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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYEITZE - 5767

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Most of this week's issue was collected by Efraim Goldstein, except for the first three pieces.

<http://613.org/rav/ravnotes2.html>

Rav Soloveitchik ZT'L Notes (Volume 3)

Notice These are unapproved unedited notes [of R.Y.?] of classes given by Rav Soloveitchik. We do not know who wrote the notes. However we offer this to the world that maybe someone can get some use out of these notes. A member of the family has looked at the notes and said that look like the real thing. (Rav Soloveitchik did NOT write these notes.) [Thanks to David Isaac for typing these notes]

Lecture delivered by Rabbi Soloveitchik on Saturday night, December 16, 1978 Sedra "Vayaytze" This evening we shall explain a few aspects of the word, "Vayaytze" (and he went out). Rashi's interpretation is that the word "Vayaytze" denotes that the departure of a "zadik" — a righteous person leaves a profound impression. When he is in a town, he is its glory, its grandeur, its beauty. "Vayaytze yaakov mibayr shova vayaylech chrona." (And Jacob departed from Ber Sheva and went to Choron.) Where does Rashi derive this conclusion about the departure? Where is his source for this statement? It was no longer the B'er Sheva which it previously was. He felt that semantically Vayaytze tells a story. It contains a message B'er Sheva became a desolate place which previously it was a beautiful city.

In Hebrew the word Vayaytze appears with many suppositions as demonstrated in various places in the Torah. In chapter 11, sentence 8 of Sedra Bo in Chumash Shemot we find: "Vayaytze mayim parah b'chori af." (And Moshe went out from Pharaoh in great anger.) We find it combined with the word "ays" when Pharaoh asked Moshe to pray for him and he answered that he could not pray here. "I will go out and spread out my hands to G-d!" There are three suppositions connected with "Vayaytze". It is combined with the words "ays", "m'ays" and "min" — all meaning "going out from". It means a physical departure — not a spiritual one. For instance, we find in Sedra Vayakal (section 35, sentence 20): when Moshe sent the people to obtain the ingredients necessary for the "chel moed", "Vayaytze kol adas bnai Yisrael milifnai Moshe." They went out to attend to important business — to return shortly with the "offering for the Mishkan." This is a departure not for ever but for a short time. They went just to get what they needed. It is a physical departure for a short time but not permanent. The same applies to what Moshe said to Pharaoh, "I'll walk out to the city gate to pray." Again it is physical, "B'tzasi ays" — not "min". "Ays" is departure from a person — Moshe's leaving Pharaoh. These are the semantics of the word. When it is combined with the word "min" (or a contraction of "min") it means something different; it means "permanent — forgotten."

Thus in "Vayaytze Yaakov mi'ber — means "I had to move away from something dear — something I loved. A "force" has displaced me. This is what Rashi means "Mi Be'r Sheva". He didn't want to go but was uprooted. More over, "Vayaytze min" refers to something tragic — something sad which is reminiscent of a catastrophe — his moving

from B'er Sheva. How do we know he felt like that? B'er Sheva felt it and Jacob felt it. It is hard to imagine a B'er Sheva without the personage of Jacob. They were one entity; he belonged to the city. His distinction was strange and foreign to him and he felt that he could never learn to live there. His tragedy was the necessity to live minus his father's home. Why did he experience this in such tragic terms? Of course, it is understood that no one wants to leave his father and mother and the home he loves. But this was not Jacob's main reason for he was not a child. The Torah would not talk merely about sentimental terms. The Patriarchs were not in the habit of turning natural events into tragedies.

There is a posek in Tehilim which reads, "I lift up mine eyes to the mountain; from whence shall mine help come!" This "posek" of Tehilim refers to Jacob when he left Be'r Sheva to go to Choron. It was a spiritual moment of tragedy for him. Interestingly, however, after he spent the night "B'mokom" (at the place), he became light-headed, happy — because he had experienced an encounter with G-d and assurance of Divine help. But it was not due merely to an encounter with G-d and not only the promise of protection and assurance. What did G-d tell him?

Abraham introduced the Covenantal Community. It was signed and sealed by G-d and it imposed an obligation not only on man but on G-d. It involved each side of the covenant. Was it unconditional or did Abraham have to meet certain conditions and obligations? Certain definite conditions were introduced as we find in Chapter 18, line 19 of Sedra "Vayera".

"For I know that he will instruct his sons and his community after him to observe the ways of G-d to do charity and righteousness in order that G-d will bring to Abraham that which He has promised concerning him."

He must transmit all his teaching to future generations. If Abraham leaves no "will", there is no obligation by G-d. It is said that every member of the Covenant must write two wills. There is the normal will which disposes of his personal wealth and belongings. But there is another will, the one of observing "Derech Hashem" (G-d's way). "He (Abraham) will entrust the spiritual treasure to his children."

According to Rambam, a "mitzvah" is not merely a commandment but "m'tzoa she' bal peh" — an utterance or a will. The word "mitzvah" is synonymous with the word "Tzavaoh" (will). If it were not carved out, the covenant would have terminated.

Abraham was the first teacher, not to a few but to tens of thousands, according to Rambam. The Community consisted of "Talmidim" — students. The main thing was the "Teacher-father," not merely based on the biological factor but on the teaching aspect. Rambam calls it, "the nation which is in love with G-d." This is how he termed the Covenantal Community. We find in Tehilim often the phrase, "Shigoyun L'Dovid" as it introduces a psalm. The word "Shigoyun" means the "Madness of David." He was madly in love with G-d. Abraham's responsibility was to see that there is someone to pass it on to. This was the type of community which Abraham passed on to Isaac and which Isaac then passed on to Jacob. It was "love of G-d" and it was consummated at Sinai.

Where in Torah do we find that "Yitzchak" took over the lead? In Chapter 26, line 25 of "Toldos" it declares, "Vayiven shom mizbayach" — and he built there an altar. Once he built the altar, he was now the teacher. Now he became the successor.

We also find that Abimelech, the King of G'ror, recognized this greatness as did the previous Abimelech of Abraham Here, immediately after being told that Yitzchak built the "Mizbayach" Abimelech came to sign a treaty. "Now I see that G-d is with you. Let there be a treaty between you and me." A king does not sign a pact with an ordinary person but with a person of equal importance. In Chapter 22 of "Sedra Vayera", Abimelech made a treaty with Abraham and recognized him as a king. Also, he wouldn't have done this with an ordinary man. Thus, with both Abraham and Isaac we find them recognized as kings. Therefore, lineage succession is clean. Now as for Jacob, where do we find the leadership turned over to him? We find it in the second

"Brochos" or blessings bestowed upon him by his father Isaac before Jacob left his home. Chapter 27, line 4: "And may He bestow upon you the blessings of Abraham." Isaac never intended these blessings for Esau. He intended for Esau only "M'tal Hashamayim" — the dew of heaven — the physical riches. The second ones, "Birchas Avrohom" were for Jacob. "Travel and spread the words of G-d. Tell the people who G-d is!" That is the trusteeship of the Covenantal Community. "Love of G-d." Interestingly, here we find the name of G-d written as "Kal Shadai" In the first blessing it is written Elokim. Shadai means "limitation," not too big — not too much — limited. Jacob's role would now involve a limited group of people.

Jacob understood all this but there was something he didn't understand. If he is the leader of the community, he thought it only could be carried out in Eretz Yisroel. He knew that his father Yitzhak wanted to leave the land but G-d stopped him. "You are the leader of the Community — one entity and cannot leave."

Here suddenly Jacob's father tells him to leave the land with the "Birkos Avraham," — (Abraham's blessings). This is what he couldn't reason. We are told by Rambam that B'er Sheva was the "Ir M'Kudeshes" — the city as holy in the Patriarchs' time as Jerusalem was destined to become. It was the center of Abraham's activities. From time to time we are told that Abraham left B'er Sheva to expand his activities but invariably he returned to the city. Thus, if the city had such stature, Jacob couldn't visualize leaving B'er Sheva. In fact, he was uprooted and taken by force from B'er Sheva. "It is not your place." These were his fears for he thought that his role would be taken away from him. It was hard for him to realize that he could be a leader — a teacher in a place of Pagans. B'er Sheva indeed lost a great man! The holiness is not B'er Sheva per se. It is not holy more with his departure and is similar to Mt. Sinai. Now it means nothing per se. "The moment the shofar "Tkiah G'Dolah" was sounded at Sinai and the "Shechina" departed, there was no longer holiness. Similar is B'er Sheva. Jacob was frightened! Perhaps, not only was Kedusha (holiness) taken from B'er Sheva but maybe from him too. Maybe there is another man. This was his great fear. This is why he declares almost hysterically, "Where shall I turn my eyes, etc." "Can I build a community in Choron? It is an impossibility." Why did G-d send him to Choron? Why start from scratch? Why lose the tens of thousands who Abraham trained, who Yitzhak trained? Apparently, the community was destroyed. However, it was G-d's inscrutable will. In Choron he did start the community with a handful of children — with twelve people. Only this did G-d want! He left thousands and came back to an old blind father with a handful. Why?

I believe that G-d tried to teach Jacob this "Yehodus" — faith is recognizable and understandable even on the moon. If he didn't leave, the community would have been limited only to Eretz. "Yehodus" wanted Jacob to realize this and to start from scratch. It also shows us that we can start from scratch.

There was "Churban rishon" — Churban sheni — destruction after destruction, and yet we picked up the threads and started from scratch. Yitzhak told him, "Lach Padana Arom" (go to Padan Arom). And Jacob had to experience this — not only Jacob but later Joseph. G-d wanted Jacob to experience "Golus" (Diaspora) — to be a stranger — to be rejected — not in a known land — to be exposed and persecuted. But why twice? First, it was father and then the son. Joseph resembled Jacob physically and also resembled Jacob's awesome experiences. Jacob had to experience it in poverty and hard work. Joseph had to experience it both ways — in poverty and as a successful man with material wealth. It was to teach us, the later generations, that we can be part of the Covenantal Community under all conditions in all places.

This is what G-d wanted for Jacob. "Go, forget all your friends and your people — go to Choron. Try to convert the young girls - your wives - your children." And from the twelve cornerstones come the nation. There will be a Mokom Kodesh, a holy place, but not B'er Sheva. There he became happy with "B'Mokom" (the mount where he slept the night). "I realize I don't have to worry. 'B'er Sheva' is not the place of destiny. It will be in time to come in another place."

