

SHABBOS AND SUSTENANCE

by Rabbi Binyomin Adler

Introduction In this week's parashah the Torah relates how Yaakov went to the house of Lavan in search of a wife. Lavan subsequently offered to compensate Yaakov for the labor that Yaakov performed and Lavan attempted to trick Yaakov out of his wages. The simple lesson from this incident is that one has to be cunning when engaged in business with someone who is dishonest. However, there is also a deeper meaning to Yaakov's dealings with Lavan. The unwarranted hatred of Lavan towards Yaakov We are accustomed to understanding the episode with Yaakov and Lavan as a case of good guy and bad guy, i.e. Yaakov is the hero and Lavan is the villain. While this may be true on a superficial level, this episode contains within it a profound lesson for all of us. In the Hagadah Shel Pesach we recite the words tzei uleamad mah bakeish Lavan haArami laasos liYaaakov Avinu shePharaoh lo gazar ela al hazecharim viLavan bikeish laakor es hakol, go and learn what Lavan the Aramean planned to do our father Yaakov. For Pharaoh decreed only that the male children should be put to death, but Lavan had planned to uproot all. The Maharal (Gevuros HaShem Â§54) raises a difficulty with this passage. Why is it that the author of the Hagadah makes no mention of the evil schemes of Esav and only mentions the diabolical plans of Lavan to Yaakov? This is even more difficult in light of the fact that the Torah explicitly states that Esav sought to kill Yaakov whereas there is no mention in the Torah that Lavan sought to eradicate Yaakov and his entire family. The Maharal explains in a lengthy thesis that unlike Esav who hated Yaakov for stealing his blessings, Lavan and Pharaoh both hated Yaakov and the Jewish People without a justifiable reason. The Maharal writes that Yaakov and Lavan were diametrically opposite of each other, and the Sifri even states that Yaakov descended to Aram to destroy Lavan. Ultimately Lavan sought to destroy Yaakov and although he was unsuccessful, the Torah deems it as if he had destroyed him. The Maharal concludes his explanation by writing that the country of Aram, represented by Lavan, did not exist as an entity. The Jewish People, however, are a real existing entity. Thus, it follows that when a non-entity like Lavan is opposed to an entity like Yaakov and the Jewish People, the non-entity will seek to entirely destroy the entity. It was for this reason that Lavan sought to entirely destroy Yaakov and his household.

Yaakov drained Lavan of all his material gains The Targum Yonasan and the Targum Yerushalmi (Bereishis 31:22) write that Lavan knew that Yaakov and his family fled because the shepherds discovered that there was no water in the well with which to give the animals to drink. It was then that Lavan realized that it was in the merit of Yaakov that for twenty years he had water for himself and for his animals. The Pinei Menachem writes that this means that Yaakov succeeded in taking out

all the holy sparks from Lavan and his household, so by fleeing with his wives and children, Yaakov essentially caused that Lavan did not remain with anything.

The Shabbos connection From the words of the Maharal and the Pinei Menachem we see that our biggest enemies in reality do not amount to anything. This idea can be applied to ones daily struggle of earning a livelihood. It is very easy for one to delude himself into thinking that it is his efforts or lack thereof that contributes to his success, or, Heaven forbid, failure, in earning a living. In reality, however, there could be nothing further from the truth. The Zohar states that all the blessings that are found during the week have their source in the Holy Shabbos. Thus, the weekday is akin to Lavan, who appears to be a formidable foe but is essentially a non- entity. The weekday is an illusion that allows one to think that his efforts are creating his financial success, but it is really Shabbos that brings one success. The goal of a Jew must be to, so to speak, use the Shabbos to take out all the holy sparks from the weekday. The Gemara (Shabbos 118b) and Medrash teach us that Yaakov, more than the other Patriarchs, reflects the ideals of Shabbos. Thus, instead of Lavan tricking Yaakov, it was ultimately Yaakov who tricked Lavan and drained him of any material gains. Similarly, one may delude himself to thinking that his efforts during the week provide for him on Shabbos, when, in truth, it is the Shabbos that sustains him the entire week.

Shabbos in the Zemiros Menuchah Visimchah Composed by an unknown author named Moshe Shabbos: A day of desire

Shomrav vizochrov heimah meidim ki lishisha kol biruim viomdim, those who protect and those who remember it - they bear witness that in six says all was created and still endures. The word kol, besides meaning all, also connotes the concept of desire, as it is said vayechal Elokim bayom hashevii, by the seventh day G-d completed His work. The Targum Yerushalmi renders the word vayechal to mean vichamad, and He desired. Thus, we are declaring here that the six days all were waiting in anticipation for the Holy Shabbos. This is what it means that the six days were created and enduring. The word omdim can be interpreted to mean the six days were standing in anticipation for the Holy Shabbos.

