

VAYETZEI



INSPIRATION

This week's newsletter is sponsored in memory of Yeta Bas Aharon, a"h • אהרן בת יטא ע"ה

FROM THE PAGES OF OU PRESS

CHUMASH MESORAS HARAV

ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע (בראשית כח:י)

And Jacob left Beer-Sheba. (Bereishis 28:10)

Rashi cites a famous comment from Bereishis Rabbah to clarify why the Torah mentions Jacob's departure from the city: *The departure of a righteous person from a place makes an impression, for when a righteous person is in a city, he constitutes its magnificence, its splendor and its grandeur. Once he departs, its magnificence, splendor and grandeur depart.* Is there a specific part of the phrase which suggests that Beer-Sheba was a beautiful city before Jacob left it, and that his departure rendered it desolate? On what basis does the Midrash derive this interpretation about the departure?

In Parashas Bo, we read *ויצא מעם פרעה* [Moses] exited from Pharaoh with burning anger, (Ex. 11:8). Here the term implies permanent dislocation. Similarly, *ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע* denotes that Jacob severed somehow from Beer-Sheba. Jacob

was uprooted by forces beyond his control, compelled to leave a place he loved. It is in light of the phrase *יעקב מבאר שבע* that the Midrash and Rashi conclude that Jacob left a place to which he had become bonded. Jacob and Beer-Sheba had merged into a symbiotic entity, and now Jacob had to leave Beer-Sheba and become dislocated.

How are we to understand the symbiotic relationship between Jacob and Beer-Sheba? To gain insight into this connection, we must consider Beer-Sheba's special significance in Jacob's life. *And he [Abraham] planted an eishel in Beer-Sheba, and he called there in the name of the Lord, the God of the world (21:33).* Beer-Sheba was the first home of the covenantal community, the center of spiritual life for the adherents of Abraham's teaching. When Jacob left Beer-Sheba, he was pulled away from this spiritual center. Perhaps he was frightened that if he left the home of his father and grandfather and the center of their teaching, he would also

lose his role as leader and teacher of the covenantal community.

Beer-Sheba was rooted in a wellspring of kedushah. It was a conduit for the Divine Presence. But when Jacob left, Beer-Sheba lost its glory. Once Jacob had gone, Beer-Sheba resembled Mount Sinai after the shofar was sounded and the sanctity of the mount dissipated. Later in Jewish history, that kedushah would find its home in the place that Jacob encountered on his journey from Beer-Sheba: the holy city of Jerusalem.

(Darosh Darash Yosef, pp. 73-75)

The Mesoras HaRav Chumash, based on the teachings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, was edited by Dr. Arnold Lustiger.



OU Press publishes books of Jewish thought and prayer that educate, inspire, enrich and enlighten. Visit www.ou.org/oupress/



A LEADER'S VISION



When Moshe came down Har Sinai, he carried with him the very first manual on how to be a leader: The Torah.

Contained within this holy scroll are all the tricks and tools of the greatest leaders. In this week's parsha, Yaakov teaches us an essential key to being a good leader - better than anything you'll find in a Ted Talk!

Parashat Vayetzei teaches us the real difference between being a leader, and being a follower. One role cannot be sustained without the other, and both are very important. The difference between the two lies in a single choice that one must make.

In the tenth pasuk of Vayetzei, it says:

ויהי כאשר ראה יעקב את רחל... ויגש יעקב ויגל את האבן מעל פי הבאר וישק את צאן לבן אחי אמו.

And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel... Jacob drew near and rolled the rock off the mouth of the well...

In this pasuk, Yaakov sees Rachel approach the well with the intent of watering her father's flock of sheep, and before she even asks, Yaakov removes the stone covering of the well for her.

This whole situation in general shows Yaakov's incredible middos (character),

but one aspect speaks specifically to his leadership capabilities.

When Yaakov saw Rachel approach, he could have easily just waited for someone else near the well to move this huge rock, or at least have waited for Rachel to ask for a hand. The fact that he saw a potential to help, and took initiative before ever being asked, gives us great clarity on what the real difference is between a leader and a follower.

