

BS"D



To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com
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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON VAYEITZE - 5765

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: November 18, 2004 To: ravfrand@torah.org "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeitzei -

Hashem Must Play The Role of Our First Love, Not Our Second Fiddle
The pasuk [verse] in this week's Parsha says that Yaakov "loved Rochel more than Leah" [Bereshis 29:30]. Subsequently, the pasuk says, "Hashem saw that Leah was hated [s'nuah] so He opened her womb." [29:31].

The Or HaChaim [1696-1743] says that only Hashem was able to perceive that Leah was "s'nuah". You should not imagine that Leah felt hated by her husband. Heaven forbid that Yaakov would treat Leah any differently than he treated Rochel. This was so subtle, so internalized within Yaakov's heart, that only Hashem could detect that Leah had an inferior relationship.

We should never suspect that Yaakov Avinu was guilty of mistreating or "hating" one of his wives. Our Sages admonish us to love our wives as we love our own person and to honor them more than we honor our own selves [Yevamos 62b]. The pasuk [verse] in this week's Parsha says that Yaakov "loved Rochel more than Leah" [Bereshis 29:30]. Subsequently, the pasuk says, "Hashem saw that Leah was hated [s'nuah] so He opened her womb." [29:31].

I saw an explanation of this matter from Rav Shimon Schwab [1908-1995]. The relationship between a man and wife is such that if the man loves any other woman in the world more than his wife, by definition his wife becomes a s'nuah [a "hated" (woman)]. Once the pasuk told us that in his heart of hearts, Yaakov Avinu emotionally loved Rochel more than Leah, that automatically rendered Leah a s'nuah. However, as the Or HaChaim explains, this was only a matter of emotion, not of action, and was only known by the Master of the World.

Rav Schwab states further that this principle may also be applied to the metaphorical marriage between the Jewish people and the Almighty. G-d speaks of his love for the Jewish people in the allegory of betrothal: "And I will betroth you to Me forever" [Hoshea 2:21].

If, in a marital relationship, one's greater love for a second wife will render the first mate "hated", then similarly, if there is something more important in a Jew's life than the Master of the World, then that relegates the Ribbono shel Olam [Master of the World] into the role of the "s'nuah".

We ask ourselves "is anything in our lives more important to us than the Ribbono shel Olam?" Unfortunately, all too many times the answer to that is "yes". Are our careers more important to us than Divine Service? We must ask ourselves, what makes us tick? What do we get up for in the morning? What drives us? What gives us our vitality? What do we enjoy? What do we live for? If the answer to these questions is that there is something more important to us than fulfilling our role as Jews, then

we have relegated the Almighty to the position of the wife who is "s'nuah".

I recently spoke in New York at a forum for Jewish professionals. Now, you can't tell someone who is at the top of the professional world not to enjoy his or her job. You cannot say to a Doctor, "don't enjoy the practice of medicine." You cannot tell a lawyer who enjoys a tremendous sense of satisfaction from working on a case or saving a client money, "no, don't enjoy your work!"

The point that I did try to make to these professionals was that while it may be okay to get satisfaction and even exhilaration from one's profession, there has to also be at least an equally satisfying exhilaration from one's Avodas Hashem [Service to G-d]. It is not sufficient to just "learn up" the Daf Yomi [one folio of Talmud, daily] and say "Well, I've put my hour in - now let me enjoy myself and go to work!" If we do that, then we are making the Ribono shel Olam the "s'nuah". If He is merely "second-fiddle" in our lives and not our "first love" then He has the role of the "hated wife".

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www.vbm-torah.org/salt.htm SALT!! ("Surf A Little Torah")

RABBI DAVID SILVERBERG

[from several years ago]

PARASHAT VAYETZE

Long before the Puritans, Yaakov Avinu set the standard of what we might term the "Jacobian work ethic." After Lavan - his father-in-law and employer - chases after him and accuses him of theft, Yaakov vehemently rejects the accusation and upholds his loyalty:

"These twenty years I have spent in your service, your ewes and she-goats never miscarried, nor did I feast on the rams from your flock. That which was torn by beasts I never brought to you; I myself made good the loss... Scorching heat ravaged me by day and frost by night; and sleep fled from my eyes" (31:38-40).

Yaakov's testimony of his devotion to Lavan's flocks contains all the elements of a proper work ethic. First, he speaks of competence: "your ewes and she-goats never miscarried." Yaakov accepted the responsibilities of shepherd only after having acquired sufficient know-how to properly tend to the sheep. Next comes honesty: "nor did I feast on the rams of your flock." Alone in the field with his employer's sheep, Yaakov had plenty of opportunities to catch a "quick snack" at Lavan's expense. Yet, he faithfully held out and never took Lavan's sheep for himself. Yaakov also worked with a keen sense of accountability: "That which was torn by beasts I never brought to you; I myself made good the loss." Rather than presenting Lavan with excuses, Yaakov maturely accepted responsibility for any mishaps that may have occurred to the flock under his charge. The final ingredient of Yaakov's work ethic is elbow grease: "Scorching heat ravaged me by day and frost by night, and sleep fled from my eyes." When the going got rough, Yaakov kept going. His devotion to his work overcame the hostile natural forces and fatigue. Besides teaching us about honesty and integrity in the workplace, Yaakov's example may shed some light on our ultimate responsibility in

life, that of "avodat Hashem." Our religious observance must feature these basic elements: competence, honesty, accountability, and hard work. The need for competence requires us to educate ourselves regarding our many responsibilities as observant Jews. We cannot possibly claim loyalty to G-d's laws so long as we remain ignorant of the many detailed halakhot that arise on a regular basis. Secondly, Yaakov teaches us to fulfill our duties honestly. Granted, here the parallel falters a bit, as one can never fool the Almighty. But all the more so, we have what to learn from Yaakov Avinu in this regard: there is no such thing as cheating or cutting corners when it comes to Torah observance. Accountability in this context essentially translates into teshuva: when we err, we must hold ourselves accountable and humbly confess our wrongdoing. We are then to do whatever necessary to reverse the effects of our sins. Finally, the elbow grease: we cannot be "fair weather Jews." Just as Yaakov remained with his flock during the seething heat and frigid winds, often losing nights of sleep, so must we never abandon our duties when adverse situations arise.

This is perhaps how we become as loyal servants of G-d as Yaakov was of Lavan.

The Gemara in Berakhot 26b remarks that upon his departure from Be'er Sheva, Yaakov Avinu instituted the arvit (evening) prayer. Later the Gemara records a controversy between Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua as to whether the evening service is mandatory or optional. It would seem that one who views this prayer as optional must reject its origins in Yaakov's prayer. Why would arvit deserve a lower level of obligation than shacharit and mincha, which, according to this position, were instituted by Avraham and Yitzchak, respectively? Rabbi Yehoshua presumably adopts the second opinion in the aforementioned Gemara, that "arvit" evolved later, in commemoration of the burning of sacrificial animal limbs on the altar in the Bet Hamikdash, which would continue through the night.

Although the halakha follows Rabbi Yehoshua, that, strictly speaking, the recitation of arvit does not constitute an outright obligation, the Jewish people have nevertheless accepted this service upon themselves as an obligation (Rambam, Hilkhos Tefila 1:6). Therefore, should one forget to recite arvit one night he must say two shemoneh esrei's the following morning to compensate. Similarly, if one forgets "ya'aleh ve-yavo" or "ve-tein tal..." and the like during shemoneh esrei of arvit, he must repeat shemoneh esrei just as he would with regard to shacharit and mincha.

