

B'S'D'  
INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON VAYEITZE - 5761

To receive this parsha sheet in Word and/or Text format, send a blank e-mail to [parsha-subscribe@egroups.com](mailto:parsha-subscribe@egroups.com), or go to <http://www.egroups.com/subscribe/parsha>. Please also copy me at [crshulman@aol.com](mailto:crshulman@aol.com). For archives of old parsha sheets see <http://www.egroups.com/messages/parsha>. For links to Torah on the Internet see <http://www.egroups.com/links/parsha>.

---

From: RABBI BEREL WEIN [rbwein@torah.org](mailto:rbwein@torah.org)  
To: [rabbiwein@torah.org](mailto:rabbiwein@torah.org)  
Subject: Rabbi Wein - Parshas Vayeitzei

After twenty years in the house of Lavan, Yaakov prepares to leave for home. But he is afraid to do so openly, for Lavan will certainly object. Yaakov has been too valuable an asset in Lavan's house and commercial enterprises to be abandoned easily. And there is the fact that Yaakov's wives are Lavan's daughters and Yaakov's children are Lavan's grandchildren. The fact that Lavan has mistreated his children and grandchildren during Yaakov's stay in his home do not alter the fact that he views them as being his children and grandchildren. He will tell Yaakov that "the sons are my sons and the daughters are my daughters!" Yaakov also knows that Lavan resents that Yaakov, in spite of all the machinations and dishonesty of Lavan towards him, has become wealthy and powerful. Lavan is jealous of Yaakov's success and will do all in his power to prevent Yaakov from going home to the Land of Israel whole and be allowed to enjoy the fruits of his labor and marriages. Therefore, Yaakov feels compelled to leave Lavan unannounced, in the dead of the night, almost as a fugitive. Yaakov wishes desperately to avoid a painful and unnecessary confrontation with Lavan. But it is not to be. Lavan pursues Yaakov, overtakes him, berates him and threatens him, but finally Yaakov manages to enter into a covenant with Lavan that allows him to escape from Aram and continue on his journey back to the Land of Israel.

"The actions and incidents of the lives of the Fathers are the precursors of the history of their children." This story of Yaakov and Lavan has been played out so many times in Jewish history as to be repetitive, though never boring. The Jewish people in their long journey in many different exiles have always suffered discrimination, bigotry, oppression, and the constant threat of violent action against it. Yet, somehow, the Jewish people always were able to grow and many times even prosper in such a hostile environment. And the Jewish contribution to the development and prosperity of the general societies in which they lived was always major and continuing. The blessing given to our father, Avraham, that "through you shall all the families of the earth be blessed" was fulfilled with beneficence, if not even vengeance, throughout the long Jewish exile. There is no nation or society that has "hosted" the Jewish people that has not benefited enormously from the Jewish presence in its midst. Nevertheless, the Jews were always seen as being foreign, untrustworthy, exploitative, and dangerous. The Nazi slogan in Germany summed up the matter succinctly, albeit brutally: "The Jews are our misfortune!" And in our century, the attitude of the leaders of the Soviet Union towards its Jewish population was also one of pathological disdain and suspicion. Yet, the Jews were castigated for leaving (and in many instances prevented from leaving) their "homeland," for longing for Zion and Jerusalem. The countries of our exile always claimed that our children belonged to them and that everything that we possessed was in reality somehow taken from them. The sad events of this bloodiest of centuries testifies to Lavan's true intentions and the difficulties of living in Lavan's home and the

difficulties of leaving Lavan's home.

But somehow Yaakov did leave Lavan and he did finally return home. There would be many difficult and sad stops on that way home, but Yaakov nevertheless persevered and came home. And that pretty much is the story of this century of Jewish life. The great centers of the Jewish exile, except for North America, have all practically closed down. The Sefardic world of the Mediterranean and Near East countries, the heartland of Ashkenazic Jewry in Eastern and Central Europe, all are almost judenrein today. Most of the Jews (and many non-Jews as well) have left Russia and settled in Israel. The Diaspora is slowly closing down. Yaakov is going home, no matter what. Lavan, may not be happy with Yaakov's decision, or that Yaakov has a home to go to, but Yaakov owes Lavan little, and therefore Lavan's objections are no longer too relevant to Yaakov's plans. The children of Yaakov live his odyssey in their lives in the present. So may we be able to follow in his footsteps in the future.

Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbiwein, Copyright © 2000 by Rabbi Berel Wein and Project Genesis, Inc. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway [learn@torah.org](mailto:learn@torah.org) 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208 (410) 602-1350 FAX: 602-1351

---

<http://www.artscroll.com/parashah.html>

Parashah Talk Parshas Vayeitzei

Excerpt from Darash Moshe, by RABBI MOSHE FEINSTEIN, zt"l

Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely Hashem is in this place and I did not know!" (28:16).

For what purpose did Yaakov mention this seemingly insignificant fact? Rashi explains that Yaakov's intent was: Had I known, I would not have slept in a holy place such as this. This is very difficult to understand. The Gemara tells us (Chullin 91b) that Hashem caused the sun to set early in order to cause Yaakov to sleep in this particular spot (Chullin 91b). The Talmud further teaches that the stones Yaakov had placed surrounding his head miraculously joined, forming one large stone. As the verse narrates, it was during this sleep that Yaakov merited receiving a prophecy from Hashem, as well as a promise of protection during his numerous travels. From all of these miraculous occurrences it should have been clear to Yaakov that it was the will of Hashem that he should sleep in this spot. Why, then, would Yaakov say that had he known of Hashem's presence he would have done otherwise?

The proper way to understand Yaakov's words is as follows. Yaakov thought that one is only considered to be serving Hashem when involved in spiritual pursuits such as tefillah and Torah study. Involvement in physical matters such as eating and sleeping, however, could not be considered serving Hashem, since they are not themselves mitzvos.

By performing miracles and causing Yaakov to sleep (a purely physical activity) on the future site of the Beis Hamikdash, Hashem sought to teach Yaakov that this is not the case. Hashem gave His Torah to human beings knowing that they are creations whose physical needs must be satisfied to facilitate their continuing ability to fulfill His commandments. It is His Divine will that these physical activities should be sanctified through their use as tools assisting people in their service of Hashem. In this way, these activities can be raised to the level where they themselves become the fulfillment of Hashem's will.

