

*Dedicated by Theddy Nossbaum, Marion and David Slonim,
Debbie and Robert Nossbaum, Leonie Nossbaum and Sam Siegel
in loving memory of Richard Nossbaum בן אליעזר עייה
whose Yartzeit is on 16 Kislev*



Vayeitzei 5781

One of my favourite phrases in Modern Hebrew is “ברחל בתך הקטנה”. It means to express something explicitly without any room for misunderstanding. For example, someone might say that they explained something to their plumber “ברחל בתך הקטנה” in order to avoid any confusion.

The phrase originates from this week’s Parsha, where Yaakov, wary of Lavan’s trickery, told him that he would work for him for seven years “ברחל בתך הקטנה” – for your young daughter, Rachel. One might ask why this full description is necessary. Did Lavan not know that Rachel was his younger daughter? Why does Yaakov state the obvious?

Rashi explains that Yaakov was concerned that if he would just say “for Rachel” or “for your daughter”, Lavan would bring him a completely different bride called Rachel or attempt to replace Rachel with Leah. By saying “ברחל בתך הקטנה”, Yaakov left absolutely no room for misunderstanding. While Lavan ultimately tricked Yaakov anyway, I believe we can still learn from Yaakov’s words that as obvious as something might seem, there are times when it is important to state the obvious.

This concept was on my mind this week, on the International Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women. As obvious as it may seem that such cruel behaviour is unacceptable, it is still important to explicitly condemn it. It may be stating the obvious but stating the obvious sends a clear message to perpetrators that society will not tolerate such behaviour. It can help victims and survivors feel supported to report their experiences and seek help where required, and it can help raise awareness for others to intervene or offer support.

Another area where it is crucial to state the obvious is when sharing our love and appreciation for others. In our Monday morning Ladies’ Shiur this week, we learnt Rabbeinu Bachya’s explanation that while Yaakov did not hate Leah, she felt hated because he loved Rachel more. When one family member perceives other family members to be receiving more love, though they are not in any way despised, the relative difference in expression

can make them feel that way. Whether we are sharing appreciation in the workplace, affection for family members, or respect for others, it is important to state the obvious.

What is obvious to us might not be so obvious to others and expressing it clearly can have a positive impact.

Shabbat Shalom.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Danny Lamm AM

Our Parsha continues with Yaakov Avinu returning to Eretz Yisrael with a promise from HaShem לך אתננה ולזרעך הארץ - our ancient land that also encompasses Judea and Samaria. The current US administration has no confusion about Israel's rights, about the sovereignty of the Golan Heights and the indivisibility of its capital, Jerusalem, to where President Trump recently relocated the US Embassy. Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State just made a visit to the Shomron and visited Psagot.

We in Mizrachi have good friends there. Yaakov and Naama Berg, the owners of the Psagot Winery, labelled one of their premium wines, 'Pompeo'. Yaakov was in our first group of Hesder bachurim and Naama in our second Sherut Leumi group of bachurot. They were part of an outstanding group of Shlichim and I'm proud to have suggested their shidduch at completion of their term in Melbourne



Whilst the 'Hesder and Sherut Leumi' programs could not be continued over this last difficult year, we hope to resume next year.

With Rav Yehoshua and Malki Asulin returning to Israel next August at the completion of their successful shlichut, we have commenced the visa application process for the next Rosh Kollel, and he will lead the selection of next year's bachurim. In fact, our organisation is looking to the year ahead as one of growth.

Our social activities committee led initially by Mrs Abi Cooper and now by Mrs Belinda Fisher have scheduled many programs which are advertised in Mizrachi Matters. The Chanuka program is particularly noteworthy. Emunah too has many programs and their weekly Shabbat afternoon Rina Pushett Parsha shiur has attracted record numbers כן ירבו.

I welcome the election of Matan Slonim as new Chairman of Kehillat Ohr David and wish him and his committee much success. I thank Oren Smith and the outgoing KOD committee for their contribution to our organisation and look forward to KOD continuing to go מחיל אל חיל.



"And Ya'akov went on his way and the angels of Hashem met him. And when he saw them, Ya'akov said, 'This is the Machane of Hashem' and he called that place 'Machanayim'" (Bereishit 32:1-2).

In the concluding verses of this week's Parsha, Ya'akov parts from Lavan, begins his return journey to Israel and is greeted by a Machane (company/camp) of angels of Hashem. Upon seeing them, he declares, "This is the Machane of Hashem" and named the place "Machanayim", after his encounter with the angels.

