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## IN THIS ISSUE

PARSHA: VAYETZE	1-3
PARSHA: HUGE STONE	1,4
LETTERS: MISHLEY	1,5,6
PARSHA: GOD'S COUNSEL	6
MAIMONIDES ON MISHLEY	7

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Houston	5:09	Phoenix	5:10
Jerusalem	4:23	Pittsburgh	4:48
Johannesburg	6:13	Seattle	4:19
Los Angeles	4:33	Sydney	7:13
London	3:58	Tokyo	4:19
Miami	5:15	Toronto	4:39
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## Weekly Parsha

# Vayetze

RABBI BERNIE FOX

## Yaakov's Promise to Create a House of Hashem

And he had a dream. There was a ladder set on the earth and its top reached the heavens. The angels of

(continued on next page)

## Weekly Parsha

## Confidence, Chachma & a Huge Stone

RABBI DR. DARRELL GINSBERG

When we speak of tzadikim and talmidei chachamim (wise men), we discuss their tremendous brilliance, deep insights, incredible middos and other positive characteristics. In general, we don't speak of their physical prowess, usually due to the fact that it is neither relevant nor applicable. One would think this would apply as well to the avos (patriarchs), the model for the tzadik. Yet in the description of Yaakov Avinu in this week's parsha, the Torah seems to focus on his physical strength, exhibited in his feat of moving the rock nobody else could budge from the top of the well.

The Torah begins the story of the well as follows (Bereishis 29:2-3):

"He looked and [saw] a well in the field; and behold there were three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for from

(continued on page 4)

## Writings



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**Naomi:** Why did King Solomon write everything in Proverb form? Was it not true that during that time the Temple existed and there were many great Rabbis and thinkers who could have better put his thoughts into a holy book, in a way other than a proverbial format?

(continued on page 5)

(Vayetze cont. from pg. 1)

## Weekly Parsha

## JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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*G-d ascended and descended upon it. Hashem stood by it. He said: I am Hashem, the G-d of Avraham your father and the G-d of Yitzchak. The land that you lay upon I will give to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will be as the dust of the earth and they will spread out to the west, east, north, and south. All of the families of the land will be blessed through you and your descendants. (Beresheit 28:12-14)*

**Yaakov's vision of angels**

At the end of Parshat Toldot, Yaakov left his father's home to travel to Charan. His objective in embarking on this journey was twofold. First, he was obeying the directions of his mother Rivka. She directed Yaakov to leave in order to escape the wrath of his brother Esav. Second, he was following his father's instructions to find a wife in Charan. Parshat VaYetze continues the account of Yaakov's life. It begins with a description of his journey and continues with an account of his life in Charan. The Torah tells us that in Charan he entered into a relationship with his uncle Lavan. He worked for Lavan, caring for his flocks. Through his labors, he acquired the right to marry Lavan's two daughters – Leyah and Rachel. All of Yaakov's children – except Binyamin – are born during his sojourn in Charan. The parasha ends with Yaakov's departure from Charan and his return journey to his father's home in Cana'an.

The Torah explains that on the first night of his journey to Charan, Yaakov arrived at Bet El. There he had a dream. In the dream, he observed a ladder extending to the heavens. Angels of Hashem were ascending the ladder towards the heavens and then descending from the heavens to earth. At the ladder, stood Hashem.[1] Rashi, quoting from Midrash Rabah, offers a well-known explanation of the dream imagery. The interpretation is based upon a seemingly odd element of the vision. Yaakov observes that the angels are ascending and then angels descend. Angels reside in the heavens, descend to earth in order to perform their missions, and then return to the heavens. Therefore, it would be expected for Yaakov to see the angels descend and then ascend. But he observed the angels first in ascents and then in descent. The Midrash explains that this nuanced presentation in the vision was intended to communicate a message. The angels that had accompanied Yaakov from his home to this point would

now leave him. These angels would not proceed beyond the borders of the Land of Israel. In their stead descended a new set of angels. These angels would accompany Yaakov on the balance of his journey.[2]

Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin – Netziv – explains the meaning of the midrash. The angels represent Hashem's providential relationship with Yaakov. They are His agents in the exercise of this relationship and perform the tasks required to execute His will.[3] Therefore, the message of the midrash is that although Hashem's providence has no limit or boundary, there is some difference between the nature of this providence as exercised in the Land of Israel and as exercised outside of the Holy Land. Therefore, as Yaakov came to the boundary of the Land of Israel, the angels, who had to this point accompanied him, departed. The unique providence that exists in the Land of Israel

now ended. It would be replaced by descending angels. These new companions represented the more universal providence expressed outside of the Land of Israel.[4]

According to this interpretation, the image in the dream and the message related by Hashem are in correspondence. The image communicated the constancy of the providence that Yaakov would experience. Hashem's assurance to Yaakov was an elaboration of this message. Hashem would protect Yaakov and return him to the Land. His descendants would take possession of the Land and become a great nation.

**Hashem's assurance that He will not abandon Yaakov**

*I will be with you and I will guard you in all your endeavors. I will return you to this land for I will not abandon you until I have done all that I have spoken to you. (Beresheit 28:15)*

Hashem continues His assurance. He explains that His providence will continue to protect Yaakov as he travels outside of the Land of Israel. He will return Yaakov to the Land of Israel. He will not abandon His servant.

For obvious reasons, this passage troubles the commentaries. The passage ends with Hashem's assurance that He will not abandon Yaakov until I have done all that I have spoken to you. The implication of this statement is that once Yaakov has been restored to the Land and Hashem has

(continued on next page)



executed His plan for Yaakov, He will abandon him!

Many of the commentaries respond that this problem is easily resolved through a more careful translation or interpretation of the passage. Hashem is not saying that He will abandon Yaakov in the future. He is saying that even in this interim period – before Yaakov and his descendants have achieved their mission – Hashem will nurture, guide, and protect Yaakov and his descendants. The passage is more accurately translated: I will not abandon you even until I have done all that I have spoken to you.[5]

Rashbam and others reject this interpretation and accept the more conventional interpretation. Hashem is assuring Yaakov that He will protect him until He returns him to the Land. Of course, according to this interpretation, the intention of the passage is not to suggest that at his return Yaakov will be abandoned. Instead, the message is that during this particularly dangerous and trying period, Yaakov will be protected. Yaakov will be shielded by Hashem's providence throughout his sojourn and be restored to the Land of Israel. Rashbam further explains that message was intended to assure Yaakov that although a journey to a distant land and resettlement in that land are dangerous, difficult processes, he will be protected by Hashem's continued providence.[6]

### Yaakov's selection of the stone for his House of Hashem and its altar

*Yaakov arose in the morning and he took the stone that he had placed at his head and placed it as a monument. He poured with oil on its top. He called the name of the place Bet El, albeit that Luz was the initial name of the place. He made a vow saying: If G-d will be with me and guard me on this road upon which I travel, give me bread to eat and clothing to wear; return me to the house of my father and be for me as G-d, then this stone that I have placed as a monument will be the House of G-d and all that You will give me I will tithe to You. (Beresheit 2:18-22)*

Yaakov arises in the morning. He takes the stone he had placed at his head the previous evening and erects it as a monument. He pours oil upon it. Then, Yaakov makes a number of commitments. He vows that with the fulfillment of the assurances he has received from Hashem, he will establish this monumental stone as a House of Hashem and he will tithe all that Hashem gives him. The passages immediately present a problem. Yaakov arises and pours oil upon the stone at his head. The precise purpose of this action is debated, but is basic objective is clear. He has selected this stone to be the center of the House of Hashem he has vowed to establish. However, he takes no further step at this

point. He does not create an altar. Only upon his return to this place many years later does Yaakov complete his project. He then creates an altar at this site. The impression created by this two-stage process is that Yaakov is making a bargain with Hashem. He is vowing that if he is protected and returns safely, then he will complete the process. In other words, with Hashem's completion of his portion of the bargain, Yaakov will perform his part of the bargain. This seems to be a remarkably inappropriate behavior.

