

פרשת ויצא
Parshat Vayeitzei

אשרינו | Ashreinu

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



GOING AND COMING

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

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ZOHARA LAM (23')

ASHIRA MEYEROWITZ (21')

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PENINA KAHANE (22')

I would like to share something that I have already shared many times, but I truly love this idea and believe that it continues to have a tremendous message for our daily lives.

Often in life we are faced with decisions to make. Which Yeshiva/Seminary to pick? Which college to attend? How should I spend my free time? Which chesed opportunities do I take upon myself? How do we decide which one to choose? We find a similar dilemma in this week's parsha.

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב, מִבְּעַר שְׁבַע; וַיֵּלֶךְ, חָרָנָה

“And Yaakov leaves from Beer Sheva and goes toward Charan” (Bereishit 28:10).

The commentaries grapple with the extra words in

this pasuk. Why do we need to be told that Yaakov leaves in addition to where he goes? Is it not obvious that if he is going towards Charan, that he would be leaving the place where he was currently living, Be'er Sheva?

Rashi offers a famous answer to this question. He tells us that the וַיֵּצֵא of Yaakov is coming to teach us a lesson. When a tzadik leaves a place, it makes an impression on that place. Why? When the tzadik, in this case Yaakov, was in a given place, his beauty, splendor, and majesty enveloped that location. However, when the tzadik leaves, all of that departs. The leaving of the tzadik can be felt in the entire place. The Beit HaLevi, in his commentary on the Torah, explains that each word, וַיֵּלֶךְ and וַיֵּצֵא, is teaching us something unique about our decisions. When a person decides to go somewhere, he can be going for one of two reasons: either because he no longer wants to be in his current location or because he needs/wants to get to the new location. Yaakov leaves for both reasons. He leaves Be'er Sheva because Rivka urges him to flee

in order to escape Esav's wrath. Yitzchak, however, wishes Yaakov to go to Charan in order to find a suitable wife from Lavan's house. So Yaakov, being an obedient son, obeys both of his parents' wishes and relocates with both reasons in mind.

Every morning before Ashrei we recite the following pasuk from Mishlei (19:21):

רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום

“There are many thoughts in the heart of Man, but the advice of Hashem, it shall stand.” I once heard an explanation from Rabbi Yamin Goldsmith, Menahel of Shaalvim for Women, that highlights our message. What Shlomo HaMelech is telling us is: We have many decisions to make in our lives and the final decisions we make represent what Hashem wanted for us. We have to go about weighing the pros and cons, but in the end, when we make the decision, that is the one that Hashem wanted for us.

Nobody can answer that question except yourself, but you should ask yourself what has motivated you towards the decisions that you ultimately make. A person should focus on the reason behind his or her decision. Why are you choosing that option? Is it the easy way out? Is there more to gain with the other option? Are we just afraid to take the challenge of the first choice? Hopefully, if we think through our decisions and with Hashem's help, we will ultimately achieve success and all of our decisions will be met with great excitement, accomplishment, and satisfaction.

SENSITIVE ACTIONS

ZOHARA LAM (23')

In Parshat Vayitzei, Yaakov wants to marry Rachel, who is the daughter of Lavan. As the story goes, Yaakov must work for Lavan in order to marry Rachel, but Lavan deceives him and gives him Leah instead. At the time of the marriage between Leah and the unassuming Yaakov, Rachel quickly noticed what was going on, and, according to the midrash, selflessly allowed her sister to marry Yaakov. She told her sister the secret signs that Yaa-

kov and Rachel had between themselves in order to make Yaakov believe that it was really Rachel he was marrying.

How was Rachel possibly able to do this? How could she give up seven years of Yaakov's hard work within a few minutes? What did Rachel understand that we don't? Rachel was careful and sensitive. She knew never to embarrass anyone and always put others before herself. She was selfless to an extreme. Rachel knew that if Yaakov noticed the woman who he was marrying wasn't Rachel, Leah would be embarrassed. Chazal compare embarrassing someone to murder, and Rachel clearly understood the seriousness of that emotion.

Rachel gave up so much to keep her sister happy, but her sacrifice didn't go unnoticed. Many years later, Hashem is angry with the Jewish people. He exiles them and promises to never return them to their home, saying that nothing can convince Him to change the decree. Rachel cries out to Hashem, to which Hashem promises her that her children, the Jewish people, will eventually return home.

It is because of Rachel's compassion, sensitivity, and understanding that the Jews will one day all return to Eretz Yisrael. We can learn from this to take other people's feelings into account. One word or action can make or break someone's day, so it is essential to be understanding and kind. One should always think, “How will my actions impact this person?” With these small but important lessons that we learn from Rachel, we will slowly but surely bring Mashiach.

