



CLASSIC DAF KESHER

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פרשת וישב PARSHAT VAYEISHEV

DVAR TORAH HIDING THE LIGHTS OF CHANUKAH

"On the 25th of Kislev the days of Chanukah **are** eight," says the Gemara on Shabbat 21b. The formulation seems incorrect, asks the Shem Mishmuel. Why doesn't the Gemara say, more accurately, "On the 25th of Kislev the eight days of Chanukah **begin**"?

He introduces his explanation by describing a process of spiritual growth that has three stages. It begins with a powerful Divine contribution, where great lights shine and there is much overt revelation and assistance from above. In stage two those lights are then hidden – but they leave their mark, a "reshima." That imprint aids the growth we must follow with based on our own effort. Our subsequent spiritual ascent does not involve conquering new territory, but regaining a peak we saw for a moment while the lights were shining.

We find the hidden lights in a number of settings: at a brit milah, on the first night of Pesach – and on the first day of Chanukah. The Arizal tells us that all aspects of a person's neshamah, even those that will only actively participate in later stages of his life, were all present at his brit milah, and then some are removed – some of the individual's great spiritual lights temporarily disappear – only to resurface later. Similarly, on the first night of Pesach, the Seder night, there is a great revelation, great lights shine, just as they did for the people of Israel in Egypt; but this revelation is then removed, waiting for us to regain it step by step during the forty-nine days of the Omer.

Similarly, on the first night of Chanukah, says the Shem Mishmuel, there is a great revelation where **all** eight lights of Chanukah shine. They are then hidden, and we are required to build up to them, one by one, reaching all eight on the eighth night of Chanukah. This explains why the Gemara's said, "On the 25th of Kislev the days of Chanukah **are** eight," for all eight lights do indeed shine on the first night of Chanukah.

Beit Hillel, who rules that we light one candle on the first night and build up to eight on the last, holds that our candle lighting doesn't reflect the initial Divine light but the step-by-step growth we go through all eight days.

Knowledge of this principle, the three-step process of spiritual development – great lights, hiddenness, then growth – can be helpful in two ways. First, it is consoling to realize that the hidden periods in our lives need not be depressing, but rather signal that a period of personal growth and effort must begin. When the Divine lights are hidden, it is time for us to strike our own matches. Second, we must learn to take advantage of our auspicious beginnings – Pesach Seders, weddings, aliyah, and the first night of Chanukah – to hold on to their shining lights and utilize them to grow. We must keep the image, the "reshima" of those peak experiences in our minds and hearts, and aspire to their heights.

May we merit seeing the great lights of Chanukah: the first night's, the last night's, and all of the steps between.

SOURCE GUIDE: WHO NEEDS STRUGGLES?

Our parshah begins with **וישב יעקב**, with Yaakov innocuously, “living in the land of his fathers’ sojourning.” Surprisingly, Rashi makes a critical comment: Yaakov, along with other tzadikim, want to live serenely in This World, but the Holy One, blessed be He, says to them, “Isn’t the World to Come enough? You also want to live serenely in This World?” Asks Harav Yerucham Levovitz, **וצ”ל, what is so terrible about wanting serenity?**

A. The Verse and Rashi’s Comments

The word **וישב** seems to have negative associations:

<p>1. Bereishit 37:1 Yaakov dwelled in the land of his fathers’ sojournings, in the Land of Canaan.</p>	<p>בראשית לו:א וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגְוָרִי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן.</p>
<p>2. Rashi on Bereishit 37:1 Our sages also commented on the word “And [Yaakov] dwelled”: Yaakov wanted to dwell in serenity, and the disturbance of the Yosef episode jumped on him. The righteous want to dwell in serenity. The Holy One, blessed be He, says: What is prepared for the righteous in the World to Come is not sufficient for them? They seek to dwell in serenity also in This World?</p>	<p>רש"י על בראשית לו:ב ועוד נדרש בו, “וישב”: ביקש יעקב לישב בשלווה, קפץ עליו רוגזו של יוסף. צדיקים מבקשים לישב בשלווה. אומר הקב"ה: לא דיין לצדיקים מה שמתוקן להם לעוה"ב אלא שמבקשים לישב בשלווה בעוה"ז?</p>

