

# IT'S GOOD FOR YOU

*by Rabbi Moshe Peretz Gilden*

After twenty years of living in the household of his evil father-in-law, Lavan (Laban), Yaakov (Jacob) received Divine instructions to depart. In relaying these instructions to his wives, he added, "I have noticed your father's disposition is not toward me as in earlier days...Now you have known that it was with my might that I served your father, yet your father mocked me and changed my wage a hundred times..." (Beraishis/Genesis 35:5-7) After accepting a long list of their father's breaches of trust, they responded, "Have we then still a share and an inheritance in our father's house? Are we not considered by him as strangers?...So now, whatever G-d has said to you, do." (ibid. 11-13)

Why did Yaakov feel compelled to explain his feelings toward Lavan? Did it not suffice that G-d had directed them to leave? Similarly, Rachel and Leah seem to be willing to follow the Divine will only because they do not have much to lose; is that a precondition to listening to G-d's command?

Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian (1876-1976; disseminator of Torah and mussar (ethics) for over 70 years in Lithuania, England and Israel; some of his thoughts are collected in the multi-volume *Lev Eliyahu*) notes our forbearers' demonstration of true service of G-d. One who approaches His service with an attitude that "for G-d's sake I must endure hardships" is mistaken. We are to appreciate that beyond the reward waiting for us in the Afterlife, there is benefit in this world in fulfilling G-d's charge. In fact, continues the *Lev Eliyahu*, these people who find the benefit in following G-d's will have a greater enjoyment of the pleasures of this world than do those who pursue pleasure for "pleasure's sake". Hedonism does not create a true sense of satisfaction.

The conversation of Yaakov with Rachel and Leah is straightforward. Accepting the word of G-d, the first reaction of each of them was to identify the direct benefit of following His command. Although the benefits were obvious, the Torah - which does not record so much as an extra letter - records all of the benefits to teach this essential lesson.

While we are not privy to prophecy through which we would receive personalized instruction, the Torah gives us mitzvos (Divine commands) as an opportunity to do His bidding. We are not doing G-d any favors by adhering to His will; quite the contrary, it is we who benefit in their fulfillment. Many times we appreciate the benefit. But even in those times we do not, we remember that a child, who cannot fathom all of the kindnesses performed for him by his parents, remains confident that all they do for him is with his best interests in mind. How much more confident can we be that the infinite, omnipotent, Creator of the Universe, Who gives us every moment's breath as a reflexive gift, would only present us with situations and actions that ultimately benefit us.

Have a Good Shabbos!

---

Copyright © 2002 by [Rabbi Pinchas Avruch](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Kol HaKollel is a publication of the Milwaukee Kollel Center for Jewish Studies 5007 West Keefe Avenue; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; 414-447-7999