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maskil Le'David

The Evening
Prayer Established
by Yaakov Avinu

"He encountered the place and spent the night there because the sun had set; he took from the stones of the place which he arranged around his head, and lay down in that place" (*Bereishit* 28:11).

Rashi explains that the expression of "encountering" is an expression of prayer, from which we derive that Yaakov Avinu established the evening prayer (Arvit), as it says, "He encountered the place... because the sun had set." Chazal add (*Berachot* 27b) that the morning and afternoon prayers are compulsory. With these prayers a person thanks his Creator for giving him life and sustaining him throughout the day. On the other hand, the evening prayer is not obligatory. For this reason, a person who forgot to recite *ya'aleh v'yavo* (recited on Rosh Chodesh) in Arvit does not repeat his prayer, but if he forgot in the morning or the afternoon, he must repeat the prayer. However, although the evening prayer is not obligatory, we have accepted upon ourselves to be meticulous about it.

Yaakov Avinu established the evening prayer with true self-sacrifice. When he lay down to sleep in that place, it was the first time he had slept after fourteen years of diligently studying Torah in Yeshivat Shem Va'Ever (*Bereishit Rabba* 68:11). Despite Yaakov's enormous fatigue, he did not lie down to sleep before reciting and establishing the evening prayer, thanking Hashem for all the kindnesses He performed for him until that day.

The verse tells us, "He took from the stones of the place which he arranged around his head," on which Rashi explains: "He arranged them as kind of trench around his head since he was afraid of wild beasts." The obvious question is, how did Yaakov imagine that the stones he put under his head would save him from wild beasts? These words of Chazal inspired me to contemplate the significance of Yaakov placing his trust in a number of stones. Indeed, placing stones around his head was not enough to protect Yaakov from danger. It was performed as a symbolic act that serves as a lesson for future generations, for we are told, "The deeds of our forefathers are an indication for their descendants."

There are many people who live their entire lives devoid of any obvious fulfillment. They walk around with no identity or feeling of individuality and tend to fall into the black hole of depression. It appears that this outcome is a result of not leaning on the Creator of the world.

A person who ascribes all that occurs to him during his lifetime only to himself, can easily fall into despondency since it seems to him that his lack of success and *mazal* are a result of his own lack of talent. This quickly leads to self-absorption and depression, since he is constantly consumed by feelings of guilt which do not allow him to function properly. These feelings rob him of all happiness and joy in life, which is an automatic prescription for melancholy.

On the other hand, one who places his trust in Hashem, as it says, "In Your hand I entrust my spirit" (*Tehillim* 31:6), merits living a life of happiness and trust, and even if something disturbing happens to him, he is not plagued with tormenting thoughts about bringing misfortune upon himself. He believes with perfect faith that the One who causes all things to happen is the One who brought this about, and even if right now he cannot perceive the good in the situation, it is clear to him everything Hashem does is for the best.

If a person hires a car for a few days and suddenly discovers some kind of mechanical fault, he will not sink into depression since he knows the car is under the custody of the rental company and they are responsible for any repairs. But if the car belongs to him, and as time goes on he discovers something that needs fixing, he is filled with concern since the responsibility lies on his shoulders and he is the one who will have to pay for the repairs.

Entrusting one's entire burden to Hashem allows a person to live a life of tranquility and peace, since he constantly keeps in mind that whatever Hashem does is for the best and everything is in Hashem's Hands. On the other hand, people who ascribe all happenings to their own efforts will quickly be overwhelmed by feelings of sadness and devastation.

Our holy forefathers understood that each day is made up of three stages – morning, afternoon, and evening. Each section of the day offers a person new opportunities and challenges which he must face with strength. In order for a person to have the strength to withstand the challenges, he must pray to Hashem three times a day, for each prayer corresponds to a different section of the day.