It was this that Yaakov alluded to when he exclaimed "and I did not know." Yaakov exclaimed that prior to being taught this lesson, he did not know that a physical act such as sleeping could be sanctified to such a degree. Rashi (quoted above) explains that commensurate with Yaakov's prior understanding, had he known of the holiness of the site he would not have thought it proper to sleep there.

Taking note of this lesson, Yaakov said that the stone upon which he

rested his head while sleeping should be a Beis Elokim. It was Yaakov Es wish that the stone should serve as a reminder to the fact that a Beis Elokim is not only a place where one is involved in Torah and mitzvos. Even the seemingly mundane act of sleeping must be done with the proper intentions  $\phi$  so that a sleeping place, too, can reach the level of Beis Elokim.

---

[http://www.torahweb.org/torah/1999/parsha/rneu\\_vay.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/1999/parsha/rneu_vay.html) [Last year]

RABBI YAAKOV NEUBURGER

VaYifga Bamokom

Fearing the enmity of his brother and the varied dangers of the road, departing from the land of Israel, something his father was not allowed to do, and thus feeling distant from his parents and their mission, Ya'akov formulates the first Ma'ariv prayer and introduces the concept of galus prayer, tefilah b'es tzoro - prayer in troubled times - into our mesorah. Medrash suggests that he preceded King David's "Eso einai el heharim - mei'ayin yavo ezri - I lift my eyes to the mountains, from where will my help come" and recited with a slight but telling change, "Eso eini el hehoirim - I lift my eyes to the parents". Chazal see this Ya'akov's prayer in the unusual phrase, "VaYifga Bamakom VaYolen Shom - And He encountered the place and he slept there" and point out that it is a double entendre telling two stories at once. It can be translated, and Rashi quotes the proof texts to support this, as "He pleaded in the place" connoting that he prayed there. Additionally this pasuk tells the story of Ya'akov's arrival at the northern border of Israel forcing him to realize that he had long passed Yerushalayim the sight where father and grandfather prayed and brought their supreme sacrifice. Instead of having Ya'akov return all the way to Har Hamoriah Hashem brings it to him and meets him part way. It seems to me that this double entendre characterizes the prayers of times that encompass the uncertainty of being far from one's own land, the agony of missed opportunities and the excitement of seeing Hashem turn encounter into orchestrated rendezvous, namely the prayers of Ya'akov's Diaspora progeny.

Why the emphasis on place? He chanced upon the place... and He slept there... and He slept in that place. Whereas Abraham returns to the very mountain where he had stood to pray on behalf of Sodom to formulate the shacharis and Yitzchak chooses the field from which to contribute to us the mincha, Ya'akov needs "the place" - a place which is drenched with meaningful dedication of his parents and his children to Hashem's will. Apparently, to focus on the spiritual and the long lasting in the whirlwind of personal or national nights, one needs to be in a place that inspires, offers a quiet respite allowing one to focus, and also directing our attention to Yerushalayim. Perhaps Ya'akov established for us the importance of davening in a makom tefilah - a beis haknesses, especially when distanced from Har Hamoriah, when it becomes a mikdash me'at as well. Indeed, Daniel when he turned to Hashem from Bavel, describes how in the quiet privacy of his home he stresses that he opened the windows facing Yerushalyim. Perhaps it is in a beis haknesses that one can most easily connect with the memories and the hopes of the horim - those who have come before and whose dedication and contributions can often be a source of great inspiration.

Finally, the medrash reads "Once Ya'akov made up his mind to return to Yerushalyim" Hashem brought the mikdash to Ya'akov. Remarks Harav Ya'akov Moshe Charlop, that Ya'akov showed all later generations that heartfelt inspiration, and yearning that is as deep as it is painful will flash in front of us moments of redemption and the closeness reserved for the holiest of places even from the far flung recesses of galus.

From: [torahweb@torahweb.org](mailto:torahweb@torahweb.org)[SMTP:[torahweb@torahweb.org](mailto:torahweb@torahweb.org)]  
Subject: Chanukah Yom Iyun - Dec. 17

The TorahWeb Foundation presents..... A Yom Iyun on Inyanei

Chanukah Sunday, December 17

Location: Bergenfield Shul: Beth Abraham Address: 396 Westminster Ave. Speakers: Rabbi Michael Rosensweig - 8:00 pm  
Rabbi Mayer Twersky - 8:45 pm

Location: Cedarhurst Shul: Young Israel of Lawrence Cedarhurst Address: 8 Spruce St. (corner of Broadway and Spruce) Speakers: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - 8:30 pm Rabbi Herschel Schachter - 9:15 pm  
The shiurim are open to all members of the community.

---

<http://www.kby.org/torah/parsha/vayeitzei.html>

Parshat Vayeitzei

Seclusion for the Purpose of Inclusion

Rosh Hayeshiva, RAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG, shlita

When Yaakov awoke from his famous dream and realized that the place where he had slept was graced with G-d's presence, he took the stone upon which he had slept and erected it as a "matzeiva," a sacrificial pillar. He then vowed his commitment to G-d, concluding with the pledge, "This stone that I have set up as a pillar ("matzeiva") shall become a House of G-d." (Bereishit 28:22) Rav Kook, zt"l, in his letters, explains this verse based on the definition of the Rambam (Hil. Avoda Zara 6:6) that a "matzeiva" is a stone that serves as an open religious center, around which anyone wishing to serve G-d may gather. In contrast, a house is a center enclosed with walls, open only to those who are allowed entrance.

The manner of our patriarchs' worship varied, and it developed gradually. Chazal express this idea by pointing out the terms used for the Temple mount, "Not like Avraham who called it a MOUNTAIN, not like Yitzchak who called it a FIELD, but rather like Yaakov who called it a HOUSE." (Pesachim 88a) A mountain is a high place, visible to all around it. Avraham called out in the name of G-d to all, and accustomed the nations to the notion of monotheism. This belief, however, was abstract and general, without an accompanying set of practical commandments. Yitzchak had a more detailed religious practice, which required him to begin a process of isolation. This is symbolized by a field, which is still open, but not visible from afar. The process culminated with Yaakov who withdraws with his family into his house, and teaches them a comprehensive and detailed way of life, completely detached from the world at large.