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - currently 5765]

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Vayetse When the "I" is Silent

It is one of the great visions of the Torah. Jacob, alone and far from home, lies down for the night, with only stones for a pillow. He dreams of a ladder set on earth but reaching heaven, with angels ascending and descending. The question is: what is it a vision of?

There are many answers in our tradition, but the simplest is - prayer. Jacob, according to the sages, established Maariv, the evening prayer. He himself gives the most moving account of his experience:

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of G-d; this is the gate of heaven." Only in hindsight do we appreciate the resonances of this sentence. A synagogue is a "house of G-d." Prayer is "the gate of heaven." The result of prayer - if we have truly opened our heart - is to know that "G-d is in this place, and I did not know it."

There is, though, one nuance in the text that is missed in translation, and it took the Hassidic masters to remind us of it. Hebrew verbs carry with them, in their declensions, an indication of their subject. Thus the word yadati means "I knew," and lo yadati, "I did not know." When Jacob wakes from his sleep, however, he says, "Surely the Lord is in this place ve'anokhi lo yadati." Anokhi means "I." In this sentence, it is superfluous. To translate it literally we would have to say, "And I, I did not know it." Why the double "I"?

To this, Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz (Panim Yafot) gave a magnificent answer. How do we come to know that "G-d is in this place"? By ve'anokhi lo yadati - not knowing the I. We know G-d when we forget the self. We sense the "Thou" of the Divine presence when we move beyond the "I" of egocentricity. Only when we stop thinking about ourselves, do we become truly open to the world and the Creator of the world.

This answers some of the great questions about prayer. What difference does it make? Does it really change G-d? Surely G-d does not change. Besides which, does not prayer contradict the most fundamental principle of faith, which is that we are called on to do G-d's will rather than ask G-d to do our will? What really happens when we pray?

Prayer has two dimensions, one mysterious, the other not. There are simply too many cases of prayers being answered for us to deny that it makes a difference to our fate. It does. A few days ago I heard the following story. A man in a Nazi concentration camp lost the will to live - and in the death camps, if you lost the will to live, you died. That night he poured out his heart in prayer. The next morning, he was transferred to work in the camp kitchen. There he was able, when the guards were not looking, to steal some potato peelings. It was these peelings that kept him alive. I heard this story from his son. Perhaps each of us has some such story. In times of crisis we cry out from the depths of our soul, and something happens. Sometimes we only realize it later, looking back.

Prayer makes a difference to the world - but how it does so is mysterious. There is, however, a second dimension which is non-mysterious. Less than prayer changes G-d, it changes us. Literally, the Hebrew verb lehitpallel, meaning "to pray," means "to judge oneself." It means, to escape from the prison of the self and see the world, including ourselves, from the outside. Prayer is where the relentless first person singular, the "I," falls silent for a moment and we become aware that we are not the centre of the universe. There is a reality outside. That is a moment of transformation.

If we could only stop asking the question, "How does this affect me?" we would see that we are surrounded by miracles. There is the almost

infinite complexity and beauty of the natural world. There is the Divine word, our greatest legacy as Jews, the library of books we call the Bible. And there is the unparalleled drama, spreading over forty centuries, of the tragedies and triumphs that have befallen the Jewish people. Respectively, these represent the three dimensions of our knowledge of G-d: creation (G-d in nature), revelation (G-d in holy words) and redemption (G-d in history).

Sometimes it takes a great crisis to make us realise how self-centred we have been. The only question strong enough to endow existence with meaning is not, "What do I need from life?" but "What does life need from me?" That is the question we hear when we truly pray. More than prayer is an act of speaking, it is an act of listening - to what G-d wants from us, here, now. What we discover - if we are able to create that silence in the soul - is that we are not alone. We are here because someone, the One, wanted us to be, and He has set us a task only we can do. We emerge strengthened, transformed.

More than prayer changes G-d, it changes us. It lets us see, feel, know that "G-d is in this place." How do we reach that awareness? By moving beyond the first person singular, so that for a moment, like Jacob, we can say, "I did not know the I." In the silence of the "I," we meet the "Thou" of G-d.

From: jmrlist@jewishmediaresources.org Date: Wed, 4 Jan 2006 11:22:25 To: <jmrlist@jewishmediaresources.org> Subject: Rosenblum in Mishpacha: "Too much insularity?"

Too much insularity?

by Jonathan Rosenblum

Mishpacha January 5, 2006

The theme of the recent Midwest convention of Agudath Israel of America was: "Apart from the world; A part of the world." Of late, the first side of that duality has been much more emphasized than the second. At last year's Agudath Israel national convention, for instance, virtually every speaker quoted the verse from that Shabbos' Torah reading, VaYishlach: "Va'yavaser Yaakov levado - Yaakov was left alone" (Bereishis 32:25), and focused his remarks on the necessity of preserving our separation from the surrounding society. The necessity of maintaining our insularity from the toxic environment of modern society cannot be denied. At the above-mentioned Midwest convention, Dayan Shmuel Fuerst of Chicago told a series of hair-raising stories of the effect of Internet on frum homes and cited equally chilling statistics. However shocking his remarks were to the audience, the points he made are common knowledge to nearly every communal rav. At the same time, an exclusive focus on protecting ourselves from the surrounding toxins carries its own costs. (For that reason the duality of the Midwest Agudah convention's theme was most welcome.) Forced to wear metaphoric blinders and earplugs by the plethora of impermissible images and sounds with which the pervasive modern media bombards us, it is easy for us to lose all awareness of all those beyond our own narrow group. And yet we have responsibilities to the members of outside society: gentiles, our fellow Jews, and even other religious Jews from circles other than our own. The Midrash at the beginning of parashas VaYeishev describes how Yaakov Avinu, after all the travails with Lavan and Esav, simply wished to live in peace, only to learn that the peace he sought is not the lot of tzadikim in this world. Rabbi Shimon Schwab specifies that Yaakov wanted to rest from his longstanding task of proclaiming Hashem's name in the world to focus exclusively on his own spiritual growth and the chinuch of his children. That slackening in his responsibility to sanctify Hashem's name created an opening for the Satan and led to tragedy of Yosef's sale by his brothers. As Torah Jews, we live with a constant tension between preserving our particularistic identity and fulfilling our universalistic mission. The solution to that tension does not lie in forgetting that we are commanded to be a "light unto the nations." Nor can it be achieved if we lack awareness of all those for whom we are responsible in one degree or another. In order to fulfill our mission, Yaakov needs to remain apart. Without preserving our own core of tahara (purity), we

cannot influence others in the ways that Hashem intended. Yet neither can we do so if we concern ourselves only with our purity and lose sight of all those "others" whom we are commanded to lift up through our example. Before we can reach out to our fellow Jews and draw them closer to Torah, we must first convince them of our love and concern for them as individuals, and not just as potential "converts." The vast array of medical organizations founded and run by chareidim in Eretz Yisrael, the phenomenal work of Satmar Bikur Cholim in America, the tens of millions of dollars raised annually for the SHUVU school system for children from Russian-speaking families and a panopoly of kiruv organizations all attest to that concern. Our society has unquestionably produced many who have fully integrated Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv's message that the educational imperative of our time is: "Let the Name of Heaven become beloved through you." Yet it is also easy to cite a wide array of phenomena that attest to a growing constriction in the purview of many Torah Jews. Wish a stranger "Good Shabbos" in some frum neighborhoods and the responses will vary from, "Do I know you?" to stares suggesting that you need psychiatric help. The fact that Partners in Torah Learning is perpetually seeking additional mentors to learn with the non-religious Jews seeking a study partner is an ongoing reproach. And I would list the tepid response at the individual level to the plight of the Gush Katif evacuees - with notable exceptions such as Stollin and Sadigira chassidim - as another example of limiting our concern to those whom we view as part of our circle. Whatever ideological or theological differences we may have with the former settlers of Gush Katif, surely they are no greater than the prophet Yirmiyahu had with the Jews of his time, who had repeatedly ignored all his warnings. Yet when the Babylonian conquerors offered to let Yirmiyahu march with the exiles without bearing the same yoke, he refused in order to be with his brothers in their suffering. How can we overcome the tension between shuttering ourselves off from the pernicious influences of the surrounding society without becoming blinded to the existence of the members of that society? The answer, as suggested by Rabbi Elyashiv, is an intensified emphasis on the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem. The Kiddush Hashem imperative requires us to be aware of all those individuals around us who are potential observers of our actions. The awareness that we are constantly broadcasting a message about Hashem's Torah in everything that we do forces us, at one level, to look outwards. But, ironically, it also forces us to develop ourselves from within at the same time. A Kiddush Hashem perspective forces us to ask continually: What does Hashem want from me at this moment? What message of praise to Him is it my unique role to sing now? When we constantly ask ourselves those questions, our core of purity is ensured. You are subscribed to the Jewish Media Resources mailing list. To subscribe to or unsubscribe from this list, go to <http://six.pairlist.net/mailman/listinfo/jmrlist>: <<http://six.pairlist.net/mailman/listinfo/jmrlist>> See our site at <http://www.jewishmediaresources.org>: <<http://www.jewishmediaresources.org/>>

**From Efraim Goldstein <efraim@aol.com>
Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet
Vayetzei 5767**

Jerusalem Post :: Nov 29 2006

CHECKS AND BALANCES :: Rabbi Berel Wein

A few weeks ago one of the minor frustrations of everyday life occurred to me. Like many of you do, I still maintain an account – a checking account – in the United States in addition to my Israeli banking account. I am thus able to pay dollar invoices with dollar checks and it is a source of great convenience to me. I am always careful to make certain that my American bank account should have sufficient funds in it to meet the demands of the dollar invoices that I receive.

So, when I received my recent American credit card bill I automatically reached for my American bank checkbook to pay the bill. Imagine, to my horror, I discovered that I had no more checks in my checkbook. Now it is very frustrating not to have enough money in one's account to pay one's bills. But it is more than frustrating to have enough money in the account but not to have any checks – the means by which the money can be disbursed and the bills paid.

