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## Weekly Parsha

# Vayetze

RABBI BERNIE FOX

## The Division of the Torah into Parsheyot

*And Yaakov went forth from  
Beer-Shava, and he went to  
Haran. (Beresheit 28:10)*

The Chumash is divided into  
sections – parsheyot. Generally, a

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## Education

# Seeing is Believing

**What's Missing in Chumash Class:  
A Lesson Plan Submission to Teachers**

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## Weekly Parsha

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blank space in the Torah scroll separates parsheyot from one another. In most cases, the blank space is created by beginning a parasha on a new line. However, in a few cases, a new parasha begins in the middle of a line and a blank space is inserted in the middle of a line to separate the parsheyot. In other words, in such instances, one parasha ends, there is a blank space, and the new parasha begins on the same line. This less-common model is used to separate Parshat VaYetzai from the preceding Parshat Toldot.

Rabbaynu Yosef ibn Kaspi explains the significance of these two different methods of separating parsheyot. He explains that the parsheyot are designed as sections of roughly equal length. Ideally, each parasha should be delineated by a change in subject matter. When a new parasha begins with a change in the topic, the objective of creating sections of roughly equal length is achieved in this ideal manner. In these instances, the new parasha begins on a new line of the Torah. However, in some cases, it is impossible to adhere to this ideal and in order to avoid an overly long parasha, a break must be inserted within a single topic. In this less-common case, the new parasha begins on the same line as the previous parasha. The topic of Parshat VaYaetzai is directly related to the end of Parshat Toldot. At the end of Parshat Toldot, Yaakov obeys the directive of his parents, Yitzchak and Rivkah, and leaves his home for Haran. Parshat VaYetze begins with a description of his journey to Haran. For this reason, the new parasha begins and Parshat Toldot ends on the same line.[1]

**Yaakov's Disapproval of Leyah**

*And he also married Rachel and he loved Rachel more than Leyah. He worked with him for another seven years. Hashem saw that Leyah was despised. He made her fertile and Rachel was barren. (Beresheit 29:30-31)*

These passages introduce the rivalry between Rachel and Leyah. Each sought to be the mother of Yaakov's children. These passages are difficult to understand. First, the passages seem to be contradictory. Initially, the Torah tells us that Yaakov preferred Rachel over Leyah. Later, the Torah states

that Yaakov despised Leyah. Second, why did Yaakov dislike Leyah? Third, why did Hashem intervene of Leyah's behalf and cause her to conceive? Finally, how did Leyah's fertility earn her Yaakov's love and appreciation?

Rabbaynu Yonatan ben Uziel offers a simple answer to the first question. He explains that the Torah does not intend to indicate that Yaakov despised Leyah. The term used in the Torah to describe Yaakov's attitude towards Leyah is that she was s'nuah. This term can be translated as "despised". However, it can also indicate a relative indifference. In this instance, the term s'nuah is used in this second sense. In other words, the Torah is not telling us that Yaakov hated Leyah. It is saying that he favored Rachel and was relatively indifferent towards Leyah. Nachmanides points out another instance in which the term s'nuah is used in this fashion. The Torah describes a man with two wives. One is beloved, the second is a s'nuah. The s'nuah has a son and later, the beloved wife has a son. The son of the s'nuah is the firstborn and is entitled to inherit a double portion of the father's possessions. The father may not transfer this right to the son of the preferred wife.[2] Nachmanides points out that in this context, the Torah is clearly describing a relative preference. One is favored over the other. The term s'nuah refers to the less favored wife. The term does not seem to indicate a despised wife.[3] This supports Rabbaynu Yonatan ben Uziel's interpretation of our pasuk.

This interpretation answers the first question. However, it does not answer our other questions. Nachmanides offers another approach to these passages. This approach provides a more comprehensive explanation. He begins with the first question. He comments that Yaakov favored Rachel over Leyah. This preference existed even prior to their marriage. However, beyond this innocent partiality, Yaakov actually had negative feelings towards Leyah. Lavan had secretly substituted her for Rachel. This deception had required Leyah's complicity. Yaakov felt that Leyah had acted dishonestly towards him.