POWER OF PRAYER

ASHIRA MEYEROWITZ (21')

In this week's parsha, Parshat Vayitzei, the Torah says:

וַתֵּרָא רָחֵל כִּי לֹא יֵלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב וַתִּקְנָה רָחֵל
בְּאֶחָתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל יַעֲקֹב הִבָּה לִּי בָנִים וְאִם
אֵין יִמְתֶּה אֲנֹכִי וַיַּחַר אַף יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר
הִתַּחַת אֱלֹקִים אֲנֹכִי אֲשֶׁר מָנַע מִמֶּנּוּ פְּרִי בֶטֶן

When Rachel saw that she had borne Yaakov no

children, she became envious of her sister; and Rachel said to Yaakov, "Give me children, or I shall die." Jacob was incensed at Rachel, and said, "Can I take the place of God, who has denied you fruit of the womb?" (Bereishit 30:1-2).

This scene seems very out of character for Rachel, so what is Rachel really asking for? According to Rashi, Rachel is asking Yaakov to daven for her. However, why would Rachel say that if she doesn't have children it'll be as if she is dead? Isn't that a bit overdramatic?

Rashi explains that without children, one has no lineage, and therefore Rachel felt as if she would be dead without kids. However, this raises another question: why didn't Yaakov daven for Rachel like Yitzchak davened for Rivkah? And why does he respond, "I'm not Hashem?"

The Ramban disagrees with Rashi, arguing that Yaakov was wrong for being insensitive towards a barren woman and that he was punished for his actions. He also explains that Rachel said she would die because she meant that she would die of pain and heartache from not having children. This exclamation, according to Ramban, was a threat to Yaakov. This angered him and caused him to respond that he could not control her ability to have children. Additionally, the Ramban explains that Yaakov had been waiting for Rachel to daven to Hashem for children before he would daven for this on his own.

According to the Radak, Yaakov became angry because Rachel didn't even ask him to daven for her -- she told him, "give me children," even though only Hashem could help her with this. After davening to Hashem, however, Rachel is blessed with children.

This teaches us that davening can override what we consider impossible and ultimately impacts the trajectory of our lives.



WHY HASHEM ACTUALLY COMPARED BNEI YISRAEL TO DUST

LEORA WINOGRAD (21')

In this week's parsha, after Yaakov's dream, Hashem appears to Yaakov and tells him that his descendants will be like the dust of the earth.

Usually, we immediately think that this means that Bnei Yisrael will be so great that you won't be able to count them because it's impossible to count the dust of the earth. However, there might be a much deeper meaning to this famous line.

The Sforno offers a very profound *peirush*; he says that when we walk around we kick and trample the dust under our feet. We treat it with disdain and without value. However, the people who step on the dust and don't give it a second thought will eventually be buried under that same dust.

This is exactly why Hashem says Bnei Yisrael will be like the dust of the earth, because we may be treated as if we are subhuman and without any care or value, but in the end the nations who try to persecute us will be the nations who cease to exist and we will be the nation to prevail.

After Hashem tells Yaakov his descendants will be like the dust, He says they will be scattered to the west and east, to the north and to the south. Notice that the directions Hashem describes are neither clockwise nor counter-clockwise.

The Kli Yakar explains that just like the rapid switch from one extreme to another, our fate will very quickly change from a completely dark *galut* to complete *geulah*. We are continuously tormented and persecuted by bigger countries, yet we still prevail against all odds. In the same way we can clearly see Hashem has guaranteed that we will not cease to exist.

May we also have the privilege to see the ultimate *geulah* in our time.

DO THE RIGHT THING

PENINA KAHANE (22')

In this week's parsha, Parshat Vayeitzei, Yaakov strikes a deal with his uncle Lavan. Yaakov will work for Lavan for seven years, and after seven years he will be able to marry Rachel, Lavan's daughter. Yaakov worked for seven years, but when it was time for him to marry Rachel, he ends up marrying Leah. Lavan deceived Yaakov and gave him Leah instead of Rachel.

The pasuk states:

וַיְהִי בִבְקֹר וַיְהִי הוּא לְאֵה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל לָבָן מֶה זֹאת
עָשִׂיתָ לִּי הֲלֹא בְרַחֵל עַבְדָּתִי עִמָּךְ וְלָמָּה רַמִּיתָנִי

"When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I was in your service for Rachel! Why did you deceive me?" (Bereishit 29:25).

Yaakov earned marrying Rachel; he worked for her, so why did he deserve to be deceived by Lavan and have to marry Leah in addition to Rachel?

The Midrash Rabbah explains that Yaakov deceived his father Yitzchak when it came to giving the blessing of the *bechor*: "Did not your father call you Esav, and you answered him! So did you call me and I answered you!" (Midrash Rabbah - Bereishit 70:19). Esav was supposed to marry Leah and Yaakov was to marry Rachel. However, since Yaakov tricked his father, he now needed to be tricked into marrying Leah.

This teaches us the idea of *middah keneged middah*. Your punishment or reward is equal to the action that deserves the punishment or reward. Hashem always treats us fairly; it is important to remember that, because it can stop us from doing something we'll regret or push us towards doing the right thing.

Through the story of the deception of Yaakov, this week's parsha teaches us that our actions always have consequences.



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