

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



NOTHING BAD COMES FROM A GOOD DEED!

A wise man once said, "You do not really understand something unless you can explain it to your grandmother." Looking around us, we have many questions in life.

We try to get to grips with as much as we can, but do we really understand what's happening around us?

One of the most frequent questions that arises is – are my good deeds really being counted? Is anyone really acknowledging what I am doing? How come I don't see the reward for my generosity straight away?

Our Parasha offers a wonderful insight.

Yaakov sets out on a long unknown journey to find a wife. At the outset he finds himself (initially unbeknown to him) in a Holy place.

He has a spiritual dream, envisaging a cryptic message of support from Hashem.

By the morning he awakes and asks Hashem to help and be with him along his journey.

"Yaakov made a vow, saying, "If G-d will be with me, and guards me on this path that I am going, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear; And if I return in peace to my father's house, and HASHEM will be my G-d". (Bereishit 28:20-21)

There is a discussion in the Midrash as to whether Yaakov was answered regarding his request of sustenance.

The Rabbis in the Midrash (sighting earlier Pesukim as proof) explains that Yaakov was answered for every request, apart from sustenance.

Hashem stated that "I will be with you and I will guard you and I will return you."

There seems to be no Pasuk addressing Yaakov's request for sustenance.

Rav Asi seemingly disagrees and states that he was also answered for this request.

He sites proof of this from the following Pasuk: Ki Lo Eezavcha - "For I (Hashem) will not leave you."

Both opinions in the Midrash raise questions.

According to the Rabbis, why did G-d not address this concern?

According to Rav Assi, how do the words, "For I will not leave you," address sustenance?

The Dubna Magid gives a fascinating answer with the following parable:

A father once sent his son off on a journey to a distant land. Along with provisions, the father also added a bundle of money to pay for his son's expenses. As they were planning the trip they found out that foreign soldiers were frequenting the roads they needed to use, making travel extremely dangerous.

The father did not want to leave his son alone under such dangerous circumstances and decided to join him on the trip. When they were on the wagon the son said to the father, "Where is the bundle of money you prepared me for expenses on the journey?" The father replied, "Am I not accompanying you? If you need anything just ask me and I will take care of it."

The same is true for Yaakov Avinu. Once G-d promised him that He would not leave him, there is no need to directly relate to Yaakov's material needs. Wherever he is, Yaakov eats of his Father's food.

In fact Rav Assi and the Rabbis do not really argue.

All agree that Hashem would provide. The Rabbis point out that the issue of sustenance is not directly related to, and Rav Assi explains that when G-d says He will accompany Yaakov, He is implicitly telling him that all of his material needs are also taken care of.

G-d says to Yaakov, "I am always with you; whenever you call I will answer."

Sometimes we feel that Hashem does not (Chas Veshalom) seem to be with us. We go through tough financial times. Is He noting our efforts? The answer is emphatically yes! Not only is He noticing, but He is helping carry us through the situation. ►

> MAZAL TOV TO

Channah Elkrief & Eliyahu Nissim
on their upcoming wedding

THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"No matter how busy a person is, if they really care, they will always find the time for you."

> UPCOMING EVENTS

• CHANUKAH EVENT ON A YACHT
ON THE 13TH DEC (see more info online)



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Nothing bad comes from a good deed!
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

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Yaakov married both Rachel and Leah. His main initial focus was Rachel, yet he was 'cheated' into marrying Leah. After a few years, Leah has six boys and Rachel is still to give birth. Leah falls pregnant for the seventh time.

There was a tradition that Yaakov would have twelve righteous tribes descend from him. Leah merited having six already, and Rachel was yet to give birth to one.

What would we do if we were Leah? Perhaps praise Hashem for the fact that we are able to give birth to potentially the seventh tribe? What a zechut!

Leah acts differently.

She saw that even the Shefachot (handmaidens) – Bilha and Zilpa had sons from Yaakov, and the only one left out was Rachel.

She said: Shall my sister Rachel not even be like one of the handmaidens? Leah therefore prayed to G-d on behalf of her sister, entreating Him: "Turn what is in my womb into a female, and do not prevent my sister from bearing a son." G-d accepted her prayer and the foetus in her womb was transformed into a girl.

Therefore the Torah states: "Afterwards she bore him a daughter,"—that is, after Leah's prayer.

Rashi explains that the resulting baby of Leah – Dinah, was so called since Leah had rendered judgment [Danah Din] on herself.

From her perspective she was giving up being the mother of an extra tribe. She had a lot to lose. She was performing an extraordinary act of kindness. She cared for her sister and prayed hard for her foetus to be a girl. Her prayers were answered and she gave birth to a girl. Was Hashem looking? Did He note her kindness? Was she instantly rewarded?