Rashbam makes a seemingly minor and somewhat cryptic comment regarding Yaakov's actions. He explains that Yaakov anointed the stone to serve as an altar for sacrifices he would offer upon his return. Apparently, Rashbam is attempting to clarify some issue that is not self-evident from the passage. Most probably, Rashbam is responding to the comments of Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra. Ibn Ezra suggests that Yaakov poured oil on the stone so that he would be able to identify it upon his return.[7] Rashbam objects that Yaakov did not pour oil on the rock in order to more readily identify it in the future. Instead, he poured the oil on the rock in order to anoint or appoint it at this point in time.[8] This difference in interpretation reflects a more major difference of opinion. According to Ibn Ezra, Yaakov did not take any step at this time to create a House of Hashem or an altar. He merely selected a stone that in the future would be central to a House of Hashem and its altar. According to Rashbam, by pouring oil upon it, Yaakov – at this moment – appointed the stone as the center of the future House of Hashem and its altar. This means that Yaakov was not making a bargain with Hashem. He began a process now that could only be completed upon his return. But the process was initiated at this time for certain completion in the future. Yaakov's intention in his vow was to declare that when Hashem has returned him to the Land, he will complete the process he has now begun.[9]

Of course, this leaves one question. Why could Yaakov only complete his project with his return? Rashbam does not comment on this issue. However, some indication of the solution to this problem is suggested by Yaakov's selection of the stone as the centerpiece of his House of Hashem and its altar. The stone was at Yaakov's head during his vision and prophecy. Apparently, he associated the stone with the promise of providential protection communicated by the prophecy. The stone became a monument to this assurance of providence. His safe return would be testimony to Hashem's ongoing providence over His righteous servant and His nation. Yaakov's vow was essentially a pledge to use his life and experience of providence as a lesson to humanity. He would establish a House of Hashem that would testify to

Hashem's interaction and divine influence over the lives of His servants. Such testimony would only become possible with the fulfillment of the assurances Hashem had provided to Yaakov. ■

[1] The commentaries disagree on the intent of the phrase in the passage that describes Hashem's position. Rabbaynu Bachya suggests that the simple meaning of the passage is that Hashem stood by the ladder. The alternative explanation, to which Rashi alludes, is that Hashem stood by Yaakov in order to guard him from harm. Rabbaynu Bachya regards this second explanation as homiletic and not reflective of the literal meaning of the phrase.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 28:12

[3] Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (Netziv), Commentary Hamek Davar on Sefer Beresheit 28:12.

[4] The difference between the providence exercised in the Land of Israel compared with providence outside of the Land of Israel is not evident from this midrash. In fact, the midrash seems mysteriously ambiguous. It suggests that there is a unique providence in the Land of Israel. Yet, both the providence in the Land and outside of it is expressed in the imagery of the dream as the work of a troupe of angels. In other words, the midrash suggests a difference in the two expressions of providence, but it carefully conceals the nature of the difference.

Perhaps, the message of the midrash is not that providence is expressed more intensely in the Land of Israel than outside of its borders – although, this idea is expressed in other passages. Instead, the midrash intends to communicate that the Land of Israel has a unique role and function that is not shared with the rest of the world. The Land of Israel was selected by Hashem as the Land of His people and as the site of His Temple. It is the earthly “capital” for His worship. This unique role assigned to the Holy Land demands that it receive special providential treatment.

[5] Rabbaynu Yosef Bechor Shur, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 28:15.

[6] Rabbaynu Shemuel ben Meir (Rashbam) Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 28:15.

[7] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 28:18.

[8] Rabbaynu Shemuel ben Meir (Rashbam) Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 28:18.

[9] In the above translation of the passages, Yaakov vows to tithe to Hashem all that He gives to him. Rashbam objects to this translation of the passage. He explains that Yaakov was not vowing to tithe in the traditional sense. He was not pledging to donate one-tenth of his income to some person or institution representing Hashem. Instead, he was pledging to offer sacrifices.

that well the flocks were watered. There was a large stone over the mouth of the well. When all the flocks were gathered, [the shepherds] would roll the stone from the well's mouth, and water the sheep. They would [then] return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well."