Nachmanides explains that Yaakov was wrong in his assessment of Leyah. She recognized Yaakov's righteousness. She wanted to

(continued on next page)



marry this tzadik. This was her sole motivation for participating in Lavan's deception. This explains Hashem's response to Leyah's plight. Hashem knows the inner motivations of every human being. He recognized that Yaakov had misjudged Leyah and did not recognize her sincerity. Hashem responded by granting Leyah children and withholding them from Rachel.

Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno offers the most comprehensive explanation of the pesukim. He begins with the same approach as Nachmanides. But he explains that Yaakov had a specific theory that explained Leyah's complicity in Lavan's deception. Yaakov observed that his marriage to Leyah was not followed by her conceiving. He suspected that Leyah was barren. This would account for her cooperation with Lavan. She was afraid that her barren condition might be discovered. She was desperate to marry before this occurred. Therefore, she followed Lavan's directions and deceived Yaakov. Of course, this was not the case. Leyah did not marry Yaakov in order to capture a husband. She recognized Yaakov's unique righteousness. Hashem responded to Leyah's predicament. She had been misjudged. He granted Leyah a son. This proved that she had not been barren. Yaakov's suspicions were disproved. The cause for his negative feelings was removed.[4]

### Rachel and Leyah's Bargain over the Mandrakes

*And Reuven went out in the time of the harvest of the wheat, and he found mandrakes in the field, and he brought them to his mother, Leyah. And Rachel said to Leyah, "Please give me from the mandrakes of your son." And she said to her, "Is it not enough that you have taken my husband. And you want to take also the mandrakes of my son?" And Rachel said, "If so, let him sleep with you tonight in exchange for the mandrakes of your son." (Beresheit 30:14-15)*

In these pesukim, Rachel and Leyah argue over the mandrakes collected by Leyah's son, Reuven. Ultimately, Rachel agrees to exchange her night with Yaakov for the flowers. On the superficial level, this episode depicts Rachel and Leyah as petty individuals. Rachel is willing to exchange the companionship of her husband for a few flowers. However, through more fully understanding this incident, we can appreciate that it actually reflects the piety of Rachel and

Leyah. The Torah acknowledges their righteousness in the next few pesukim. Both Rachel and Leyah were rewarded with children.

Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno explains that the exchange between Rachel and Leyah was not over a few flowers. These flowers had a very important significance to Rachel and Leyah. It was widely believed that mandrakes could be used as a fertility drug. Both Rachel and Leyah were determined to serve as mothers of the Tribes of Israel. Each saw, in these flowers, an opportunity to further this aim.[5] Rachel was willing to temporarily give up the companionship of the husband she loved in order to ultimately achieve fertility. Hashem rewarded the endeavors of Rachel and Leyah through granting them the children for which they yearned.

### Yaakov and Lavan's Dispute Over a Shephard's Responsibilities

*I never brought you an animal that had been attacked. I took the blame myself. You made me responsible whether it was stolen in the day or by night. (Berseheit 31:39)*

At the end of the parasha, Yaakov confronts Lavan over his dishonesty. He contrasts Lavan's ethics with his own. Yaakov served Lavan as a faithful shepherd. He fulfilled his duties diligently. In contrast, Lavan arbitrarily changed Yaakov's compensation. He also held Yaakov responsible for all losses to his flocks. This included losses that were beyond the control and responsibility of a shepherd.

