

# THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

Ya'akov departed from Be'er Sheva and went toward Charan. (Bereishis 28:10)

Did he have much of a choice? Once Ya'akov took the blessings away from Eisav, all Eisav, the twin brother of Ya'akov, could think of, was revenge. Thus, Ya'akov's long journey from Ya'akovhood to Yisroelhood - THIRTY-SIX years altogether - began.

One could question the Divine Providence of all of it. After all, it was not for a selfish reason that Ya'akov took his righteous mother's advice and disguised himself as his brother to fool his father into giving him the blessings, instead of Eisav. He had done it l'shem Shamayim - for the sake of Heaven - and the least Heaven could do was neutralize Eisav so that Ya'akov could remain at home in peace.

But that was not what Heaven wanted. The whole thing was a set up from the beginning, SPECIFICALLY so that Ya'akov would be FORCED into exile by his vengeful brother. That was the plan from the start, I mean from the very beginning, when the Torah says, "In the beginning, G-d created . . ." That is how primordial the entire episode was, is, until the end of history and the Jewish people, like their great ancestor, achieve Yisroelhood also.

That is how Hashgochah Pratis (Divine Providence) works. It creates scenarios to which we must respond, forcing us into directions we might otherwise not have gone, or even feel necessary to go, for our own good. This is what the Talmud means by, "One who wants to purify himself, Heaven helps him" (Shabbos 104a). Our free will is there to allow us to choose to want to become purified in the first place.

Thus, Heaven creates situations that force us to make choices. If we are honest and have the proper priorities and we live in search of spiritual growth, we will make decisions that will lead us through and out of the maze successfully. If we lack self-honesty, and spiritual growth is something from one's ancient past, then we can get stuck in the maze, tragically, not even aware that we entered it.

That's how Ya'akov understood his journey. This is why everything he underwent he saw as a test, and why he looked for spiritual road signs all along the way to guide him. For example, early on Ya'akov's journey:

He took two stones in his hand and said, "If these two stones become attached as one then I know that there is no waste to come from me." (Bereishis Rabbah 69:11)

To what was Ya'akov alluding? To his children, of course. However, Ya'akov had not even met his wife yet, let alone fathered children! Unquestionably he was on his way to getting married, as we learned from the end of the previous parshah, but still, wasn't Ya'akov's thoughts somewhat premature?

Obviously not, for in the next scene he lay down to sleep and dreamed of the four exiles his descendants were destined to undergo. Thus, Ya'akov thought only in terms of completing the task for which he was created, something he understood that could only come true through his descendants, and something he saw as being measured by the unity of his children.

Which, in light of the following statement from the Talmud, is quite remarkable:

Rava bar Machsya said in the name of Rav Chama bar Guria, who said it in the name of Rav: A parent should never treat one's child differently from the other children, because, for the sake of two 'dollars' of clothing that Ya'akov gave to Yosef more than the rest of his sons they became jealous of him, and it caused all the events that brought our ancestors down to Egypt! (Shabbos 10b)

Thus, Ya'akov, whose whole concern was the unity of his children was the very cause of the schism amongst them! But wait a second, didn't G-d tell Avraham that his descendants were destined to be oppressed there, even before Ya'akov himself was born? Answers Tosefos:

THAT BROUGHT OUR ANCESTORS TO EGYPT: Even though it was decreed, "They will oppress and afflict them" (Bereishis 15:13), perhaps it was not decreed that they should suffer as much as they did, whereas as a result of this the four hundred years began 30 years before the birth of Yitzchak.

Is this supposed to make us feel better or worse? Because of only TWO extra dollars worth of clothing we had to suffer so much in Egypt?! If Ya'akov had known this, would he have given Yosef that extra coat in the first place? The answer, of course, is yes, and something we will try to come to terms with over the rest of this parshah sheet, b'ezras Hashem Yisborach.

### **SHABBOS DAY:**

Ya'akov 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. (Bereishis 28:18)

From where did Ya'akov get this jar? When he picked up the stones from under his head and returned them in the morning, he found a stone that had a jar of oil in it, and he used it to pour on the top stone. When it refilled itself, Ya'akov knew it was set aside for G-d. He said, "It's not right to leave this here . . ." (Yalkut Reuveni, Parashas Vayishlach)

Like Ya'akov's odyssey, the journey of the miraculous jar of oil begins here in this week's parshah. Every miracle that will ever occur with oil will have occurred with this special, self-replenishing, oil that Ya'akov found at this crucial moment on his journey to Yisroelhood.

And, even though the Midrash does not mention the oil of the menorah at the time of the Chashmonai in its list, it seems too obvious that it must be included, since the theme of Chanukah is that of Ya'akov, his sons, and all of his descendants. After all, it took 36 years - the number of candles that we light over eight days of Chanukah - to complete his transformation from Ya'akovhood to Yisroelhood, just one of MANY allusions to Chanukah along Ya'akov's personal path to perfection.