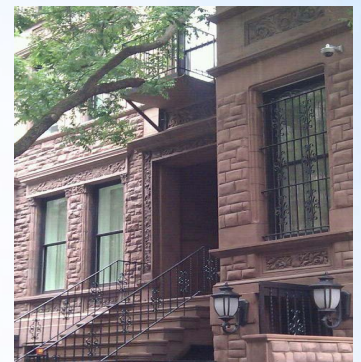
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6 Kislev 5785

7 December 2024

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Yayetztei



Hilula

6 Kislev

Rabbi Shmuel Pinto,
son of Rabbi Daniel Pinto

7 Kislev

Rabbi Rafael David Sebban,
Rav of Turkey

8 Kislev

Rabbi Avraham Hakohen,
author of *Mishmerot Kehunah*

9 Kislev

Rabbi Natan Salem, of the
Yeshivat Porat Yosef sages

10 Kislev

Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer,
Rosh Yeshiva of Eitz Chaim

11 Kislev

The Dayan Rabbi Moshe Harrari,
a gadol on Aram Tzova

12 Kislev

Rabbi Shlomo Luria,
the Maharshal,
author of *Yam Shel Shlomo*





FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik
— Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Torah Elevates a Person

“I have sojourned with Lavan and have lingered until now” (*Bereishit* 32:5).

Chazal expound (*ibid.* Rashi): “I have sojourned (גָּרַתִּי) with Lavan, and I observed the six hundred and thirteen (תִּרְיָג) mitzvot. (The Hebrew word גָּרַתִּי is made up of the same letters as the word תִּרְיָג.)

The *sefer Yismach Yisrael* of the Admor of Alexander, *zy”a*, writes that if a person considers himself small, he automatically perceives Hashem’s greatness. But if he considers himself as someone great, this thought causes him to consider Hashem as “small,” *chalila*.

It is possible that Yaakov Avinu, *a”h*, was hinting at this idea with his words, “I have sojourned with Lavan yet I observed the entire Torah.” Sojourned implies staying as a stranger, from the word גָּר, alien. Yaakov was implying, I have not become a great prince nor have I achieved status. I remained merely an alien. Since I observed the entire Torah, I have no desire to achieve status for I see that everything is futile and nothing has value in life besides the holy Torah.

Rabbeinu Hakadosh, a great prince and extremely wealthy, was an example of this outlook. How else can one explain that Rabbi declared about himself before he passed away that he did not partake of any physical pleasures, even with his

smallest finger (*Ketubot* 104a)? Since he was a distinguished personality, he must certainly have had a lot of opportunity to get physical pleasure? The explanation is, since Rabbi was so strongly connected to Torah and Torah alone, nothing else in life gave him pleasure.

This is what Yaakov was implying. After tasting the sweetness of Torah, I have no desire to be a prince or chief, since the Torah elevates a person to spiritual heights.

I heard from a certain Rav that at the *hilula* of the Maggid of Mezritch, *zy”a*, his chassidim used to dance with the spoon that the Maggid used to use, repeating, “This is the spoon with which the Maggid of Mezritch used to eat.”

What is the significance of this story? Chazal tell us that when passing a certain place, one of the Tana’im saw a stone and bent down to kiss it. In answer to his disciples’ query, he replied that Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkenos had sat on this stone and studied Torah, therefore the stone becomes like Har Sinai.

When the chassidim danced with the tzaddik’s spoon, they were implying that if an inanimate stone has holiness, all the more so is this holiness present in a spoon that was a tool in physically strengthening the tzaddik to enable him to serve Hashem.

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Prayer connects a person to his Creator and helps him place his faith only in Hashem. Prayer sharpens a person’s knowledge that there is Someone in Heaven Who is watching over him and guiding his path.

This is why Yaakov placed stones around his head. It was a symbolic act. Yaakov was asking Hashem to protect his head, which is where a person’s thoughts lie, from evil and impure powers which increase at night. The wild animals that Chazal tell us he wished to protect himself from, refer to the powers of impurity which lie in wait for a person like wild beasts. Yaakov

was emphasizing his wish that Hashem should protect him from the forces of *klippah* and from the *yetzer hara* — not from the wild beasts — for stones indeed afford no protection against them.

