Glanz gave Reuven his classic warm smile and his customary good morning. This time Reuven responded with a good morning in return.

It was not much. He did not stop and chat. He continued walking to breakfast. But as soon as Reuven was out of earshot, I turned to Rav Glanz and said, "He speaks!" The same thing occurred the next day and the day after that. As Reuven was walking out of the Shul, he would respond with a good morning of his own. Somehow Rav Glanz had broken through what seemed to be an impenetrable wall.

A couple of weeks went by, and again something shifted. Reuven came to daven in the morning and put on Tefillin. He opened his Siddur and began saying the words. No one knew why Reuven decided to daven. He still wasn't talking to anyone. But he was clearly making a move. And another thing changed as well. Reuven would not just respond good morning with a blank stare; he actually had a smile on his face. It was really beautiful to see. When Reuven smiles, he smiles with his whole face. He lights up the room.

A short while later, as Rav Glanz and Reuven wished each other their daily good morning, Reuven asked Rav Glanz if they could speak. Of

course, Rav Glanz immediately said yes. He had been waiting months for this opportunity, and now that it had arrived, he would not let it pass.

They went for a walk. When they returned from their conversation, Rav Glanz pulled me to the side. I have known Rav Glanz for a long time. He is not easily shaken up. He had a look on his face, unlike anything I had ever seen.

The details of his conversation with Reuven remained private. All he could tell me was that something dramatic happened to Reuven between my interview with him in February and his arrival in Yeshiva. Reuven was in a tremendous amount of pain. He had strongly considered taking his life. And the reason Reuven wanted to talk to Rav Glanz that morning was to thank him for saving his life. It was Rav Glanz's good morning that stopped him from committing suicide. In times of great pain, he knew that there was someone in the world who would not give up on him. Despite the fact that he never responded, Rav Glanz never stopped saying good morning. And if Rav Glanz would not give up on him, he would not give up on himself either.

Everyone is struggling. Some more so and some less so, but everyone is going through something we know nothing about. A little bit of kindness goes a very long way. For those who feel completely alone, a kind word is a refreshing oasis in an arid desert.

Rav Shlomo Freifeld zt"l taught that in previous generations if someone wished you a gut morgen (good morning), the appropriate response was to wish them a gut yahr (good year). But why such an exaggerated response? They wish you one good morning, and you bless them with an entire good year?!?

Rav Freifeld explained that the person who says good morning has done much more than utter a simple platitude. He has let the other person know they matter and are worthy of being greeted with a smile and warm wishes for a great day. The person who receives a good morning from another has received life itself.

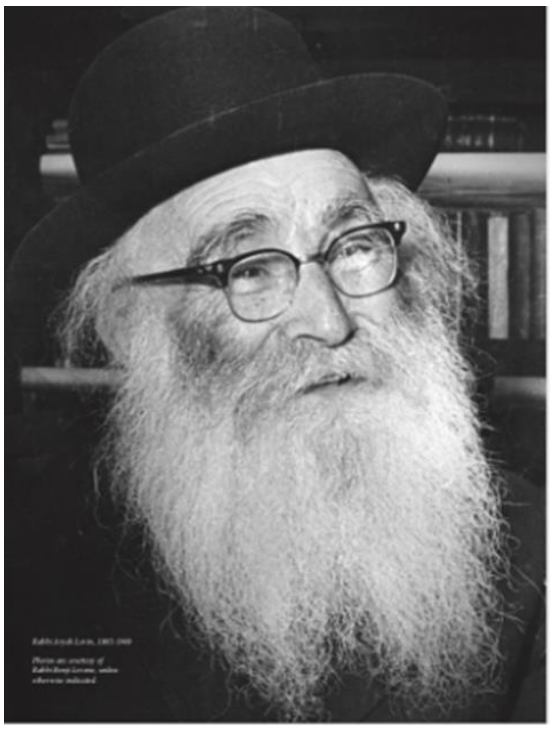
The next time you have the opportunity, greet someone with a smile and a genuine good morning. Watch their face. See how they smile back. Watch how they come alive. A simple good morning, one human being to another, can literally save a life.



Special Gift in the Yichud Room

Someone once asked the Gaon, **R' Eliyahu Lopian zt"l**, just how long do Chazal's words apply when they say (Pirkei D'Rav Eliezer) that a chosson is "Domeh L'melech" - a groom is like a king. Is it during the engagement, the night of the wedding, only for the week of sheva berachos, the first thirty days, or maybe even for the entire first year?

R' Elya replied, "As long as the chosson reveres his kallah and treats her like a queen, that is as long as he is considered a king!"



The Tzaddik from Yerushalayim, **R' Aryeh Levine zt"l** was such a person - he was a genuine king, based on the way he treated and revered his Rebbetzin as a queen. There is a well-known story related about how he once went with his wife to their family doctor for a check-up, and after the doctor received them with honor and respect. he asked why they came that day.

R' Aryeh replied, "We came to the honorable doctor because our foot hurts us." The doctor was noticeably confused; which foot was he to examine? Hers? His? Both? R' Aryeh smiled and said, "My wife's foot hurts us both!"

Another story is told by Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky a"h, the granddaughter of R' Aryeh Levine, about this wonderful mindset. She related as follows: "My holy Zaida was orphaned from a young age. He lived overseas and had a difficult life, with no money or financial support as he wandered from yeshivah to yeshivah.

When it came time for him to marry, Hashem arranged a most wonderful shidduch for him with a truly exceptional kallah. After

the chuppah, in the yichud room, R' Aryeh turned to his new kallah and told her very warmly and wholeheartedly, 'My precious wife, the custom is to give the kallah a special gift in the cheder yichud, and from the depths of my heart I so much wanted to give you a gift. Unfortunately, as you know, I have absolutely no means with which to purchase such a gift.

"It is painful to me to be unable to buy you something special. Therefore, my request is that you accept this gift from me, a gift that did not require any funds in order to purchase. Here is my gift: I accept upon myself to always be mevater, to always give in and acquiesce to all of your wishes. This gift should last for the duration of our lives! I will always let you do as you wish!'

"My grandmother was overcome with emotion. Her eyes filled with tears of gratitude, happiness and joy over such a magnificent gift, from her magnificent chosson. Instantly, she turned to him and replied, 'My dear chosson, if this is your gift to me, then I too, would like to give you the same exact gift: everything in our home should always run according to the way you feel it would be most beneficial!'

With this approach towards one another, it is no wonder that R' Aryeh and his wife lived together for so many wonderful, good years, always being mevater one to the other. They built a home and family that was a model example of Torah and middos tovos, a home in which there lived a true king and queen.

And they were zoche to merit having their daughters marry wonderful Gedolei Yisroel."

Before you can know "what Hashem is thinking," you must be willing to abandon what YOU are thinking.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה

וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה 'And he dreamed, and behold! a ladder set up on the ground and its top reached to heaven.' (20:12)



Yaakov Avinu dreamt of a סֻלָּם – a ladder, on which malachim were going up and down.

The Baal Haturim points out that the gematria of the word **סולם** = 136, which is also the gematria of **ממון** - money. The ladder in Yaakov's dream symbolised money. What is the message?

Money can be used for anything. But it's intended use is for Ruchniyos things.

Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli used to say that people think that when we scream out the famous line **ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזרה** – teshuva, tefillah, and tzedakah remove the evil decree. Above the words **תשובה ותפילה וצדקה** in the machzor, there appear 3 smaller words; Tzom (fasting) Kol (voice) and Mamon (money) . Each of these 3 has a gematria of 136.

צום קול ממון

וּתְשׁוּבָה, וּתְפִלָּה, וּצְדָקָה,
מַעֲבִירִין, אֶת רֹעַ הַגְּזֵרָה:

Some people think that Tzom and Kol is sufficient without the money. I will only fast and daven.

Dovid Hamelech said: (Tehilim 92:7) **אִישׁ בַּעַר לֹא יֵדָע וּכְסִיל לֹא־יָבִין אֶת־זֹאת** – '***A boorish man does not know; neither does a fool understand this***.'

בַּעַר is the gematria of 272 = 2x 136, which is equivalent to the **צום** and **קול**. **זר לא יבין זאת** – '***A stranger won't recognise 'this'***; What is **זאת** -'***this***'? Gematria 408, which is 3x 136. We require all three together to get the whole benefit.

According to the commentators, this comes to indicate that the ascent of the ladder **סולם** = 136, placed on the ground and whose top reaches heaven is done through **תשובה ותפילה וצדקה** - repentance, prayer and charity. All these elements are necessary, and none of them should be given up if we want to realize the hope of building a better world.

The Search for Eternal Life

"***And he called the name of that place Beit El, but Luz was the name of the city for the first time***" **וְאוּלָם לוּז שֵׁם־הָעִיר לָרִאשֹׁנָה** (28:19)

In ancient times, they believed in a legend that said that everyone who lived in the city of Luz never died, and many searched for this place - in vain. They tell of a Jew named Aharon, who heard that a sage named Naftali lived in Jerusalem who knew the location of the city of Luz. Aharon, determined to find Luz, arrived in Jerusalem, looked for the same Naftali and asked him: "How do you get to Luz?"

Naftali did not answer him immediately, but finally said: "Before you get to Luz, you must find a city, in the very centre of which stands an ancient tree. There you will see an old man named Chaim, and he will instruct you how to get to another city, which also has an ancient tree standing exactly in the centre of it. In that second city there will be a wise man with a white beard, who will show you a cave that you must pass through before you reach Luz. There is no light in that

cave, but it has many passages; only when you find the right passage will you reach Luz."

Aharon immediately went on his way and looked for a city, in the very centre of which stood a tree. He continued according to Naftali's instructions, and a few weeks later he reached the cave and entered it. He took plenty of provisions and equipment with him, because he had been warned that this cave was wide, deep and long.

After wandering there for several days he met an old man. "Hello," said Aharon, "who are you, my good friend?" - "My name is Menachem ben Yehuda," the man replied, "and who are you?"

They couldn't see each other because it was very dark in the cave, but Aharon told him: "I'm looking for the entrance to Luz."

"The entrance there? Weird!" Menachem replied, "I'm looking for the exit. Where is the exit? I have to get out of here. I'm so tired of Luz, I'm bored to death. There's simply nothing to do there!"

When Aaron heard this, he retraced his steps, left the cave and returned to his home and to the work that was waiting for him there.

Many believe that they would be happy if they could live forever. However, when there is no goal, when there are no values, when the person does not feel that he is wanted and needed, life is long, boring, tedious and monotonous.

Happiness is a by-product of a creative lifestyle. The enthusiasm and joy in life is built from doing things for others, from the feeling that a person is needed, and he achieves things in his life, and not necessarily from the number of years he has already lived, or that he may still live.

And the one who said: "***Adding life to your years is just as important as adding years to your life***."

The blessing of labour

"ויעבוד [יעקב] עמו [עם לבן] עוד שבע שנים אחרות" '***And [Jacob] worked with him [among Laban] another seven years***' (29:30)

In the Midrash, Yaakov Avinu is referred to as **בחיר שבאבות**. What did Yaakov do to deserve this title?

In that although he worked seven years for Leah and another seven years for Rachel, we are told that he was happy in all his labour.

In ancient times it was customary for a man to buy his wife. Today we say that "a man takes a wife"; However, Jacob our father worked, in actual practice, for his wife.

