



Parshat HaShavuah

VAYEITZEI

DEC 03, 2011

ויצא

ז' כסלו תשע"ב

A PUBLICATION OF



Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting

5:10

S"Z Kriat Shema

9:31

Sunset

5:28

Motzei Shabbat

6:06



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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LIFE'S DECISIONS

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

As my "senior year," my fourth year teaching at WYHS, is slowly coming to an end, I have been reflecting on my initial decision to move to Florida to teach at WYHS. I had a choice to make; come to Boca and teach, or take advantage of a post graduate studying opportunity. It was not an easy decision. My wife and I spent weeks going back and forth through all of the pros and cons.

On one hand, I had more friends in the other community and a learning environment that was relatively similar to Yeshiva University where I had previously studied. On the other hand, I felt that I wanted to share my passion for תורה and love of Judaism with others, and WYHS would be a perfect place to do that. I sensed that if I wanted to grow as a person, WYHS would be the best place for me.

"ויצא יעקב מבר שבע וילך חרנה" (28:10). The commentaries have grappled with the extra words in this פסוק. Why do we need to be told that יעקב leaves and where he goes? Is it not obvious that if he is going towards חרן, that he would be leaving the place where he was currently living, באר שבע? רש"י has a famous answer to this question, but I'd like to share another answer.

The הלוי explains in his commentary on the תורה that when a person decides to go somewhere, he can either be going for one of two reasons. Either because they no longer want to be in their current location, or because they need to get to the new location.

יעקב leaves for both reasons. He leaves באר שבע because רבקה wants יעקב to leave באר שבע in order to escape עשו's wrath. יצחק, however, wishes יעקב to go to חרן in order to find a suitable wife from לבן's house. So יעקב, being an obedient son, obeys both of his parents' wishes and relocates with both reasons in mind.

Throughout our lives we are faced with many decisions. Who should we be friends with? Where should we go to college? Where should we go to seminary/yeshiva? Where should we work? Where should we raise a family?

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YOU GET WHAT YOU WORK FOR SHMULI GOLDIS ('12)

In Parshat Vayeitzei, Yaakov flees for his life from his brother Esav after "stealing" the brachot from their father Yitzchak. On his way to Charan, Yaakov settles down to sleep for the night on Har Hamoriah. While fast asleep, he dreams of a ladder on which angels are ascending and descending. Hashem speaks to Yaakov, reveals to him a bit of the future that is in store for his descendants, and promises Yaakov that the land he is sleeping on will one day belong to his offspring.

After Yaakov wakes up, he proclaims, "Surely Hashem is present in this place, and I did not know!" Rashi comments on this, adding to Yaakov's statement: "Had I known, I would not have slept in such a holy place."

However, if Yaakov had not gone to sleep in this place, he would not have had his *nevuah* and consequently, would not have heard G-d's promise regarding the land. So why is Yaakov so distraught over going to sleep if his slumber is actually the medium through which Hashem communicates with him?

Rav Kook explains Yaakov's mindset in order to answer this puzzling question. Yaakov does not want to receive the land as some sort of arbitrary gift. Yaakov wants to work, earn, and strive for the land, so that he can ultimately rejoice when he deserves receiving the land. Had he been aware of this gift, he would have never slept, but rather would have stayed awake to toil for what would ultimately bring him to the level of deserving the gift.

Often in our lives, we merely seek gifts and handouts. However, we must strive to feel a sense of fulfillment, to acquire something through one's own efforts. If we strive, we will earn, and we will deserve; for "the person who gets the farthest is the one who is willing to do" (Dale Carnegie).

DON'T CASH OUT YOSEF ITZKOWITZ ('14)

If we look closely at this week's parsha, we find Yaakov running from his brother Esav, who is trying to kill him. Exhausted from running, Yaakov lays down to rest and soon falls asleep and begins to dream.

In his dream, Yaakov sees a ladder, a *sulam*, with its foot on the ground and its top reaching up to *shamayim*. The Baal Haturim explains that the *gematriah*, numerical value, for *sulam* is the same as the *gematriah* for *mamon*, which translates from Hebrew to mean money (when both words are written with a *vuv* the numerical value is 136).

So, what do money and a ladder have in common?

The Baal Shem Tov says that money, like a ladder, can cause people to ascend and descend. If used appropriately, such as spending our money on necessities and giving tzedaka, it can elevate our existence and therefore the meaning in our lives.

