



The Path To Follow

VAYEITZEI

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

If You Seek it Like Silver

One should seek what concerns the service of Hashem as if he were seeking silver. If a person is trained for a certain type of factory work, and such work is performed very early in the morning, would he be too tired to work at such a time? Everyone in such a position would get up early and come to work, and even an individual who is quite lazy would find a way to get up and arrive at work on time. This is because he realizes that his livelihood depends on it, and if he is too lazy to show up on time even once or twice, he will definitely be fired. How much more does this apply when the Holy One, blessed be He, advises man to constantly reflect upon the incident involving Miriam, for even someone as important as Miriam, who was honored in the eyes of Hashem and all Israel, was not found innocent with regards to the sin of Lashon Hara! We must learn from this incident, we who are small in comparison to her! The evil inclination induces a person to be lazy, so that that he will completely forget what happened to Miriam and not listen to the advice of the Holy One, blessed be He. We must naturally reprimand it and pay heed only to the good inclination.

- Zachar LeMiriam

MAKING A PERSON SIN IS WORSE THAN KILLING HIM

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "Laban had two daughters. The name of the older one was Leah, and the name of the younger one was Rachel. Leah's eyes were tender, while Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance. ... Laban said, 'Better that I give her to you than to give her to another man. Remain with me.' So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, but they seemed to him like a few days because of his love for her" (Genesis 29:16-19). Further on we read, "Reuben went out in the days of the wheat harvest. He found mandrakes in the field and brought them to Leah his mother. Rachel said to Leah, 'Please give me some of your son's mandrakes.' But she said to her, 'Was your taking my husband insignificant? And now to take even my son's mandrakes!' Rachel said, 'Therefore he shall lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes.' When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, 'It is to me that you must come, for I have clearly hired you with my son's mandrakes.' So he lay with her that night" (ibid. 30:14-16).

Needless to say, these passages are difficult to understand. How can we say that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah because of her beauty? Could we possibly think that Jacob, the greatest of the Patriarchs, considered the beauty of a woman, and that he loved the beautiful one and despised the ugly one, since the Torah says of him: "Jacob was a just man, living in tents" (Genesis 25:27)? We also need to understand the true meaning of the second passage cited above. For what reason did Leah initially refuse to give the mandrakes to her sister Rachel? After all, Rachel had been kind to Leah by providing her with the secret signs that had been arranged with Jacob, prior to Laban's attempt to deceive Jacob by having him marry Leah instead of Rachel. When Rachel saw her father taking her sister to marry Jacob instead of her, she thought: "Now my sister will be put to shame" (Megillah 13b). She therefore gave Leah the signs that Jacob had provided her with, so she would not be put to shame. That being said, how could Leah be so ungrateful to Rachel?

Before explaining all this, let us raise two more questions regarding Parsha Vayeitzei. The Midrash states: " 'This heap [of stones] is a witness' [Genesis 31:52]. Thus the verse states, 'Bilam's foot was crushed against the wall' [Numbers 22:25] - the heap is this wall, for Bilam had transgressed the oath made to Jacob, as it is written: 'Nor may you cross over to me beyond this heap' [Genesis 31:52]. Now Bilam is Laban, as it is written: 'An Aramean tried to oved [destroy] my forefather' [Deuteronomy 26:5]. Because he tried to destroy Israel, he is called an Aramean, as it is written: 'Come invoke wrath against Israel' [Numbers 23:7]. Hence the wall made him pay" (Tanhuma, Vayeitzei 13). All this is very surprising. First of all, what does the Midrash mean by saying: "Bilam is Laban, as it is written: 'An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather' "? How does this verse prove that Bilam is Laban?

There is another problem. The verse states, "An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather. He descended into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation - great, strong, and numerous." In the Midrash our Sages said, "Laban wanted to uproot everything" (Sifrei, Devarim 301). We need to understand how his wickedness was greater than that of other evildoers, and for what reason the Torah says that he sought to oved ("destroy"). After all, other evildoers also wanted to destroy Israel, yet they are not described by the same term. We can even make the following inference: If Laban, who wanted to destroy everything but could not, is called oved, then why are other evildoers such as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and those like them - who wanted to destroy everything and almost did - not

called destroyers? We also need to understand what it means that he wanted to uproot everything, for was that not the goal of those other evildoers?