When we have to work to achieve something, it becomes valuable in our eyes, as it is said: **יְגִיעַ כַּפֶּיךָ כִּי תֹאכֵל אַשְׁרֶיךָ וְטוֹב לָךְ** –"***Your hand will be enough because you will eat, and you will be blessed and it will be good for you***" (Psalms 128:2).

The only part of the Temple wall that remains to this day is the Western Wall. Why was the Wall allowed to remain standing? On the



Midrash that says **אין שכינה זזה מכותל מערבי** - "***The Shekinah doesn't move from the Western Wall***" it is said that when the people were asked to build the walls of the Temple, the rich chose to build the Eastern Wall, and hired laborers to do it; The nobles preferred the southern wall, and sent their slaves to do the work; The rulers took the northern wall for themselves, and commanded those subject to them to build it; However, the Western Wall was built by the masses of the people with their own hands.

Indeed, the southern, eastern and northern walls were destroyed, and only the western wall, made by his own hands and the fruit of the people's dedication, still stands.

Only those things in which we invest effort and dedication will last for a long time and will give us satisfaction and a feeling of fullness.

Meaningful Minute - By Getzy Markowitz



"***If you don't have anything nice to say, then you don't get it.***"

Many years ago, when I was in yeshiva searching for my place there, my Mashgiach passed my seat, and in a tone that I will never forget, he said, "***Markowitz, Du bist hoich.***" – ***You are tall, and when you are tall, you can reach high.***" - Rabbi Cohen's words created a storm within me and set me on a positive track.

Yiddishkeit takes the words that say or chose not to say very seriously. Slander, gossip, evil talk, lashan harah, are poison to us, our families and communities.

Yet, we can choose words that are kind and complementary, emboldening, forgiving and encouraging.

Why talk down to someone if you can lift them up? Why blame a person, when you can bolster them? Why slander someone, when you can celebrate them?

Condemn someone, and they make break. Complement someone, and they may become the person worthy of your praise. The words we choose, can demolish or build. Say something to create something or someone.

Etz Hachaim - The Jewish Wife's Role



The daughter of the Chofetz Chaim once related the following story. "My grandmother **ע"ה** , wasn't so well known. But I remember when the Chofetz Chaim's name became known in the world, some people approached her and asked her what she did to merit a son who lit up the world. She answered, "I don't recall anything specific, but once you're asking, I can tell you one episode.

Before I got married, **my** mother asked me if she could speak with me for a few moments and this is what she told me: 'My daughter, listen to my words. We are commanded to raise our children on the correct path of Torah and **יראת שמים**. Therefore, I ask of you one favour. Whenever you have time, take this siddur/tehillim, and pray to Hashem that you should merit to raise your children to Torah and **יראת שמים**. And don't forget to shed real tears when you daven.' The mother of the Chofetz Chaim continued, "My mother gave me the siddur/tehillim and this is all I did my whole life." she said simply.

"Every time I finished work in the house, or I placed a pot on the stove, and I had a few minutes until the food was finished, I would take out my trusted **סידור/תהילים** that I got from my mother, and I would cry to Hashem, **שיחון את עניו של ישראל'קה שלי ואזכה לגדלו לתורה וליראת שמים**

Torah Tavlin

וַיַּגֶּד יַעֲקֹב לְרָחֵל כִּי אֲחִי אָבִיהָ הוּא 29:12



R' Nissan Bak zt"l was the leader of the Chassidish community in Yerushalayim during the mid-19th century. He was known for being sharp and highly intelligent, and he was also the unofficial "ambassador" of the holy **Rizhiner Rebbe, R' Yisroel Friedman zt"l**. As such, he took care of the building of the famous and beautiful synagogue known as "Tifereth Israel Sadigora" in Yerushalayim. This was one of the enterprises of the Rizhiner chassidus.

While the structure was still incomplete, the dome not having yet been erected, it happened that the late Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria visited the structure and was received by R' Nissan himself. The Emperor chatted with R' Nissan regarding the holy Rizhiner Rebbe, about whose accomplishments he was familiar, and mentioned casually, "How come the building is still incomplete?"

"Your Majesty," answered R' Nissan, jokingly, "since you are known all over the world as a ruler who is friendly to the Jewish people, it (the dome) takes its hat off to you!"

The Emperor smiled, apparently amused. "However," R' Nissan continued, "his Majesty is aware that with our Nation, who adhere to the ancient 'Oriental' customs and traditions, it is considered an even greater mark of respect to keep one's head covered. I hope his Majesty will enable our synagogue to put on it's headpiece!"

The Emperor laughed again. He got the message. He instructed his adjutant to send a substantial contribution to R' Nissan to enable him to complete the dome.

Yaakov Avinu told Rochel that he was her father's brother, meaning, he knew how to deal with him like a "brother" should the need arise. This is a wakeup call for all Torah scholars, says the holy **Chofetz Chaim.** People are shrewd. Learn to deal with them the proper way!



The Shidduch

A family living in Jerusalem had a son by the name of Zelig, who was getting on in years, and couldn't seem to find his soulmate. The family did its utmost, but things were not turning out the way they had hoped for. The boy's mother decided that she would travel to Meron and daven at the kever of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, in the hopes of finding a shidduch for her son.

She took the bus from Jerusalem and while she was sitting on the bus, she called her husband on her cell phone. "Do you remember," she asked him, "that when we were first married, we didn't have a child right away and we went to Meron to daven?

At that time, we made a promise that if we were to have a son, we would name him Shimon, after the great Tanna. Boruch Hashem, we had a son but for some odd reason, we seemed to have forgotten our promise and in the end, we named him Zelig. I was thinking, maybe this is what's holding back his shidduch?" Her husband agreed with her premise but felt that he must discuss the matter with his Rov before taking any measures.

Immediately, he called his rabbi and explained the whole situation. The Rov also agreed and told him to add a name to their son, and

from then on he should be called Shimon Zelig. He called back his wife and told her to daven at the kever of Rashbi for their son "Shimon Zelig" that he should finally find his soulmate and become engaged.

She arrived in Meron and davened with heartfelt tears for a very long time. When she returned back home, she felt as if a stone had been lifted off her family's collective chest and they were excited about the future prospects.

In order to make it official, the following Shabbos during Krias HaTorah, the gabbai called up "Habachur Shimon Zelig ben Reb ...." for an aliyah, and afterwards he made a Mi Shebeirach using the same name.

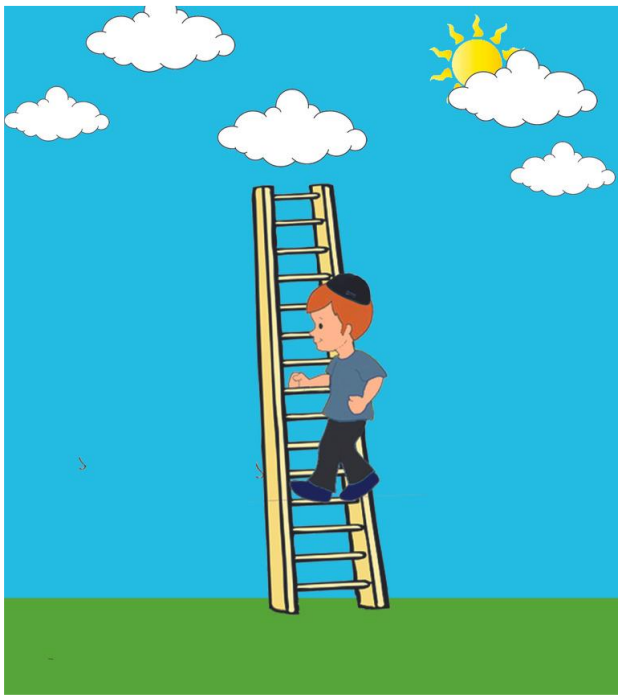
A few eyebrows were raised but no one seemed to have an issue. Except for one man who also davened in the same Beis Medrash, and his name was also Zelig. As soon as davening was over, he walked over to the gabbai and asked him, "Why did you call this bachur Shimon Zelig? His name is Zelig. When did he suddenly get a new name?"

The gabbai shrugged his shoulders and replied, "Don't look at me. This is what his father asked me to do. I don't know why. I didn't ask questions."

This man Zelig had a daughter who was in shidduchim for a while as well. Long ago, he had his eye on the bachur Zelig as a chosson for his daughter, but since both of their names were Zelig, he couldn't do such a shidduch. After all, it is famously quoted from Rav Yehuda HaChasid that the names of a father-in-law and son-in-law mustn't be the same. He had never pursued the shidduch - until now.

Now that he realized that their names weren't the same, he was willing to go forward with the shidduch. He involved a local shadchan who put forth the idea. It didn't take long, and with amazing siyata dishmaya, Shimon Zelig became engaged to Zelig's daughter.

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick



Yaakov Avinu had a dream where he saw a ladder standing on the ground and there were Malachim going up and also going down the ladder.

Horav Yehonosan Shteiff זצ"ל says that this ladder represents the connection between heaven and earth. One must strive to raise his spiritual level step by step as he climbs the 'ladder to heaven'. However, while climbing in spirituality one has to remember to be 'set on the ground', which means to remain humble.

The only way to reach the top of this spiritual ladder is by staying humble.



"Nefesh Shimshon" – From the Teachings of Rabbeinu Shimshon Dovid Pincus Zt"L – The Greatness of Rochel

וְעֵינֵי לֵאָה רַכּוֹת וְרָחֵל הָיְתָה יְפַת־תֹּאַר וִיפַת מַרְאֶה ***The eyes of Leah were soft, and Rachel's face was finely formed and shined beautifully. (Bereishis 29:17)***

It says in the *Shulchan Aruch* that we should close our eyes during the *Shemoneh Esreh* (or look only in the *siddur*, which is similar to closing our eyes). Simply speaking, this is so we will remain focused on our prayers. However, we need to have *kavanah* in all parts of the *Tefilah*, not just in *Shemoneh Esreh*.

So if keeping our eyes open disturbs our concentration why isn't there a *halachah* to close one's eyes also during *Berachos* and *Pesukei d'Zimra?*

The answer is that closing our eyes during *Shemoneh Esreh* has a deeper meaning, beyond the fact that it helps us to keep focused on our prayers. Early Torah sources say that the source for this *halachah* of closing eyes is the verse from our *parshah:* **וְעֵינֵי לֵאָה רַכּוֹת וְרָחֵל הָיְתָה יְפַת־תֹּאַר וִיפַת מַרְאֶה**

It says in Early Torah sources that Rachel is called "a beautiful maiden but she doesn't have eyes." So when a Jew *davens* he needs to close his eyes, as if he doesn't have eyes.

About a person who closes his eyes it says: **כִּי לֹא־יִרְאַנִי הָאָדָם וָחָי** – ***A person shall not see Me and live***.(*Shemos* 33:20.)

The *Midrash* comments on this verse: While they are alive, they do not see Me, but they see Me when they die.



If a person closes his eyes when he prays, he will merit seeing the *Shechinah* when he dies. But if a person doesn't close his eyes in *Tefilah,* when he dies, he sees the *Malach Hamaves,* and that is a dreadful sight indeed.

We need to understand what *Chazal* meant when they said that Rachel doesn't have eyes. We also need to understand how this connects to the idea of reciting *Shemoneh Esreh* with closed eyes.

Let's compare Leah to Rachel. Leah has "eyes."