Although we do not conduct a repetition of shemoneh esrei ("chazarat ha-shatz") at arvit, Chazal instituted a brief repetition of shemoneh esrei on Friday night. The "Magen Avot" prayer - which actually begins with the previous passage, "Barukh Ata Hashem..." - consists of brief summaries of each of the seven berakhot of the Friday night shemoneh esrei. Although this paragraph was intended solely for the chazan, the custom has evolved for the entire congregation to recite (or chant) "Magen Avot." However, the Mishna Berura (268:22) emphasizes that the chazan himself must repeat the paragraph aloud after the congregation, whereas it was initially instituted for him alone. It is also worth noting the Shulchan Arukh's ruling (268:13) that one who missed arvit or recited the weekday shemoneh esrei on Friday night may fulfill his obligation by carefully listening to the chazan's brief "repetition," from "Barukh Ata Hashem" until "mekadesh ha-Shabbat." In order for this to work, however, the chazan must have in mind to fulfill the obligation on behalf of the listener. Therefore, it would seem that one leading the service on Leil Shabbat should remember to bear this in mind as he recites "Magen Avot."

On his way to Charan, Yaakov dreams his famous dream of the angels ascending and descending a ladder that stretched up to the heavens. Several different explanations exist as to what exactly these angels were

doing and why they walked continuously up and down the ladder. The Gemara in Chulin (91b) comments that these angels went to heaven "to look upon his [Yaakov's] image up above," after which they descended to earth "to look upon his image down below." Meaning, the angels were busy comparing Yaakov's "image" in the heavens and his image down on earth. What does all this mean?

The following, insightful explanation is cited in the name of Rav Soloveitchik zt"l. Yaakov's "heavenly image" refers to his potential, the persona destined for him to become and the sum total of his innate talents and gifts. His "earthly image" means the manifestation of Yaakov down on earth, how the ideal image adjusted itself to the realities of our world. The angels scurried back and forth between the two, observing that each was in fact a carbon copy of the other. Our third patriarch had actualized his G-d-given potential and emerged into the spectacular pillar of righteousness that sowed the seeds for the emergence of Am Yisrael.

The Rav is cited as applying this idea to the well-known Midrash of Yosef's encounter with Potifar's wife. The Midrash relates that just as Yosef nearly acquiesced to her advances, he beheld his father's image and withdrew. What about Yaakov's image afforded Yosef the strength to resist temptation? Yosef took note of the perfect symmetry between Yaakov "heavenly" and "earthly" images. He feared the disparity that would result between the "theoretical" Yosef in heaven, the "Yosef Ha-tzadik" that has become synonymous with righteousness, and the Yosef prepared to sleep with his employer's wife. Yaakov's image taught him - and teaches us - that through enough discipline and effort, one can reach his full potential and fulfill the goal for which he was created.

Commenting on the first verse of Parashat Vayetze, Rashi speaks of the profound impact felt by a city upon a tzadik's departure therefrom. Yaakov's flight from Be'er Sheva left its mark on the city, for, as Rashi writes, a righteous man is the city's pride and glory. As he leaves, the city senses a profound sense of loss.

The obvious question arises, this is not the first time in Chumash that a tzadik leaves town! The Torah speaks on several occasions of the travels of Avraham and Yitzchak. Why did Rashi never mention anything about the impact felt on the cities from where they left?

One answer given suggests that Rashi notes the impact of Yaakov's departure because his leaving town might have seemed less consequential than the travels of Avraham and Yitzchak. The Torah informs us of Avraham and Yitzchak's involvement with the community and their role in public life. Yaakov, by contrast, is described as a "dweller of tents," or, in contemporary lingo, "a yeshiva bachur." He hadn't yet emerged on the public scene or involved himself in communal affairs. One may have therefore questioned the effects of his departure from a city. Rashi thus feels compelled to point out that Yaakov, was, in fact, the crown jewel of Be'er Sheva. The community suffered a blow when he packed his bags and left.

Particularly in an age of mass media, we often use public notoriety as a barometer of a given individual's contribution to society. A no-name rarely receives credit for accomplishments or acknowledgment for his day-to-day goodness. Yaakov Avinu didn't lead outreach or "chesed" organizations, nor did he speak at public gatherings or forums. At least until fleeing from his brother, he led a simple life, working to build for himself the highest standards of Torah knowledge and piety. Yet, his presence impacted upon the local population, and, as Rashi tells us, that impact was sorely missed as Yaakov made his way out of the city.

Upon his arrival in Charan, Yaakov encounters the shepherds of three flocks sitting idle near a well. Yaakov takes note of their inactivity and scolds, "It is still broad daylight, too early to round up the animals; water the flock and take them to pasture" (29:7). They explained to Yaakov that their failure to water the flock is due not to laziness or fatigue on their part, but rather to the large stone sitting at the well's opening. No

one can move the rock until all the shepherds gather together and push it together.

We ought to be pleasantly surprised by the shepherds' polite response. A strange foreigner comes out of nowhere and administers unsolicited criticism, which resulted from his own ignorance of the local protocol. What more, this criticism essentially constitutes a rather harsh allegation, accusing the shepherds of negligence in their responsibilities towards their sheep! Why are they not infuriated at this nosy stranger who incorrectly and unfairly charged them with delinquency towards their flocks?

Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky finds the answer in a single word: "achai" ("my brethren"). Yaakov first warmly greets the shepherds and speaks softly and pleasantly. He engages them in friendly conversation, inquiring as to the well-being of his Uncle Lavan. In so doing, Yaakov teaches us an invaluable lesson in how to criticize: it must be done politely and pleasantly, rather than in anger and disgust. Hostile and confrontational rebuke only reinforces the other's resistance to accept criticism. Soft-spoken, kindhearted words, however, have a chance of meeting a receptive audience. Yaakov's pleasant demeanor transmitted his sincere concern for the flock and, more importantly, high regard for the shepherds in spite of his critique of their current idleness. Therefore, rather than responding defensively, the shepherds politely explained to the stranger the situation, and a potentially fiery exchange was replaced by a calm, friendly dialogue.

In his comments towards the beginning of the parasha, Rashi cites the Midrash that presents a far more complicated version of Yaakov's trip to Charan than that which appears in the verses. Chazal claim that upon reaching Charan, Yaakov regretted having passed Mount Moriah without taking advantage of the site's sanctity to offer a prayer. As soon as he decided to turn around and head back, the mountain miraculously came to greet Yaakov, as it were, and he prayed at the holy site.

Among the many questions this passage raises is a rather simple one posed by the Kotzker Rebbe: why did Yaakov, in fact, neglect to pray at the mountain initially? Did he just forget? Was it only after he reached Charan that he realized the importance of praying at the holy site of the Temple?

The Kotzker Rebbe answers that Yaakov at first felt himself unworthy of frequenting the sacred site where his father and grandfather had performed the "akeida." Yaakov saw himself on a qualitatively lower spiritual plane than Avraham and Yitzchak, and hence he had no right to step foot on the sacred mountain. Only with the passage of time did he realize that he is the only one capable of perpetuating the spiritual qualities of his esteemed predecessors; small as he may be (in his eyes), he still had the right - and the duty - to serve the Almighty on Mount Moriah.

Perhaps two important lessons emerge from this analysis. First and foremost, Yaakov teaches us something about genuine humility. How rarely do we consider ourselves "unworthy" of anything! Quite to the contrary, we so often argue that we deserve this, that or the other thing. One example actually flows quite naturally from this incident involving Yaakov: people often feel insulted after not having received a given honor in the Bet Keneset, be it an "aliya" or the opportunity to lead the services. According to the Kotzker Rebbe, Yaakov exhibits the exact opposite attitude: he felt himself unworthy of a given religious ritual. He understood that certain forms of service are reserved for the spiritual elite, a status he could not honestly claim for himself.