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam explains that Lavan demanded that Yaakov repay him for animals attacked and killed by wild beasts. This is not a reasonable responsibility. A shepherd can justly be held responsible for protecting his employer's flock from smaller animals. However, the shepherd cannot be expected to drive off the marauding attackers or large beasts. Lavan did not distinguish between losses that were preventable and those that were not preventable by his shepherd. He demanded that Yaakov assume responsibility for all losses to his flocks. Also, the shepherd should be held accountable for an animal stolen during the day. However, he cannot reasonably be expected to prevent theft during the night. It is impossible for the shepherd to guard his employer's flocks every moment. Nonetheless, Lavan demanded that Yaakov make restitution for animals stolen at any time, day or night.[6]

Yaakov clearly maintained that Lavan had required an inappropriate level of accountability from his shepherd. How did Yaakov determine the appropriate standard for a shepherd's liability? True, the Torah deals with this issue and establishes clear rules for the conduct and responsibility of the shepherd. But the Torah had not yet been revealed. Furthermore, even if Yaakov was aware of the Torah standards, through prophecy, this would not bind Lavan.

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam deals with this issue. He explains that the standards for a shepherd's responsibilities pre-existed the Torah. These standards were generally accepted even before they were delineated by the Torah. Yaakov referred to these conventional standards in critiquing Lavan's ethics. The Torah did not create these standards. Instead, the Torah provided strict legal definition and codification of the existing standards.

Rabbaynu Avraham explains that this is not the only instance in which the Torah codified an existing practice or custom. The practice of yibum also predates the Torah. This practice applies to a married woman, whose husband died without male offspring. The prevalent practice was to require the wife to marry the brother of the deceased. Any children, resulting from the new union, would be regarded as offspring of the deceased. This practice preexisted the Torah and was incorporated into the Torah as a mitzvah.[7] This thesis explains another incident in the Torah. Yehudah's oldest son married Tamar. He died, without children. Yehudah arranged for Onan, his next to eldest son, to marry Tamar. This is was yibum.[8] According to Rabbaynu Avraham it is not necessary to assume that Yehudah was aware of the Torah requirement. Instead, he was following the practice that already existed. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Yosef ibn Kaspi, Mishne Kesef, Part 2, Parshat VaYaetzai.

[2] Sefer Devarim 21:16-17.

[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban/Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 29:30.

[4] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 29:31.

[5] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 30:14.

[6] Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 31:39.

[7] Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 31:39.

[8] Sefer Beresheit 38:6-8.



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# Seeing is Believing

## What's Missing in Chumash Class: A Lesson Plan Submission to Teachers

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

I recently enjoyed the company of my friends whom I had not seen in a while. We caught up, and before sitting down to dinner at their home, two of their sons had questions concerning medrashim (allegories) learned at their yeshiva. Their children, Zach and Jonah didn't understand them, and rightfully so, as they were incorrectly taught these allegories, as "historical fact". Before I address those specific allegories, I wish to repeat the teachings of our two great leaders: King Solomon, and Maimonides' son Abraham. Throughout, I will write in a style that both student and teacher will read with greater ease.

Maimonides' son Abraham wrote an important introduction to Ein Yaakov, a collection of the stories of the Talmud. Abraham wrote that we are not to understand these stories as having taken place in reality. They are to be understood as metaphors.

King Solomon wrote a book, commonly known as "Proverbs". But the correct translation of the Hebrew title "Mishley" is "Metaphors". The book's title alone is sufficient to the average mind to indicate that the book's contents are not to be taken literally. That is the meaning of "Mishley". But King Solomon writes again in the very beginning, the purpose of his work 1:6: "To understand metaphor and poetic expression; the words of the wise [the Rabbis], and their subtle sayings". The king made it clear: his book is not literal. He also taught that the Rabbis spoke in these following styles: 1) metaphor, 2) poetic expression, and 3) subtle sayings. The king was not the first to use various modes of speech; the Rabbis too employed them as a means of prodding the minds of Torah students. When the mind must work – using analysis, deduction and induction – it strengthens, similar to a muscle. King Solomon teaches in 1:4 that such a book will "give acumen to the simpleminded, and give

knowledge and analytical skills to the youth".

These three categories the king cites, 1) metaphor, 2) poetic expression, and 3) subtle sayings, comprise the Rabbis' abundant use of riddles, exaggeration, and cryptic lessons. The king himself starts his metaphors immediately (1:8,9):

(8) "Hear my son the moral instruction of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother."