The story continues with Yaakov inquiring as to Lavan and his whereabouts. As his conversation continues, Rochel enters with Lavan's sheep, approaching the well. The Torah (ibid 10) then tells us the famous fate of the stone covering the well:

*"When Yaakov saw Rochel, the daughter of Lavan, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Lavan, his mother's brother, he stepped near and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well. He then watered the sheep of Lavan, his mother's brother."*

This story contains a tremendous amount of detail and occupies a sizable amount of real estate in the Torah, something that troubled the Ramban. He writes (ibid 2-3) that the Torah expands on this story to let us know that "those who wait for God have renewed strength (Yeshayahu 40:31) and those who fear Him are given courage." How so? The Ramban explains that when Yaakov came to the well, he was tired from his travels and yet he removed the stone by himself. On the other hand, the shepherds with the three flocks of sheep were unable to move the stone at all.

The Ramban, taken at face value, is quite troubling. Many commentators agree that Yaakov was someone who was naturally strong, accounting for his ability to move the stone (see Rashi and Rashbam, among others). Moving the rock, therefore, would seem to be no great achievement by Yaakov. If one would assume he was not a particularly strong person, then what was his expectation when he came upon this rock? Taking the Ramban literally, one would have to assume that there was some type of Divine intervention that allowed him to move this stone. Did Yaakov know this to be true prior to his actions? Did Yaakov have the right to assume God would step in at that moment and aid him? This seems to be a very difficult approach to take. What, then, is the Ramban teaching us?

The logical approach here would be that Yaakov indeed was naturally strong, and that he was someone who had the means to move the stone. The Ramban, though, is alluding to a deeper idea. Yaakov enters into the situation of the well in a very difficult state. While he had previously received the famous prophecy at

Beit-El, he was still on the run, alone, and penniless. This is the "tired" being referred to by the Ramban. Yet, with all that, we know that he was always being guided by the truth, his conviction and security placed in God. This state of mind allows for a certain sense of confidence in the individual, confidence that goes a long way in decision making and actions. It was this attitude that guided Yaakov in this episode. The Ramban, therefore, is contrasting the normal sense

of loss and insecurity a person would have in this type of situation as compared to Yaakov's self-assurance. His confidence, resulting from his conviction in God, aided him in achieving this objective.

One might be able to extend this idea beyond a contrast to the actual manifestation of this confidence in Yaakov's plan. What plan did Yaakov have then? The Torah tells us (ibid 13) that "When Lavan heard the news of Yaakov, his sister's son, he ran to greet him." The Sforno (ibid) points out that the "news" here refers to Yaakov's moving the stone off the well, meaning that Lavan had heard about this event. Why is this significant for us to know? As mentioned above, Yaakov came to Charan without anything or anyone. His objective, as related by his parents, was clear – escape from Esav, find Lavan, and eventually search for a spouse from within Lavan's family. Why not just walk up to Lavan's door and knock, rather than go through all the conversations with the other shepherds and the displacement of the rock? As a result of his wealth, Lavan, as the Malbim (ibid 5) points out, was the most well known man in Charan. Showing up at Lavan's house as a desperate, poor relative would certainly engender sympathy from his host. But Yaakov knew that in the long term, a sudden appearance would work against him. Eventually, the sympathy would fade and Yaakov would be seen as a burden, someone in a constant state of need. For someone whose value system revolved around the acquisition of wealth, power and fame, to relate to someone as being a needy individual would compromise the relationship. Yaakov understood that in order for the plan of his parents to succeed, he needed to take the initiative. He realized that obtaining a reputation, like becoming known for some great feat in the local community, would go a long way to establishing an identity that Lavan would relate to. Based on this approach, it could be Yaakov's



plan developed when he saw this unique situation at the well, where a stone was covering it and was not able to be moved by anyone. By removing the stone, he would achieve instant fame, which he sensed would be appealing to someone of Lavan's position. As mentioned above, the Torah (ibid 10) tells us that "When Yaakov saw Rochel, the daughter of Lavan, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Lavan, his mother's brother, he stepped near and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well". It is interesting that Yaakov looks towards both, Rochel and the sheep of Lavan. The obvious result of moving the rock would be to benefit Rochel. Yet he realized it would also benefit the flocks belonging to Lavan, something Lavan would certainly appreciate. This would then demonstrate the importance of the words of the Sforno. Lavan greeted Yaakov not based on the fact that they were related—instead, it was the fame attributed to Yaakov that ultimately enticed him. Therefore, we see from Yaakov the chachma used in this plan, chachma characterized by a good deal of confidence. This could only emerge from his knowledge of the true ideas of God and his ability to place his security in Him.