It would seem not.

Our Rabbis lend further insight.

We are not taught much about Dina's life in the Torah, but one sad episode stands out. Later on in life, Dina was raped by Shechem. The Midrash relates that she had a baby daughter called Osnat from the encounter.

The Midrash relates that Osnat, was given up for adoption. Then, by a curious twist of fate, Osnat ended

up in Potiphar's house in Egypt, and eventually married Yosef, her uncle! (Midrash – Yalkut Shimoni 134)

Hashem was always watching.

Leah, through her caring for her sister and desire to perform good, prayed and had changed her baby to be a girl, yet her actions didn't go unnoticed. She was repaid many years later as Yosef married her granddaughter Osnat. Together they bore two children – Ephraim and Menashe, who later each became considered as an individual tribe.

Leah was willing to lose a tribe for her sister's honour.

In the end Hashem repaid her by gaining an extra tribe.

Hashem is constantly testing us, but we have to stand strong amongst the storm and show our true colours.

We should be confident and certain that when we perform good deeds, they will produce fruit. We never lose from doing a good deed! ■

Shabbat Shalom

RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM - SHALOM LAAM DIASPORA

DVAR
TORAH



EXPLAIN YOURSELF

Yaakov Avinu was instructed by his parents to go to the house of Lavan to find himself a spouse. He ended up marrying Lavan's daughters, Rachel and Leah, for whom he worked tirelessly for fourteen years, to be able to establish the twelve tribes. After having been there for twenty years and becoming wealthy, G-d appeared to Yaakov and told him to leave and return to the Land of Canaan. Yaakov summoned Rachel and Leah to the fields for an important meeting. He explained to them a whole rationale why it would be a good idea for them to leave their father's home, and then, at the end, he mentioned that G-d had instructed him to do so. Their reaction was that there was no reason for them to stay there, and thus, if Hashem had told Yaakov to go, he should do that.

The Shelah makes note of the fact that although G-d had commanded Yaakov explicitly to leave, when he broached the subject with Rachel and Leah (Vayetze 31:4-16), he nevertheless began by explaining the reasons why it would be advisable for them to move to Eretz Canaan. Yaakov Avinu chose not to enforce the matter by saying that they must go, even though he was divinely commanded to do so. Additionally, he did not exploit his position as "leader of the house" to force them to listen to him. He merely reasoned with them, until they understood by themselves what was needed to be done, and were willing to do so.

From this the Shelah derives, that when a decision needs to be made or an action needs to be taken that affects the household. One should do so with mutual understanding and agreement, rather than by forcing one's opinion on others. Even if the husband has decided that a certain course of action is the correct thing to do, he should present and explain his opinion to his spouse, to see how she feels about it, and get her agreement before he proceeds.

For a husband to enforce his opinion is not healthy for a marriage. One should try, as much as possible, to ensure that one's spouse

understands one's reasoning, so that they will be on the same wavelength. This promotes the harmony and unity in the marriage, and enables their relationship to be one of mutual understanding and love, due to a common opinion being shared.

Furthermore, when children see that their parents share the same opinion and have a common understanding. This gives them a sense of stability and strength, as well as discipline and guidelines for life. This enables them to develop healthily, have a strong backbone and eventually, when they get married, to emulate the harmony that they witnessed with their parents.

Another lesson that we can learn from Yaakov Avinu, is the pleasant and personable way in which he presented his argument. Even a reprimand, when delivered in a pleasant manner, will be listened to. Conversely, instilling fear in one's household only backfires and can be the cause of terrible tragedies.

If we put in effort to make ourselves understood in a pleasant manner, we will enjoy a stronger and healthier relationship with our families. ■

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI YOSSEF CHAIM - "THE BEN ISH HAI"

Our revered teacher, Rabbi Yossef Chaim, better known as the Ben Ish Hai, was born in Baghdad on Av 27, 1834. After the disappearance of his illustrious father, which occurred on Elul 13, 1859, he succeeded him as head of the prestigious community, the inheritor of the Jewish Babylonian tradition.

It was in 1860, the morning of Shabbat Teshuvah, that he rose to the podium of the large synagogue to give his first course. It should be noted that he gave his lesson not in the capacity of Chief Rabbi, for all his life he refused the slightest official position. Everyone understood that G-d had bestowed upon Rabbi Yossef both immense wisdom and a marvelous gift for teaching, as well as incredible speaking abilities. From then on the Ben Ish Hai, in the same way as King Solomon, didn't stop instructing the people in all the mysteries of the Torah, even the most secret ones. He did this as much by his courses as by his books. To familiarize his audience with divine truths, he employed a vocabulary understood by all. He didn't hesitate to turn to everyday examples, or to anecdotes, to draw everyone's attention, retain it, and in this way transmit to everyone sacred knowledge. It must be underlined that in regards to this, besides his veritable encyclopedic knowledge of Torah, nothing of the human realm was unknown to the Ben Ish Hai. Hence to spiritually uplift people to the highest levels, he first spoke to them in language they understood.

