

Money or Davening?

In the first half of the century, there lived a Rav in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, named Rabbi Moshe Shimon Zivetz. R'Zivetz was a renowned talmid chacham and authored a number of sefarim.

In 1931, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman arrived in America; where he would later found the Yeshiva Ner Yisrael in Baltimore. When R'Ruderman emigrated from Europe, he was already regarded as one of the generation's most outstanding young talmidei chachamim and had authored a work entitled Avodas Levi. R'Ruderman felt it proper to mail a copy of his sefer to R'Zivetz, whose seferim he had studied. A few weeks later, R'Ruderman received a letter from R'Zivetz thanking him for the sefer. Along with the letter from R'Zivetz was a cheque made out to R'Ruderman for \$50.

R'Ruderman did not understand. He was grateful that his sefer had found favour with this great talmid chacham but why the \$50? If R'Zivetz had ment to pay for the cost of the sefer (which had been sent as a gift) a few dollars would have been sufficient. \$50 was a huge sum in those days. What had prompted R' Zivetz to send it?

Sometime later, R'Ruderman visited Pittsburgh and stayed at the home of R'Zivetz. He thanked R'Zivetz for the letter and the cheque. "It seems to me though" he continued, "that the Rav was far too generous in sending me such a large sum."

There was silence for a while as R'Zivetz pondered his reply. "I will tell you" he finally said. "I have been Rav here for many years and Baruch HaShem, the people here appreciate me very much."

"Some time ago, I was visited by the board members of our congregation. They expressed their appreciation to me for all that I had done for them over the years. They said that while they

hoped I would serve as their Rav for many years they realised it soon may be too taxing for me, I would want to retire but what would I live on?

"Unknown to me a meeting had taken place to discuss this. All the congregation's members had decided to contribute something towards a retirement fund for me. The chairman presented me with the cheque of the amount raised at the meeting. I could not believe my eyes, \$20,000!"

"I did not feel comfortable accepting the gift but my congregants would have it no other way. I took the cheque and deposited it in a savings account, not knowing what I would do with it. Should I leave the money in the account so that interest could accrue, or should I invest it in some high risk venture?"

"Over the next few weeks, something very disturbing began to happen. When I would daven the Shemoneh Esrei, my mind would keep wondering about the money. This began to happen very often. My davening was just not the same anymore.

"I gave the matter some thought and I came to the conclusion that as long as I had possessed this small fortune, I would not be able to overcome my problem. There was only one thing I could do to daven properly again – to give the money away.

I could not give the money back as my congregants would not accept it. Rather, I turned myself in to a generous philanthropist. In the past I used to give \$10 to tzaddokoh collectors, but now I gave \$100. This is same with you; in the past I used to send \$5 for a sefer such as your own, now I sent \$50. Baruch HaShem I have now used up most of the money."

By Shlomo Katz

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No. 297

Vayeitzei 5769 - ויצא תשס"ט

מס' רצ"ז

ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה (כ"ח:י')

"And Yaakov went out from Be'er Sheva and headed towards Charan." (28:10)

The departure of a Tzaddik from a place makes an everlasting impression. When the Tzaddik resides in a city he is its glory and its splendour. When the Tzaddik leaves, so departs the city's glory, splendour and light. (Rashi on Bereishis 28:10)

The question bothering Rashi is why was it necessary to write the name of the place, 'Be'er Sheva', that Ya'akov had just left. Why not just write "And Ya'akov travelled to Charan? Why the extra words?

Rashi answers; "these extra words teach us that the departure of a Tzaddik leaves a 'mark'."

The Brisker Rav ZT"L explained what Rashi meant by 'A Tzaddik leaves a 'mark'.

Looking at most world maps, you will find that the largest countries in the world; such as the USA, Brazil, India and Russia etc. are very clearly marked. Even the major capital cities; such as Washington D.C, New York, London and Paris are also marked.

In contrast, if you look for Yerushalayim or even Israel, you will most likely have to strain your eyes on most maps to find any sign of them at all. Looking for Lakewood? Bnei Brak? No sign whatsoever!

"In heaven", said the Brisker Rav "there is a *Rabbi Y. L. Hager (Hasmonean High School)*

very different map of the world and its major cities. There is no sign of Paris, Rome or Barcelona".

"What you will find" said the Brisker Rav, "is Radin, Volozhin, Brisk, Vilna and all the other great centres of Torah Tefillah and Avodas Hashem being very clearly marked".

Looking down from Shamyim, all the seemingly tiny villages and towns are shining very brightly on HaShem's map. These are the places that are important to Him and not the so called 'great cities of culture, arts and fashion'. Those don't even appear on HaShem's map!

When Ya'akov Avinu left Be'er Sheva, the bright lights blinking on Hashem's map suddenly stopped shining. Suddenly, Be'er Sheva had no significance whatsoever any more.

The great Tzaddik Ya'akov Avinu had left and there was to be no more Torah and Tefillah coming from that place anymore.

This is Rashi's message to us explained by the Brisker Rav; even though we may feel that we are just davening in a small Shul, live in a small Jewish area, study in a small Jewish school or Yeshiva and we may think that we don't really feature on anybody's maps, but rather, these are the areas that shine brightly and are very clearly marked on the 'heavenly map'. These are the real places of significance to HaShem.

