

Pardes Yehuda

← Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick →

Parshas Vayetztei 5778

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פרשת ויצא תשע"ח

Yaakov celebrated his coming to Eretz Yisrael

וַיִּשְׂכַּם יַעֲקֹב בְּבֹקֶר וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם מִרְאשֵׁיתוֹ וַיִּשֶׂם אֹתָהּ מִצֵּבָה וַיִּצַק שָׁמֶן עַל־רֵאשָׁהּ: (כח יח)

"And Yaakov arose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had placed at his head, and he set it up as a monument/altar, and he poured oil on top of it." (28:18)

There is some difficulty as here Yaakov placed on the altar oil. Yet later, when Yaakov returned from the house of Lavan to Eretz Yisrael it states: וַיִּצַב יַעֲקֹב מִצֵּבָה בְּמִקְוֵם:

Now *Jacob had erected a monument in the place where He had spoken with him, a stone monument, and he poured a libation upon it, and [then] he poured oil upon it.* Here Yaakov poured a libation of both wine and oil. Then why did he use only oil this first time? Hagaon Reb Zalman Sorotzkin the Slutzker Rav, explains: that Yaakov's departure from Eretz Yisrael was not a joyous occasion, even though he left with his parents blessings. Since he was running away to avoid being harmed by his brother Eisav, he did not celebrate with a wine libation. However, when he returned to Eretz Yisrael, it was a joyous occasion for both Hashem and himself. This merited celebration, which included a wine libation. (*Hadeya ViHadibur*)

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יַעֲקֹב אַחֵי מַה־יֵּמֵינִי אַתֶּם: (כ"ט ד')

Yaakov said to them, My brothers, where are you from? (29:4) The obvious question is: When did Yaakov become so close to these people that he could call them "Brother?" HaRav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (the Netziv) in his Commentary *Haemek Davar* on Bereishis offers a beautiful insight. Yaakov had a tremendous love for all Hashem's children; therefore he felt as close to each person as to a brother. It was natural for him to call them "Brother". With this we can understand what happened right afterwards when Yaakov starts telling Mussar (moral instruction) to the shepherds. There is an obvious question: if the mussar would help, why not tell them straight

away, and if it won't help, then why tell them at all? But according to our pshat, Yaakov instilled love in them. With a "Brotherly?" relationship at that point, Yaakov felt he was fit to tell them Mussar, and for them to absorb it. We can add to this insight: since Yaakov always showed his love to all mankind, other people reciprocated and reflected Yaakov's love back to him. In response to his love of others, the hatred of his enemies towards him diminished. In this light, Yaakov was able to survive his ordeals with Eisav and Lavan all the ensuing years. (*Yehuda Z. Klitnick*)

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאָה יַעֲקֹב אֶת־רַחֵל בַּת־לֵבָן ... וַיִּנָּשׂ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּגֹּל אֶת־הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וַיִּשְׂק אֶת־צֹאן לָבָן אֲחֵי אִמּוֹ: (כט י')

And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, that Jacob drew near and rolled the rock off the mouth of the well, and he watered the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother." (29:2-10) Rashi elaborates by stating that the Torah notes Yakov's physical superhuman strength that he was able to roll the stone off the top of the well. It seems strange that Yaakov, a spiritual giant, should be praised and measured by his physical strength. The sefer Si'ach Mordechai explains that obviously, characterizing someone according to his physical ability, is both inaccurate and inappropriate. The importance of one's physical ability lies in the benefit derived from its use. The wicked utilize this G-d-given gift to take advantage of those who are weaker than they. The righteous channel their physical abilities in the service of their fellow man, to those in need. Such an appropriate use of one's G-d-given physical attributes should be stressed, so that others will be inspired to emulate it. The mishna (Avos 4:1) states Who is the mighty one? He who conquers his impulse, as it says, "slowness to anger is better than a mighty person and the ruler of his spirit than the conqueror of a city." (Proverbs 16:32) With this inner strength was Yaakov able to withstand the 22 years of dealings with Lavan. [YZK]

STORY OF THE WEEK (By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

Rav Moshe Midner admired greatly by Hagaon Rav Elchonon Wasserman

23 days in Cheshvan 1930 a giant in Torah, Chassidus and mentchlichkeit left this world childless but his legacy of Chassidische vertlach and a way of thinking is alive. His sefer *Kisvei Reb Moshe Midner* is a classic especially for the Slonimer Chassidim as well as any Ehrliche Yid looking for chizuk in Avodas Hashem. Chassidim of all ages were drawn to R' Moshe, thirstily drinking every word that emanated from his holy mouth. He never conducted himself as Rav or Rosh Yeshivah. He would sit at the tish of the

Slonimer Rebbe, the Bais Avrohom (who was decades his junior) on every Shabbos and Yom Tov, with utter humility and complete subjugation. Living in Baranovitch, many would go to R' Moshe with their troubles, asking for advice or blessing, and that he pray on their behalf. R' Moshe always helped every petitioner. Even gentiles who saw him pass by in the street would stop to pay him respect, exclaiming, "Now that is a true Jew!" R' Yitzchok Elchonon Waldshain, the Mashgiach of Yeshivah Ohel Torah of

Baranovitch headed by Hagaon Rav Elchonon Wasserman, always sought opportunities to observe R' Moshe's every move. He considered R' Moshe a "living Sefer Torah" whose every action was a complete Torah lesson. When R' Moshe went to bake matzos on Erev Pesach, R' Waldshain would stand quietly in the corner of the bakery to observe R' Moshe's actions. In 1929, when the Slonimer Rebbe, the Beis Avrohom, returned from Eretz Yisroel, R' Waldshain was present amongst the large group of chassidim who gathered to greet the Rebbe. But R' Waldshain was there to observe R' Moshe – to see how he would greet the Rebbe, and to learn from his holy ways.