Let us try to answer all these questions. According to the Sages (Sifrei, Devarim 252), one who makes a person sin has committed a worse deed than killing him, for by killing him he has taken him out of this world, yet by making him sin he has taken him out of this world and the World to Come. Laban was also aware of this, and since he knew that Jacob observed the entire Torah - and that Jacob would not fall into his hands as long as he studied Torah and performed mitzvot - he wanted to deceive Jacob in order to make him fall into his hands. What did Laban do? When Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, he saw that twelve tribes were to emerge from her. In fact the Sages have said, "Joseph was worthy that twelve tribes should issue from him, as they issued from his father Jacob" (Sotah 36b). Hence Jacob told Laban, "I will work another seven years for you in order to marry your younger daughter Rachel, so that I may have twelve tribes of tzaddikim from her."

What did Laban do? He put Leah in Rachel's place, thinking that as soon as Jacob realized that he had married Leah instead of Rachel, he would be forced to marry Rachel in addition to Leah, which would violate the Torah's command: "You shall not take a woman in addition to her sister" (Leviticus 18:18). Thus if Jacob were to transgress the Torah, he would immediately fall into Laban's hands and have no portion in this world or the World to Come. How much more would he not bring forth twelve tribes! Laban could thereby destroy the descendants of Abraham. Since Laban had tried to make Jacob sin, the Torah describes him by the term oved, for there is nothing that destroys Israel more surely than making them sin, which causes them to lose this world and the World to Come. Hence the Sages said that Laban wanted to destroy "everything," not "everyone," for he was not only acting against Jews in a physical sense, but in a spiritual sense as well, since he wanted to deprive Israel of both worlds by making Jacob sin.

Esau sensed that Jacob had married two sisters, and therefore he went to meet him in order to kill him. Esau thought, "Up to now Jacob's Torah protected him. Yet because he transgressed it by marrying two sisters, he has forfeited the Torah's protection and is liable to death. I therefore have the right to remove him from the world." When Jacob encountered his brother Esau, he said to him: "I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now" (Genesis 32:5). Our Sages explained this to mean, "I have sojourned [garti] with the wicked Laban, but I kept the 613 [taryag] mitzvot" (Midrash Aggadah). In other words: I did not transgress the words of the Torah, as you may think, for I kept them all, even the mitzvah not to marry two sisters together. Actually, the fact that I married two sisters is not a sin on my part, for the Torah has not yet been given, and I have the status of a ben Noah. Now a ben Noah is considered to be the son of his mother, not his father. Leah and Rachel were sisters through their father, not their mother. Thus as the early Sages said (see Ramban, Yebamot 98a; Maharil, Likutim 22), Jacob did not marry two sisters.

When Esau heard that, he wanted to know if it was true. He therefore fell on Jacob's neck to kiss him, trying to bite him in the process. He then noticed that Jacob's neck was like a marble column, and his teeth were shattered (Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 35). Esau then understood that Jacob was right, for he felt weakened. Therefore he immediately departed.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Power of a Word

It is written, "With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live" (Genesis 31:32).

Rashi cites the Midrash in stating, "From that curse, Rachel died on the way."

The Sages teach that a curse that emerges from the mouth of a sage never fails to have an effect on things. Even when a curse is intended to take effect only under certain conditions, yet those conditions never materialize, the curse still has some effect. We may reasonably ask why this occurs. From where does this incredible power, concealed in the words of a sage, come from? The answer is that in the eyes of ordinary people, only the material world seems real. To them, the spiritual world is something that is solely within the heart. In reality the opposite is true, for spirituality is the true reality – it exists – whereas material reality only has partial consequences. It is written, "By the word of the L-RD were the heavens made" (Psalms 33:6). It was the word of the Holy One, blessed be He, that created the world. He spoke and it came to be. When man received a living soul, he also received the power to create worlds by the words of this soul. However a mouth that speaks too much will gradually lose its connection to the soul, and the tongue will cease to be the "quill of the heart," as the Chovot HaLevavot calls it. Nothing in the soul is connected to the vanities and vacuum that exists within the mouth. Conversely, "The tongue of the wise brings healing" (Proverbs 12:18). The tongue of sages is the perfect quill of the soul. Their souls speak by their words, and when the soul speaks, its words are so powerful that nothing can stop them. Hence the curse of a sage is fulfilled even if it was uttered conditionally, for the soul is made in G-d's image. He spoke and it came to be; He commanded and it ceased.