(9) "For they are an adornment of grace for your head (a crown), and chain ornaments for your neck (a necklace)."

Now, Zach and Jonah, your parents said they would read this to you on Shabbos. So before reading further, think about how verse 8 above can possibly create a crown and a necklace. Is that possible, that when you learn from your parents, all of a sudden, a crown suddenly appears on your head, and a necklace appears out of nowhere on your neck? Your parents teach you all the time...has this ever happened? Of course not. So what does this really mean?

You see, this very test of seeing if crowns and necklaces appear when you study, is what God wants us to use to figure out whether we are to understand Torah ideas as real facts, or a "story" that didn't really happen, but was written so we learn something deeper. Like we said, when we are forced to think, our mind grows stronger. So I am so glad that your parents have trained you to think, and not accept what you are taught, if it doesn't make sense. Maimonides and all of our great Rabbis also teach that we must not accept what doesn't make sense. Unfortunately, many teachers today were not taught this, but they were taught to accept everything as real fact. That is why this test is very good. No one can say King Solomon means something literal with two these verses.



But I want you to focus on what I am saying right now, about this test...

You don't see any crown or your head now, do you? Your parents are reading this to you, and there's also no necklace on your neck! You see, God gave each person "senses". A sense, is a part of the human body that tells us what is happening in the world. For example, God gave us eyes, because He wants us to accept that what we see, is really there. God does not want us to be fooled. He wants us all to know what is true. So when we see a red apple, we know it is red, and not green. When we feel water is cold, this is because what we see is really water; and what we feel, is really cold. God is not fooling us, and God does not want us to fool ourselves.

God wants each of us to select what is true, and reject what is false, by using our senses.

God gave only man a mind. Animals, plants and rocks cannot write poems, figure out math problems, or make new scientific discoveries. This is because these things don't have minds. God wants only man to have a mind, for the very reason that we use it in all areas. If we don't use our minds, then we go against God's wish. It is a sin, as the Torah teaches, "from a false matter, stay away". (Exod. 23:7)

But some people, even Jewish teachers, fail to use their minds, and they simply believe whatever they were taught, since they were

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## Education

afraid to argue with their Rebbes and teachers. Then, they teach these false ideas to their students. But that is wrong. A Rabbi once said, "Had Joshua bin-Nun said it, I would not hear it". (Tal. Chullin, 124a) That means that he was not afraid to argue with Joshua, even though Joshua was a great leader. And Moses' brother Aaron disagreed with Moses. (Lev. 10:19,20) And Moses said he made a mistake, and Aaron was right for disagreeing. This teaches that we don't accept whatever anyone says – even Joshua. But we must think for ourselves. And as we just learned, we must think if something makes sense, even in Torah study. Just as Moses made a mistake, certainly Rebbes today make mistakes. But many times a teacher or a Rebbe is afraid to say, "I don't know", or "I was wrong". This is a sin, since they are not "staying away from something false".

So to review, the lessons so far are:

- 1) Use your mind in all areas.
- 2) Stay away from anything false.
- 3) Do not accept something if it makes no sense to you.
- 4) Do not be afraid to argue with anyone, because everyone makes mistakes, even Moses.
- 5) If something you learn goes against what you really see happening in the world, then what you learned is false.

Now, let's see if we can understand King Solomon. He said that your parents' teachings will create a crown and a necklace. Now, since by watching your head and your neck as you learn right now, no crown or necklace appears...there must be a deeper idea. This is where you must think. What are the clues King Solomon gives you? Well, he says Torah study will create two things, but he also says "where" they will be: on your head and neck. We know that a crown and a necklace are things that make us look important. But the king says that what will be important, has something to do with your head, and your neck. What do a head and a neck represent? You see, the king is using "head" and "neck" as a "mashal" – a metaphor. A metaphor is where one thing really means another. Like I told you Wednesday night, "I was so hungry, I could eat a horse". We said that this means I could eat a lot, like something the large size of a horse. So the horse's "size" was what I was using to express that I could eat "a lot".