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Iitzkowitz continued

But if used for selfish pleasure, money can tear our souls apart. It is our job to use everything given to us by Hashem, including our money, to live by the Torah, taking on every mitzvah to its fullest.

THE SHIELD OF TORAH ISAAC KURTZ ('14)

As Parshat Vayeitzei begins, Yaakov leaves his homeland of Eretz Yisrael and embarks on a journey towards Charan. In his twenty-year exile from Eretz Yisrael, Yaakov spends his time working for the Lavan, a dishonest person. Lavan's demeanor is so horrible that we mention him in the Haggadah as the man who tried to uproot the entire Jewish nation. However, as Yaakov heads off to Charan, he makes a peculiar stop. Our rabbis tell us that on his way to Charan he stops to learn at the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever for 14 years.

In the context of the story, this pit stop seems quite strange. Why would Yaakov, a man who had just spent 63 years learning from his father Yitzchak Avinu, have to spend 14 more years learning Torah? It seems strange that Yaakov delays his journey to learn from two men who were very possibly not as knowledgeable as Yitzchak.

To adequately answer this question we must examine who Shem and Ever are and what virtues they possess that Yitzchak does not have. Shem lives in the generation of the flood amidst people who lacked morals and were thus destroyed. Ever lives among those who build the Tower of Bavel, people who directly ignore the power of Hashem. But, despite the corrosive environment in which Shem and Ever live, they overcome external pressures and do not give up learning Torah.

As Yaakov is preparing to leave his safe haven, a place that is sheltered from the corruption of Charan, a place ideal for Torah learning, he needs the influence of Shem and Ever to keep him strong in the face of opposition from people like Lavan. He needs to learn from people who have not been sheltered, and are still able to stand true to Torah without falling under the influence of Charan. It is these 14 years, according to Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky, that allowed Yaakov to emerge from his ordeal spiritually unscathed.

Although living in intimate Jewish communities may sometimes create an ideal world for us in which we are protected from outside influences, it is important to remember that no matter how great we may be, it is easy to slip and fall under corruptive influences. We must stay strong to our beliefs, and ensure that we live our lives as Torah Jews.

Rabbi Hochman continued

My choice to teach at WYHS was my own personal “וילך” because of what it had to offer me.

A person should focus on the reason behind their 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 come out on top and all of our decisions will be met with great excitement, accomplishment, and satisfaction.



“מדור לדור”

TORAH FROM OUR ALUMNI

WHO STOLE THE COOKIE FROM THE COOKIE JAR?

YOCHEVED TIRSCHWELL('08)

In this week's parsha, we bear witness to a game of “who stole the cookie from the cookie jar,” as Lavan accuses Yaakov of taking the idols from his house. Yaakov is incorrectly blamed as the culprit, while in reality, the culprit is his wife Rachel. Rachel did not simply take the idols from her father's house, but the pasuk emphasizes that she stole the idols (“*vatignov*”), violating a fundamental sin. Rashi quotes the Midrash regarding her act of “*vatignov*” that says Rachel stole the idols in order to lead Lavan away from idolatry. If so, then a question remains: Why did this act seemingly lead to Rachel's untimely death?

The Ibn Ezra offers a characteristically novel and eyebrow-raising explanation. Rachel stole the idols because she believed that they possessed special powers. In subscribing to such a ludicrous idea, Rachel failed to cut off all or any ideological connections to Lavan's idolatrous lifestyle.

When Lavan accuses Yaakov of stealing the idols, Yaakov unknowingly curses Rachel, declaring “*Im asher timtzah et Elokecha lo yichyeh*,” “With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live” (Bereishis 31:32). Later in the perek, Yaakov emphasizes that his and Rachel's life in Canaan will lack spiritual significance if they still contain any semblance of a connection to idolatry.

Perhaps Rachel passed away during her journey to Canaan, not only because she stole the idols, but also because she never fully severed her connection with the ways of her past. But as the famous statement of Chazal goes, “the gates of tears are never closed.” Years after Rachel leaves this world, Yirmiyahu prophesizes that Rachel cries out for her children who are in exile, and G-d answers with the promise “*V'Shavu Banim L'gvulam*” (Yirmiyahu 31:16) “The Jewish people will eventually be redeemed.”

We see from G-d's response that Rachel was able to completely atone for her sin and regain respect as one of the *Imahot*, mothers, of our nation. The cookie may not have been put back in the jar, but Rachel redeemed herself from her sin by acknowledging her misled ideologies, transforming them, and advocating for the salvation of her people.

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