

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

כי מעט אשר לך לפני יפרץ לרב ויברך ה' אתך לרגלי ועתה מתי אעשה גם אנכי לביתי ... (ל-ו)

The period during which Yaakov lived in Lavan's house was fraught with friction. Although it begins with a welcoming reception, soon after an agreement is made concerning Yaakov's marriage to Rachel. Yaakov is deceived by his father-in-law. This phenomenon repeats itself later. When Yaakov wishes to return to the Land of Canaan, Lavan persuades him to agree to another contract regarding the division of property which leads to further tension between them. With the backing of his wives, Yaakov flees from his father-in-law without his knowledge. Rachel saw fit to take her father's idols with her. Lavan sets out after him. Lavan complains about the manner in which Yaakov left his home and about the disappearance of his idols. An argument develops between them, which heats up further when Lavan fails to find his idols among the belongings of Yaakov's families. In the end, the two sides reach an agreement and part company. Yaakov maintains his position and an uneasy peace takes hold which remains for the rest of their days. Rather than a war, Yaakov and Lavan retain their peace.

R' David Ashear shliita relays an incredible story that enlightens us to endure the situation that *Hashem* puts us in, to recognize that *Hashem* is in every situation, and to know that it's there for our very best interest.

A man had a son who was very successful in *Torah* learning. He was always from the best in his *shiur* and he was considered a top *bochur*. When it came time for *shidduchim*, he was told of a girl with the finest qualities. After further investigation, though, he learned that she was slightly hard of hearing and did not want to pursue the *shidduch*. The father of the girl told the father of the boy that he would give one million *shekel* as a dowry for his daughter. The boy's father really wanted his son to be able to learn with peace of mind, and he did not have the funds to support him. The girl did have sterling *middos* and was able to hear, albeit with difficulty, so they agreed to go out and, soon enough, the *shidduch* was finalized.

A couple of months after the wedding, the father of the girl informed the couple that the million *shekel* that he had given them was actually a loan he had taken out in their names. In essence, he had basically lied to get his daughter married.

The young man obviously had no way of paying back such a debt, especially since he used most of the money to buy an apartment. And he honestly didn't want to have anything to do with his father-in-law anymore.

He went to **R' Chaim Kanievsky zt"l**, to ask him what to do. R' Chaim told him to overcome his natural inclination and give honor to his father-in-law despite what he did, and he will see that in the end, everything will turn out fine. The boy obediently listened, although he really did not feel like honoring a man who so ruthlessly deceived him. On *Yom Kippur*, he bought his father-in-law a very special *aliyah*, and on *Simchas Torah*, he bought him another one.

This *avreich* was learning in the *Mir Yeshivah* together with a *chaburah* of other Americans like himself. One day, a new *bochur* arrived in the *yeshivah*, an only child to his parents, and he was very homesick. He wasn't happy with his bed, the food was not to his taste, and he wanted to return home. When the *avreich* found out about the boy's problems, he tried to give him *chizuk*. He told him that he was also an only child and that he also had had a difficult time when he had first started out in the *yeshivah*, but now he loves it. He offered to learn with this boy and be his *chavrusa*, and the boy accepted.

A few weeks into the winter *zman*, the new *bochur's* father flew on his private jet to *Eretz Yisroel* to visit his son. While there, the boy told him of how this nice young man saved his entire year and how much he loves the *yeshivah* because of him. His father was so appreciative that he asked the young man what he could do to help him. The young man, seeing how wealthy his *chavrusa's* father was, told him about the million *shekel* debt and how it had happened.

The wealthy man happily went and paid the debt for him in full. His apartment was now free and clear!

R' Chaim understood that the secret to bountiful *beracha* and all kinds of blessing comes when a person goes against his inner inclination and accepts his situation instead of disliking it. By honoring his father-in-law, this *avreich* merited *beracha*.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות ייברך יעקב שדה ארם ויעבד ישראל באשה ובאשה שמר ... (וישע יב-ג)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAPTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN What is the connection between the notion of *Yaakov Avinu* fleeing to the fields of *Aram* and the fact that he worked for and guarded sheep for a wife?

The **Arizal** explains that when a man and woman get married, part of the man's spiritual essence becomes infused into the woman, something which does not leave the body of his wife even after her death. In the case of *Yaakov*, whose essence was infused into his two wives, *Rachel* and *Leah*, it is interesting to note that the essence embedded in *Rachel* eventually passed on to her son *Binyamin*, as the *pasuk* says: "*It happened when her soul left her, for she was about to die...she called his name Binyamin.*" The spiritual essence which *Yaakov* infused

Rachel with was called "נפשה" and eventually became *Binyamin*. The spirit *Yaakov* had infused *Leah* with, however, remained within her, and eventually became implanted within the righteous *Avigayil HaCarmeli*, wife of *Dovid HaMelech*. This also brings to light the concept of *Yibum* and how a levirate marriage is based on the brother of the deceased being able to access this residual spiritual essence of his deceased brother within his widowed wife.

Says the *Arizal*, this brings to light the understanding that *Yaakov* fled his single status and not only simply "worked for a wife" but also "guarded sheep for a woman - his wife. Nothing is ever truly lost in this world. Eventually - it may take generations - something will come out of such an action.