B. Difficulties

The Mashgiach of the Mir Yeshivah, Harav Yerucham Levovitz, **וצ"ל** (1874-1936), Reb Yerucham, asks some powerful questions:

<p>3. Daat Torah on Parshat Vayeishev But why, in truth, shouldn’t he have serenity? Is it so terrible for the righteous to want to benefit from both worlds? And, in general, how do we understand the serenity of Yaakov our father – is it speaking of serenity like ours? G-d forbid ... The only serenity he wanted was a situation without the ‘disturbance of Yosef.’ All the righteous are looking for is to do their holy service of Hashem without any disturbances. If that is so, why is Yaakov criticized here?</p>	<p>דעת תורה על פרשת וישב אולם מדוע באמת לא? מי סני להו לצדיקים דאכלי תרי עלמא? ובכלל, כיצד מבינים את השלווה של יעקב אבינו, האם כשלווה שלנו המדובר? חלילה וחלילה ... כל השלווה שהוא ביקש היה רק מצב ללא רוגזו של יוסף ... כל הצדיקים שמבקשים לעבוד עבודת הקודש ללא כל רוגז, ובמה נתפס כאן יעקב?</p>
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All Yaakov wanted was peace of mind to engage in spiritual pursuits. Didn’t Yaakov want to spend his time involved in wisdom, meditation, and prayer? Doesn’t G-d encourage the tzadikim to live a spiritual life? Why is the agitation and disturbance of the Yosef episode so important?

C. This World and the Next World

The Midrash lays down a principle:

<p>4. Bamidbar Rabbah 19:1 “This is the law of the Torah” (the opening of the passage in the Torah about the Red Heifer, Bamidbar 19:2): This is what the following verse refers to, “Who can give forth purity from impurity? Is it not One?” (Iyov 14:4) – Like Avraham [came from] Terach, Chizkiyahu from Achaz, Yoshiah from Amon, Mordechai from Shimi, Israel from the Idolaters, This World from the World to Come. Who did this? Who commanded this? Who decreed this? Is it not the Unique One of the world?!</p>	<p>במדבר רבה יט:א “זאת חקת”: זה שאמר הכתוב, “מי יתן טהור מטמא לא אֶחָד” (איוב יד:ד) – כגון אברהם מתרח, חזקיה מאחז, יאשיה מאמון, מרדכי משמעי, ישראל מעובדי כוכבים, העולם הבא מעולם הזה. מי עשה כן? מי צוה כן? מי גזר כן? לא יחידו של עולם!?</p>
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Just as Avraham is distinct from Terach, and Israel from the idolaters, these two levels of existence, This World and the World to Come, cannot be identical. This World without the “רוגז”, without its disturbances and

agitation, would not be This World.

Why must This World be so full of tumult and struggle? Another comment by Rashi leads us to an insight:

<p>5. Bereishit 32:5 He (Yaakov) commanded them, saying, "Thus you should say to my master Esav, 'Thus says your servant Yaakov – I have dwelled with Lavan and tarried until now.'"</p> <p>Rashi on Bereishit 32:5 Another explanation – I have dwelled, "גרת", has the numerical value of 613, תרי"ג. It is as if Yaakov said, 'I have dwelled with Lavan but kept the 613 commandments and did not learn from his actions.'</p>	<p>בראשית לב:ה וַיִּצַו אֹתָם לֵאמֹר פֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לְאֵדְנִי לַעֲשׂוֹ פֹּה אָמַר עֲבָדְךָ יַעֲקֹב עִם לָבָן גֵּרְתִּי וְאַחַר עַד עָתָה.</p> <p>רש"י על בראשית לב:ה ד"א "גרת" בגימטריא תרי"ג. כלומר, עם לבן הרשע גרתי ותרי"ג מצוות שמרתי, ולא למדתי ממעשיו הרעים.</p>
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Why, asks Reb Yerucham, does Yaakov not just say openly to Esav that he kept the 613 commandments? Why say it in such a roundabout way, through a gematria?