Yes, Yaakov was strong, manifesting in his feat of removing the stone from the well. However, our focus should not be on his strength in and of itself. As the Ramban teaches us, Yaakov used his natural ability to overcome many of the insecurities that would emerge in the average person facing a similar situation. His confidence, a result of his convictions, was what allowed him to face the challenges ahead. And as the Sforno explains so eloquently, there indeed was a plan devised by Yaakov and the removal of the stone offered an opportunity to gain favor in the eyes of the wealthy and famous Lavan. While it is certainly true that the Torah recognizes Yaakov's physicality, it is how he used chachma to apply his physical strength that is the essential feature of this story. ■



(Mishley continued from page 1)

## Writings



## MISHLEY

Discernment

Acumen  
Knowledge

(continued from page 1)

**Rabbi:** Naomi, we must first be aware that after Moses, King Solomon was the wisest man. God miraculously granted him great wisdom at the age of 12 when he ascended the throne. His wise decrees struck the nation with awe. His decision to write one of his works in a metaphoric and expressive style deserves our analysis. All thinkers accepted his wisdom, during and after his era, and this acceptance must teach us they agreed with his decision to write in metaphor. ("Proverbs" is actually not an accurate translation if "Mishley", which is the plural of "mashal", a metaphor or parable.)

What is the purpose of Mishley, as opposed to teaching ideas clearly? King Solomon explains why he wrote this work:

*"To know wisdom and morality; to grasp words of understanding. To give acumen to the simple, and to the youth, knowledge and design. That the wise man may hear and increases his learning, and the discerning man may acquire strategies. To understand metaphor and expressions, the words of the wise and their riddles."* (1:2-6)

How does the study of metaphor, expressions and riddles offer us greater wisdom, acumen, knowledge, and strategic thought? Naomi, if we answer this, we answer your questions. What we must do at this point is offer examples from King Solomon's book.

In verses 1:21,22 King Solomon says that wisdom "calls out" to simpletons, "How long will you love foolishness?" Now, we know that wisdom has no audible quality. But the King personifies wisdom as if it calls out. He means to express that wisdom is readily perceived, like a crying voice. Wisdom is not hidden. He then teaches us one of its messages, "How long will you love foolishness?" Foolishness is that which does not comply with how the world operates. This means to say that a person who lives foolishly is confronted by 'repeated' failure, as if he is being "told" by this failure, "How long will you make this same mistake?" "How long" means this fool should have learned a lesson by now. I don't tell a baker "How long will you fail to be careful of the hot oven!" only after burning his hand for the first time. But after three times, such a statement is justified. King Solomon teaches us that God designed the world with laws. Disobeying natural law results in our failure to attain our goals. This repeated failure is the "wisdom calling out". The King's teaching is that man should observe this lesson. So a metaphor of "calling" is used to highlight wisdom's "expressive" nature. "How long..." teaches the obvious nature of laws that we should have accepted already.

*"You tore all my counsel and you did not desire my rebuke".* (1:25)

Here, King Solomon sustains his metaphor, as if wisdom continues talking. Wisdom admonishes the previously warned fool. Here we have not only metaphor, but also an example of one of the numerous "parallel" verses of this great work. The King places two statements in a single verse. On the surface, they sound the same: ignoring advice and not listening to rebuke. But by comparing both halves – what the King truly intends with his parallels – we realize new distinctions.

