

Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick

Parshas Vayeitzei 5779

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פרשת ויצא תשע"ט

Yaakov prepared himself spiritually for 14 years.

וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא: (כח"א)

Yaakov lay down in that place (28:11). Rashi comments that that night Yaakov went to sleep, but during the previous fourteen years that he spent in the Yeshiva of Eiver, he did not sleep in a bed. What was so special about these fourteen years? Yaakov spent his first years learning there as well, as mentioned in Rashi at the beginning of Parshas Toldos on יָשַׁב אֶהְיֶה "abiding in tents". (25:27). The difference is that in the earlier years, Yaakov learned how to behave while surrounded by his family, tzaddikim and ehrliche, Yidden while during these fourteen years he was prepared for spiritual survival in the foreign environment of the degenerate and evil lovon. (Rabbi Mayer Yechiel haLevi of Ostrovitz, in "Meir Einei Chachomim" vol. #2) An interesting Midrash states that Yaakov composed the psukim in Tehilim אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יְבֵא עֲרִי: עֲרִי מֵעַם ה' עֲשֵׂה שְׁמִים וְאָרֶץ (Tehilim 130:1-2) Yaakov noted that Eliezer, Avraham's servant, when searching for a wife for Yitzchok, met Yaakov's mother Rivka, and displayed the contract showing the riches that Avraham had bestowed upon his son. "However, I, Yaakov, have no money, and I know that it will be difficult for me to deal with lovon and to have him agree for me to marry his daughter. Therefore, I lift my eyes to Hashem to guide and watch over me. My salvation can only come from Hashem".

Why was Rachel punished for hiding the Idols of lovon?

וְלִבְנֵי הַלֵּךְ לִגְזוֹת אֶת צֹאנֵי וְתַנְנֵב רָחֵל אֶת-הַתֵּרָפִים אֲשֶׁר לְאִבֶּיהָ: (לא יט)
lovon had gone to shear his sheep, and [meanwhile] Rachel stole her father's teraphim [idols]. (31:19) The Torah relates that Yaakov inadvertently cursed Rachel by saying: עַם אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא The one with whom you find your gods shall not live. The Zohar Hakodosh explains that Rochel was punished for causing her father anguish by hiding his idols. The Zohar asks: why was Rachel punished for causing pain to her father, while Avraham Avinu who destroyed his father's Avoda Zara, presumably causing him anguish, was apparently not punished for it? Rav Shimon Schwab answers: Destroying Avoda Zara is a Mitzvah, and it supersedes the Mitzvah of honoring one's parents. This is the difference between Avraham and Rochel. Avraham destroyed the Avoda Zara of his father, which was a Mitzvah, while Rachel only took them. Had Rachel destroyed them, she would not have been punished. There is another answer: The reason that Rachel hid the idols was that lovon would not have whom to ask to where Yaakov had escaped. However, she didn't realize that שְׁלוּחֵי מִצְוָה אֵינֵן Emissaries to do a mitzvah will suffer no harm (Pesachim 8a). Yaakov was on a mission to observe the Mitzvah of Kibud Av. The Mitzvah will be his protection. This admittedly minor sin caused a Tzaddeikes to be punished.

STORY OF THE WEEK (By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

**** The city of Barditchev was saved from a blood libel, in the zchus of a Mitzvah ****

A group of Poles were playing cards. One of them was a Polish squire, who had large landholdings whose luck was poor, and his losses were mounting. He had run out of cash. Having nothing to put into the pot, it seemed he would have to drop out of the game. "I don't have any more money, but I want to put my forest into the pot for the next game." "How are you going to do that?" "We'll draw up a basic contract right here and now," said the squire. The others agreed. The next round was played, and the squire's bad luck continued. He lost the round and thereby the forest as well.

The winner of the pot was a wealthy Polish merchant who lived in Barditchev. After the game, he gathered his winnings, including the title to the forest, and returned home. Back in Barditchev, the merchant decided that it would be too much bother for him to conduct a forestry business. He decided to sell the forest right away and invest the money in his other businesses. The buyer of the forest was a Jewish man living in Barditchev. The man had business dealings in Prussia, that required vast amounts of lumber. The acquisition of the forest would provide him with a large supply of wood and enable him to make serious commitments to his business associates. He immediately organized teams of lumberjacks to chop down the trees and ship them to Prussia. The Prussians were delighted

with the quality of the wood and immediately ordered more. In a few short months, the man became exceedingly wealthy.

It was not long before news of the Jewish man's financial success reached the squire. He was enraged that all that wealth, that should have been his, was now going to a Jew, and he convinced himself that he was entitled to get it back. The first move he made against the Jew was to sue him in the Polish courts. He insisted that the Jew was unlawfully harvesting the riches of land that rightfully belonged to him. Under questioning, he admitted that he had gambled the forest away, but he insisted that he had never put up his forest as collateral. The document in the possession of the Jew, however, contradicted all his arguments. It stated explicitly that the forest had served as collateral for his final wager and that the winner of the pot would take title to the forest. The Jew also had a perfectly executed bill of sale from the winner of the forest. The court ruled in favor of the Jew.