Shabbos in Tefillah

HaShem and His praises are infinite Tisbareich moshieinu al kol shevach maasei yadecho vial miorei ohr sheyatzarta heimah yifaarucha selah, may You be blessed, our Savior, beyond all the praises of Your handiwork and beyond the brilliant luminaries that You have formed - may they glorify You - selah. This passage is difficult to understand. Why do we declare that HaShem should be blessed beyond all praises? We know that the word baruch really does not mean blessed. Rather, baruch means that HaShem is the Source of all blessings. This being the case, how can we say that HaShem should be the Source of all blessings beyond our praises? It would seem that our praises and HaShem being the Source of all blessings are mutually exclusive. Perhaps the solution to this enigma is that it is easy for one think that by praising HaShem one has discharged his obligation of

praising HaShem. The passage here thus demonstrates that contrary to this supposition, HaShem is the Source of all blessings, and just like HaShem is infinite, praising HaShem is also infinite. Thus, in reality one can never praise HaShem enough, and one has to be aware of this limitation.

Shabbos Story What you don't know won't hurt him Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffman writes: When Reb Shimon Goldfling (names have been changed) disembarked from his bus travelling from Bnei Brak to Tel Aviv that fateful winter day, he forgot one crucial thing: his briefcase. In his briefcase were his appointment book (which contained his schedule of appointments for the day), his cell phone, his lunch, and numerous other papers and documents. Without it, he was lost. He had realized his error within 30 seconds of the bus having pulled away, yet it was too late to do anything. Using a pay phone, he contacted the bus company's head office, relating his predicament, and asking them to call him back at the pay phone as soon as a driver reported finding a briefcase. Then he began waiting. And waiting. Every half-hour, he would call the head office to enquire if anything had been reported; and every half-hour they assured him that nothing had been reported yet, but that they'd call him as soon as anything turned up. As the hours passed, so did the missed appointments. Reb Shimon could feel his blood pressure rising with each tick of the clock.

Finally, in the late afternoon, the pay phone rang. They had his briefcase. It had been located by a cleaning crew in a station a few blocks away. Reb Shimon claimed his briefcase. The day was a complete write-off. He opened his briefcase, and noticed there were 12 messages on his cell phone. Intrigued, Reb Shimon began listening:

Message 1: "Hello, Mr. Goldfling, this is Rabbi Silver of your son, Moishie's, Yeshiva. I tried calling your wife at home, but no one answers. We have a small problem here. We took the boys on a hike, and Moishie seems to have become lost. We've been searching for twenty minutes, and I'm getting concerned. Please call back as soon as you get this message." Reb Shimon felt his already elevated blood pressure go up a notch. Message 2: "Hello, this is Rabbi Silver again. Please call me as soon as you can. We've been searching for almost an hour, and we can't find Moishie. I'm very nervous. I'm calling in the army."

Message 3: "Hello, Mr. Goldfling, are you there? We have soldiers combing the area. They're bringing in helicopters as well."

Message 4: "Hello, this is Rabbi Silver. Moishie has been found. He seems to have fallen off a small cliff. He's not conscious, and the army is transporting him by helicopter to the nearest hospital. I am going along. Please call back!"

Message 5: "Mr. Goldfling, we just arrived at the hospital. Moishie is still unconscious, and is being examined right now by the doctors. I'll let you know what they say as soon as they're finished."

Message 6: "Hello, Mr. Goldfling, this is Dr. Schlisser. Moishie seems to have sustained a serious blow to his head. There may be swelling in the brain. He has not, as yet, shown any response to stimulation. I am very concerned. Please call us at the hospital as soon as you receive this message."

"We may need to operate to relieve the swelling." Reb Shimon could feel his body beginning to tremble. He sat down on a bench in the bus station in a daze.

Message 7: "Dr. Schlisser again. It doesn't look good. If I don't get any response to stimulation within the next 20 minutes, I'm going to have to operate."

Message 8: "Hello, Mr. Goldfling, this is Dr. Schlisser. I myself don't quite know what happened. Moishie has suddenly begun responding to stimulation. This is very positive. I'm putting off operating for now."

Message 9: "Mr. Goldfling - this has to be a miracle! Moishie has regained consciousness. He is talking coherently, although he remembers nothing of the hike or his fall. But this is to be expected. I'm going to keep him in emergency for observation. I will advise you as to his progress."

Message 10: "This is Dr. Schlisser. We've been observing Moishie for over an hour. He seems fine (but he refuses to eat hospital food!). I just got off the phone with your wife, Rutie. It seems she was out doing errands for most of the day. Anyway, I'm satisfied with Moishie's progress, and we're sending him home with an ambulance. Moishie should consider himself one very lucky boy! For a while there, things were touch-and-go."

