

will. Only by being humble and appreciative can we assure ourselves of a steady flow of blessings from Heaven. (Rabbi Naftali Reich)

Birthdays

Everyone loves a birthday – and a host of anniversaries, too. The greeting card companies, florists, and manufacturers of everything from chocolates to jewelry count on our country's love for the commemoration of milestones.

When you give it a little thought, however, celebrating seems out of order. Imagine a prisoner, sentenced to execution. He is taken from his cell to proceed to the gallows. The guards accompany him on board a train whose last stop is the execution site. How ludicrous it would be if at every stop – every step closer to his end – he was served some cake and ice cream and sung a verse of “Happy Birthday.” Isn't that what a birthday party is?

However, for the Jew that is not true. Think for a moment. A baby is born. Excitement! *Mazal tov!* Gifts and congratulations are showered upon the infant and its parents. Why is everyone so excited? The newborn has not done anything of value – and cannot even attend to his own basic needs. The ebullient reactions are caused by anticipation. This little bundle of potential is a future member of the Chosen People. We are right to get excited but not sure if anticipation will become a reality.

When a birthday is reached, it is time for a review of the past year's progress. What did you achieve in your lifelong project of self-perfection? If you made positive steps forward in the year just past, then a birthday or anniversary takes on an atmosphere of celebration. If each stop on the train brings you closer to your goal, that is cause for happiness and rejoicing. You can celebrate the achievements and successes of another year of life. This makes it so important to remember that a year is made up of days – and days are built with hours – and hours are composed of minutes – and minutes are a bunch of seconds. How valuable each one is! (One Minute with Yourself)

Thinking on His Feet

The Ponevezher Rav (Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman) was once on a trip to New York. He was riding the subway when he found himself in a car with a bunch of hoodlums that he feared might have their eye on him with the intent of attacking him. Besides being an outstanding *Talmudic* genius, it is clear from many stories told about him that the Ponevezher Rav was very fast on his feet as well.

The Rav was carrying a lot of money on him. What is he going to do? He took out a slip of paper from his pocket that had an address written on it. He went over to the hoodlums and said, “Can you help me find which stop I get off at for this address?”

The hoodlums wink to themselves and say, “We'll take you there. Get off at the next stop with us and we'll take you to that address.” The train pulled into the next stop, the doors open, the hoodlums walk out. The Ponevezher Rav walks slowly behind them. He exits from the car, but as the doors are about to close, he steps back in and the train pulls away with the gang of hoodlums left behind at the station.

The Ponevezher Rav, in telling over the story, explained: “Where did I come up with this idea? I got it from *Parashat Vayishlach!*” How? Esav said to Ya'akov, “Come with me to Seir.” Ya'akov agreed. He said, “Yes. I will go with you, but I need to walk at my own pace...” Esav heads off to Seir and Ya'akov is still headed there to this very day. The Ponevezher Rav said, “I learned from this incident in *Humash* that in a time of danger, it is best to let the person think you are going with him and then you wave good-bye.” (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאַה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

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SHABBAT VAYISHLAH ☆ עֶשֶׂת וַיִּשְׁלַח

Haftarah: Obadiah 1:1-21

DECEMBER 4-5, 2020 19 KISLEV 5781

Friday Minhah: 4:11 pm	Shaharit: 6:05, 6:40, 8:00, 8:15, 9:00 am
Shir Hashirim (midrash): 4:01 pm	Morning Shema by: 8:52am
Minhah (midrash): 4:11 pm	Shabbat Minhah: 3:50 pm
Candlelighting: 4:11 pm	Shabbat Ends: 5:09 pm (R"Y 5:41 pm)
Evening Shema after: 5:09 pm	Sunday Minhah: 4:15 pm

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

**This bulletin is dedicated by Steven Levy
in honor of his wife, Linda, a true *eshet hayil*.**

Begin saying *Barech Alenu* on Saturday night, December 5 in *Arbit*.