A few frantic phone calls to the United States and the cooperation of FedEx brought checks to my home a few days later. As I gratefully paid my bills with my new-found checks I considered the moral lessons to be learned from this incident.

For in the Jewish view of life, every event is fraught with meaning and teaching. There is nothing in life that does not have meaning. The rabbis in Avot taught us. And so it is.

The Talmud tells us that a great master of Torah ruefully remarked: "I have many coins to exchange with others but I have no one to deal with regarding them." This metaphor referred to his great Torah knowledge and wisdom and his personal disappointment at being unable to impart his "coins" of wisdom and tradition to the multitudes that were not able or willing to deal with them.

The Talmud teaches us a similar frustration of the great Rabi Eliezer ben Hyrkonos who stated that his students were only able to carry away from him "as much as a dog can diminish the sea by licking at it." The greatest frustration a teacher can encounter is an apathetic class or a group that is unable to derive full benefit from its teacher.

The teacher has plenty of money in the account but does not have the checks that can help disburse that wealth – this time the wealth of knowledge. I wanted to pay one of my coworkers on the movie series that the Destiny Foundation is producing. I said to him, "I want to pay your bill right now and I have a sufficient balance in the account to cover your invoice but I don't have any checks." He replied: "Rabbi, that is the most original excuse I have heard in a long time for not paying my invoices."

I explained to him that this excuse was not really original with me, that it had Talmudic origins and that there is nothing more galling and frustrating than being caught in this position. I hoped that he believed me. Anyway, I was able to pay the invoice immediately upon receiving the precious checks.

The truth in life is that humans rarely appreciate the teachers and leaders that they have until they are no longer here. The Talmud is replete with such stories of students who did not really begin to appreciate and miss their mentor until after that mentor's passing. The teacher will be wise to understand this fact of life. One must overcome the natural frustration inherent in having a large balance in the account and yet not having the checks by which to disburse it properly.

Even if the amount of knowledge and inspiration taken from the great teacher is only "as much as a dog can diminish the sea by licking at it" the teacher must continue his or her efforts. Even if the students are not the checks that the teacher really wishes to write and disburse one can only deal with what one has in hand. This is also a great lesson of the Talmud: "I have learned from all of those whom I have taught." Not only are the checks important regarding the balance in the account but, as far as Torah is concerned, the checks written and disbursed do not diminish the balance in the account. Rather, they somehow enhance and increase it. In any event, I personally hope not to run out of checks on my account again. But then again, who knows? Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: VAYETZE :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Of all of the patriarchs, Yaakov is the most representative of all later Jewish history. His story therefore should be viewed as the story of Israel and its relations with the other peoples and faiths in the world. Yaakov flees from the sword of Eisav. On the way to the house of Lavan where he senses that he will find some sort of refuge, he is despoiled and robbed of all of his worldly possessions by Eisav's son, Elifaz. He arrives in abject poverty at Lavan's house as an unwanted guest that is tolerated to an extent but who is always destined to remain a stranger and outsider. Yet in spite of all of the obstacles and bigotry that Yaakov encounters, he rises to power and wealth in the house of Lavan.

This deserved and hard won success, a success that also makes Lavan wealthy in the process, becomes a cause for enmity and jealousy amongst Lavan's sons and family. They do not count their own blessings but rather begrudge others – Yaakov and the Jews – their blessings. They repeat the accusation that Yitzchak faced in the land of G'rar at the hands of Avimelech and his cohorts – "Leave us, for you have become wealthy from us."

It is too galling to the insider to witness the success and wealth of the outsider. No matter what Yaakov will do he will remain the eternal pariah, the outsider who somehow has exploited the insider – so thinks Lavan and his family. There is no refuge from such feelings of paranoia and envy. The only thing that Yaakov can do is to move on again and return home to the Land of Israel and the home of his parents. And this in an encapsulated nutshell is the story of the Jewish people over its centuries of dispersion and exile.

The inherent disdain towards Jews generally and currently focused primarily on the Jewish state of Israel is a product of millennia of Lavan attitudes. In the 1930's, though Franklin Roosevelt was appalled by the treatment of Germany's Jews by the Nazis, he nevertheless commented that Hitler was correct in asserting that there were too many Jewish doctors and lawyers in Germany. His fashionable, Hudson Valley manor house upbringing imprinted this attitude upon his psyche.

The weakness of Lavan lies not only in his cheating and lying behavior but rather in his inability to allow Yaakov credit for his success. Every success of Yaakov is viewed as having been at Lavan's expense even though at the end of the parsha Lavan himself admits that his own success and great wealth is directly traceable to Yaakov's efforts, talents and industry.

Yet this admission does not truly reflect any change of attitude in Lavan regarding Yaakov. Only God's interference, so to speak, in warning Lavan not to attempt to physically harm Yaakov saves Yaakov from a most unpleasant and violent confrontation with Lavan.

Perhaps it is this knowledge that God's interference, so to speak, is necessary to preserve the Jewish people is, itself, the ultimate lesson of this story and of the parsha itself. May such heavenly protection and interference always continue. Shabat shalom.

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Vayeitzei
For the week ending 2 December 2006 / 11 Kislev 5767
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Beer Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the Beit Hamikdash. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan 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 fools Yaakov, substituting Rachels older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissaschar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

INSIGHTS

Understanding The Times

“And he named him Yissaschar.” (30:18)

When you close your eyes and think of Chanuka, what comes to mind? The lights of the menorah; the dreidel spinning; the aroma of latkes and doughnuts.

And of course, the sound of “Maoz Tzur”.

In that beautiful stirring Chanuka song, we sing of the B'nei Vina, the “Children of Understanding”. Who were those children, and what was it that they understood?

Another question. On the festival of Lag B'Omer, there is a widespread custom to shoot arrows from a bow and arrow. The symbol of the month of Kislev, in which we are now, is the bow (Sagittarius - The Archer). What is the connection between the bow of Lag B'Omer and the bow of Kislev?

Lag B'Omer commemorates the passing of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. On that day, before he left this world, Rabbi Shimon revealed much of the Torah's hidden light. The “bow and arrow” symbolizes this revelation. How? White light seems indivisible, inscrutable. No detail can be discerned in its pure whiteness. The bow of the rainbow, however, reveals the secret anatomy of white light. It shows us how white light is really composed of all the colors.

Just as the rainbow reveals the hidden colors within the white light, so Rabbi Shimon revealed the hidden light within the Torah.

The most conspicuous event in the month of the bow, the month of Kislev, is Chanuka. Chanuka is the festival that celebrates the hidden light of the Torah. Yissaschar, the son of Yaakov most closely associated with Torah learning, was conceived on Chanuka and born on Shavuot. Birth is the ultimate revelation of

the hidden. Just as the conception of life is something that only makes itself manifest after the fact, so Yissaschar's entrance into this world connects the hidden and the revealed - the hidden light of Chanuka with its revelation on Sinai at Shavuot. Those “children of understanding” of whom we sing on Chanuka are Yissaschar's children who understood and inherited this connection of Chanuka to Shavuot. This is why the Book of Chronicles calls them “men with understanding of the times,” for they understood how the connection of those two times - Chanuka and Shavuot - are the link between the hidden and the revealed Torah.

Source: B'nei Yissaschar

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum **PARSHAS VAYEITZEI**

He met the place and stayed there. How awe-inspiring is this place! (28:11)

Rashi explains the word va'yifga, "he met," as a reference to Yaakov Avinu praying there. This unusual use of the word va'yifga, to denote praying, teaches us, shekaftza lo ha'aretz, "the earth jumped towards him," the point towards which he was journeying came to meet him. When Yaakov realized that this was a remarkable place, he exclaimed, "How awe-inspiring is this place!" When we view these incidents in context, we note that Yaakov attributed the revelation which he had experienced to the place, while, in truth, it was Hashem Who "brought the earth closer to him." Therefore, although the place was awe-inspiring, it was "brought there" because of Yaakov.

The Sefas Emes elaborates that, on one hand, Yaakov attributed his dream to the inherent sanctity of the place, thereby bestowing honor on the location. On the other hand, however, since Chazal inform us that the place actually moved towards him, thus demonstrating its deference and subordination to him, the honor should really be accorded to him, not the place. In order to resolve the apparent question concerning who paid homage to whom, he explains that Hashem protects His devotees from falling prey to the trap of arrogance. Hashem, therefore, permitted Yaakov to feel that the dream was a result of the place, so that he might not attribute it to his own spiritual stature and become haughty. In this way, Yaakov demonstrated his humility, and Hashem helped him to retain this unique quality intact.

This is a powerful statement. Hashem caused the kefitzas haderech, the shortening of the earth, only so that Yaakov's middah, character trait, of anavah, humility, not be challenged. Chazal tell us that Yaakov's exclamation, mah nora, "how awe-inspiring (is this place)," is what distinguished the mountain as the future makom ha'Mikdash, site of the Bais Hamikdash. Hashem said, "The Heavens are My throne, the earth, My footstool. How can you build Me a house? Where can I rest?... with a poor person and one of a lowly spirit?" (Yeshayah 66:1,2). Yaakov's self-abnegation was the quality required to enable the Bais Hamikdash to be built at that site. Prerequisites for the very existence of the Bais Hamikdash are humility and negation of one's self. It is only when we sacrifice our pride and selfish desires that we allow the Shechinah, Divine Presence, to enter. Hashem dwells within us when we provide Him with a place created by our humility. Hashem gave Yaakov the opportunity to demonstrate his humility. Yaakov grasped the opportunity, because humility was an integral aspect of his psyche. Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, cites the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna, who underscores the extreme spiritual damage caused by receiving even a small amount of honor. The Gaon explains that honor is a spiritual pleasure which is experienced by the soul, thus diminishing one's eternal reward much more so than physical indulgence, which by its very nature is limited. The body can sustain only so much because of its limitations. Not so the soul,

which is eternal. It has no constraints. It is for this reason that ennobling oneself in the eyes of others produces such disastrous consequences.

Rav Dessler posits that Rachel Imeinu's inability to conceive was a dire consequence of having been the recipient of an extra vestige of honor. The pasuk (Bereishis 29:31) says: "Hashem saw that Leah was hated, so He opened up her womb, while Rachel remained infertile." Previously, (29:30) the Torah writes that, "and he (Yaakov) also loved Rachel." This implies that Yaakov certainly loved Leah. It is just that he had a greater affinity towards Rachel. He loved them both, but Rachel received slightly more honor - an honor which she deserved, but, it was still more than Leah had received.