Every Shabbat, during speeches that could sometimes last three hours, he explained the Parsha of the week to the community. In addition, each morning at the end of Shacharit, while still enwrapped in his Tallit and crowned with his Tefillin, he delighted the faithful with mountains of Halachot adorned with Talmudic and Midrashic narratives. Then for a half-hour he alternated between teaching the volumes of Orah Chaim and Yoreh Deah from the Shulchan Aruch. To conclude a study cycle that ended every four years, the Ben Ish Hai organized a great feast for the learned of the city, the costs of which he assumed himself. At this occasion, he would delight his audience by means of a discourse teeming with marvelous Chiddushim (novel interpretations) of Torah and Kabbalah.

Happy were all the tens of thousands of men and women who had the privilege to see and hear him during four great Shabbats of the year: Shabbat Teshuvah, Shabbat Hagadol, Shabbat Zachor, and Shabbat Parah. His lessons then lasted four hours, but because his audience was held captive by his teachings, his charm, his pleasantness, and his well-known humility, these four hours always seemed too brief. "The sound of his voice," said his biographers, "evoked the sound of the sea." A great love for Eretz Israel, and in particular for Jerusalem, emanated from each of his words.

Having never accepted the least of positions, the Ben Ish Hai enclosed himself (sometimes for entire days) in his office to study and write. He would interrupt himself only for guests, and would receive with his regal bearing all those who came to consult him, greeting them with incomparably great joy and humility. By appearing at the entrance to his study, the least of his students could see the Ben Ish Hai rise, rush to meet him, make him sit beside him, and listen attentively. In the same way, the Ben Ish Hai would rise to see each of his guests off, accompanying them until the entrance of his home.

He carefully watched over the absolute purity of his food in the minutest of details, even to the choice of those who served him. In regards to this, we must make it clear that for six years out of seven, the Ben Ish Hai imposed on himself a daily fast. He thus applied the Sages' interpretation to the Torah verse concerning the Hebrew slave, a verse that states, "Six years he shall serve, and in the seventh he shall go out free" (in other words, he shall be free from his Yetzer Hara, his evil inclination). That was but one of the mortifications and personal strictures that he demanded of himself. Thus, in the full heat of summer, when a blistering heat embraced Baghdad, he did not permit himself to eat watermelon solely for the purpose of not getting carried away by his desire. For this he waited until Rosh Hashanah, at which time he recited the blessing of Shecheyanu ("Blessed are You ...Who has granted us life ... and enabled us to reach this occasion").

Rabbi Yossef Chaim, the legendary Ben Ish Hai, left this world on Elul 13, 1909. He left us with works on Torah and Kabbalah that cannot be overlooked, veritable wellsprings of knowledge from which each of us can drink.

May his merit protect us, as well as all the Jewish people. Ame



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

IS IT PERMISSIBLE ON SHABBAT TO FILL AN ICE CUBE TRAY WITH WATER AND PUT IT IN THE FREEZER TO MAKE ICE CUBES?

Rabbi Chayim Palachi (Turkey, 1788-1868) in Shut Lev Hayim, Helek 2, siman 182, ruled that making ice cubes, which entails converting a liquid into a solid, is akin to producing cheese from milk, which is forbidden on Shabbat on the grounds of "Boneh" ("building"). Just as one may not convert milk to cheese on Shabbat, so would Halacha forbid transforming water into ice. A number of other authorities ruled stringently on this issue, as well.

Chacham Ovadia Yosef in Halichot Olam, Helek 4, page 93, however, argued that making ice cubes differs fundamentally from producing cheese. For one thing, the process of transforming milk to cheese is done actively, with one's hands, whereas water transforms into ice naturally when exposed to cold temperatures. At most, this would be a situation of "Gerama" - the indirect performance of a Melacha (forbidden activity on Shabbat). Secondly, cheese retains its solid form permanently, and thus making cheese justifiably qualifies as "Boneh." Ice, however, transforms back into water if left outside the freezer, and thus making ice cubes is but a temporary transformation, which does not qualify as "Boneh." Therefore, Chacham Ovadia rules that one may make ice cubes on Shabbat with intent to use the ice on Shabbat. (See Yehaveh Daat, Helek 1, siman 30.)