The head and the neck do certain things. The head is where we think, and the neck is from

where we create our voices. King Solomon's deeper lesson here, is that when your parents teach you Torah, they make your thinking more important, and also your speech, which is what you use to tell others true Torah ideas.

Now we understand the true meaning of the king's lesson. When we learn Torah from our parents, it's "like" getting a crown on our head, and a necklace on our neck. This is a metaphor that really means our thinking (head) and our speech (neck) have become more important, and have improved. The lesson is that Torah improves our thinking and our speech, making both more important, as if they both deserve to be adorned.

At Mount Sinai too, the Torah says the Jews received two "crowns", but really the word is adornment (edyo). Where could the crowns have come from? The answer is that they really didn't receive any metal crowns. But this means that since they accepted the Torah by saying "We will do, and we will listen", these two statements were their promises to "act" (do) and to "learn" (listen) to what the Torah says. And way of saying that what they said was a good thing, is by the Torah saying that they "received crowns". It is a metaphor.

So we must compare what we see in reality, to what we learn. This way, we know whether an idea is really true, or if we must search for a deeper idea. Now let's discuss your two questions.

### To Zach

You asked why Jacob was crying when he met Rachel at the well. Your question is not about a metaphor, since the Torah's words from Bereishis through Devarim are about real events – things that really happened. Only very few places in the Torah talk about metaphors, like the crowns, and also, when the Egyptians said the makkos (plagues) were "the finger of God." Since God is not a man, He cannot have fingers. So that really means something else. But Jacob can cry, so we understand this story as real. So why was he crying?

The Torah gives us many clues. In Genesis 28:2, Isaac commands Jacob to marry from Lavan's daughters, "the brother of his mother" Rivka. Soon thereafter (29:10) the Torah describes Rachel as the daughter of "the brother of his mother". That verse repeats "the brother of his mother" three times! God uses repetition to draw our attention to an important part of the story. The significance is that Jacob saw that God helped him keep his

father's command. Jacob immediately found a daughter of Lavan, "the brother of his mother" as soon as he reached his destination. God was helping him, so Jacob cried from happiness. A tzaddik like Jacob is happiest when God helps him. And something that makes us very happy, sometimes brings a tear to our eyes. This also explains why the first thing Jacob told Rachel, was that he was related to Rachel. Jacob felt Rachel would understand the importance of the two of them becoming husband and wife, since they shared the same love of Torah. So you see, we can find clues to answer questions if we study the verses, the pasukim. That is how God wrote His Torah, with hints everywhere.

### To Jonah

You asked about Jacob while he was still in his mother's stomach. The medrash says when Rivka passed the place of Torah of Shame and Ever, Jacob wanted to get out. And when she passed a place of idol worship, Esav wanted to get out. You asked why Jacob wanted to get out, if he was learning Torah with an angel, while he was inside his mother. Let's first understand that.

You must know that an angel, or malach, is not something only on Earth. Whenever the Torah talks about a malach, it is talking about something that performs God's will, or does God's activities. The word malach, is the same word as "malacha", which means activity, or work. By describing something that happens through a malach, the Torah teaches that the story is what God wants to happen.

That's why Sodom and Amora were destroyed, through a "malach". The malach in that story was the power in heaven that controls fire. Like King David says, "God makes His messengers the wind; His servants blazing fire". (Tehillim, 104:4) This means that God created all the laws of nature, and many times He uses them to do something He wants. When God uses nature to perform His will, the natural law now becomes a "malach", since it does His "work".

But there two parts to a malach: 1) the results that happen on earth that we see; and 2) the part in heaven that God talks to. It's like a puppet. The puppet doesn't do anything, unless the man holding the strings moves it. So the man holding the strings is the part of the malach in heaven, and the puppet is the part of the malach on the earth. When God tells the malach in heaven to do something, he listens, and then tells the fire to destroy Sodom and Amora on Earth.