We must remember that Rachel neither asked for nor sought this honor. She did everything possible to see to it that her sister, Leah, would not be humiliated on her wedding night. She remained concealed in the room in order to assist Leah. She sacrificed her role in life as the propagator of the Jewish nation, so that her sister would not be humiliated. Chazal tell us that it was in the merit of this act of selflessness that Klal Yisrael was later spared. Clearly, whatever honor was later bestowed upon her was neither sought nor desired. Yet, the mere fact that she sustained this added honor disqualified her from bringing into the world Levi, who was the ancestor of Shevet Levi and Moshe Rabbeinu, as well as Yehudah from whom Moshiach would descend. All this was because of a little unrequested, but well-deserved, glory! Instead, it was all transferred to her sister, Leah. What a lesson for all of us as to what a moment of glory can mean, and how much we have to lose. The flip side is, of course, the tremendous merit that Leah had of becoming the Matriarch of Shevet Levi, the Kehunah, Moshe Rabbeinu and Moshiach Tzidkeinu. All this occurred because she was the "unloved" one, the one who had received a little less honor.

Incredible! For every moment of glory in which we bask, we pay a price. Likewise, every time we think that we have lost out on something, or we feel that we did not receive the appropriate honor due to us, we should think twice. This quite possibly may be a hidden blessing.

Avoiding honor has been the hallmark of our gedolei Yisrael, Torah giants, of each generation. They understood that honor is fleeting, but its consequences are eternal. By fleeing from honor, they ensured that their eternal reward would remain intact and preserved in its entirety.

And he (Yaakov) dreamed, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached to the Heavens. (28:12)

Rashi says that the legs of the ladder which Yaakov Avinu envisioned were situated in Be'er Sheva, with its tip reaching Bais El and its middle over Yerushalayim. The Ramban disputes this, contending that it is unreasonable to place Yerushalayim in middle of the ladder. Yerushalayim and the Bais Hamikdash are either a point of embarkation or the point of achievement of a goal. Thus, it either belongs at the bottom of the ladder or at the top. He, therefore, feels that the ladder was either standing in Yerushalayim with its top in Beis El or it was stationary in Be'er Sheva with its top in Yerushalayim. It is the place where holiness and blessing enter the world, the culmination of spiritual achievement. The significance of Yerushalayim is lost if it is placed under the middle of the ladder.

Horav Yisrael Belsky, Shlita, explains Rashi in the following manner. Taking upon oneself to ascend to the lofty perch of holiness and spirituality is an auspicious undertaking. Yet, as momentous as it is, it is not uncommon. People do it all the time. We resolve to start over, to begin anew with the finest, most lofty intentions, only to get sidetracked, overcome by challenge or overwhelmed with disappointment. It is not unusual to hear of the individual who possessed tremendous potential, yet succumbed to the pitfalls of life. The path of life is filled with shattered dreams and unfinished, unrealized potential. Surely,

Yerushalayim cannot signify the bottom of the ladder, the commencement of what - a fall, failure, broken dreams? Yet, on the other hand, there are those few who do make it to the top. They triumph over adversity, succeed against all odds, and rise above challenge. These are the gifted few, the unique elite, who, with righteousness and fortitude, scale the mountain of spirituality and holiness to reach its summit. To say that Yerushalayim is only for them, however, would be a difficult statement to make. Hashem did not create the world only for the few elite, for the totally righteous, for the spiritually invincible. Yerushalayim is for everyone. It, therefore, cannot be at the top of the ladder.

Rashi is of the opinion that Yerushalayim's position corresponds to the middle of the ladder. Holiness is not only an achievement, it is a goal. It is the reflection of a person's striving to excel, to attain a greater and more elevated level of kedushah, holiness. Any Jew who has broken the shackles that restrain him from growing is already on the road to kedushah. If he has moved beyond the pitfalls, the obstacles and disappointments, then he is already, in a sense, kadosh. It is not necessary to achieve the goal, to reach the summit - only to continue striving, to persevere and keep on going. Yerushalayim signifies this. It is in the middle of the ladder, because that position indicates forward movement. A Jew's avodah, service to the Almighty, is to never lose sight of his goal, never to give up in defeat, to persevere over the challenges that confront him. Indeed, these obstacles give him the greatest opportunity for spiritual ascension, by bringing to the fore his deeper strengths, abilities and potentials - opportunities that, under normal circumstances, would elude us.

It is expressly at these difficult moments, when the "going gets rough," when the barriers which confront us seem insurmountable - and we are about to despair of ever achieving success in our spiritual climb - that we have the fortuity to make significant strides. When a person feels that he is up against a wall with nowhere to go, he now stands at the verge of achieving unprecedented success. Hashem avails us of these unique moments in life. It is up to us to withstand the test and ascend like never before. When we consider the alternative, there is really no other option. It is not only about winning; it is about not giving up. One's attitude makes the difference between success and failure. When we lose the will and determination to persevere in our quest, we have lost, perhaps, the single most important ingredient for success. There is no failure, except in no longer trying. There is no defeat greater than the defeat from within: the defeat of giving up.

Then Yaakov kissed Rachel; and he raised his voice and wept. (29:11)

Rashi explains that Yaakov Avinu wept for either of two reasons. First, he saw through Divine Inspiration that Rachel would not be buried with him in the MeOras Ha'Machpeilah. Second, he wept because he came empty-handed. He thought, "Eliezer, my grandfather's servant, came for my mother with great wealth. I am coming to Rachel penniless, with nothing to offer." It is not that Yitzchak Avinu sent Yaakov on his way with nothing. Yaakov had been amply supplied before he left. On the way, he was pursued by Elifaz, Eisav's son, who was sent by his father to kill Yaakov. When he caught up with Yaakov, he realized that, as a result of his being raised by Yitzchak, he could not bring himself to take a human life. Nonetheless, he was disturbed about not carrying out his father's command. When he posed this question to Yaakov, he was told that if he were to take away Yaakov's money, thereby leaving him destitute, he would be in compliance with his father's command. Our sages teach us that ani chushuv k'meis, "A poor man is considered like a dead man." Elifaz complied, and Yaakov was left penniless.

Elifaz sat next to Yitzchak. He grew up in his proximity. The Steipler Rav, zl, derives an important lesson from this incident. The only reason that Elifaz did not kill Yaakov was the inspiration

with which he was imbued by Yitzchak. According to the Midrash, he was "raised in his bosom." Elifaz did not just "pop" into seder when he felt like it, leaving when he found something more important to do. - No! He remained there - glued to Yitzchak. It was in this merit that he did not kill Yaakov. Imagine, had Elifaz not had such an upbringing; there is no question that he would have fulfilled his father's command to kill Yaakov. After all, one must respect his father! Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, expands on this idea. Let us consider the average student of Torah. The yetzer hora, evil-inclination, whispers in his ear, "Why bother? Is there really any hope for you to make it as a talmid chacham, Torah scholar? You are not destined to be one of the few, one of the elite. Give it up. How does one respond to this compelling assault? One cannot ignore the element of realism involved in this disparagement.

The response must be that, while becoming a talmid chacham is certainly everyone's lofty goal, the ideal, the end result of years of total perseverance, it is true that only a select few make it to the top. The rest will become bnei Torah, observant, knowledgeable, committed Jews, whose lifeblood will be Torah and mitzvos, whose day be filled with Torah, avodah, service to the Almighty, and gemillas chasadim, carrying out acts of loving-kindness. Rav Galinsky relates an incident that occurred concerning him and Horav Chaim Kreisworth, zl. The venerable rav of Antwerp commented about a recent din Torah, litigation, that was presented to him. It concerned a dispute regarding the broker's percentage on the sale of a diamond. The owner claimed that he had promised five percent to the broker, while the broker contended they had agreed on six percent. One might think that this entire dispute was foolish. What is one percent? When one takes into consideration that the principle was valued at fifteen million dollars, the one percent was quite a huge sum of money. A similar idea applies to Torah and Jewish living. When one computes the value of the principle of Torah and mitzvos, then every percentage point is of infinite significance. Whatever one achieves in Torah is an incredible accomplishment. Every step that he ascends on the ladder of Torah achievement is beyond our ability to gauge. Every little bit matters - both in a positive light and from a negative perspective.

In the Talmud Sanhedrin 46, Chazal say that those executed by Bais Din were buried in different cemeteries. There was a cemetery designated for those who were killed by the sword and those who were strangled. There was another cemetery for those who were stoned or who died by hot lead. Just as the condemned sinners were not immediately buried in the general community cemetery, so were the different levels of sinners not buried together. Just as a wicked man is not buried next to a righteous person, so, too, is a high-level sinner not buried next to one whose sin is considered to be less grievous. Since those who are condemned to die by stoning or fire are guilty of a greater, more deleterious sin, they are not buried next to others who, although were executed, had not sinned to as great an extent.

Let us analyze an example of this halachah. A married woman commits an act of infidelity; her punishment is chenek, strangling. If this same woman had not yet entered into full matrimony, if she is only an arussa, betrothed, without chuppah, and still in her parents' home, she is to receive the ultimate punishment of sekillah, stoning. She is, thus, buried in the cemetery reserved for the most miscreant sinners. Why? One would think that a woman who is not married, who has not destroyed the sanctity of a Jewish home, would receive some form of dispensation and leniency - surely not a greater punishment.

Horav Elya Lopian, zl, explains that precisely because the woman is married and has a family her punishment is mitigated. When she leaves the stability of her home and her husband, to whom she was to have remained committed, in order to act

immorally, her heart gives a shudder. She feels "bad" about what she is doing. It is this "bad" feeling that diminishes her sentence. The other woman, who has yet no family ties, acts with impudence and with no conscience. She enjoyed her sin more. Therefore, her punishment is greater. It is all dependent on the heart's thumping. When one sins, and he does not feel good about it, if his heart gives a beat of remorse, it palliates his sin. It all depends upon the percentage. One percent of an enormous sin is a large amount in respect to the sin and will concomitantly deduct from his punishment. Everything that we do - however miniscule - both positive and negative - must be measured in context of the big picture. It suddenly takes on new weight and greater proportion.