Leah expresses the power and the greatness of the Jewish people. She gave birth to Reuven, who is the *bechor* of the Jewish people. She gave birth also to Shimon, who teaches the children. And to Levi,

who has the *Kehunah* and the service in *Beis Hamikdash*. And to Yehudah, who has the royal dynasty of David. And to Yissachar, who were heads of *Sanhedrin.* And to Zevulun, who had wealth, and supported Torah learning. This is the greatness of Leah.

What did Rachel contribute to building the Jewish nation? Ostensibly, nothing. ***She doesn't have "eyes."*** She has physical eyes, but she doesn't see anything with her eyes. She is a "simple Jewess" without any special traits of greatness.

Leah was the mother of all those who were special in some way. Rachel was the mother of Yosef, about whom it says: **הֲבֵן יַקִּיר לִי אֶפְרַיִם** – ***Efraim is a precious son to Me***.

Efraim is Yosef, and the whole Jewish people is termed "Efraim" in many places in *Tanach.* What is special about Efraim? Nothing, really, but *Hashem* loves him, as it says in the *pasuk*. Rachel is thus the mother of the Jewish people in general. She is the mother of the simple people.

Yaakov did not want to marry Leah. He did not feel that greatness, which Leah represented, was necessary. Being king causes one to miss out on Torah study. Kings don't usually have time to sit and learn all day. *Kehunah* is not necessary, either, because *Chazal* say that *Hashem* told *David Hamelech: 'One day that you sit and occupy yourself with Torah learning is better to Me than a thousand burnt offerings that your son Shlomo will bring before Me on the Altar.'*

A simple Jew who sits and learns is more precious in *Hashem's* eyes than a *kohen* offering *korbanos.* This is why Yaakov wanted to marry Rachel. Leah will be for Eisav. Wealth, kingship and other positions of power and influence are appropriate for him. And Yaakov? He will sit in the corner and learn. He will get by on bread with salt and a jug of water. He will thereby merit *Olam Haba,* and then he will have greatness.

This is how *Yitzchak Avinu* looked at things when he sought to bestow the blessings upon Eisav. But Rivkah didn't agree. She held that the blessings need to go to Yaakov. Rachel, too, looked at it that way, that Leah needs to marry Yaakov first. The Jewish people needs greatness.

Our *parshah* says that "the eyes of Leah were soft," implying that she has eyes. This signifies that she sees greatness. Leah looks at herself and sees: *bechorah, kehunah, malchus,* heading the *Sanhedrin,* supporting Torah learning.

"Rachel's face was finely formed," but she doesn't have "eyes." She does not see how great she is. Rachel is "a beautiful maiden but she doesn't have eyes." She does not appreciate the greatness of the simple Jew. She does not have eyes to see how precious and important she is to Yaakov.

This is our problem, too. So to speak, we don't have "eyes." We are likely to say to ourselves things like, "If learning this *daf* of *Gemara* will make me into a great *rosh yeshivah* or the head of the *Sanhedrin,* it's a good deal. If, because of my success in Torah learning, I will become very wealthy and will be able to support *yeshivos,* this, too, is a worthwhile deal. But just to learn a *daf Gemara?* I am not going to get anything so great out of it."

This is "a beautiful maiden but she doesn't have eyes." We don't have eyes; we don't know how to appreciate how beautiful and how important is the learning of one *daf Gemara* by a simple Jew, how beautiful is the recitation of a chapter of *Tehillim* by a simple Jew.

The time when we are standing in the *Shemoneh* Esreh prayer is actually the most beautiful situation a Jew can be in. It is standing before *Hashem*.

A Jew might *daven* the *Shemoneh Esreh* and think to himself, "What good is my *tefilah?* What big changes is it going to make? All I am doing is standing here with my eyes closed, saying words."

This person doesn't know what every word of *tefilah* does in Heaven. We don't know how to appreciate the wondrous beauty of the *Shemoneh Esreh* prayer. It is the time of ultimate greatness and we don't know how it appreciate it properly.

This is indeed "a beautiful maiden but she doesn't have eyes."

וַיִּגַּשׁ יַעֲקֹב וַיְגַל אֶת־הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וַיַּשְׁקְ אֶת־צֹאן לָבָן אֲחִי אִמּוֹ "***And Yaakov came forth and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and gave drink to the sheep of Lavan, his mother's brother.***" 29:10



In tefillas hageshem (the prayer for rain), we daven that Hashem remember the merit of Yaakov when he rolled off the stone to water Lavan's sheep.

Question: Why is it that when we need Heavenly mercy and daven for rain, we mention this kindness of Yaakov, which he did thousands of years ago? Furthermore, according to Rashi, the effort that Yaakov made was equal to the effort it takes to remove a cork from a bottle.

Answer: We are not asking Hashem to remember the actual act that Yaakov performed, but rather the way in which he performed it. When Yaakov removed the stone, it was with his whole heart. When a chessed is done wholeheartedly, no matter how small it is, it has the power to have impact for generations.

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted!

הסבא מסלבדקא



Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

וְרָחֵל הָיְתָה יְפַת־תֹּאַר וִיפַת מַרְאֶה ***Rochel had beautiful features and a beautiful complexion.*** (29:17)

Every Friday night, before we begin the Shabbos meal, we sing Shlomo HaMelech's beautiful praise of the aishes chayil - woman of valour. Toward the end, we declare (Mishlei 31:30) sheker ha'chein

v'hevel ha'yofee - Charm is false and physical beauty is vain and empty. At the same time, the Torah praises Rivkah and Rochel as being attractive, and the Gemora in Megillah (15a) teaches that Sorah was one of the four most beautiful women in all of history. Why do we praise the Imahos for such a superficial, illusory quality?



The Vilna Gaon explains that Shlomo himself alluded to the resolution of this apparent contradiction. Immediately following the aforementioned verse, he continues ish yiras Hashem hee tishalal - Only a woman with fear of Heaven is truly praiseworthy.

In other words, if a woman possesses physical beauty and uses it for the immodest and immoral purposes glorified by the society around us, it is indeed vain and empty. On the other hand, if she is Gd-fearing and uses her beauty in a modest and appropriate manner, as did the Matriarchs, it becomes a positive attribute worthy of praise.

Similarly, **Rav Avrohom Yaakov Pam** likened physical beauty to the number 0. If all a woman has going for her are good looks, she is an empty 0, a container which is fair to the eyes but with no inner value or inherent worth. If, on the other hand, she also possesses other laudable and praiseworthy traits, adding her attractive features to the list enhances and magnifies her intrinsic value from 10 to 100 or from 100 to 1000, a message which is all too relevant for a generation that has become increasingly fixated on external appearance as an overriding consideration in evaluating potential matches.

Parsha Points to Ponder

1) When Yaakov encountered Rochel, he began to cry (29:11). Rashi explains that in contrast to Eliezer, who arrived at Rivkah's house bearing presents, Yaakov greeted Rochel and her family empty-handed. Although he set out with appropriate gifts, he was accosted on his journey by Elifaz, who was commanded by his father Eisav to kill Yaakov but was hesitant to do so. Instead, he took all of Yaakov's possessions, as the Gemora (Nedarim 64b) teaches that a poor person is considered as if he is dead, and this was considered a partial fulfilment of Eisav's instructions to kill Yaakov. Where is this episode hinted to in the Torah?
2) The Gemora in Megillah (13b) relates that when Yaakov encountered Rochel at the well, he asked her to marry him. She replied in the affirmative but warned him that her father Lavan was a trickster. In what way do Jews living in America thousands of years later still need to protect themselves from Lavan's deceit?
3) Rashi writes (Bereishis 29:25) that to prevent potential trickery by Lavan, Yaakov gave certain simanim (signs) to Rochel that only she would know. When Rochel realized that her father Lavan intended to send Leah under the bridal canopy instead of her, she feared the humiliation her sister would face and related the simanim to her so that she could convince Yaakov that she was indeed Rochel. What were these simanim?
4) After Rochel attempted to express the depth of her pain at her inability to conceive children, saying that without kids she was like a dead person (30:1), Yaakov became angry at her. What was wrong with Rochel's expression of pain that upset Yaakov? (Even Yisroel)
5) When Lavan kissed his children and grandchildren to bid them farewell (31:55), what deleterious spiritual effect did this have on them?

Answers to Points to Ponder:

1) **Rav Yehuda Assad** points out that the letters comprising the words (28:10) **מבאר שבע וילך חרנה** –Yaakov travelled) from Be'er Sheva, and he went to Charan – are an abbreviation for **מיד בא אליפז רשע שהוא בן עשו ויתן יעקב לו כל חילו, רק נשאר המקל** Immediately the wicked Elifaz the son of Eisav came, and Yaakov gave him all of his possessions, and all that remained was his staff.

Similarly, the **Gan Yosef** notes that the letters in the words (29:13) **את כל הדברים האלה** –Yaakov told Lavan all of the things that had happened – are an abbreviation for **אל תאמר כי לא הבאתי דבר, ברוב רכוש יצאתי מביתי, הלך אליפז לקח הכל** Do not say that I did not bring anything; I left my house with a tremendous amount of possessions, but Elifaz came and took them all.

2) Although American Jews feel comfortable that the government respects our rights, **Rav Nachman Bulman** pointed out that it is no coincidence that the President's residence, the White House, when translated into Hebrew becomes **בית לבן**–the house of Lavan, who externally tried to seem fair, even though his true goal was to destroy the Jewish nation. While we must appreciate our unprecedented freedom, we must also remember that we are still in exile and never completely let our guards down.

3) **The Daas Z'keinim** writes that the "password" was the 3 mitzvos that are especially associated with Jewish women: challah, niddah, and lighting candles. Based on mystical concepts, the **Kaf HaChaim** maintains that the simanim were holding Yaakov's right big toe, his right thumb, and then his right ear.

4) **Dayan Yisroel Yaakov Fisher** writes that Yaakov was upset at Rochel's statement that if she was unable to have children, she considered herself like a dead person, which revealed that she believed that the entire purpose of her existence was to bear offspring. This was incorrect, because the purpose of a woman's creation is not solely to have children, but to perfect herself and to assist her husband in reaching his own spiritual completion. Because

Rochel trivialized her true essence and life mission, Yaakov responded sharply to her statement.

5) **Rav Shimon Schwab** suggests that when Lavan kissed all his children and grandchildren, they were influenced by his powerful love of deceit and trickery, and he imbued each of them with a powerful evil inclination for falsehood, which was absorbed and passed over to future generations.

Always a Chassid



While exiled by the Soviets to Siberia, the famed mashpia and chassid **Reb Mendel Futerfas** was asked by fellow non-Jewish inmates why he was happy while they were depressed.

Once a few inmates asked me why I was always so happy. I turned the tables and asked them why they were so unhappy. Each told a sombre story: one had been a famous engineer, another a respected lawyer, the third a former general in the Red Army. All had been reduced to worthless prisoners. They asked me again, "Now tell us why you are happy."

I explained to them that their lives had centred on their professions and status, so their self-worth disappeared as soon as their careers were taken from them. "My life is about much more than that," I said. "It's true that I was a successful businessman, but that was not the purpose of my life. I was a chassid, and here too I am still a chassid."

Letters of Truth - Rabbi Eliyahu Maksumov



In Hebrew, the word **אמת** is spelled aleph-mem-taf, revealing an important secret. The first two letters – aleph and mem – spell the word **אם** - "mother." The last two letters spell the word **מת** - "death."

