

THE ANGEL WHO REDEEMED HIM

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 265, Yahrtzeit. Good Shabbos!

Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R. Yissocher Dov - In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand

Yaakov Invokes Heavenly Blessings for His Grandchildren From "The Angel Who Redeemed Him"

"And he blessed Yosef and said 'the L-rd before whom my fathers walked, the L-rd who has taken care of me until this day, the Angel who redeems me from all evil, He shall bless the young lads...' [Bereishis 48:15-16]. This pasuk [verse] is familiar those who say it with our children at night before they go to bed. However, if we think about the pasuk, we will discover a basic difficulty.

Yaakov began giving this blessing to Yosef by referring to the L-rd (haElokim) with whom his forefathers traveled. We would expect that Yaakov would invoke the help of G-d in the blessing of the children. However, in the middle of the blessing, Yaakov suddenly switched and started talking about "the Angel". Yaakov invoked the blessing of the Angel rather than the blessing of G-d. Wouldn't G-d's blessing be better than an Angel's blessing?

I saw a beautiful explanation in the Limudei Nissan (Rav Nissan Alpert). There was a very big difference between the relationship that G-d had with Avraham and Yitzchak and the relationship that He had with Yaakov. The first two generations of Patriarchs merited a relationship with G-d that was built upon open miracles. Avraham, even amongst his peers, was crowned: "a Prince of G-d are you in our midst" [Bereishis 23:6]. Everyone appreciated who he was. Likewise, Avimelech initiated a peace covenant with Yitzchak because he realized who Yitzchak was. They merited a treatment by G-d that was apparent to everyone.

Yaakov is the Patriarch who symbolizes the Jew in Exile. He existed and lived in exile and passed on to his children and his descendants the ability to survive in exile. The providence that Yaakov had was one in which G-d always saved him, but the salvation came in a way which was much more hidden than that experienced by Avraham and Yitzchak.

Look at Yaakov's life. He had troubles from Eisav. Then he had troubles with Lavan. Then he had troubles with Dena. Then he had troubles with Yosef. Then he had troubles with Shimon. Then he had troubles with Binyamin. Yaakov literally lived a life of troubles. But G-d was always there. In all of these instances, in the final analysis, goodness sprouted from what was perceived as evil.

The twenty years spent with Lavan were the twenty years in which Yaakov built the future Tribes. The incident with Yosef is what eventually sustained them in the years of famine. All of these things eventually had a silver lining - but as they were happening, they were all highly traumatic situations. It was certainly true that at all times G-d was "pulling the strings", but it was not necessarily apparent that this was the case.

This typifies Jewish life in the Exile (Galus). In Galus, we live a life in which the Divine Face of G-d is Hidden (Hester Panim) from us. This means that G-d is there, calling the shots, but He is behind a cloud. It is often difficult to identify the "Hand of G-d" in that which transpires around us. It is difficult to perceive that what occurs to us is "for the best" rather than sometimes calamitous. This is our life in Exile.

Yaakov is about to bless his grandchildren, Menashe and Ephraim, who are the first Jews born into Exile. Their experience in the Egyptian Exile would foreshadow the Jewish experience in many future countries of exile. Yaakov wanted them to realize that the "Hand of G-d" would not always openly intervene on their behalf. At times, G-d's presence would not be apparent to them at all.

Therefore, precisely for this reason, Yaakov gave them the blessing of "the Angel who redeemed me from all evil..." In Galus, G-d does not deliver the salvation Himself in an open and apparent way as it was with the earlier patriarchs. Rather, "the Angel (Malach) who redeems" delivers the salvation. In Galus, G-d has his representatives (Malachim, literally Angels) who come to deliver salvation.

The entire blessing can be understood in this light. "The L-rd before whom my forefathers Avraham and Yitzchak walked" - openly basking in His Salvation. "The G-d who shepherds me" - this is the same G-d who is like a shepherd to me. [The sheep do not know that the wolf is lurking in the background, but it is the shepherd who is always there to make sure that nothing happens. This is the type of Providence that I merited to have in Exile.] And this same Providence - that G-d should watch out for you in Exile even in hidden and indirect ways - is my blessing to you: "The Angel who redeems me from all evil, he too should bless these young boys..." And if you can see this hand of G-d in all that occurs and you will remain upright and steadfast, then "... my name will be called upon you, as well as the names of my forefathers..." - eventually you will merit to have the open Providence of G-d which was experienced by Avraham and Yitzchak.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
Technical Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#); Yerushalayim.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas VaYechi are provided below:

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