

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

PARSHAT VAYEITZEI

Making This World Into A Home For Hashem

Dear Friends,

This post is in honor of the 9th of Kislev, which marks the birth and passing of the second Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Dovber of Lubavitch, and the 10th of Kislev on which he was released from prison, incarcerated for his work to strengthen Judaism in Czarist Russia.

This date is close to my heart, because it is the date that Dina and I got engaged.

Yitzi

In parshas Vayeitzei, we read about Yaakov's descent to Charan. On his way he stopped at Mount Moriah, had the dream with the angels going up and down the ladder, in which Hashem blessed him, and he prayed to Hashem.

Everything the Torah tells us about our forefathers, are meant to be a lesson to us, especially in our service to Hashem. Let us examine some of the details of this story and see how it pertains to us.

When he came to the mountain, the sun had set. "And he took from the stones of the place and put it around his head, and he lay down in that place." The Torah didn't have to tell us about how he gathered the stones and put them around

his head, so what are we meant to learn from it?

If you look at the literal translation of the words, it says that "he put it around his head." first it was several stones, now it is one stone, what are we to derive from this detail?

Now he lays down. It is interesting to note, that the Midrash tells us that before Yaakov's descent

to Charan, he spent 14 years studying Torah in the academy of Ever. It says that the whole time he was there, he didn't once lay down to sleep. This was the first time that he lay down. What are we to take from this point?

After having his dream and recognizing that Hashem's Presence was there, he woke up in the morning and set up the stone that was under his head as a monument. Later, in

his prayer, he says, "And this stone that I set as a monument will be a house for Hashem." What is the idea of a stone being a house for Hashem?

Yaakov says a prayer in the form of an oath, "If Hashem will be with me, and will protect me on this journey that I am undertaking, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear. And if I will return to my father's home in peace (b'shalom), then Hashem (Havaya) will be to me as G-d (Elokim)." The simple meaning of this prayer is understood. What spiritual symbolism is to be found in this prayer?

Yaakov says, "And if I will return to my father's home in peace." When you use the word "return," it means to go back to where you started from. In our parsha, it says that he left from Be'er Sheva, not from his father's home. Shouldn't he say, "And if I return to Be'er Sheva?" Why does he say, "to my father's home?" It is not enough that he return, but he asked to return "b'shalom, in peace." What is the idea of returning in peace?

And finally, Yaakov says, "Hashem will be to me as G-d." What other option is there? Wouldn't Hashem be his G-d even if he didn't return in peace?

On a spiritual level, Yaakov's descent from Be'er Sheva to Charan is the descent of the neshama into the world. And this story teaches us the purpose, the mission and the goal of the neshama's descent, and on a broader perspective, the purpose, mission and goal of the Jewish people in this world.

The mission of the soul is to transform the body and its place in the world into a dwelling place for Hashem. It leaves Be'er Sheva, its holy abode above, and makes its way to this lowly world. Just as in Yaakov's dream, before leaving the heavens, Hashem blesses it and reassures it that He will always be with it and protect it. In other words, Hashem strengthens each of us and fortifies us with what is necessary to accomplish our mission.

Yaakov took stones, symbolizing the lowest physical, inanimate and fragmented existence and he united them into a single entity, that is why they are first called "stones" and then called "It." Then he tells Hashem, that he will make the stone into a home for Hashem. Meaning, that he will turn even the lowest level of existence into a home for Hashem.

How does one do this? Yaakov says, "If you will give me bread to eat," bread is symbolic of Torah, which nourishes the soul. "And clothing to wear," clothing is symbolic of mitzvahs. In Kabbala mitzvahs are called the garments of the soul, because unlike Torah that permeates ones mind and heart,

MAKE YOUR ACTIONS SHINE BY USING EVEN THE MOST MUNDANE TASKS AS OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH G-D.



mitzvahs are Hashem's will, which is beyond our ability to understand, therefore it doesn't permeate the mind and heart, instead they remain outside of you, and surround you like garments. Also, just like different garments allow you to be in different environments, it is Torah and mitzvahs you do in this world that serve as garments of the soul in heaven, and allow the soul to enjoy Hashem's radiance. It is through these Torah and mitzvahs that we refine ourselves and the world around us.

