

SHABBOS: CHALLENGE AT TWILIGHT AND RECEIVING THE WEALTH OF SHABBOS

by Rabbi Binyomin Adler

Introduction

In this week's parashah the Torah relates how Yaakov encountered the angel of Esav and struggled with him. The Torah records that the angel of Esav requested from Yaakov that he let him go and Yaakov refused. It is said (Bereishis 32:27) *vayomer shalcheini ki alah hashachar vayomer lo ashleichacho ki im beirachtani*, and he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." This declaration of Yaakov requires understanding. How is it that Yaakov was able to hold the angel hostage until he blessed him?

Evil submitting to good

We have discussed in previous weeks the idea that the evil angel is forced to submit to the blessings of the good angel. The Sefarim write that a righteous person is even greater than an angel. Thus, Yaakov was able to overwhelm the angel of Esav and force him to agree to the blessings that Yaakov had received from Yitzchak. We must wonder, however, how the angel of Esav was capable of causing injury to Yaakov. Was not Yaakov righteous enough that he should not have been harmed at all?

Yaakov sets boundaries

There is a fascinating Medrash which would seem to shed light on the struggle that occurred between Yaakov and the angel of Esav. Subsequent to Yaakov meeting Esav and battling the angel, it is said (Bereishis 33:18) *vayavo Yaakov shaleim ir Shechem asher bieretz Canaan bivoo miPadan Aram vayichan es pinei hair*, Yaakov arrived intact at the city of Shechem which is in the land of Canaan, upon his arriving from Paddan-aram, and he encamped before the city. On the last words of the verse that state that Yaakov encamped before the city, the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 79:6) comments: Yaakov arrived Erev Shabbos with the setting of the sun and he set up techumin, boundaries. This teaches us that Yaakov observed the Shabbos prior to the Torah being given. This Medrash is a bit puzzling. Why does the Medrash teach us specifically here that Yaakov observed Shabbos? Was there something unique about Yaakov's arrival that warranted mention of him observing Shabbos? Furthermore, why is Yaakov's Shabbos observance characterized by creating boundaries?

The Shabbos connection: the twilight zone is fraught with danger

One aspect of Shabbos that is sometimes overlooked is the idea that we are transitioning from the weekdays into Shabbos. While many people tend to rush into Shabbos, it is worthwhile to contemplate what is occurring during the transition period. Throughout the week one is constantly facing challenges in spiritual matters. Shabbos is referred to as a day of menuchah, rest, because on Shabbos all harsh judgments depart prior to Shabbos. Thus, upon the arrival of Shabbos, one should be able to sense all the challenges of the week disappearing in an instant. In order to sense this phenomenon, however, one must prepare properly for Shabbos. Yaakov Avinu taught us with his actions that to prepare for Shabbos one needs to acknowledge that Shabbos is a true day of rest from the struggles of the week. The Maharzav on the Medrash (Ibid) writes that the word vayichan, when the letters are rearranged, spells out the word vayanach, and he rested. Thus, by properly preparing for Shabbos, Yaakov was able to truly rest on Shabbos. Although we cannot know what lack the angel of Esav found in Yaakov, it would seem that the deficiency was manifest in an area that was hidden, as the area where the angel inflicted harm on Yaakov is a discreet part of the body. Perhaps this alludes to the period in time referred to as bein hashemashos, between the (settings) of the suns, i.e. twilight. It is specifically with the onset of Shabbos when the Jewish People are faced with the challenge of receiving Shabbos properly. Instead of rushing into Shabbos at this time, we should already be prepared earlier in the day so that we do not have to be 'inflicted' by the forces of evil, Heaven forbid.

Receiving the wealth of Shabbos

There is another aspect of Shabbos that is alluded to in this verse. It is said, vayichan es pinei hair, and he encamped before the city. What is the Torah teaching us with the word pinei? In Kabbalas Shabbos we recite the words lecho dodi likras kallah pinei Shabbos nikabelah, come my Beloved to greet the bride - The Shabbos presence, let us welcome! What is meant by the words pinei Shabbos? The answer to this question can be found in a Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah). It is said (Bereishis 41:56) viharaav hayah al kol pinei haaretz, when the famine spread over all the face of the earth. The Medrash states that the words pinei haaretz refers to the wealthy people. Thus, we can suggest that when the Torah states vayichan es pinei hair, this means that Yaakov encamped before the wealth of the city. What is the wealth of a city? It is said (Mishlei 10:22) bircas HaShem hi taashir, it is the blessing of HaShem that enriches. The Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 11:1) states that this refers to Shabbos, which is the day that HaShem blessed. Thus, the Medrash is teaching us that Yaakov encamped before the wealth of the city, and the wealth of the city is Shabbos. In a similar vein, with the onset of Shabbos we go out to greet its wealth, as the poverty and struggles of the weekday disappear and we receive the blessings of Shabbos. HaShem should allow us to merit properly observing the Holy Shabbos and then we will all merit to greet pinei Moshiach Tzidkienu, the 'face' of Moshiach our righteous one, speedily, in our days.

Shabbos in the Zemiros

Menuchah Visimchah

Composed by an unknown author named Moshe

HaShem is our Rock and paints a picture

Shimei shamayim eretz viyamim kol tziva marom givohim viramim tanin viadam vichayas rieimim ki bikah HaShem tzur olamim, all layers of heaven, earth, and seas, all the host above, high and exalted, sea giants and man and mighty beasts - that the Creator, HaShem, is the stronghold of the Universe. HaShem is called the Rock of the Universe. The word tzur has many connotations. Besides for the simple meaning of rock, the word tzur can also mean tzayar, painter (see Brachos 10a). Alternatively, the word tzur is similar to the word tzorer, foe or oppressor. It would seem, then, that when we refer to HaShem as tzur, we are describing Him in various facets of our perception of Him. HaShem is the stronghold of the world. Yet, at times we feel agitated and HaShem, so to speak, hides His Face from us. Nonetheless, we must realize that HaShem is, so to speak, an artist, and one cannot always understand the deeper meanings that are contained within a masterpiece. Perhaps that is why HaShem is referred to as tzur olamim, as the word olam is interpreted to be similar to the word heelem, concealment. Thus, HaShem is painting, so to speak, behind the scenes.