This, then, was the intention of Yaakov: This stone that I now set up as a pillar -- a public center for what is still an abstract belief, fit for all people -- will be in the future a House of G-d. It will be a house surrounded with walls, into which only the family of Yaakov will enter, for only Bnei Yisrael are fit for a religion defined by a detailed practice of Torah and mitzvot.

This detachment, however, is for the ultimate purpose of influencing, seclusion for the purpose of inclusion, as stated in the Zohar, "The demonic forces of evil begin with attachment and end with separation; the Heavenly forces of holiness begin with separation and end with attachment." It is impossible for a person or a nation to influence others without first undergoing a process of seclusion and self-fulfillment. When a cup is not filled, it cannot run over. It is Yaakov, who completely isolated himself in a house surrounded with walls, who will ultimately expand without bounds. "I will give you the lot of your father Yaakov" (Yeshayahu 58:14) - a lot without boundaries. (Shabbat 118a)

In the end of days, the nations of the world will recognize the worth of Israel, and the will see the importance of religious practice and its influence on the Jewish nation. They will aspire to join with Israel, and to learn from them, not only religious belief, but also a specific way of life. Yeshayahu declares this in his famous prophecy (2:2-4):

In the end of days, the mountain of the House of G-d will stand firm ... And the many peoples shall go and say, "Come let us go up to the Mount of the L-rd, to the House of the G-d of Yaakov, that He may

instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths." The nations will say: We will not suffice this time will merely going up the mountain, with an abstract, undefined belief as it was in the time of Avraham. Rather, we will enter into the house, the House of the G-d of Yaakov, in order to learn specific lessons, because it has become clear to us that belief without religious practice and specific guidelines for living is insufficient to lead an ethical life. "That He may instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths." The Gemara states (Shabbat 21b): "The Chanukah lamp should be placed, ideally, at the opening of one's house outside, but in a time of danger it is sufficient to place it on one's table." The idea of the light of Israel is to brighten the outside, so that the entire world will be able to benefit from and enjoy its light. However, in a time of danger, when it is impossible for us to influence others, we seclude ourselves in the house, and brighten our table alone. We continue to hope, nonetheless, that ultimately we will have more than enough light, in order to once again take the candles outside to brighten the land with them.

---

From: yitorah@lists.virtualjerusalem.com To: Young Israel Divrei Torah List Subject: NCYI Weekly Divrei Torah- Parshat Vayetze Parshat Vayetze

Guest Rabbi: RABBI MACY GORDON

Director, Council of Young Israel Rabbis in Israel  
12 Kislev 5761 December 9, 2000 Daf Yomi: Nazir 53

(This Dvar Torah is excerpted, with permission, from Rabbi Gordon's book Wavelengths: Weekly Torah Thoughts Broadcast on Israel Radio (1992-1993) Printed by Sunderland Press 1994)

"And Jacob's anger flared up at Rachel and he said: Am I then in place of G-d who has denied from you fruit of the womb?" (Genesis 30:2)

"And Jacob was angry and he quarreled with Laban and he said to Laban: What is my betrayal and what is my sin that you have pursued me like fire?" (Genesis 31:36)

The book of Genesis is more than a series of biographies. It also represents the moral implications of the lives of our early forebears and binds us to emulate them. The lives and actions of the ancestors are guidelines of conduct for their progeny. But in point of fact, the avot, the patriarchs, were not all alike. If we were to guide ourselves by them, we would have to embody different, and sometimes contradictory, characteristics.

The prophet Micah describes two of the patriarchs in a phrase that has found its way into our daily prayers and much of the High Holy Day liturgy: Titen emet L'Yaakov, chessed L'Avraham. Thou hast endowed Jacob with truth, and Abraham with lovingkindness. That Abraham represents chessed is well accepted. It was he who welcomed the stranger, accepted converts into the fold, pleaded for mercy even for the wicked city of Sodom, who represents generosity and concern. But Jacob to represent the truth? What prophetic insight made Micah the Prophet realize that truth emanates from the personality of Jacob?

In Jacob we find, for the first time in any of the patriarchs, the trait of anger. Jacob was angry at Rachel, for demanding that which was not in his power to give (Genesis 30:2). Jacob was angry and protested to Laban for seeking to take that which was not his to take (Genesis 31:36, both versus in this week's Torah portion). Nowhere in the lives of Abraham or Isaac do we find it written that they were angry. Jacob appears on the scene as "the first angry man," and it is indeed a curiosity. Abraham had many reasons to be angry: Pharaoh, Avimelech, Lot. Isaac certainly had reasons to be angry: the Philistines, Esau's deception. Yet they never displayed that emotion. But Jacob was a man of truth, whose whole fiber rebelled against falsehood and hypocrisy, even if he was drawn into it himself. And truth sometimes requires anger.

The midrashic account of G-d's deliberations before creating the

world has the attribute of truth advising G-d not to create humanity. Emet omer: al yiborei. Man, says the attribute of truth, will live on falsehoods. A sense of truth motivates anger. One cannot accept wrongdoing with equanimity. Tolerance towards injustice is itself an evil. Those who would speak out on the burning issues of their times, if they are honest, must be angry. One cannot seek to bring order into chaos unless one is angry enough at the chaos.

We sometimes smile at the excesses of ecologists and the activists in preserving nature, but they act as they do because they are angry at what they perceive as the destruction of G-d's beautiful and healthy world for crass and unworthy reasons. Smokers are often irritated by the persistence of anti-smoking efforts, but the issue has come as far as it has because some people were angry enough at the alarming rate of increase of lung cancer and emphysema to be willing to insult and harass and coerce for the sake of truth. And if this is true in relatively localized time-bound issues of the day, how much more is it true of the great historical moments. As we approach the festival of Hannukah, we cannot help but perceive the Maccabees as angry people, angered all the more by the lack of resistance, the passivity and the resignation of Jews all around them to the inroads of Hellenism and paganism. The Hannukah cry of Mi LaShem elai, whoever is for G-d, let him come to my side, is not a call to prayer. It is an angry cry!

And this was indeed the character of Jacob: to learn to be angry and insistent when matters of principle are at stake. Life is not a debating society for cold, dispassionate discussion. If something is worth creating and building, it is worth getting angry for.

