Points to Ponder

Vayetze 5781

**וַיִּקַּח֙ מֵֽאַבְנֵ֣י הַמָּק֔וֹם וַיָּ֖שֶׂם מְרַֽאֲשֹׁתָ֑יו He took from the stones (28:11) - Rashi** cites the famous Midrash that each of the stones wanted Yaakov to place his head on it. Therefore Hashem fused them into one. Why? **Rav Zaidel Epstein ztl.** explained that Hashem despises Machlokes that is based totally on “alai -- on me (and not you). Thus, Hashem fused the stones together to get rid of the “Alai” argument. We suggest that one consider the fact that the lessons of “getting ahead just by being there” seem to overwhelmingly involve inanimate objects -- Har Sinai versus the other mountains, the Beis Hamikdash not being in anyone’s portion, etc. --- the reason might be because no one grows from the argument of Alai. You grow based on whom you choose to become.

**וְהִנֵּ֤ה סֻלָּם֙ מֻצָּ֣ב אַ֔רְצָה וְרֹאשׁ֖וֹ מַגִּ֣יעַ הַשָּׁמָ֑יְמָה Behold there was a ladder on the ground and its top reached the heavens (28:12) - The Skvere Rebbe Shlita** noted that we need to maintain a delicate balance in life. When a person’s head is so high that he thinks it reaches the heavens, he needs to learn that the bottom of the ladder is on the ground and the person is limited. On the other hand when a person feels lower than dirt, he needs to remember that he is a Tzelem Elokim and his opportunities can take him to Shomayim and he should reach for the stars.

**וְאוּלָ֛ם ל֥וּז שֵֽׁם־הָעִ֖יר לָרִֽאשֹׁנָֽה: Originally the city was called Luz (28:19)** - The **Gemara** (Sotah 46b) noted that the Malach HaMaves was not permitted to enter Luz and therefore no one there died. **Rav Elyashiv ztl.** asked where the city is today? He answers that the people erred thinking that they had achieved everything there was to achieve. They had eternal life by banning the Malach HaMaves. But they were mistaken. The main point of the place is “Beit El” the purpose of life is to bring Shechina into it. But just to live life is not a plan -- to make life is the plan.

**וְעֵינֵ֥י לֵאָ֖ה רַכּ֑וֹת Leah’s eyes were soft (29:17) - Rashi** notes that Leah cried often because the people would talk about her and that she was going to marry Eisav. **Rav Aharon Kotler ztl** notes that this was all part of Hashem’s plan. **Rav Dessler ztl** adds that Rachel is the main wife in this world while Leah is in the next. But one needs to ask, why was Rachel allowed to cheat Yaakov by giving the signs to Leah? Why did she allow Yaakov to be embarrassed? **Rav Schwadron ztl** explains that Yaakov was also commanded not to embarrass Leah and thus, she was watching out for him too.

**וַיִּֽהְי֤וּ בְעֵינָיו֙ כְּיָמִ֣ים אֲחָדִ֔ים And it was like a few short days in his love for her (29:20)** - We can easily see the contrast of this Possuk with the one experienced by his children which refers to the slavery as “long days”. Why the difference? **Mrs. Sivan Rahav Meir Sh’Tich** cited the Midrash which comments that the time spent sighing is called “a long time” but time spent in happiness goes fast. Mrs. Meir explained that our emotional condition influences our perception of time. At a time of sighs, time moves slowly. When there is love and hope, time flies.

**יֹסֵ֧ף ה לִ֖י בֵּ֥ן אַחֵֽר Hashem should add another child for me (30:24)** - What kind of gratitude is this from Rachel? Lenny Winograd quoted **Rav Dovid Cohen Shlita** who suggested that when we turn to Hashem and ask him for more, in essence we are making sure that the Beracha never dries up. We might suggest that we find this theme in other areas in the Parsha -- like when Leah sees that she had stopped having children -- perhaps because she was only Modeh on that which she had thusfar and was not looking for more opportunity. IT can be found in Yitzchak’s Beracha of V’Yeeten Lecha where we ask that Hashem return and give more.

**וַיִּשְׁלַ֣ח יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב וַיִּקְרָ֖א לְרָחֵ֣ל וּלְלֵאָ֑ה Yaakov sent and called Rachel and Leah to him to the field to his sheep (31:4)** - Why does he need to ask his wives if he got the word of Hashem? **Rav Meir Shapiro ztl.** noted that according to the Mishneh L’Melech, he wanted to explain to them that they were not Halachic sisters but rather Geirim and they had nothing to worry about in regard to the return insofar as violating the Halacha of not marrying 2 sisters**. Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** added that one does not lose by choosing to do a Mitzva and he wanted them not to have their Bechira clouded by knowing the will of Hashem.

Haftorah

**וּנְשַׁלְּמָ֥ה פָרִ֖ים שְׂפָתֵֽינוּ And let our lips replace the bovines (Hoshea 14:3)** - Does this only apply to Korbanos or can reciting other things replace other Mitzvos? **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that the **Mabit** applies this to all Ones situations wherein, one can fulfill other Mitzvos in the same way that one can fulfill Korbanos by reciting them. The **Chofetz Chaim** who argued in favor of studying Kodashim in depth (but not necessarily Zeraim) clearly felt that it only applied to Korbanos but NOT other Mitzvos.