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To teach Torah, you must not blindly accept what you were taught. You must use your thinking and your accurate perception of reality to determine what is fact, and what is metaphor. Certainly, we must follow Moses and King Solomon, whose words came from God. King Solomon taught that metaphor is how he, and the Rabbis spoke. Moses taught we must trust only our senses and our reason.

Now, the medrash that "every baby learns Torah with inside the mother" must be explained. We must look at reality to tell us if this can be so. And it cannot: a baby is too young to learn when it was just born. So it cannot be learning in the mother's stomach even earlier! This must mean something else. This medrash means that the "ability" to learn Torah starts even while we are still inside our mother. God gives every baby inside its mother, the ability to learn once it leaves. But the ability starts inside the mother, and we can describe this as a malach. We must be told this, because some people are lazy and don't want to learn, and make the excuse "I am not able to learn". This medrash teaches that "every" person is able to learn. It doesn't depend on what happens "after" we leave the mother. So babies really aren't learning with a malach inside our mother's stomach. This is a metaphor.

Another metaphor is that Jacob wanted to get out when his mother passed a Yeshiva. Reality tells us that a baby's eyes are closed while inside his mother, and also, that even if they were open, a baby cannot see or know what is outside. His mother's stomach is closed, and it is dark. So Jacob didn't know where his mother was. This medrash means that Jacob had "feelings" that would help him learn, already inside his mother... "as if" he wanted to get out to learn Torah.

Remember, just like a crown doesn't appear on our heads when we learn, a malach is not inside our mother's stomach.

Teachers and Parents: If you follow these rules, and agree with what your senses tell you is written, that our Rabbis and Prophets speak in riddles, metaphors and allegories, you will then begin to find the real meaning of their deep medrashim.

However, if you accept such stories and medrashim as literal, and teach them as fact...you damage yourself and your students. Unlike Moses, who asked the Jews to accept only their senses, "you saw no form, only a voice" (Deut. 4:12) you will reject Moses and make students accept what is impossible and never witnessed, causing them to sin against God by denying the senses God gave them.

Urging students to accept unreasonable matters, you steer them closer to the Christian approach. For they will respond to you, "Rebbe, you taught us that impossible things can happen, that babies know what's outside and want to leave their mothers' stomachs, so I too believe that Jesus is a miracle, and he is right". You will have no response, since you rely on belief, instead of reason. Their sins, will be your fault.

I understand far too well that many teachers were taught midrashim as literally true. But you cannot rely on ignorance to atone you when you answer to God for misleading your students. To teach Torah, you must not blindly accept what you were taught. You must use your thinking and your accurate perception of reality to determine what is fact, and what is metaphor. Certainly, we must follow Moses and King Solomon, whose words came from God. King Solomon taught that metaphor is how he, and the Rabbis spoke. Moses taught we must trust only our senses and our reason.

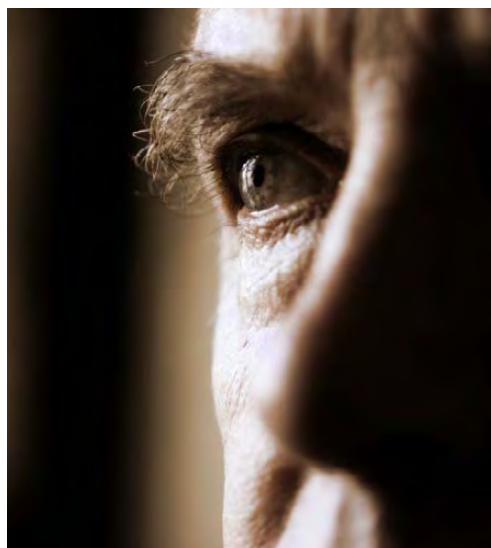
I suggest to teachers and Rebbes that you include these vital lessons in your Chumash classes. ■





# Know Thyself

Rabbi Yoni Sacks



This failure on the part of education to isolate a natural "thought ability" underlying the act of the identifying and solving problems of particular subject areas is bizarre.