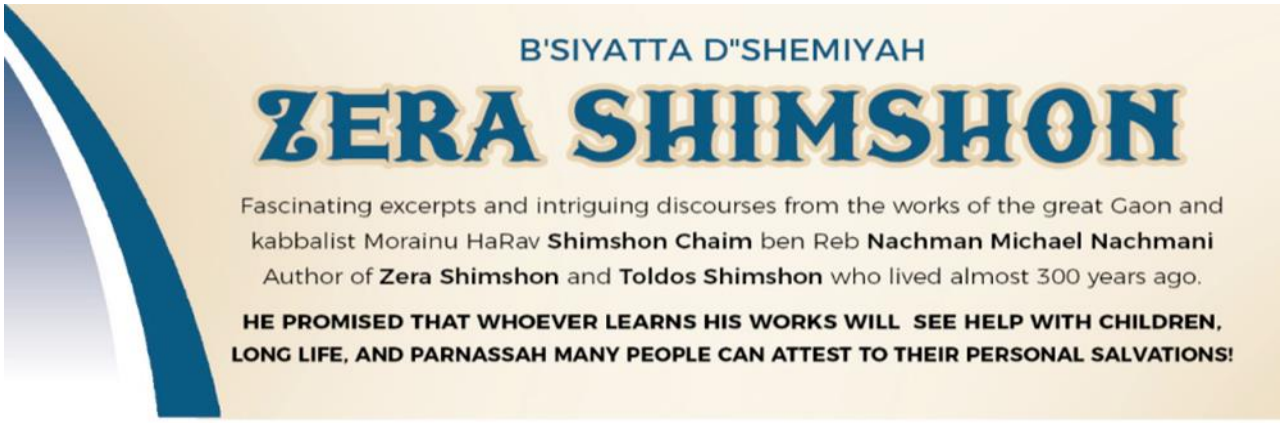
This is a metaphor referring to the moment we enter this world until it's time for us to reunite with our Creator. Throughout our entire life, our purpose is to find the truth. Our goal is to discover the truth of why we're here in this world and to live up to that reason and fulfil that mission. And if we do that, then we are living a life of truth.



Rabbi Y. Reuven Rubin

The Piesnetzna Rebbe Ztl writes that each Yid should write a journal of how Hashem has shown His love throughout his life. The Rebbe explains that this will serve as a vivid reminder to each of us of how much our emunah can mean in our real lives.

At the same time it will be a testimony to your children of the miracles that formed their family and the wonders that have touched their loved ones. We all need chizuk, especially in a world filled with the noise of immorality.



וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיָּשֶׂם אֹתָהּ מַצֵּבָה וַיִּצֹק שֶׁמֶן עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ *and he took the stone that he had placed at his head, and he set it up as a monument, and he poured oil on top of it.*



On the possuk, "And he (Yaakov) took the stone that was under his head..." Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer comments, "What did Hashem do? He stretched His right foot and sunk this stone into the depths of the earth and Hashem made it a part of the Earth just like a person makes a doorpost to support the lintel (a horizontal support of timber, stone, concrete, or steel across the top of a door or window). Therefore it (this rock) is called "even shesia" because this (stone) is the core of the world and from this stone the world expanded. (On that stone) the Palace of Hashem (Bais Hamikdash) stands like it says, "... and this rock that I (Yaakov) made an alter, will be the Dwelling Place of Hashem."

We see from the Pirkei D"Rebbi Eliezer that until Yaakov took the stone and placed it under his head, the foundations of the world were not yet complete.

Zera Shimshon asks why did Hashem put on the finishing touches of the world specifically now, before Yaakov arrived at the house of Lavan? Why couldn't it have waited until Yaakov left Lavan's house with his wives and children?

He answers by first asking a similar question on a different Medrash. The Medrash says that Hashem first created the food for mankind and only after that did He create people. He asks why was this order so important? Why couldn't Hashem first create mankind and after that their food?

He explains in light of the halacho that a person is allowed to do whatever he wants to do on his own property even if his neighbour will eventually be damaged. (For instance, he can plant a tree in his yard even though that the roots will eventually spread and damage his neighbour's field.) However, he is not allowed to do something that will cause immediate and direct damage.

For instance, he is not allowed to dig a pit in his field if the digging will weaken his neighbour's wall. He can dig a pit on his own property only if he distances himself far enough away from his neighbour's property not to cause any damage.

In actually, people and the physical world really damage each other. We damage the world by doing sins (like what happened at the time of the Flood in the days of Noach). The world damages us by enticing us to do avairos through forbidden pleasures. However there is a fundamental difference between the way we damage each other. The world damages us immediately. Almost involuntary, we see something and the heart yearns for it. However, our damage to the world doesn't come right away. Hashem warns us and gives us time to do teshuva. Only then, if we don't heed the warnings, does Hashem punish the world.

According to this, reasons Zera Shimshon, we can understand why Hashem created our food before He created us. The world needs

both people and food for people in order to exist. If mankind was created first, Hashem wouldn't be able, so to speak, to create our food since the physical world directly and immediately damages us. However since our actions don't damage the world immediately, therefore there is no problem that Hashem creates us, just like it is permitted to plant a tree in your own property even though the roots will cause damage later on.

Yaakov Avinu didn't just go to Lavan's house. He went there to bring into this world the 12 tribes whose existence is the basis and root of all of mankind. (This is symbolized by the fact that there are twelve tribes which is parallel to the 12 Zodiac signs, the 12 months, and the 12 combinations of the name of Hashem).

If Hashem would have waited to finish creating the foundation of the world until Yaakov returned from the house of Lavan and after he gave birth the twelve tribes, He would not have been able to finish the creation of the world, since the world directly and immediately damages mankind. Therefore right before Yaakov arrived at the house of Lavan and begot the Twelve Tribes, Hashem put on the finishing touches of our world.

After Yaakov Avinu had his dream with the ladder, he asked Hashem to protect him. He says, "**וְנָתַן־לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ** " (28:20).

Isn't it obvious that if you have bread, it's for eating, and if you have clothes, they are for wearing? Why were the extra words necessary?

How many people do we know, that have access to plenty of food, and clothing, but unfortunately, they are so unwell, that they are unable to enjoy the food or wear the clothes?

So Yaakov asked that not only he should receive food and clothing, but to be allowed the health to eat the bread, and wear the clothing. We all thank Hashem for supplying us with our needs. But in addition, we must thank Hashem for being able to enjoy those needs, in good health. Because in life, we mustn't take anything for granted!

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

Later on in the parsha, when Leah has already had five of the Shivtei Kah the Pasuk says: **וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל־לֵאָה וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד לְיַעֲקֹב בֵּן חֲמִישִׁי** ***And Hashem listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Yaakov a fifth son***. (30:17)

Rashi says: **שהיתה מתאוה ומחזרת להרבות שבטים** ***That she desired and was seeking means to increase the number of shevatim***.

The Sifsei Chachomim asks, what is the Pasuk telling us? Leah didn't actually daven to have more children, so what did Hashem hear?

Actually, *fakert*, the Pasuk says that after she had Yehudah **וַתַּעֲמֹד מִלֶּדֶת** - She stopped davening!



Reb Ezriel Rosenbaum said in the name of the **Chasam Sofer**, that the reason why she stopped bearing children was because she never asked for more!

we say **מוֹדִים** twice in davening. Once in the silent Shmono Esrai and again in Chazaras Ha'shatz. The first is thanks for all the gashmiyos that we receive from The Ribono Shel Olam. The second occasion is for all the ruchniyos that receive.

The Chasam Sofer says that's why in the **חזרת הש"ץ** we continue to ask for more... **כֵּן תְּחַיֵּינוּ וּתְקַיְּמֵנוּ וְתֶאֱסוֹף גָּלֻיּוֹתֵינוּ** because for ruchniyos things we ask for more. So because Leah stopped davening for more children which are a ruchniyos thing, - **וַתַּעֲמֹד מִלֶּדֶת** - she stopped bearing children.

So, where do we see that she davened for more? As Rashi says, **שהיתה מתאוה** ***– she desired more children.***

The Sifsei Chachomim says that the gemarah in Taanis says that tefillah is **עבודה שהיא בלב** - b'ikur an avodah from the heart. We normally have to articulate it with words, as our minds are fragile, and we need to focus properly.(Chovos Halvavos)

Hashem heard the tefillos that were emanating from Leah's heart! She didn't have to actually say anything. That's why it says **וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל־לֵאָה וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד לְיַעֲקֹב**

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

The Chasam Sofer says that Yaakov's dream occurred on erev/leil Shabbos.



Somebody that keeps Shabbos properly, is zoche to **נחלה בלי מצרים - נחלת יעקב יירש בלי מצרים נחלה** as the pasuk says **וּפָרַצְתָּ יָמָּה וָקֵדְמָה וְצָפֹנָה וָנֶגְבָּה** 28:14. There will be no boundaries to your **נחלה** if you keep **שבת כהלכתה**.

וַיָּשֶׂם אֹתָהּ מַצֵּבָה – (28:18) The word **מצבה** b'miluah [**ממ צדיק בית הא**] is exactly the gematria (702) as **שבת**!

נחלה בלי מצרים - נחלה in the Miluah [**נון חית למד הי**] is the same gematria as **תריג**! This is what Yaakov Avinu was zoche to – Taryag Mitzvos.

"Hashem places A ladder for every Jew right where they stand. It reaches from that very spot all the way to heaven. Wherever you are, is the place from which you can rise highest, accept it with love and joy." ~ The Slonimer Rebbe (Bircas Avraham)

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

It states (28:11) **וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ** -"*He arrived at the place and lodged there because the sun had set.*

Rebbe Leibele Eiger zt'l explains that **כִּי בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ**, the sun setting, was a reminder for Yaakov Avinu that just as the sun sets and then the morning comes, so, too, Yaakov should know that all tzaros will end and good times will come.

This was a great chizuk for Yaakov Avinu when he went to Charan, to the house of Lavan the rasha. He was taught that suffering has an end.

We quote from Rebbe Leibele Eiger's holy sefer, Toras Emes: "He knew that all the darkness that he endures in Charan is only for a certain amount of time. The salvation is prepared and ready to come. Only for the time being, the salvation is concealed.

It can be compared to when the sun sets. It looks like there isn't a sun in the world anymore, when in truth it just went away for a moment, and it is prepared to shine again when the morning comes.

Similarly, Yaakov understood that the darkness is only for a short time, like the sun setting."

Reb Leibele Eiger adds that this is the specialty of tefillas Maariv. It is said when it is dark, but one shouldn't lose hope. The salvation is prepared, and it will come. It will become light again, just as the night turns into the morning.

Tiferes Shlomo (Moadim, Tefillah) explains the pasuk (Tehillim 107:1) הוֹדוּ לַה' כִּי טוֹב, when one praises Hashem for His kindness, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ, the kindness will continue forever.

Rebbe Leibele Eiger teaches that the final letters of **וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ** - "Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and went…"(28:10) is gematria 292, the same as **רפואה**. The final word of the pasuk is חָרָנָה, "to Charan." **חרנה** or **חרון** represents anger (**חרון אף**), as this is written in Rashi and the Midrash. The Torah hints at "refuah" before the **חרון**, the anger and punishment.