However, rocks are symbolic of even a lower level of existence. Not the things that involve Torah and mitzvahs, but the mundane basics and even the pleasures of life, eating, drinking, work, exercise, vacation, etc. they can be done for Hashem and made into a home for Him as well. This is the greatest possible transformation that one could achieve, that even his mundane activities, his "rocks," become a home for Hashem. Not that it becomes spiritual, rather it remains a rock, and that rock becomes a home for Hashem as it is.

This idea is stressed by Yaakov laying down. The head symbolizes the highest level, G-dliness, and the feet the lowest, the most mundane. Normally the head is above and the feet are below, but when you lay down you put them on the same level, symbolizing drawing G-dliness into the mundane.

Not only does Yaakov teach us this lesson, but it is hinted in his name. In Hebrew, the name Yaakov could be divided into the letter yud, which symbolizes Hashem, and the word aikev, a heel, the lowest part of a person's body. When you bring them together, you have Yaakov, drawing G-dliness into the lowest places.

After the soul does its mission it returns above, but it doesn't return to the same place it came from, rather because of its work down here it attains a much higher level. That is the idea of, "and I will return to my father's home." Not just to Be'er Sheva where he came from, but to a much greater place, to his father's home.

This is also the story of our nation going down into exile. We are here to do a mission, to make this world, as it is, into a dwelling place for Hashem. When we complete the mission, we won't return to our previous state, but much higher, infinitely higher, when we will see Hashem in everything, as it says, "That the world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem like the waters cover the sea."

Yaakov asked to return "b'shalom, in peace (or whole)." Rashi explains that it means that he shouldn't be influenced by Lavan. In other words, when there are obstacles, enemies or negative influences, one can be adversely effected by them, leaving him less than whole. Contending with your body, its natural tendencies, and the world around you, making them into a home for Hashem, can be a great struggle. We ask to succeed without being effected by them. This is similar to what King David said, "Redeem my soul in peace (b'shalom)," because many wanted to do him harm and he fought many wars. He was not only asking to be saved, but that he not be adversely effected by them.

However, there is another meaning of "b'shalom." When you have such a powerful effect on your adversaries that instead of working against you, they become a help to you. Meaning, that the body and the world around you become transformed until they are totally in sync with Hashem's will. This will clearly be the case when Moshiach comes.

Now we can understand why Yaakov says, "Hashem (Havaya) will be to me as G-d (Elokim)." Because although the life force of existence is from the name Havaya, the G-dly energy that comes from the name Havaya is too much for the physical world to handle. The name Elokim makes existence possible by transforming the Havaya energy so that we could exist. That is why in the story of creation the name Elokim is used, "In the beginning Elokim created the heavens and the earth." Because it is the name Elokim that allows for existence. So the norm for us is that Elokim is to us as G-d (Elokim), because we don't experience the name Havaya, it is in our world, but it is beyond our ability to connect with.

However, through refining ourselves and our place in the world we can attain a higher level, in which we can sense Havaya in everything, to the point that we see Havaya as G-d (Elokim). When Moshiach comes, this will be the norm, as we will see Havaya in everything, as it says, "That the world will be filled with the knowledge of Havaya as the waters cover the sea."

May our efforts to refine ourselves and the world around us be successful and may we merit to see Havaya in everything soon with the coming of Moshiach. The time has come.

"Dear Rabbi Yitzi

I recently started following you on Instagram and it was long overdue. I always heard about you but I didn't know you had an instagram (you were tagged in my friend's story).

Rabbi Yitzi, You are so inspiring. Seeing how you live with no spiritual limitations and with such physical limitations really gives me so much strength.

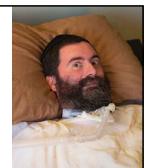
I'm looking forward to your Parasha Dvar Torah and I will bli neder print them and share them at the Shabbos table!

Thank you so much!"

- Zelda B, Florida

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:
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Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



IN HONOR OF THE BIRTHDAY OF
**YEHOSHUA TANCHUM
(SHUA) WOLFF**

· ROSH CHODESH KISLEV ·

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