Chessed and emet, kindness and truth, are both traits worth developing. Kindness requires a sense of openness to everyone, whatever their commitment or their ideological distance from us. Chessed extends love to all. No one is cut off, no one is excommunicated, no one is damned. But, on the other hand, when truth or vital principal is at stake, emet demands that we stand for what is true and authentic, be it even one against the whole world, as was Abraham; the weak against the strong, as was Jacob when he faced Esau; the few against the many, as were the Maccabees when they faced the Syrian oppressor and the assimilated and apathetic Jews of their time.

We can understand why Jacob was angry at Rachel, when she demanded of him that which G-d alone can give, the gift of children. He knew the truth!

We can understand why Jacob was angry at Laban and at Esau, for they sought to harass him in order to subvert his historical role. We can even sympathize with Moses in his anger at the Children of Israel for worshiping an idol of gold only weeks after they had received the Torah, or for testing G-d when they were the daily beneficiaries of His love and care. In a very modern sense, we understand Golda Meir when she said: I am not angry at the Arabs for killing my sons, but I am angry at the Arabs for making it necessary for my sons to kill. That was cause for anger in the fullest and most Jewish sense. It was truthful to the core.

We are a people of chessed, of love and kindness. But we are a people of emet as well, of truth. And both traits are the heritage to us of our respective patriarchs Abraham and Jacob.

A Project of the National Council of Young Israel  
<http://www.youngisrael.org> Kenneth Block (abba@bigfoot.com) Project Coordinator

---

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND ryfrand@torah.org  
"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeitzei  
Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R.  
Yissocher Dov - In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand

We note, with a profound sense of sadness and incomparable loss, the petirah of Harav HaGaon Rav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky ZTL, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshiva Ner Israel. Rav Kulefsky taught Torah for over 45

years to thousands of talmidim and instilled in them a love for learning. We dedicate this week's shiur for Parshas Vayetzei -- the Parsha in which the Sages teach us the lesson that the departure of a Tzadik (righteous person) from a city leaves a void -- to Rav Kulefsky's memory -- Leiluy Nishmas Moreinu Harav Yaakov Moshe ben R. Rephoel Nissim Shlomo. Ye'hi Zichro Baruch, May His Memory Be For a Blessing.

#### Comparing The Image In Heaven With The Image On Earth: Do They Match?

Yaakov Avinu [our Patriarch] dreamt of a ladder that was based on earth, with its top reaching up to Heaven. Angels of G-d were ascending and descending the ladder. The Talmud [Chulin 91] comments on the Angels' actions: They would ascend to examine the image of Yaakov, which was present beneath the Divine Throne and then they would descend to examine the image of the real-life Yaakov below.

What is the meaning of this imagery? Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903- 1993) offered a beautiful insight into this Talmudic passage. The Angels were amazed at the similarity of the images. The earthly Yaakov's image was precisely the same as the Heavenly image of Yaakov. This was a tremendous accomplishment. There was an image in Heaven of who the Patriarch Yaakov was supposed to be. G-d perceived Yaakov's spiritual potential and created an image under his Heavenly Throne which represented that potential. Yaakov achieved in deed on this earth exactly what had been expected of him in Heaven. This was such a noteworthy accomplishment that it stirred the interest of legions of Angels who came to inspect this amazing phenomenon for themselves.

Rav Soloveitchik added that the same concept holds true for all of us. When G-d created each of us, he gave us certain gifts and talents and had something in mind for us in terms of how we should use those gifts and talents. Each of us has a Heavenly image. Each of us also has an earthly image of what we indeed look like. We must strive throughout our lives to try to ensure that the two images match up as precisely as possible.

Finally, Rav Soloveitchik pointed out that Angels are not the only ones who look at the images of what is up above and compare them with what is here on earth. People have a strong sense of what the image of a Torah-observant Jew looks like in Heaven, in the ideal. Wherever religious Jews go, people are comparing them with what they intuitively know to be the image of a religious Jew up in Heaven.

Everyone has an idea of what a Torah-observant Jew is supposed to be like, how he is supposed to act in business, how he is supposed to talk, what kind of lifestyle he is supposed to lead. People are constantly holding up the Earthly image to the Heavenly image. Unfortunately, not everyone matches up with the Heavenly image as well as our Patriarch Yaakov matched his Heavenly image. Unfortunately, the "real-life image" of the so-called religious Jew is often not what it is really supposed to be, as indicated in Heaven. The religious community must be especially sensitive to this.

Our life's challenge is to become like Yaakov, to ensure that our two images match precisely.

#### Comparing The Fourth Grade Image With The Image of the Ba'alei Mussar: They Don't Match!

Upon Yaakov's arrival in Paddan Aram [Bereshis 29: 1-11], the Torah relates the incident of Yaakov giving water to the sheep from the well. A large boulder sat atop a certain well from which all the flocks were given to drink. The rock could not be moved until all the shepherds gathered to collectively remove it from the well and then collectively replace it. Yaakov removed the rock from the well by himself and gave water to the sheep that Rachel was watching. Rashi notes that Yaakov removed the rock as easily as one would remove a cork from a bottle.

When we learned this story in grade school, we all pictured a

dramatic scene of a macho, muscle-bound Yaakov demonstrating awesome power and impressing Rachel with his good looks and great strength. Then we imagined a scene right out of a Hollywood script: Rachel falls madly in love with Yaakov, they get married and live happily ever after.

However, that picture of events is far from accurate. Does it not seem strange that all these shepherds, who were going through this routine, day after day, year after year, did not have the strength to remove the rock but Yaakov - the Yeshiva student from the Yeshiva of Shem V'Ever, who had (according to the Medrash) spent the last 14 years learning day and night - did have the strength? Yaakov, in fact, probably looked more like the stereotypical pale, emaciated Yeshiva weakling than like a Hollywood he-man. How was it that he could move the rock and all the rugged shepherds could not?

Rav Yaakov Neiman offered the following idea, which is echoed by many of the Ba'al'ay Mussar [Masters of Ethics]: The key to understanding this whole chapter is a stanza which we recite in the Prayer for Rain (recited on Shemini Atzeres). The poet there uses the language "He concentrated his heart and then rolled off the stone" (yichad lev, vaYagel Even). In other words, Yaakov did not use his biceps or his upper body strength to move the boulder. Yaakov used concentration of the heart. This means that it was a matter of motivation. Yaakov was able to move the stone by virtue of his single-mindedness of purpose to do an act of kindness. When one is driven by a goal, he can accomplish that which is beyond the scope of normal people.

