

# THE 'LUZ' BONE

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Vayeitzei

### The 'Luz' Bone

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In our parashah, Yaakov Avinu visits the city of Luz. "Luz" also is the name of a human bone which, say our Sages, never decays and from which man's body will be rebuilt at the time of techiyat ha'meitim. This bone takes all its nourishment from the melaveh malkah meal eaten on Motzai Shabbat. Thus, it derived no benefit when Adam ate from the Etz Ha'da'at--since that was not Motzai Shabbat--and it remained unblemished by that sin. As a result, it is not subject to the same mortality as the rest of the human body (see Mishnah Berurah 300:2 & Siddur R' Yaakov Emden).

By sitting down for one additional meal when Shabbat departs, we demonstrate that we are not sending Shabbat away like an unwanted guest; rather, we are accompanying ("melaveh") the queen ("malkah") respectfully as she leaves. On a deeper level, R' Menachem Man shlita (Yeshivat Ohr Etzion) explains in the name of R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (1823-1900; chassidic rebbe in Lublin, Poland): When Leah gave birth to her third son, she named him "Levi", which shares a root with the word "melaveh." She said (in our parashah--29:30), "This time my husband yilaveh / will become attached to me." Likewise, says R' Tzaddok, by accompanying the Shabbat on her way, we attach the Shabbat to the week ahead.

But where is Shabbat going? R' Tzaddok explains: Shabbat is the point of holiness which is inherent in every week. Hopefully, that point of holiness goes with us as we enter the work week ahead.

R' Man adds in the name of R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael): The luz is not only a physical part of the body; there is a spiritual "luz" also. That is the point of pure emunah / faith deep within a person that is never extinguished. It is the essence of every Jew; it is not the many unique interests and influences that shape each person, but that kernel deep within him, which is what enables him to share in both personal and national rebirth. (Le'toamehah Chaim p.228)

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"He took from the stones of the place which he arranged around his head, and lay down in that place." (28:11)

"Yaakov arose early in the morning and took the stone that he placed around his head and set it up as a pillar." (28:18)

Were there "stones" or one "stone"? Rashi z"l explains: He arranged the stones in a semi-circle around his head for he was afraid of wild animals, but the stones began quarreling with one another. One said, "Let this righteous man rest his head on me," and another said, "Let him rest it on me." Therefore, Hashem made them into one stone. [Until here from Rashi]

This raises a new question, however, notes R' Chaim Zvi Senter shlita (rosh yeshiva of Yeshiva Aderes Hatorah in Yerushalayim). Yaakov had taken the stones to protect himself. If they merged into one stone and he used it as a pillow, how was Yaakov protected?

He answers: Our Sages say that Yaakov originally took 12 stones, symbolizing the 12 tribes that he was destined to father. The midrash which Rashi quotes is teaching that, when the Jewish People are united, there is no need for external protection. (Heard from R' Senter, 4 Kislev 5773)

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"Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely Hashem is present in this place and I did not know!' He became frightened and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of G-d and this is the gate of the Heavens!' Yaakov arose early in the morning and took the stone that he placed around his head and set it up as a pillar; and he poured oil on its top." (28:16-19)

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005) writes: Yaakov's first reaction when he awoke was fear, and his response was to lay the foundation for the future Bet Hamikdash. If we had had a dream such as his, we might have reacted with joy or with awe. Yaakov, however, reacted with regret, with fear, at having slept in this place ("Surely Hashem is present in this place and I did not know!").

R' Wolbe continues: King Shlomo wrote (Mishlei 1:7), "Fear of Hashem is the beginning of knowledge." Appropriate fear can be a great motivator to action. And, the way to reach ruach ha'kodesh / Divine inspiration is to follow inspiration with action, as Yaakov did here. Yaakov did not wake up and meditate on the mystical secrets that were revealed to him in his dream. He woke up and took action. (AleI Shur, Vol. I p.139-140)

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"It is in my power to do you all harm, but the G-d of your father addressed me last night, saying, 'Beware of speaking with Yaakov either good or bad'." (31:29)

We say in the Pesach Haggadah, "Pharaoh decreed only against the males, while Lavan wanted to uproot everything." Where in the Torah do we find that Lavan had such plans?

