

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת ויצא

ויחלם והנה סלם מצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה והנה מלאכי אלקים עלים וירדים בו
“And he dreamt, and behold, a ladder standing earthward and its top reaching heavenward; and behold, angels of Hashem were ascending and descending on it” (28:12)

The Tzror HaMor comments that the numerical value of “סולם,” “ladder,” is equal to the numerical value of “קול,” “voice.” The ladder that connected the heaven and the earth represents our voice and our prayer, which is our connection to Hashem. It is also the same numerical value as “סיני,” the mountain upon which the Torah was given, to symbolize that the Torah is also a connection between our world and the spiritual world. A ladder is the vehicle for a progressive climb toward a goal. Prayer and Torah are vehicles to establish a connection between us and Hashem. We must constantly be climbing the ladder of Torah and Tefilla toward its highest rung. We must always be moving up on the ladder. What is important to note is that the posuk emphasizes that the ladder rested on the ground, right next to us, to symbolize that we can start climbing this ladder very easily.

The Or Tzadikim writes that סולם also equals ממון, money. Just like the ladder, money rests on the ground. It is mundane and it represents our physical needs. However, its end is in the heaven, it has the potential to be raised to a higher level. The Torah allows us and even encourages us to amass material possessions to enable us to serve Hashem. Although money may seem like something mundane and lacking of any spiritual purpose, it can be uplifted through its use for worthy causes and to help us serve Hashem. This is true of anything that we have in the world. Everything that surrounds us in the world can be used as a vehicle to serve Hashem.

The Orach Lechayim gives a homiletic explanation for the ladder. If a person is humble and views himself as low to the ground, in the eyes of Hashem he is really very high. As a result, the Divine Presence rests near such a person, just as Hashem appeared to Yaakov after the appearance of the ladder.

והיה זרעך כעפר הארץ ופרצת ימה וקדמה וצפנה ונגבה ונברכו בך כל משפחת האדמה ובזרעך

“Your offspring shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall burst forth westward, eastward, northward and southward; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and by your offspring” (28:14)

The Gemara in Shabbos 118a says: "Whoever delights in the Shabbos is given a boundless inheritance, as the verse states, 'If you... call the Shabbos a delight... then you shall delight in Hashem... and I will feed you the inheritance of Yaakov your forefather... (Yeshaya 58:13-14)'... Regarding Yaakov, it is stated, 'And you shall burst forth westward, eastward, northward and southward.'"

Why is delighting in Shabbos rewarded with "a boundless inheritance"? What is this reward? The Torah Temimah explains this based on a Gemara in Beitzta 16a which says that a person's livelihood for the coming year is decreed on Rosh Hashana, but does not include what is spent for Shabbos because what is spent for Shabbos is paid back by Hashem. Based on this, we can say that one who delights in Shabbos by not skimping on his spending and going the extra mile to make Shabbos special will receive a reward that is not limited by the amount that he is supposed to make for the year. He will be paid back in a way that is boundless and this

money that is gained as compensation for expenditures for Shabbos does not count against his decreed earnings. We learn from this that we should make sure to keep Shabbos properly and not be afraid to spend money to do so. We should remember that any money spent in order to honor Shabbos will be repaid with the boundless blessing of Yaakov Avinu.

ותהר ותלד בן ותאמר אסף אלקים את חרפתי

“She conceived and bore a son, and said: Hashem has taken away my disgrace” (30:23)

What did Rachel mean when she said that Hashem had removed her disgrace through the birth of her child? Rashi quotes a midrash which states that when a woman has a child she can blame any mishaps that occur on her child, whereas a woman without children takes the blame for everything. An obvious question arises. This is Rachel's initial reaction upon the birth of her first child? Why does she want to blame her problems on her son?

A possible suggestion is that a woman mostly wants her husband to be happy. She wishes that her husband should never be upset with her and her house should be filled with shalom bayis. Any time that a husband gets upset at his wife, it detracts from the shalom bayis. She wants her husband to love her and that that they should be happy together. When she has a child who can now be blamed for mishaps, her husband will not be upset with her when problems arise. She can blame the problem on the child and the husband will not be upset with her or the child, because of his young age, and there will be less discord in the house. This increases peace between the couple and maintains shalom bayis. This is what Rachel had in mind with this declaration upon the birth of Yosef. Having a child meant that the shalom bayis in her house would grow and this was the most important emotion that she felt when her child was born.