"Tearing counsel" means that once a person is faced with a practical failure, he does not take advice from his experience. (The "counsel" is the failure.) The second half, "Not desiring rebuke" addresses not the response to failure, but the internal desire of the fool. He is not one who accepts lessons. Instead, he

wishes to maintain a pristine ego, despite failure. A completely different idea. The first half addresses response to failure: the second half, a description of the fool's attitude – his desire. The new lessons are derived only due to the King's alignment of two seemingly similar statements. Doing so, the dim distinctions are brought into stark contrast. Similarly, if I wish to teach children different shades of gray, I will place two different color swatches before them, side-by-side. But if I separate the two color swatches by a large distance, they may not readily see the contrast. Again, if I wish to teach them which leaf has sharper ridges, a side-by-side comparison creates the starkest contrast.

King Solomon does the same. And I would add that my use of these two examples of color and leaves as a metaphor, illustrates how using examples from your own experience allows you to more easily grasp a new concept of comparisons and parallels.

*"Then you will call to me [wisdom] but I will not answer; you will seek me out but you will not find me".* (1:28)

After the fool's failure, he will be devastated and will naturally attempt to improve his fate. Again, both halves appear similar: the fool is seeking help. But we see that in the first half, the fool "calls" and receives no "answer". Here, we are taught that the fool will attempt to engage intelligence or a plan of escape, but he won't receive an answer. As he never cultivated his intellect, he has no relation to strategic thought. He cannot receive any "answer". Intelligent solutions can only be realized by a being with intelligent thought. Then, he will also "seek out" wisdom, as if practical attempts will pay off. But he will not "find" any escape. Since he is devoid of analytical thought, all practical attempts will also fail. He will not find a practical solution to his problems. King Solomon's alignment of these two statements directs us to their distinctions.

## Metaphor

A metaphor includes objects and phenomena familiar to us. This familiarity allows one to engage his or her mind in new areas. Thus, King Solomon calls to mind those phenomena to which we relate. He then uses them to illustrate new ideas. If I attempt to explain guilt to a 9 year old, I might say guilt is like a wall. It holds me back from doing something I want to do. He may then sense this in himself and thereby, understand something new.

(continued on next page)

### Parallels in Verses

The contrasting of two similar objects allows us to perceive additional insights. Subtle distinctions become stark. And through these distinctions, we derive new insights.

### A Magnifying Glass

Mishley might be viewed as a magnifying glass. It brings into focus and greater definition those phenomena. Metaphor, personification of inanimate objects and other illustrations create stark contrasts of every day phenomena, while also highlighting specific observations and their lessons. Through our comparisons of matters that only seem the same, we observe subtle distinctions. As we grow more adept at observing finer distinctions, our minds separate, define and categorize with greater precision. This accuracy offers us greater knowledge. We are thereby trained to detect greater subtleties and distinctions in the future.

Mishley is no different than the Torah, nature and all God's creations. Each one offers us this opportunity. Studying natural design, we observe similarities and differences. We come to understand why certain creatures possess thick hair, while others require light feathers. Why some are large and others, microscopic. And Torah verses include repetitions, contrasts and other clues that force questions, leading us deeper knowledge than what we read on the surface.

All that exists is God's creation. But His wisdom is deep and requires much thought. How can we grow in our knowledge of God? God designed all phenomena to bear His mark of immense wisdom, to prod thought and invoke questions so we might learn more. Mishley is King Solomon's method of teaching morality and wisdom. But through a unique style of contrasting and highlighting, he sharpens our minds. Issues and matters we might know but never compared, are presented in this work. If we take the time to gain from this training of the world's second wisest man, we can approach all other areas with cultivated skills of observation and thought, resulting in greater wisdom and insights.

As the book is large, there are many other methods, rules, truths and lessons to be studied. This article is intended only to offer some reasoning behind a few of these. ■

## THE COUNSEL OF HASHEM ENDURES



Rabbi Reuven Mann

Many people turn to religion for an understandable but selfish reason: they are in search of Divine protection. They believe that if they make the effort and sacrifice necessary to obey the mitzvot they will obtain Hashem's favor and life will be so much better. There definitely is validity to this concept but it doesn't operate in a simplistic manner. Becoming "religious" is not a panacea and does not automatically make all one's problems depart. This can be clearly seen from a careful and honest study of the lives of the patriarchs and matriarchs who are the ultimate role models of the Jewish people. They served G-d with the greatest dedication and courage and yet things did not necessarily always go smoothly for them. To the contrary, they encountered many setbacks and disappointments as well as great frustrations. For example, Rivka and Yitzchak did not have "nachas" from Eisav's wives. In explaining to Yitzchak why it was imperative for Yaakov to return to Haran, Rivka said: ".....I am disgusted with my life on account of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth like these, of the daughters of the land, what is life to me?"

