



TAL

VAYEITZEI 5775

THE COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

Shabbat Begins 15:42 Shabbat Ends 16:49

Are You Serious?

Rabbi Jonathan Tawil



How do you act when your spouse complains?

Some people are calm and collected; others are quick to fight back, but all agree that in the end the best way to approach complaints is to try and get a deeper understanding of where they are emanating from.

Show a bit of compassion and the rest of the day will be much easier!

What's surprising is that when Rachel was unable to have a child for so long, she approaches Yakov and beseeches him to help her bring children in to this world.

The Midrash elaborates and states that Rachel asked Yakov to pray for her.

Didn't your father Yitschak pray for his wife? Why are you not praying for me?

Yakov replied that his father Yitschak was different. In his father's case, he

never had any children and therefore prayed. But in Yakov's case, he had children already from Leah. Therefore,

Rachel was told she shouldn't compare the two cases!

This seems like a harsh response from such a righteous man as Yakov.

Is this how he really dealt with issues in the house?

The Midrash in Shir Hashirim brings the story of a couple that could not have children for ten years. They approached Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and said that, sadly, although they both loved each other dearly, there was no option left for them other than to divorce. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai answered that they should go ahead with their decision, but before they get divorced they should have a party. "Just like you married with a celebra-

bration. Make it just as big as the wedding!" he told them.

They were confused, but rushed to implement the Rabbi's orders.

Within a short time they were 'celebrating' their divorce. Many people attended, and the food and drink were plenty.

Near the end of the evening, the husband showed his love of his wife by telling her that it would be his honour if she would take back home with her any item from his house.

Perhaps she would take a gold vase, or the treasured pottery set?

He drank away the evening and expected to go back to his parents' house that night.

The next morning, he was shocked to find himself in his wife's parents' house.

He had a bit of a memory lapse as to what happened that night and came to his wife to ask her why he was in their house?

She answered that when he told her to take whatever she wanted, she immediately decided to take him – he was the most precious thing in that house!

Now confused, they both went back to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

He smiled and said to them: "You are now ready to have a child. You have shown extra love for each other."

He blessed them and nine months later they were blessed with a child.

The Midrash continues and states that if only we would appreciate Hashem and show a special love like this couple, then we too would merit the Geula.

This Midrash is fascinating and with it we will answer the original question. But first a final piece to the jigsaw.

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When Yakov set out on his journey to Charan, it was long and surely not simple.

Our Sages explain that when he arrived in Charan, he realised that he had passed by the holy place in which his father had experienced the Akeida. His heart was full of regret as to how he dared pass such a holy site and not pay his respects and pray.

He decided whole heartedly that he would go all the way back, just so that he could pray at that place.

What a decision to make! There were no aeroplanes, no buses, and Yakov seemingly didn't even have any animals to help him on his way. All he had was a mere stick (Ki Bemakli Avarti Et Hayarden).

How would we have reacted?

How many excuses would we have given ourselves just to feel good?

Yakov was different; he knew that what was desired of him was to go back. That was the correct thing, and even if he had to travel for days or weeks all the way back to Yerushalayim and then back again to Charan – so be it.

What an expression of great character! That was Yakov.

Hashem saw this and in turn made a miracle – Yakov had Kefitsat Haderech

(Ramban), and arrived there very quickly.

Miracles are hard to come by. People search the world for solutions. But with the correct outlook, the secret to success has already been taught!



Yakov was sincere; he was really going to go all that way back.

Why? Because he believed in Hashem and the importance of prayer and gratitude in a holy place.

We see that when we are sincere and we have servitude of Hashem as a top priority in our life, Hashem responds miraculously.

This is the deeper meaning of the above mentioned Midrash:

If only we *really* believed in Hashem and showed our love for Him, we would immediately witness the Geula! Now we can understand what Yakov was saying to his barren wife - Rachel. It was as if he was saying:

"My father didn't have children, he prayed together with Rivka with *earnest*. They *both* knew deep down that only Hashem could help.

"Rachel, the problem with you is that you are relying on *my* prayer. You need to approach prayer with the same sincerity I did many years earlier, just before I ever met you and I was transformed back to Yerushalayim. Don't rely on me. I already have children. Therefore, your deep prayer will be much more acceptable and breed success."