Is not all of modern science founded on the notion that all things have natural principles, open to our research?

Read Rabbi Sacks online:  
[rambamssystem.blogspot.com](http://rambamssystem.blogspot.com)

In private communication with David Guttman, as well as in comments on David Guttman's blog to R. Micha, I made reference to the fact that proper understanding of the model of the soul presented in Shemone Perakim, is extremely useful in understanding the Mesorah of Rambam as presented in the MT. I have been thinking about this statement of mine about the soul a lot lately. How do I illustrate what I mean, without resorting to meaningless terminology, or as my dear student RJM puts it so eloquently, heavy jargon?

## Ignorance of Self

The answer lies, as it so often does, in allowing Rambam to speak for himself, without getting in the way. In Shemone Perakim, Rambam presents the issue of developing proper Middot in the soul by means of an important analogy, one which deserves our undivided attention.

ואתה יודע, שתיקון המידות הוא ריפוי הנפש וכוחותיה. וכמו שהרופא, אשר ירפא הגופים, צריך שידע תחילה את הגוף אשר ירפאהו בכלל וחלקיו - מה הם, רצוני לומר: גוף האדם, וצריך שידע אילו דברים יחלוהו וישמר מהם, ואילו דברים יבריאנהו ויכוון אליהם, כן רופא הנפש הרוצה לתקן מידות האדם, צריך שידע הנפש בכללה וחלקיה, ומה יחלה אותה ומה יבריאנה

Clearly, Rambam is instructing us to relect upon our educational relationship to himself as a Baal Ha-mesorah, as somehow being like that of the therapeutic relationship of a doctor to a patient. In so instructing us, Rambam is clearly not interested in some feel - good, pretty words. There would be no need for an elaborate technical description of the soul to achieve a feel good experience. Rather, Rambam seems intent on fostering a certain insight about the Mesorah we otherwise would overlook. But what is this insight?

The answer is clear in the Rambam, yet somehow mystifying to us. By virtue of telling us that the Doctor of the Soul must come to learn the nature of the soul, it is clear that most of us, do not have knowledge of our souls. This simple fact, that we need instruction by an expert to identify our souls, implies that we do not know how to identify our very selves. It is the removal of core ignorance, the inability to identify ourselves, that consti-

tutes the education of Torah and Mitzvot. In a sense, to learn torah then is to recognize and identify ourselves.

This notion, that we do not know ourselves, is also implicit in the dictum of the great philosophers of Greece. What could "know thyself" mean, if not that we are currently ignorant of what and who we are? Clearly, wise men generally, and Rambam in particular, intend to awaken a reader who needs to first and foremost be informed that he, in fact, does not know his own soul, that he is unaware of his very identity as a man.

But is this not preposterous, to say that we do not know who and what we are? Not if we consider the reality of education, Jewish and Non-Jewish as we experience it today. In fact, ignorance of soul is the elephant in the room that permeates all education. We all know that educators limit themselves to politely solving problems proper to the popular fields of study -the various "subjects." For them the crowning glory of man is the ability to solve official problems about things other than ourselves. No wonder then that focus of modern education lies exclusively in the issue of the manner to in which to present, or perhaps sequence, the problems of the various subject matters external to us. Thought is always limited to solving problems about external objects; rather than reflection upon the soul as a phenomenon in it's own right. When was the last time we saw the identification of the soul, its whole and parts, as an important issue in school? Such talk would be a disaster, it would waste so much time, we would never cover the subject matter of general and Torah subjects. We are totally preoccupied with the results of soul -problem solving- never on soul itself. No wonder we never stop to consider the best way to understand mizvot as means by which the soul can be given tikkun through the therapy of a Doctor.

This failure on the part of education to isolate a natural "thought ability" underlying the act of the identifying and solving problems of particular subject areas is bizarre. Is not all of modern science founded on the notion that all things have natural principles, open to our research?