Rabbi Yerucham of Mir Zatzal often emphasized the concept that spirituality is the simple reality of things. With regards to Rebecca it is written, "The children struggled together within her," and the Sages said that Esau struggled to emerge when she passed places of idolatry, while Jacob struggled to emerge when she passed places of Torah study. Rabbi Yerucham wrote that spirituality is similar to magnetism, for holiness is like a magnet that draws things toward it, just like unseen forces direct a compass needle towards the north. Likewise impurity acts in the opposite sense. For a Torah scholar, since a word constitutes a spiritual reality, the power of speech is immense.

A Pearl From the Rav:

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Wealth

It is written, "He dreamed and behold: A ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven" (Genesis 28:12).

The book Turei Zahav cites the Baal Shem Tov as saying that the word sulam ("ladder") has the same numerical value as mammon ("money"). This teaches us that since money is something material, it can be planted in the earth. Despite all else, money gives a person the ability to reach the heavens if he uses it for tzeddakah and good deeds. In fact nothing acts as a better barrier against misfortune than tzeddakah. The above verse compares money to a ladder, for just as a ladder has steps by which a person can, if he so desires, ascend and reach a higher level – just as he can descend to reach a lower level – likewise for money: If a person merits to give his money to tzeddakah, he can ascend. Conversely, if he fails to give his money to the poor, he will descend and fulfill the verse: "Riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune" (Ecclesiastes 5:12).

We need to understand what this means, since what does money have to do with Jacob's departure from Beersheba? According to what is written in Sefer HaYashar, Eliphaz the son of Esau stole all of Jacob's possessions because his father had commanded him to kill Jacob. When Jacob implored Eliphaz to take his money instead, he was appeased, for the poor are considered as being dead. At that point Jacob raised his eyes to Heaven and left for Haran. However he deviated from his planned route, going to study in the Beit Midrash of Shem and Eber and telling himself: "I had gold and silver, but now I have nothing. My only option is to enter the Beit Midrash and study Torah, which is more precious than pearls and more alluring than an abundance of gold." That is what he did for the next 14 years, until he learned everything. Although he later left with nothing, he did not regret it because he possessed Torah, which is more precious than wealth. This is why Hashem revealed Himself to Jacob and showed him a ladder in a dream. By this He wanted to show Jacob that although he didn't see a penny during those 14 years, and even if he hated money and loved Torah, the world still endures only on account of tzeddakah, as it is written: "The world is built by lovingkindness" (Psalms 89:3), and man can only give the poor his money. At that point Hashem once again made a love for money enter Jacob's heart, so he could fulfill the mitzvah of tzeddakah. Hence we find that Jacob later returned to retrieve some small jars (Chullin 91a).

I Am With You

It is written, "Behold, I am with you and will guard you wherever you go, and I will return you to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken about you" (Genesis 28:15).

The Midrash cites our Sages as saying, "He answered all his requests, except for sustenance" (Bereshith Rabba 69:6). This means that in regards to Jacob's statement: "If G-d will be with me and will guard me on this way that I am going" (Genesis 28:20), we see that G-d indeed answered him, since He told Jacob that He would not leave him. Yet with regards to Jacob's statement, "And He will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear" (ibid.), we do not find that G-d explicitly answered him. Nevertheless Rabbi Assi said, "He answered his request for sustenance also, since it says: 'For I will not leave you'" (Bereshith Rabba 69:6). Where in these words do we find an answer to Jacob's request for food and clothes? By using a parable, the Maggid of Dubno gives a profound explanation for the Midrash's response. A man was about to send his son to study in a distant yeshiva, and he prepared everything he needed for the trip: An abundance of food, clothing for the winter and summer, as well as money for expenses on the way. Before he left, however, the man heard that a band of armed robbers was waylaying innocent travelers on the roads, stealing everything they had and even threatening to kill them. When the man heard this, he began to fear for his son's safety, and therefore he decided not to send him alone. Instead, he would accompany his son on the journey. Hence they began this long and difficult trip together, but contrary to initial plans, the man did not give his son any money for the journey. His son asked, "Father, why haven't you given me any money?" The man replied, "As long as I thought that you were going alone, I prepared money for your expenses on the way. Yet now that you're with me and I'm covering all the costs of this trip, why do you want money? I'm constantly with you, so all you have to do is ask for what you need and I'll give it to you."