The squire then summoned the Jew to the rabbinical court of Barditchev, headed by Rav Levi Yitzchok, and his efforts failed there also. The rabbinical court ruled in favor of the Jew. Seeing no prospect of reclaiming his lost forest through the legal system, the squire's thoughts turned to revenge against the Jewish buyer of the forest, against Rav Levi Yitzchok whose

court had thwarted him, and against all Jews in Barditchev. He decided to perpetrate the most odious of anti-Semitic calumnies: a blood libel. Before Pesach, he searched for, and found a dead Polish child. He wrapped the body of the child in a blanket and then sought an accomplice, who would deposit the corpse in the cellar of the Barditchever Rav's house. While the squire was secretly plotting against him, Rav Levi Yitzchok was busy with a different problem. A Jewish peddler in town was extremely poor. He lived in a wooden hut with the windows boarded over, and earned his meager living by delivering clay for construction. He collected the clay in the forest, and transported it in a small cart drawn by a weak tired horse. One day, the horse died, and the peddler did not have enough money to buy another horse. Having no choice, he and his wife carried the clay on their backs to the customers. The people of Barditchev took up a collection to help the peddler buy another horse and fix his hut. After the money had been raised, Rav Levi Yitzchok invited the peddler to his home and offered it to him. "I cannot take it: I refuse to take charity from anyone," said the peddler. The peddler left, and Rav Levi Yitzchok remained at home seeking a way to help the poor man.

While Rav Levi Yitzchok was sitting and thinking, the squire was acting to set his plan into action. He knocked on the door of a Polish peasant who lived near Rav Levi Yitzchok. The peasant was surprised to see the squire, and invited him into his house. "I need your help," said the squire, "and I am prepared to pay you handsomely for your services. I've found the body of a Polish child, and I'm convinced the Jews are responsible. Everyone knows they need Christian blood for their matzos at this time of the year. They cannot be allowed to get away with murder, so this is where you come in. I'll deliver the body to you, and I want you to put it into the Rav's cellar. After it's done, you will be paid." "I can't do it," said the peasant. "The Rav has always been good to me, so how can I do something that might cost him his life?" "All right," the squire grumbled. "I'll find someone else."

After the squire left, Rav Levi Yitzchok knocked on the peasant's door. The peasant was shocked to see the Rav so soon after the squire's visit. "What can I do for you, Rav?" he asked. "I want to borrow some of your work clothes," said Rav Levi Yitzchok. "Sure," said the peasant, not even bothering to ask why he needed them. Rav Levi Yitzchok went home, put on the peasant's clothes and went down to the cellar of his house. Moments earlier, the squire and another man carrying a heavy sack had gone down to Rav Levi Yitzchok's cellar, but before they had time to unload the bundle, they heard footsteps and saw a man descending the stairs. It seemed to them that it was the peasant who lived nearby. What could he be doing there? Was he setting a trap for them? Frightened, they drew back into

the shadows and waited for him to leave. Then they fled up the stairs, taking the sack with them. As they ran through the streets, they caught the attention of a Polish officer who ordered them to stop. When the officer opened the sack and discovered the murdered child, he immediately arrested the squire and his henchman and led them away.

Meanwhile, dressed in the peasant's clothes with the hood pulled over his head, Rav Levi Yitzchok gathered up a pile of his own firewood and tied it into a bundle. He hoisted the bundle onto his shoulders and went to the poor peddler's house. The peddler opened the door and was surprised to see a peasant standing there, his face almost entirely concealed by his hood. "Do you need firewood?" asked the peasant in a low gruff voice. "Yes," said the peddler, "but I have no money." "Take it on credit." "I don't buy on credit," said the peddler. "I'm going to have to leave it with you anyway," said the peasant as he threw the bundle to the ground. Without another word, the "peasant" turned on his heels and ran away.

The peddler looked down at the bundle of firewood, which had come loose when the peasant had thrown it to the ground. He gathered it up and took it into his house until he would decide what to do with it. As he carried the firewood across his threshold, a pouch fell out from among the sticks and fell to the ground. Mystified, the peddler picked it up and saw that it contained a large amount of money. He decided to go ask Rav Levi Yitzchok what to do. Rav Levi Yitzchok listened to his story and nodded. "It is very clear to me," he said. "The peasant who came to your door was none other than Eliyohu HaNovi. Because of your refusal to take charity or loans that you would not be able to repay, you merited a visit from Eliyohu HaNovi and a gift from Heaven. Use this money to bring happiness into your home. And from now on, sell bricks instead of clay. You will prosper."

While Rav Levi Yitzchok was telling the peddler about Eliyohu HaNovi, the squire and his henchman were being intensively interrogated in the police station. The henchman was the first to break under pressure and confess. The squire's confession followed soon after. The police were puzzled, however, by the appearance of the peasant in Rav Levi Yitzchok's cellar. What, indeed, was he doing there?

After questioning Rav Levi Yitzchok and the peasant, they pieced together the entire story. Rav Levi Yitzchok, they concluded, had been delivered miraculously from a horrible fate. Rav Levi Yitzchok's family was flabbergasted, but he shrugged it off. "Why are you so amazed?" he said. "Our Sages have taught us (Pesachim 8a) שְׁלֹחֵי מִצְוָה אֵינָן נִיזְקִין – Emissaries to do a mitzvah will suffer no harm. That's all that happened here, nothing more."

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