At first glance, the name "Machanayim" seems grammatically incorrect, for it is in the plural form, meaning "two camps". Seeing as Ya'akov saw a single Machane of angels, surely, he should have called the place "Machane". Why did he choose to call it "Machanayim" in the plural?

Rashi (Bereishit 32:2) explains that there were in fact numerous camps of angels involved in this encounter. Prior to leaving the Land of Israel at the beginning of the Parsha, Ya'akov dreamt of a ladder spanning heaven and earth and saw the angels which normally accompany him in Israel return to heaven, with their places being taken by the angels of Chutz La'Aretz. At the end of the Parsha, as Ya'akov makes his return journey to Israel, the angels of Israel come out to greet him and once more exchange places with the angels of Chutz La'Aretz. Ya'akov therefore named the place "Machanayim" in the plural form.

Ramban (Bereishit 32:2, in his second explanation) agrees that there were two Machanot, but disagrees with Rashi's interpretation. According to Ramban, this encounter occurred in the Diaspora (without connection to the angels of Israel) and the "Machanayim" being referred to are the camp of Ya'akov and his family and the camp of accompanying angels from heaven. Such was Ya'akov's greatness that despite many years away from home in idolatrous surroundings, he remained true to his faith and his camp on earth was comparable to a camp of angels in Heaven.

Ramban's explanation is the story of the Jew in exile. Despite being away from home, we can still maintain a connection with Heaven and we can still deserve the protection of Hashem. However, perhaps Rashi's explanation is more relevant for our generation today. Now that the gates of Israel have been opened for all Jews around the world to return, the angels of Israel have come out to greet us and accompany us on the journey home.

Throughout his stay in the Diaspora, Ya'akov Avinu served as tremendous role model for his descendants in exile. In returning home from exile, Ya'akov set a further example for us to aspire to as well.

Shabbat Shalom



Reb Leor Broh

Riddle for Vayetze: In the Parsha of Vayetze, Yaakov had two of these. Lavan had only one. What were they?

Answer to Riddle for last week (Toldos):

Both of us have our father's name and our brother's name appearing in the Parsha, but no mention of our mother's name. We do not come from the same family. Who are we?

Rivkah is described the daughter of Betuel and sister of Lavan (25:20) but her mother's name does not appear in Toldot, or any other Parsha.

Mochalat is described as the daughter of Yishmael and sister of Nevayot (28:9), but likewise, her mother's name does not appear in Toldot, or any other Parsha. (Chazal learn that her brother's name is mentioned in connection with her marriage to teach us that Yishmael her father died then and her brother took over the marriage arrangements)

NB The two brothers Yitzchak & Yishmael also have their father's name Avrohom mentioned in Toldot, but not their mother's name Sara.

SHABBAT THOUGHT



Dr Michal Kaufman, Rosh Midrasha

Yaakov's Encounters with the Angels

This week's Parsha begins with Yaakov leaving the Land of Israel on the way to Charan to sojourn in the home of his Uncle Lavan. Towards evening, he came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night. Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lays down to rest.

וַיִּחַלְמֶם וַהֲנֶה סֵלֶם מִצֵּב אֶרְצָה וְרֵאשׁוֹ מִגַּיַע הַשָּׁמַיִם וַהֲנֶה מִלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ: (בראשית כח:יב)

He had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and the angels of God were going up and down on it. (Bereshit 28:12)

The text continues-

וַהֲנֶה יְקֻוֹם נֹצֵב עָלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֶיךָ וַיִּצְחַק הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה שֹׁכֵב עָלֶיהָ לֵךְ אֶתְנַנֶּה וּלְזָרְעֶךָ:

"And G-d was standing beside him and He said, "I am the Lord, the G-d of your father Abraham and the G-d of Isaac: the ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and to your offspring."

G-d then blesses Yaakov saying:

הֲיֵה יִרְעֶךָ פֶּעֶפֶר הָאָרֶץ וּפְרֻצֹת גְּמָה וְקִדְמָה וְצַפְנָה וְנִגְבָּה וְנִדְבָרְכוּ בְךָ כָּל־מִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה וּבְזִרְעֶךָ: וַהֲנֶה אֲנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וְשִׁמְרְתִּיךָ בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־תֵּלֵךְ וְהִשְׁבַּתִּיךָ אֶל־הָאֲדָמָה הַזֹּאת כִּי לֹא אֶעֱזָבְךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם־עָשִׂיתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּרְתִּי לְךָ: (כח:יג-טו)

Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (28:14-15)

From this point onwards, angels will continue to accompany Yaakov throughout his life. He encounters them in the house of Lavan (31:11). Upon leaving the house of Lavan, the angels would once again accompany Yaakov back to the land of Israel (32:2-3). Finally, before meeting up with Esav, in the darkness of the night Yaakov tussles with an angel and merits a special blessing (32:25-32).