We have all heard of cases of a mother, who, upon finding her young child pinned underneath a car, lifts the car and saves the life of her child. Reflecting moments later, she is astounded - "How did I lift that car? I would not be able to budge it off the ground if I tried for the rest of my life!" These types of stories happen regularly. What is this all about? The poet of the Prayer for Rain expresses it as "Yichad Lev" -- singleness of purpose. If it is my child that I am trying to save, I can lift up a car!

The difference between Yaakov and the shepherds was one of motivation. To the shepherds, it was no big deal if the rock was not moved. They were not concerned if it would take them another 4 hours for enough people to show up to move the rock. Their attitude was "Who cares?"

When Yaakov saw the scene and saw everyone waiting around, and saw an opportunity to perform an act of kindness, he put his heart to it and was able to do it. When one puts his heart to do something, strengths and abilities that he innately possessed all along come forth, and amazing things can be accomplished.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@aol.com  
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org  
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 260, Ein Me'Arvin Simcha b'Simcha. Good Shabbos! Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway learn@torah.org 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208

---

From: RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY podolsky@hakotel.edu  
Rachel's Secret

At the time of this writing, Palestinian terrorists are brazenly attempting to capture Kever Rachel, Rachel's tomb. What relevance do they have to the tomb of our Bubby Rachel? How can we bring this nonsensical act into the realm of understanding?

"And it was, in the morning, that behold it was Leah (Breishis 29:25)!" Note the difficulty: Was she not Leah the evening before as well? Thus, explains Rashi, that in the evening, under the Chuppah, Yaakov actually thought Leah was Rachel. Yaakov and Rachel, in

anticipation of Lavan's treachery, devised a secret sign to allow Yaakov to disclose the deception. However, when Rachel saw her father setting up Leah in her place, she had a change of heart. "My sister will be mortified!" Rachel, overwhelmed by sympathy, gave the secret sign to her sister.

A superficial reading makes Rachel's act sound very nice and altruistic. After all, she spared her sister shame. Surely, each of us would have done the same.

Taking a deeper, more accurate look, however, we will discover that concealed between the lines lies a superhuman self-sacrifice of unparalleled proportions.

Remember, Yaakov worked for Rachel for seven years. Their profound love made it seem like only a few days (v. 20). During all this time, Rachel anticipated the day she would finally marry her beloved.

At the last minute, Rachel realized that her unscrupulous father had deceived them, and was dressing Leah in the wedding gown. How would we have felt under such circumstances? She was losing her husband! She had no way of knowing that Yaakov would agree afterward to marry her as well. As far as she was concerned, she was relinquishing Yaakov forever.

All Rachel had to do was make a scene so that Yaakov would realize that she was not the bride. But Rachel kept quiet. Moreover, she gave her sister the secret sign, so that Yaakov would think he was actually marrying Rachel. Rachel did everything possible to spare her sister disgrace. All this, despite the permanent loss of her husband.

In addition, Yaakov was not just a husband. He was to become the third and culminating patriarch of the Jewish nation. Rachel had a one-time opportunity to mother the Shivtei Kah, the tribes of Hashem.

Furthermore, by failing to marry Yaakov, Rachel would surely be suggested as a shidduch for the wicked Esav. "Everyone was saying: Rivka has two sons, and Lavan has two daughters. The older daughter for the older son, and the younger daughter for the younger son (Rashi 29:17)." Leah had been the natural bashert (intended) for Esav. Now that Leah was marrying Yaakov, Rachel would obviously be expected to marry Esav. Moreover, Esav apparently had his eyes set on Rachel (See Rashi 30:22,33:7). Rachel was systematically forfeiting absolutely everything for her sister's sake!

But the greatest question of all: Why did Rachel do it? Why didn't she protest this grave injustice? And why did she provide Leah with the secret sign?

Says the Mishna: "One who humiliates his friend publicly... though he may have Torah and good deeds, he has no share in the World to Come (Avos 3:11)." A person can be a consummate Tzaddik, he can learn Torah 24/7, he can donate one fifth of his income to Tzedaka, he can dedicate his life to helping others, yet he will have no place in the Afterlife!

"All who descend to Gehinnom ascend except for three, who descend and never ascend... and a person who humiliates his friend publicly." What goes down, must come up. Except for this.

"A person should sooner throw himself into a fiery furnace, before he embarrasses his friend publicly (Kesuvos 67b)." According to some opinions, a person is obligated to give up his life before humiliating someone! (Tosfos, Sotah 10b; Shaarei Teshuva 3:139; Minchas Shlomo I:7)

Consequently, Rachel did not protest. Had she made a scene, what would she have gained? She may have married Yaakov, mothered the twelve tribes, and spared herself a life with Esav, but in the end she would have lost. Of what benefit are all these things if one has no place to enjoy it after all is said and done?

But from Rachel, we learn an additional lesson. To absolve herself from eternal condemnation, it would have been sufficient to keep quiet. Any shame Leah experienced would have been attributed to her father, Lavan. Yet Rachel did far more than simply keep quiet. She gave the

secret code to Leah. Totally beyond anyone's expectations, Rachel went the extra mile to spare Leah pain.

What reward did Rachel receive for her unrivaled self-sacrifice? First of all, she lost nothing. Human logic dictates that a person is justified in cutting corners to receive what he feels is coming to him. Had Rachel cut corners, had she contributed even indirectly to her sister's humiliation, she would have ended up bankrupt. By doing what was right, Rachel lost nothing. She married Yaakov, became one of the matriarchs, and thus stayed out of the clutches of Esav.

Furthermore, let us not forget that Rachel was born barren; she was incapable of giving birth (Breishis 29:31). Had she protested, and subsequently married Yaakov in a straightforward manner, she may never have mothered a child. It was solely due to her willingness to forego her future that she attained motherhood (See Rashi 30:22).