Here's another:

Ya'akov took them and crossed them over the river and all that was with him. Ya'akov remained alone. (Bereishis 32:24)

He remained for small jars. (Chullin 91a)

G-d said to Ya'akov, "For endangering yourself for a small container, I Myself will repay your children with a small container to the Chashmonaim [at the time of Chanukah]." (Midrash Tzeidah LaDerech)

And another:

The sun shone for him (lamed-vav) . . . (Bereishis 32:32)

THE SUN SHONE FOR HIM (LAMED-VAV): The word 'lamed-vav' (whose gematria is 36) alludes to the thirty-six candles of Chanukah. (Maharil, Avodah Zarah 3b)

And, there are many, many more, such as the fact that Rachel, his beloved wife died at the age of 36, whereas the name of her twin sister, Leah, is equal in gematria to 36 (lamed-aleph-heh). None of this should be surprising given that the struggle to achieve the level of a Yisroel is the struggle to discover the inner essence of the Jew, which the olive oil represents.

The question is, what does all of this have to do with sibling rivalry? No question that the fight between Yosef and his brothers is about to dominate the story line from Parashas Vayaishev through Parashas Veyechi, and land us in Egypt as well. However, is it the side story, or the main event?

Granted there is plenty of material to dovetail the story of Yosef and his brothers with the theme of Chanukah, but is the third strand the one that Ya'akov first deals with in this week's parshah as he flees his angry brother, Eisav?

### **SEUDOS SHILSHIS:**

When Rachel had given birth to Yosef, Ya'akov told Lavan, "Send me away . . ." (Bereishis 30:25)

WHEN RACHEL HAD GIVEN BIRTH TO YOSEF: When she gave birth to the adversary of Eisav, as it says, "And the house of Ya'akov shall be fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Eisav straw" (Ovadia 1:18). Fire without a flame is not effective at a distance. Therefore, once Yosef was born, Ya'akov put his trust in The Holy One, Blessed is He, and wanted to return. (Rashi)

Achdus - unity - is one of the most beautiful and important concepts in all of creation, and particularly to G-d. As we learn in many places, but especially from the words of Yechezkel, which are the Haftarah for Parashas Vayigash, the Final Redemption, something that is synonymous with achieving Yisroelhood, is defined in terms of such achdus:

The word of God came to me, saying, "Now you, Son of Man, take for yourself one piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yehudah and for the Children of Israel, his comrades'; and take one piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yosef, the wood of Ephraim and all the House of Israel, his comrades.' Then bring them close to yourself, one to the other, like one piece of wood, and they will become unified in your hand. Now, when the children of your people say to you, saying, 'Will you not tell us what these things are to you,' say to them:

Thus said the Lord Hashem/Elohim: Behold, I am taking the wood of Yosef which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his comrades, and I am placing them and him together with the wood of Yehudah; and I will make them into one piece of wood, and they will become one in My hand.

The pieces of wood upon which you shall write shall be in your hand, before their eyes. Say to them:

Thus said the Lord Hashem/Elohim: Behold, I am taking the Children of Israel from among the nations to which they have gone; I will gather them from all around and I will bring them to their soil; I will make them into one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel, and one king will be a king for all of them; they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two nations, ever again . . . My servant Dovid will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them . . . (Yechezkel 37:15-24)

As such, there are very specific things that lead to achdus, and very specific things that undermine it. For example, the Talmud statement of, "Every Jew is a guarantor for his brother" (Sanhedrin 27b) was completely fulfilled at the foot of Mt. Sinai just in advance of receiving the Torah:

They traveled from Rephidim and came to the Sinai Desert and camped; and there Israel camped before the mountain. (Shemos 19:2)

THERE ISRAEL CAMPED: As one man with one heart. (Rashi)

What prompted Rashi to speak of the unity of the Jewish people at this point was the verse's use of the singular expression for the word 'camped': vayichan (vav-yud-ches-nun), whose root is that of CHANukah as well (CHES-NUN-vav-chof-heh). In other words, something happened at the base of Mt. Sinai that caused each and every Jew there to become spiritually elevated to the point that all aspects of selfishness and dissension disappeared.

How?

G-d. G-d unifies. He is One, and those who pursue Him - SINCERELY - become one. In fact, achdus is

one of the best measures of one's level of spirituality, providing, of course, that the goal is perfection of one's spiritual traits.

For, the opposite of unity, or at least that which results in the opposite of unity is materialism. Materialism tends to breed greed and jealousy, and distinguishes people from one another in spiritually unhealthy ways. And, even though people work together for common materialistic goals, it is still usually only self-serving and not real *achdus*, which is why G-d dispersed the generation of the Tower of Bavel, to make this very point.

