

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS VAYETZE - 5756

(c/o CShulman@paulweiss.com)

From: "Seth Ness <ness@aecom.yu.edu>"
To: CSHULMAN, " Yeshiva University s weekly devar
Tor...
Date: 12/1/95 11:31am
Subject: Eiyanim Latorah - vayeitzey

vayeitzey

here it is, the first enayim l'torah i've gotten. Thanks go to dov siegman, who transliterated the hebrew that is now being used in the printed version back into english. enjoy.

Enayim LaTorah

Publication of Student Organization of Yeshiva University

Parashat Vayetzei

The Twice Promised Land
by Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman

Ha'aretz Asher Ata Shocheiv Aleiha Lecha Etnena Uleazaracha
The land on which you lie, to you will I give it and to your
descendants.. (28:13).

The Talmud (Chulin 91b) remarks, lThis teaches that G-d folded the entire land of Israel and placed it underneath Yaakov, in order that it be easier for his descendants to conquer.

We find a similar statement in the Talmud in regard to Avraham. G-d said to Avraham:

Kum Hithaleich Ba'Aretz Lerkah Ulerachbah Ki Lecha Etnenah
Arise, walk in the land through the length of it and the breadth of it;
for I will give it to you (13:17)

The Talmud (Bava Batra 100a) rules that this was not a legal act of acquisition; rather: lOut of affection for Avraham He told him so in order that it be easier for his descendants to conquer it. (R' Eliezer, however, quotes this verse as a source for his view that walking the length and breadth of a piece of property is an actual act of acquisition.)

We might ask: Why does Avraham pave the way for his descendants by traversing the land, while Yaakov does so by having the land fold up under him as he sleeps on it?

(Parenthetically: Hashem later says to Avraham, "Lezarachah Natati et ha'Aretz Hazot" - "To your seed I have given this land" (15:18).
Rash"i,

following the Midrash, explains that the verse uses the past tense since G-d's promise is as good as done - prophetic past tense. But R' Yossi in the Yerushalmi (Challah 2:1) uses the past tense of this verse to prove that the Jews were in possession of the land of Israel from the time of Avraham and that, therefore, even grain that grew before they entered the land was obligated in challah. Why does Rash"i reject this explanation? If

one examines the discussion in the Yerushalmi one finds that R' Yossi's statement is advanced on behalf of R' Eliezer, who holds that grain that grows outside of the land of Israel is normally exempt from Challah. Not surprisingly, then, it is consistent with R' Eliezer's own view in Bava Batra that Avraham performed a legal act of acquisition by traveling the land its length and breadth; according to this view, the past tense of the verse indeed implies that Avraham was already in legal possession of the land Rash"i,

B'S'D' however, follows the view of the Sages in Bava Batra that walking the length and breadth of a piece of land is not a legal act of acquisition; accordingly, he owns the Midrash and explains the past tense of the verse as being an example of the prophetic past tense.)

After receiving this promise Yaakov vows:

"Vechol Asher Titein Li Aser A'asrenu Lach"

And of all that You shall give me I will surely give a tenth (ma'aser) to You (28:22)

We find that Avraham (14:20) and Yitzchak (26:12, see Rash"i there) also gave maaser; only Yaakov, however, makes a vow to do so. Why should this be so?

To answer these two questions we must preface several items of information:

The Talmud in Yevamot (82b) states that the obligations of terumah and ma'aser took effect only after the Jewish people took possession of the land

of Israel. This happened twice; first, at the time of Yehoshua, and again at the time of Ezra, after their return from the Babylonian exile. The Ramba"m (Shmita 6:16) distinguishes between these two acts of acquisition; the first was accomplished through conquest, whereas the second was accomplished through chazaka (a form of legal acquisition). (See there the ramifications of this distinction.)

Furthermore, the Ramba"m (Terumot 1:26) rules that at the time of the Second Temple the obligations of terumah and maaser were only Rabbinic, because only a part of the people were settled on the land of Israel. On a Biblical level these obligations are that all of the Jewish people be living in the land of Israel. The source for this ruling seems to be the Yerushalmi in Shevi'it (6:1; see Resp. Beit Halevi 3:1) which records the view that, at the time of Ezra, the people accepted the obligations of terumah and maaser of their own accord, rather than as a Biblical obligation.

The Yerushalmi finds a source for this in the verse in Nechemiah (10:1ff), lAnd because of all this we make a covenant and write it... that we shall bring the first portion of our dough and our terumah... and the maaser of our land...

In the light of the above, we can answer our first question by suggesting that when the Talmud in Bava Batra states that Avraham was told to traverse the land of Israel in order to pave the way for his descendants, the reference is to his descendants at the time of the first acquisition of the land of Israel. As the Ramba"m writes, this acquisition was accomplished through conquest. Furthermore, it was only completed at the close of the seven years of division in which the boundaries of the tribes were laid out. Avraham's travels throughout the land prefigured the campaign to conquer the land and the laying down of its boundaries. But when the Talmud in Chulin states that G-d collapsed the entire land under Yaakov in order to make it easier for his

descendants, the reference is to his descendants at the time of the second acquisition of the land of Israel. As the Ramba"m writes, that acquisition was accomplished through chazaka. Likewise, Yaakov's laying on the land was an act of chazaka, as we find bedding down on a piece of property is, under certain circumstances, an effective chazaka (hatzoat matzot; see Hil. Zechiyah u'Matanah, 2:4. Cf. Tzofnat Paaneach al HaTorah, Breishit 28).

Accordingly, we find an answer to our second question; we understand why Yaakov's giving of maaser was preceded by a vow, whereas Avraham and Yitzchak gave maaser without a vow. As the Yerushalmi in Shevi'it states, at the time of the second acquisition the Jews did not automatically become obligated in terumah and maaser; they made a covenant and obligated themselves. Likewise Yaakov, whose actions portended theirs, undertook a vow and obligated himself.

From: "Rav Yissocher Frand <ravfrand@torah.org>"
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Date: 11/30/95 5:19am
Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeitzei

- "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeitzei -

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 32, Obligation to Give Ma'aser Good Shabbos!

Parshas Vayeitzei:

Why is the Beis HaMikdash Called "The House of Yaakov?"

The second verse in this week's portion tells us, in regard to Yaakov's journey, "Vayifga BA-makom" (and he encountered THE place). The prefix "BA" means not just a place but THE special place. Our Rabbis tell us Yaakov prayed in the (future) place of the Beis HaMikdash.

This prayer was the third prayer which we find that the Patriarchs instituted. The tradition tell us that Avraham enacted the morning prayer (Shachris), Yitzchak enacted the afternoon prayer (Mincha), and Yaakov Avinu enacted the evening prayer (Ma'ariv).

The Yalkut cites an interesting Medrash on a verse in Tehillim, (81:2), "Give Praise to the L-rd our Strength; blow a Teruah to the G-d of Yaakov". The Medrash asks the obvious question: Why is Yaakov singled out here? Why not say "the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov".

The Medrash gives a parable to a King who had three friends. He shared with these friends his plans to build a palace on a certain site. When the site was pointed out to the first friend, the friend said, "You mean on that hill?" The King left that friend. When the site was pointed out to the second friend, the second friend said, "You mean in that field?" The King left that friend also. When the King pointed out the site to the third friend, the third friend looked at the site and said, "Oh yes, there's going to be a palace over there!"

The Medrash says Avraham called the spot of the Beis HaMikdash a Mountain (Bereishis 22:14); Yitzchak called it a Field (24:63); but Yaakov called it a House -- "This is none other than the House of Elokim ..." (28:17). As a result of that, the Medrash continues, G-d says "By your life, you called it a House before it was built, the House will be called by your name as it says in the verse 'The House of the G-d of Yaakov'. (Isaiah 2:3)"

In order to understand the significance of this Medrash, we have to understand the significance of the 3 Tefilos the Patriarchs respectively established. It was not merely coincidence that Avraham established Shachris, Yitzchak established Mincha, and Yaakov established Ma'ariv.

Shachris is prayed in the morning -- a time of brightness; the day is just beginning and is full of hope. Avraham's life was a life of daylight -- of peace, security, and plenty. He was respected, admired, and wealthy ("...You are a Prince of G-d in our midst... (23:6)"). He lived the life of the "Morning" and he enacted a requirement to pray to G-d when things are good and when we have plenty.

Yaakov on the other hand instituted Ma'ariv -- the prayer that is recited at night. Yaakov's whole life was a life of tsoros. -- Yaakov runs away from Esav, has problems with Lavan, has problems with Dina and Yosef. -- Yaakov has not a moment of peace. Yaakov had a life of "Night" so it is

appropriate that specifically he enact the Ma'ariv prayer -- teaching us that we must also pray at night -- when (figuratively) things are going badly.

Rav Sholmo Breur points out that the first time the Torah indicates that Avraham prayed Shachris is when he gazed out at the destruction of Sodom and Amora (19:27-28). Through this act, Avraham is teaching us that when things are going good -- when one has wealth and plenty -- that's the time when it is necessary to look out at Sodom and Amora and see what too much wealth and plenty can do to a person.

Sodom was fertile and affluent and full of riches -- that's what drew Lot there in the first place. Avraham teaches that we should daven Shachris but we should do it looking at Sodom. This reminds us that riches and affluence that get out of hand can cause us to forget G-d, the result being a Sodom.

Yaakov davens Ma'ariv at the spot that will eventually be the Beis HaMikdash. Looking at that spot now, one would see nothing -- only nighttime and desolation. But Yaakov could stand in that spot and see the light at the end of the tunnel. Yaakov is teaching us to look optimistically towards the future to see a Beis HaMikdash where there is now darkness and despair. Life can change. G-d "lowers the haughty" but he also "raises the lowly."