Rachel saw that she had not borne children to Yaakov, so Rachel became envious of her sister; she said to Yaakov, "Give me children..." Yaakov's anger flared up at Rachel, and he said, "Am I instead of G-d who has withheld from you fruit of the womb?" (30:1,2)

Rachel complained to Yaakov Avinu that he should do something about her lack of children. His response was terse and seemingly out of nature, "Hashem has held children back from you, but not from me!" Yaakov was apparently saying that he had children from Leah. It was now up to her to daven to Hashem, for herself. The Midrash wonders how Yaakov could have responded in what seems a heartless manner to his wife, who was clearly brokenhearted. Is this the way one speaks to an aggrieved woman? Indeed, it was for this reason that Yaakov's children from Leah would one day bow down humbly before Yosef, Rachel's son. While Yaakov certainly did not want to hurt Rachel, he was criticized for the manner in which he spoke to her. We wonder if Yaakov had another reason for speaking to Rachel this way.

Horav Chaim Kamil, zl, feels that Yaakov was intimating a profound idea to Rachel. If the situation had become so grave that Rachel still was not blessed with a child, it must be because Hashem wanted to hear her prayers. This is why Yaakov told her - "From you, Hashem has withheld children - not from me." He wants to hear your tefillos, prayers - not mine. It is not that Yaakov refused to daven, pray, for Rachel. It is just that her lack of children was due to her lack of prayer. His prayer would not have catalyzed the blessing that she sought.

A person must delve into every nisayon, challenge, in life and ask himself, "What is Hashem asking of me? What does He want from me?" The challenge is there to elevate us. We must rise to the occasion as our Patriarch Avraham did throughout his life. Every challenge made him a greater person. Every challenge elevated him spiritually. Every challenge fulfilled the ratzon Hashem, will of the Almighty.

Va'ani Tefillah

Melech mhullal ba'tishbachos - A king extolled in praises.

Is there anything else with which one is praised? Certainly one who is praised is appreciated for his positive activities - not for anything negative. The Gaon, zl, m'Vilna explains this with a parable. There was a king who possessed every virtue and attribute. Indeed, there was not one blemish to his behavior and character. He had but one physical blemish: his nose was long and crooked. Every year on his birthday, every officer and minister would file by him and laud him with praises. One year, after everyone had passed by, one minister presented himself and said, "Your nose is long and crooked." A pall came over all those assembled, as they stood there in shock and disbelief at the minister's insolence. The king immediately sentenced him to death. As he was being led to the gallows, the king asked him why he had so foolishly insulted him. The condemned man replied, "My praise was more exalted than any of the ministers. They each praised you, leaving room for other praises. After they were all finished speaking, there was still much to be said about you. I declared that you have only one negative point - your

nose. Otherwise, you possess every praise imaginable. When the king heard this, he was overwhelmed with joy. He now realized that this minister was really the cleverest of them all. He pardoned and elevated him.

We derive from here that it is possible to laud someone by mentioning his negative aspects. Thus, the less negativity indicates an increase in praise. This is true with regard to human beings who are not perfect. Hashem, however, is perfect. Therefore, when we praise Him, we praise Him with only tishbachos, praises, because there is nothing else with which to praise Him.

In loving memory of our husband, father and grandfather on his yahrtzeit
Elchanan ben Peretz z'l niftar 11 Kislev 5739 Esther Kurant Mordechai &
Jenny Kurant Aliza & Avrohom Wrona Naomi & Avrohom Yitzchok
Weinberger Dovid & Chavi Kurant Yossi Kurant

Rabbi Mordechai Willig **The TorahWeb Foundation** **Love and Hate**

I

Yaakov loved Rachel even more than Leah...Hashem saw that Leah was hated (Braishis 29:30,31). Although Yaakov loved Leah, she is called hated, since Yaakov loved Rachel more (Ramban)

The Torah allows men to marry more than one wife, however, it is considered shameful unless the first wife is barren (Psikta Rabbosi 43, Meiri Yevamos 65b, Avos D'Rabbi Nassan 2). Rabbeinu Gershom prohibited polygamy a thousand years ago, and his ruling is now universally accepted.

Nonetheless, the lesson of the Ramban remains critical. A married woman must feel that her husband loves her more than anyone or anything else. The obligation to honor one's wife more than oneself (Yevamos 62b) includes one's interests and preoccupations as well. A wife must respect her husband's schedule, but if she finds it necessary to interrupt him, he must respond with concentration and empathy. Otherwise, she may feel hated, loved less than his other pursuits.

"One must love one's wife as he loves himself" (ibid). "One who is lovesick thinks about his beloved always, when he is sitting, standing, eating or drinking. His mind is never removed from his love of her" (Rambam, Hil. Teshuva 10:3). Just as one is always concerned about himself, so should he be lovingly mindful of his wife.

II

Even more so should the love of Hashem be in the heart of those who love Him. They think of this love always, as He has commanded, "with all your heart and with all your soul" (Devarim 6:5). This is Shlomo's metaphor, "I am sick with love" (Shir Hashirim 2:5) and all of Shir Hashirim is a metaphor for this (Rambam ibid.)

Unfortunately, we have not always lived up to the Rambam's standard of ahavas Hashem. For example, we said, "Because of Hashem's hatred for us He took us out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Emori to destroy us" (Devarim 1:27). "He loved you, but you hated Him, as the popular saying says, 'that which is in your heart about your friend is what you think is in his heart about you'" (Rashi). We call this phenomenon projection. Yet it seems incomprehensible that Bnei Yisroel would hate Hashem, even during the sin of the spies.

Perhaps hate in this context should be interpreted based on the Ramban. Bnei Yisroel at that time preferred the comforts of the past to the challenge of entering Eretz Yisroel upon Hashem's command. Since their love of Hashem was secondary to their other desires, Rashi states that they hated Hashem (Rav Resach Oratz).

This led to the paradoxical conclusion in response to the spies' report, "...isn't it better for us to return to Egypt. Let us appoint a leader and let us return to Egypt" (Bamidbar 14:3,4).

The Torah itself accuses Am Yisroel of hating Hashem, "Because you despised Hashem...saying 'why did we leave Egypt'" (ibid 11:20). This hatred, too, can be understood as a relative term. Bnei Yisroel explicitly recalled the food in Egypt, "we remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, and cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic" (ibid 11:5). Their overemphasis on food renders their love of Hashem insignificant. Like Yaakov's secondary love of Leah, it is referred to by the Torah as hatred.

III

Proof for this interpretation can be found in Rashi's comment on Hashem's alleged hatred of Am Yisroel, that is, that He allegedly took us out of Egypt because of hatred. Rashi compares it to a human king who has two sons and two fields...to the one he loves he gives the irrigated field; to the one he hates he gives the field which depends on rain only. Hashem took us out of irrigated Egypt to the seemingly inferior Canaan which depends on rain (Devarim 1:27). [In fact, Canaan is superior (Rashi 11:10, Bamidbar 13:22)].

Why did Bnei Yisroel say, according to their mistaken assumption, that Hashem hated them? They should have said, "He loves us less than others." Apparently secondary love is called hatred.

The metaphor of two sons also resonates in the family of Yaakov Avinu.

Yaakov loved Yosef more than all his sons (Breishis 37:3).

A person should never treat one son differently than his other sons, for on account of the fine wool of the garment that Yaakov gave Yosef in excess of what he gave to his other sons, his brothers became jealous of him. The matter evolved until our forefathers descended to Egypt (Shabbos 10b)

One must attempt to love all his children equally. In any event, he should never demonstrate a preference for one particular child. Given each child's different needs and circumstances, this can prove to be extraordinarily challenging. Nonetheless, it is crucial because a child who thinks he is less loved sometimes considers himself hated. This can cause jealousy and a break in the family.

IV

We live in an age of overindulgence. Our wealth allows us to eat out in an ever increasing number of kosher eateries, offering ever new variations of fancy menus. Party planners make seudos mitzvah more and more ostentatious. So much emphasis is placed on clothes, cars, furnishings, and homes. This is not a welcome development. Flaunting wealth is a violation of the critical attribute of modesty. Moreover, it arouses the jealousy of neighbors, including non-Jewish ones. Rather, we should hide our material success, as Yaakov Avinu said, "Why do you make yourselves conspicuous" (Breishis 42:1). The Kli Yakar (Devarim 2:31) bemoaned this problem four hundred years ago. "Those who display fancy clothing and homes cause anti-Semitism. This widespread custom causes all the problems that beset us. The wise should understand this and learn the lesson."

Sometimes this overindulgence constitutes a love of honor and pleasure that makes our love of Hashem relatively insignificant. As we have seen, this diminishing of ahavas Hashem can even be referred to as hateful.

Consider these powerful words of the Sefer Hachinuch (418): One who focuses his thoughts on physical matters and the futilities (havlei) of the world, not for the sake of Heaven, but merely to enjoy them or to achieve illusory honor, not intending to assist and strengthen good and upstanding people, violates (bitel) the positive commandment to love Hashem, and his punishment is great.

Each of us must engage in soul searching to measure our fulfillment of ahavas Hashem by comparing it to our other pursuits. The Sefer Hachinuch allows us to focus on the physical, for the sake of Heaven and to help others. Beyond that it compromises our primary love of Hashem.

"For I have seen all that Lavan is doing to you" (Breishis 31:12). Previously, Yaakov dreamt of angels climbing to Hashem. Now he dreams of speckled sheep. It is time to leave Lavan and return home (31:13), to focus primarily on spiritual pursuits, on the love of Hashem.

Our dreams reflect our innermost desires and thoughts. The American dream is rags to riches. The Torah dream is spiritual ascent. As we read about Yaakov Avinu, we should focus on improving our loving relationships with our spouses, our children, and our Creator.