Is it permissible to return an ice tray to the freezer on Shabbat if one will not need any more ice on Shabbat, or would this constitute "Hachana," preparing for Shabbat for the weekday, given that he places the tray in the freezer solely to preserve the ice for the following day?

A fundamental principle of "Hachana" states that this prohibition applies only when one's intent is to save time after Shabbat. For example, Halacha would forbid making beds or washing dishes for the purpose of saving time after Shabbat. One may, however, do something on Shabbat that is necessary to preserve a given item. For example, one may return food into the refrigerator after his meal even though he will not need the food until after Shabbat, since he does so simply to preserve the food. Likewise, one is allowed to move an article out of the sun on Shabbat if it would be ruined by exposure to sunlight. Similarly, one may return an ice tray to the freezer on Shabbat even if he will need the ice only after Shabbat, since this is done for the purpose of preserving the ice cubes, and not to save time after Shabbat. (See Menuhat Ahava, Helek 1, page 248.)

Summary: One may fill an ice tray with water and put it in the freezer to make ice on Shabbat with intent to use the ice on Shabbat, and one may return an ice tray to the freezer on Shabbat even if he will not need any more ice until after Shabbat. ■

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TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- ❶ Yaakov said "I will return with shalom." What did he mean by "shalom"?
- ❷ Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
- ❸ Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
- ❹ What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
- ❺ Who escorted Yaakov into Eretz Yisrael?

Answer

❶ 28:21 - Completely without sin. ❷ 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money. ❸ 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day. ❹ 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel asked Hashem for another son in addition to Yosef. ❺ 32:1 - The angels of Eretz Yisrael.

Kids STORY

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

"Hi Jake, how are you doing?"

"Hi guys. Just fine. What's up?"

"We're on our way up to the school's library to help move and cover the books. They're going to paint the room and they need lots of help. Do you want to come?"

"Are they paying you anything to help?"

"Well, we never asked. I don't think so."

"Are they giving you free food?"

"We didn't ask about that either. We just wanted to help out."

"Are they at least putting the names of the volunteers on the bulletin board so everyone can see who they are?"

"Guess what. We didn't ask about that either."

"Well, guys have a good time."

"Does that mean that you are not coming?"

"Why should I come? They are not giving you any money, food, or recognition. What's in it for me?"

"What's in it for you, Jake?"

"That's right. What's in it for me?"

"Do you mind if I answer your question with a little story?"

"Sure. I love stories."

"Yaakov Avinu, our forefather Yaakov, went to the home of his uncle Lavan to find refuge from Eisav, his brother, and to look for a wife. He met Rachel, Lavan's daughter, and the two decided to marry. He asked Lavan for his daughter's hand in marriage. Lavan replied that he must work for seven years in order to marry Rachel. The time flies by, due to Yaakov's great love for Rachel. As the wedding day approaches, Rachel senses trouble. She knows that her father is a trickster, and may try to give her sister Leah to Yaakov as a bride. She makes up secret signals with Yaakov, so that he can identify her as the true bride. The wedding night arrives, and sure enough, Lavan comes to get Leah. Rachel is put on the spot. Should she let Leah go without giving her the secret signals? Then Lavan's devious plot will be exposed. But what about poor Leah? She will be so embarrassed. An unwanted bride. What a humiliation. Of course, she should give her the signals. But what about Rachel? She is finished. She will never marry her beloved Yaakov. Who knows whom she will marry? Perhaps his cruel brother Eisav. What should she do? What do you say Jake?"

"She should expose the plot. After all, she must worry about herself. She has her future to think about. Why should she give up a husband like Yaakov? What's in it for her?"

"That is one way of looking at it. I'll tell you what's in it for her. She saves Leah from embarrassment. Our sages tell us that it is better to be thrown into a fiery furnace than to embarrass someone. More importantly, she masters the art of self-sacrifice and giving to other people."

"That sounds interesting. Can you tell me about it?"

"Jake, there are two ways that we can relate to people. One is, 'What can I get from them?' The second way is, 'What can I give to them?'" The one who always looks at people the first way will never be truly happy or fulfilled. He is always looking to get something. His wants will never be satisfied, because he can never have everything. He will always want more than he has. And, he will dislike people who do not give him what he wants. People will not like him because they know that he only wants to take from them."

"That sounds pretty miserable."

"It is. The giver, on the other hand, is a truly happy person. He is happy with what he has because he is not always looking to get things. He only wants to help people. By giving to people, he grows to love them. And they grow close to him."

"What a beautiful thought."

"Jake, it is reality. 'What's in it for me' is a good question. Helping others without pay or recognition is the best thing that you can do for yourself. You get much more than just a little money or a free meal. You get true happiness and good relationships with people. That's what's in it for you."

"Where's the library? I'm on my way to help. Now I really see what's in it for me."