Times for Shabbos - זמני שבת

In: 3:35

Out: 4:50

More And More

ויקץ יעקב משנתו ויאמר אכן יש יקוק במקום הזה ואנכי לא ידעתי (כ"ח:ט"ז)

And Yaakov awoke from his sleep and he said, "HaShem is in this place and I did not know" (28:16)

Rashi explains that when Ya'akov In Ya'akov's eyes, this was not a sad woke up, he realised that the place he thing, but an opportunity to improve. To had slept on was holy and had he known Ya'akov the opportunity to improve fit-how holy it was, he would not have slept ted with the joyous mood that followed there. the dream.

At first glance, this seems to be a There is a story told about Rabbi Isser strange thing for Yaakov to have done Zalman Meltzer. When he was in ye-after waking up from his sleep. He shiva, he was told had just had a dream where by someone that Hashem had told him 'he does not need to fear Esav and that He will guard Ya'akov and his children who will become as many as the dust of the earth'. Rabbi Isser Zalman responded by saying, "This shows the Rebbe sees I have great potential. Unfortunately, at the moment I am not expected Ya'akov to react to seeing this living up to it and I could be achieving dream by being overjoyed and thanking so much more than I am now." Rabbi Hashem, but instead he rebukes himself Isser Zalman saw this moment of praise for a seemingly small error. and happiness as an opportunity to evaluate whether he was living up to his potential and was being the best person he could be.

This episode provides us with an insight into the character of Ya'akov Aveinu as well as being a lesson to us. Ya'akov's main focus was self improvement and developing his character to be able to serve Hashem in the best possible way. Ya'akov was always looking for ways to become a better person and in this situation, saw this episode as a mistake on his part that he could learn from.

By Aron White

Laws of 'Cooking on Shabbos'

Over the next several issues, we will be discussing the laws associated with cooking on Shabbos. If a prohibition against cooking is transgressed, a qualified rabbinical authority should be consulted, since in some circumstances it is forbidden to eat the resulting food.

The prohibition of cooking on Shabbos includes; boiling, roasting, frying, baking and any method of preparation of food by most forms of heat, provided, in general, that heating takes place to a temperature of at least 45 degrees Centigrade (113 degrees Fahrenheit).

(Laws adapted from Sefer Shemirath Shabbath)

We should endeavour to learn from Ya'akov's actions. He took a very happy moment as an opportunity to assess his actions and improve himself.

The Real Trickster

ויגד יעקב לרחל כי אחי אביה הוא... (כ"ט:י"ב)

Ya'akov told Rachel that he was her fathers' relative... (29:12)

Rashi quotes the Medrash which states that in addition to understanding this possuk literally, Ya'akov was trying to tell Rachel more than just explaining how they were related. Ya'akov was sending a warning to Lavan via Rachel. "You think you are such a good trickster, I am your brother in trickery, don't try anything."

This warning seems very strange. Firstly, Ya'akov's whole essence is "a simple man dwelling in tents." Ya'akov had never been the streetwise trickster he is claiming to be? Secondly, Ya'akov is telling Lavan, "don't try you'll never trick me". However, later in the parasha, Lavan manages to trick Ya'akov by switching Rachel and Leah under the chupah. If Ya'akov can spot tricks, why did he not spot this one?

The answer can be readily seen by understanding what kind of a trickster Lavan really was. Lavan is referred to by Chazal as 'Lavan Ha'Arami'. This name has two meanings. Firstly, he came from a place called Aram. Alternatively, it contains the same root as 'Ramai' which can be translated as a 'trickster'.

However, there seems to be a problem with

the second interpretation. Lavan should actually be called 'Ha'Ramai' not 'Ha'Arami'. Indeed, Lavan's trickery was twofold. Not only did he trick his victim, but he managed to fool himself and believe that what he was doing was actually correct.

This is what Ya'akov could not cope with. He was in essence "a simple man dwelling in tents." What he could do was pretend to be Lavan's brother in trickery. However, what he could never do was to change his inner moral framework and tell himself what he was doing was right. It was because of this that Lavan could trick Ya'akov. Whilst Ya'akov's trickery was on a superficial level, Lavan's went deeper so that he could outdo him.

This also helps us understand how it was possible for Ya'akov, someone whose main midah was emes (truth), could bring himself to trick his own father into giving him the brocha. Although on the outside he was a trickster, he never let this affect who he was as a person and therefore his character was not adversely affected by his actions.

By Aharon Goldwater adapted from Peninim on the Torah

Riddle of the Week

What is forbidden on Rosh Hashana but permissible on Pesach?

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer to Last Week's Riddle

When is a non-Kohen called first to the Torah in the presence of Kohanim?

Answer: When the only other people present are Kohanim. The non-Kohen gets the unique first aliya. Congratulations to all those who answered correctly!!!

Prizes have been sponsored by various local Jewish shops to be raffled off monthly to those who successfully answer the weekly general knowledge question!!! Everyone is welcome to submit an answer by emailing us at:

LIVINGTORAH@HASMONEAN.CO.UK