Rav Breur cites the Gemara in Berachos (11b) which says, "One must mention the attribute of night during the day and one must mention the attribute of day during the night." [In the morning we mention "He Creates Light and Darkness"; In the evening we mention "He rolls away the Light from Darkness and the Darkness from the Light].

The moral lesson indicated in this requirement is precisely the point mentioned before. In Shachris, when things are going well, we cannot let it go to our heads and must remember that it can change if we don't act correctly. That's why we have to mention "the attribute of darkness during the daytime."

Likewise, when things are bleak and it looks like the trouble will never end, we have to mention that G-d rolls away the Darkness to make way for the Light. This was the attribute of Yaakov. The Patriarch who lived such a bitter life remained steadfast and taught us that we must daven at night and that the night will end.

This is what the Medrash means: Yaakov looked at the desolate spot of the Beis HaMikdash. This was the spot where Avraham looked and saw only a Mountain; Yitzchak looked and saw only a Field. But Yaakov looked and saw in the darkest of times and in the most desolate of spots that this indeed would be the future sight of the Beis HaMikdash. That is why he was the one to enact the prayer of Ma'ariv and why the Beis Hamikdash was called by his name.

Personalities:

Rav Sholomo Breur -- (1850-1926) leader of German Orthodoxy; son-in-law and successor to R. Samson Raphael Hirsch; Frankfurt.

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This weeks write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#32). The corresponding halachic portion for tape #32 is: The Obligation to Give Ma'aser.

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Date: 11/25/95 11:54am
Subject: Torah Weekly - Vayeitze

* TORAH WEEKLY *
Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion
with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiros
Parshas Vayeitze
For the week ending 9 Kislev 5756
1 & 2 December 1995

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Summary

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Beersheva and sets out towards Haran, the home of his mother's family. After a fourteen year stopover in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzhak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the Beis Hamikdash. He lays down to sleep and has a prophetic dream of angels ascending and descending on a ladder between heaven and earth. Hashem promises him the Land of Israel; that he will father a great nation; and he will be guarded by Divine protection everywhere. Yaakov awakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Haran and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan deceives Yaakov, and substitutes Rachel's elder sister, Leah. He then commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears him four sons -- Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda -- the first of the Tribes of Israel. Rachel is jealous that she cannot conceive, and gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, and she bears Gad and Asher. Leah now gives birth to Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of how much wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries again to swindle Yaakov, but is unsuccessful, and Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Twenty years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become resentful of his wealth, takes advantage of his father-in-law's temporary absence, and flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by Hashem not to harm them. A covenant is agreed upon by Yaakov and Lavan, and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

Commentaries

A Little Bonus...

"She (Leah) conceived again, and bore a son and declared, 'This time let me gratefully praise Hashem,' and therefore she called his name Yehuda." (29:35)

"Mrs. Jacobs -- here's your monthly salary check."

"Oh thanks..."

"And here's a little bonus that I don't think you were expecting..."

"Oh thank you so much! That's so kind of you! I really don't know how to thank you!"

A person finds it hard to give thanks for things that he feels he deserves:

Leah knew that she would give birth to three of the 12 tribes, so she didn't really feel thanks for the first three births. That, after her all was her due, she felt. However, with the fourth birth, she knew that she had received a bonus that she wasn't expecting, and consequently she was able to thank Hashem with a full heart. It could also be that once she was blessed with a fourth child, she realized that she really didn't deserve even the first three -- that everything in life is a bonus -- and then, retroactively, she felt that same appreciation for the first three children that she felt when Yehuda was born.

(Based on Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, zatzal; vyb'l Rabbi Mordechai Perlman, shlita)

You Can't Take It With You...

"And all that You will give me, I will repeatedly tithe to You." (28:22)

All a person really owns at the end of his stay in this world are the mitzvos and good actions that he performs while he is here. All the wealth, the honor and the status that he amasses, whether he likes it or not, is left here with his body when he exits the world. As Yaakov Avinu says in this verse: What You have given me is that which I tithe and give to Tzedaka -- that's what will stay with me. Everything else will remain behind.

You can't take it with you -- But you can send it ahead!

(Based on Kometz HaMinchah)

The Time Capsule

"This is none other than the house of G-d..." (28:17)

...Not like Avraham who called it (the Beis Hamikdash) 'mountain', and not like Yitzhak who called it 'field', but rather like Yaakov who called it 'house'." (Pesachim 88a)

A house is basically four walls, a door, and perhaps a window. The walls serve three functions: First of all, they create an inner area, a private domain, separated from the public domain. The Jewish home must create an environment of Jewish values and morals, an inner sanctum of spirituality that serves as the foundation of Torah learning and observance. Secondly, the walls form a partition that encompasses and unites all the individuals who occupy this inner area. Each individual feels himself part of a unit, each using his unique talents for a common goal. And finally, the walls of the house serve as barriers against destructive foreign influences, hostile to Torah values. Once that inner area is suffused with sanctity and purpose, then the light from the inside can be projected from the windows, and the intense sanctity of the Jewish home can be exposed to the outside world.

Yaakov perceived the 'house' aspect of the Beis Hamikdash as he was ready to descend into exile, where his children would be as the dust of the earth, trodden upon by all the nations of the world, yet at the same time a source of the inspiration and blessing to the entire world. In exile, the concept of the Beis Hashem (the house of Hashem) would be embodied in the House of Prayer, the House of Study, and the Jewish home. These three would be like a time-capsule, preserving the Jewish People in exile and enabling them to return to Eretz Yisrael and receive the ultimate House of Hashem, the Third Temple.

(Adapted from Outlooks and Insights, Rabbi Zev Leff)

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Haftorah: Hoshea 11:7 - 14:10

"You corrupted yourself, Israel, for your help is only through Me."(13:9)

A great king once asked one of the sages of Israel why it was that, at the time of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, so many thousands of Jews were slain. The sage replied that the Jewish People had always put their trust in Hashem saving them, and He had always protected them. They had never concerned themselves with the strategies of war; rather they had always poured out their hearts in prayer and offerings. Therefore, when the Jewish People sinned, and consequently lost Hashem's protection, they were left bereft of any defense at all. They fell before their enemies like the standing crop before the scythe, like lambs abandoned by their shepherd, torn by the teeth of wolves. The Jewish People are the lamb amongst the 70 wolves. The lamb is not protected by F-16s or the military might of any world-power -- however broad its shoulders may be. The Jewish

People have only one 'Friend'. But He is the only Friend we need. (Based on Ahavas Yehonason)

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Sing, My Soul!
Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Yom Shabbos Kodosh - "Holy Sabbath Day..."

Kara l'Moshe Matana - He (Hashem Who created the Shabbos) called it a gift when speaking to Moshe.

"I have a precious gift in my treasure house," said Hashem to Moshe, "and it is called Shabbos. I wish to give it to Israel and I want you to inform them." (Masechta Shabbos 10)

Just as a gift is received with no investment of effort so does the sanctity of Shabbos spiritually enrich us far beyond the effort we invested in preparing for it.

From: "Yeshivat Har Etzion <yhe@jer1.co.il>"
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summar...
Date: 11/30/95 7:47am
Subject: SICHOT - Parshat Vayetze

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH
PROJECT(VBM)

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI
YESHIVA

PARSHAT VAYETZE
SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT" A

Summarized by David Tee

"And Yaakov answered and said to Lavan... This twenty years have I been with you... Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from my eyes..." (Bereshit 31:40)

The gemara (Bava Metzia 93b) derives the following halakha: What is the limit to which a paid guardian (shomer sakhar) is obligated to guard? Until he reaches the stage of "Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me...". There is a debate in the gemara as to the nature of the obligation itself: One side maintains that it applies to any paid guardian, while the other side insists that this applies only to the guardian of a city (shomer ha'ir), which involves a special degree of obligation. According to the latter opinion, Yaakov was NOT obligated to maintain this degree of guardianship, but had promised Lavan that he would guard with special care, on the same level as the guardian of a city.

This idea, that Yaakov volunteered to guard on this special, higher level, is compatible with the image that we have of him as it is depicted in the parsha. Yaakov tells his wives about his years of labor (even before he started being paid for them!): "And you know that with all my power I have served your father..."

Thus we see that we may distinguish two areas in which Yaakov excelled: The first involves the quantitative aspect ("in the day... and... by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes"), the second involves the qualitative aspect ("with all my power I have served").

We have already mentioned the debate with regard to the obligation to guard as Yaakov did. With regard to a paid worker, the Rambam is quite clear in his stipulations:

He must be careful not to steal when working for the landlord by wasting a little time here and a little time there, such that the whole day of work turns out to be a sham. Rather, he is obligated to keep precise track of his time - and [our Sages] were so strict in this regard that they instructed that the fourth blessing of Birkat Ha-mazon be omitted [for this purpose, i.e. when a worker is under time pressure]. And he is obligated to work with all his strength, as Yaakov Ha-Tzaddik declared: 'With all my strength I served your father.' For this reason he was rewarded even in this world, as it states: "And the man increased exceedingly."

(Hilkhot Sekhirut 13:7)

Hence we find that in the Rambam, too, there is a dual emphasis: in terms of quantity - the worker is forbidden to waste time, and must work continuously every minute that he is employed; and in terms of quality - he must work with all his strength.

It is important to realize that this applies to every area of our lives. No matter what it is that one is engaged in - be it studying, working or serving in the army - one is obligated as a "ben Yisrael" to behave in the same way as Yaakov Avinu: Whatever one does should be done in the quantity required of him and should also be of the quality required of him.