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) answers: There is no hint of this in the Torah. Rather, it is an oral tradition passed down by the Sages. Even Yaakov Avinu was not aware of the extent to which Lavan conspired against him.

He continues: What befell the forefathers foreshadows what will befall their descendants. We, too, are not aware of the extent to which our enemies conspire against us. Even so, just as G-d saved Yaakov, He saves us as well. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim)

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"Yaakov said to his brothers, 'Gather stones!'" (31:46)

Rashi z"l writes: "Really his sons, who were like brothers to him since they were standing by him in trouble and in battle."

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (see above) writes: The Torah is teaching that a parent can, and should, make his child into his "brother" in some respects by making him a partner in his work. This begins when a parent says to a toddler, "You be my helper!" When a child sees himself as a partner with his parents, he does not feel like a burden is being imposed on him. And, as the level of importance of the tasks entrusted to the young "partner" increases, so does the child's own sense of responsibility increase. (Zeriah U'binyan B'chinuch p.27)

A related thought:

R' Avraham Zvi Kluger shlita (Bet Shemesh, Israel) writes: If a parent commands a child to do something then, even if the parent's will is done, no mutual relationship will be formed. But, if the parent asks the child to do something and explains how much it will please the parent to see that thing done, then a mutual relationship has been formed in which the child, who is usually a recipient, feels like he is giving to the parent, who is usually the giver.

Indeed, R' Kluger continues, the secret of every successful relationship is for the "giver" to make the "taker" feel like a "giver" as well. This is why so much of our prayers are praises to Hashem. Of course, He does not need praises from us. Nevertheless, He wants us to praise Him so that we do not feel the discomfort of always being the "takers" in the relationship. (Yichud Ha'hitbodedut p.33)

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## **Letters from Our Sages**

This letter was written by R' Avraham of Slonim z"l (1809-1883), the first Slonimer Rebbe, to a chassid.

Your letter reached me. May the good and merciful G-d please console you in the midst of the general consolation of Zion and Yerushalayim.

Regarding your overabundance of worry, it is already written [Mishlei 12:25], "If there is worry in a person's heart, yesichenah," which our Sages explained to mean, "He should remove it from his thoughts." One must strengthen himself very much with the stubbornness of a victorious warrior to remove worry from his heart and turn his thoughts to other things. How good it would be to be happy with one's lot in one's day-to-day life!

Our Sages say that sinners are full of mitzvot like pomegranates [are full of seeds]. But, are not all Jews full of mitzvot like pomegranates? And, if these people are full of mitzvot, what makes them sinners? The answer is that [they are called sinners because] they are never happy, which leads them to fall prey to repulsive desires and, ultimately, to sin willfully. Thus, one must flee from sadness as one flees from a goring ox.

The correct and effective way to be spared from a black mood is to review the statement of our Sages, "Whatever measure He metes out to you, thank Him very much" [see Rashi to Devarim 6:5]. Everything the Merciful One does is for a good end. This attitude will "sweeten" the judgment and turn the attribute of strict justice to mercy.

A certain wise man engaged in business for many years but in the end, an act of G-d caused him to lose everything. Even so, he was happy with what he had. Someone asked him the reason, and he answered: I once had a neighbor who was of the same station as I was, but he loved money so much that I once heard him say, "If, G-d forbid, G-d would decree that I be poor, I would rather not have life." I was alarmed by his foolish words, and I told him, "To the contrary! Life is more precious than anything, for as long as one lives, he has hopes for two worlds." And, I saw close-up how my friend received the fate he had wished on himself, while I, thank G-d, remain alive. I now hope for eternal life in the World-to-Come, and in the interim, I fulfill the verse, (Yeshayah 12:1), "I will thank You, Hashem, for You have been angry at me." (Yesod Ha'avodah - Michtevei Kodesh, no.58)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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