This means that when Yaakov left Be'er Sheva en route to Charan, he understood that the "refuah" would come before the "Charan", the suffering.

In honour of the **Bas Ayin's** yahrtzeit (12th of Kislev) **(Rebbe Avraham Dov ben Rebbe Dovid zy'a)**

Chazal say (Chulin 7:) "Tzaddikim are greater after their passing than when they were alive." This is particularly so on their yahrtzeit because that is when their holy *ruach* (spirit) hovers and rests on their grave to bring salvations to those who daven there and seek Hashem's compassion.

The Yismach Yisrael (Me'oron shel Yisrael 14 Shevat 2) says that a yahrtzeit is called **הלולא** because, in Aramaic, a chasunah is also called *hilulah*. The celebration of a yahrtzeit is compared to the joy of a chasunah. And just like at a chasunah, the *kesubah* is read before the *chosson* to remind him of his obligations to the *kallah*, so too, on the day of the *hilulah* of a tzaddik, the tzaddik is reminded of his obligations to the people who are **החוסים בצלו** reside under his shade (which means those who are students of this great tzaddik).

And this doesn't only mean those who were the tzaddik's students when he was alive; it includes those who try to go in this tzaddik's ways and learn from his divrei Torah after his passing.

On the day of the *hilulah*, when the tzaddik is reminded of his obligations to help those who are under his shade (**החוסים בצילו**), this certainly also includes the new students, who didn't know the

tzaddik. Perhaps they didn't even see the tzaddik when he was alive, but they seek to learn from him and become influenced by his ways and from his divrei Torah.

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l explained that when a tzaddik goes to heaven, looks down, and sees the suffering in this world, he understands very clearly how everything we go through is all for our benefit. From his viewpoint in heaven, he sees everything in a positive light.

As is told about the **Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l**. He promised his student, **Rebbe Mendel of Riminov zt'l**, that when he is niftar, he will annul a particular decree that was then decreed on the Jews. Time passed, and Rebbe Elimelech came in a dream to Rebbe Mendel of Riminov and said, "Now that I am in heaven, I don't see that the decree is bad anymore. Every decree is good. So how can I annul it?"

But on the yahrtzeit, the tzaddik comes down to this world, and then he sees and perceives the great tzaros we endure in the way *we* experience them. When this occurs, he is motivated to act to annul all the harsh decrees and to daven for salvations for Bnei Yisrael.

This is why the yahrtzeit is called hilulah, an expression of joy. There is a lot of joy and salvations on this day because the tzaddik understands our tzaros and prays for our salvation.

In the year 5601, a plague broke out in Tzefas. The Bas Ayin fell ill and was sick for a few days. He requested that his student, Reb Shmuel Heller *zt'l*, visit him before his passing, as he wanted to share the secrets and profound lessons he had heard from his teachers. However, Reb Shmuel's family was afraid to allow Reb Shmuel to visit the Bas Ayin because the Bas Ayin was ill with the contagious plague.

Reb Shmuel Heller always regretted having lost such an opportunity.

Before his passing, the Bas Ayin proclaimed, "I'm the last victim of this plague. After me, no one will die." -And that is what happened. His passing brought atonement to the people of Tzefas, and the plague subsided.

(The Bas Ayin is buried in a cave. To get to his *kever*, one needs to bend down low. Tzaddikim said that this exemplifies the Bas Ayin's humility. Even to get to his grave, one must lower himself.)



Straight Path Home

There is a perplexing statement made in the middle of this week's Haftorah: **מִי חָכָם וְיָבֵן אֵלֶּה נָבוֹן וְיֵדָעֵם כִּי־יְשָׁרִים דַּרְכֵי ה' וְצַדִּקִים יֵלְכוּ בָם וּפֹשְׁעִים יִכָּשְׁלוּ בָם** – '*Who is wise and will understand these things; [who is] understanding and will know them? For the* ***ways*** *of the Almighty are straight; the righteous will walk in them, and sinners will stumble over them.*" (Hoshea 14:10)

What is the meaning behind the Almighty having many "ways" rather than just one "straight and narrow" path? In order to fully appreciate the answer, we must first hear an incredible story shared in Rav David Ashear's Living Emunah on Yamim Noraim (p. 87):

Laurie was born into an affluent non-Jewish family and grew up in a wealthy neighborhood. She had all the luxuries she could ever want, but she eventually realized that her life was focused on clothing, cars, and who had a bigger house. She was no longer interested in a shallow lifestyle. She met a few Jewish girls and was enchanted by their warmth and refinement.

Laurie reached the point where she wanted to convert, but the Rabbis discouraged her from doing so. When Laurie persevered, her father sent her for psychological counseling. After all else failed, he yelled, "*You know I'm worth millions of dollars. Let me make one thing clear:*

if you convert, I will disinherit you. You will not receive even one cent. No food, no clothes, no money – nothing."

Despite his threat, Laurie gave it all up and became Jewish. When she enrolled in a seminary in the Holy Land, the principal was concerned how Laurie would transition from such wealth to now not having enough money to buy bread. He set her up with the Rosens, who would "adopt" Laurie and provide her with shelter, support, and care. They were not well-to-do. Rabbi Rosen spent his days learning in a kollel while his wife worked.

During the first Shabbos she spent with them, the couple was very impressed by her exceptional character and said, "From now on, our house is your house. You will be like our daughter."

When she started dating, a promising match was suggested to her. They became engaged after several dates, but their joy was mixed with worry and stress. Laurie had no money to put toward her wedding and home expenses, nor did the Rosens. Together, they calculated what the couple would need for all the costs, including an apartment, and the groom's parents agreed to contribute a certain sum. Laurie's side was expected to contribute the hefty sum of $50,000.

When Rabbi Rosen consulted one of the leading sages, he was advised to go to America and fundraise for her. The sage also gave him the contact information of each person who would guide him where to find potential donors. Rabbi Rosen got the addresses of several prosperous people and landed in America. He immediately took a taxi to what he thought was the first prospect on the list, but he mistakenly gave the driver the wrong address. They drove into a neighborhood with large, fancy homes that had a different names on the mailboxes than the ones he was seeking.

It was very cold outside, and snow had started falling. As he walked up the street searching for a house with a mezuzah, a man in a cashmere coat and dress shoes was walking his vicious-looking dog.



The dog sensed the Rabbi's fear and barked loudly, then bit him. Although Rabbi Rosen trembled from shock, the dog only managed to tear his many layers of clothing. The dog owner shouted, "*Down Butch!*" pulled on the leash, then pleaded, "*Please don't call the police*. *They'll take him away. This dog is like a member of my family. I'll give you anything if you just walk away*."

Rabbi Rosen replied, "I don't live here. I came to raise $50,000 for my daughter's wedding." - The man pulled out his checkbook on the spot and wrote a check for the full amount.

Rabbi Rosen was shocked, took a taxi right back to the airport for the next flight home, and told his family about his experience. Laurie asked to see the check…and turned pale. "That was my father! He said he wouldn't give me a cent for converting to Judaism, and here he paid for all my wedding expenses without even knowing it!"

Rav Dovid Feinstein (Hoshea 14:10) beautifully explains that the Almighty has many "ways" – generous and harsh, merciful and judgmental, etc. Although it may be difficult, the righteous walk with complete trust that their Loving Father's paths are all just. Never underestimate the profound power of faithfully following the straight paths even if they are filled with painful obstacles to help us grow – just ask Laurie.

"If you have no means to give to the poor, comfort him with kind words! " ~~ Vayikra R.

בס"ד

למודי משה

Even the Midas HaDin Needs to Acknowledge Rochel's Zechus

Finally, Rochel had her own child! - **וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת־רָחֵל וַיִּשְׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ אֱלֹקִים וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־רַחְמָהּ** - "*G-d remembered Rochel; G-d hearkened to her and He opened her womb.*" (Bereishis 30:22).

The Medrash asks "What is this reference to remembering?" The Medrash answers that the Ribbono Shel Olam remembered Rochel's silence so as not to embarrass her sister when their father Lavan pulled the deceitful "switch," at the time of Yaakov's wedding. Not only did Rochel keep quiet, she actually gave a secret sign to her sister whereby Yaakov would think that he was marrying Rochel that night and would not protest the marriage.

There is a word that should jump out at us twice in this aforementioned pasuk: The pasuk uses the word "**Elokim**" to represent the Ribbono Shel Olam. However, seemingly, it should not say "Vayizkor **Elokim**" (using the Divine name of midas hadin (judgment), but rather, it should say "Vayizkor **Hashem** (yud-kay-vov-kay; using the Divine name of rachamim (mercy and compassion). In fact, this pasuk uses the name **Elokim** not once, but twice: **וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת־רָחֵל** and **וַיִּשְׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ אֱלֹקִים**. Is this not a misuse of the name **Elokim**, which always connotes the midas hadin?

The answer is that the pasuk is teaching the power and great zechus [merit] of "shtikah" [silence]. The fact that Rochel kept quiet and let her older sister get married is so great that even the midas hadin needs to say, "It is time now for you too to have a child." That is why the pasuk uses the name **Elokim**.

And what is the great zechus? The great zechus is the sensitivity displayed towards an older sister. Rochel was terribly worried that

now that Leah married cousin Yaakov, she herself was going to wind up with Yaakov's twin brother Eisav. This was going to ruin her life. Rochel wanted Yaakov as a husband more than anything. Nevertheless, to prevent the pain and humiliation of her sister, Rochel kept silent.

The zechus of that sensitivity was so great that it even overwhelmed the midas hadin, such that **Elokim** recognized the need to reward Rochel. (R' Frand)

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman



Cherish the Stones

At the end of this week's parsha, the pasuk says - **וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְאֶחָיו לִקְטוּ אֲבָנִים וַיִּקְחוּ אֲבָנִים** – *'And Yaakov said to his children, "Gather stones," and they took stones and made a pile.'* (31:46).

Why does the pasuk first say **לִקְטוּ אֲבָנִים** "Collect stones", but finishes with **וַיִּקְחוּ אֲבָנִים** – "They took stones"?



Some explain it as follows: - Yaakov Avinu told his children, "My precious children, when you stumble upon stones [challenges in life], **לִקְטוּ** - collect them! Know that they are diamonds! They are what make you great!"

"Don't get lost. Don't be afraid my dear children - **לִקְטוּ אֲבָנִים** - collect these stones." – "Collect them like you would collect diamonds." – "These stones [Nisyonos] are of great value to a person. They elevate a person. – They are not stones, they are diamonds! – Collect them with love, like you would gather gold and silver."

The Shevatim however didn't understand the deeper meaning of what Yaakov was alluding to. They saw them as simple stones. And that's why the pasuk says **וַיִּקְחוּ אַבְנֵי֙** – "***They took stones***."

Of course, we cannot comprehend the level on which the Holy Shevatim were on, but this is the message that Yaakov Avinu wished to convey.

The pasuk says: **עַל כַּפַּיִם יִשָּׂאוּנְךָ פֶּן תִּגֹּף בָּאֶבֶן רַגְלֶךָ** – *'On [their] hands they will bear you, lest your foot stumble on a stone'.* (Tehillim 91:12)- Hashem will lift you on the wings of an angel, lest your foot stumbles on a stone.

Wouldn't it be better if Hashem just removed the stone [challenges, Nisyonos] ?

No! – You need that stone! It is the challenges that make you grow stronger! Only that He should protect you from getting lost – from being broken and confused.