Reb Yerucham has a new way of reading this Rashi: Yaakov did not only keep the 613 commandments **despite** living in Lavan's house; he learned how to keep them **through** living in Lavan's house. The Sages also say:

<p>6. Avodah Zarah 3b ... Lavan can come and testify that Yaakov was above suspicion for theft ...</p>	<p>עבודה זרה ג: ... יבא לבן ויעיד ביעקב שלא נחשד על ... הגזל</p>
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The hostile environment Yaakov found himself in actually contributed to his development. Yaakov's struggles with Lavan forged him. So when Yaakov wanted to communicate to Esav that he kept the commandments, he said "I dwelled with Lavan," whose house was the testing ground for really keeping the commandments.

It was Lavan's trickery that put Yaakov's honesty to the test. Yaakov held up to his own high standards during all of the long years of having his salary changed time after time. He worked as tirelessly during the seven years after Lavan switched Rachel for Leah as he did during the first seven years (see Rashi on Bereishit 29:30). And during the final showdown between Yaakov and Lavan, Yaakov was able to say with confidence that he had taken absolutely nothing during the long years of living in his father-in-law's house (see Bereishit Rabbah 74:7).

The struggles of this world forge us. We of course do not run after difficulties, but This World is full of them. Yaakov's life teaches us that Hashem gives us struggles because they are necessary for our development.

Every time we encounter a situation we must ask ourselves, like Yaakov did, "How can I grow through this? How can this forge me? Am I still complete after the struggle?"

REALITY BY RABBI AVRAHAM FISCHER

We tend to behave differently when we know we're being watched, especially if we're being recorded. It makes you wonder about those television programs where they put people in unusual and difficult situations; they know they're being videoed yet they call that "reality" – TV. But we know that we are supposed to at all times be aware of the fact that Hashem is watching us and is aware of our actions. As it says in Pirkei Avot (2:1), you must know that there is **עין רואה** – an eye that sees, **ואוזן שומעת** – and an ear that hears, **בספר נכתבים**, and all of your deeds are recorded, as it were, in a book. Hashem remembers everything.

The Psikta Rabbati (Chapter 8) adds how Hashem finds out about a person's deeds. Our actions are impressed on our own **נפש**, inner being, and our **נפש**, granted to us by Hashem, reports back to Him.

According to this it is a little difficult to understand Chazal's comment about Reuven in this week's parshah. The brothers are set on killing Yosef; they are determined to do so. Reuven, however, takes a very strong and forceful stand. He says, **"לא נכנו נפש"** – "We are not going to kill him" (Bereishit 37:21). He sees that they are not backing

down, and so he devises a plan. He says, "We will not kill him directly. Let's throw him in this pit. It's in the midst of the desert and he will die of hunger and thirst but we will not shed his blood." Then the Torah attests, "למען הציל" "אותו מידם להשיבו אל אביו" – that his reason, his motivation was "in order to save Yosef from their hands and return him back to his father" (Bereishit 37:22). At this point the Midrash (Ruth Rabbah 5:6) says that had Reuven known that his actions and his intentions would be recorded in the Torah for posterity he would have done even better. He would have grabbed Yosef, placed him on his shoulders, "בכתפו היה מוליכו אצל אביו" – "He would have carried him on his shoulders back to his father."

This is puzzling. Was Reuven unaware of the fact that Hashem is watching? Or worse, was he thriving only on fame? **חס ושלום** – G-d forbid.

Harav Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz, זצ"ל, explains that Reuven's actions were done **בצניעה**, they were done modestly. The only thing that was important to Reuven was to effectively save Yosef's life. But he would have acted differently if he knew that his actions were going to serve as a role model for others, teaching others by his actions. When others might learn, you have to take into account the way it looks to them. When we act as teachers, or when we act as parents, we must be aware of how what we do appears to those who are learning from us.

Someone once came to the Kotzker Rebbe, זצ"ל, and said, "I'm not a talmid chacham; I don't learn Torah. But please daven, please pray so that my son will become a talmid chacham." The Kotzker Rebbe said, "It's not going to be effective. If you want your son to be a talmid chacham he has to see **you** learning.

Our Torah and our mitzvot we do because they're the right thing, because they're remembered and recorded by Hashem, because they're impressed on our own souls. But at times we also have to realize that the way we behave is what teaches others. Torah and mitzvot – that's reality.

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**We continue to pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing,
for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.**