Likewise, explained the Maggid of Dubno, Jacob asked the Holy One, blessed be He, to give him food to eat and clothes to wear. To this Hashem replied, "Behold, I am with you...for I will not leave you." In other words: If I were to leave you, I would then give you money to live on. Yet now that I am going with you, why do you want money? I will take care of all your needs!

Be Careful of the Evil Eye

It is written, “[Leah] conceived again...and declared, ‘This time I will praise the L-RD’...and she stopped giving birth” (Genesis 29:35).

Rabbeinu Bechaye states that when the Holy One, blessed be He, performs a miracle for someone, He conceals this miracle in order to prevent the evil eye from affecting it. Hence the prophet Elisha said to his servant Gehazi, “Take my staff in your hands and go. If you meet a man, do not greet him, and if a man greets you, do not respond to him. Place my staff upon the lad’s face” (2 Kings 4:29). Elisha did not want Gehazi to begin chatting with people and thereby reveal his mission, for he wanted to prevent the evil eye from affecting it. Yet because Gehazi was careless, he revealed his mission and the evil eye was able to have an effect. Therefore the text goes on to say that Gehazi was unable to revive the lad. Rabbeinu Bechaye adds that we should not be surprised that the evil eye is so powerful that it can even affect miracles. With the birth of the tribal fathers, we find that because Leah said, “I will praise the L-RD” out of gratitude that her fourth son was more than her share, the evil eye affected her. Thus immediately afterwards we read, “She stopped giving birth.” We also find that miracles extended to Joseph’s descendants because of what had been said concerning their father: “Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a fountain [ayin, which also means ‘eye’]” (Genesis 49:22).

Therefore when the descendants of Joseph told Joshua, “I am a great people, for the L-RD has blessed me so much” (Joshua 17:14), he replied: “If you are a great people, then go to the forest” (v.15). Here the Sages explain: “Go and hide yourselves in the forests, so that the evil eye will have no power over you” (Bava Batra 118a). There was no greater miracle than the giving of the Torah, and yet the evil eye had an effect even then. In fact the Sages have said that the first set of Tablets were broken because they were given in public, and therefore the evil eye affected them. The second set of Tablets, however, were given discreetly, as it is written: “No one shall ascend with you, neither shall anyone be seen anywhere on the mountain” (Exodus 34:3). The evil inclination had no effect on them, and therefore they were not broken. This is why Jacob schemed with the rods, a natural act, in order to hide a miracle. Laban and his people had to be unaware of the miracle in order for the evil eye not to have any effect on it.

Overview of the Parsha

Our parsha describes the beginnings of the era of Jacob, who sets out from his father’s home for the home of Laban, where he arrives after a long delay. When Jacob leaves Beersheba for Haran, he “encountered the place” and there he has a dream and makes a vow. He heads for the land of the east, and upon his arrival Laban gives him Rachel and Leah as wives, though in the reverse order. Jacob’s children are born from them and their family, during which time Jacob takes care of Laban’s flocks and his own. He eventually flees with his family to the land of his fathers, but Laban, whose idols are stolen, pursues and overtakes him. Laban lets him go, but only at Hashem’s command.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

The Joy of the Wedding Feast

It is written, “Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast” (Genesis 29:22).