You should always have it – bright, sweet and Freilich!

Halocha Is Halocha – Rabbi Jeremy Golker

Yaakov leaves Beersheba and goes to Charan. He encounters a particular place [*hamakom*, "the place"] and spends the night there, as the sun sets. He arranges some of the stones as a pillow for his head, and there he lies down. He dreams of a ladder standing on the ground, with its top reaching heaven, as angels of Hashem go up and come down upon it. Standing over him is the Eternal, who says:

"I am the Eternal, the G-d of Avraham your grandfather, and the G-d of Yitzchok your father. The Land upon which you lie I am giving to you and to your offspring, and your offspring shall be as the dust of the earth. You shall spread out westward and eastward, northward and southward, and all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you and your offspring. Know that I am with you and that I shall protect you wherever you go and bring you back to this Land. I shall not leave you until I have accomplished all that I promise you."

What a most remarkable beautiful uplifting dream that anybody could ever have! This was music to Yaakov Avinu's ears. This was gold dust!

What happens next?

Then Yaakov awakens from his sleep and recognizes that "the Eternal is in this place, and I did not know it." Fearfully he says: "How awesome is this place! It is none other than the House of G-d and the Gate of Heaven."

Rashi says: וְאָנֹכִי לֹא יָדָעְתִּי: *'For had I known, I would not have slept in such a holy place.'* - It would have been totally inappropriate.

Rav Elyakum Schlesinger says fascinatingly in his sefer **בית אב**:

The Sefas Emes says, what does it mean.. "Had I known."? - Because had I known the holiness of this place, I wouldn't have slept here at all – I would have learnt Torah here all night (like he was doing for the last 14 years). - **דברי קדמונים** say that as opposed to learning, he would have davened there.

Either way, he wouldn't have slept there. But at the end of the day, through his sleep and subsequent dream, he merited having the most remarkable majestic prophecy for the future. – So therefore, how could Yaakov have regret for sleeping there? This is a strange response!

The Beis Av says, "I heard from the **Brisker Rav** that this is a benchmark in **יראת חטא**. Because if the halacha says that it is forbidden to sleep in this holy place, it is forbidden – period. And however powerful and majestic that this dream is, that doesn't justify violating the halachah!"

Dreams Reveal the Heart

A person can discern from his dreams whether his heart is truly aligned with Hashem. ~ Reb Nachman of Breslov



Inspired by Time - The Power of one Moment – Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis

Ya'akov is alone, frightened, and running for his life. He has nothing left except his emuna. And then the Torah says, "**וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם**" — he suddenly "encounters the place." In that instant he realizes where he is standing: at the Beis Elokim, the source of the holiness of this world. - The recognition sweeps over him and he cries out, "**מַה־נּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה! - אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם־בֵּית אֱלֹקִים**- How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of Hashem."

Rashi tells us something striking. When Ya'akov first passed the makom haMikdash, he did not stop. His mind was burdened; he didn't realize the opportunity to daven where his fathers had davened. But Shamayim would not let him continue - **הַשָּׁמַיִם יְעַכְּבוּהוּ**— from Above they prevented him. Only when he reached Charan did the realization hit him:

"**אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁעָבַרְתִּי עַל מָקוֹם שֶׁהִתְפַּלְּלוּ אֲבוֹתַי וְלֹא הִתְפַּלַּלְתִּי בּוֹ?**" "Is it possible that I passed the place where my fathers prayed — and I did not pray?"

The thought shook him deeply. Tired, afraid, and empty-handed, he still turned back. Not for comfort, not for safety — but because he could not walk away from a moment of connection with Hashem.

One honest thought turned him around. One moment changed the direction of his life. And from that moment, everything that was waiting for him from Above began to open.

The Brisker Rav notes the staggering depth of this moment. Ya'akov Avinu was already there — steps away from the holiest place on earth, from an encounter that would shape the destiny of Klal Yisrael — and yet he walked past it. Not because he didn't care, but because

he hadn't been sam lev. His mind was overwhelmed, his heart burdened, his situation frightening. And all it took to transform everything was one thought. One awakening. One moment of clarity.

The Brisker Rav explains that sometimes a person is standing precisely at the threshold of unimaginable siyata di'Shmaya. The gates are already open. The opportunity is already waiting. Everything is prepared for him from Above — and all that separates him from it is one inner shift. A pause. A moment of taking stock. One honest thought of, "Where am I? What does Hashem want from me right now?"

A person can rise in a moment. Years of confusion can dissolve in a single second of emess. Gates that a person thought were locked for a lifetime can open wide with one spark of awareness, one heartbeat of turning back toward the Ribbono shel Olam. That is the power of sam lev, choosing, even in the middle of fear or tiredness, to direct the mind and heart toward Hashem for just a moment.

When Ya'akov stopped, when he let himself think, when he realized what he had passed by, that one realization changed everything. It drew him back to the place where Heaven embraced him — where the ladder would appear, where malachim would rise and descend, where his entire future would be revealed. - A single moment of clarity opened the gates of eternity.

The Mashgiach, Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, would repeat over and over: a person must never underestimate the power of a single moment of focused thought. One moment of honesty with oneself. One moment of tefila uttered with a heart that is awake, alive, and facing Hashem without distraction. A moment like that is not small. A moment like that can change a life.

Consider what happened with Ya'akov Avinu. Had he not stopped... had he not turned back... had he not allowed himself those few precious minutes to think, to reflect, to daven... the entire future of Klal Yisrael — every bracha, every spark of destiny, every ray of

light that would one day shine down upon millions of his descendants — all of it was hidden inside that vision of the ladder. That moment held the generations.

It is frightening to contemplate the alternative. What if Ya'akov had simply kept walking? What if he had said, "I'm exhausted... I'm overwhelmed... I can't think now... I'll daven later..."? What if he had listened to the voice of weariness instead of the whisper of his neshama?

The ladder would not have appeared. The malachim would not have ascended and descended. The promise of protection, the promise of the land, the assurance of a future nation — all that indescribable light would have remained concealed.

A tiny decision, a moment of turning back, determined the destiny of Klal Yisrael for all of time.



Inspired by Time - Eisav's Easy Life - Ya'akov's Hard Road- Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis

The parsha begins with the words "Va'yeitzei Ya'akov mi'Be'er Sheva," in spite of the fact that the pesukim at the end of Toldos already reveal that Ya'akov had left for Paddan Aram. Rashi explains that the Torah paused to tell us about Eisav's marriage to Machlas, daughter of Yishmael, and therefore repeats Ya'akov's departure to return us to the main narrative.

But this raises a question. Why does the Torah break the storyline at precisely this moment — the moment Ya'akov is stepping into the most difficult journey of his life — to mention Eisav's marriage? Why place these two scenes side by side?

Rav Yosef Salant teaches that this is not a break at all. It is a contrast. - This parsha is the beginning of galus, and Ya'akov Avinu becomes the model for every Jew who will ever walk through exile: the struggle, the uncertainty, the disappointments, the long road with no clear answers. His life becomes the blueprint. - To make that clear, the Torah places the two brothers next to each other.

Eisav wanted a wife. He simply went to his uncle Yishmael and married Machlas. No complications. No obstacles. No inner conflict. It was quick, easy, and convenient. Everything in his life came without effort. The road rose to meet him.

Ya'akov's path could not have been more different. He left home with a pounding heart, not knowing if he would ever return. He walked away from everything familiar — his parents, his learning, the atmosphere of kedusha in which he had grown — and stepped into a world that offered him nothing. He arrived at Lavan's doorstep empty-handed, stripped of every possession, with no one to turn to and no security of any kind.

And then the tests began. To marry Rachel, he devoted seven full years, working with honesty, loyalty, and unimaginable patience. At the end of those years — the moment that should have been his joy — he discovered that he had been deceived. Most people would have broken. Ya'akov did not. He accepted the blow, gathered himself, and began another seven years with the same steadiness and the same faith.

This was the story of his life. Nothing easy. Nothing handed to him. Every achievement carved out slowly, through effort, through disappointment, through perseverance. From the moment he left Be'er Sheva, his journey became a long chain of nisyonos, each one demanding greater strength than the one before it.

And that is exactly what the Torah wants us to see. Eisav's life flowed without resistance; Ya'akov's was filled with struggle. Yet it is Ya'akov — the man who walked the harder road, the man who

refused to give up no matter how many times the world pushed him down — who becomes the father of Klal Yisrael.

Eisav's ease built nothing. Ya'akov's struggle built eternity. His path gave us our strength. His perseverance became our spiritual DNA. And every Jew who has ever survived a hardship, every Jew who has stood firm through confusion or pain, every Jew who has held on even when the road feels impossible — is drawing directly from the well of Ya'akov Avinu. - His difficult road is the very reason we are still here.

Rav Matisyahu Solomon adds a powerful thought. The Torah describes Ya'akov's departure with the word va'yeitzei — "he went out." The haftarah, however, uses a very different word: "vaYivrach Ya'akov — Ya'akov fled." - Rivkah herself told him, "Run for your life." And outwardly, that is exactly what he was doing. He was running, escaping mortal danger, stepping into a journey he had never wanted to take. - But the Torah chooses a gentler expression — va'yeitzei. Why?

Because that is how Ya'akov chose to live. On the outside, he was a fugitive. On the inside, he was a believer. He was walking into the unknown with the confidence that Hashem was guiding every step. His heart was not in a panic. The world around him was frightening, but the world inside him was steady. Externally it was flight; internally it was emuna.

This, Rav Matisyahu Solomon explains, is why the Torah places the two brothers side by side. It's not a break in the story at all. It's showing us two very different ways a life can look. Eisav's road was smooth. Whatever he wanted came easily, without effort or struggle. Ya'akov's road was the opposite. It was long, heavy, and filled with challenges from the minute he left home. Yet it was this difficult road — not Eisav's comfort — that built Klal Yisrael. His strength, his patience, his willingness to keep going even when everything felt uncertain, became the foundation of our nation.

And that is the message the Torah wants us to notice. There are times when a person wonders why his path seems harder than everyone else's. The Torah answers: a hard road does not mean a person has been pushed away. Many times it is precisely through the harder road that Hashem builds something lasting inside us.

Ya'akov Avinu teaches us that a Jew's greatness is not measured by the ease of the journey, but by the way he walks the journey he is given. And very often, the road that feels the heaviest is the road through which Hashem is preparing a blessing we will only understand later.

And that is why the Torah lets us see these two roads side by side. So that when our own path feels steep, when we find ourselves pushed into places we never chose, we can remember where we come from. We are children of Ya'akov Avinu. Our strength was forged on the harder road. Our greatness was born there. And very often, the moments that feel the most difficult are the ones that later reveal themselves as the beginning of something good — something solid, something lasting — something that Hashem was building inside us all along.

Parsha Points to Ponder by Rav Ozer Alport



Before going to sleep, Yaakov placed stones around his head (Bereishis 28:11). In what way were these stones different than those found anywhere else?

The **Gemara** in Kesubos, as explained by **Tosefos**, relates that when Rav Chanina traveled to Eretz Yisroel and wanted to know if he had already reached its borders, he would pick up a stone and weigh it. If it was light, he knew that he had not yet arrived in Israel, where the rocks weigh more. Eventually, when the stones became heavier, he would kiss them to show his love for Eretz Yisroel.