Mabrook to Moshe & Molly Esses on the birth of a baby boy. Mabrook to the grandparents, Michael & Barbara Gindi.

A Message from our Rabbi

(Beresheet 35:26) "אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר יִלְדְּלוּ בְּפְדוֹן אֶרֶם"

“These are the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padam Aram”

In this week's *perashah*, the Torah lists the names of Ya'akov *Abinu's* sons, and concludes: “These are the sons of Ya'akov who were born to him in Padam Aram.” The difficulty with this *pasuk* is obvious. Binyamin was not born in Padam Aram where Laban lived, but in *Eress Yisrael* on the road to Bet Lehem. *Hizkuni* answers that Binyamin was born as a result of Rachel *Imenu's* prayer in Padam Aram following the birth of Yosef, when she said, “May Hashem add for me another son. (30:24)” Therefore it was considered as if he was born in Padam Aram.

Rabbi Shimon Finkelman asks: Rachel prayed 14 years that Yosef should be born. For Binyamin, one prayer was enough. What gave that particular prayer such power?

The Torah tells us that Rachel named her first son Yosef for two reasons. The first was that “Hashem gathered in my shame.” This reason was one of *hakarat hatob* – gratitude to Hashem for ending the shame she had endured as the only wife of Ya'akov *Abinu* who was childless. Her second reason for naming him Yosef was “May Hashem add for me another son.” A prayer that follows an expression of *hakarat hatob* to

Hashem is a very powerful prayer. Also a prayer is particularly powerful when offered on behalf of someone to whom someone feels *hakarat hatob*.

Rabbi Finkelman illustrates with a true story that he heard from a friend:

“A neighbor of mine in Monsey was sitting *shiva* in Brooklyn after his father passed away. Because the *shiva* ended on Shabbat morning, he planned to return home on Friday afternoon so that his neighbors could visit him before Shabbat. I knew the house would be crowded and it would not be possible to have a meaningful conversation with the mourner who was a good friend of mine.

“I decided to drive to Brooklyn so that I could fulfill the *misvah* in the optimum way. I went to visit him in Brooklyn and offered to drive him to Monsey, and he gladly accepted the offer.

“My friend told me, ‘I cannot explain how grateful I am to you. Had you not driven me back, I would have had to take the Monsey bus back home, and with my torn shirt and unkempt appearance, I would have been the object of many stares and disapproving looks. You saved me from all that.’

“When we arrived at his home, he blessed me with all his heart that he should not be able attend the weddings of my three daughters, all of whom were in *shiduchim* at the time, meaning that all three weddings should be held during the year of his mourning.

“This *berachah* was fulfilled. The last night of *sheva berachot* for the third daughter was held on the night after his father’s first yahrtzeit!

Such is the power of *hakarat hatob*. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

Succot is a State of Mind

After Ya’akob met Esav, they (at least partially) reconciled, and then they decided to go their separate ways. The *pasuk* says, “So Esav went back that day on his way toward Seir. Then Ya’akob journeyed to Succot and built himself a house, and for his livestock he made shelters (*Succot*); therefore he called the name of the place Succot.”

There are two problems with this *pasuk*. The first is that Ya’akob only called the name of the place Succot after he got there (after he erected the shelters (*Succot*) for the livestock). Nevertheless, the *pasuk* says “he journeyed to Succot” as if that was the pre-existing name of the town. Of course, we can say that the *pasuk* is speaking in “prophetic future tense” — i.e., Ya’akob journeyed to the place that in the future he would name Succot. However, it is strange to find it written that way.

The other question is that it seems that Ya’akob named the town for a very insignificant fact — namely the structures he built for his cattle. Why is the town (apparently) named for the huts he made for his livestock?