But the greatest reward of all is evident from the Medrash (Introduction to Eichah Rabba). After the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash, various Tzaddikim arose to plead on behalf of the Jewish people. It was an all-star cast. Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, etc., all tried to rescind the tragic decree and to restore the Jewish people to their former glory. One by one, their prayers were rejected by Hashem; All their vast merits did not help them! Finally, one last voice made itself heard:

"At that moment, Rachel our mother jumped up and said to Hashem, 'Master of the universe, You well know that Your servant Yaakov loved me deeply, and he worked for my father for seven years. When those seven years were up and the time of my wedding to my husband arrived, my father schemed to substitute my sister for me, and this was terribly difficult for me. I informed my husband, and I gave him a sign so that he could distinguish between my sister and me, to thwart my father's scheme. Afterwards, I regretted what I had done, and I suppressed my yearning. I had mercy on my sister, so that she would feel no shame. In the evening, they gave my sister to my husband in my stead, and I gave my sister all of the signs that I had given to my husband, so that he would think she was Rachel... I was not jealous of her, and I did not humiliate her. If I, mere flesh and blood, dust and ashes, did not envy my competitor and did not humiliate her, You, the everlasting, merciful King, why did You envy idolatry which has no substance, and You exiled my children, and they were killed by the sword, and the enemies did with them as they pleased?'"

"Immediately, Hashem's mercy was aroused and He said, 'For you, Rachel, will I return Yisrael to their place.' As it is written, 'Thus said Hashem, A voice is heard on high, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeps for her children; she refuses to be consoled for her children, for they are gone. Thus said Hashem, Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for there is reward for your accomplishment and they will return from the enemy's land. There is hope for your future and your children will return to their border.' (Yirmiyah 31:14-16)"

The secret to our success and to our ultimate redemption was revealed by Rachel Imeinu. Follow in her footsteps, develop sensitivities to our fellow man, abstain from embarrassing others, and Hashem will rescue us posthaste. The Palestinians, hoping to break our spirit, focus their rage on a tomb. Unbeknownst to them, the real secret lies within us.

"There is hope for your future your children will return!"

<http://www.hakotel.edu> (C) 5761/2000 by Lipman Podolsky and American Friends of Yeshivat Hakotel Lists hosted by Project Genesis - <http://www.torah.org>

---

From: Torah and Science[SMTP:torahandscience@mail.jct.ac.il]  
To: pr@mail.jct.ac.il  
Vayetzei  
Genes And Heredity in Laban's Sheep

By PROF. YEHUDAH FELIX

It is commonly supposed that Jacob succeeded in gaining possession of a significant portion of Laban's sheep by miraculous divine intervention in the laws of nature. In fact, though, the only thing miraculous about this may have been the revelation to Jacob of two natural laws. Textual evidence seems to support this.

Approximately 150 years ago, Gregor Mendel discovered a basic law of inheritance. According to this law, most anatomical traits are determined by an equal number of genes contributed by both parents, although one of the contributions may not be immediately evident. For example, peas, whose color is determined by a pair of genes, may appear yellow or green. < A pea containing two yellow genes (y-y) will be yellow, and a pea with two green genes (g-g) will be green. However, the green and yellow genes do not carry equal weight. In the case of peas, the yellow gene is dominant while the green gene is recessive. Hence, if a pea has one green gene and one yellow gene (y-g), that pea will be yellow even though it is actually a mixture or heterozygote. The difference between (y-y) and (y-g) shows up when the pea is mated with its own kind. When two (y-y) peas are mated, all the offspring are yellow. When two (y-g) peas are mated, one quarter of the offspring are green and three quarters are yellow, 2/3 of these being (y-g). When (y-g) is crossed with (g-g), half the offspring are green (g-g) and half are yellow-mixed (y-g), etc.

There is another natural law called heterosis, or hybrid vigor. According to this law, heterozygotes manifest stronger fertility traits than do monozygotes, who have two identical genes. It may be that G-d revealed this law as well to our forefather Jacob, and that, taking advantage of both of these laws, Jacob succeeded in inheriting a large portion of Laban's sheep as worker's wages.

Let us go over the parshah while paying attention to its meaning based on our assumption. Jacob makes Laban an attractive offer: "I will go over your sheep today removing from them every speckled and spotted animal. Every brown sheep and spotted and speckled goat shall be my wage."(1) The color of sheep then, as now, was white. This was the dominant color. Only a quarter of the sheep had partially brown wool - what the Torah calls "speckled, streaked and spotted." In contrast, goats are generally black. Only one quarter of them have skin with light spots - what the Torah calls "patched, speckled, and grizzled." In the following, we refer to the white sheep and the black goats as "uniform" (u), and any partially brown sheep and white goats will be called "spotted" (s). Clearly, Laban would not agree to give Jacob all the spotted portion of his flock, which, as we noted, should amount to 25%. Therefore, Jacob suggests that Laban remove all the spotted sheep from the flock for himself, leaving only the "uniform" white sheep and black goats for Jacob to herd. Now, Jacob requests "Let this be my wage" - that he should receive as his wage all the spotted offspring that will be born from the uniform sheep and goats. This offer appealed to Laban, since he assumed that the uniform sheep would beget only a small number of spotted offspring; indeed, this is what should have happened had Jacob not taken special measures as will become evident later. Laban quickly accepted Jacob's offer: "He removed that day the streaked and spotted he-goats and the speckled and spotted she-goats, all partially white [goats] and partially brown sheep and handed them over to his sons."(2) < So, Laban removed all the spotted sheep from the herd, leaving only the uniform flock in Jacob's charge.

Now, let us look at the genetic side of the situation. By appearance, Jacob's flock was purely uniform, i.e. white sheep and black goats. From Laban's entire flock, 75% remained with Jacob (25%, spotted, were removed initially by Laban). However, not all the sheep under Jacob's charge were purely uniform. Just like with the peas, where the second-generation yellow peas were composed of 1/3 pure yellow (y-y) and 2/3 heterozygotes (y-g), so too was the situation by Jacob's sheep. 1/3 of the ostensibly uniform sheep were genetically pure (u-u), while

the other 2/3 were a mix of uniform (u) and spotted (s). Hence, genetically, they were (u-s) while by appearance they were all uniform, since the gene for uniformity is dominant over the gene for spots.

We assumed that laws of inheritance were revealed to our forefather Jacob, so that he knew that by breeding the mixed breed with its own kind (u-s + u-s), he could reap an abundance of spotted offspring that would be his according to the agreement. However, this would not be the situation if the pure uniform (u-u) would mate with the mixed (u-s), in which case all the offspring would appear uniform.

Apparently, this was the situation that Laban anticipated when he agreed to Jacob's offer, knowing that only a small number of the uniform would produce spotted offspring. But here enters an angel to assist Jacob to see the unseen: "Lift up your eyes and see: all the sheep that rise on the flock are streaked, speckled and grizzled."(3) In other words, even though all the sheep appear uniform to the naked eye, hidden inside them is the recessive trait of spots. All that you must do is discern from among the white those that are mixed and inbreed them to produce spotted progeny.