ויגש וישק לו וירה את ריה בנדיו ויברכה ויאמר ראה ריה בני בריה שדה אשר ברכו ה' ... (כו-ב)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ZT"l

מחשבת הלב

Rashi comments on the seemingly peculiar order of how the *malachim* went on the ladder in *Yaakov's* dream; first they were going up, then going down, instead of going down first. He explains that first the *malachim of Eretz Yisroel* took leave of *Yaakov Avinu*, and only afterwards, the *malachim of the land* descended to further protect him.

One of the earlier *Rebbes*, while learning *Chumash* as a child, had an uncanny knack for asking **Rashi's** queries on his own even before seeing the words inside. It is told that as they learned this above *posuk*, his *cheder Rabbi* expected the prodigious child to ask **Rashi's** question here. He did not. When asked why not, the child wittily responded "It was only a dream!"

Indeed, it was a dream, but both he and we know that *Yaakov's* dream was anything but ordinary. Which brings to mind the well-known legend of the **Ponovezher Rav zt"l** embarking on the construction of his famous *yeshivah* during the height of World War II. People were astounded and expressed their disbelief. "Are you dreaming?!" they asked with wonder and consternation. "I may be dreaming," the *Ponovezher Rav* replied, "but I'm not sleeping!"

Perhaps there's another possible explanation to the above *posuk*. The *Medrash* says "עולים וירדים בו" - in him, referring to *Yaakov* himself, not the ladder. The spiritual well-being of one's angel is directly correlated to the person himself. If the person is enjoying a spiritual *aliyah*, then *עולים* - his *malachim* too, will rise. If he declines *chas v'shalom* in *ruchniyus*, so will they. Thus, the *Torah*, urging us all to improve, first writes "עולים". And since understandably there are inevitable bumps in the road, it also says "ירדים". The *machshava* is that we must realize that like the ladder itself, there are ups and downs in life. As long as our life's game of "Chutes & Ladders" progresses mostly upward, we cannot be discouraged by the occasional inevitable slide. Pick yourself up, brush yourself off, and charge upward. If you do so, you'll be a winner.

משל למה הדבר דומה

וידי בבקר והנה הוא לאה ... (כז-ב)

משל: Scandalous accusations are detrimental. When a scandal breaks out, it is not just the person or people who are being accused that are affected, but also the numerous people surrounding them who are very often left impacted. Then there are the "aftershocks" of the damage as well.

Often, it takes a scandal to run its course before dying down and it leaves devastating destruction in its place. On the other hand, often times there is a clear-headed quick thinking individual who extinguishes the scandal before it can burn out of control, or even do any damage.

A story is told of a certain city in which scandalous allegations were made that the *shochet* did not check an animal's lungs properly. A terrible dispute resulted, with *lashon hara* being spoken on both sides, and many people's

lives and reputations were destroyed in the interim.

When the *gadol hador*, **R' Chaim Volozhin zt"l**, heard about it he felt compelled to point out something fascinating: Checking the lungs is a rabbinical obligation, whereas the prohibitions of *lashon hara* and dispute are Biblical. Those zealous individual who wanted the ruling of the rabbis to be kept properly, were being lax about the Biblical prohibition!

נמשל: When *Rachel* realized that her father was about to switch her for her sister on her wedding night, she realized the magnitude of the catastrophe that was about to occur. *Yaakov* might become furious, and the wedding night - pandemonium! Instead of standing by the wayside and letting things play out themselves, because after all she wouldn't be at fault, she thought clearly and quickly and gave the "simanim" to her sister to save the night. We are taught, in the merit of *Rachel* the final redemption will come about.

ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה ... (כז-ג)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

Rashi tells us that when a *tzaddik* leaves a place, it makes an impression (רשם), "for while the righteous man is in the city, he is its beauty, he is its splendor, he is its majesty. When he departs from the city, its beauty has departed, its splendor has departed, its majesty has departed." The *Medrash* comments that only when a *tzaddik* leaves a city is he missed; when he's in the city, however, he is not appreciated. Unfortunately, this a very common phenomenon - people do not appreciate what they have until it is gone!

The Hebrew word for appreciation is translated literally as "הערכה" but when we discuss the *middah* of thankfulness, we call it "הכרת הטוב" because the essence of this *middah* is to recognize the good that one has within him. Just being a good person alone does not mean that you will be appreciative. There are many people who have alot; and yet they are very poor! There are those who have little; and yet they are extremely wealthy. Why are they wealthy? Because they appreciate whatever they have. The value of appreciation is what makes one a wealthy person.

In truth, the essence of a Jew and his connection to his Creator, is dependent on this *middah* of *Hakaras Hatov*. True *Hakaras Hatov* is recognition (*Hakaras*) of the One and only Source of Goodness (*Hatov*) - which is *Hashem*. The more a person sees *Hashem* in his life, the more appreciation he will feel. For this reason, a Jew is called a "Yehudi" (יהודי) and the very first words that he speaks when he wakes up in the morning is "Modeh Ani." (מודה).

R' Shimshon Pincus zt"l points out that we say "Modeh Ani" and not the more grammatically correct "Ani Modeh" because the first word that a Jew should pronounce upon opening his eyes should not be "Ani" - making it all about himself, but rather a way to say thank you to *Hashem* for giving him back his life each morning.