Let's say that I am planning an event, and one week prior, I get really sick. There is still lots to do, I'm overwhelmed, and the stress

CONTINUED ON LAST PAGE

FIVELIGHTS

5 INSPIRATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS ON THE PARSHA

1

"I have a dream!" Everyone has dreams and aspirations - rarely however, will they all be realized. The importance of dreams is not just about their execution, however, but rather about what they tell us about the dreamer.

Rav Tzadok of Lublin (Tzidkas haTzadik #3) explains that **what we think about when we are idle and daydream is an indication of our level of spirituality.** Yaakov's dream that God was standing over him was an indication of his own connection to God.

Interestingly, Rav Tzadok emphasizes the importance of dreams throughout his works and even has an entire work, entitled *Divrei Chalomos*, that catalogues his own dreams.

Before Freud, our chassidic teachers already understood that dreams are a window to the soul.

2

Animals are protected by God's providence in general, as a species; man is the only creature that enjoys individual providence. Maimonides explains that the degree of Divine providence correlates directly with the intellectual influence that the person receives from God (Guide for the Perplexed III, 18). This being the case, **the more one hones his connection to God, the more Divine providence he will receive.**

The prophets had very strong connections to God, therefore they were enjoyed a large degree of His Divine providence. God told Avraham, "I am your shield" (Bereishis 15:1). To Yitzchak, He said, "I will be with you and bless you" (26:3). Yaakov was told, "I am with you and will keep you" (28:15). Similar promises were made to Moshe (Shemos 3:12) and Yehoshua (Yehoshua 1:5). In all of these cases, **the amount of providence received was directly proportionate to the high degree of personal perfection they had achieved.**

While it may be surprising that some people can have more of God's providence than others, it's only logical that the closer we get to Him, the closer He is to us.

3

The mound that Yaakov called "Gal Eid" in Hebrew was called "Yagar Sahadusa" in Aramaic by Lavan. (Each of these names means "the mound of testimony.") Throughout Tanach, foreign languages are translated into Hebrew. For example, Pharaoh and Moshe no doubt conversed in Egyptian, while Balak and Balaam presumably spoke the language of Moab. Aramaic, however, is considered to be a variant form of Hebrew and is not translated when it appears in Tanach.

Aramaic is the language of the Talmud, as well as of kaddish and other parts of the liturgy. According to the Kuzari (2:68), Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic are all cognate languages, and Aramaic was Avraham's native tongue in Ur Kasdim. All three sections of Tanach use Aramaic. In Kesuvim (the Writings), entire sections of the Book of Daniel are written in Aramaic. In Neviim (the Prophets), Jeremiah sends a message in Aramaic (Jer. 10:11). As we see from our verse, **even the Torah has Aramaic in it!** Therefore, the Talmud Yerushalmi (Sotah 7:2) tells us not to disparage Aramaic, a language that shares some of Hebrew's sanctity.

4

And (Yaakov) said, "The day is still long; it is not yet time to bring in the livestock. Water the sheep and go graze them." (Bereishis 29:7)

When Yaakov reached the well of Charan, he found three flocks of sheep just lying around as they do before returning home for the day. Rashi cites the midrash in Bereishis Rabbah (70:11) that Yaakov logically concluded that the shepherds were knocking off early for the day. He said to them, "If you're day laborers, you haven't completed your day's work."

The Sforno points out that Yaakov chastised the shepherds even though he had no vested interest in whether or not the shepherds fulfilled their fiduciary responsibilities. He didn't even know who their employers were! **Nevertheless, a characteristic of righteous people is to be moved to action when they see injustice.** Even if one stranger is wronging another stranger, virtuous people cannot sit by idly and allow it to occur. While others are passive in the face of dishonesty, those who follow the example set by our forefather Yaakov will speak out and take action.

5

Reuven went out in the days of the wheat harvest and he found mandrakes in the field; he brought them to his mother, Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." (Bereishis 30:14)

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 99b) discusses verses that appear to be superfluous and what they actually teach us. The wicked king Menashe (who later repented) used to mock the Torah by saying things like, "Did Moshe have nothing better to write than 'Reuven found some mandrakes in the field?'" The sage Rava b'Rebbi Yitzchak explains what the verse teaches us: **the righteous are careful to avoid theft.** Reuven went out during the wheat harvest but he didn't take wheat, which people owned; he took mandrakes, which were free for the taking!

