

# IT'S A MATCH!

*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 # 260, Ein Me'Arvin Simcha b'Simcha. Good Shabbos!*

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

## **Comparing The Image In Heaven With The Image On Earth: Do They Match?**

Yaakov Avinu [our Patriarch] dreamt of a ladder that was based on earth, with its top reaching up to Heaven. Angels of G-d were ascending and descending the ladder. The Talmud [Chulin 91] comments on the Angels' actions: They would ascend to examine the image of Yaakov, which was present beneath the Divine Throne and then they would descend to examine the image of the real-life Yaakov below.

What is the meaning of this imagery? Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903- 1993) offered a beautiful insight into this Talmudic passage. The Angels were amazed at the similarity of the images. The earthly Yaakov's image was precisely the same as the Heavenly image of Yaakov. This was a tremendous accomplishment. There was an image in Heaven of who the Patriarch Yaakov was supposed to be. G-d perceived Yaakov's spiritual potential and created an image under his Heavenly Throne which represented that potential. Yaakov achieved in deed on this earth exactly what had been expected of him in Heaven. This was such a noteworthy accomplishment that it stirred the interest of legions of Angels who came to inspect this amazing phenomenon for themselves.

Rav Soloveitchik added that the same concept holds true for all of us. When G-d created each of us, he gave us certain gifts and talents and had something in mind for us in terms of how we should use those gifts and talents. Each of us has a Heavenly image. Each of us also has an earthly image of what we indeed look like. We must strive throughout our lives to try to ensure that the two images match up as precisely as possible.

Finally, Rav Soloveitchik pointed out that Angels are not the only ones who look at the images of what is up above and compare them with what is here on earth. People have a strong sense of what the image of a Torah-observant Jew looks like in Heaven, in the ideal. Wherever religious Jews go, people are comparing them with what they intuitively know to be the image of a religious Jew up in Heaven.

Everyone has an idea of what a Torah-observant Jew is supposed to be like, how he is supposed to act in business, how he is supposed to talk, what kind of lifestyle he is supposed to lead. People are constantly holding up the Earthly image to the Heavenly image. Unfortunately, not everyone matches up with the Heavenly image as well as our Patriarch Yaakov matched his Heavenly image. Unfortunately, the "real-life image" of the so-called religious Jew is often not what it is really supposed to be, as indicated in Heaven. The religious community must be especially sensitive to this.

Our life's challenge is to become like Yaakov, to ensure that our two images match precisely.

### **Comparing The Fourth Grade Image With The Image of the Ba'alei Mussar: They Don't Match!**

Upon Yaakov's arrival in Paddan Aram [Bereishis 29: 1-11], the Torah relates the incident of Yaakov giving water to the sheep from the well. A large boulder sat atop a certain well from which all the flocks were given to drink. The rock could not be moved until all the shepherds gathered to collectively remove it from the well and then collectively replace it. Yaakov removed the rock from the well by himself and gave water to the sheep that Rachel was watching. Rashi notes that Yaakov removed the rock as easily as one would remove a cork from a bottle.

When we learned this story in grade school, we all pictured a dramatic scene of a macho, muscle-bound Yaakov demonstrating awesome power and impressing Rachel with his good looks and great strength. Then we imagined a scene right out of a Hollywood script: Rachel falls madly in love with Yaakov, they get married and live happily ever after.

However, that picture of events is far from accurate. Does it not seem strange that all these shepherds, who were going through this routine, day after day, year after year, did not have the strength to remove the rock but Yaakov - the Yeshiva student from the Yeshiva of Shem V'Ever, who had (according to the Medrash) spent the last 14 years learning day and night - did have the strength? Yaakov, in fact, probably looked more like the stereotypical pale, emaciated Yeshiva weakling than like a Hollywood he-man. How was it that he could move the rock and all the rugged shepherds could not?

Rav Yaakov Neiman offered the following idea, which is echoed by many of the Ba'al'ay Mussar [Masters of Ethics]: The key to understanding this whole chapter is a stanza which we recite in the Prayer for Rain (recited on Shemini Atzeres). The poet there uses the language "He concentrated his heart and then rolled off the stone" (yichad lev, vaYagel Even). In other words, Yaakov did not use his biceps or his upper body strength to move the boulder. Yaakov used concentration of the heart. This

means that it was a matter of motivation. Yaakov was able to move the stone by virtue of his single-mindedness of purpose to do an act of kindness. When one is driven by a goal, he can accomplish that which is beyond the scope of normal people.

We have all heard of cases of a mother, who, upon finding her young child pinned underneath a car, lifts the car and saves the life of her child. Reflecting moments later, she is astounded - "How did I lift that car? I would not be able to budge it off the ground if I tried for the rest of my life!" These types of stories happen regularly. What is this all about? The poet of the Prayer for Rain expresses it as "Yichad Lev" -- singleness of purpose. If it is my child that I am trying to save, I can lift up a car!

The difference between Yaakov and the shepherds was one of motivation. To the shepherds, it was no big deal if the rock was not moved. They were not concerned if it would take them another 4 hours for enough people to show up to move the rock. Their attitude was "Who cares?"

When Yaakov saw the scene and saw everyone waiting around, and saw an opportunity to perform an act of kindness, he put his heart to it and was able to do it. When one puts his heart to do something, strengths and abilities that he innately possessed all along come forth, and amazing things can be accomplished.

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Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.  
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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 Vayeitzei are provided below:

- Tape # 032 - The Obligation to Give Ma'aser
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- Tape # 170 - Marrying Off a Younger Child First
- Tape # 216 - Maariv
- Tape # 260 - "Ein Mearvin Simcha B'Simcha"
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