"RavFrand" List - Parshas Vayeitzei

Making A Deal With The Almighty

In The Tradition of Yaakov Avinu

This week's parsha contains an incident of a "conditional vow" made to the Almighty. "Then Yaakov took a vow saying, 'If G-d will be with me, and He will guard me on this way that I am going; and He will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear, and I will return in peace to my father's house, and Hashem will be a G-d to me - then this stone which I have set as a pillar shall become a house of G-d, and whatever You will give me, I shall surely tithe to You.'" [Bereshis 28:20-22]

In effect Yaakov makes a deal here with the Master of the Universe. This has been a time-honored tradition in the Jewish nation that people have in effect made deals with the Almighty. I would like to share an incident that I heard in the name of Reb Chatzkel Besser. He personally heard this story from the Sadegerer Rebbe in Tel Aviv.

So much of life is being in the right place at the right time or being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The Sadegerer Rebbe had to be in Vienna on Shabbos Parshas Zachor, March 12, 1938. That was a very inopportune Shabbos to be in Vienna. On that Friday the brown shirted Nazis marched into Vienna and ransacked Jewish homes. Subsequently, the Nazis invaded Vienna and that was the beginning of the end for Viennese Jewry.

[Ironically, the famous Reichman Family was also in Vienna in 1938. That Shabbos was supposed to be the Bar Mitzvah of the eldest brother Edward Reichman. Unfortunately—or at least what they thought was unfortunate at the time - Mrs. Reichman's father who still lived in Hungary (in Beled) had a stroke. They wanted very much that the grandfather should be at the Bar Mitzvah, but he was in no condition to travel to Vienna. So the week before the Bar Mitzvah the Reichman family with three of their children left Vienna to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah in Hungary. Samuel Reichman (the father) never stepped foot in Vienna again. That is how he was able to make it out of Europe. He fortuitously happened to be in Hungary.]

The Sadegerer Rebbe had no such luck. The brown shirted Nazis zeroed in on every prominent Jew they could find. They grabbed Jews out of cabs out of shuls, out of every place they could find them. They captured the Sadegerer Rebbe. This is the background to the story I want to tell. I will relate what happened to him very soon.

Years later, Reb Chatzkel Besser visited Tel Aviv. Early one morning, he was walking into the shteible of the Sadegerer Rebbe. He noticed the Jewish street cleaner sweeping the street and the sidewalk on the block of the shteible. When the street cleaner reached the sidewalk immediately in front of the shteible, he stopped sweeping, walked past the shul, and then resumed his cleaning operation on the next block.

Reb Chatzkel Besser sensed anti-religious discrimination here and went over to the street cleaner and objected. "What's wrong with this piece of sidewalk?" The street cleaner responded "HaRebbe lo noten reshush" (The Rebbe does not allow me to sweep there.) Reb Chatzkel Besser did not believe him and repeated his question to which the street cleaner repeated the same answer.

He thought the street cleaner was making up the story or just being lazy. He went into the Rebbe and asked him directly "Why won't the street cleaner sweep in front of your shteible?" The Rebbe put him off and did not give him a straight answer. This was Friday morning. He kept badgering the Rebbe Friday night, Shabbos morning, Shabbos afternoon: "What does it mean 'HaRebbe lo noten reshush'?"

At the end of Shabbos the Rebbe explained the true story to his guest. When he was in Vienna that Shabbos in March 1938 the Nazis took him and dressed him up in one of the uniforms of the street cleaners of Vienna and they gave him a tiny little broom. They placed him by the steps of the Vienna Opera House and ordered him to clean every step.

Of course, this was a humiliating experience for the Rebbe. He was wearing one of those little street cleaner's caps and essentially holding a tooth brush, cleaning the massive steps of the Vienna landmark. He related that at that moment he made a "deal" with the Ribbono shel Olam. He said, "Master of the Universe, if You help me escape from here I promise You I will sweep the streets of Eretz Yisrael."

He made it out and he kept his promise. When he arrived in Eretz Yisrael and set up a shteible there, he accepted upon himself that he would not let anyone sweep outside his shteible - he would do it himself. Every day, he would sweep the sidewalk in front of his shul because of the deal he made with the Almighty, in the tradition of Yaakov Avinu.

Yaakov Approached The Shepherds Like A Brother

I would like to relate another story I just read, this one involving the Ponnevitzer Rav. The parsha contains the following narration, immediately after Sheni:

"So Yaakov lifted his feet, and went toward the land of Bnei Kedem. He looked and behold - a well in the field! And see there! Three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for from that well they would water the flocks, and the stone on the mouth of the well was large. And all the flocks would be gathered there, and they would roll the stone from upon the mouth of the well and they would water the sheep; then they would return the stone onto the mouth of the well, to its place. Yaakov said to them, 'My brothers, where are you from?' And they said, 'We are from Charan.'...He said, "Look the day is still long; it is not yet time to bring the livestock in; water the flock and go on grazing. But they said, 'We are unable to, until all the flocks will have been gathered and they will roll the stone from upon the mouth of the well; and we will water the flock.'" [Bereshis 29:1-8]

Yaakov Avinu is a stranger in the city. He arrived mid-day and saw the shepherds were apparently sloughing off. He criticized them for taking off so early. He told them they should be out in the field yet grazing with their sheep! They explained to Yaakov the special circumstance that caused them to come in when they did.

The Ponnevitzer Rav asked a question on this narration. This is apparently akin to the following scenario: We drive by and see construction workers who are supposed to be fixing a pipe or fixing the street or fixing a fire hydrant. It is two o'clock in the afternoon and we notice that they are taking off from work. Here they are, State employees and instead of working they are all sitting on the ground shmoozing. It is not lunch hour. We wonder what they are doing there.

We approach them and say, "Fellows, how are you? You know it is really not right that you should be taking off at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. There is still plenty of daylight. You have not put in

your eight hours yet. Tell me, guys, why are you knocking off so early?"

Trust me, we would not receive the same answer that Yaakov Avinu received.

At best they would tell us "Mind your own business! Who are you? Bug off!"

(This is the sanitized version of what they would tell us.)

In effect, Yaakov Avinu tells these strangers the same thing. The Ponneveter Rav asked why did he get such a polite response from them? How did Yaakov Avinu get away with it?

The Ponneveter Rav answers that the key to the polite response is how he first approached them. He introduced himself by saying to them "My brothers, where are you from?" He called them his brothers. More than that, he succeeded in demonstrating to them that he felt like a brother to them. They felt his sincere concern. They felt that he was speaking to them like a kinsmen. When one feels that way about people, one can get away with giving them honest criticism and encouragement to improve their ways.

The Ponneveter Rav was himself such a person. When he talked to another Jew, the Jew felt like he was talking to a brother. He was one of the most -- if not THE most—successful fundraisers in the history of modern Yeshivas. He was so successful because he was able to convey this spirit of "My brothers". People felt like the man cared for them.

I recently read a story that Rabbi Berel Wein wrote reminiscing about his years as a Rabbi in Miami Beach when the Ponneveter Rav used to come for annual fundraising visits.

Rabbi Wein drove him around and went with him to see some of the prominent members of the Jewish community.

The Ponneveter Rav entered the office of a young businessman. In past years, he had received generous donations from the man's father and grandfather. However this young man was very full of himself. He was very wealthy and very full of chutzpah. Not only did he refuse to give any money to the Ponneveter Yeshiva, he dressed down the Ponneveter Rav in a disgusting fashion: "I don't need you and I don't need your Yeshiva and I don't need other Yeshivas and you and your old fashion ways can get out of this office and never come back." The Ponneveter Rav sat there without saying a word. When the man finished his diatribe, he shook his hand and walked out of the office, in total silence. While walking to the car with Rabbi Wein, the Ponneveter Rav began crying. Rabbi Wein tried to reassure him. "Don't worry. The next fellow will give us more. You will make up this loss. Don't worry."

The Ponneveter Rav told Rabbi Wein "I am not crying about the lost donation. I am not crying because the Ponneveter Yeshiva will get \$500 or \$1000 less this year. But every Jew has to have a connection to Torah. If he does not have a connection to Torah he will be lost. This man was not religious. He certainly did not learn Torah. But his connection to Torah was that at least his father and grandfather supported Yeshivos. At least they had some kind of connection to Torah. If this man stops giving me money and stops giving money to Yeshivos, that is it—he will be lost to Judaism." That was why the Ponneveter Rav was crying - not over the lost check, but over the lost soul. The Ponneveter Rav's connection to people was one of "you are my brethren." Rabbi Wein concluded with the following point: This incident happened over 35 years ago. Thirty-five years ago the connection of non-Observant Jews with Judaism was that they gave money to Yeshivas. In the last 35 years many people no longer even give money to Yeshivas. The last remaining link for many to Judaism is Eretz Yisrael. They still give money to Israel Bonds or the Jewish National Fund. At least they have some connection to the Jewish people.

But sometimes we find that these same people are not happy about certain things that happen in Eretz Yisrael and they threaten "if the legislation does not go the right way, we are

going to cut off our donations to Israel". The great tragedy is not the loss for Israel. Israel will make it with or without the contribution of these American Jews. The tragedy is that these people's last tenuous connection with Judaism is going to be severed. If that happens, they will be severed from the Jewish people.

Our reaction must not be "Nu, let them leave!" Our reaction must be like that of the Ponneveter Rav. He was mourning and crying over a lost soul.

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Parshat Vayetze: In Search of Truth

By Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Am Yisrael is a nation steeped in the search for truth.

There are billions of people who are satisfied with believing in falsehoods, regardless how absurd or ludicrous they may be, because it is convenient and because their fathers believed in them.

If one's conception of religion is belief in 'immaculate conception', so be it! If one believes that Muhammad wrote the Koran (not an easy task for someone known to have been illiterate) and that he took a midnight ride to Jerusalem on his faithful steed 'Al Burak', and after tying the beast to the Kotel he ascended to heaven, so be it!

Not so with the Jewish nation. Our classical writings are replete with controversy, quarrel and disagreement, not because we are contentious or uncompromising, but because we seek out the truth. In that spirit, one must be prepared to deal with uncomfortable questions, like the one I now pose.

This week was the 'yahrtzeit' of David ben Gurion. In his lifetime, he could have been considered an apikoras -a heretic. He did not believe in the God of the Torah. He was better versed in Buddhism than in the Shulchan Aruch. Yet this man, so far from Torah and mitzvot was correct. He recognized that the time for redemption of the Jewish nation had begun.