Why should man, body and soul, be exempt? How does this ignorance of our very selves arise? ■

# CHOOSING A BURIAL PLOT

Moshe Abarbanel

*Avaraham and Sarah reestablished the concepts of Monotheism that Adam lived by. So it was fit to link their permanent resting place with Adam, thereby linking the first Monotheist with the reestablishers of Monotheism.*

How does one choose his last resting place? Should it be a quiet place? A place with a view? Near family? Last week when Sarah died Avaraham found himself with this exact problem. Some people make plans for interment years in advance. It seems that Avaraham did not. Did he just accidentally choose to bury Sarah in Hebron? Did he like the location? We are given many details in the parsha that may hint to what Avaraham was doing. First he goes specifically to the Beni Chait and humbly requests "achuat kevar" a possession of a burying place. He also

beseeches the elders to intercede on his behalf to speak with Ephron the son of Zohar "that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has" (Genesis 23:9). Avaraham has the presence of mind in middle of his grief to request a specific location to establish burial plot for Sarah and ultimately himself and the other Avos and Emaos. If this is so what was so special about this location?

Rashi may give us a hint in Genesis 23:2. He is bothered by Torah name for city Hebron, Kirath-Arba. "And Sarah died in Kirath-Arba the name is Hebron". Rashi gives two explanations on the name Kiraiath-Arba, literally the city of four. Rashi states in his second explanation is "because of the four pairs that were buried there, man and wife; Adam and Eve, Avraham and Sarah, Issac and Rebekah and Jacob and Leah." Why did Avaraham want to establish burial monument linked to Adam the first man? He seems to know according to Rashi that Adam and Eve were buried there and Avaraham specifically wants to bury Sarah with them. What is the connection?

I believe that Avaraham knew that just as in life he and Sarah represented to people the true ideas of Monotheism that their resting place had to accomplish the same. But even more, he desired to link their discovery of One True God to first man because Adam HaReshon was the first Monotheist. Created by God directly Adam knew his maker and understood that there were no other deities besides HaShem. He tried to fulfill God's Will (even though he originally failed). Over the next twenty generation between Adam and Avaraham people forgot the one true God. Avaraham and Sarah reestablished the concepts of Monotheism that Adam lived by. So it was fit to link their permanent resting place with Adam thereby linking the first Monotheist with reestablishers of Monotheism.

Rambam [1] says all altars were erected at the site of "Adam's creation": the altars of David, Noah, Abraham, etc. Why? This is so that all subsequent generations should recognize monotheism, i.e., God. Knowing that we are "created" and created by HIM, is emphasized by linking all sacrifice to the location of Adam's "creation", that location being exclusively identified with man's creation, and thus, the Creator. ■

[1] Hilchos Bais Habechira chap 2; halachos 1 and 2.





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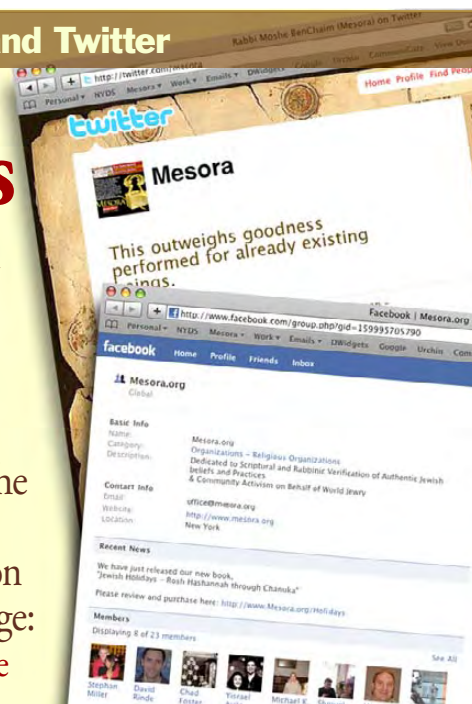
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