

Echoes of the Ages

Many great Rabbis of the past were renowned for the amount of צדקה they gave. One such Rabbi was R' Moshe Leib of Sassov, who was so particular in the מצוה that he gave even when it put him into poverty.

Once, the saintly Rav paid for the marriage of a poor bride and groom out of his own pocket. After seeing the כלה step under the חפה to the sounds of lively, joyous music, he exclaimed "If only, when my time comes, they will walk me to my resting place to this music!"

Time went by and the comment was completely forgotten by the people at the wedding.

On the 4th of שבת 5567 (1807) R' Moshe Leib passed away. On this day, a group of musicians were travelling to the city of Brody to play at a wedding. Somewhere along the journey, the wagon driver suddenly lost control of the horses, which began to run in a different direction. The

worried musicians were pulled along at a rapid pace, through the countryside, until the carriage finally stopped outside a cemetery where a large crowd of Jews were gathered.

After asking who had passed on and being informed that it was the funeral of the holy R' Moshe Leib, the musicians suddenly remembered what the saintly Rav had said at the poor couple's wedding many years before. Not knowing what to do, a בית דין was quickly set up and the verdict was that the musicians were allowed to fulfil the specific request of the Rabbi. And so the Rav was gathered in to his people to the happy sound of a wedding.

יגוע יצחק וימת ויאסף אל-עמיו זקן ושבע ימים" - בראשית לב : כט

"And Yitzchak expired and died and he was brought in to his people, old and fulfilled of days" - Bereishis 35:29

Adapted from "Stories my grandfather told me, Bereishis"

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THE LIVING TORAH

FROM HASMONEAN HIGH SCHOOL

לעלוי נשמת ר' אליהו רחמים בן מאיר דוד ע"ה ואחיו ר' עבדאללה פרג בן מאיר דוד ע"ה
מס' רמד פרשת וישלח תשס"ג No. 244 Parshas Vayishlach 5767

יצחק's Outlook on Life

These stones competed for the right to be the support for אבינו. יעקב בראשית - "יתרצו הבנים בקרבה" - כה : כב

Rashi gives an explanation on this phrase, ה - צילני נא מיד אחי מיד עשו - בראשית לב : יב

The בית הלוי asks, "why did יעקב have to specify his brother's name as he only had one brother?" תרוצים זה עם זה ומריבים בנחלת מ"שני עולמות."

We see that יעקב wished to assert his right to a physical existence in this world and to live in such a way which would lead to a place in עולם הבא. עשו however wished to deny יעקב both these rights.

He answers that יעקב feared the warrior עשו who threatened him with annihilation. Even more, he feared the consequences of a brother who wished to co-exist with him. He saw the dangers which such אחוה, brotherhood presented in terms of the need to compromise and eventually to assimilate. יעקב thus davened to ה' to deliver him from either 'יד', either approach that he believed that everything in this world can be used directly or indirectly to promote the well-being of an ה' עבד.

The בית הלוי also asks why in ה פסוק, does the תורה tell us of two different levels of fear.

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By Avrohom Bokor

Ask the Rabbi

Please send your questions in to us by email to livingtorah@hasmonean.co.uk

The Danger Within

” יותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר” – בראשית לב כה

”Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn” – *Bereshis 32:25*

This passage depicts how יעקב, after seeing his family across the river to ensure their safety from his brother עשו, crosses back to their camp site to collect a few items that had been left behind. Whilst there, he is accosted by a man who grapples with him, neither one able to defeat the other. Finally, towards daybreak the other man concedes the loss. But what is really going on behind this strange event?

One of the explanations given by the commentators is that this was no mere man he was wrestling with, rather it was the שטן, the evil inclination itself. This is derived from the exact translation of the פסוק: “איש עמו”, or “man within him.”

The מעינה של תורה adds a very interesting point to this, with regard to the nature of the evil inclination. He notes that יעקב was attacked by the evil inclination

specifically when he was left alone. The influence of the שטן is greatly lessened when we are around our friends, those people who can always be relied upon to stop you going too far. But what about when you are by yourself? That is when you are vulnerable. That is when the שטן will try to attack you, to get you to sin. When the restraining influences of our friends can no longer help us, we are most liable to sin. Much is said about the “rule of the mob” effect, where a group of people will do things they would not have done singly. Clearly, we need to realise that with friends well chosen, the danger is turned the other way around, so that must ensure that whilst alone, you act in the same manner as you would in the company of your friends.

The message of מעינה של תורה is a powerful one, that we all need to learn from. Make sure your actions in private are ones you could be equally proud of in public. See if we, like יעקב, can be stronger than the שטן. Aim to be as righteous in private as you are in public. That is the true test of life.

By Yisroel Greenberg

Riddle of the Week

When is it permitted to say you heard something from someone when you really didn't (excluding for the sake of peace)?

Answer to last week's riddle: Salt and Meat before מליחה.

Attitudes in Prayer

It is every man's dream to be able to talk to one who can grant their requests. For peasants in ages past, this was the king. For us, of course, it is G-d. We can have a connection with the Creator of the universe; He is willing to listen to us. The important question then, is “so how should we best make use of the opportunity we have to beseech Him? What attitude should we have in prayer?”

We find in this week's פרשה a basic lesson which is a foundation in Jewish Prayer. יעקב is on his way back to כנען after having fled from his brother 20 years earlier. He sends word to עשו that he is returning, and that he wants to be on good terms with him. יעקב's messengers return with news that עשו is on his way with 400 men, thinking war. As part of יעקב's preparations, he prays. From his words we can answer this question.

Here יעקב asks “I have become undeserving from all of the kindnesses and truth that you have done with your servant. Please save me from my brother עשו”. (בראשית 32:11-12). In the classic work בית”ת, the Mabi”t writes that a person should not demand something of G-d. When we demand, fulfilment of our requests

depends on whether we really deserve it. Rather, requests should be for kindness; that we should not feel entitled to what we request, but like someone asking for more than he deserves. This is the way יעקב approached G-d. “I have become undeserving.” That means “I've already received more than I'm entitled to. Yet I have needs, and I recognize that You, G-d, are the One Who can fulfil them.” When G-d sees that we recognize His unlimited kindness, He continues to bestow it in that merit.

The Jew considers prayer a great opportunity. Prayer is called “the fruit of the day”. This means that standing face to face with G-d, praising Him, thanking Him and recognizing His ability to grant us our requests is not just a means, but an end in itself. The sweetness of the fruit is the attitude we manifest in requesting humbly and not demanding our needs.

By Rabbi Amar

Quote of the Week

“Perfection of faith is only when one believes in Hashem without any philosophising, with no signs and wonders, and without any investigation at all” - R' Nachman MiBreslov

Acknowledgement

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