In contrast, the rabbis of the Satmar dynasty, and those who follow their teachings are God fearing Jews. Many are scholars. They pray, teach Torah, author Torah books and mekarev – draw near those who have become distanced from the Torah. Yet these people, so steeped in the Torah, were and still are WRONG, as they preach that Medinat Yisrael is an unholy entity. The number 6,000,000 is proof of their historical error. This is the number of Jews who were murdered by staying in the galut of enlightened Europe, and it is also the number of Jews in Eretz Yisrael today. How can any rational person dismiss the presence of six million Jews in Eretz Yisrael and claim that the redemption process has not yet begun?

The difference between Ben Gurion and the Satmar, can be reduced to one word which is the subject of a midrash in Parashat Vayetze.

The midrash states that in Ya'akov's dream, the angels who were ascending and descending the ladder to heaven represented the major empires in history. Ya'akov sees these great empires rising to the heights of power and influence only to eventually descend into oblivion.

At one point, Ya'akov hears the voice of HaShem instructing him to ascend the ladder. But Ya'akov hesitates because he fears that if he ascends, then he and his children will also eventually descend into oblivion. HaShem promises him that if he ascends the ladder, the Jewish nation will forever remain on top.

Ya'akov is afraid and remains at the foot of the ladder, and for that, the midrash concludes, we were condemned to the tragic events of Jewish history.

At that particular moment in his life, our father Ya'akov's conduct could be described as lack of courage; when "courage" is defined as a fierce and uncompromising dedication to achieving a goal against all odds of success.

Ya'akov was not yet called 'Yisrael', the man who fought and vanquished human and spiritual adversaries. He was still the Ya'akov, who escaped from the threatening Aysav. Ya'akov was not yet the man to ascend the ladder in search of greatness. It was this trait of courage which made HaShem choose David Ben Yishai to be the king of Israel and the future mashiach. David who fought the lion and bear in protection of his flock, was the same David who stood before the giant Goliath-with no more than a sling shot and five stones.

Ben Gurion was all the negative things I stated above; but he was also infused with the God given gift of courage. The United States warned him not to declare a state which would be destroyed by the armies of five Arab nations. And as a means of showing its displeasure, the US placed an arms embargo on the newborn Jewish state. But Ben Gurion was adamant that the time had come for the return of the Jewish nation to our ancient homeland and he acted with courage.

There are many rabbanim who encouraged the creation of the state, which they believed would survive through the miracles of HaShem. They too were imbued with the courage of David ben Yishai. Religious Jews swelled the ranks of the two underground organizations, the Etzel and Lechi, whose aim was to rid Eretz Yisrael of the British forces. Dati'im served in the Hagana in every area of the country. The blood of Bar Kochba's soldiers flowed in their veins.

Don't look for secrets in the position advocated by the Satmar and those who follow his ways. They do not know anything we do not know. The plain reason for their opposition to the State is simply a character trait less than 'courageous', camouflaged by halachic dialectic which was the life raft of generations of Jews who did not have the strength of character to take the extra leap called 'emunah'.

Now, if it is disturbing to think that Torah greats can be wrong, turn to the book of Vayikra, chapter 4, which discusses the process of 'kapara' (forgiveness) when a Kohen Gadol (High Priest) erroneously permits an act which the Torah rules to be punishable by 'karet'. If this is insufficient to prove that even great Torah personalities can err, the chapter discusses the events when the Sanhedrin itself erroneously permits such a prohibition and a majority of the people act on their error.

As the days of Chanukah approach, everyone should ask himself, "Had I lived at that time would I have joined the ranks of the few against the many; the ranks of the weak against the powerful? Today's challenges are no less formidable than having to fight the mighty Greek army. Yet when HaShem provided us with the 'ladder of Ya'akov' by giving us control over Shomron, Yehuda, the Golan and Azza we did not act with the courage needed to ascend the ladder.

The temerity of our political leaders and, in many cases, religious leaders, blocked the gate leading to greatness. For this we might, HaShem forbid, have to pay the price which all cowards must pay when faced with their own phobias.

The call of Moshe Rabbeinu "Mi LaShem Eylei" (whoever is for God let him come forward) was heard by many of our ancestors when the call was again sounded to join the ranks of the Hashmonaim. And it reverberates today, calling everyone strong of heart to return to Eretz Yisrael, to complete the process of Jewish redemption which began on the 5th of Iyar, 5708.

This is the truth we as a nation seek.

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Parashat Va-Yetze

Laban and Jacob – On Employee-Employer Relations Rabbi Yehudah Zoldan - Midrashah for Women

This week's reading describes the employee-employer relations between Laban and Jacob. Laban, the employer, did not treat our patriarch Jacob, who was in his employment, properly. Jacob, in contrast, behaved with great probity, far above and beyond what would be expected. Let us look at what the Sages and exegetes had to say in this regard in order to learn more about the relations between these two biblical figures.

I. Laban's treatment of Jacob

a. Paying wages lower than the norm

Jacob arrived at Laban's home, where he was his guest for a full month. Then, "Laban said to Jacob, 'Just because you are a kinsman, should you serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?'" (Gen. 29:15). The text does not say what the terms of Jacob's employment were with Laban, but later on we read what Jacob said to Rachel and Leah: "but your father cheated me, changing my wages time and again" (Gen. 31:7). Later Jacob also said similar things to Laban (Gen. 31:41). In what way did Laban cheat him? The midrash gives the following description (Genesis Rabbah [Vilna edition] 70.14): For work that was worth ten coins, he paid him five; for work that was worth six coins, he paid him three. Even in Haran there were norms of payment and accepted wages for certain jobs. Nevertheless, Laban did not pay Jacob the full wages due him, but only half of the norm, and even this he changed (switching the kinds of sheep).

b. Not adhering to a labor contract

According to legend, Jacob could not close a clear contract detailing his terms of employment with Laban (Genesis Rabbah [Theodore-Albeck edition] 74.6): But your father cheated me, changing my wages time and again. Rabbi Hiyya Rabbah said: Everything that our patriarch received as a present, he had to pay for ten times over. "And Laban said, 'Very well, let it be as you say'" (Gen. 30:34). Ravnin said, one hundred times. When one does not have a clear contract and the employer time and again reneges on the previous agreement, changing its terms, the principal person who suffers is the employee. But with Jacob, "G-d, however, would not let him do me harm" (Gen. 31:7).

c. Failure to mention the local custom

Jacob spelled out the compensation he requested, aside from his regular wages: "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel" (Gen. 29:18). Jacob set the time framework for his employment – seven years of work for Rachel, and so that there be no doubt, he spelled things out clearly (Genesis Rabbah [Vilna edition] 70.17): Jacob loved Rachel – since I know that the people here are cheats, therefore I am making my deal with you perfectly clear: 'I will serve you ... for your younger daughter Rachel' – for Rachel and not Leah; your daughter – so that you not bring me some other maiden from the market who also happens to be called Rachel; your younger – so that you not exchange their names one with the other. Nevertheless, when the seven years were over, after the great celebration, Jacob discovered that he had married Leah. Laban claimed, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older" (Gen. 29:26). Even though Jacob had made it perfectly clear that he was working for Rachel, Laban had not bothered to tell Jacob beforehand that he could not live up to these conditions since they were against the local practice.

Quite the contrary, he expressed much satisfaction with Jacob's proposal: "Better that I give her to you than that I should give her to an outsider; Stay with me" (Gen. 29:19). Even after Laban's deceit was discovered he disclaimed responsibility for breaking the agreement, putting the blame on local practice. So Laban made Jacob another offer: "Wait until the bridal week of this one is over and we will give you that one too" (Gen. 29:27). His use of the plural, we will give, is also designed to shed responsibility, presenting himself as if he would have kept his word if only he had not been prevented from doing so by the practice of his fellow townsmen.

In Jewish law, whoever does not pay his worker the wages due him commits a severe crime:

Anyone who withholds the wages of a laborer transgresses on the following five counts: "You shall not defraud your fellow" (Lev. 19:13); "You shall not commit robbery" (ibid.); "You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer" (Deut. 24:14); "The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning" (Lev. 19:13); "You must pay him his wages on the same day" (Deut. 14:15), and "before the sun sets" (ibid.) (Tosefta Bava Metzia 10.3; BT Bava Metzia 111a).

Why is it written, "for he looks to him for his life[LR1]" (Deut. 24:16)? To teach us that whoever withholds the wages of a laborer, it is, according to Scripture, as if he took his life (Sifre Deuteronomy 279; Bava Metzia 112a).

The Hafetz Hayyim, Rabbi Meir Israel ha-Cohen of Radin, wrote, "Even if he shorts him by just one penny of what he owes him, he transgresses what is written in the Torah: 'You shall not defraud your fellow'" (Ahavat Hesed, Part I, ch. 10, sect. 13).[1]

d. Shifting all the blame onto the employee

Jacob tended Laban's flock and received wages, hence his status was like that of a person who guards for pay. Although great responsibility is placed on a person who guards for pay, since he is receiving payment precisely for guarding, nevertheless not all damages are considered his responsibility. This, however, was not the case with Jacob (Sekhel Tov [Buber edition], Gen. 31:39):

Whether snatched by day or snatched by night (Gen. 31:39). Whether you were robbed at night or during the day, it was my responsibility to repay the theft. For someone who guards for pay (shomer sakhar) swears to make good for the captive and the maimed, but for the dead he is exempt. And he must pay for what is stolen or lost, whether by day or by night. But me you made pay for everything.

II. Jacob's behavior towards Laban

In contrast to Laban's behavior, Jacob acted with great probity. The Sages describe how he applied himself to his work (Genesis Rabbah [Vilna edition] 70.20):

Rabbi Judah bar Simon said: In the way of the world a worker applies himself to his job faithfully for two or three hours, and then he slacks off. But in this case, just as he served the first [years] fully, so too the last.