At the same time, it is noteworthy that in the end Yaakov realizes his mistake. While maintaining his self-effacing humility, he nevertheless accepts the responsibility of heir to the golden chain of Avraham. He recognizes that however undeserving he felt himself to be, no one else but he could continue the tradition of Avraham and Yitzchak, symbolized by worship on Mount Moriah. As soon as he came upon this

realization, G-d came to his assistance and facilitated his worship at the sacred site.

Modesty can often work as an excuse for shortsightedness and underachievement. One can easily shake himself free of a given burden of responsibility on the grounds that he is unqualified. Yaakov disproves the myth of the contradiction between humility and bold ambition. One must know exactly where he stands and act accordingly. At times this may dictate recoiling and excusing oneself from a given position. Nevertheless, one must also acknowledge his skills and capitalize on them to the best of his ability.

At the very end of Parashat Vayetze, Yaakov takes leave of Lavan and encounters "angels of G-d." Ibn Ezra explains that these angels came to assist him, presumably in protecting himself from his vengeful brother. Ibn Ezra also notes that only Yaakov beheld these angels; no one else from his camp saw them.

We may speculate as to the significance of this incident. These angels do not interact with Yaakov, and they seem to contribute nothing to his effort (with the possible exception that, according to the first Rashi in Parashat Vayishlach, Yaakov sent real angels to his brother, a likely reference to the angels he encounters here). Perhaps this is exactly what the Torah teaches us: only Yaakov possessed the insight to see the heavenly protection that accompanied him throughout his ordeals. Whereas everyone else in his camp saw only the events themselves, Yaakov, as he now returned to Canaan, recognized the supernatural forces that had come to his aid.

This encounter is also significant in that it brings Yaakov's excursion to Charan full circle. His trip began with a vision of angels on the ladder, and now closes on a similar note, with the appearance of angels. (Note also the parallel expression, ""vayifg'u," in both contexts.) This may come to emphasize Yaakov's maintenance of his prophetic quality despite the years of exile in the spiritually hostile environs of Lavan, tending to sheep and trying to survive his father-in-law's abuse and manipulation. This steadfast consistency displayed by Yaakov may parallel - in the opposite direction - that of Lavan. The previous verse reads that after the truce between Yaakov and Lavan, "Lavan returned to his place." This may be understood not only in geographic terms, that Lavan returned home to Charan, but in an ethical sense, as well: Lavan remained the same corrupt trickster as he had always been. Yaakov, by contrast, left Lavan's home with the same piety with which he had arrived. Just as he merited an angelic entourage twenty years earlier upon his departure from Canaan, so does he now meet an assembly of angels upon his departure from Lavan.

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

RABBI DR. JONATHAN SACKS

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[from 2 years ago]

Vayetse Encountering G-d

It is one of the great visions of the Torah. Jacob, alone at night, fleeing from the wrath of Esau, lies down to rest, and sees not a nightmare of fear but an epiphany:

He came to a certain place [vayifga bamakom] and stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream. He saw a ladder resting on the earth, with its top reaching heaven. G-d's angels were going up and down on it. There above it stood G-d . . .

Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "G-d is truly in this place, but 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." (28:11-17)

On the basis of this passage the sages said that "Jacob instituted the evening prayer." The inference is based on the word *vayifga* which can mean not only, "he came to, encountered, happened upon" but also "he prayed, entreated, pleaded" as in Jeremiah 7: 16, "Neither lift up cry nor prayer for them nor make intercession to Me [*ve-al tifga bi*]."

The sages also understood the word *bamakom*, "the place" to mean "G-d" (the "place" of the universe). Thus Jacob completed the cycle of daily prayers. Abraham instituted *shacharit*, the morning prayer, Isaac *minchah*, the afternoon prayer, and Jacob *arvit*, the prayer of nighttimes.

This is a striking idea. Though each of the weekday prayers is identical in wording, each bears the character of one of the patriarchs. Abraham represents morning. He is the initiator, the one who introduced a new religious consciousness to the world. With him a day begins. Isaac represents afternoon. There is nothing new about Isaac - no major transition from darkness to light or light to darkness. Many of the incidents in Isaac's life recapitulate those of his father. Famine forces him, as it did Abraham, to go to the land of the Philistines. He re-digs his father's wells. Isaac's is the quiet heroism of continuity. He is a link in the chain of the covenant. He joins one generation to the next. He introduces nothing new into the life of faith, but his life has its own nobility. Isaac is steadfastness, loyalty, the determination to continue. Jacob represents night. He is the man of fear.

There is, however, a difficulty with the idea that Jacob introduced the evening prayer. In a famous episode in the Talmud, Rabbi Joshua takes the view that, unlike *shacharit* or *minchah*, the evening prayer is not obligatory (though, as the commentators note, it has become obligatory through the acceptance of generations of Jews). Why, if it was instituted by Jacob, was it not held to carry the same obligation as the prayers of Abraham and Isaac? Tradition offers three answers.

The first is that the view that *arvit* is non-obligatory according to those who hold that our daily prayers are based, not on the patriarchs but on the sacrifices that were offered in the Temple. There was a morning and afternoon offering but no evening sacrifice. The two views differ precisely on this, that for those who trace prayer to sacrifice, the evening prayer is voluntary, whereas for those who base it on the patriarchs, it is. The second is that there is a law that those on a journey (and for three days thereafter) are exempt from prayer. In the days when journeys were hazardous - when travellers were in constant fear of attack by raiders - it was impossible to concentrate. Prayer requires concentration (*kavanah*). Therefore Jacob was exempt from prayer, and offered up his entreaty not as an obligation but as a voluntary act - and so it remained.

The third is that there is a tradition that, as Jacob was travelling, "the sun set suddenly" - not at its normal time. Jacob had intended to say the afternoon prayer, but found, to his surprise, that night had fallen. *Arvit* did not become an obligation, since Jacob had not meant to say an evening prayer at all.

There is, however, a more profound explanation. A different linguistic construction is used for each of the three occasions that the sages saw as the basis of prayer. Abraham "rose early in the morning to the place where he had stood before G-d" (19:27). Isaac "went out to meditate [*lasuach*] in the field towards evening" (24:63). Jacob "met, encountered, came across" G-d [*vayifga bamakom*]. These are different kinds of religious experience.

Abraham initiated the quest for G-d. He was a creative religious personality - the father of all those who set out on a journey of the spirit to an unknown destination, armed only with the trust that those who seek, find. Abraham sought G-d before G-d sought him.

Isaac's prayer is described as a *sichah*, literally, a conversation or dialogue. There are two parties to a dialogue - one who speaks and one

who listens, and having listened, responds. Isaac represents the religious experience as conversation between the word of G-d and the word of mankind.

Jacob's prayer is very different. He does not initiate it. His thoughts are elsewhere - on Esau from whom he is escaping, and on Laban to whom he is travelling. Into this troubled mind comes a vision of G-d and the angels and a stairway connecting earth and heaven. He has done nothing to prepare for it. It is unexpected. Jacob literally "encounters" G-d as we can sometimes encounter a familiar face among a crowd of strangers. This is a meeting brought about by G-d, not man. That is why Jacob's prayer could not be made the basis of a regular obligation. None of us knows when the presence of G-d will suddenly intrude into our lives.

There is an element of the religious life that is beyond conscious control. It comes out of nowhere, when we are least expecting it. If Abraham represents our journey towards G-d, and Isaac our dialogue with G-d, Jacob signifies G-d's encounter with us - unplanned, unscheduled, unexpected; the vision, the voice, the call we can never know in advance but which leaves us transformed. As for Jacob so for us, it feels as if we are waking from a sleep and realising as if for the first time that "G-d was in this place and I did not know it." The place has not changed, but we have. Such an experience can never be made the subject of an obligation. It is not something we do. It is something that happens to us. *Vayifga bamakom* means that, thinking of other things, we find that we have walked into the presence of G-d.