Since the evening prayer is not compulsory, the *yetzer hara* takes the opportunity to intensify his efforts and as a result a person faces difficult challenges at night. Only through prayer to Hashem can one overcome these challenges. This is why Yaakov, despite his extreme tiredness, established the evening prayer. He realized man requires renewed spiritual powers to stand up to these challenges with fortitude.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust
penned by Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David
Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Comforting Thoughts

On a visit to Canada, my hosts prepared a comfortable, spacious room for me on the main floor of their home. Since several married couples were also sharing this floor, I requested a room in the basement instead. When my host heard my unusual request, he was stunned. “Honored Rav,” he implored, “How can I agree to such a request? It is not fitting for someone of your stature to sleep in the basement. Besides, it is dangerous to sleep there.”

I countered that it was many times more dangerous to sleep on a floor where inappropriate thoughts were liable to assault me, and I insisted on moving to the basement. To my host’s credit, he did not refuse my request and did as I asked.

People often think they can get a good night’s sleep only if they sleep in an airy room with a good mattress and fresh linen. This is not the case. Only living by the tenets of the Torah will afford a person a restful sleep.

Although the room in the basement was on a lower level of physical comfort, I lay down to rest and slept very well. I was calmed by the knowledge that I was doing the right thing. *Baruch Hashem*, I was spared the *yetzer hara* of having inappropriate thoughts during sleep.

Shortly before Mincha, I once again lay down to rest. Once again, despite the less than optimal conditions, I slept very well. Suddenly, as I was sleeping, I felt my *kippah* falling from my head. I was alarmed and immediately woke up, intending to pick up my *kippah* from the floor. But then I felt an invisible hand lift my *kippah* and place it on my head. I know people will be skeptical on hearing this narrative. They might think I dreamed the whole thing. But I can vouch that this account is a hundred percent true.

When I related it to my son Rabbi Refael and my escort R’ Moshe Mirali, they asked if I wasn’t afraid about this incident. I replied that it was not an act of the *klippah*. The hand that assisted me in my sleep wanted to protect me, it did not want to cause me to sin. Had it been an impure force, it would have wished to do the opposite of returning my *kippah* to my head.

I believe that the incident with the kippah was a clear indication from Hashem that He was pleased with my decision to change rooms, as I was more concerned with my spiritual repose than with any physical comfort.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Two Rules for Disassembling Ladders

“And behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward” (*Bereishit* 28:12).

A ladder serves as a tool to impart several important messages concerning appropriate conduct in life. The Gaon Rabbi Ben Zion Mutzafi, *shlita*, brings a wonderful *meshal* to clarify these concepts:

There was once an unfortunate man who was not blessed with much wisdom. One day his landlord said to him: “Please go up to the roof and bring down several bags of sand.”

“How will I get up to the roof?” he asked. “There are no stairs that lead up to the roof.”

“You are correct,” the landlord replied. “There are no stairs, but I have a ladder.”

The simpleton took the ladder and went around to the side of the house. He placed the ladder against the wall and tried to climb up, but he did not succeed since the ladder kept falling.

“This wall must be crooked,” the simpleton said, and he went around to the other side of the house. He placed the ladder against the wall, but once again he did not manage to climb up since the ladder kept falling. He continued trying until a passerby called out, **“If you wish to climb up the ladder, you need to pull it slightly away from the wall. In order for it to stand steady, you must lean it on a slant.”**

The conclusion: Dear friend, do you wish to climb far in life? Allow a bit of breathing space. Don’t be adamant about every small issue. Know to forgo when necessary.

Here is another story about a second unfortunate simpleton:

His landlord turned to him with the following request: “There are stairs that lead to the roof of my house, but the roof is a dangerous place for my children. I am concerned they will sneak up there without my knowledge, so please demolish the stairs!”

“No problem,” answered the simpleton. What did he do? He began ascending the stairs, breaking each step below him. Standing on the second step, he broke the first step – and this is how he continued until he reached the roof. He completed his mission but then found himself on the roof without any way of getting down!

“Help! Help!” he cried out.

The neighbors heard his shouts and asked what was wrong.