Thus Yaakov, alone and without financial resources embarked on a journey to find a suitable mate. Lavan had an older daughter named Leah and a younger one named Rachel. Yaakov was attracted to Rachel and wanted to marry her. It seems that he was aware that Lavan was more interested in marrying off his elder daughter before Rachel. He therefore made a very substantial offer to Lavan: "I will work for you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter." The words "younger daughter" are clearly superfluous. However, their purpose is to justify the exorbitant sum

which Yaakov was willing to pay in order to obtain the younger maiden whose turn had not yet come for marriage. Lavan agreed and Yaakov was very pleased with the arrangement. Her value was so great that the price did not seem to be excessive. He worked with faithfulness for seven years and then the marriage took place. He woke up in the morning and behold it was Leah. Yaakov had waited for seven years only to be deprived of the goal of his labors and instead to find himself married to one who was not "Bechirat Lebo" (his heart's choice). Let us all try to imagine how we would act in this kind of situation. Yaakov angrily accuses Lavan of deception. Lavan is extremely smooth and sophisticated. "It is not done this way in this place to give the younger before the older." Lavan pleaded that he was sincere but that he could not flaunt the custom of the society in which he lived. To demonstrate his good faith he would allow Yaakov to marry Rachel in exchange for another seven years of work.

The greatness of Yaakov can be seen in his reaction to this unexpected setback and challenge. He felt betrayed by Lavan but not rejected by Hashem. His service of G-d was not connected to any particular "outcomes" that he was pursuing. He put aside his personal frustration and anger and proceeded to marry Rachel. He never thought he would be married to both Rachel and Leah. However, he was willing to recognize that "there are many thoughts in the heart of man, but it is the Counsel of Hashem that will endure." He put all his energy into working to bring to fruition the plan of Hashem and he, with Leah and Rachel established the Shivtei Kah (tribes of Hashem).

Shabbat Shalom ■

# MAIMONIDES ON MISHLEY

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in vessels of silver”. (Prov. 25:11)

Hear the explanation of what he said; the word maskiyoth, the Hebrew equivalent for “vessels” denotes “filigree network”, i.e., things in which there are very small apertures, such as are frequently wrought by silversmiths. They are called in Hebrew maskiyoth (*lit.* “transpicuous” from the verb *sakah*, “he saw” a root which occurs also in the Targum of Onkelos, Gen. 26:8) because the eye penetrates through them. Thus Solomon meant to say, “just as apples of gold in silver filigree with small apertures, so is a word fitly spoken.”

See how beautifully the conditions of a good simile are described in this figure! It shows that in every word which has a double sense, a literal one and a figurative one, the plain meaning must be as valuable as



silver, and the hidden meaning still more precious: so that the figurative meaning bears the same relation to the literal one as gold to silver. It is further necessary that the plain sense of the phrase shall give to those who consider it some notion of that which the figure represents. Just as a golden apple overlaid with a network of silver, when seen at a distance, or looked at superficially, is mistaken for a silver apple, but when a keen-sighted person looks at the object well, he will find what is within, and see that the apple is gold.

—Maimonides intro to the Guide



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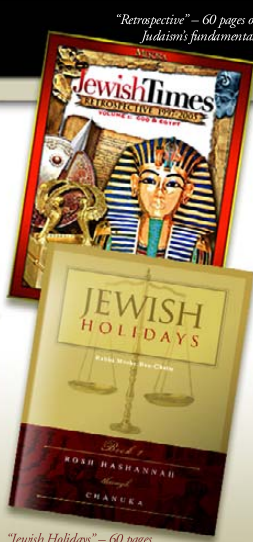
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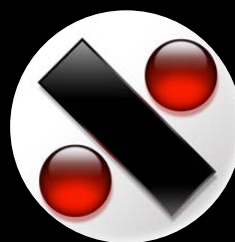
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