Such experiences take place, literally or metaphorically, at night. They happen when we are alone, afraid, vulnerable, close to despair. It is then that, when we least expect it, we can find our lives flooded by the radiance of the divine. Suddenly, with a certainty that is unmistakable, we know that we are not alone, that G-d is there and has been all along but that we were too preoccupied by our own concerns to notice Him. That is how Jacob found G-d - not by his own efforts, like Abraham; not through continuous dialogue, like Isaac; but in the midst of fear and isolation. Jacob, in flight, trips and falls - and finds he has fallen into the waiting arms of G-d. No one who has had this experience, ever forgets it. "Now I know that You were with me all the time but I was looking elsewhere."

That was Jacob's prayer. There are times when we speak and times when we are spoken to. Prayer is not always predictable, a matter of fixed times and daily obligation. It is also an openness, a vulnerability. G-d can take us by surprise, waking us from our sleep, catching us as we fall.

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RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM -
Hebrew Academy of Cleveland - Parshas Vayetze

Behold, I am with you; I will guard you wherever you go...For I will not forsake you. (28:15)

The Midrash comments, "On everything (that Yaakov asked for) Hashem replied in the affirmative, except for his request concerning *parnasah*, a livelihood, for which He did not reply." Hashem said that He would protect Yaakov Avinu from adversity and from those who would challenge him. Yet, regarding his request that Hashem grant him "bread to eat and clothes to wear," we find no indication of a reply. The Midrash concludes that Hashem did indeed issue His reply when He said, "Ki lo e'evacha," "I will not forsake you," which is a reference to *parnasah*, as David haMelelech says in Tehillim, "V'lo ra'isi tzaddik ne'ezav," "but I have not seen a righteous man forsaken."

The Dubno Maggid explains this Midrash in his inimitable manner with a *mashal*, analogy, that is profound and insightful. A young boy was about to set out on a long journey. His mother, concerned that he have enough necessities with him, personally oversaw the packing process.

She made sure that he had sufficient clothing for all types of situations and food and treats to satisfy his needs. His father prepared a bag with enough money to cover the various expenses that would arise during the course of the trip. As he was preparing to leave, word got back to the father that along the route there were a number of warring factions that might endanger his son. The father decided that he had no recourse but to accompany his son on his journey, to protect him. While on the road, the son noticed that he did not have a penny to his name. Looking at his father with worried eyes he said, "Father, I have no money for the trip." His father returned his gaze and said, "Why do you worry? I am with you to protect you and take care of your every need. You do not have to worry about money as long as I am with you." This is what Chazal are telling us. When Hashem told Yaakov that He would not forsake him, it was tantamount to implying, "I am here to take care of all your worries." What is there to worry about if Hashem is taking care of everything?

Look, the day is still long; it is not yet time to bring the livestock in. (29:7)

Time seemed to have little effect on the shepherds. If they could take advantage of a little extra time, they would. This is not a Torah-oriented outlook. Time is valuable. Time is life. Time is an eternity. Every person is created with a limited amount of time set aside by Hashem for him. This amount of time is called a lifespan. Every person is allotted a different lifespan. How we use the time given to us determines the quality of our lives. For instance, a person who was allotted a long lifespan, but does not use it properly, wasting the precious moments that he has been granted, does not really make the most of his gift. On the other hand, one who unfortunately was not granted longevity, but nevertheless does not waste a minute, making sure to use every moment wisely and judiciously, elevates the quality of his life.

We must understand that everything Hashem gives us is for a purpose. All material gifts are granted to us so that we are able to serve Hashem better. Hashem's material gifts are there to enable us to earn eternal reward in the World To Come. Thus, we consecrate and elevate the material and mundane by using them in the service of Hashem. When Yaakov Avinu asked Hashem for "bread to eat and clothes to wear," (ibid. 28:22) he was implying that he only wanted clothes for the purpose of clothing himself and food to sustain himself. He did not seek luxuries or food with which to gorge himself. He wanted enough sustenance so that he could serve Hashem. The same idea applies to the gift of time. We are given a gift which many of us waste needlessly. We take precious time that could be used to earn merit in the Eternal World and use it for frivolity and foolishness. When we waste time, we are party to one of the greatest tragedies of life, because we are exchanging the eternal for the temporal. Horav Yaakov Weinberg, zl, cited by Rabbi Boruch Leff in "Forever His Students," explains that one of the greatest punishments Hashem can mete out to the righteous is to deprive them of the ability to earn rewards in the World To Come. By causing us pain and suffering during our lifespan on this world, He takes away from us the chance to perform mitzvos and study Torah. When we are incapacitated from pain or suffering, we are relegated to wasting precious moments - moments that could have been used for earning nitzchuyus, eternity. Thus, our earthly pain is more than corporeal pain, it causes eternal damage in our quest for a greater portion in Olam Habah. Time is life - eternal life. When we waste our time we are wasting life. Furthermore, when we waste someone else's time, we are doing him far greater damage than we think. We are killing his opportunity for eternity! This is a form of iniquity that can hardly be rectified.

The Gerrer Rebbe, zl, the Imrei Emes, never went anywhere without his trusted timepiece. He was so meticulous about every moment, that he once gave his watch to repair because it was off by a few minutes. He was wont to say, "Why is there a custom to give a gold watch to a

chassan? It implies to him that, as he begins a new life, he should learn to value every minute even more than gold." A young man about to get married came to him requesting advice on what mussar sefer, ethical work, he should study. The Rebbe pointed to his watch and said, "This is the greatest mussar sefer. Every minute that is wasted is lost forever, and it never returns."

Regrettably, we use the phrase "wasting time" too casually, not realizing the true and irreplaceable value of the commodity we call time.

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: November 17, 2004 To: yhe-parsha@etzion.org.il Subject: PARSHA65 - 07: Parashat Vayetze By Rav Yaakov Medan

Please note: This shiur includes three visual aides to help illustrate the points of the shiur. These pictures are only available in the htm version posted on our website. Enjoy.

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm) Parashat Hashavua

This parasha series is dedicated in memory of Michael Jotkowitz, z"l.

The htm version of this shiur is available at: <http://vbm-torah.org/archive/parsha65/07-65vayetze.htm>

In memory of Chana Friedman z"l (Chana bat Yaakov u'Devorah) on her ninth yearzeit. In commemoration of the third yearzeit of my dear sister, Szore Rivka Kitay, on the sixth of Kislev - From those who remember her. Mazal tov to Rav Aviad and Debra Tabory, currently on shelichut in London, upon the birth of their daughter Talyah Rachel. May they be zocheh to raise her le-Torah, le-chuppa, u-le-ma'asim tovim. May both sets of grandparents - Henry and Syma Weinberg of London, and our own Rav Binyamin and Naomi Tabory, currently on shelichut in New York - enjoy their latest grandchild together with the entire family.

BEIT-EL
BY RAV YAAKOV MEDAN

A. BEIT-EL VS. JERUSALEM - ACCORDING TO RASHI

The Midrash and Rashi appear to have deliberated at length over the place that Beit-El occupies (or should occupy) in our consciousness. A literal reading of the parasha would seem to justify the actions of Yeravam ben- Nevat, who abandoned Jerusalem and built a new religious center for the nation in Beit-El:

"The king took counsel and he made two golden calves, and he said to them: 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.' He placed one in Beit-El and the other he placed at Dan... He offered upon the altar that he had made at Beit-El on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had invented on his own, and he made a festival for Bnei Yisrael, and went up to the altar to offer incense." (Melakhim I 12:28-33)

In our parasha, we are told explicitly that the House of G-d that is destined to be built, will be in Beit-El - for there G-d was revealed to Yaakov; that was the "gateway to heaven," and Yaakov would fulfill his oath by building the house there.