Shabbos in Tefillah: HaShem and the angels are beyond our comprehension

Tisbareich lanetzach tzureinu malkeinu vigoaleinu borei kedoshim, may You be blessed eternally, our Rock, our King and Redeemer, Creator of holy ones. We refer to HaShem and the angels as holy ones. Thus, HaShem, Who is beyond our imagination and perception, created in His infinite wisdom, beings that are also beyond our perception. This thought should cause us to contemplate how insignificant a human being is, and with that realization, we will make every attempt to serve HaShem faithfully.

Shabbos Story Always enough

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: The Rebbe, Reb Ber of Mezritch, was once approached by a chasid who had a very common problem. "Rebbe," he pleaded. "I never seem to have enough. The more I get, the more I want. I know it is improper to think this way and I need help." The rebbe told the man to visit Rebbe Zusia of Anipoli. "He can guide you with your difficulty."

The man was shocked as he approached Reb Zusia's residence. He saw a ramshackle wooden hut with boarded windows. Upon entering, the poverty was overwhelming. The man figured, "surely this is a man who is in constant need. He hardly has what he needed, and must grapple with new desires on a constant basis. He surely will be able to counsel me on my longing for the articles that I lack."

The man discussed his problem with Reb Zusia, but Reb Zusia looked at him in amazement.

"What are you coming to me for? How can I advise you? I have absolutely everything I need!"

Never forget others

In the summer of 1954, my grandmother, Itta Ettel Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, left Beth Israel Hospital, for the last time, after a prolonged stay. Her condition had deteriorated, and the doctors felt that there was nothing left for them to do. My grandfather, Reb Yaakov zt"l, went together with family members to pick her up from the hospital. My grandmother was wheeled to the waiting automobile and made as comfortable as possible. Suddenly, Reb Yaakov seemed to realize that he had forgotten something very important. He whispered something to his wife, and when she nodded her approval, he asked if it was possible for the driver to wait a few minutes. He had to go back into the hospital.

The family members were a bit surprised. Although there was another patient in the room, and items may have been confused, they remembered removing every one of my grandmother's personal belongings from the room. Accompanied by his curious son, Reb Yaakov proceeded to the elevator and pushed the button to the floor on which his wife had stayed.

"Pa," his son protested, "we have everything." The elevator stopped at the correct floor. Reb Yaakov proceeded into his wife's former room and turned to her ailing roommate. "In our rush to leave the hospital, I forgot to tell you good-bye and wish you well. May G-d send you a speedy recovery." With that, Reb Yaakov walked out of the room, nodded at the stunned nurses, whom he already had thanked on his first exit, and left toward the waiting car.

Shabbos in Navi Shmuel I Chapter 20

Three days prior to Shabbos and three days following Shabbos

In this chapter we learn how Yonasan and Dovid agreed upon a manner of informing Dovid if Shaul truly wished to kill Dovid. Dovid did not appear at Shaul's table on Rosh Chodesh, and he did not appear on the day after Rosh Chodesh, and Shaul informed Yonasan that Dovid should be killed. Yonasan agreed with Dovid that if he shoots three arrows and tells the lad with him that the arrows are on the side, then there is no concern that Shaul wants to kill Dovid. If, however, Yonasan tells the lad to fetch the three arrows that are beyond him, then Dovid would know that Shaul sought to kill him. Interpreting this incident homiletically, we can suggest that this alludes to the three days prior to Shabbos and the three days that follow Shabbos. The three days prior to Shabbos are deemed to be a preparation for Shabbos, when one can begin to experience the holiness of Shabbos. The three days that follow Shabbos, despite retaining a vestige of the holiness of Shabbos, are when one becomes distanced from Shabbos. Hashem should allow us to observe Shabbos properly and experience the Shabbos throughout the entire week.

Shabbos in Agadah: Six days struggle is rewarded accordingly on Shabbos

The Medrash states that upon entering into the city of Shechem, Yaakov instituted techumin, boundaries for Shabbos. The Sfas Emes (Vayishlach 5637) writes that Yaakov leaving Eretz Yisroel was akin to the six days of the week. Through his hard work in exile, Yaakov was able to arrive at

Shabbos in a state of perfection. Commensurate to the troubles that one experiences during the six days of the week one will be pure and clean without any evil cleaving to him when Shabbos arrives. Yaakov entered into the city with the setting of the sun, similar to HaShem Who finished, so to speak, His work on the sixth day within a hair's breath prior to the onset of Shabbos. It is said that Yaakov entered the city complete, and this can be interpreted to mean that Yaakov arrived in peace, and Shabbos is referred to as shalom, peace. Thus, it would appear that Yaakov arrived at the exact moment that Shabbos began.

Shabbos in Halacha : Returning in a different pot

One is also allowed to pour boiled water from the kettle into a cup and then pour from the cup into the pot of cholent. In these situations, one is returning hot water from the kettle to the blech in a different pot, i.e. the cholent pot. Theoretically, one could add hot water from an urn to the cholent. Nonetheless, since water in an urn does not usually reach the boiling point (212°F), the water cannot be 'returned' to a pot where it might become boiled, as this would be a violation of cooking.

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