At the outset of building a family, our great forefather Yakov put into motion the secret to Siata Dishmaya – Heavenly help.

A sincere heart, conviction and complete belief can take you through mountains and back.

What about us? Let's do a belief check from time to time and re-energise. Focus on Hashem's love and we will breed success.

Life is complicated. From the moment that we awake in the morning, there are various different pressures and demands on our time; many distractions and nuisances that get in the way of us fulfilling the day's tasks. We may ask ourselves: Imagine if Hashem had created the world in a way that we are not pulled in all different directions and in a world where we are not constantly being distracted from what is really important in life. Envisage our day being occupied primarily with Torah, Mitzvot and acts of Chesed. Our financial worries would be to a minimum.

In today's Parsha Vayeitzei, the Torah discusses the journey of our father Jacob/Yaakov from Be'er Sheva to Charan. The Torah describes Be'er Sheva as a holy and spiritual environment where Yaakov sat near his father Yitzchak learning Torah. Charan, however, as Rashi describes at the end of Parshas Noach, is a place that angers Hashem. It was a place of idol worship

and where peoples' behaviours did not follow in the ways of Hashem.

Even though this journey from Be'er Sheva to Charan meant going to a less holy and spiritual environment, nevertheless Yaakov understood that being away from his father Yitzchak was also a preparation for him and eventually the Jewish people to go into a dark Galut (exile) as the Rambam explains, and have the strength to bring light and Kedusha into the bleakest corners of the world.

Charan also represents the physical and material world we are living in. Hashem does not want us to live an angelic life without any connection to the world. On the contrary, He wants us to play our part in being a partner with

Him in transforming the world to a place of holiness.

What is the first thing that Yaakov does when he leaves Be'er Sheva? He does not seek the tourism office or look for accommodation. He davens/prays to Hashem, asking that he should have the strength to overcome the new challenges that he would now face in the new Galut of Charan and that everything that he had learned and experienced in Be'er Sheva should be a source of energy and strength for him.

When Yaakov lay down to daven/pray, the Pasuk tells us that he took from the stones of the place and he put them at his head. Rashi (28:11) explains that he put the stones around his head to

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Parasha Insights

Rabbi Menachem Junik



protect it from the wild animals that would harm him.

The question is asked: Why should Yaakov want to protect only his head from the wild beasts; what about the rest of his body?

Yaakov was not worried about the physical wild animals. He was worried about the new spiritual challenges that he would now face. He knew that exposure to the lifestyle of the people in Charan can lead one on a path of immorality and decadence.

Yaakov was willing to expose his hands and feet to the elements of Charan, but not his head. He would do whatever it would take to succeed in the secular world, which is filled with wild beasts of all shapes and sizes. But his enthusiasm and passion for Torah and spirituality would be protected and preserved.

Dovid Hamelech/King David writes in Tehillim (128:2) Yegia Chapecha Ki Tochel Ashrecha Vetov Lach: Fortunate is you who eats from the labour of your hands, You will be happy and full of goodness.

"When it comes to commerce and business, and our daily mundane routine, one should invest in the labour of one's hands. The head, the intellect, should be primarily focused on Torah and Mitzvos."

When it comes to commerce and business, and our daily mundane routine, one should invest in the labour of one's

hands. The head, the intellect, should be primarily focused on Torah and Mitzvos.

This journey from Be'er Sheva to Charan represents our life. Be'er Sheva is the warm and comforting atmosphere of our homes, the sanctuary for our moral and spiritual growth. Eventually we have to face the "real" world, filled with obstacles and challenges. The world is Charan - anger - the total dichotomy of physical and spiritual, where the material is in a constant state of dispute against the spiritual and 'angers' G-d.

Yaakov knew that ultimately he would become involved in the material and mundane. He and we have no choice but to do so. However, he committed not to become deeply involved, not to become consumed with these things. In this way, his passion and love for Torah and spiritual development would always remain and be developed.

Our Chachamim



The story of the daring escape of the Belzer Rebbe, R' Aharon Rokeach ZT"L, from Nazi Germany, is one replete with open miracles, unnatural occurrences and inspiration which clearly portrayed the Yad Hashem (Hand of G-d) at every turn. Just the idea of whisking the tzadik, a thin, gaunt saintly man, who was so weak from continuous fasting, praying and sleep deprivation, out of the jaws of the hideous Nazi beast was a daunting task, but due to the heroic efforts of a host of righteous individuals, the chassidic dynasty of Belz survived to establish a glorious link to pre-war Yiddishkeit.