It was then that another biological phenomenon called heterosis was revealed to Jacob. This phenomenon refers to the tendency of heterozygotes to manifest stronger fertility traits than do monozygotes. So, the mixed cattle (u-s), despite their uniform exterior, showed additional fertility in the form of the male mating drive and early heat of the females. Jacob made sure that those males would mate with those females, and his keen shepherd's eye did not disappoint him. "And when the stonger flock was in heat, Jacob placed the staffs before the flock in the troughs to heat them with the staffs."(4) But he did this only with the "stonger" flock - those, as pointed out by Onkelos, which were ready first to mate. Jacob also found those males that manifested a greater mating drive and bred the two. These beget spotted progeny already in the first generation (the percentage will be determined later).

The Torah continues: "But when the flock were feeble, he did not put them in. So the feebler were Laban's and the stonger were Jacob's."(5) As Onkelos explains, the feebler were those slow to be in heat and procreate. So, the feebler flock showed weaker mating instincts. Jacob was sure that the feebler flock was entirely (u-u) and that no chance existed for the flock to bear spotted offspring. Accordingly, he immediately transferred this group to Laban. Hence, after only one season, Laban already received an extra 25% of the initial herd, in addition to the original spotted 25% that he removed at the outset. All told, only 50% of the original herd remained in Jacob's hands for breeding, and all those were uniform by appearance though mixed genetically. From these, Jacob intended to create his own personal spotted herd.

In the arrangement with Laban, Jacob guarded Laban's flock over a period of seven mating seasons. Numerically, the state of Jacob's spotted herd (s-s) increasingly improved from one generation to the next. In the final tally, 39% of the herd he pastured remained in Jacob's hands, a percentage much higher than any Laban would have estimated or than Jacob would have attained without the heterosis revelation. In fact, calculations show that had Jacob not known of heterosis, and, as a result, had he kept the purely uniform (u-u) within a common herd, his personal herd would have amounted to a mere 15% of the entire herd.

Thus, we conclude from here that chapters 30-31 of Genesis are the first written document showing practical knowledge of the inheritance laws and heterosis. Hence, our forefather Jacob has priority in discovering the laws of inheritance, while being "a simple man who dwells in tents." <

Yehudah Felix is professor emeritus of Botany and of Talmud at Bar Ilan University and the author of many books. < The above is a condensation of an article (Techumin 3:461, 1982). It is reprinted also in the book "Teva Va-Aretz BaTenach", pp.27-41.

Notes 1.Genesis 30, 32. 2.ibid 30, 35. 3.ibid 31, 12. 4.ibid 30, 41.

5. *ibid* 30, 42.

Published by: < Department of Public Relations Jerusalem College of Technology - Machon Lev 21 Havaad Haleumi St., POB16031 Jerusalem, 91160 ISRAEL Tel: < 972-2-675-1193 < Fax: < 972-2-675-1190 Senior Editor: < Prof. Leo Levi, Rector Emeritus, Jerusalem College of Technology - Machon Lev Junior Editor: < Avi Polak Translation: < Eliyahu Weinberg Previous shiurim are available on the JCT WEBSITE: <http://www.jct.ac.il> If you would like to support the Dvar Torah U'Mada or dedicate a Dvar Torah, please e-mail: [torahandscience@mail.jct.ac.il](mailto:torahandscience@mail.jct.ac.il)

---

From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Weekly-halacha for 5761 Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Vayeitze

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

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

#### CHECKING OUR MEZUZOS

All mezuzos(1) must be checked periodically to verify their kashrus. Everyone who lives in a dwelling(2) (whether he owns it or rents it) is Rabbically obligated to check his mezuzos twice in seven years, or once every three-and-half years(3), since it is an established fact that over a period of time mezuzos are liable to become pasul. Age, humidity, rain, location, a paint job and/or other factors may ruin a mezuzah which was originally kosher(4). Even if one letter is smudged or cracked, the entire mezuzah may no longer be valid and often, cannot be fixed. It is imperative, therefore, to check mezuzos periodically and be prepared to buy replacements(5).

The three-and-half year time frame established by the Rabbis applies only to mezuzos exposed to normal conditions, not to mezuzos that have to weather harsh elements like direct sunlight, exposure to a sprinkler system, a paint job(6), etc. Such mezuzos must be checked more often(7). [Indeed, some meticulous individuals check all of their mezuzos every Elul(8).]

Some people are lax about checking their mezuzos claiming, among other excuses(9), that it is difficult to find a professional sofer who will come to the house, remove all the mezuzos, check them, and re-affix them in short order. Since people are wary of leaving their homes without the protection of the mezuzah for any length of time - and justifiably so - checking mezuzos gets pushed off and sometimes neglected entirely.

But since all that is necessary to ascertain the kashrus of the mezuzah is to verify that the lettering has not faded and that the letters are whole and fully formed, anyone who reads Hebrew well can check and render a verdict. No professional sofer or rabbi is required(10). Of course, if a question were to arise about a specific letter, then one would need to refer to his rav for a decision.

Obviously, this type of checking suffices only if the mezuzah in question was certified kosher by a professional sofer at the time of purchase. Before one places a mezuzah on his door post, he must have it professionally checked to be sure that it was properly written. [Unfortunately, buying a mezuzah from a Jewish-owned establishment is no automatic guarantee that the mezuzah is kosher.] Once, however, the mezuzah was certified as kosher, all future checking can be done by any layman as described above.

In order to check a mezuzah, it must be removed from the door post. If it is removed for only the few moments that it takes to check it, there is no halachic obligation to replace it with another mezuzah(11). The mezuzah is removed, looked over carefully, and if no problem is found, it is immediately returned to the door post. One does not recite a blessing over the mezuzah when re-affixing it to the door post(12).

But sometimes the checking process can drag on for a number of hours or even a few days. In such a case, it is improper to leave the house (or any single door post) without mezuzos. According to some opinions, the people in the house may even have to move out while the mezuzos are being checked(13). Obviously, this is a terrible inconvenience and highly impractical.

To avoid this eventuality, there are several possible alternatives: 1) Buy [or borrow(14)] an extra mezuzah which will replace the mezuzah that is being checked. A blessing would have to be recited when the replacement is put on(15). This solution is not practical for a large house that has many mezuzos to be checked.