Sefer Milchemet Yehudah says that the *pasuk* is teaching that Succot is not merely a place on the map — it is a state of mind. The Torah is teaching that Ya’akob *Abinu* is now entering the final stage of his life. Ya’akob lived in his parents’ house for many years, during which time he sat and learned. Then he went to Yeshivat Shem V’Eber for another 14 year period where, again, he sat and learned. Then, as a fugitive running for his life, he left *Eress Yisrael* and worked by Laban for 20 years. This was all a prelude for the final stage of his life. Now, Ya’akob is coming back to *Eress Yisrael*. In today’s terminology, he is finally “settling down.”

Ya’akob said to himself, when I was by Laban, I saw what is involved in earning a living. I saw how Laban acts. I am now beginning “the rest of my life.” I have seen enough of life to know that materialism (*gashmiyut*) and all other mundane pursuits in this world can become a person’s *raison d’être* — his reason for existence. I do not

want this to happen to me because I know that the only thing that counts in this world is spirituality (*ruchaniyut*) and service of Hashem. All the rest is only a means to an end.

So when the *pasuk* says that Ya’akob traveled to Succot, it is not referring to the name of that town. It is referring to this concept that a person must look at *gashmiyut* - the material things in life - as merely just traveling “to Succot.” All these acquisitions are not going to make a bit of difference after 120 years. They are all transitory.

They are like a Succah. When someone is out camping, he does not put up a house for his ten-day camping trip. People put up tents, because it is just a temporary situation. Ya’akob traveled to Succot: “Now I am starting my life — I have finished with Laban, I have finished with Esav – so now I am beginning. My mindset is to Succot.” I called the name of the city I would live in “Temporary Huts” [Succot] because I am making a statement for myself and for my children that this entire world must be viewed in the context of a temporary dwelling - “Succot.” (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

Diminishing Returns

After 34 long years, the dreaded confrontation between the brothers was about to take place. Ya’akob had spent all these years in exile to avoid Esav’s murderous designs, and now he was coming home with his new family and wealth, hoping that his brother’s anger had subsided. But apparently, it had not. Esav had responded to the news of his brother’s arrival by mobilizing his forces and marching to meet him with four hundred armed thugs. In desperation, Ya’akob cries out to Hashem to save him and his family from his vengeful brother. “I am diminished by all the kindness and truth You have done for Your servant.” He then goes on to recount his rise from the sad plight of a destitute fugitive to the great prince he has become.

What does he mean by the expression “I am diminished by all the kindness”? The commentators explain that all his good fortune has depleted his store of credit with Hashem, and he has little merit left to stand him in good stead.

But if so, the question immediately arises: Isn’t he defeating his own purpose with this argument? On the one hand, he is calling out to Hashem for deliverance, yet on the other, he is admitting that he has no right to make such a request.

The commentators explain that when Ya’akob described himself as “diminished” he was not referring only to his credit with Hashem but also to himself as a person. Hashem’s kindness had “diminished” him, making him feel humble and unworthy. The sudden rise in his fortunes could easily have gone to his head. Here he had been a ragged fugitive, and now he had a beautiful family, many children and spectacular wealth. He could have assumed fine airs and become arrogant and conceited, attributing his successes to his charisma and his cleverness. But he did not. On the contrary, the more Hashem gave him, the more humble he became.

This is what he was saying to Hashem. In all these years, I have only been humbled by all You have done for me. Now, too, if You come to my assistance and deliver me from my brother, I shall not think for a moment that my prowess and fearsome reputation have saved me. I will recognize that everything is a gift from You, although I have done nothing to deserve it, and I shall become more diminished than ever.

In our own lives, Hashem constantly showers us with innumerable blessings, the company of our loved ones, the roof over our heads, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the ground upon which we walk, the very air we breathe. Every step we take, every sound we hear, every fragrance we sniff, every beautiful sight we behold, all these are gifts which we have not earned through any special merit of our own, yet sometimes we tend to take them for granted. In fact, some people may even be resentful that they have not received more. Such an attitude will certainly not earn us divine good