As late as May 1943, the Belzer Rebbe, along with his distinguished brother, R' Mordechai ZT"L, the Bilgoray Rov, was still hiding out in the Bochnia ghetto. "Hiding" is a relative term since there were very few people, including the Nazi commandant, his evil cohorts, the Jewish policemen, the Judenrat, and most of the ghetto residents, who did not know that the "Wunder Rabbiner" was in their midst. In fact, the chief Nazi, a sadistic tyrant by the name of Muller, went so far as to visit the Belzer Rebbe, receive a blessing from him and offer to double his rations and release him from forced labour! Such was the esteem

that even the Nazis held for the saintly Rebbe and they believed that keeping him contained within their midst was a "good luck charm" of sorts. As a result, sneaking the Rebbe out from under their very noses was doubly difficult since they were specifically looking after him to make sure that he remained.

Eventually a plan was hatched which called for the Rebbe and his brother to sneak out of their home in the early morning hours, climb through a loose plank in the ghetto wall behind their building, and take sanctuary in an apartment until daybreak. Then, a horse-drawn wagon would transport them to the village of Baczko where they would wait in seclusion until after nightfall when an official car driven by Captain Shtai, a legitimate and heavily bribed officer of the Hungarian Army Counterintelligence staff, was to collect them and smuggle them out of Poland and into Hungary.

It would have gone off without a hitch if not for the fact that as their wagon rolled through the village of Baczko early on the morning of May 13, a group of Jewish labourers on their way to work

in the factory noticed the wagon and thought they spotted the Belzer Rebbe. Immediately, a rumour circulated in the ghetto that the holy Rebbe was escaping!

The Rebbe's gabbaim refuted this rumour but many people wanted to see for themselves. The gabbaim had no choice but to devise an ingenious scheme. A young Belzer Chasid by the name of Reuven Walkin disguised himself as the Belzer Rebbe, donning his distinctive silk kapota, white socks, half shoes, woollen Talis and Tefillin, all the while imitating the Rebbe's voice to perfection. Since the Rebbe spent most of his day in his inner chamber and only his gabbaim and closest chassidim were allowed to enter to talk to him and give kvittlach, by sitting in the Rebbe's customary chair facing the wall with his Talis over his head in prayer, Reuven Walkin was indistinguishable from the real thing. The gabbaim purposely left the door to the inner room open a bit so all those in the outer waiting area could see the "Rebbe" praying as usual by his shender while they continued to run in and out of the room, bringing petitions,

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pitchers of water and tea at regular intervals to foster the deception. It worked, and throughout the day, many people were convinced that they saw the Belzer Rebbe in his room all the while, the real Belzer Rebbe was buying valuable time for his escape.

All that day and into the next, the deception continued. Some Judenrat offi-

cials recognized the deception but decided to keep their doubts strictly to themselves. Other less scrupulous members, however, passed on their suspicions to the Gestapo.

The Commandant decided to see for himself. Luckily, the gabbaim were tipped off. "Muller, Rosen and Weiss (the Lagerfuehrer, Jewish police chief

and Judenrat head) are coming! They're already in the building, officially checking if everyone's at work!" Reuven Walkin hastily tore off the Rebbe's garments and they all ran out into an abandoned ruin in Ghetto Two. The Nazi screamed with rage but could do nothing as the holy Belzer Rebbe escaped his evil clutches.



He took from the stones of the place and he placed them around (under) his head." (28:11)

QUESTION: Rashi says that he wanted to protect himself from wild animals. Why did he protect only his head and not the rest of his body?

ANSWER: A very important lesson can be learned from Yaakov's actions. Yaakov spent all his years studying Torah in the home of Yitzchak and in the *Beit Midrash* of Shem and Eiver. Now he had to give up some of his Torah study time and engage in worldly matters. Yaakov knew that in the world at large there are many forces that are alien to

Torah and *mitzvot* and hostile to the religious Jew. These forces influence the mind of the Jew and try to persuade him to leave the path of Torah. Therefore, Yaakov made a great effort to protect his "head," to prevent negative influences from interfering with his *yiddishkeit*.

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