ויאמר אליו לבן אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך נחשתי ויברכני ה' בגללך

“But Lavan said to him: If I have found favor in your eyes - I have learned by divination that Hashsem has blessed me on account of you” (30:27)

Based on this posuk, Abaye says in Berachos 42a that blessing follows a talmid chacham. Rashi there explains that when one becomes close to a talmid chacham or invites him to his house, he will be blessed because of his association with the great person. Yaakov lived with Lavan in his house for many years and Lavan profited from it immensely. Even though Lavan was a wicked person, he recognized that he had benefited greatly from Yaakov's presence. We should try to find a talmid chacham who we can become close to so that we have a role model and someone to look up to, aside from the blessings that such an association will bring us.

In connection with the mitzvah to associate with talmidei chachamim, the Rambam (Hilchos Deios 6:2) writes as follows: "It is a positive commandment to associate with wise people and their students in order to learn from their actions, as it is written, '...and you shall hold fast to him' - this 'him' is not Hashem, for how can one attach himself to the Divine Presence? In explaining this commandment, the Sages said that one has to attach himself to wise people and their students. Therefore, one should endeavour to marry the daughter of a learned sage, to marry one's daughter to a learned sage, to eat and drink with learned sages, to trade with them and to join with them in all matters in which one can join, as it is written, '...and to hold fast to him.' The Sages similarly commanded that one should join with the dust of their feet, and to listen enthusiastically to their words."

וישלח יעקב ויקרא לרחל וללאה השדה אל צאנו

“Yaakov sent and summoned Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock” (31:4)

In the Gemara in Berachos 8b, R' Akiva praised the Medes because "when they give advice, they only give advice in the fields." As a proof to this act of propriety, he cites the example of Yaakov Avinu who called Rachel and Leah out to the field in order to discuss the matter of leaving Lavan's house. When a person gives advice and tries to help someone, he should be respectful of the person's privacy. He should do it in such a way that nobody else is around who can listen in. Even if the person means well, he should bear in mind that the recipient may not want others to hear what is being said. This is true for giving advice or rebuke to a person. Personal discussions are always best held in private.

ואתנה ידעתן כי בכל כחי עבדתי את אביכון

“And you have known that it was with all my might that I served your father” (31:6)

In connection with this posuk, the Rambam (Hilchos Sechirus 13:7) writes: "Just as a boss is warned not to steal wages from a poor worker and not to withhold them, so too the poor worker is warned not to steal from the work of the boss and be idle a little bit here and a little bit there and spending the whole day in trickery. Rather, he is obligated to be exact with himself during that time... One is also obligated to work with all his strength, as Yaakov Avinu said, 'It was with all my might that I served your father.' Therefore, he was also rewarded for this in this world, as it says, 'The man became exceedingly prosperous' (30:43)" The Magid Mishnah comments on this Rambam: "This is obvious." (See also Choshen Mishpat 337:20)

R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato speaks at length in Mesillas Yesharim, one of the classic mussar sefarim, regarding the prohibition against an employee wasting time while on the job (Chapter 11, near the beginning):

"How obvious is it, then, that a day-laborer has no right to interrupt the work assigned to him for mundane considerations, and that if he does, he is a thief. Abba Chilkiyah did not even return the greeting of talmidei chachamim so that he would not interrupt the work he was doing for his neighbor (Taanis 23b). And our father Yaakov explicitly stated, 'In the daytime I was consumed by drought and in the evening by frost, and my sleep fled from my eyes' (Bereishis 31:40). What, then, will those say who occupy themselves with their pleasure and leave off working, or those who during their working time engage in their own affairs for personal gain?

"In summary, if one is hired by his neighbor for any kind of labor, all of his hours are sold to his employer for the day. As our Sages say, 'Hiring oneself out is equivalent to selling oneself for the day' (Bava Metzia 56b). Any utilization of these hours for his personal benefit in any manner whatsoever is gross theft, and if his employer does not forgive him, he is not forgiven. As our Sages have said, 'Yom Kippur does not atone for a man's sins against his neighbor until he pacifies him' (Yoma 85b). What is more, even if one performs a mitzvah during his working time, he is not credited with righteousness, but charged with a transgression. A transgression cannot be a mitzvah... This is analogous to what our Sages say concerning a stolen lulav (which is not valid for the mitzvah). Stealing an object is stealing, and stealing time is stealing. As with a stolen object that is used for a mitzvah, so with stolen time that is similarly used."

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

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