What is interesting is that each time Yaakov encounters an angel, it happens at night, and at a time when Ya'akov is preoccupied with other things. What is most interesting is that each of these encounters with the Divine are unexpected and they awaken something in Yaakov, setting him on a new course.

On this very point, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks eloquently taught, *"None of us knows when the presence of God will suddenly intrude into our lives...Jacob signifies God's encounter with us – unplanned, unscheduled, unexpected; the vision, the voice, the call we can never know in advance but which leaves us transformed."* (Covenant and Conversation Vayetse -5767)



Rabbi James Kennard

Ya'akov followed his father's instruction and headed for the home of his uncle, Lavan.

As he arrived in Haran, he asked the shepherds that he met:

הִידַעְתֶּם אֶת־לָבָן בֶּן־נָחוֹר וַיֹּאמְרוּ יָדַעְנוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַשְּׁלוֹם לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׁלוֹם (בראשית כט:ה-ו)

"Do you know Lavan the son of Nahor?" And they said, "Yes, we do." He said to them, "Is it well (literally: is there peace) with him?" They said, "peace." (Bereishit 29:5-6)

But Ya'akov seems to have erred. Lavan was the son of Betuel who was himself the son of Nahor. Why did Ya'akov ascribe Lavan's paternity to his grandfather rather than his father? Some of the various approaches in the commentators can be grouped together, as explaining that even though Nahor was the grandfather, there were good reasons why Ya'akov should have called Lavan "ben Nahor".

The **Abarbanel** (15th century Portugal) suggests that since Nahor was patriarch of that branch of the dynasty, and the brother of Avraham, Ya'akov's own grandfather, it was logical that Ya'akov should see Nahor as the key source from which the rest of the family came.

Ramban (12th century Israel) also posits that Nahor was the head of the family, and was a more honourable figure than Betuel, as evidenced by Lavan swearing an oath in the name of the god of Nahor (Bereishit 31:53). Ramban suggests further that Betuel may have been lacking in ethical behaviour (an idea found also in Midrashim) and therefore Ya'akov did want to identify Lavan with Betuel, but only with his own grandfather's brother.

The relative ethical qualities of Betuel and Nahor inspires the **Kli Yekar** (16th century Bohemia) to explain homiletically the conversation between Ya'akov and the shepherds. Ya'akov would not have needed to ask them if they knew Lavan, because naturally Lavan's neighbour would have done so. Rather when he asked them about "Lavan ben Nahor" his true inquiry was whether Lavan was to be compared to his grandfather Nahor, who (according to this narrative) was a man of righteousness and integrity, or did he take after his father, Betuel, a perpetrator of various misdeeds.

When the shepherds replied "we know him" (i.e. as Lavan ben Nahor) they affirmed that Lavan was righteous like his grandfather. However Ya'akov's next question revealed this to be false. If Lavan were righteous then he would not be at peace with his townspeople who were known to be evil. When the shepherds said that there is "peace with him", that confirmed that Lavan was indeed of the same low moral character as his father and neighbours.

The **Terumat Hadeshen** (15th century Austria) learns from this incident a halachic rule. If a man's father is an apostate, then he is called to the Torah then to be called to the Torah as "son of (his father's name)" would be an embarrassment. Instead he is called up as "son of (his grandfather's name)

Rabbeinu Bachya (14th century Spain) takes a different approach. Calling Lavan "ben Nahor" was not, he says, a misnomer, because of the Talmudic principle of "בני בנים הרי הם כבנים" - grandchildren are like children (Kiddushin 4a). Thus Nahor's grandson (Lavan) could be legitimately referred to as "son of Nahor".

No less a figure than Avraham employed the same device. When Avimelech accused Avraham of falsehood by claiming that Sarah was his sister, Avraham replied:

וְגַם-אֶמְנָה אֶחָתִי בַת-אֲבִי הוּא . . . (בראשית פרק כ"ב)

And besides, she is in truth my sister, my father's daughter . . . (Bereishit 20:12)

Yet Sarah was not Avraham's father's daughter, but his granddaughter (being the daughter of Haran, Avraham's brother). Avraham is not seeking to justify himself against charges of lying, by uttering another untruth; rather he is employing the principle of "grandchildren are like children".