The **Gemara** in Chullin recounts that Yaakov left his parents' home in Be'er Sheva and traveled to Charan, which is outside of Israel. Upon arriving there, he became concerned that he had passed the place where his forefathers prayed (Yerusholayim) without stopping to utter his own entreaties. As soon as he resolved to retrace his steps back to Jerusalem, he experienced kefitzas haderech (a miraculous contraction of the ground) and found himself at Mount Moriah.

Based on these two Gemaras, **Rav Yonason Eibeshutz** explains that the kefitzas haderech confused Yaakov and left him unsure where he was. He therefore picked up the stones around him, and when he noted how heavy they were, he knew that he was already back in Eretz Yisroel.



When Lavan entered Rochel's tent to search for his missing terafim (idols), she placed them in the camel's saddle and sat on them. To prevent Lavan from asking her to rise so he could search underneath her, she explained (31:35) that she could not get up because **דרך נשים לי**. This is traditionally understood to mean that she was impure, a false excuse she fabricated to avoid getting caught. -Which pasuk in Parshas Mishpatim gives us an alternative way to interpret Rochel's words that avoids making her a liar?

In Rav Yeshaya Pick's commentary on the Sefer HaAruch known as **Haflaah Shebe'ara-chin**, he offers a brilliant interpretation of Rochel's words that he heard from his wise and pious sister Kreindel.

In Parshas Mishpatim (Shemos 22:17), the Torah commands **מכשפה לא תחיה** - you shall not permit a sorceress to live. Why is the prohibition addressed to women when it applies equally to men?

The **Gemara** explains that because sorcery is more prevalent in females, the Torah addressed the mitzvah to them.

Thus, when Rochel told Lavan that **דרך נשים לי**, she used an expression that he would understand as a modest reference to being impure, but in reality, she was explicitly confessing that she had stolen the terafim, which the **Midrash** and **Rashbam** say were used by Lavan for divination. - Because magic is traditionally associated with women, she expressed this by saying that **דרך נשים לי** – I have the terafim that are used for the female art of sorcery.

According to this insight, Rochel told her father the truth, but he misunderstood her words.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Rashi tells us that really the Torah should have said, "And Yaakov went to Charan." It didn't need to say he left Be'er Sheva. - He explains it is to teach us that when a righteous person leaves a place, it leaves a void. Thus, when Yaakov left Be'er Sheva, his absence was felt.

Numerous commentaries ask why the Torah does not use this syntax when discussing the travels of Avraham and Yitzchak. They were great tzaddikim who surely left a void!

The Chasam Sofer suggests that when Yaakov left, Yitzchak and Rivka were still there. They were on the level to be able to appreciate Yaakov's righteousness and the loss upon his departure. This was not the case with Avraham or Yitzchak, so their departure went largely unnoticed.

However, we'd like to suggest a different approach. When Avraham was in a land, his warmth and kindness overflowed and influenced those around him. When he left, the void was filled by those like-

minded individuals he left behind. Yaakov was the Patriarch of Torah. Torah was not given to the people of the lands he left so there was no way to fill the loss.

Each of us has many comings and goings. If we make a Kiddush Hashem, a good impression, then we, like Avraham, can leave behind like-minded people who love and fear Hashem and fill the world with goodness.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita

וַיַּעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וַיִּהְיוּ בְעֵינָיו כְּיָמִים אֲחָדִים בְּאַהֲבָתְו אֹתָהּ – *'So Yaakov worked for Rochel seven years, but they appeared to him like a few days because of his love for her.'* 29:20

In his commentary, the **Chizkuni** addresses the psychological paradox of how seven years of hard labour could feel like "only a few days."

Chizkuni offers a nuanced explanation of this verse:

Anticipation of the Goal: He explains that because Yaakov was so certain of his eventual "reward"—marrying Rochel—the difficulty of the labour was diminished. When a person is deeply focused on a highly desired outcome, the time spent working toward it feels insignificant compared to the value of the goal itself.

The Power of Love vs. Tedium: He contrasts this with "tedious" work. Normally, if a person dislikes their task, every day feels like a year. However, Yaakov's love for Rochel was so profound that it removed the "tedium" of the labour.

A "Few Days" in Retrospect: Chizkuni also notes that the text says the years appeared to him like a few days. This suggests that while the daily work was physically demanding, when Yaakov looked back at the end of the seven-year term, the time seemed to have flown

by because his motivation remained constant and his love never wavered.

Essentially, Chizkuni argues that love transformed Yaakov's perception of time, making the heavy price of seven years' service seem like a small, quick payment for the woman he loved.

In truth, this is the same as it should be regarding our Avodas Hashem. – When we have an opportunity to do a מִצְוָה or מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, sometimes it may be difficult and tedious to apply ourselves to this עֲבוֹדָה – But if a person realises how great this עֲבוֹדָה is, and what the reward will be, it's all כְּיָמִים אֲחָדִים – it's insignificant compared to the great value and prize that is is!

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita

וַיֶּאֱהַב גַּם־אֶת־רָחֵל מִלֵּאָה – *'And he also loved Rachel more than Leah.'*

The Kedushas Levi points out that the word "gam" emphasizes the degree to which Yaakov loved Rochel, indicating a significantly greater love than for Leah. But it is understood on a deeper, spiritual level, focusing on the quality of love and good deeds (maasim tovim).

The Kedushas Levi explains this greater love was not merely due to physical appearance but because Rachel was a "baalas chesed" - she was a person who did more acts of kindness and good deeds than Leah. The ultimate love (ahava) for Yaakov was tied to these spiritual qualities and actions.

According to the Kedushas Levi Rochel's act of kindness: The text implies that Rochel gave up something for the sake of Leah (presumably the "signs" the sisters had arranged to prevent Lavan's deception, as mentioned in Midrashic sources), and this great act of selflessness was a primary reason for Yaakov's profound love for her. This act demonstrated a high level of spiritual refinement and chesed, which was the true focus of Yaakov's love.

Gratitude

וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה׳ עַל־כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמֹד מִלֶּדֶת - "*And she conceived again, and bore a son; and she said: 'This time I will praise the L-rd.' Therefore she called his name Yehudah; and she left off bearing.*" 29:35



The birth of Yehudah marks a spiritual turning point for Leah. Here are the key commentaries on this verse:

1. Rashi: Gratitude for "More than my Share"

Rashi, citing the Midrash, explains that Leah knew through Ruach HaKodesh that Yaakov was destined to have 12 sons from four wives—an average of three sons per wife. - She expected that each wife would contribute equally, meaning three sons each.

When she gave birth to her fourth son, Yehudah, she recognized that she had received a fourth son while others might receive fewer than three. She viewed this not as an earned right, but as a pure gift from Hashem that exceeded her "fair share".

The Lesson: True Hoda'ah (thanksgiving) occurs when a person recognizes they have received a kindness beyond what they strictly deserve.

2. Kedushas Levi (R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev)

The Kedushas Levi notes that the name Yehudah (**יהודה**) contains the four-letter Name of G-d (**י-ה-ו-ה**) with the addition of the letter Dalet (**ד**). The Daled represents the four corners of the physical world. Leah was teaching that even in the physical world, one must acknowledge and "draw down" the Divine.

הודיה - הודאה: Expressing gratitude for the good.

Admission: Admitting that one's success is not due to "my own power and the might of my hand," but is entirely from Hashem.

The Lesson: Gratitude is often blocked by a sense of entitlement. If we believe we "deserve" what we have, we view it as a salary rather than a gift. Leah's Hoda'ah represents the moment she let go of what she felt she was "owed" and embraced her reality as a recipient of unearned grace.

3. Midrash Rabbah: The First to Praise

The Midrash makes a startling claim: "From the day the Holy One created the world, no one offered Him praise until Leah came and praised Him."

While Adam, Noach, and Avraham certainly thanked Hashem, Leah was the first to establish "praise" as a permanent state of being. She thanked Hashem despite her personal pain (being the "unloved" wife), choosing to focus on her blessings rather than her social standing.

4. Kli Yakar: Shifting Focus from Man to G-d

The Kli Yakar observes a shift in Leah's naming process. With her first three sons, Reuven, Shimon, Levi, the names reflected her relationship with Yaakov. They were named based on her personal needs and pain.

With the fourth son, Leah stopped trying to win Yaakov's affection through her children. She said, "This time, I am not focusing on my husband; I am focusing solely on my relationship with, and kindness of Hashem."

5. Sfas Emes: The Essence of a "Jew"

The Sfas Emes (Chassidic master of Gur) explains that the entire Jewish people are called Yehudim (Jews) after Yehudah.

This is because the defining characteristic of a Jew is the capacity for Hoda'ah—to acknowledge G-d's hand in everything and to live in a state of constant gratitude. To be a "Jew" is to be a "Thanker."

Acknowledgment vs. Thanksgiving

The Hebrew word Hoda'ah (**הודאה**) has a dual meaning: thanksgiving and admission/confession.

Admitting Dependency: To thank someone is to admit that you needed them and could not do it alone.

Humility as a Foundation: This admission requires humility—the recognition that one's life and successes are not self-created.

Defining a "Jew": This is why the Jewish people are called Yehudim (Jews) after Yehudah. To be a "Jew" is to be one who "acknowledges" and "thanks". It is the defining gesture of the faith: to see all of life, even one's very breath, as a gift rather than an entitlement.



וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה - *"And Yaakov departed from Beer-Sheva and went to Charan" (Bereishis 28:10).*

Rashi asks why does the passuk mention that Yaakov left *Beer-Sheva*? It is to teach us that a tzaddik's departure from a city leaves a void. For a tzaddik is the glory, light and honour of a city. When he departs, the city's glory departs with him.

Rashi is bothered by why the Torah tells us from where Yaakov left. The focus of the *Parsha* is Yaakov's journey and his stay in *Charan*. It is irrelevant that he left *Beer- Sheva*. Moreover since we know that Yaakov was in *Beer-Sheva*, it is obvious that this is where he departed from. Therefore, *Rashi* explains that his departure was

significant. - As a tzaddik, Yaakov was the glory of *Beer-Sheva* and his departure created a void that was felt by all its inhabitants.

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky zt"l, offers another approach to this question. If Yaakov's main purpose was to go to *Charan*, then it would be redundant to say from where he left. This, however, was not Yaakov Avinu's main goal. Yaakov had to escape from *Beer-Sheva* because he feared that Esav would kill him.



Therefore the Torah tells us that he left *Beer-Sheva*. He was not going, he was leaving. Once he was leaving home, he needed a destination, so the passuk also mentions that he went to *Charan*. This was also significant for he went to *Charan* to marry and start his family.

This answer seems obvious and simple. However it contains an important lesson. When one travels from point A to point B, no matter what one's intention is, he is doing the same act of travelling. Nevertheless, his intention determines if he is leaving or if he is going.

The same is true with many of our daily activities. We need to eat, sleep, earn a living and care for our families. Regardless of what our intentions are we will perform these tasks. However, we have the ability to elevate these actions from the mundane to the spiritual. If we eat and sleep so that we will be healthy, so that we can learn and fulfill mitzvos, our eating and sleeping become a mitzva as well. And if we work so that we may give tzedaka and support the less fortunate, this becomes a holy deed. "*B'chol derachecha dei'eiu, know Hashem in all your ways" (Mishlei 3:6).*

More importantly we need to examine our deeds to know if we are coming or going. Before one goes on a trip, one makes sure he has

the right directions and just to be sure, one consults a map as well. Even after leaving one must be certain that he does not take a wrong turn.