Rav Moshe Feinstein ztz"l still has a question on this explanation. We know that all of Yaakov's sons were righteous. **Do we really need a verse to tell us that righteous people don't steal?** What we are really being told here, he says, is that the righteous are careful not to steal. It would be easy for someone to become overconfident that of course they wouldn't commit a serious sin like theft. But that way lies a minefield. People with that kind of attitude ultimately end up falling into sin through their lack of attention. For this reason, the Mesillas Yesharim cautions us that it is the most basic things that require constant emphasis and reinforcement.

SEE IT **INSIDE**

Parsha ideas that are so good, you have to see them inside!

RAMBAN 28:12	The lesson of the ladder.
SEFORNO 28:14	Why are Jews compared to dust?
KLI YAKAR 28:16	The allusions to the Beis HaMikdash
RAMBAN 28:17	Yerushalyim is awesome.
RAMBAN 30:1-2	Praying for our children.
TARGUM YONASON	Giving birth to Yehudah merited special praise.
SEFORNO 32:1	The bracha of a person - when said with passion, even someone lowly, is significant.
RABBEYNU BACHAYE 32:11	Real men cry.
BAAL HATURIM 29:14	Supporting family can be stressful.
RABBEYNU BACHAYE 32:3	The place "Machanyaim" alludes to Matan Torah

This parsha begins with the dream of Yaakov with a ladder stationed on earth which reaches the heavens. Many interpret this to signify the incredible reach of our actions. Here is an amazing story from the pages of history on how one person's actions can reach the heavens:

At the turn of the twentieth century, two of the wealthiest and most famous men in America were a pair of Jewish brothers named Nathan and Isidor Straus. Owners of R.H. Macy's Department Store and founders of the A&S (Abraham & Straus) chain, the brothers were multimillionaires, renowned for their philanthropy and social activism.

In 1912, the brothers and their wives were touring Europe, when Nathan, the more ardent Zionist of the two, impulsively said one day, "Hey, why don't we hop over to Palestine?" Israel wasn't the tourist hotspot then that it is today. Its population was ravaged by disease, famine, and poverty; but the two had a strong sense of solidarity with their less fortunate brethren, and they also wanted to see the health and welfare centers they had endowed with their millions.

However, after a week spent touring, Isidor Straus had had enough. "How many camels, hovels, and yeshivas can you see? It's time to go," Isidor decreed with edgy impatience in his voice.

But Nathan refused to heed his brother's imperious command. It wasn't that he was oblivious to the hardships around him; it was precisely *because* of them that he wanted to stay. As he absorbed firsthand the vastness of the challenges his fellow Jews were coping with, he felt the burden of responsibility. "We can't leave now," he protested. "Look how much work has to be done here. We have to help. We have the means to help. We can't turn our backs on our people."

"So we'll send more money," his brother snapped back. "I just want to get out of here."

But Nathan felt that money simply wasn't enough. He felt that the Jews who lived under such dire circumstances in Palestine needed the brothers' very presence among them: their initiative, their leadership, and their ideas. Isidor disagreed.

The two argued back and forth, and finally Isidor said, "If you insist, stay here. Ida and I are going back to America... where we belong."

The two separated. Isidor and his wife returned to Europe, while Nathan and his spouse stayed in Palestine, traveling the country and contributing huge sums of money to the establishment of education, health, and social welfare programs to benefit the needy. Nathan also financed the creation of a brand-new city on the shores of the Mediterranean. And since his name in Hebrew was Natan, and he was the city's chief donor, the founders named it after him and called it...Natanya.

Meanwhile, back in Europe, Isidor Straus was preparing to sail home to America aboard an ocean liner for which he had also made reservations for his brother, Nathan, and his wife. "You must leave Palestine NOW!" he cabled his brother in an urgent telegram. "I have made reservations for you and if you don't get here soon, you'll miss the boat."

But Nathan delayed. There was so much work to be done that he waited until the last possible moment to make the connection. By the time he reached London, it was April 12 and the liner had already left port in Southampton with Isidor and Ida Straus aboard. Nathan felt disconsolate that he had, as his brother had warned, "missed the boat." For this was no ordinary expedition, no common, everyday cruise that he had forfeited, but the much ballyhooed maiden voyage of the most famous ship of the century. This was the Titanic.