Hagahot Maimoniot, at the end of Hilkhot Sekhirut, explains the Rambam as follows: The Yerushalmi (Demai 7:3) recounts the story of R. Yohanan who once saw a teacher of young children who was as weak as an invalid, and he questioned him as to the reason for this. The teacher replied that he fasted regularly. R. Yohanan said to him: "You are forbidden to do so. If this would be forbidden when serving a human master, then how much more so when serving God!" Based

on this, the Raavya (quoted in the Hagahot Maimoniot and in Or Zarua siman 246) stipulates: "It is forbidden for a teacher to stay awake at night for longer than he usually does, for the following day he will lack the energy to teach...". Clearly from here we may learn a 'kal va-chomer, ben beno shel kal va-chomer'.

In the modern world we are used to thinking of 'mussar' as an area which pertains to relations between man and his fellow. Moral behavior means behaving morally towards others - not insisting on one's honor, being lenient with one's money, and so on.

The Jewish approach rejects this concept totally. Anyone steeped in the ideals of Judaism knows that mussar is not necessarily an area which applies only to relations between people. A person should speak the truth not because his fellow will be offended by falsehood, but rather because truth in and of itself is a desirable and worthy characteristic. Mussar is defined in terms which are independent of interpersonal relations: we must cleave to truth because it is one of the thirteen middot, and God's 'seal' is truth.

Yaakov indeed demands of himself both maximum quantity and maximum quality in his interpersonal relations, but at the beginning of the parsha we find that in his relationship with God, too, he invests everything that he has: "And Yaakov went out from Beer Sheva and went toward Charan. And he lighted on a certain place...". Chazal explain that Yaakov had already reached Charan, but turned around and went back, saying: "Could it be that I passed a place where my fathers prayed, and I myself did not?!" So he turned around and went back as far as Bet El...." We should not imagine that Yaakov himself was not on a sufficient level to be able to stand up to Lavan and to say afterwards, "I lived with Lavan and nevertheless kept the 613 mitzvot." But if he was already on such a high spiritual level, why did he return from Charan to Bet El?

Yaakov said to himself, "Here I have the opportunity to increase my spiritual inspiration and potential - shall I not take advantage of it? Did I pass a place where my fathers prayed without praying there myself?!" Yaakov returned to Bet El in order that afterwards he could say, with a clear conscience, "with all my strength I served" my God.

In Berakhot (32b) we learn, "Four things require 'chizzuk' (strengthening), and they are: Torah, good deeds, prayer, and derekh erez." Rashi explains, "Derekh erez - if he is an artisan, then with respect to his art. If he is a merchant, then with respect to his merchandise. If he is a warrior, then with respect to his war."

We can understand this in terms of the discussion above. Every person, no matter what he does, needs 'chizuk' in order to perform his work in the best possible way, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

(Originally delivered at Seudah Shlishit, Shabbat Parshat Vayetze 5750. Translated by Kaeren Fish)

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Date: 11/30/95 7:37am
Subject: Parshat Va'yetze

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH PROJECT(VBM)

PARSHAT HASHAVUA

PARSHAT VA'YETZE

by Menachem Leibtag

PARSHAT VA'YETZE

Waking from his dream, Yaakov immediately proclaims that the site at which he has just slept was the "House of God" and the "Gate to Heaven" (28:16-17). Apparently, God's revelation to Yaakov prompted him to reach this conclusion. This week's shiur examines that revelation in order to appreciate its significance. It also uncovers the connection between the theme of Sefer Breishit and the concept of the Bet HaMikdash.

BACKGROUND (REVIEW)

Over the past few weeks we have followed the primary theme in Sefer Breishit - the process of "bchiyra" and "dchiya", i.e. the choosing of Avraham's offspring by God as the forefathers of His special nation. At the end of Parshat Toldot it became clear that this process of "bchiyra" will not end with Yitzchak, but, it will continue for yet another generation. Therefore, Yitzchak designates Yaakov to be the 'chosen' son by blessing him with "birkat Avraham" (28:3-4). After receiving this blessing, Yaakov is sent to Padan Aram for two reasons: to protect him from his brother and to search for a proper wife.

SOMETHING TO LOSE SLEEP OVER

Despite his father's blessing, Yaakov has three good reasons to doubt that he was truly chosen.

I.) Only the day before, his father had planned on giving the primary blessing to his brother Eisav.

II.) His parents are sending him AWAY from Eretz Canaan to:

(A) look for a wife &

(B) protect him from the danger that his brother posed. Had Yaakov truly been chosen, it should have been forbidden for him to leave, just as it had been for his father.

Recall two similar instances when God PROHIBITED Yitzchak to leave Eretz Canaan:

(A) to look for a wife. (Avraham insisted on sending his

servant to bring Yitzchak's wife to him (24:1-8).)

(B) in time of danger, when there was a famine (26:1-3).

III. Yaakov is sent (by his parents) to the EAST (29:1). In the previous generation, Avraham's chosen son Yitzchak remained in the Land, while his brothers - Yishmael and the children of Ktura - had been sent to the EAST (see 25:6 & 13:11)! Thus, being sent to the east appears to be an indication of "dchiya", i.e. being rejected from the "bchiyra" process.

[Note other 'negative' connotations of being sent to the east: Adam Ha'Rishon (3:24), Cain (4:16), and Lot (13:11).]

Thus, despite his mother's promise that she will send for him as soon as the 'coast was clear' (27:45), Yaakov could very well have wondered as to his true status in the family. Could it be that his parents are telling him nicely that they wanted him 'out of the way'?

Even beyond these suspicions, Yaakov still requires formal Divine confirmation of his father's blessings. Recall that when Yitzchak blesses Yaakov prior to his departure: he does not actually bestow upon him the "bchiyra", rather he blesses him that GOD should award him the "bchiyra":

"May He GRANT you the blessing of Avraham to you and your offspring, that you may inherit the LAND...." (28:3-4)

From any standpoint, Yaakov is in definite need of Divine reassurance!

YAAKOV HAS A DREAM

This backdrop helps us appreciate the significance of Yaakov's dream and his reaction to it (28:11-20). We begin our discussion by examining God's "hitgalut" (revelation) in that dream, one pasuk at a time:

<PASUK 1> CONFIRMATION OF THE BCHIYRA

God begins His revelation by informing Yaakov that HE is the CHOSEN son of Yitzchak:

"I am the Lord, the God of Avraham and Yitzchak, the LAND upon which you are lying, I have given to YOU and YOUR OFFSPRING" (28:13)
["H'ARETZ asher ata l'cha et'nena u'IZARECHA"]

Note the key words "zera" (offspring) and "aretz" (the Land). They indicate that this promise constitutes the continuation of all the previous Divine promises to Avraham and Yitzchak (see 12:7, 13:15, 15:18, 17:8, & 26:3). Thus, despite Yaakov's reasonable doubts, the "bchiyra" has been confirmed upon him. Yaakov's offspring are to become God's special nation.

<PASUK 2> MISSION AND PURPOSE

In contrast to the first pasuk which emphasizes "zera v'aretz", a phrase common to ALL previous revelations, the next pasuk includes several special phrases:

"And your offspring shall be like the AFAR HA'ARETZ, and you shall spread out to the WEST, EAST, NORTH, and SOUTH (ya'ma v'kayd'ma, tzafona, v'negba), and through you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (28:14)

Note the three key phrases:

- (a) "afar ha'aretz" (the dust of the earth)
- (b) [spreading out] "to the west, east, north & south"
- (c) "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"

To better comprehend the meaning of these phrases, let us trace their origin back to earlier revelations to the Avot.

The first two phrases - (a) "afar ha'aretz" and (b) all four

directions (west, east, etc.) - are unique to a particular incident - God's affirmation of the "bchiyra" to Avraham after Lot's departure to Sdom. Take special note: this affirmation took place at Bet El (read 13:1-13 carefully):

"And God said to Avram, after Lot had parted from him, Raise your eyes and look out... to the NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, & WEST, for I give you all the LAND which you see... I will make your offspring like the AFAR HA'ARETZ..." (13:14-16)

Recall (see shiur on Lech L'cha) that Bet-El is the focal point of Avraham's "aliya" from both Mesopotamia and Egypt. At Bet El he builds a mizbayach and "called out in God's name" (12:8, 13:4). This act symbolizes the ultimate mission of God's special nation - to make God's name known to all Mankind (see Ramban 12:8). The repetition of these two key phrases, (a) & (b), in Yaakov's "hitgalut" emphasizes not only God's reassurance, but also the MISSION for Yaakov's offspring, whose "bchiyra" has now been confirmed.

[Make note of this comparison, as we will return to it later in this shiur.]

The third phrase (c) - "and through you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" ["v'nivrchu bcha kol mish'pcho ha'adama"] is found several times, interestingly enough, in the OPENING "hitgalut" to both Avraham (12:3) and Yitzchak (26:4), and NOW in the opening "hitgalut" to Yaakov! [Note that this phrase is also repeated when God consults with Avraham before destroying Sdom (18:18), and also when God makes an oath to Avraham after the Akeyda (22:18).]

This phrase must be emphasized to each of the Avot, for it reflects the ultimate PURPOSE of God's special nation: through Am Yisrael, all the nations of the world will be blessed, i.e. through the leadership and guidance of Am Yisrael, every nation will have the capability of developing a proper relationship with God.

Thus, the second pasuk in this "hitgalut" serves as a reminder to Yaakov of the mission and purpose of his "bchiyra".

<PASUK 3> REASSURANCE

The third pasuk relates to Yaakov's current predicament: EVEN THOUGH he is the chosen son, he is exiled from the Promised Land. God must allay Yaakov's fears by assuring him that He will remain with him in "galut", and so He guarantees his ultimate return:

"And behold, I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this Land..." (28:15)

In summary, the "hitgalut" to Yaakov in his dream not only confirms his "bchiyra", but emphasizes his mission and purpose, while assuring him that, even though he is going into exile, Hashem will be with him and will bring him back to Eretz Canaan.

Until this point, our analysis has shown how each of the three psukim of God's "hitgalut" reflects earlier revelations to the Avot, and relates specifically to Yaakov's unique predicament. This analysis will now help us understand Yaakov's reaction to his dream, as detailed in the psukim that follow.

