



Parshas Vayetzei

December 6, 2019

A Taste of Torah

Rescue Mission

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

It was time to go. Yaakov informs his father-in-law Lavan that he has paid his dues for Lavan's two daughters, having worked fourteen years for the pair he married. But Lavan isn't ready for his son-in-law to depart just yet, and he asks Yaakov to hang around and work for him, telling him to name his price. Yaakov agrees, pointing out that after all, he does need to make a living at some point. Yaakov makes a deal with Lavan that will entitle him to certain types of sheep that will be born in the flock he is shepherding. Yaakov ends up staying on for another six years, during which time he becomes quite wealthy, despite Lavan's numerous attempts to cheat him.

Lavan wasn't the greatest guy to be around, and Yaakov should have been looking - and really had been looking, before Lavan's offer - to catch the first flight back to Canaan. Why does Yaakov agree to Lavan's plea after initially deciding to return home? And why does it only occur to Yaakov that he ought to consider his livelihood after Lavan's offer?

The Shem Mishmuel (Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztain of Sochatchov; 1855-1926) notes that generally, wicked people cannot tolerate a *tzaddik* (righteous person). Why, then, was Lavan so interested in having the very righteous Yaakov remain? Even if he believed he would benefit financially from his presence, he should have been repulsed by his presence.

Wicked people may contain elements of *kedusha*, sanctity and holiness, explains the Shem Mishmuel. If those

sparks of holiness fail to improve the wicked person, they must be retrieved and expressed in the world. These sparks of *kedusha* may cause a wicked man to feel a kinship with a *tzaddik*, and is an indication to the *tzaddik* that there is something present that requires his attention.

It is clear that Lavan possessed some sparks of holiness, considering that he was the father of the great Matriarchs Rochel and Leah. He was also the father of the two maidservants and eventual concubines of Yaakov, Bilha and Zilpa, who were very righteous individuals as well and the mothers of four tribes. These four great women, Lavan's offspring, needed to be "rescued" from Lavan's clutches. But after Yaakov got Lavan to allow him to marry all four of these great women in exchange for his fourteen years of work, he figured that he had already retrieved all the *kedusha* that Lavan possessed, and there was no good left in him. His work seemingly done, Yaakov prepared to leave. But, strangely, Lavan was still interested in Yaakov. This odd occurrence told Yaakov that there was still something belonging to Lavan that needed to be brought into the realm of holiness. It wasn't Lavan himself, as he was too far gone. Yaakov concluded that part of Lavan's wealth needed to be taken. He realized that there was more to be done, and so he agreed to remain.

Fast-forward six years. Despite Lavan's valiant attempts to hang on to his sheep by hook or by crook, Hashem has enabled Yaakov to successfully achieve his goals. And suddenly, Yaakov notices that Lavan is no longer

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Stories for the Soul

No Prayer Unanswered

based on a story from achim.org

Bitterly unhappy, a woman once came to the home of Rabbi Aryeh Levine (1885-1969). "Let me sit in your house," she pleaded, "and cry and weep before you."

"You may surely sit," he replied kindly, "and even cry and weep - but not before me. Direct your tears to Hashem who listens to weeping and hears the cries of His human beings."

Taking a seat, the woman simply began a lament without end, unable to stop. In between her tears, she managed to sob out her story of woe about her husband who was mortally sick.

"Do not cry so," said Reb Aryeh. "Hashem will surely have mercy and grant a cure." But alas, a few days later the woman returned to tell him that her husband had passed away. And she wept anew with bitter tears. Reb Aryeh did his best to comfort her, seeking words that would touch her heart.

Finally, with some spirit she answered, "I will accept your solace and stop my lament - but only if you tell me what became of the thousands of tears I shed over the Tehillim, the Book of Psalms, when I said its words of prayer to the Master of the world, imploring Him to cure my husband when he lay ill. It was all for nothing, wasn't it?"

"I will tell you," said Reb Aryeh gently. "When your life on earth ends and you come before the court of justice in heaven, you will find out how many severe and harsh

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Kollel Happenings

FAMILY FUN AT JEWISH FAMILY EXTRAVAGANZA ON DEC. 25TH

Join the Kollel for family fun at the annual Jewish Children's Extravaganza on Wednesday, Dec. 25th, from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. The event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: \$15 per child, \$7.50 per adult; discounted group rates are available before 12/21. Admission includes laser tag, ice skating, Lollipop Park rides, ferris wheel, carousel, and Chanukah activities. For general information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org.

REB SHALOM SOMMERS SEFER TORAH CAMPAIGN

A Sefer Torah is being dedicated in memory of Reb Shalom Sommers, father of Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers. Dedication opportunities for the Sefer Torah at all price levels are available. Proceeds from the campaign will fund the continued growth and expansion of the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissachar. For dedication opportunities or more info, visit www.denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

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|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) 12 to 1 | 4) Like grandfather did |
| 2) Bottle stopper | 5) 100 times |
| 3) Signs of embarrassment | 6) Not during their lifetime |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk II

The tension created by the Cantonist Empire, which encompassed much of Poland and Lithuania in addition to Jewish communities in the Russian Russia.

A Taste of Torah

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acting toward him in the same friendly fashion he had previously. This is a blaring siren for Yaakov: There is not a smidgen of holiness left in Lavan, and he is repulsed by Yaakov. It's time to leave.

I assume most of those reading this are not adept at figuring out which wicked people are concealing sparks of holiness in need of rescue. But most of those reading this likely engage in mundane activities on a daily basis. It might be going to work, shopping, paying the bills or the like. We are put

into this life, with all its seemingly inane drudgery, for the purpose of finding the holiness locked deep within. So the next time you're stuck in traffic or cooking dinner, stop for a moment and think: How can I elevate this engagement? Can I maintain a patient and pleasant demeanor while waiting in standstill traffic? Can I make the effort to happily prepare delicious food that my family will enjoy? You may not be walking out with Lavan's wealth, but you've certainly revealed a little bit of *kedusha* to the world.

Stories for the Soul

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decrees against the Jewish People were tom up, made null and void, because of those precious holy tears you shed for your husband. Not one teardrop goes to waste. Hashem counts them like pearls and treasures them."

At that the woman burst into weeping again, but now with tears of happiness that all her suffering and prayer were truly not in vain. Sometime later she

came back: "Tell me again, dear rabbi, those beautiful words: What happened with those tears of mine that I wept?"

In this week's parsha, Rochel prays for many years to have a child before she is answered. Our Sages teach that Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous, and thus caused three of the Matriarchs to be childless so they would pray to Him.

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| 1) 12 to 1 28:11 s.v. vayasem | 4) Like grandfather did 30:3 s.v. v'itibaneh |
| 2) Bottle stopper 29:10 s.v. vayigash | 5) 100 times 31:7 s.v. montin |
| 3) Signs of embarrassment 29:25 s.v. vayih | 6) Not during their lifetime 31:42 s.v. upachad |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers