



Tiferet
ת פ א ר ת



TIFERET UPDATES

תורת תפארת

Stairway to Heaven

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Parshat Vayeitzei

Our Parsha begins with Yaakov running away from Esav. As he is fleeing, the Torah reports ויפגע במקום - he reached the place. The Midrash, picking up on the curious word choice of ויפגע, teaches that it was as if Yaakov ran into a wall. The Slonimer Rebbe in his renowned sefer, Netivot Shalom, asserts that the Midrash is alluding to a challenge Yaakov encountered. Yaakov Aveinu spent his formative years (14 years in all) learning day and night in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever. Fourteen years of complete immersion in Torah and spirituality left Yaakov uncertain of how to engage the 'real' world. How would he successfully involve himself in the mundane: build a home, raise a family, earn a livelihood, deal with the Lavans of the world and yet maintain his deep spirituality and G-dly connection?



The Netivot Shalom teaches that Yaakov's famous dream was G-d's message to Yaakov of how to leave the safe environment of Yeshiva and survive in the physical world. The Torah describes the dream as follows:

ויחלם והנה סולם מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה והנה מלאכי אלקים עולים ויורדים בו
Yaakov dreamt and behold, a ladder rooted in the ground with the top reaching the Heavens; and behold, the angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it.



The Midrash Rabba teaches that this dream is a double metaphor. One meaning of the dream is that the ladder is the מצבה which is rooted in the ground, the תרבות reach up to the Heavens and the angels going up and down the ladder are the כהנים.

The second metaphor in the Midrash is based on a Gematria. סולם is numerically equivalent to סיני. Har Sinai is rooted in the earth and reaches up to the Heavens and Moshe and Aharon going up and down Har Sinai are like the angels on the ladder. Therefore, the Midrash teaches that the dream represented two principle concepts: Avodah and Torah.

The Slonimer Rebbe teaches that Hashem was imparting a very important message to Yaakov and future generations. It is G-d's will for man to be involved in the world and to elevate the mundane. Like the ladder of Yaakov's dream, we need to be

פרשת ויצא – The Pitfalls of Pride

By: Sara C. Olson (Tiferet 5772)

The פטרה of ויצא is taken from פרקים יא-יד ספר הושע. In the פטרה, הושע is rebuking מלכות ישראל for his sins. Instead of being upright and truthful, אפרים – as the Ten Tribes are collectively called – has been acting like a crooked trader, who cheats his customers with rigged scales. And not only that, אפרים has become boastful, even to the point of denying his sins. States the Navi:

אך עשרתי מצאתי און לי כל יגיעי לא ימצאו לי עון אשר חטא (יב:ט)
"ויאמר אפרים"

"Ephraim said, 'Indeed I have become rich; I have found power for myself, for in all my toil they will not find for me any iniquity which contains sin (12:9)'"

"כמרעיתם וישבעו וירם לבם על כן שכחוני (יג:ו)"

"With their pasture they became sated; they were sated and their hearts grew haughty, therefore they forgot Me (13:6)'"

How does this פטרה connect with the פרשה?

ויצא is aptly named, for it contains many exits. It begins with יעקב fleeing his home and arriving in חרן, home of his uncle לבן. יעקב then works for לבן for 20 years, after which point he flees with his family to escape לבן's home. He then makes a treaty with לבן in מחנים.

The simple connection of the פטרה is that the text mentions this story of יעקב in יב:יג to reprimand the Ten Tribes. הושע reminds them that יעקב had to flee from his home and work as a humble shepherd. The אבן עזרא adds that יעקב fled in such a poor state that he had to beg for bread. יעקב worked honestly for his wealth and was even cheated by his uncle. How can you, מלכות ישראל, be earning your income in such a crooked manner? You are emulating לבן instead of יעקב.

It is easy for us to look at our wealth and say, "ידי – I did it! It was through my hand alone." But this perspective leads straight to haughty pride, גאווה, as evidenced by the boasts of אפרים. However, we are less likely to take the arrogant approach if we realize that money and power – "עשרתי מצאתי" – is not our ultimate goal.

In his book, *Listen to Your Messages*, Rabbi Yissocher Frand relates a story about a friend of his, who is a talented systems analyst. This friend had the capacity to rise high in the company, but he turned down promotions because he wanted to spend time learning Torah, learning with his children, interacting with his family. Incorporating Torah into his life was his goal. His fellow gentile co-workers could not understand him, for the goal of corporate America is to obtain as much wealth and prestige as possible.

A final note of interest is the difference in where אשכנזים and ספרדים divide the פטרה. ספרדים read from יב:ז – יב:יג and recite three פסוקים that refer to cheating, boasting, and running after wealth. This is in contrast to אשכנזים, who read from יב:יג – יב:יג and recite only one פסוק that mentions such sins. Perhaps this difference is of historical significance. If we go back about 800 years, we find the ספרדים living in Muslim controlled Spain while most אשכנזים are living in Catholic controlled Europe. Faced with a greater challenge due to their better economic situation, perhaps the ספרדי community wanted to increase the number of warnings against wrongful pride, and therefore selected an earlier portion for the פטרה.

Next Shabbat

Tiferet Alumnae Shabbaton

Parashat Vayishlach

December 9th – 10th

In Stern College

Contact arosner@tiferetcenter.com for more details

תורת תפארת (המשך)

rooted in this world but our goals and objectives need to be spiritual. However, for a Torah Jew to succeed in a world full of values that are antithetical to Torah, we need to create, what the Slonimer Rebbe terms, a מסגרת קדושה - a framework of kedusha. Once you are within the framework of kedusha, you are ensured long-term spiritual success. Like the angels, you will have your ups and downs but as long as you remain a part of the framework you are safe.

This framework of kedusha is what is alluded to in the Midrash: Avodah and Torah. If one is committed to Avodah - tefilla and Torah study in a serious and consistent manner then you are guaranteed to safely engage in worldly affairs as long as your goals and aspirations remain spiritual. This framework is entrenched in halacha. We have three tefillot a day and are expected to learn ויליה - every day and night. Although we may experience spiritual highs and lows, the message to Yaakov was that the most important objective is remaining on the ladder because ultimately you will rise up again.

A common difficulty experienced by young men and women leaving yeshiva or seminary to attend college and enter the work force is how to maintain their spiritual gains of their 'year' in Israel. We may find solace in knowing that Yaakov Aveinu endured a similar issue. The message of Yaakov's dream is really a message to everyone leaving the 'bubble' of yeshiva or seminary. We must create a מסגרת קדושה of Torah and Tefilla, always yearning to continue a trajectory of spiritual growth. By doing this we can securely root ourselves in a challenging world with challenging people who either intentionally or unintentionally detract us from our true purpose.