For this reason, the Midrash and Rashi seem to feel obliged to forcibly uproot Beit-El from its central place and to shift the weight of

our parasha onto Jerusalem. Let us review their words – and especially the way in which the midrashim of Chazal are reflected in Rashi's commentary:

"Upon which you lie' – G-d 'rolled up' all of Eretz Yisrael under him, hinting to him that it would be easy for his descendants to conquer." (Rashi on 28:13)

This suggests to us that it is of no importance where Yaakov actually lay; either way, the entire land was folded up under him. Thus, even if he lay in Beit-El, G-d may have been speaking to him from Mount Moriah. Rashi adds to this by explaining:

"He happened upon the place' – the text makes no mention of which place it was, rather it refers to 'the place' – which was mentioned elsewhere, i.e., Mount Moriah, concerning which it is written, 'He saw the place from afar.'" (Rashi on 28:11) Thus, he concludes that the specific place upon which Yaakov alighted was actually Mount Moriah.

Further on, Rashi comments as follows:

"Furthermore, [the Sages] taught: YAAKOV CALLED JERUSALEM 'BEIT-EL.' But this [i.e., where he was] was Luz, not Jerusalem; so from where do they deduce this? I maintain that Mount Moriah was uprooted and brought here; it was a miraculous displacement of land... in which the Temple came to him in Beit-El; this is the meaning of the phrase, 'he alighted upon the place.' And if we ask: why did Yaakov then not stop when he passed by [the site of] the Temple? He did not pay attention to stop at the place that his forefathers had prayed, but Heaven delayed him there. He went all the way to Charan ... but when he arrived there, he said, 'Perhaps I have passed a place where my forefathers prayed, and I did not pray there?' He decided to return, and when he reached Beit-El the land was uprooted for him." (Rashi, 28:17)

Here Rashi explains that Yaakov did indeed reach Beit-El on his way back from Charan, but the land contracted itself for him and Mount Moriah came to where he was.

Rashi comments further: "But the house of G-d' – Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Yossi ben Zimra: This ladder rested with its foot in Be'er Sheva, while the middle of it hung over the [site of the] Temple. For Be'er Sheva is in the southern part of Yehuda, with Jerusalem in its northern part, on the border between Yehuda and Binyamin. Beit-El is in the northern part of the portion of Binyamin, on the border between Binyamin and the children of Yosef. Thus the foot of the ladder was in Be'er Sheva and its head in Beit-El, such that the middle of it stretched over Jerusalem." (Rashi on 28:17)

In other words, Yaakov did indeed sleep in Beit-El, but the "gateway to heaven" he saw at an incline over Mount Moriah. Thus, Yaakov actually directed his heart towards Mount Moriah, for this is the place that G-d chose.

Altogether, Rashi provides four different ways of turning the "Beit-El" of the literal text into Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. And all this just to prevent any possibility of our deducing from our parasha that the place that G-d chooses for the establishment of the Temple is the city of Beit-El.

Since the scope of this shiur is limited, we shall discuss only the latter two explanations that he offers: firstly, that Mount Moriah was uprooted and came towards Yaakov as he returned from Charan; and secondly – that Mount Moriah was situated under the center of Yaakov's ladder.

B. THE UPROOTED MOUNTAIN

How are we to understand Rashi's words? The first way of understanding this teaching is that Yaakov did not dare to pray at Mount Moriah on his way from Be'er Sheva to Charan; he walked the entire long journey – about eight hundred kilometers – until he reached Charan. Only when he got there did he regret not having prayed at Mount Moriah, and so he wanted to walk all the way back there. But

G-d had mercy on him; Mount Moriah jumped to Beit-El, and thus his journey was shortened by about 15 kilometers.

This explanation leaves us asking: what was the point of all of this? Why did Yaakov originally refrain from praying at Mount Moriah, and why did he decide afterwards to go back and pray there? Moreover, on his long return journey from Charan to Eretz Yisrael, what is the point of so marginal a contraction of the way as the distance between Beit-El and Jerusalem?

Perhaps Rashi's explanation here ties in with his teaching at the end of the previous parasha, Toldot, concerning the discrepancy of fourteen years between Yaakov's departure from Be'er Sheva and his arrival in Charan. According to Rashi, Yaakov spent those years learning Torah in the Beit Midrash of Shem and Ever:

"We learn that Yaakov was, at that time, sixty-three years old: Yishmael was seventy-four years old when Yaakov was born, Yishmael was fourteen years older than Yitzchak, and Yitzchak was sixty when his sons were born – thus we arrive at seventy-four [as Yishmael's age]. And he lived a total of a hundred and thirty-seven years, as it is written, 'These are the years of Yishmael's life....' Thus, when Yishmael died Yaakov was sixty-three years old. And we learn from here that he remained in the house of Ever for fourteen years, and then went to Charan." (Rashi on 28:9)

It seems that the Beit Midrash of Shem and Ever was in the north [1], while Yaakov, in panic-stricken flight from Esav, did not stop to pray at Mount Moriah (perhaps not even knowing where this mountain was located). The Beit Midrash of Shem and Ever was not far from Charan, and after studying there for fourteen years and deciding to go and find a wife from amongst the household of Lavan, his mother's brother, Yaakov longed for Beit-El – the place where his forefathers had been, and so he returned to Eretz Yisrael to seek out the place.

We learn more from Rashi as to what happened to Yaakov in Beit-El:

"He lay down in that place' – this is a succinct hint at something much bigger: IN THAT PLACE he lay down – but for the fourteen years that he spent in Ever's yeshiva he did not lie down at night, for he was completely engaged in Torah." (Rashi, 28:11)

Our initial impression is that Rashi is praising Yaakov for his conscientious dedication to Torah, not wasting any time and therefore not sleeping at all during his stay at the Beit Midrash. Only when he left to seek the place where his forefathers had prayed did he permit himself to sleep. Once again we ask: what possible lesson can we learn from Yaakov's conscientiousness in Torah study, which was not of this world?

Aside from Yaakov, legend tells of another phenomenally conscientious Torah scholar – King David:

"[David] said: I have never been asleep at midnight. Rabbi Zeira said: Until midnight he would doze like a horse; from that time onwards – he would fight it off like a lion. Rav Ashi said: Until midnight he was engaged in Torah; from then onwards – in song and praise." (Berakhot 3b) The same question we posed concerning Yaakov would apply to David.

It appears to me that this is meant to teach us not only about conscientiousness in Torah, but also – principally – about the fulfillment of David's oath and vow:

"A song of ascents: Remember, O G-d, to David all his affliction, that he swore to G-d and vowed to the mighty G-d of Yaakov: Surely I shall not come into the sanctuary of my own house, nor go up to my bed; nor give sleep to my eyes or rest to my eyelids, until I find a place for G-d, a dwelling place for the mighty G-d of Yaakov. Behold, we heard of it in Efrat, we found it in Sde-Ya'ar: we shall come to His dwelling places, we shall bow down at His footstool. Arise, O G-d, to Your resting place – You and the Ark of Your strength." (Tehillim 132:1-8)

David is disturbed by the question of how he can live in his house and sleep upon his bed while the Master of the house is like a guest in a temporary lodging, and His Ark has no fixed place. He does not know where the place of the Shekhina is; he does not know where to establish its place. David is certainly aware of the story of the akeida at Mount Moriah, and he must surely know that it is with regard to this mountain that it is written, "Concerning which it is said to this day – on the mountain G-d will appear." But he does not know which mountain it is, and which place G-d will choose. David promises that he will not lie down to sleep until he finds a place for G-d's Ark to rest.