“I went up to the roof, and now I am stuck here with no way of getting down!”

“Go down the same way you went up,” they replied logically.

“I can’t,” he cried out hysterically. There used to be steps here, which I climbed up. But now that I broke them, I can’t get down.”

“Listen to us,” they replied. **“When you demolish stairs, this is the way to do it: You start at the top and as you proceed downward you break the step above you.”** The simpleton repeated this forty times until he absorbed the message: “When demolishing stairs, you start at the top and proceed downward.”

Time passed and he became the most sought-after worker for demolishing stairs. When cats began stealthily entering a large wine cellar and spoiling the wine, the owner thought to himself: If I get rid of the steps that lead down to the cellar, it will solve the problem. He hired this now famous simpleton to demolish the stairs. Before beginning work, he repeated to himself, “When demolishing stairs, you start at the top and proceed downward.” He began the job, descending to the second step and demolishing the top step. He continued making his way down, breaking the step above him, until he found himself in the cellar with no way of climbing out.

“Help! Help!” he shouted. A passerby stopped and asked: “What happened? How did you get stuck down there?”

“I did exactly what I was told to do,” he explained, repeating his refrain: “When demolishing stairs, you start at the top and proceed downward.”

“This is correct when you are on the roof; for a basement you must do the opposite!”

We too, sometimes mix up the roof with the basement. When a person sees his income decreasing, where does he cut down?

If he does not possess strong faith, he cuts down in his *avodat Hashem*. For example, he gives less charity and pays less tuition. However, he tries hard not to cut back in material matters. He is not prepared to lower his standard of living and does not want to give up the pleasures that have always been part of his life.

When his financial situation starts to improve, he starts allowing himself to be more carefree with his expenses. Where will we see the outcome? If he has not worked on himself, he will upgrade his clothing, food, furniture, and car. Maybe after all that he will remember to increase the amount he gives to charity and once again give with the same generosity as he used to.



PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

A Rasha’s Thought Process

“Lavan said, ‘It is better that I give her to you than that I give her to another man; remain with me’” (*Bereishit* 29:19).

How can it be that Lavan prefers his daughter to marry Yaakov, rather than any other man? Which *rasha* wants his daughter to marry a Torah observant Jew?

The Maharam Shik, *zt”l*, offers a wonderful answer: Lavan said this out of extreme wickedness. This was his thought: Since my daughter is a *tzaddeket*, if she marries Esav she will transform him into a *tzaddik*. If so, it is better for her to marry Yaakov who is already a *tzaddik*, and thereby I will gain that there will be one less *tzaddik* in the world!

The Power of a Word

“Rachel saw that she had not borne children to Yaakov, so Rachel became envious of her sister; she said to Yaakov, ‘Give me children – otherwise I am dead.’ Yaakov’s anger flared up at Rachel” (*Bereishit* 30:1-2).

Yaakov’s conduct seems perplexing. His childless wife pours out her heart to him and instead of comforting her and offering her words of encouragement, he replies harshly.

The holy Ohr Hachaim, *zy”a*, explains that Yaakov was harsh with Rachel because she referred to death when speaking about herself, and he was concerned maybe this will bring her harm.

In the later *parsha* of Vayigash, we find Hashem said to Yaakov, “I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up [to be buried]; and Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes [when you die Yosef will close your eyes].” The Ohr Hachaim asks, why did Hashem mention his death and the fact that he would be buried by Yosef?

He answers, since Yaakov had several times used expressions of death concerning Yosef, “He has surely been torn to pieces,” and, “For I will go down to the grave mourning for my son,” Hashem had to promise him that he does not need to be concerned about this fact and it will not be considered “As something that happens as a result of a ruler saying something by accident.”

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Make the Most of Opportunities



“Yaakov departed from Be’er Sheva”
(Bereishit 28:10).