Message 11: "Hello, Tatty, this is Moishie. I don't really know what happened. I woke up in a hospital room this afternoon surrounded by doctors and nurses. They told me I fell off a cliff. I feel okay now; my head hurts, and I'm hungry. Why aren't you answering your cell phone?" Message 12: "Shimon, this is Rutie. You have no idea of what's gone on today! It's too long to tell you over the phone. Baruch Hashem everything's fine now. Where are you, anyway? It's late! Please come home as soon as you can."

Reb Shimon could feel the blood beginning to return to his flushed face. In the space of four minutes, he had just lived through what should have been the most stressful day of his life. The more he thought about it, the more he realized how grateful he was for having forgotten his briefcase on the bus. Imagine, he thought, if I would have had my cell phone. I would have spent my day in absolute terror, not knowing for hours whether Moishie would live, or, G-d forbid, die. Imagine the rushed trip to the hospital, agonizing over the decision of whether to operate or not. It would, he thought, surely have sent me into a state of nervous breakdown.

Shabbos in Navi Shmuel I Chapter 19

Maintaining Shabbos during the week

In this chapter we learn how Yonasan convinced his father Shaul to spare Dovid's life and Shaul agreed. Later on, however, a spirit of melancholy befell Shaul and he sought to kill Dovid, so Dovid had to flee. When Shaul discovered that Dovid was with Shmuel, Shaul sent messengers to have Dovid killed. The messengers arrived and they saw Shmuel prophesying and they began to prophesize. This happened with all the messengers that Shaul sent and eventually Shaul himself

arrived and he began to prophesize. This incident bears a profound lesson for us. We can spend the entire week engaged in matters that are not necessarily spiritual and then the Holy Shabbos arrives. One would think that after experiencing the holiness and purity of Shabbos one would find it extremely difficult to go back into the week as if nothing had occurred. Unfortunately even after Shaul experienced this stage of prophecy he continued in his pursuit of Dovid. Let us hope that HaShem will allow us to taste the beauty of Shabbos and to take that exalted spiritual level with us into the weekday.

Shabbos in Agadah

Shabbos is a day of remembrance

The Gemara states that prior to the birth of a child, an angel strikes the child on his lip and the child forgets all the Torah that he studied with the angel while inside his mother. The Pinei Menachem writes that the custom is to have a Shalom zachor on the Shabbos that occurs after the birth of a male child, as it is akin to comforting the mourners. A child who knew all of the Torah and then forgot it requires consolation. The Pinei Menachem wonders why this is done on Shabbos and not immediately after birth or at the bris, and furthermore, Shabbos is not a time of mourning. The Pinei Menachem answers that Shabbos is the world of remembrance, and that is when the child can have a connection to what he learned prior to his birth. This idea is similar to what is brought in Sefarim that one who rectifies himself in this world can attain the knowledge of Torah that he studied prior to birth. This can occur specifically on Shabbos which is referred to as a day of the souls.

Shabbos in Halacha

Returning in a different pot

When one is permitted to return a pot, one would also be allowed to pour the food from one pot to another and return the new pot to the blech. This halacha has important ramifications. If cholent or any food is on the verge of drying out, one is allowed to take a kettle from the blech and add some of its boiled water to the cholent.

Shabbos Challenge Question

Last week we posed the question: the Medrashim mention associations between Avraham and Yaakov to Shabbos. It would seem that Yitzchak is not mentioned regarding Shabbos. What could possibly be the association between Yitzchak and Shabbos and why is not mentioned?

It is noteworthy that in the Shabbos mincha prayer we recite the words Avraham yagel Yitzchak yiranein Yaakov uvanav yanuhcu vo, Avraham would rejoice, Yitzchak would exult, Yaakov and his children would rest on it. The word yiranein is equal in gematria to 310, and this is the same gematria as the word yeish. The Mishna (Uktzin 3:12) tells us that HaShem will give as a heritage to the righteous three hundred and ten worlds, as it is said (Mishlei 8:21) lihanchil ohavai yeish, I have what

to bequeath to those who love me. Yitzchak was deemed to be completely detached from this world. In a sense, then, Yitzchak was on the level of Shabbos, as Shabbos is a semblance of the World to Come. Thus, we see an allusion to Yitzchak being associated with Shabbos.

This week's question is, every week we recite Kabbalas Shabbos as we greet the Shabbos. What is the idea of greeting the Shabbos, which we do not find by any other commandments and we do not greet the festivals? If you have a possible answer, please email me at ShabbosTaamHachaim@gmail.com and your answer will be posted in next week's edition of Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim.

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