It is for this reason that David did not go to bed all those years. And since a person cannot function without sleep, he used to doze off like a horse – i.e., standing, but would not lie down on his bed.

Yaakov was in a similar situation. He was sent by his mother to establish himself a home, but having come to learn Torah, he understood that he could not build a home until he had found G-d's home. Perhaps the midrash is suggesting that Yaakov made a similar oath to that of his royal descendant – King David. During that time, throughout the fourteen years during which he tried to find the place of the Shekhina, of the G-d of his fathers, Yaakov refused to lie down and sleep; he, too, would doze upright, like a horse.

After the fourteen years, Yaakov decided to go back and seek out the place that G-d would choose, and he did not know where it was. In Beit-El he suddenly felt sleepy, and for the first time in fourteen years, he lay down to sleep. He dreamed a dream, and when he awoke, he understood its meaning, and the meaning of his first sleep in so many years: he had indeed found the place of the Shekhina, the resting place of G-d's Ark, and thus he had also found rest for his soul and license for his body to lie and sleep.

Mount Moriah was uprooted and brought to him not in order to shorten his journey, but rather in order to show Yaakov the place that he was unable to locate on his own.

"Not like Avraham, [who called G-d's House a mountain,] as it is written, 'In the mountain G-d will appear,' and not like Yitzchak, who called it a 'field,' as it is written, 'Yitzchak went out to meditate in the field,' but like Yaakov, who called it a house, as it is written, 'He called the place El Beit-El.'" (Yalkut Shimoni Mikha 552)

C. THE SLANTING LADDER "Yaakov set out from Be'er sheva' – The Torah need only have said, 'Yaakov went to Charan;' why is [specific] mention made of his leaving? It teaches that the departure of a righteous person from a place has an effect. For so long as the righteous person is in the city, he is its glory, he is its radiance, and he is its majesty. When he leaves, its glory, its radiance and its majesty all pass away." (Rashi, 28:10)

The immediate question is: why does Rashi say that the glory of Be'er Sheva departed – after all, Yitzchak was still alive and living there! Let us return to the Midrash of R. Yossi ben Zimra:

"This ladder rested with its feet in Be'er Sheva, while the middle of it hung over the [site of the] Temple. For Be'er Sheva is in the southern part of Yehuda, with Jerusalem in its northern part, on the border between Yehuda and Binyamin. Beit-El is in the northern part of the portion of Binyamin, on the border between Binyamin and the children of Yosef. Thus the foot of the ladder was in Be'er Sheva and its head in Beit-El, such that the middle of it stretched over Jerusalem."

The usual interpretation of this Midrash is that it depicts a long, inclined ladder, like a fireman's ladder, with its foot in Be'er Sheva and reaching up to the heaven above Beit-El. We may sketch this ladder as follows, with the angels ascending and descending on it: [sorry - this picture is only visible on the website]

The problem with this picture is that the central point of the incline, marked as stretching over Jerusalem, is rendered insignificant. Moreover, in actual fact Jerusalem is not halfway between Be'er Sheva and Beit-El. It is closer to Beit-El and further away from

Be'er Sheva. The angels ascending and descending also present a problem; in reality, such a situation would be almost impossible.

Let us present a different perception of the ladder – rather like the sort of step-ladder that we use at home, with two legs. In addition to the angels, let us add Yaakov, lying under the ladder, and Eretz Yisrael rolled up under him:

[sorry - this picture is only visible on the website]

This interpretation would seem to offer several advantages:

- i. The center of the ladder's incline is its uppermost point; this is what the ladder leads to - it reaches to the heaven. It is the center of the incline in the sense that up to this point the slope ascends, and from the point onwards it descends.
- ii. The legs need not be of equal length, and there is nothing preventing the "Gateway to heaven" – the most important point in this dream-vision – from being suspended over Jerusalem, which is the most important of the three cities that appear in the dream, according to the midrash.
- iii. The angels that are ascending, which Rashi understands to be the angels of Eretz Yisrael who have completed their task of guarding over Yaakov, ascend a different path than the one used by the angels responsible for other countries, which now descend from the heavens to accompany Yaakov as he leaves Eretz Yisrael. The angels of Eretz Yisrael ascend from Be'er Sheva as soon as Yaakov leaves there and they return to heaven above Mount Moriah, while the angels responsible for his safety outside of the Holy Land descend from there to Beit-El, which is Yaakov's final stop in Eretz Yisrael.
- iv. Rashi's statement that when Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva the place loses its glory, now makes sense: the heavenly angels leave the city together with Yaakov, and they ascend heavenward. Although Yitzchak remains in Be'er Sheva, these angels were sent specifically to watch over Yaakov, and now that they have left, the city has lost its glory.
- v. The midrash that teaches that G-d folded all of Eretz Yisrael under Yaakov's head now assumes new significance with relation to the dream of the ladder. Yaakov's head is in Beit-El, under the head of the ladder horizontally – for it is there that his mind is active. The legs of the ladder, horizontally, are in Be'er Sheva, where Yaakov's feet are also resting. The middle of the ladder's incline, which is the vertical head of the ladder, is at the gateway to heaven – above Mount Moriah.
- vi. If we assume (as certain commentators do) that the Beit-El that Yaakov knew is about ten kilometers north of Beit-El as we know it today, a physical measurement demonstrates that the 'gateway to heaven,' suspended over Jerusalem, IS OVER YAAKOV'S HEART – with all the significance of G-d's revelation and the location of Mount Moriah and Jerusalem over his heart.

The picture that we have proposed creates an obvious parallel to the structure of the Kodesh ha-Kodashim (Holy of Holies), the permanent location of the revelation of the Shekhina. For this purpose we need only convert the sketch according to the following key:

- i. The stone under Yaakov's head corresponds to the "foundation stone," upon which the Kodesh ha-Kodashim rests.
- ii. Yaakov, who is the chariot of the Shekhina and the guardian of G-d's covenant to the forefathers, corresponds to the Ark of the Covenant with its Tablets.
- iii. The angels on the ladder, above and on both sides of Yaakov, correspond to the keruvim, who stand above and on both sides of the Ark of the Covenant [3].
- iv. G-d, Who stands over Yaakov in the dream in between the angels on the two legs of the ladder, corresponds to the Voice of G-d, which emerges from above the covering between the two keruvim.

[sorry - this picture is only visible on the website]

D. WHERE IS BEIT-EL?

Beit-El (lit. "the house of G-d") is a general name that may be given to more than one place. We know that Avraham dwelled in between "Beit-El" and Ai (chapters 12 and 13), and we note that this place had always been called "Beit-El". This site is identified as being close to

the settlement of Beit-El today, slightly east of it, in the Arab village of Bittin.

But Yaakov gave the name "Beit-El" to a place that had formerly been called "Luz," and this may be a different place. Perhaps we may locate it north of Beit-El today, in the mountains overlooking the settlement of Shilo from the south (indeed, the name offers us the possibility of matching them). Shilo is not a specific, defined, bounded location – for consecrated food may be eaten in any place from which Shilo (the place of the Sanctuary before the Temple in Jerusalem was built) may be seen. We assume that Yaakov's Beit-El is related to and anchored in the sanctity of Shilo in later generations. Support for this thesis is to be found in the verses describing the war over the concubine in Giv'a:

"Bnei Yisrael and all the nation went up AND CAME TO BEIT-EL, and they wept and sat there before G-d and fasted on that day until the evening, and they offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings before G-d. And Bnei Yisrael asked of G-d, for there the Ark of G-d's Covenant was in those days. And Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon, stood before Him in those days..." (Shoftim 20:26-28) Here all the commentaries note, correctly, that Bnei Yisrael gathered at Shilo, for there the Ark of the Covenant was located, and Pinchas with it.