The Talmud explains that this passage describes the seven days of the marriage feast for Jacob and Leah. Concerning the great importance of these days for young newlyweds, the Menorat HaMaor (173) writes that wedding days are worthy of a feast and an outpouring of joy for the newlyweds and their relatives. Such an occasion is not made for filling one’s stomach, but to praise and thank Hashem, Who brought the couple together in marriage, and to give gifts to the poor and bring them joy through the mitzvah. The joy of the seven days of the wedding feast has its source in the Torah, as we find in Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer (16), which cites Rabbi Yossi as saying: From where do we know that there are seven days of feasting? From Jacob, who rejoiced for seven days before marrying Rachel, as it is written: “Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast.” The Holy One, blessed be He, said: “You have rejoiced My servant Jacob, and I will give your reward to your children.” The groom is like a king, for just as everyone praises a king, everyone praises the groom. Just as a king wears beautiful garments, the groom wears beautiful garments. Just as a feast is made for a king and people rejoice before him, a feast is made for the groom and people rejoice before him for seven days. Just as a king does not go outside alone, the groom does not go outside alone. Just as a king has a face that shines like the sun, the groom has a face that shines like the sun, as it is written: “He has set up a tent for the sun, like a groom emerging from his bridal chamber” (Psalms 19:5). The Ben Ish Hai (Parsha Shoftim) writes, “It is a great mitzvah to rejoice bride and groom and bring them laughter, and the reward of those who bring them joy is great. We should just be careful not to descend into frivolity, even with regards to a light transgression, even one of rabbinic origin. It is a mitzvah to rejoice bride and groom with musical instruments. Here in our city, during the time of my grandfather the Rav and gaon Rabbeinu Moshe Haim, people wanted to forbid the playing of musical instruments during wedding feasts, but my grandfather did not authorize it.”

ESHET HAYIL

Doing Her Husband’s Will

The Vilna Gaon wrote a letter to his wife in which he stated: “Our Sages have said, ‘The only proper wife is one who does her husband’s will.’ Of course, I am writing you words of the Living G-d. Therefore I am certain that you will follow all that I have written. Nevertheless, I wish to strongly advise you not to deviate from anything that I have written. ... I reiterate my request that you guide your sons and daughters with words of kindness and Mussar that will find a place in their heart. ... Therefore train them well, since one must work hard on one’s speech and character traits, and only through good habits can we control ourselves. ... Man must deprive himself until he dies, not by fasting or asceticism, but by controlling his mouth and desires. This is teshuvah, and it is the whole reward of the World to Come.... It is worth more than any amount of fasting and self-affliction! For every second that man controls his tongue, he merits some of the ‘hidden light,’ something that no angel or creature can imagine. ... It is also advisable that your daughter not go to synagogue, because she will see beautiful clothes there, become jealous and talk about it at home. This will lead to Lashon Harah and other things. She should rather cling to Mussar and not become jealous of anything in this world, where everything is vanity and illusions, ‘appearing in a night and perishing in a night’ [Jonah 4:10].”

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

The Maharshah

The twelfth of Kislev marks the passing of Rabbeinu Shlomo Luria, known by his acronym as the Maharshah. His remarks on the entire Gemara are printed in every tractate under the name of Chochmat Shlomo, and his commentaries and ruling are printed in great works such as Yam Shel Shlomo, Sefer HaMitzvot HaGadol, and Responsa of the Maharshah.

The Chida wrote in Shem HaGedolim, "A certain rav told me that he heard that the gaon Maharshah, while he was a Posek, Rav, and Av Beit Din, had ordered someone who admonished others to visit him for an hour each day to issue admonishments and warnings to him, as if he were a regular individual, for that was his rightful desire. When the person arrived, the Maharshah immediately enveloped himself in his tallit and sat down to hear how he should fear G-d. Happy was he and happy was his lot! Happy were the people to have a Rav as pious and holy as him!"

In the book Yam Shel Shlomo on tractate Gittin, the Maharshah mentions the Maharam of Rothenburg, who was held hostage in the tower of Ensisheim for several years. The king demanded an exorbitant ransom from the Jewish community, which wanted to pay it. However the Maharam did not let them, for he said that we do not ransom hostages for more than they are worth, so as not to encourage further hostage taking in the future. The Maharshah concluded by saying that the Maharam was actually the greatest figure of his generation, and therefore it was permitted to pay a ransom for more than his value, especially since he was being prevented from studying Torah. However the Maharam feared that other kings would come and do the same, taking the greatest Torah scholars of the generation hostage for enormous sums, until finally all the money in the Diaspora would be insufficient to ransom them and the Torah would be forgotten in Israel. He showed this printed decree to the sages of the exile. The king in question also wanted to capture his disciple the Rosh, but he fled safely to Spain. In numerous instances the Maharshah contested the rulings of the Rema, who was younger than him. The holy Shelah wrote that people trusted in the Rema and did not regard the Maharshah's differing opinions. From Heaven, the Rema merited this in the same way that the Halachah is fixed according to the views of the house of Hillel, despite the fact that the house of Shammai had better arguments for their views. The Shelah ended by saying that in any case, it is better to take the Maharshah's views into account. May his merit protect us all.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