This above quote refers not to just a few hours, but to many long years. Throughout the entire period Jacob applied himself conscientiously to his work, performing his job faithfully and honestly. Maimonides even deduced from the behavior of our patriarch Jacob the last rule of halakhah concerning a person who works for hire (Mishne Torah, Laws of Hiring, 13.7):

Just as the boss is cautioned not to cheat on the wages of the poor or delay payment, so too the poor person is cautioned not to cheat his employer of labor, slacking off here and there and deceitfully calling it a full day's work; rather, he must be strict with himself regarding the work-time he puts in. Therefore he need not recite the fourth benediction of grace after meals. Also, he must work as hard as he can, for our righteous patriarch Jacob

said, "As you know, I have served your father with all my might" (Gen. 31:6); therefore, he received his reward while yet in this world, as it is written, "So the man grew exceedingly prosperous" (Gen. 30:43).[2]

[1] The prophet Jeremiah, as well, reproved King Jehoiakim for not paying wages: "Ha! He who builds his house with unfairness and his upper chambers with injustice, who makes his fellow man work without pay and does not give him his wages" (Jer. 22:13). This was interpreted by Radak: He who builds his house – that is King Jehoiakim (see Jer. 22:18), who built himself a palace and did not pay the wages of his workmen. The midrash sees not paying wages as one of the reasons for the Destruction of the Temple: "Judah has gone into exile because of misery and harsh oppression (Lam. 1:3) – for oppressing the laborer by not paying wages, as it is written, You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer (Deut. 24:14)" (Lamentations Rabbah [Vilna edition] 1.28).

[2] Jacob's work ethics have also been discussed by Rabbi Hayyim David Halevy, "Musar Avodah," Responsa Mayim Hayyim, Tel Aviv 1991, Part II, par. 80.

[LR1] My own translation, since JPS was obviously inappropriate to the context.

Last Update: November 29, 2006

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WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5767

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav

COVERING THE CHALLOS DURING KIDDUSH

QUESTION: Must the challos which will be used for lechem mishneh on Friday night be placed on the table before Kiddush is recited, or may they be brought to the table after Kiddush?

DISCUSSION: According to the basic halachah, there is no need for the challos to be on the table during Kiddush. As a matter of fact, it may be preferable that they not be there during Kiddush at all. This is based on the Talmud's statement(1) that one should cover the food on the table before reciting Kiddush on Friday night. Why? The basic explanation given by the Rishonim(2) is Yikra deShabata, the "glory of Shabbos." It is considered a far greater honor to Shabbos if Kiddush is recited first, and only afterward the Shabbos food is brought to the table in honor of Shabbos - which has just been sanctified by reciting Kiddush. However, by covering the challos during Kiddush and uncovering them once Kiddush is over, we act as if the challos were not really there during Kiddush and were actually "brought to the table" after Kiddush was recited.

QUESTION: Why, then, do most people bring the challos to the table before Kiddush?

DISCUSSION: Based on the previous Discussion, it would seem that instead of placing the challos on the table and then "hiding" them, it would be best not to bring them at all to the table until after Kiddush is recited. Indeed, that is the opinion of some poskim,(3) and some families observe that custom.(4)

But most homes follow the traditional custom of placing the challos on the table before Kiddush and keeping them covered [at least] until after Kiddush is recited. While the exact source for this custom is not clear,(5) there are a number of possible explanations as to its origin:

To honor the Shabbos by having challos on the table throughout the entire Shabbos, even when it is not mealtime.(6)

To allow the table to be moved after the Shabbos candles have burnt out.

(7) By placing challos on the table before Shabbos begins, the table becomes a basis (a base) for the challos as well as for the candles and it is therefore permitted to be moved.(8)

To properly fulfill Shulchan Aruch's ruling of "setting the Shabbos table" in anticipation of Shabbos.(9) Since challos are a main part of the meal, the table is not considered "set" unless the challos are on it.(10)

According to Kabbalistic teachings, placing the challos on the table enhances the table's holiness.(11)

QUESTION: Based on the aforementioned, should other Shabbos foods be brought to the table before or after Kiddush?

DISCUSSION: Since we have established that for the sake of yikra deShabata we cover the challos to make it appear as if they are not on the table, it follows that all other Shabbos foods should only be brought to the table after Kiddush is recited.(12) Indeed, there are many people who are careful to do so.(13)

But this concept applies only on Friday night; on Shabbos morning, yikra deShabata does not apply.(14) It therefore makes no difference when the Shabbos food is placed on the table on Shabbos morning.

QUESTION: If yikra deShabata does not apply to Shabbos morning, why, then, do we cover the challos during Shabbos morning Kiddush?

DISCUSSION: Although yikra deShabata does not apply on Shabbos morning, there are other explanations given by the Rishonim (for the Talmudic statement mentioned earlier that food on the table must be covered during Kiddush on Friday night) which apply to Shabbos morning as well as to Friday night:

So as to "hide the shame" of the challos. Normally, ha-motzi is the first blessing to be recited and bread is the first food eaten at a meal. When Kiddush is recited, the wine "usurps" the place of the bread.(15)

So as to remember the miracle of the Manna, which fell from Heaven covered in layers of dew.(16)

QUESTION: When cakes or pastries are being served at a Shabbos morning Kiddush, do they need to be covered as well?

DISCUSSION: Two of the three reasons mentioned previously, do not apply in this case. Yikra deShabata does not apply on Shabbos morning at all, and remembrance of the Manna applies only to lechem mishneh, not to mezonos items. But the other reason, the one regarding the "shame" of the challos, applies to mezonos as well, since ordinarily the blessing of borei minei mezonos is recited before the blessing of borei peri ha-gafen. Indeed, some poskim rule that cakes and pastries should be covered during the recital of the morning Kiddush.(17)

But not all poskim agree. Some(18) hold that mezonos items do not need to be covered during Kiddush because only challos - which can be used for Kiddush and are being bypassed in favor of wine - are being "shamed." Mezonos items, however, are generally not eligible to have Kiddush recited over them, so they cannot be "shamed" by the wine taking precedence over them.(19)

QUESTION: May the challos be uncovered right after Kiddush, or must they remain covered until after the ha-motzi blessing is recited?

DISCUSSION: Here, too, the answer depends on the exact reasoning behind the halachah. If the main purpose of covering the challos is yikra deShabata, then once Kiddush is recited, there is no longer any reason to keep them covered; on the contrary, the challos should be immediately uncovered. Similarly, if the primary reason for the halachah is to "hide the shame" of the challos, then there is no longer any reason to keep them covered once borei peri ha-gafen has been said. But if the reason to cover the challos is to commemorate the miracle of the Manna, then it is appropriate to leave the challos covered until after ha-motzi is recited, since that is when the mitzvah of lechem mishneh is fulfilled.(20)

In practice, everyone should follow his family's custom, as there are conflicting views(21) and customs and all have valid sources. One who has no family custom should adopt the following procedure: On Friday night, he should leave the challos covered until after ha-motzi.(22) On Shabbos morning, the challos should be completely covered during Kiddush and partly uncovered for ha-motzi.(23) For seudah shelishis, the challos should not be covered at all.(24)

QUESTION: May the challah cover be made from a see-through material? May the cover be perforated or made from a mesh-like material (which will make the challos visible)?

DISCUSSION: L'chatchilah, no, since the challos can be seen. If no other cover is available, such covers may be used.(25)

FOOTNOTES:

1 Pesachim 100a.

2 Rashbam and Tosafos, Pesachim 100b, quoting She'iltos. This explanation is quoted by the Tur, O.C. 271:9; Magen Avraham 271:7 and Mishnah Berurah 271:15 as the primary reason for covering the challos during Kiddush Friday night. See also Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 271:48.

3 The Gaon of Vilna, quoted in Ma'asei Rav 118. This was also the custom during Talmudic times, when each participant at a meal was served at his own individual table. Food was laid on the tables in advance, but the tables were not brought into the dining area until after Kiddush.

4 As attested to by Aruch ha-Shulchan 271:22 (who objects to this custom).

See also Nefesh ha-Rav, pg. 158.

5 See Tosafos, Pesachim 100b, s.v. she'ein, who write that already in their day it had become customary for the challos to be brought to the table and then covered. Tosafos, however, do not explain why the challos could not be brought to the table after Kiddush was recited.

6 See Taz, Y.D. 178:7, who writes that it is customary to honor the Shabbos in this way. See Be'er Heitev, O.C. 180:2.

7 Rav Chayim of Volozhin, quoted in Keser Rosh 92.

8 As explained in Mishnah Berurah 277:18.

9 O.C. 262:1.

10 Minchas Yitzchak 3:13-10.

11 Ben Ish Chai, Vayeira 17, quoted in Kaf ha-Chayim 262:21.

12 See Toras Shabbos 271:8 and Peri Megadim (Eishel 271:7 and Mishbetzos 12) which say that for yikra deShabata to be fulfilled properly, all of the foods on the table should be covered.

13 See Misgeres ha-Shulchan 77:1. See also Mi-Peninei ha-Rav, pg. 69.

14 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 271:49, quoting Mordechai; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos k'Hilchasah 47, note 125).

15 Tur, O.C. 271, quoting Yerushalmi.

16 Tosafos, Pesachim 100b. Based on this reason, Shulchan Aruch writes that one should cover the challos underneath as well to symbolize the bottom layer of dew. Many people use a challah board or tray for this purpose.

17 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 55:5; Teshuvos Levushei Mordechai, O.C. kamma, 46. Even according to this view, however, only the person making Kiddush (and others who are partaking of the wine) needs to cover his mezonos items. All other participants do not need to cover their mezonos, since they are not "shaming" the mezonos by listening to Kiddush; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos k'Hilchasah 47, note 125). Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:19-18, however, holds that "shaming" the bread applies to those listening to Kiddush as well.

18 Eishel Avraham, O.C. 182.

19 Ta'amei ha-Minhagim 365, Kuntress Acharon; Az Nidberu 2:8.

20 Mishnah Berurah 271:41, quoting Chayei Adam. Peri Megadim (quoted by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 48), however, maintains that even according to this reason it is sufficient to cover the challos until after Kiddush.

21 Note that some poskim are of the opinion that the challos should not be covered during ha-motzi, since a blessing should be made on an item which is visible, not hidden from sight; see Peri Megadim (Mishbetzos) 271:12.

22 Aruch ha-Shulchan 271:22.

23 Nimukei Orchos Chayim, O.C. 271.

24 Aruch ha-Shulchan 291:10 and 299:14; Shulchan Shelomo, addendum to vol. 1, pg. 27.

25 See Minchas Shabbos (Sheyarei ha-Minchah 77:8), Tikunim u'Miluim 47, note 116 and Bris Olam, Kiddush 34.

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