If we accept this assumption, then the Beit-El of our parasha is not left orphaned and alone, and G-d's revelation to Yaakov in Beit-El – both in our parasha and in next week's parasha, when Yaakov returns from Padan-Aram – are not left devoid of meaning for all future generations.

We find an answer to our question: why did the congregation of Bnei Yisrael gather at Shilo and establish G-d's Ark there in the days of Yehoshua? After all, no mention is made until then of anything special related to Shilo; why, then, was this place chosen for the Sanctuary to be erected?

We can also now understand Yaakov's mysterious words to Yehuda, in his deathbed blessing:

"The staff shall not depart from Yehuda nor the scepter from his descendants, until Shilo will come – and the people will obey him." (Bereishit 49:10)

The commentators have difficulty explaining this verse. In my view, Yaakov handed over kingship to Yehuda until G-d would rest His Shekhina in Shilo, which Yaakov knew from the dream of the ladder in Beit-El, which is Shilo. >From the moment that the Ark came to Shilo, G-d Himself would lead Israel, not any one of the tribes. And the place of Shilo was given by Yaakov to his favorite son – Yosef, the firstborn of Rachel, whom he dedicated to the priestly service. Therefore, he raised him as "the nazirite of his brothers," in the same way that Channa raised Shmuel.

Of Yosef's two sons, Yaakov chose Ephraim: "Yisrael put forth his right hand and he stretched it over the head of Ephraim – who was the younger, and his left hand over the head of Menashe; he crossed his hands, for Menashe was the firstborn." (48:14) To my mind, Yaakov placed his right hand over Ephraim's head in order to hint that he would receive the southern portion (= right side) of Yosef's inheritance in the land – the portion in which Shilo is located.

We may ask: why did Yaakov not also mention Jerusalem, which is more important than Shilo-Beit-El, and which was given to Yehuda and Binyamin?

I believe that this is the significance of Chazal's teaching that Yaakov sought to "reveal the end," but it was hidden from him. Yaakov saw, in his prophecy, as far as Shilo, but he did not see the future beyond that – Jerusalem. Perhaps this was a punishment to him for his instinctive, unauthorized selection of Yosef, and of Rachel, his mother. After all, G-d chose both Rachel and Leah, both of whom together established the House of Israel. He also went on to choose Jerusalem, where Rachel

and Leah were joined together, in the persons of Yehuda and Binyamin. This is the Jerusalem that we pray for G-d to give us the merit to see rebuilt, in all its glory – soon and in our days, Amen.

NOTES:

[1] There is reason to identify the location of this Beit Midrash as Avela, in northern Syria. I shall not elaborate here on the reasons for this identification; I learned this idea from Rav Yoel bin-Nun.

[2] The angels watched over Yaakov just as the keruvim watched over the Tablets of the Covenant. Compare Bereishit 3:24 concerning the keruvim guarding the way to the Tree of Life.

Translated by Kaeren Fish

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From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: November 17, 2004 To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Vayetzey WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5765

BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics.

For final rulings, consult your Rav

TALLIS KATAN: QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

QUESTION: Is one required to wear a garment with tzitzis fringes attached to it?

DISCUSSION: Although Biblical law does not require one to put tzitzis on a garment unless the garment that he is wearing has four square corners, which most garments nowadays do not have, it is fitting and proper for every male to wear a tallis katan (a small four-cornered garment) all day. By doing so, he fulfills an important mitzvah, one that serves as a constant reminder of all of the other mitzvos of the Torah.(1)Accordingly, it has become customary for all G-d-fearing people to wear a tallis katan all day.(2)Since this has become the prevalent custom, one may not deviate from the accepted practice. Nowadays, therefore, one is obligated to wear a tallis katan all day long.(3)Indeed, those who are meticulous in their mitzvah observance do not walk four cubits (approximately eight feet) without tzitzis.(4)

QUESTION: Does a Tallis Katan require a blessing?

DISCUSSION: Married men and those who wear a large tallis during davening need not recite a separate blessing over their tallis katan. Rather, when they recite the proper blessing over the tallis gadol, they should have the tallis katan in mind.(5)Unmarried men who do not wear a tallis gadol recite the blessing of Al mitzvas tzitzis on a tallis katan. If the tallis katan is of questionable size(6)or material,(7)a blessing should not be said.

Although all married(8)men should wear a tallis gadol during davening, they should not forgo davening with a minyan if a tallis is unavailable in shul.(9)[In regard to tefillin, however, it is better to daven without a minyan than to daven without tefillin.(10)]

Before the blessing on a tallis gadol or katan may be recited, the tzitzis fringes should be separated from one another.(11)Some poskim(12) imply that if the fringes are intertwined, then one has not fulfilled the mitzvah of tzitzis at all, while other poskim hold that b'dieved one has fulfilled the mitzvah.(13) [If taking time to separate the tzitzis will cause one to miss tefillah b'tzibur, he may rely on the lenient view(14)] All poskim agree that if the fringes are tied [or glued] together, then the mitzvah has not been fulfilled and the blessing said over them is said in vain.(15)

Often, the chulyos (the top segment of the fringes which is wound and knotted) become unraveled or loosened. If this happens, the fringes should be rewound and knotted. On Shabbos, however, this is strictly forbidden. Tightening or knotting tzitzis fringes on Shabbos may even be Biblically prohibited.(16)

QUESTION: L'chatchilah, can one wear a tallis katan made out of cotton?

DISCUSSION: There is a dispute among the Rishonim as to whether it is a Biblical requirement to attach tzitzis to a four-cornered garment made of cotton. Some Rishonim(17)hold that only woolen and linen garments are Biblically obligated in tzitzis, while others(18)include cotton as well. Both views are quoted

in the Shulchan Aruch,(19) and the Rama rules like the view that maintains that cotton garments are Biblically required. Nevertheless, many poskim advise a G-d-fearing person to wear only a tallis katan made from wool and thereby fulfill the mitzvah according to all views.(20) Other poskim, however, do not insist on wool,(21) and there were eminent Torah scholars(22) who wore cotton garments to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzis.

QUESTION: May a woman attach tzitzis strings to a garment (tallis katan or tallis gadol)?

DISCUSSION: The Talmud(23) excludes women from the writing of tefillin since they are not commanded to wear tefillin. Following this line of reasoning, R' Tam ruled that since women are not commanded to wear tzitzis, they are also not permitted to attach the tzitzis to the garment. The majority of Rishonim, however, do not agree with this ruling. They allow women to be involved in all phases of tzitzis production. The Shulchan Aruch(24) rules with the majority. Nevertheless, in deference to the minority opinion [and for other reasons as well], the Rama advises that l'chatchilah, women should not be allowed to put tzitzis on a garment (25). One should follow the Rama's directive(26). The Rama's restriction, however, applies specifically to inserting the strings through the hole and knotting the first set of chulyos and the double knot immediately following(27). All poskim agree that after the fact, if these procedures were done by women, the tzitzis are kosher and need not be restrung(28).

QUESTION: May a minor attach tzitzis fringes to a garment?

DISCUSSION: Based on the previously mentioned Rama, some poskim rule that a minor below the age of bar mitzvah should not attach tzitzis to a garment. Other poskim feel that minors are not excluded and may attach tzitzis to a garment. The Mishnah Berurah(29) rules that l'chatchilah, it is not proper to allow a minor to do so.