The **Torah Temima** (20th century Lithuania) brings a support from the Torah itself for this rule. Bemidbar 10:29 refers to "Hovav, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moshe's father-in-law". Trying to unscramble this mixture of obscure names, Rashi states that Hovav is another name for Yitro, which makes Reuel the father of Yitro. But in Shemot 2:18 we read that the daughters of Yitro spoke to "Reuel their father". This is therefore an example of "grandchildren are like children". (See Ibn Ezra on Bemidbar 10:29 for a different approach). A seemingly insignificant comment by Rashi suggests yet another approach. When Avraham's servant visited the house of Betuel to propose marriage between Yitzhak and Rivka, the Torah records

וַיַּעַן לָבָן וּבְתוּאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵה' יָצָא הַדָּבָר לֹא נוֹכַל דַּבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ רַע אוֹ-טוֹב: (בראשית פרק כד:ג)

Then Lavan and Betuel answered, "The matter has come from Hashem; we cannot speak to you bad or good. (Bereishit 24:50)

On this, Rashi points out:

וַיַּעַן לָבָן וּבְתוּאֵל - רָשָׁע הָיָה וְקִפֵּץ לְהִשִּׁיב לִפְנֵי אָבִיו:

Lavan and Betuel answered: He (Lavan) was a wicked person and so rushed in to answer before his father.

Rashi is not just observing the audacity of a son to speak before a father. He is revealing to us a fundamental character trait of Lavan, that he lacks respect for his parent.

This might explain why, with one exception, the Torah never describes Lavan as "ben Betuel". Invariably he is לבן הארמי - Lavan the Amarean, as if his peoplehood has eclipsed his family connections. Hence Ya'akov too disconnects Lavan from his father and calls him "ben Nahor". (The one exception is Bereishit 25:5, which tells of how Ya'akov fulfils the common of his father Yitzhak, who *did* understand the value of respect for parents).

Just as he breaks the link with his own father, he does the same with his own children. Rachel and Leah, are clear that Lavan has abandoned them. When Ya'akov asks their permission to flee from Lavan, they reply

וַתַּעַן רָחֵל וְלֵאָה וַתֹּאמְרֶנָּה לֹא הָעוֹד לָנוּ חֵלֶק וְנַחֲלָה בְּבֵית אָבִינוּ: הֲלוֹא נָכְרִיזְתָּ נְחֹשְׁבָנוּ לֹא כִּי מְכָרְנוּ וַיֹּאכַל גַּם-אֶכּוֹל אֶת-כֶּסֶפְנוּ: (בראשית לא:יד-טו)

Then Rachel and Leah answered him, saying, "Have we still a share in the inheritance of our father's house? Surely, he regards us as outsiders, now that he has sold us and has used up our purchase price. (Bereishit 31:14-15)

Lavan's philosophy is distilled into the chilling words with which he finally takes leave of Ya'akov:

וַיַּעַן לָבָן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-יַעֲקֹב הַבָּנוֹת בְּנֹתַי וְהַבָּנִים בְּנֵי . . . (בראשית לא:מג)

Lavan answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children. . . (Bereishit 31:43)

Calling his grandchildren "my children" could be a term of endearment, or an ironic reference back to the principle of "grandchildren are like children". But given all that we know of Lavan, we can suggest that he is saying "the children are my children - *and not yours*". By luring Ya'akov to stay in Haran year after year, by swapping daughters to create dysfunction in the family, he aims to separate Ya'akov from his own children and from his own parents, leaving him a rootless, fruitless, atomised individual, just like Lavan himself.

(Note that when Ya'akov himself claims that his grandchildren - Ephraim and Menashe - are his children in Bereishit 48:5, he does so in a way that does *not* deny that Yosef is their father.)

Ya'akov escapes. Having been desperate to raise a family (see Bereishit 29:21 and Rashi there) and equally passionate that all of his children follow in his ways (see Rashi on Bereishit 28:21), he finally succeeds in taking children away from a hostile and alien environment and thereby establishes that they are indeed "his" progeny.

And when he reunites with Esav, who sees the children and asks

מִי־אֵלֶּה לְךָ

Who are these?

as if to say: "on what basis do you claim that they belong to you? Are they not citizens of the world?", Ya'akov's answer is clear:

הַיְלָדִים אֲשֶׁר־חַנַּן אֱ-לֹהִים אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ: (בראשית לג:ה)

The children with whom God has favored your servant.

For Ya'akov, the archetypal Jewish parent whose example inspires every subsequent generation, our children are given to us as a divine gift. We cannot abdicate our role, or let the Lavans of the world claim our children as their own. To nurture and to raise them is our privilege and our sacred responsibility.