Nathan Straus, grief-stricken and deeply mourning his brother and sister-in-law could not shake off his sense that he had had a rendezvous with history. The knowledge that he had avoided death permeated his consciousness for the rest of his life, and until his death in 1931, he pursued his philanthropic activities with an intensity that was unrivaled in his time. Today, Natanya is a scenic resort city of 200,000 and headquarters to Israel's thriving diamond trade - one of the most important industries in the country. And in almost every part of the city, there is some small reminder of Nathan Straus's largesse, his humanity, and love for his people. His legacy lives on.



CONVERSATIONS WITH RABBI CHAIM HAGLER



Rabbi Chaim Hagler is the principal of Yeshivat Noam in Paramus, NJ.

HOW HAVE THE LEADERSHIP VALUES YOU LEARNED IN YOUR PARENTS HOME INFLUENCED THE WAY YOU DECIDE TO RUN A SCHOOL?

[The values I learned have] tremendously [influenced the way I run my school]. The leadership values that I learned in my parents home were first and foremost honesty, which I think is important in anything, especially in being involved and certainly in the running a Jewish Yeshiva. And the second one was hard work, especially when you're working on behalf of the Jewish community, to really put in hard work and to put in the time and effort and go the extra mile.

WHAT EFFECT DID BEING BORN IN THE GENERATION AFTER THE SHOAH HAVE ON YOUR VALUES?

I don't know if I was conscious of it, but I think that certainly in our generation ... we had this sense that we didn't take it for granted that we were here; we didn't take it for granted that we were able to learn openly and receive a full yeshiva day school education. And we had this feeling because being [that we were] the generation after the Holocaust [we] had this sense that we were doing something even more important, we were the continuity of Jewish education, and of the Jewish people.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO INSPIRE YOUR STUDENTS TO REACH THEIR POTENTIAL?

I think first and foremost to just love them and to believe in them, and to really appreciate who they are... I think that everybody, but certainly children respond to people who believe in them, and they rise to that occasion [when] they're in an environment where they feel secure

and they feel loved. I think that's the key to inspiring them to love Judaism and to participate in all the wonderful things it has to offer.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT TO TEACH?

That's a hard one. I'm going to say two things. I love teaching Gemara, [because] I just love the ability to help them learn to think and to analyze, and the fact that it is so open ended in the realm of critical thinking. So I really enjoy teaching Gemara, especially in sixth and seventh grade where it's their first experience with learning Gemara, so to really help them develop a passion and love for learning Gemara. And the second thing is, as you probably recall, I love teaching Parsha to the kindergartens. That's just part of who I am, helping them develop their first excitement and love of Parsha and Torah, and being a part of that is just amazing.

A LEADER'S VISION CONTINUED FROM FRONT

is only making me feel worse. A friend notices my situation and immediately is faced with a question: Do they wait and see if they get asked to help out, or do they jump in and help without being asked?

If my friend waits for me to ask for help, they are still being a good person, and doing a good deed. However, they're taking a risk. What if I'm someone who has a hard time asking for help, or I am already so overwhelmed that I feel beyond help? By

waiting for me to ask, they are deciding to act as a follower, rather than leader.

If my friend takes initiative, and reaches out to help me with the event without my ever asking, they turn a good deed into a great one, and have actively made the choice to be a leader, just as Yaakov did with Rachel.

Taking the immediate action of an attentive leader, Yaakov saw the needs of Rachel and fulfilled them before she could ever reach a point of distress, or even ask for help.

A leader cannot lead without followers, which is why it is paramount to anticipate their needs and make the choice to take action, just like Yaakov, whether it be a matter of moving a rock, or helping a friend in need. We should try to emulate this lesson taught by Yaakov in order to grow as leaders, and benefit the world as a whole.

Talya Rogoff is a member of NCSY's National Teen Board.

TORAH

IN THE CITY

COME AND HEAR SOME OF THE TORAH WORLD'S GREATEST SPEAKERS

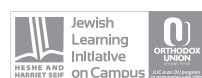
JANUARY 15th 2017 // INDOORS AT CITI FIELD // REGISTER TODAY AT OU.ORG/CITY



PROGRAMS OF THE ORTHODOX UNION



Department of Synagogue & Community Services



To receive a digital copy of this Parsha Newsletter or to bring one to your shul, please contact synagogue@ou.org.