YAAKOV'S REALIZATION - BEIT ELOKIM & SHAAR HA'SHAMAYIM

Although God had revealed Himself numerous times to the Avot, Yaakov's "neder" (vow) made in reaction to his first "hitgalut" experience is unprecedented.

When Yaakov wakes up he immediately recognizes that there is something unique about this place:
"How awesome is this place (ha'Makom)! This is none other than the house of God [BEIT ELOKIM] and the gate to Heaven [SHAAR HA'SHAMAYIM]." (28:16)

Obviously, the vision of angels ascending and descending the ladder leads Yaakov to conclude that this site is "shaar ha'shamayim". However, what prompts Yaakov to proclaim that this site is "Beit Elokim"?

The simplest answer would be to connect both points of Yaakov's statement, i.e. the very fact that this site is a 'gate to heaven' makes it the appropriate site for a 'House of God'. However, the conclusion of "Beit Elokim" is stated BEFORE "shaar ha'shamayim". Furthermore, each conclusion is stated individually. This may suggest that each statement has its particular reason.

A deeper interpretation can be suggested, based on the comparison between this "hitgalut" to Yaakov and the "hitgalut" to Avraham at BET EL (as explained above).

Recall the two common phrases, "afar ha'aretz" and "yama v'keydma...", and their thematic connection. Considering that the Bet El, where Avraham's revelation took place, possesses the fundamental features of a "Beit Elokim" - a "mizbayach", "hitgalut", and the proclamation of God's Name - it constitutes the prototype for the future Bet HaMikdash. Therefore, based on this comparison, Yaakov reaches his conclusion that this site is actually the Bet El of Avraham, and thus worthy of becoming a "Beit Elokim".
[See the Ramban's commentary to Breishit 12:8 for an explanation of the significance of "calling out in the Name of God" at Bet El. Review also Dvarim 12:5-12, noting the special phrase used numerous times in Sefer Dvarim to describe the Mikdash - "ha'MAKOM asher yivchar HASHEM l'shakein SHMO sham".]

YAAKOV'S "NEDER"

Now we can understand Yaakov's "neder" (vow) in the following psukim:

"Yaakov woke up early in the morning and took the stone that was under his head and set it up as a pillar (matzeyvah) and then poured oil on it. He named that site Bet El..." (28:18-19)

In preparation for that "neder", Yaakov first erected a pillar, designating it to become the cornerstone of the future "Beit Elokim" by pouring oil onto it. This act serves as a type of dedication ceremony, to designate this site for the future "Beit Elokim". Accordingly, he then names that site Bet El.

[Note similarity to 'chanukat ha'Mishkan' / See Bamidbar 7:1]

Now, the stage is set for his "neder":

"And Yaakov then made a vow saying: If God remains with me, if he protects me on this journey... and if I return safely to my father's house... Then THIS STONE, which I have set up as a pillar, will be a BEIT ELOKIM, and from all that You give me, I will set aside a tithe." (28:20-22)

As mentioned above, Yaakov's vow in reaction to this

"hitgalut" is unique. Instead of merely thanking God for His promise, Yaakov initiates a reciprocal relationship. Should God be with him and return him to his father's house, Yaakov will establish a House for God. Why does Yaakov choose this specific vow?

This "neder" reflects Yaakov's understanding of the purpose of his "bchiyra". As we explained in previous shiurim, Avraham was chosen for a purpose, IN ORDER to establish a Nation that will bring God's message to all mankind. A "House of God" - the Bet HaMikdash - serves as a vehicle to fulfill that purpose. Therefore, Yaakov vows that should God fulfill His promise of the "bchiyra" by returning him to the Promised Land, he will fulfill the purpose of that "bchiyra" by establishing a "Beit Elokim".

Avraham had already begun fulfilling that purpose at Bet El, by building a "mizbayach" and "calling out in God's name". Yaakov, due to his current predicament, is unable to do so at this time. Nevertheless, this goal remains his aspiration; he vows, that upon his return to this Land, he will establish a "Beit Elokim".

A BIBLICAL THEME

In this week's Parsha we find the first biblical mention of "Beit Elokim", a House of God. Although mentioned only once in Sefer Breishit, this concept of a "House of God" is fundamental, for it presupposes the possibility that man can visit that house, and thus develop a relationship with the Divine [for that's what n'vuah is all about]. Considering that this concept will emerge as a major theme in Chumash, we conclude this week's shiur with an insight into the significance of its presentation in Parshat Vayetze.

Yaakov's description of this site as both "shaar ha'shamayim" and "Beit Elokim" reflects the nature of the Mikdash as the focal point and intersection of both a vertical and lateral relationship with God.

The "shaar ha'shamayim" aspect, angels ascending and descending from Heaven, implies a vertical relationship, a conceptual connecting point between Heaven and Earth. Despite God's transcendence, a connection, and thus a relationship, is possible. This potential for a relationship with the Divine may be reflected by the phrase "afar ha'aretz". Recall that this phrase is unique to Bet El. Although possibly only coincidental, "afar ha'aretz" may thematically relate back to the original AFAR from which Adam ha-Rishon was created (see further iyun section).

Moreover, the "Beit Elokim" aspect, a house on Earth where Man can encounter God, implies a lateral relationship. This site acts not only as a center for congregation, but also as the focus for dissemination. Here Hashem's word and reputation can be spread to all mankind. This centrality may be reflected by the phrase "yama v'keydme, tzfona, v'negba", dissemination to all four corners of the earth. Symbolically, it becomes the center of our spiritual existence.

From God's perspective the "shchina" descends to earth by way of "shaar ha'shamayim" and radiates via "Beit Elokim" (in the form of His Torah) to all of mankind. From Man's perspective, we gather at "Beit Elokim" to serve God, and through the "shaar ha'shamayim" we can climb the ladder of holiness.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

A. Note the emphasis and repetition of the word "ha'Makom" in this Parsha - 28:11,16,17,19. Note also in Parshat Lech Lcha, 13:14, at the Akeyda 22:4, and in Sefer Dvarim 12:5,11,14,18.

1. Try to explain the reason for this emphasis and repetition, specifically in these parshiot.
2. Use this to explain Chazal's opinion that this site was the same site as the Akeyda on Har Ha'Moriah, and eventually the site of the Bet HaMikdash in Yerushalayim.
3. Read Ramban on 28:17 (including Rashi whom he quotes). Relate this Ramban and his machloket with Rashi to the above shiur.

B. Read Rashi on Breishit 2:7. Note his two explanations from the Midrash on that pasuk "vayitzer Hashem Elokym et ha'adam afar min ha'adama":

- a) "afar" from Har Ha'Moriah
- b) "afar" from the four corners of the earth.

1. Relate to these two opinions based on the analysis explained in this week's shiur.
2. Recall from our shiur on Parshat Breishit that "perek bet" reflects Creation from the perspective of "shem Havayah", where "hitgalut Hashem" is predominant. Relate this to the opening pasuk of "perek bet" (that means 2:4) "ayleh Toldot ha'SHAMAYIM V'HA'ARETZ and our explanation of the word "toladot". Relate also to the purpose of creation according to perek bet, and its thematic connection to the Bet Ha'Mikdash.

C. Relate this last section of this shiur to two well known Midrashim:

1. Opposite "Yerushalayim shel matah" exists a "Yerushalayim shel maaleh". [Relate this to "shaar ha'shamayim"] (Ta'anit 5a)
2. Yerushalayim is known in the Midrash Tanchuma as "taburo (navel) shel olam"- umbilicus of the world. [Relate this to Beit Elokim and 'four directions'.]

D. Several questions arise in next week's Parsha.

1. Does Yaakov actually fulfill this "neder" when he returns?
2. Is this "neder" fulfilled by Am Yisrael, if so when.
3. Relate Yaakov's "galut" and his "neder" to the principal of "maase avot siman l'banim" and Jewish history.

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VAYEITZEI

This Sidra contains an account of Jacob's four marriages, all (according to Rashi) to daughters of Laban.

Now this appears to contradict the traditional view that Jacob (together with Abraham and Isaac) kept all the commandments of the Torah despite the fact that G-d had not yet given them to Israel - out of a combination of personal zealotness and a prophetic knowledge of what the law would be - for marriage to two sisters is later prohibited.

Rashi seems to offer no explanation of the difficulty and the Rebbe considers a number of possible solutions, eventually reconciling the apparent contradiction, and drawing out the moral implications of the story.

JACOB'S WIVES

An important and well-known principle about Rashi's commentary on the Torah, is that his policy is to answer all the difficulties which are apparent in construing a literal interpretation of the verses. And when he cannot find an answer on this level, he will note the difficulty and add, "I do not know" how to resolve it.

When there is a difficulty which Rashi does not even point out, this is because the answer is obvious, even to a five-year-old (the age when a Jewish child begins to study the Torah).

It is therefore very strange that we find in this week's Sidra a puzzling fact, that has preoccupied many commentators, and which Rashi not only does not explain, but appears to take no notice of at all.

We are told that Jacob married both Rachel and Leah, and later Bilhah and Zilpah, all daughters of Laban.

Now since we have a tradition that the forefathers kept the entire

Torah, even though it had not yet been given, how can it be that Jacob married four sisters when we are told in Vayikra: "Thou shall not take a woman to her sister" - that is, one may not marry the sister of one's wife.

Perhaps we could say that Rashi does not comment on the problem because when the "five-year-old" learns this Sidra, he does not know that Jacob's act was forbidden (for the law does not appear until Vayikra, and the child has not yet reached that book).

However, this will not do, for Rashi does not explain the difficulty even later on.

Alternatively, it is possible that Rashi felt that, amongst the many explanations of the point given in other commentaries, there was one sufficiently obvious that he was not bound to mention it.