We are all on a journey in this world, our destination, the Afterlife. We must learn Torah and works of Jewish Ethics to ensure that we are heading in the right direction. We must also perform a self-examination to see that we do not lose sight of our goals. Are we coming or going?

It is easy to become complacent. The only way to make progress in our journey is to constantly seek to grow and perfect ourselves.

In *Gemara Moed Katan*, R' Yehoshua ben Levi taught that whoever evaluates his deeds to see if he is on the right path, will merit to see Hashem's salvation. - bLet us heed his advice so that we may witness the coming of *Moshiach* speedily in our days.



וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת ה׳ - She conceived again and gave birth to a son. She said this time I will praise Hashem and she names him Yehuda.

The **גְּמָרָא** in **בְּרָכוֹת** tells us in the name of **רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן־הַלֵּוִי** that from the day Hashem created the world, no one ever thanked Hashem until Leah expressed her gratitude.

Rav Schwab asks really? - Is it possible that all the greatest people that preceded Leah such as — **אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן, נֹחַ, אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק, יַעֲקֹב** — never thanked Hashem for His kindness?

Evidently, Chazal are referring to a unique type of gratitude that had never been expressed until Leah thanked Hashem. Yes, of course

those before her thanked Hashem — but every expression of gratitude was attached to a request for the future. - This is typical of most people: when they say "thank you," they hope that as a result, the benefactor will continue to give.

But Leah says: "הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת־ה' " — "This time I will thank Hashem **with no strings attached**, regardless of whether He answers my prayers." - This, says the גְּמָרָא, was utterly unique. No other person had ever thanked Hashem in that way without any strings attached.



Rav Yisroel Gustman זצ"ל - the last dayan in Vilna during World War II, survived the Holocaust. He lost his young son, and he himself hid in the forests to stay alive.

After the war, when he founded Yeshivas Netzach Yisrael in Yerushalayim. There was a small garden outside the building. Rav Gustman himself would water the plants and tend the trees.

People wondered why.

What's remarkable is why he did this. - He explained to those that asked that he felt a deep debt of gratitude to those plants and trees because they had given him a place to hide during the war. In his mind, these plants were not just a decoration. — They were shluchim of Hashem, part of the miracle that kept him alive. They were part of his salvation, part of how Hashem protected him. By caring for them, he was expressing his pure הַכָּרַת הַטּוֹב to Hashem for the vital blessing that helped him survive.

Pure gratitude, no strings attached.

That's exactly what Leah is teaching us in this week's parsha. Yes, it's great to thank Hashem for all the things that we have when our

intention is to get more of them. But to simply thank Hashem without any intention of receiving anything in return is of the greatest praise.

Wishing you a very uplifting Shabbos Kodesh.



וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב, מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע (כח/י)

Rashi comments that the first thing **יעקב** did was that he left a city. Many years later, his descendants learn this lesson; that when a **צדיק** leaves it affects the whole city?

יעקב wasn't the first **צדיק** to leave a place. **אברהם** and **יצחק** left the city many times. Why only by **יעקב** does the **תורה** teach us this lesson? That when a **צדיק** leaves, it affects the whole city.

יעקב was different than **אברהם** and **יצחק**. When **אברהם** left a town, of course it had an effect on the town. Since he was the only **צדיק** in that town, and now that he left, there's no **צדיק** living there anymore. However, when **יעקב** left **באר שבע**, there still remained in the city **יצחק אבינו** and **רבקה אמנו**. One might have thought that with such **צדיקים** still living there, **יעקב**'s departure would have no effect.

The **תורה** comes to teach us that each and every **צדיק** has an effect on a town whilst he is living there. **כלי יקר**.

The **סטיפלר זצ"ל** (one of the great **תלמידים** of the **חזון איש**) once said that he was born with a "pumpkin head." He could not absorb the **גמרא** and sometimes he would have to do **חזרה** 40 times before it sunk in. But through his **עמלות התורה** and **תפילה** he grew up to become the "**סטייפלר**".

The **אלשי"ך** was once giving a **שיעור** on this week's **סדרה** and he was listing out all the 100 different swindles which **לבן** had tricked **יעקב**. Sitting at that **שיעור** was the **אר"י הקדוש**. As the **אלשי"ך** detailed the 99th swindle the **אריז"ל** gave a grin.

After the **שיעור** the **אר"י הקדוש** was asked about the sudden grin. He replied that the **רוח** of **לבן** was present and he was listening to each scam which the **אלשי"ך** described. **לבן** nodded his head after each one and said **אמת** that is true. However, when he explained number 99 **לבן** said, 'I never thought of that one!' That is why I smiled. (**להגיד- מפי ר שלום שוודרון**)



ויאמר לבן טוב תתי אותה לך מתתי אותה לאיש אחר שבה עמדי וגו' (כט-יט)

When *Yaakov Avinu* came to Lavan and asked for his daughter Rachel's hand in marriage, Lavan responded in a very unusual way. He told Yaakov, **מוטב תתי אותה לך מתתי אותה לאיש אחר** - "Better that I give her to you than I give her to someone else."

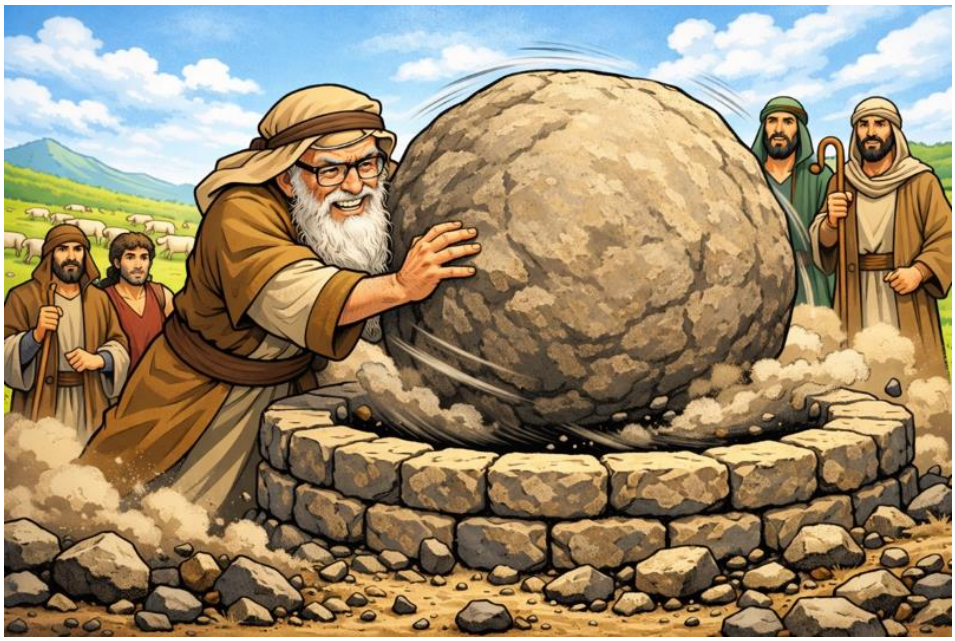
Lavan is notorious in history for his wicked and devious actions, but why would he prefer that his daughter marry a *tzaddik* like Yaakov?

R' Simcha Bunim of Pshischa ZT"L explains that Lavan had to have been disappointed that Rachel, his own daughter, did not follow in the family tradition of treachery and wickedness. She didn't even continue the tradition of idol-worship and despised her father's pagan beliefs. She was, after all, a true, G-d-fearing individual.

If so, reasoned Lavan, if Rachel were to marry anyone else, she would certainly have a tremendously good and just influence on that person, causing him to become a righteous and G-d-fearing person like herself. As wicked as he was, Lavan wished to minimize the amount of righteous people in the world.

Thus, Lavan truly believed that it would be better if his daughter married Yaakov, already a *tzaddik* in his own right, from a noble and pure family, rather than anyone else in the world. In that way, Lavan felt that he could effectively limit the amount of righteous people in the world, since there would be one less *tzaddik* created as a result of his sacrifice, by allowing his daughter to marry an already righteous Yaakov!

ויאמר הן עוד היום גדול לא עת האסף המקנה השקו הצאן ולכו רעו (כט-ז)



Why was Yaakov so critical of the shepherds, accusing them of idling? It should have been evident that the stone covering the well was so massive that it required the combined strength of many men to move it. And if he was critical of them for not even attempting to move it, how did he know that they did not? Perhaps they had tried unsuccessfully to move the stone before he had even arrived?

The Sefas Emes, R Yehuda Aryeh Leib of Ger ZT"L answers that even if they had made an unsuccessful attempt, the shepherds still had no excuse for sitting around idly. They should have continued trying. Even if previous efforts by the shepherds to move the rock appeared futile, they might have at least loosened the big stone just enough so that the next attempt would have succeeded. Indeed, Yaakov's moving the rock single-handedly, may have been a sign from above that they had given up prematurely, and that just

another bit of effort, would have been sufficient enough to have achieved their purpose.

We cannot guarantee the success of our efforts, but it is our obligation to at least try to achieve our goals, and to continue to persist in trying, even in the face of previous unsuccessful attempts.



מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ויפגע במקום וילן שם כי בא השמש .... וישכב במקום ההוא וגו' (כח-יא)

Chazal tell us that when Yaakov reached *Har Hamoriya* and put his head down to rest, it was only the first time in 14 years that he actually slept. For the previous 14 years, while at the *Yeshiva* of *Shem and Aver*, Yaakov learned *Torah* continuously and did not sleep even once.

The story is told that on a warm and long *Shabbos* afternoon, after eating his *shabbos* meal, the **Tschebiner Rov, R' Dov Berish Wiedenfeld ZT"L**, felt a bit weary and decided to lie down. He had been resting only a short while when he heard a knock on the door. At first he ignored it, thinking that whatever it was could probably wait until later. But when the knocking became louder and more persistent, the *Rov* arose and hurried to open the door thinking, "Perhaps it is an emergency."

Opening the door, however, he found a nine-year-old boy holding a *gemara*. (*Yerushalayim*, where he lived, is surrounded by an *Eruv*.) "*Gut Shabbos*," said the *Rov* to the young boy, "Is there something that I can help you with?"

The little boy looked up at the great sage, and said, "I just finished a chapter of *gemara*, and I would like the *Rov* to test me on it." The elderly *Rov* invited the boy inside and offered him a seat.

"My child," he said, "I would love to listen to you say the *gemara*, but

first I would like to explain to you something. If you come to a *Rov's* house on a *Shabbos* afternoon, and you knock on the door but there is no answer, it would not be wise to continue knocking. You would have to think that perhaps the *Rov* is a bit tired and has gone to rest for a little while."

The little boy turned pale as he looked at the venerable *Rov* with purity and innocence, "I - I'm so sorry," the boy stammered, tears forming at the corners of his eyes. "It's just that - I never thought that a *Rov* sleeps on *Shabbos*!"

The **Tschebiner Rov** was so taken aback by the child's perception of how a *Rov* would act, that from then on, he never again slept on *Shabbos* afternoon.



R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk ZT"L would say:

"Our mother Leah cried because it was said that she was to marry Esav. We understand from here that we are not to wave aside what the Velt says. We must consider and fear what others think and say!"