A minor, however, may prepare tzitzis for himself or for another minor. Even when he becomes bar mitzvah, he does not have to unknit the tzitzis and restring them(30).

There is, however, another issue concerning minors attaching tzitzis to a garment. When tzitzis are placed on a garment, they must be attached with the intention of "l'shem mitzvas tzitzis," for the sake of the mitzvah of tzitzis. Since a minor may not be mature enough to concentrate properly, he may not attach tzitzis to a garment unless he is under the supervision of an adult. If a minor was not properly supervised, then the tzitzis must be removed and reattached properly(31.)

QUESTION: Is it permitted to attach tzitzis fringes to a garment at night?

DISCUSSION: There are some poskim(32) who recommend that one should not do so. Their reasoning is based on the halachic principle of ta'aseh (you should make) v'lo min ha-asui (it should not be automatically done): Since one is not obligated to wear tzitzis at night(33), it follows that one cannot produce kosher tzitzis at night, either. The vast majority of poskim (34) however, reject this argument. The Mishnah Berurah does not discuss this issue, but the Chafetz Chayim is quoted(35) as permitting tzitzis to be attached at night. The Chazon Ish is reported(36) as having asked that tzitzis be prepared for him at night.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Bamidbar 15:39 [quoted in O.C. 24:1]: "That you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them." In addition, the Talmud (Menachos 41a) says that wearing a tallis katan protects a person from Hashem's anger. 2 Aruch ha-Shulchan 8:2; Tzitz Eliezer 8:4; Yechaveh Da'as 4:2. 3 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:4. See also Igros Moshe O.C. 5:20-25. 4 Mishnah Berurah 8:1. See also Tzitz Eliezer 14:49, who says that the tallis katan should be left on even if one is suffering from the heat. 5 Mishnah Berurah 8:24, 30; Aruch ha-Shulchan 8:16. This is especially recommended since often the tallis katan may not be the right size according to all views. In order to avoid reciting a blessing on the tallis katan that may be l'vatalah, it is best to recite the blessing over the tallis gadol. Some poskim rule that if there will be a "long break" until the tallis gadol is worn, a blessing should be said on the tallis katan - Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky in Orchos Rabbeinu 1:48; oral ruling heard from Harav M. Feinstein. See Siach Halachah 8:47-5 for elaboration. 6 See Shulchan Aruch O.C. 16 for the laws of the proper size. 7 Rama O.C. 8:6. The following segment discusses which materials require tzitzis. 8 The Sephardic and German custom is that unmarried men wear a tallis gadol, too. 9 Imrei Yosher 2:201-2; Be'er Moshe 5:5. 10 Mishnah Berurah 66:40. 11 O.C. 8:7. 12 Artzos ha-Chayim O.C. 8; Be'ur Halachah 8:7 according to the view of the Gr"a and Olas Tamid. 13 Aruch ha-Shulchan 8:13; Chazon Ish O.C. 3:9. 14 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 9:7; Mishnah Berurah 8:18; Aruch ha-Shulchan, 8:13. The Artzos ha-Chayim [quoted above] holds that one must separate his tzitzis even at the expense of tefillah b'tzibur. 15 Chazon Ish O.C. 3:9. 16 Ketzos ha-Shulchan (Badei ha-Shulchan 317:4); Az Nidberu 3:22; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 15:50. 17 Rif, Rambam. 18 Rashi, Tosafos, Rosh. 19 O.C. 9:1. 20 Chayei Adam 11:5; Shulchan Aruch Harav 9:4; Mishnah Berurah 9:5; Igros Moshe O.C. 1:2; 2:1; 3:1; 3:52. In Igros Moshe O.C. 5:20-25, Harav Feinstein adds that one who suffers from the heat is not required to wear woolen garments, although he himself was particular to do so. 21 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and Aruch ha-Shulchan do not mention this stringency. 22 Chazon Ish (quoted in Shoneh Halachos 9:1) and Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu 3:188) based on the ruling of the Gr"a (Ma'asei Rav 17). There are several reasons given why the Gr"a ruled so - See Tzitzis-Halachah Pesukah pg. 77. 23 Gittin 45b. 24 O.C. 14:1. 25 Many poskim rule that other mitzvos [such as putting sechach on a sukkah] are included in this prohibition. See, however, Igros Moshe O.C. 5:40-3. 26 See Be'ur Halachah 14:1. Aruch ha-Shulchan 14:7

refers to this stringency as a chumra b'alma. 27 Mishnah Berurah 14:2. 28 Mishnah Berurah 14:5. 29 In 14:4 he quotes both views without a decision. In Be'ur Halachah he rules that it is appropriate to be stringent. 30 Be'ur Halachah 14:1, since we view that situation as a b'dieved, and b'dieved the tzitzis are valid according to all views. 31 Mishnah Berurah 14:4. 32 Tosefos Chayim on Chayei Adam 11:1; Salmas Chayim 3:28. 33 The Talmud (Menachos 43a) derives from the verse "and you should see them" that there is no mitzvah of tzitzis at night. 34 Tehillah l'David 18:4; Aruch ha-Shulchan 14:7; Kaf ha-Chayim 18:2; Harav A.Y. Bloch (quoted by Harav C. Stein in Imrei Shalom 1:1). 35 Rivevos Efrayim O.C. 3:27. 36 Dinim v'Hanhagos Chazon Ish 2:11; Orchos Rabbeinu 3:188.

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Parsha November 19, 2004 <http://www.rabbiwein.com/parsha-index.html>
VAYETZE <http://rabbiwein.com/column-845.html> There is perhaps no parsha in the Torah with which the Jewish world today can identify so fully as with this week's parsha of Vayeitze. Yaakov is dealing with two great and dangerous adversaries, both of whom are close to him personally and understand and appreciate his greatness. Nevertheless, both Eisav and Lavan are out to destroy Yaakov - to eliminate him and all that he stands for from the world. Eisav states his aim openly and without embarrassment. "After my father's death I will murder Yaakov." Yaakov will have to deal with this threat to his existence and he successfully does so through a variety of tactics and measures. The open anti-Semites in our world state brazenly that they want to make the world Judenrein. The fanatics of Islam and the haters who populate the neo-Nazi parties in the Western world make no secret of their intentions regarding our future. But they will not succeed. We will not allow them to succeed and the Lord of Israel has stated many times that He will never forsake or desert us completely. Eisav can cripple Yaakov, as he has done many times over our history, but he cannot vanquish and destroy Yaakov. The Jewish people are too strong and resilient to allow for such an occurrence. We will fight this overt anti-Jewish hatred with all of our heart and soul and might. And we shall triumph. More insidious and, according to the rabbis of the Pesach Hagada, more dangerous and lethal is the hatred that Lavan holds for us. His complaints stem from academia and professors, artists and intellectuals. He is convinced that if there will be no Yaakov, then everyone else in the world can live happily ever after. He has nothing but praise for Yaakov - "The Lord has blessed me because of you." He acknowledges Yaakov's contributions to civilization and humanity, his talents and Nobel prizes. But that does not sway Lavan emotionally. Behind the veneer of his intellectuality and liberal humanism, Lavan is a killer, a murderer of his own family, simply because he detests Yaakov and all that he stands for. Lavan has diplomatic solutions for Yaakov's problems with Eisav. Lavan wants a single-state solution to the Israeli-Arab war; he wants the anachronistic Jew and his baffling religion to disappear; he really wants what is best for us but we are too stupid to accept his suggestions. Lavan is thriving today - in the UN, the European Union, academia and unfortunately even amongst some of Yaakov's descendants. But Lavan also is to be vanquished and left in the ash heap of history. After four thousand years of history, not much has really changed. Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein
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