But this also will not explain his silence, since firstly, there are many disagreements among these other commentators, so the explanation is not obvious; and secondly, they are not explanations of the literal meaning of the text - which is therefore still wanting.

SOME EXPLANATIONS

Ramban offers the explanation that the forefathers kept the 613 commandments of the Torah only when they lived in Israel, whereas Jacob married the two (four) sisters while he was in Haran.

But Rashi could not consistently hold this view, for he says elsewhere of Jacob, "while I stayed with the wicked Laban (i.e., in Haran), I kept the 613 commandments."

Another explanation is that Jacob was in fact obeying a specific command of G-d in order to have the 12 sons who would later become the 12 tribes.

But though it is clear that G-d's explicit command would have overridden the prohibition involved, nonetheless we find no indication in the Torah that G-d commanded Jacob to take Rachel, Bilhah or Zilpah in marriage.

On the contrary, it is clear from the narrative that he married Rachel because he wanted her, from the very outset, to be his wife; and both Bilhah and Zilpah were given to Jacob as wives, by their mistresses (they were the handmaids of Rachel and Leah): He did not take them in obedience to a command from G-d.

THE ARGUMENT FROM LENIENCY

There has been intensive speculation as to whether the forefathers, in undertaking to keep the Torah before it has been given, accepted only those rulings which were more stringent than the (then binding) Noachide Laws, or also accepted the rulings which were more lenient.

If we follow the second view, and remember that all four sisters must have converted to Judaism before their marriages, and take into account the lenient ruling that "a convert is like a new-born child" - then it would follow that the wives were no longer considered sisters, since their lineage was affected by their conversion.

However, even this answer is unsatisfactory at the level of literal interpretation.

- (a) Before the Giving of the Torah, there is no Biblical evidence that Jews had any other law than the Noachide Code (other than the specifically mentioned obligation of circumcision etc.). So the undertaking of the forefathers was entirely a self-imposed

thing, and did not involve their children in any obligation. It follows that there was no general legal distinction, before the Giving of the Torah, between Jews as such and the other descendants of Noah. Hence, the whole idea of conversion did not arise.

Nor can we support our point by saying that the voluntary undertaking of the 613 commandments was itself a kind of conversion. For this was a self-imposed stringency and could not have included the lenient ruling that "a convert is like a new-born child."

- (b) Besides which, Rashi, in his commentary on the Torah, never mentions this law; and indeed a literal reading of the Torah inclines one to the contrary view, for G-d says to Abraham, "You shall come to your fathers in peace." In other words, even after Abraham's conversion, Terach is still regarded as his father, to whom he will be joined in death.
- (c) Lastly, the prohibition of marrying one's wife's sister is not simply because she belongs to the category of those forbidden for the closeness of their relation to the would-be husband; but for the additional psychological reason that it might put enmity and jealousy in place of the natural love between two sisters.

So even if the law "a convert is like a new-born child" applied before the Giving of the Torah, it would not be relevant in the present instance, for there is still a natural love between two converted sisters, which would be endangered by their sharing a husband.

Individual and Collective Undertakings

The explanation is that the manner in which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob kept the Torah was one of self-imposed stringency alone (and this is why it was so esteemed by G-d: "Inasmuch as Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commands, ordinances and laws").

If so, then clearly if something which they had been commanded conflicted with something they did only from their own zealotry, the former, having G-d's authority, would overrule the latter.

This is - at the simple level - why Abraham did not circumcise himself until he was commanded to (when he was 99 years old); for the Noachide Code forbade shedding one's blood - even when it would not harm one.

And though circumcision outweighed this prohibition, it could only do so when commanded by G-d.

Now, besides the Seven Noachide Laws, there were other restraints that the descendants of Noah voluntarily undertook. As Rashi says, "the non-Jewish nations had restrained themselves from unchastity (i.e., even in relationships which had not been expressly forbidden to them) as a consequence of the flood (which was a punishment for this sin)." And this explains what Rashi says elsewhere, that the Torah mentions the death of Terach, Abraham's father, before Abraham left his father's house, even though he left, in fact, before his father died, "so that this matter should not become known to all, in case people should say that Abraham did not show a son's respect for his father."

Even though respecting one's parents had not yet been commanded by G-d, nonetheless since the nations had of their own accord undertaken this duty, it had acquired something of the force of law. To the extent that Jacob was punished by G-d for not respecting his parents - simply because of the status which this universal voluntary undertaking had acquired.

It follows that if there were a conflict between the self-imposed stringencies of the Forefathers (as individuals) and the voluntary restraints of the descendants of Noah (en masse), the latter overruled the former.

And one of these restraints that had become universally adopted was that of taking care not to deceive others, as is evidenced by Jacob's accusation against Laban, "Why have you deceived me?" against which Laban takes pains to justify himself (showing that he agreed that deception was a sin).

Now we can at last see why Jacob married Rachel. For he had promised her that he would marry her, and even gave her signs to prove her identity on their wedding night. Not to marry her would have involved deception, and this had a force which overruled his (individual) undertaking not to marry his wife's sister (in accordance with what G-d would later command).

THE CONCERN DUE TO OTHERS

One of the morals which this implies is that when a man wishes to take more on himself than G-d has yet demanded of him, he must first completely satisfy himself that he is not doing so at the expense of others.

And indeed, in the case of Abraham, we find that his preciousness in the eyes of G-d was not primarily that he undertook to keep the whole Torah before it had been given, but rather, "I know him" (which Rashi translates as 'I hold him dear') "because he will command his children and his household after him to keep to the way of the L-rd, doing righteousness and justice."

And the self-imposed task of personal refinement must not be at another's expense, either materially or spiritually. When a fellow-Jew knows nothing of his religious heritage and needs, as it were, spiritual charity, it is not open to another Jew who is in a position to help him, to say, "Better that I should spend my time perfecting myself." For he must judge himself honestly and answer the question, "Who am I that these extra refinements in myself are worth depriving another Jew of the very fundamentals of his faith?" And he will then see the truth which underlies Jacob's marriage to Rachel, that care for others overrides the concern for the self-perfection which goes beyond G-d's law.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. V pp. 141 -8)

From: "Jeffrey Gross <75310.3454@compuserve.com>"
To: CSHULMAN, " "Halachic Topics Related to the Weekl...
Date: 11/29/95 9:49am
Subject: P. Vayetzey-Maaser

HALACHA FOR 5756

SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAYETZAY

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

---->RELATION TO THE PARSHA<-----

...And whatever You will give me, I shall repeatedly tithe to You (Braishtis 28:22)

Income Level Required for Maaser Kesofim

QUESTION: Is a poor person required to give Maaser Kesofim from his income?

DISCUSSION: It must first be emphasized that the Poskim argue about the degree of obligation to give Maaser Kesofim. Although only Maaser on crops is explicitly commanded in the Torah, nevertheless, some Poskim hold that giving Maaser from one's income is also required by the Torah. Many other Poskim maintain that the obligation is a Rabbinical ordinance. Still others say that Maaser on money is an obligation evolving from a time honored Minhag (custom), which dates back to the period of the Avos(1). Accordingly, although everyone should give Maaser Kesofim, the Poskim(2) advise that it be given Bli Neder (without a vow), so that the obligation which may have originated from a custom does not turn into an obligation which has the force the vow.

The Poskim generally agree that a poor person is not obligated to give Maaser, in keeping with the principle that one's life takes precedence over the lives of others(3). Some Poskim advise that although a poor person is exempt from Maaser, he should, nevertheless, separate the Maaser and then keep it for himself.

The question, however, remains as to the definition of "poor". The Poskim maintain that a poor person is one who earns only enough for subsistence. Many Poskim define subsistence as having "bread and water"(4) (the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter). Any one who has more than that would not be considered a poor person, with respect to giving Maaser(5).

The Brisker Rov has been quoted(6) as ruling that "Anyone who finds himself in dire (tight) circumstances - so that he needs help from others - and does not live a life of luxury at all, but he and his family live frugally, should not give Maaser. Rather, he should keep his own Maaser money. A Ben Torah in particular should not take money from others if he could take from himself(").

A substantial savings account does not necessarily render a person "rich", if he is otherwise not earning a living. Thus, a couple which needs \$20,000 to subsist and earns that amount through interest, is still classified as "poor", provided they have no other income. This is especially so if the couple is using the interest or the savings account as a form of earning a living while being in Kollel(7).

One who receives a government subsidy for rent (e.g. Section 8), or one who has his rent paid for him by another individual, is required to count that amount as part of his general income when he is figuring out his income for the year(8).

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FOOTNOTES:

- 1 This is the view of the majority of the Poskim. For a full discussion see Maaser Kesefim (C. Domb) chapter 1.
- 2 Ahavas Chesed 18:2; Minchas Yitzchak 5:34; Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Maaser Kesefim p. 19.
- 3 Rama YD 253:3; Shach 248:1; Chochmas Adam 144:2.
- 4 Aruch Hashulchan YD 251:5; Harav S.Z. Auerbach, ibid p. 21. See also Igros Moshe YD 2:112 who maintains that one with basic parnasa for a day or two is required to give Maaser.
- 5 As opposed to be definition of "poor" regarding the receiving of Maaser money - Harav S.Z. Auerbach (ibid p. 23).
- 6 In Am Hatorah Vol. 2 no. 5 p. 36, by Harav Moshe Shternbuch.
- 7 Harav Moshe Feinstein quoted in Ohaley Yeshurun p.103. See also Igros Moshe ibid. See also Guide to the Maaser Forms p.14.
- 8 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Am Hatorah Vol. 2 no. 11 p. 13-15).