Thus, playing dreidel on Chanukah for money is a reminder of this point. And, on the sides of the dreidel are the letters: nun-gimmel-heh-shin, which stand for the words that mean, "a great miracle happened there." The B'nei Yissachar points out that these letters also spell "Goshnah," which is where Yehudah went to meet Yosef, after he revealed himself and *achdus* had been achieved.

Perhaps, then, Ya'akov SPECIFICALLY gave Yosef the extra clothing, knowing full well that he was sending his sons on a dangerous spiritual and physical odyssey, just as he had traveled, on their own way to Yisroelhood. *Achdus* amongst themselves would, eventually, become the measure of their success, if not then, then, certainly by the time Moshiach arrives, may it be in our time!

Thus, in a very real sense, *achdus* and materialism, Eisav-style, represent two opposite sides of one coin, just like Yisroel and Ya'akov - just like the Yosef Ya'akov perceived and cherished, and the Yosef his own brothers perceived and hated. And, how that coin lands has everything to do with how the gentile nations of the world treat us, and ultimately, when and how Moshiach arrives. And, as we have just mentioned, it is the underlying theme of the holiday of Chanukah, which celebrates a Jew's ability to tap into the Supernal Light of creation . . .

## **MELAVE MALKAH:**

### Kislev & Chanukah, Part 1

It all comes down to the concept of 'chayn' (ches-nun). We are first introduced to it in the Torah when it is the basis of Noach's survival from the terrible flood that eradicated all of man- and animal-kind from existence:

And G-d said, "I will blot out Man whom I created from the face of the ground - from man to animal, to creeping things, and to birds of the sky; for I have reconsidered My having made them." But Noach found grace (chayn) in the eyes of G-d. (Bereishis 6-7-8)

From this posuk, and similar ones like it, chayn seems to be a simple concept, just a way of expressing that there is something likeable about a person. Something about them makes one want to be nice to them, as G-d was to Noach, even though He was exercising extreme judgment on the rest of the entire generation.

Small coincidence that the name 'Noach' is spelled in reverse, like a mirror-image of the word

'chayn': nun-ches - ches-nun (Orach HaChaim, Bereishis 6:8). But, we Jews don't believe in coincidences (Chullin 7b), so there must be something to this, and of course there is.

Life, at this stage of history, is never black-and-white. Well, actually it can be - before birth and after death, because in the case of the former, the body, though alive, is neutralized and the soul is in command, and in the case of the latter, the body no longer had ANY say in one's life while the soul is free to be its spiritual self.

However, in-between these two periods of time, body and soul are bound together by some kind of miraculous bond, each seeking diametrically opposite desires and goal - like Ya'akov and Eisav - each pulling in the opposite direction. It can be enough to drive a person mad, but at the very least, it forces a person to make compromises. Thus, life is rarely black-and-white during this stage of one's existence.

The trouble, or rather the challenge, comes from the fact that the body is physical, and the soul is spiritual. As such, the body is more automatically involved in the physical world than the soul is, and tends to make more noise and attract more attention, like a screaming child in the candy section of a supermarket.

Not everything a child does is cute. When a child makes decisions that are not appropriate for his emotional and intellectual maturity level, he may upset his parents and may cause his parents to punish him. On the other hand, when a child acts in an age appropriate fashion, then he exudes something special that draws our positive attention.

What did he exude? If he is smart, he will learn the answer to this question quickly, because it can get him just about anything he wants. However, usually by the time a child figures out the source of such positive attention, he is already a full-grown adult, and such behavior seems inappropriate, even fraudulent and draws in its wake feelings of disgust from other people.

Unless, that is, the adult does it naturally, as did Noach.

But, what are we talking about? Bodily tendencies? If a person acts in a materialistic and body-serving way, are we impressed and drawn to him? He may be having 'fun,' but most people will not be impressed, but rather, just the opposite, wishing to avoid such a person altogether.

Then, what impresses people? What is it specifically that draws people to others who seem to exude . . . chayn?

Good character traits. Noble reactions to everyday life and other people's situations. People for whom physical goals are second priority compared to spiritual ones, especially when it serves other people's well-being. They make not be the most fun people to be around, but they are the great ones of society and history.

Are these functions of the body?

No, they are functions of the soul.

And, it is the soul that is the source of chayn, for just as the oil is within the olive, hidden away until it is 'released' and ignited, so too is the soul hidden away within the body, waiting to be 'released' and 'ignited' so that it can give off 'chayn'. And when it does, it is CHAYN-ukah, for not only has the soul found expression in physical creation, but the Original Light of creation, the Primordial Light with which G-d made creation, gave Torah, and brings about redemption shines forth.

That is the 'chayn' of Cheshvan (CHES-shin-van-NUN). That is 'lo' (lamed-vav) of Kislev. And THAT, b'ezras Hashem Yisborach, will be explained, next week.

Have a Great Shabbos,  
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