Points to Ponder

Vayetze 5784

**וַיֵּצֵ֥א יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב מִבְּאֵ֣ר שָׁ֑בַע וַיֵּ֖לֶךְ חָרָֽנָה** **And Yaakov left Beer Sheva and went to Charan (28:10)** – The commentaries debate why the Torah had to focus on both where Yaakov left from and where he was going. That is because people leave somewhere sometimes to get away from something and sometimes to get somewhere. In Yaakov’s case he was doing both. He was leaving his parent’s home to get away from Eisav but also in order to go to Charan to find a wife. **The Steipler** adds that the same was true in the olden days when even one who left the Yeshiva to go to work was able to remain committed to Torah values. Still, he needed to begin his life in Yeshiva to learn how to remain Torah true. Today, one needs to go to get a Yeshiva education even if he will not be a successful Lamdan merely to serve as a **deterrent from the streets.**

**וְהִנֵּ֤ה סֻלָּם֙ מֻצָּ֣ב אַ֔רְצָה וְרֹאשׁ֖וֹ מַגִּ֣יעַ הַשָּׁמָ֑יְמָ**ה **And behold there was a ladder with its feet on the ground and its head in the heavens (28:12) – Rav Chaim Sabato**  explains that the dream was a message based on Yaakov’s thoughts. It was a reference to man’s role in the world. We live to climb the ladder one step at a time. If we take it each step at a time, there is no limit to how high we can go – assuming we want to go. At the same time, Hashem’s influence meets us going downward until they get us into the ground at the darkest of moments – and then they too, rise up. Yaakov, the forefather who prepares us for Galus, teaches us that even in the darkest of times, we need to keep climbing and the challenges will rise with us.

**הַפַּ֨עַם֙ אוֹדֶ֣ה אֶת־ה This time I will thank Hashem (29:35)** – The Talmud tells us that from the day the world was created, there was no one who was Modeh to Hashem until Leah came along at the time of Yehuda’s birth. Thus, Yehuda whose name becomes synonymous with Judaism all the time, is based on this principle of Hodaah. Yehuda too, is known later on in life for Hodaah – but of a different kind. The Talmud tells us that in regard to the episode with Tamar, Yehuda Hodah V’Lo Bosh. He too, was the epitome of Hodaah. Yet, there, unlike by Leah where the word Hodaah meant “thanks” it referred to an admission. Is there any connection between thanks and an admission**? Rav Hunter** says absolutely. He notes that contained within each and every Hodaah – thanks, there is also a recognition that” I couldn’t do it without you. “ The recognition of man’s limits is also an admission of man’s failings. **Rav Kook** carries the idea into the Modeh Ani we recite upon rising each morning. By offering thanks at the first moment of the dawn of another day, we are also recognizing and admitting that Hashem created and runs the entire world.

**הָֽבָה־לִּ֣י בָנִ֔ים וְאִם־אַ֖יִן מֵתָ֥ה אָנֹֽכִי Give me children and if not I am dead (30:1) – Rav Schachter** would often point out to us that the great distress of Rachel Imeinu was her diametric opposition to the song “Hei’Avar Ayin V’HeiAsid Adayin Daaga Minayin. For Rachel cried out to her husband that if she won't have any children she will consider herself as if she were dead and as if she had accomplished nothing in her lifetime. Even though such an individual identifies with the past, that is not sufficient; one must have children to be able to link up with the future as well. For only a Rasha has a very brief life indeed, considering that he lives only in the very brief moment of the present.

**הַֽמְעַט֙ קַחְתֵּ֣ךְ אֶת־אִישִׁ֔י וְלָקַ֕חַת גַּ֥ם אֶת־דּֽוּדָאֵ֖י בְּנִ֑י  Was it not enough that you are trying to take my husband but that also you want to take my son’s Dudaim?** (30:14-15) – How could Leah DARE challenge Rachel. Didn’t she KNOW that Rachel had given her the Simanim? **Rav Shalom Schwadron** explains that the Simanim were the mitzvos of Niddah, Challah and Hadlakas HaNer (Based on the Baalei haTosafos). Rachel never introduced these as the Simanim – merely as Jewish laws that the bride needed to know. Therefore, Leah never knew the extent of the sacrifice that Rachel had made for her. This is the ultimate in Chessed.

**רָחֵ֞ל לָֽקְחָ֣ה אֶת־הַתְּרָפִ֗ים וַתְּשִׂמֵ֛ם בְּכַ֥ר הַגָּמָ֖ל וַתֵּ֣שֶׁב עֲלֵיהֶ֑ם** **And Rachel took the Terafim and placed them under the saddle and sat upon them (31:34)** – The **Zohar HaKadosh** explains that she took the Terafim so that Lavan could not use these idols and their spiritual impurity power to find Yaakov and family. By sitting on the Terafim, she rendered them useless. How? The Zohar explains that when we sit on something we are showing that we degrade it. Once terafim are degraded, they are powerless. **Rav Avigdor Nebenzal** explains that the same thing is true about the other “forces” that we think control our lives. They have an effect on us only when we allow them to ensnare us. Once we decide to overpower these forces, they too, are powerless.

**לָ֤מָּה נַחְבֵּ֨אתָ֙ לִבְרֹ֔חַ וַתִּגְנֹ֖ב אֹתִ֑י** **Why did you hide to run away (31:27)** – Yaakov was a tremendously strong man – he was able to defeat a Malach. His children too, were quite strong. Why then does he run away from Lavan? What was he afraid of? **Rav Elyashiv.** explains that Yaakov was not afraid of Lavan per se. However, he did not want to have to confront Lavan for he knew that if he did, Hashem would strike Lavan down and it would look like Yaakov was a Kafui Tova – an ingrate – for destroying the man who gave him everything. Fearful of a Chilul Hashem, Yaakov preferred to leave quietly.

**Haftara:**

**וַיִּבְרַ֥ח יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב שְׂדֵ֣ה אֲרָ֑ם וַיַּֽעֲבֹ֚ד יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ בְּאִשָּׁ֔ה וּבְאִשָּׁ֖ה שָׁמָֽר And Yaakov ran away to the fields of Lavan and Yisrael worked for a woman and he guarded for a woman (Hosea 12:13-14**) – Why is he first referred to as “Yaakov” and later as “Yisrael”? Why the double mention of the women? **Rav Schachter** pointed out that the reference was to Yaakov’s experiences with finding a Shidduch. First, he set his eyes on finding a wife and worked at it but it was as easy as a few days. However, after the trickery, the additional years were served in earnest – yet Yaakov had to work harder at it emotionally. Rav Schachter pointed out that the toughness of the Shidduch process for Yaakov was necessary because each of these marriages would produce members of the Shevatim and ultimately Am Yisrael. Things that come with effort and sometimes through difficulty, are things that last. Thus, the Novi begins with Yaakov but ultimately the destiny of the Jewish people result as a consequence of Yaakov’s efforts and his attitude of sticking with it.