Turning back to our first question, as we have learned in the Rambam (27:4) on Ya'akov taking the blessings that Yitzchak intended for Esau (Ya'akov's brother), whatever the justifications and explanations are, it is clear that it was the will of the A-mighty that the blessings go to Ya'akov in the way they did. In fact, this was included in the prophecy given to Rivkah in her pregnancy, which she told Ya'akov about (Onkelos 27:13). Ya'akov was therefore obligated by command of the prophet to carry out her instructions.

Why then was he apprehensive about his father's feelings and so careful in his language not to lie explicitly? The answer is as above: Ya'akov feared that in the process he would stumble and sin, and thereby revoke his inherent rights to the blessing of his father.

Therefore, the first thing that Hashem says to Ya'akov Avinu is that he confirms the blessing; that the covenant and promises made to Avraham go directly to Ya'akov, and he is the only bearer of the blessings of Avraham. Any rights Esau may have had as son of Yitzchak are gone, and for this reason Yitzchak is not even called the father of Ya'akov, to exclude Esau totally, and finally to grant Ya'akov Avinu the G-dly stamp of approval.

From: "kollel@mcs.com"
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Date: 11/30/95 1:22am
Subject: Haftorah: Vayeitzei

MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH
PARSHAS VAYEITZEI

Hoshea 12:13

This week's haftorah is devoted to the rebuke of the Jewish people for their idolatrous practices. This serious offense traces back to the era of Yeravam ben N'vat, when the Jewish kingdom was divided into two segments. Hashem revealed through the prophet Achiya that ten tribes would be led by Yeravam and that the tribes of Yehuda and Binyomin would remain under the reign of the household of Dovid Hamelech. In those days, the influence of Shlomo Hamelech's idolatrous wives threatened to engulf the Jewish nation and Hashem responded sharply by appointing Yeravam as king over most of the Jewish nation. However this opportunity was misused and instead of preventing the spread of idolatry it actually nurtured and developed it beyond the point of return. Eventually, Hashem had no choice but to exile the major segment of the Jewish people in order to bring things under control. In our haftorah the prophet Hoshea turned to the remaining kingdom and warned them to return to Hashem and not to follow their brothers' devastating path.

It is worthwhile to study this development and thereby gain perspective into the benefits of unity - and disaster of division. The prophet Hoshea says, "When (Yeravam from) Efraim spoke trembling words he was elevated to position in Israel; yet he sinned in idolatry and died." This passage refers to a special incident described in Sefer M'lochim where Yeravam stood up and reprimanded Shlomo Hamelech for forsaking the way of his father, Dovid. Dovid Hamelech had designated an area outside Yerushalayim called Milo as a gathering place for the Jewish people. His son Shlomo, after marrying the daughter of Pharaoh built her a beautiful house on that exact site. The Jewish nation was disturbed over his exercise of power but didn't have the courage to respond to it. Yeravam demonstrated his boldness and publicly reprimanded Shlomo Hamelech for his behavior. Hashem

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Parshas VaYetze

by Rabbi Avraham Dov Beller
Yeshivas Bircas HaTorah

"...I am Hashem, the G-d of Avraham your father and the G-d of Yitzchak..." (Genesis 28:13)

This first statement made by the A-mighty to Ya'akov Avinu brings the Or HaChayim to ask why isn't Yitzchak called the father of Ya'akov, as we know he was, and instead only Avraham is termed the father of Ya'akov?

To appreciate his answer, we must backdrop to the dynamic of the interchange unfolding here between G-d and Ya'akov Avinu on the occasion of the latter's important dream. In it, Hashem promises to watch over Ya'akov and to bring him home safely. Ya'akov Avinu then vows that if this will be so, he undertakes certain obligations. Apparently, this response seems strange. If the Master of the Universe could come to anyone of us with such explicit promises, would we be in doubt as to the carrying out of these promises? Surely not! But that is exactly what Ya'akov Avinu is doing here!

In this connection the Sifsei HaChaimim (29:20) brings a rule from next week's Torah portion as explained in Gemora Berachos 4a "Shema Yigrom Hachet" - "lest the sin causes". All the promises that the A-mighty gives the Jewish people hinge on condition that we do His will, as explained in the Torah, and if not, these promises are not binding.

responded to this display of strength for his sake and that of His people and His people's sake and elevated Yeravam to the position of power.

Our Chazal (Yalkut Shimoni, 196) reveal to us an important insight about Yeravam's rise to power, basing their comments on the passage in M'lochim I (11:27) which regards Yeravam's act as "lifting his hand against the king." Our Chazal comment that Yeravam actually merited to become the king because he displayed outstanding courage in opposing Shlomo's conduct and in reprimanding the king. However, they add that Yeravam was punished because he reprimanded the king in public. Chazal are apparently pointing a finger to the devastating outcome of Yeravam's kingdom. They are asking, "If in fact Yeravam's act was a meritorious one, as is evidenced by Hashem's appointing him king over Israel, how did this same power result in the Jewish people's downfall? If Hashem appreciated Yeravam's devotion to Hashem and Israel how could that devotion have so quickly resulted in a wide sweeping campaign of idolatry?"

Our Chazal answer that although Yeravam's intentions were proper his insensitivity for the king's feelings and esteem represented a serious fault. They see his failure to consider the feelings and prestige of another Jew as cause for serious catastrophe. Although he was possessed by religious zeal and felt compelled to act immediately he lost sight of the greater picture and publicly shamed and humiliated the king of Israel. This imbalance played itself out in the broader sense and Yeravam eventually created a separate religion for his kingdom. He feared that the Jewish pilgrimage to Yerushalayim would bring his people to forsake him and unite with the king of Yehuda. This would undermine Hashem's master plan that the ten tribes have their own separate leader. He therefore established substitute sites of worship and discouraged his people from visiting the Bais Hamikdash or associating with the kingdom of Yehuda. The result of this fear was that the Jewish people totally abandoned Hashem and became gravely involved in idolatry.

If we analyze Yeravam's fear, we realize that it is rooted in the same insensitivity for unity. After all, it was certainly feasible for the king of Yehuda, being a scion of Dovid, to be recognized as an authority without interfering with Yeravam's reign over the ten tribes. But, due to Yeravam's insensitivity towards Shlomo and his successors, Yeravam developed this threatening illusion. Regretfully, the underlying character flaw which yielded a lack of respect for feelings and prestige eventually caused the downfall of our nation.

This lesson is most appropriately related to our sedra wherein our matriarch Rochel becomes the paradigm of human sensitivity, displaying total subjugation to the sensitivities of her sister Leah. Although Rochel recognized the immeasurable spiritual outcome of her exclusive relationship with Yaakov this did not influence her feelings towards Leah. If this exclusiveness would cause Leah embarrassment and humiliation Rochel would not permit this and felt compelled to prevent it. She, unlike Yeravam, overlooked her religious fervor and focused on her sister's pain. Therefore she revealed Yaakov's secret arrangements and secured that Leah would also enter the household of Yaakov. This sensitive approach became the merit of the Jewish people. In fact, as described in the Midrash, Hashem responded to the tefillah of Rochel on behalf of her children, and in her merit Hashem consented to forgive the Jewish people for Yeravam's fault and return the Jewish people to the land of Israel.

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel, Rosh Kollel (dean) Kollel Toras Chesed of Skokie

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The Weekly Internet

P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E

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by Mordecai Kornfeld

kornfeld@jer1.co.il

This week's Parasha-Page has been dedicated by Jay & Michele Levine and family in memory of Jay's father, Yaakov ben Shmuel, Alav Hashalom.

*** Would you like to dedicate a future issue of Parasha-Page and help support its global (literally!) dissemination of Torah? If so, please send me an email note. Contributions of any amount are also appreciated. Help spread Torah through the farthest reaching medium in history!

Parashat Vayetze 5756
"HASHEM HAS ENDED MY DISGRACE"

Hashem remembered Rachel and heard her prayers and caused her to conceive. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and said, "Hashem has ended my disgrace."
(Bereishit 30:22-23)

"My disgrace" - I was disgraced because due to my being barren, they said that Yakov would divorce me and I would marry Esav instead. [This is the simple understanding of the verse.]

According to the Midrash, however, the disgrace to which Rachel was referring was that a childless woman has no one to blame for her misdeeds. Once she has a son she can blame him: "Who broke this vessel? It must have been your son! Who ate these figs? It must have been your son!"
(Rashi, ad loc.)

As the verse quoted above tells us, Rachel called her son "Yosef" because "Hashem has ended ("Asaf") my disgrace." What disgrace was Rachel referring to? Having no children is not a disgrace. Only a misdeed can be a source of disgrace. Childlessness might be a source of depression, or a feeling of lack, but it is not a "disgrace," i.e. a cause for others to disgrace her. This is the question that Rashi is addressing in the above selection (as pointed out by Yefe To'ar to Bereishit Rabba 73:5, s.v. Taluy).

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D'var Torah and News from Project Genesis - learn@torah.org
Volume III, Number 9 Vayeitzei

Please pray for the speedy healing of
Chaim Moshe ben Malca and Ya'akov Re'uvein Ben Eeta

"And [Yaakov] dreamed, and behold there was a ladder, secured to the
ground,
with its head reaching to Heaven, and behold, the angels of the L-rd
ascending and descending upon it." [28:12]

There are any number of beautiful explanations of this verse found in the
Medrash and later writings. One such perush asks that we look at the ladder
as a parable, applicable to a human being. Though we are "rooted to the
ground," going about our daily lives and dealing with the physical world,
each of us has the opportunity nonetheless to have a "head reaching to
Heaven."

This refers to a person who goes through life doing his or her actions for
the sake of Heaven. If we analyze our behavior, and work every moment to
increase our spirituality, learning, and good deeds - as well as those of
others - then we live out a Heavenly existence. Every minute of the day
offers us this opportunity to be "rooted to the ground" with "a head
reaching to Heaven."