Rashi explains: “A righteous person’s departure from a place leaves a void. As long as he lives in the city, he constitutes its glory, splendor, and beauty; when he departs, its glory, splendor and beauty depart with him.” This Rashi, said about Yaakov’s departure from Be’er Sheva, highlights an important concept:

Yaakov was neither the Rav nor the Maggid of Be’er Sheva. He did not give speeches or arouse the masses to consider their wayward ways, but rather he closed himself off in his corner and diligently studied Torah. The Torah describes him as, “Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents.” Despite this fact, the Torah testifies that he was the glory, splendor and beauty of the city!

Harav Eliezer Turk, *shlita*, points out: this shows us that the degree of influence a tzaddik has on his surroundings is not measured according to his involvement in public matters or according to his fame amongst the residents. Sometimes a tzaddik can be secluded in his home, but his influence reaches much further than the boundaries of his sanctuary, to the extent that the Torah testifies about Yaakov that he was the glory, splendor and beauty of the city!

This important foundation also answers the famous question of why Chazal do not mention that when Avraham and Yitzchak left their hometown, their departure left an impression. Why indeed? Avraham and Yitzchak were extremely wealthy. They possessed much livestock and were accorded respect by the local population. They also involved themselves throughout their lives

with spreading Torah, influencing the public, and instilling *emunah* in the hearts of the people. This being the case, their departure certainly left a void. It was a natural outcome that Chazal do not have to make a point of stressing.

But concerning Yaakov who was hidden away in the tent of Torah, we could make the mistake of thinking that his coming and going was not felt by the people and had no effect on the local population. So the Torah points out that even *his* departure made an impression.

The Gaon Rabbi Zalman Rotbarg, *zt”l*, Rosh Yeshiva of Beit Meir, writes in his *sefer Imrei Da’at*, that for two weeks he had the merit of staying in a room close to his Rebbe, the Gaon Rabbi Shimon Shkop, *zt”l*, Rosh Yeshiva of Grodno and author of *Sha’arei Yosher*. He declares that those days spent in the company of his Rebbe remained etched in his heart and soul forever.

He describes several aspects that inspired him during that valuable time. The same awe-inspiring personage of Rabbi Shimon giving over his magnificent, profound shiurim to his *talmidim*, the effusion of his soul absorbed in pure prayer, the smiling countenance he presented to his *talmidim* and all those who came to bask in his presence, was the same outstanding personality who was also particular to allow himself a small amount of rest to refresh his tired mind from his deep involvement in the intricacies of Torah, and through that fulfilled “ונשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם”—“You shall greatly beware for your souls.”

He absorbed the exceptional order with which his Rebbe scheduled his day, concerning

both spiritual and physical matters, which according to his definition afforded him “profound lessons in character refinement.” He witnessed how just before going to sleep Rabbi Shimon would utter to himself chapters of *mishnayot*, and he defined it in the following way: “Through this Rabbi Shimon took the necessity of sleep and used it to transform the essence of Torah into reality.”

Until his final days, Rabbi Zalman nostalgically recalled this great merit of intimately observing Rabbi Shimon’s conduct. Every single aspect of a *talmid chacham’s* lifestyle is Torah, and frequenting his company is instructive and enlightening. “A path of life [waits] above for the intelligent one.”

The Gaon Rabbi Moshe Shmuel Shapira, *zt”l*, Rosh Yeshiva of Be’er Ya’akov, would often lament the fact that in his childhood he forwent the opportunity of beholding the radiant countenance of the Chafetz Chaim.

This occurred when the Chafetz Chaim visited Bialystok to encourage and inspire the townspeople. Rabbi Moshe Shmuel was then a young boy of about seven or eight years old, and his father, the Gaon Rabbi Aryeh Shapira, *zt”l*, Av Beit Din of Bialystok, urged his young son to accompany him to get a glimpse of the Chafetz Chaim. However, Rabbi Moshe Shmuel’s childish perception overrode any enthusiasm, and he preferred to continue playing with his friends.

Many years later, Rabbi Moshe Shmuel was still troubled by this regrettable fact, and his eyes would fill with tears when speaking about it. “I was presented with a special opportunity and I gave it up,” he sighed with distress.



“Contemplate and see that Hashem is good”

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