2) Renounce ownership of one's home(16) for as long as the mezuzos are being checked. This procedure, called hefker, removes halachic ownership from the home and makes it an owner-less entity. Once ownership of the house is renounced, the

obligation to put on a mezuzah is lifted. The residents are living in an owner-less property, and they are not obligated to put on mezuzos for at least thirty days(17).

The proper way of being mafkir an item is to renounce ownership in the presence of at least three adults. The adults may be household members. [Some Rishonim maintain that the hefker is valid even when declared in front of one individual or even in front of no one at all(18). If three adults are not available, one may rely on this view(19).]

Before re-affixing the mezuzos, one should have in mind that he is once again becoming the owner of the house.

When mezuzos are removed for more than several hours, a blessing should be recited when they are re-affixed [even if the house was not pronounced as hefker]. If all the mezuzos are re-affixed at the same time, one blessing suffices for all of them. The poskim argue as to whether one who replaced a mezuzah and forgot to recite the blessing can recite the blessing later on. One may conduct himself according to either view(20).

#### FOOTNOTES:

1 Mezuzos which are publicly owned must be checked only once every twenty-five years; Y.D. 291:1.

2 This includes a woman living alone, students sharing an apartment, etc.

3 In order to remember this obligation, the custom in Frankfurt was to check the mezuzos every Adar Sheini, which falls every two or three years.

4 Another reason for checking is to see if the mezuzah was stolen [or misplaced]; Rashi Yuma 11a. See also Meiri, *ibid*.

5 Y.D. 291:1.

6 Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:183. L'hatchilah, mezuzos should be removed before painting.

7 Aruch ha-Shulchan 291:1.

8 Mateh Efrayim 581:10; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128:3. In addition, Teshuvos M'haril 94 writes that it is proper to examine one's mezuzos if misfortune befalls an individual or his family, G-d forbid.

9 It must be emphasized that there is no halachic basis for laxity in this obligation. See Birur Halachah, pg. 399, who quotes several sources that strongly condemn those who are not careful about fulfilling this obligation.

10 Teshuvos Chasam Sofer 283, quoted in Pischei Teshuvah 291:3.

11 Da'as Kedoshim 291:1 (concerning a renter); Eimek Brachah (Mezuzah 11).

12 Pischei Teshuvah 289:1 remains undecided on this issue but most poskim rule that one should not recite a blessing in this case.

13 See Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 285:1 quoting the Pri Megadim who maintains that it is prohibited to remain in a house [or in a room] without a mezuzah and one who has another place to go to must go there. Other poskim, however, are not as stringent and do not require one to move out of his home if the mezuzos are down temporarily, if he cannot find a replacement.

14 Har Tzvi Y.D. 238.

15 Harav C. Kanievsky (Mezuzos Beseicha 289:6); Kuntres ha-Mezuzah 289:6, quoting several poskim. Other poskim, however, do not require that a blessing be recited (oral ruling by Harav M. Feinstein, quoted in Oholei Yeshurun, pg. 22).

16 This is suggested by Mikdash Me'at 285:3 and Mezuzos Melachim 285:19. There are other halachic areas where this solution is suggested, see Mishnah Berurah 13:15 concerning tzitzis; O.C. 246:3 concerning a Jew's animal on Shabbos. For various reasons not all poskim agree with this solution. [See Sefer Tevilas Keilim, pg. 84, who quotes Harav S.Z. Auerbach as ruling that under extenuating circumstances one can rely on this solution to permit temporary use of utensils which were not ritually immersed.]

17 Although one who "borrows" a house is required to put on mezuzos after a thirty-day time period, in this case it may be argued that the people living in the house are not even considered "borrowers". Halachically, the house has no owners to "borrow" from. The house is technically owner-less and temporarily exempt from the mitzvah of mezuzah.

18 Rama C.M. 273:5. .

19 See Sm" a C.M. 273:11, Mishnah Berurah 246:15 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 18.

20 See Kuntres ha-Mezuzah 289:3.

Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 2000 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Project Genesis, Inc. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishnah Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to [jgross@torah.org](mailto:jgross@torah.org). Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway [learn@torah.org](http://www.torah.org) 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208 (410) 602-1350 FAX: 510-1053

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu]

The Weekly Daf #356 Nazir 48 - 54 Issue #356 Parshat Vayeitzei Week of 7 - 13 Kislev 5761 / 4 - 10 December 2000 By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

#### BACK TO THE PROPHETS

A major dispute raged among the sages as to whether a nazir must interrupt his nezirut if he comes into contact with a quarter kav of the bones of a dead man. A later generation of sages decided that even though a quarter kav is sufficient to cause ritual impurity which prevents a kohen from eating terumah and prevents anyone from eating sacrificial meat, a nazir need only interrupt his nezirut if he contacts half a kav.

What gave this later opinion so much weight that it is recorded as law in our mesechta (49b) and in Mesechta Oholot -- says Rabbi Yaakov bar Idi -- is the fact that the sages who stated it received this tradition from the Prophets Chaggai, Zecharia and Malachi.

This idea of sages quoting halachot from the last of the prophets appears in a number of places in the Talmud, and it deserves attention both in regard to the authority of such a source and the nature of its transmission.

Tosefot (Mesechta Bechorot 58a) takes issue with Rashi who writes that what the sages received from Chaggai, Zecharia and Malachi they viewed as prophecy which must be accepted even without understanding its logic. The mention of prophecy, says Tosefot, is inaccurate, because no prophet was given a mandate to introduce prophecy into the halachic process; it would be more accurate to refer to this as a halachic tradition received from those prophets based on their Torah knowledge.

The other issue is an historic one. Although the text of the gemara -- that the tradition was received "from the mouths of Chaggai, Zecharia and Malachi" -- would seem to indicate that these sages heard it directly from those prophets, this is hardly likely. Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chayot points out in regard to what the gemara says (Mesechta Megillah 3a) that Yonatan ben Uziel wrote that targum-translation of Nevi'im (The books of the Prophets) from the mouths of Chaggai, Zecharia and Malachi that it cannot mean a literal transmission from them to him, because he lived more than 300 years after them. In all such cases the meaning must be that the sages citing these prophets had a tradition from generation to generation going back to these prophets, although they did not hear it directly from them.

\* Nazir 53a

(C) 2000 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

---