Not only do we affect ourselves, but "the angels of the L-rd ascend and
descend upon it" - the whole world, physical and even spiritual, depends on
human beings! The Kabbalists say that each time a person does a Mitzvah,
s/he creates a "good angel" - and, Heaven forbid, the opposite is also true.
If we live spiritual lives, then we bring light to the entire world, and
even the angels are uplifted.

We see a demonstration of this later, when Moshe ascends Mt. Sinai to
receive the Torah. When the nation of Israel turns away from their leader,
and appoints a Golden Calf to replace Moshe - with some even worshipping
it
as an idol - "G-d said to Moshe, 'Go, descend, for your nation has defiled
itself, that which you brought up from the land of Egypt.'" [Shemos 32:7]
When Israel defiles itself, it - and the world - no longer can have a leader
who is up in Heaven, speaking directly with G-d.

The Torah tells us again and again: each of us has the opportunity to affect
ourselves for the better, and simultaneously to have an impact on others as
well. And it always begins with the individual. "Tikkun Olam," perfection of
the world, can only come about by beginning with "Tikkun Atzmo,"
perfection
of one's self. Every generation hopes that it will be the one to finally
perfect the world; the Torah tells us where to start.

We announced "LegacyNet" last week - "An informative and inspiring
weekly
collection of Torah thoughts on the Torah portion of the week, Jewish Law
and Torah perspectives of marriage." Legacy will also hold a seminar for men
- "The Eternal People in a Disposable World," Dec. 24-31. For more
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Good Shabbos,
R. Yaakov Menken

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Vayeitzei-5756

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This edition is dedicated to the memory of Mrs Jack Lew

Vayetze - The Cry of the Childless

by Rabbi Dr. Daniel Sinclair, Principal of Jews' College

Rachel's cry of "give me children or else I die" is a powerful and moving expression of the pain and anguish suffered by an infertile spouse! In Rachel's case, it is particularly poignant since her sister Leah, who was also married to Jacob, and who constituted a rival for her husband's affections, had already given birth to three sons. Jacob's response appears to be harsh and unfeeling:

"Can I take the place of God who has denied you the fruit of the womb?"

This response is preceded by the statement that "Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel." Why did Jacob become angry and why did he respond in such

negative fashion to Rachel's desperate cry?

Nahmanides and other commentaries emphasise the theological aspect of the exchange between Rachel and Jacob. The recitation of a prayer or the putting on of sackcloth are not magic charms guaranteed to change the course of nature. Nahmanides assumes that Jacob had prayed long and hard for Rachel to be blessed with children, but to no avail. In the end, she would have to pray to God herself, and, indeed, later on in the chapter we read that "God heard her and opened her womb". Jacob's rebuke was, therefore, justified since it impelled Rachel to pray directly to God and possibly, to come to terms with her condition in a direct and unmediated manner.

Nahmanides also hints at the fact that Rachel's motive was not a pure one i.e. her desire for children emanated, in part, from envy of her sister Leah. In order for her to cope with her infertility it may have been necessary for Rachel to deal with this envy and to place it in the right perspective as far as her infertility was concerned. The removal of the envy of her sister was a necessary condition for Rachel's prayer to be heard by God.

The Talmud comments on the fact that both the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs suffered from infertility and suggests that this was a Divine mechanism for eliciting the "prayers of the righteous" (Bava Bathra 16a). The notion of guilt ought not, therefore, to be associated with childlessness - at the level of human discourse at any rate.

Indeed, one of the Midrashic sources takes Penina, the second wife of Elkanah, the husband of Hannah (I Samuel chapter 1) to task for using her own children in order to emphasise Hannah's infertility (Pesikta Rabbati ... 43).

The medieval pietist work, Sefer Hassidim, contains a passage in which it advises parents against expressing affection to their children in public, since this causes pain and suffering to both childless parents and orphans, whose longing for this type of relationship would be exacerbated by such public displays of affection (Sefer Hassidim p.374).

The modern complement of prayer is medical treatment and a whole range of treatment options are available to the childless. There is, however, a point at which the inability to have a child must be accepted as an inevitable fact, and the prophet Isaiah makes the point that the observance of the commandments and the leading of a just and virtuous life are supreme values which are in no way compromised by the lack of natural progeny: "For thus says the Lord.... the childless who keep My Sabbaths, who have chosen what I desire and hold fast to My covenant - I will give them, in My House and within My walls a monument and a name - yad vashem - better than sons and daughters an everlasting name which shall not perish". Isaiah 56:5). The Sabbath is the symbol of the creation of the world and it is arguable that this commandment is selected as the appropriate one for the childless since it involves them in the spiritual and religious elements of

the creation and not only in its physical aspect.

The distinction between the spiritual and intellectual role of a person and his or her role as the progenitor of future generations is used by R. Isaac Arama in order to provide yet another explanation for Jacob's harsh words to Rachel. R. Arama takes his cue from the two names borne by the first woman i.e. Ishah and Chavah. The name Ishah shares the same root as ish i.e. man, and indicates the capacity for understanding and advancement in the intellectual and moral field. The second name Chavah (Eve) alludes to the power of childbearing and rearing children. Jacob's anger was directed at the notion that without the capacity for childbearing, life was not worth living. Jacob's point was that Rachel was totally disregarding her role as an intellectual and moral being and judging herself solely in terms of child-bearing capacity. R. Arama also cites the passage from Isaiah as a proof-text for his explanation (Akedat Yitzhak, Vayetze).

Finally, it must be observed that irrespective of the theological or psychological justification for Jacob's anger with Rachel, his harsh words were not in place, and the Midrash states quite categorically that Jacob was wrong. " 'And Jacob's anger was kindled'. Said the Holy One Blessed be He to him. Is this the way to answer the troubled? By your life, your sons are destined to stand before her's (i.e. Joseph) (Midrash Genesis, Rabbah 71:7)." In the course of time, Jacob's sons would stand before Joseph, the son of Rachel, and would quake in fear before him, whilst he would utter the words "Can I take the place of God?" (Bereshit 50:19) to them. The difference between Jacob and Joseph, however, is that the former spoke these words in unjustified harshness whereas the latter used them in an atmosphere of conciliation and mercy.

Rav Amram Gaon by Rabbi Leonard Tann, Birmingham Hebrew Congregation

The period of the Geonim - 6th-11th centuries - was an important period for the development of Jewish law, custom and practice. Following the Talmudic period, these Geonim - heads of the rabbinical academies in Babylon, and the head of the rabbinic academy in Israel - gave rulings and advice on the entire spectrum of Jewish law and practice.

Rav Amram ben Sheshna (9th century) was head of the rabbinic academy at Sura in Babylon. Rav Amram was highly regarded by Sherira Gaon - one of the most eminent of the great Geonim - and gave many rulings in matters of practical Jewish law, as well as explaining passages in the Talmud.

Rav Amram is, however, noted for his rulings on the structure of prayers and services. Our present prayers and services owe their origins to three great works - to the Machzor Vitri of the 11th century - based on Rashi's rulings and opinions, to the Siddur of Saadia Gaon of the 10th century, and to the work of Rav Amram that preceded both.

It is not appreciated today how fluid the prayers and Torah readings were over a thousand years ago, and while there were already standardized parts of the service and common wordings for many ancient prayers, there were wide divergencies from shool to shool and community to community. It seems that Rav Amram received a question concerning prayers or services from the Community in Barcelona, and he responded to it in a teshuvah (responsum) that explained the laws and customs of prayers and services for the cycle of the whole year. It seems he even gave a specific text for certain of the prayers. His sources were the Talmud, such well-established customs as were known, as well as the rulings and works of earlier Geonim, such as his immediate predecessor Rav Natronai Gaon, who had written on the rabbinic rule to make 100 blessings daily.

The 'Seder of Rav Amram' came to be well-known throughout communities

in Spain, Provence, France and Germany. It also served as the basis for the later works as mentioned above. The 'Seder of Rav Amram' in the course of time, was expanded and annotated, as there are three different manuscripts of the Seder, and additional fragments known to us from the Cairo Genizah.

>From the close of the Talmudic period, there was already a strong move to unify the Jewish people in custom, prayer and Jewish law. Although there was always room for 'local custom and minhag', rabbinic opinion was that there should be unity of practice and observance. The 'Seder of Rav Amram' - together with its notable successors began the process of unity of prayer, service and Torah reading. It was matched similarly by the great codifiers of Jewish law - Maimonides, Rabbeinu Yerucham, the Tur - up to the Code of Jewish Law by Rabbi Joseph Karo - a unity of practice for the whole Jewish people.

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

The reconciliation between David and Absalom was engineered by Joab (chapter 14) by using a wise woman of Tekoa to relate a graphic parable to the king, the parable of the widow and her and realised that Joab was behind it all. Absalom was brought back, but was not to be in the presence of the king for two years. Whilst David could handle troops and men generally he could not cope with Absalom, for which he had to pay a very heavy price.

The chapter refers to Absalom's beauty, especially his hair. The sages considered Absalom as a Nazirite; others regarded Absalom as vainglorious about his hair, which would eventually encompass his death. The Book of Samuel refers several times to personal appearance: Saul's height, David's complexion, Absalom, to Tamar (David's daughter) and to Tamar Absalom's daughter, so named after her aunt. These children died; see further chapter 18:18.

The insertion of Absalom's hair at this point is for information in the unfolding of the story and essential for the denouement, much in the same way as the story of Bigtan and Zaresh in the Book of Esther. The flow of the story also highlights the ways of Divine Providence, whereby events flow naturally on the surface but at the same time are part of a Divine design planned from the beginning to the end. The Jerushalmi regards Absalom as a ben sorer umoreh, a rebellious son, as he was the offspring of a war-bride, Maacah, the daughter of the king of Geshur, captured by David. This illustrates Devarim 21:11 and onwards, and Rashi's comment that a war-bride leads to dissention in the family and the outcome is the 'rebellious son'.