On Friday nights, many chassidim would sit together with R' Moshe as he sang zemiros with deep feeling, elevating himself and all those present to high spiritual levels of dveikus. Sometimes at the Shalosh Se'udos meal, R' Moshe would say Divrei Torah – but he would merely say Torah in the name of Rishonim, or his grandfather the Slonimer Rebbe, or his father-in-law R' Moshe Mordechai of Kobrin. He would repeat their holy Torah thoughts with awe and reverence, inspiring those listening to greater heights.

On Motzoei Shabbos, the most outstanding Chassidim and students of the yeshivah and those closest to him, would gather in R' Moshe's room to hear him relay stories about tzaddikim. These stories were in the category of the "Oral Torah," for he emphasized their holy ways in order to teach his listeners how to live their lives according to the Torah. R' Moshe recalled these stories with amazing accuracy, sitting for 5-6 consecutive hours as he progressed from one story to the next. His listeners remained finely attuned so as not to miss even one word. He breathed life into every story, as if the tzaddik of the story was standing before their eyes at that moment. His listeners were transported to the time of the story, forgetting their surroundings.

As R' Moshe grew older, his physical strength weakened yet he remained mentally vibrant and strong. He continued relentlessly to learn Torah diligently, day and night. He transferred some of his responsibilities in the yeshivah to his young relative, R' Mattisyahu Fiedel. Yet R' Moshe made clear that he was not resigning from his position, and he continued to keep watch and run the yeshivah. He only needed help due to his physical limitations brought on by old age.

When he drew close to his 70th year, those close to him heard R' Moshe often hint at his impending passing. When, during his last Chanukah, his menorah did not light properly right away, R' Moshe sighed and said, "The Chanukah lights of R' Yechiel of Novo-Mush (a great Rav and tzaddik in R' Moshe's hometown) also did not light properly in his final year of life...."

After Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur of 1930, a student of the Baranovitch Yeshivah Ohel Torah, R' Yitzchok Eliyahu Bernstein (later Rosh Yeshiva of Eitz Yosef in Yerushalayim), came to R' Moshe on behalf of R' Elchonon Wasserman to borrow the Sefer Meiri on Yevamos, which R' Moshe had in his library. This sefer was a veritable treasure, and was very hard to obtain in those days. It occupied a permanent place on R' Moshe's learning table. R' Moshe wrote an entire sefer on Yevamos, about which R' Elchonon, who also wrote his sefer "Koveitz He'aros" on Yevamos, testified that for many generations no sefer as deep and penetrating as R' Moshe's had ever been published. When R' Bernstein asked R' Moshe to borrow this sefer Meiri, R' Moshe was busy learning from it. R' Moshe asked for how many days R' Elchonon wished to borrow it, and then added, "In any case, in a short while I will have no need for this sefer."

When R' Bernstein brought the sefer to R' Elchonon and repeated R' Moshe's words, R' Elchonon shuddered. Soon thereafter, at R' Moshe's funeral, R' Elchonon recalled R' Moshe's strange, yet prophetic, comment. Hours before his passing, R' Moshe was sitting in his room in deep discussion with the Slonimer Rebbe, the Beis Avrohom. A while later, after the Rebbe had left, a student of the yeshivah came in to find R' Moshe unconscious. A doctor who was speedily summoned diagnosed a hemorrhage in his brain. There was nothing that could be done to save his life. Within the hour, R' Moshe returned his holy soul to Heaven.

The bitter news spread like wildfire. There were those who wanted to bury R' Moshe in his hometown, Novo-Mush, near the tzaddik R' Yechiel and near R' Moshe's ancestors. The Jews of Baranovitch, however, insisted that he be buried in their city. The final decision, made by the Slonimer Rebbe, was that he be buried in Baranovitch on condition that the community commit that ten people would take responsibility to assure the viability of Yeshivas Toras Chessed. Thousands participated in R' Moshe's funeral, crying bitterly and without restraint as the Slonimer Rebbe eulogized R' Moshe.

R' Elchonon Wasserman followed R' Moshe's bier on foot all the way to the cemetery, a distance of some kilometers. As he walked he described the greatness of the loss. His praise for R' Moshe was unqualified. The many seforim he wrote were lost in the Holocaust. Yet his spirit and manner of learning, and the Torah he imparted, continue to be perpetuated within the walls of the Beis Avrohom Yeshiva in Yerushalayim, established by one of R' Moshe's prime disciples, the Slonimer Rebbe (the Nesivos Shalom). (Marbitzei Torah Me'Olam HaChassidus Vol. 3, Reb Elchonon)

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