The reconciliation between Absalom and David served the son well in his plan to seize power and overthrow David, either because of ambition and revenge for his past treatment or to prevent Solomon becoming king.

.../to be continued next week

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PARSHAS VAYETZEI

SHEEPISH LEADERSHIP
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

12/01/95
Volume 2 Issue 6

Sheep. You wouldn't think they'd play a major role in determining our leaders, but they did. The Midrash says that one of Moshe's defining acts that moved G-d to choose him as the leader of Israel was his attitude toward his animal flock. Once a ewe wandered from the pack, and Moshe scoured the desert to find it. He finally found the parched and exhausted creature, and he fed and carried her back to the rest of the flock. G-d was impressed. On the way home, Moshe saw a very fascinating sight. A burning bush. The rest is history.

King David was also a shepherd. The Midrash tells us that David's handling of sheep was also the impetus for G-d to choose him to lead His flock. David had a very calculated grazing system. First he would allow only the young sheep to pasture. They would eat the most tender grass. After they finished, David allowed the older sheep to graze. In this manner the tougher meadow grass was left for those sheep with stronger jaws.

The Midrash tells us that G-d was impressed with David's abilities to discern the different needs of varying age groups and foresaw in those actions the leadership qualities needed to be King of Israel. So much for the careers of two of our greatest Jewish leaders as shepherds. What troubles me is this week's Torah portion which contains a long episode that also deals with sheep. It expounds in detail exactly how Yaakov manipulated genetics and had the acumen to cultivate an amazingly large and diverse flock.

However, I am troubled. Why is a long narrative of seemingly inconsequential breeding techniques detailed so intricately? The Torah spends nearly twenty verses on a half-dozen varieties of sheep colors and explains how Yaakov bred them. Why are such seemingly insignificant breeding details given so much play in the Torah? Let us analyze the story.

Yaakov worked many years for his father-in-law, Lavan. No matter how arduously he toiled, Lavan constantly tried to deny Yaakov compensation. Finally, he forced Yaakov to accept a share in the sheep as wages, but only with certain stipulations. He would only compensate him with sheep that were an mutation from the normal flock. First, he set Yaakov's wages to be paid with only speckled lambs that born of Yaakov's flock. Yaakov, in a procedure that would have astounded even Gregor Mendel, produced sheep exactly according to those specifications. Next, Lavan allowed him striped sheep. Again, miraculously Yaakov cultivated his flock to produce a bounty of striped sheep! The Torah repeats the episode in various colors and stripes. What could be the significance of its importance?

Rabbi Aryeh Levin was once standing outside his yeshiva in Jerusalem while the children were on a 15 minute recess break. His son, Chaim, a teacher in the yeshiva, was standing and observing, when suddenly his father tuned to him. "What do you see my son?" asked Rav Aryeh. "Why," he answered,

"children playing!"

"Tell me about them," said Reb Aryeh. "Well," answered Reb Chaim, "Dovid is standing near the door of the school, with his hands in his pockets, he probably is no athlete. Moishie is playing wildly, he probably is undisciplined. Yankel is analyzing how the clouds are drifting. I guess he was not counted in the game. But all in all they are just a bunch of children playing." Reb Aryeh turned to him and exclaimed, "No, my son. You don't know how to watch the children.

"Dovid is near the door with his hands in his pockets because he has no sweater. His parents can't afford winter clothes for him. Moishie is wild because his Rebbe scolded him and he is frustrated. And Yankel is moping because his mother is ill and he bears the responsibility to help with the entire household.

"In order to be a Rebbe you must know each boy's needs and make sure to give him the proper attention to fulfill those needs."

Yaakov had a very difficult task. His mission was to breed twelve tribes -- each to be directed in a unique path. Some sons were to be merchants, others scholars. Judah was destined for royalty, while Levi was suited to be a teacher of the common folk. Each son, like each Jew, had a special mission. Hashem needed a father for the twelve tribes who would not breed all his children in the same mold. If Moshe's and David's destinies were determined by their care and compassion for their animal flock, perhaps Yaakov's development of twelve tribes was pre-determined by his development of a wide array of his flock. Only someone who knew how to cultivate unity in diversity would know how to produce the forebearers of the Jewish nation.

Good Shabbos
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Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Joel Mandel in Memory of Yoel Zvi Tobias

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Shiur HaRav on Parshas Vayetze

"And Yaakov continued on his way and met angels of G-D. And when Yaakov saw them he said 'this is the camp of G-D' and he called that place Machanaim." (Breishis 32:3)

The Rav (Rabbi Y.B. Soloveitchik z"l) analyzed the terms Machane (camp) and Machanayim (two camps) according to two different approaches.

1. Rashi interprets Machanayim as 2 Machanos-two camps: one of Angels belonging to Chutz l'Aretz (outside the land of Israel) who escorted him to the border of Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel), and the second consisting of Angels who were to escort him into Eretz Yisrael.

2. The Ramban raises the following question on Rashi's interpretation: at this time Yaakov was still quite far from reaching Eretz Yisrael. How could one of the camps refer to angels of Eretz Yisrael? The Ramban is therefore of the opinion that these groups of angels were sent to reassure Yaakov. Yaakov was traveling through danger, exposed to enemies lying in ambush for him. The purpose of showing him legions of angels was to reassure him that his "camp" will never be left alone. For wherever his camp may go and how hopelessly outnumbered they may appear to be, there will always be a second "camp" of Malachei Hashem that will protect the camp of Yaakov. Yaakov has the G-Dly strength in his "camp" and need not fear the earthly powers of his enemies. Machanayim refers then to the camp that was traveling with Yaakov and to the heavenly camp, the angels of G-D who were sent to protect him.

The Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel on this verse indicates that the term Machanayim means the Beis Hamikdash. The sanctity of the Beis Hamikdash and its surrounding areas, referred to as Kedushat Machanot, increases in gradations, each of which is called a "camp" since they correspond to the different camps which the Jewish people consisted of in their sojourn in the desert. As the Rambam states (Hilchos Beis Habechirah 7:11) "There were three camps in the desert, and correspondingly three camps throughout the generations." In other words, besides the obvious sanctity of the Mikdash, the Mikdash and its surrounding areas also contained a Kedushat Machane (sanctity by camp) that derived from the three camps in the desert:

1) Machane Yisrael (camp of Israel) which is all of Jerusalem outside of the Temple mount. (Jerusalem is not simply a city, but rather it is an integral part of the Mikdash for several Halachic parameters.

2) Machane Leviyah (camp of Levites) which is the Temple mount.
3) Machane Shechina (the Beis Hamikdash itself).

Let us examine this Kedushat Machane more closely. Chazal say that Avraham called the place of the Beis Hamikdash "Har" a mountain, Yitzchak referred to it

as "Sadeh", a field, and Yaakov referred to it as "Bayis", a house. The term house implies that there is a owner of the house who controls access to his house. There must be a protocol for approaching and entering the Bayis.

A camp, however, particularly a military camp, has a greater sense of equality among its inhabitants. The general and the private live together under the same conditions. The private can more readily approach the general and speak with him because of the shared cramped and difficult conditions than he could under more normal conditions.

The Kohen Gadol is called the watcher of the Beis Hamikdash, as it says in Zechariah (3:7) "And you [referring to the Kohen Gadol] will judge my House and watch my courtyards... The Kohen Gadol can invite his friends, i.e. the scholars and leaders of the generation into the home of Hashem. But what of the plain and simple Jew? How does he approach and enter the house of Hashem? Here is where the Machane concept comes in. The simple Jew approaches the Mikdash as a Machane. He, the lowly private, can enter the Mikdash and pour out his heart to the General himself without deference to the disparity between their "ranks".

"And I will meet with you there and speak to you from atop the Kapores between the two Kruvim..." (Shemos 25:22). The rendezvous of G-D and Moshe Rabeinu took place in the Holy of Holies. What about the simple Jew? Where will he encounter G-D? The Torah tells us (Shemos 42:43) that the altar in the Temple courtyard was the rendezvous for G-D and Klal Yisrael. Any Jew could approach Hashem there. Returning to our discussion, it is worth noting that it was Yaakov alone who recognized the Malachim as angels. To the rest of his entourage they appeared to be ordinary people. Yaakov said "This is the camp of G-D" but he called the place Machanaim. By this he meant that each person, each Jew, has the ability to grow spiritually to the point where he too will recognize the angels as such. Machanaim-two camps-the earthly one which you see and the heavenly one which Hashem has provided to the Bnay Yisrael to protect them from their enemies. I, Yaakov, see them clearly and you, potentially, can see as well.

When Yaakov embarked on his journey to the house of Lavan, his impression of what the Mikdash was to be was that of a house, as he said "This is the house of G-D..."(Breishis 28:17). The home of Hashem is exclusive; not all can enter. When he returned from Lavan, however, he saw the Mikdash as a camp where each Jew has the potential to raise himself to the level of seeing the angels of G-D and to ally his own personal camp with the camp of G-D.

(NB: When Avrohom went to the Akeida, he saw Mount Moriah from afar. He asked Eliezer and Yishmael what they saw; they saw nothing. He asked Yitzchak and Yitzchak saw a cloud of G-D's glory over the mountain, as did Avrohom himself. In order to discern that there even is another camp beyond your own, one must be on a higher spiritual level. Avraham and Yitzchak reached that higher level and were able to see and distinguish the two camps while Eliezer and Yishmael had not and could not. This is similar to Yaakov, and his message to his children, that the level of spirituality one has achieved determines how much of the heavenly "camp" one is privileged to see.)

In summary, the Machane Elokim provided Yaakov with

security and confidence to face his challengers as his camp included the Machane Elokim as well. Each and every Jew must strive to reach the spiritual level of perceiving the Machane Elokim that surrounds him.

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