The Time is Now

It is written, "In the womb he seized his brother's heel, and with his strength he struggled with G-d. He struggled with an angel and prevailed. [The angel] wept and beseeched him" (Hosea 12:4-5).

Why did the angel weep? The Midrash states that the angel wept and beseeched Jacob to release him so he could ascend to Heaven and sing the praises for the day, for dawn had broken and it was time to sing Hashem's praises. In fact from the moment the angel had been created, his time for reciting praises had not yet arrived (see Bereshith Rabba 78:1-2).

This statement is enough to teach us how much we should be concerned with not squandering the appropriate time, fixed and precise, but instead to use it in order to elevate ourselves and sing Hashem's praises, which spiritually elevates the soul at that specific time. A delay results in everlasting sorrow, for our future depends on this hour and this moment. It is the first and also the last, because from the day we were created, the time for our spiritual elevation has not yet arrived.

The angel that comes from the supernal world knows the value of the present time. The angel was aware, standing, trembling, weeping, and beseeching Jacob to release him, not to delay him and thereby cause an everlasting and irreparable loss.

If a person knew the value of the present time, if he knew the secret meaning of his role and the order of Creation – the "order of the song" that is destined for everyone and which comes at this point in time – and if he realized that now was the time to elevate himself, then he would not squander it. He would not be lazy or allow himself to be delayed.

It is said that a great Torah figure would awaken his neighbors in the morning and ask them to get up because an important visitor had just arrived, a visitor they had never before met. When they asked him who this visitor was, he replied: "This very day."

– Ma'ayanei HaChaim

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

I Await His Arrival Every Day

A certain tzaddik usually woke up in the middle of the night to mourn over the destruction of Mount Zion, weeping and crying aloud. His neighbor, an uneducated shepherd, came and asked him why he was crying like this. Why was he complaining, and why did he weep during the night for nothing, for our exile and the deliverance of our souls? "After all, every calculated date for our deliverance had already passed," he said, "and yet Mashiach has not yet come." The shepherd claimed that there was no further hope to see Mashiach in this world, for "Hashem abandoned us many centuries ago, and yet people have been weeping greatly every year on Tisha B'Av! The three weeks of mourning have already ended this year as well, and yet no deliverer has arrived. Even if Mashiach were to arrive today, how could the verse, 'Gladden us according to the days You afflicted us' [Psalms 90:15] be fulfilled, since hundreds of years have already passed since the start of the sixth millennium? What more do we have to hope for from Hashem, and how is He going to save Israel, since our mourning has ended this year as well, and yet we still have no reason for joy?" The tzaddik replied, "You should realize that even if I were living in the last day of the sixth millennium, it wouldn't prevent me from hoping that G-d's Mashiach will arrive and save us, and that Jews will experience deliverance. Mashiach will come, there is no doubt about it, and even if he delays until the end of the sixth millennium, what G-d has said will surely come to pass. He will not abandon His people, for His great Name is with us in exile. He has already promised us by the prophets of truth that deliverance for Israel will indeed take place through His Mashiach, and He will again reveal His glory to us, as it is written: 'Happy is he who waits.... However you go your way until the end. You will rest and then arise for your portion at the end of days' [Daniel 12:12-13]. It is also said, 'The L-rd, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His Sanctuary' [Malachi 3:1], as well as: 'I, the L-RD, will hasten it in its time' [Isaiah 60:22]. The wise man foresees the future of this people. He sees and understands its end by means of its beginning. He perceives the end through the start. In the beginning, this people came into the world only as a result of a great miracle, only after all hope was lost, since Isaac was born when Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham was 100. Similarly, Mashiach will arrive only through a great miracle, only after all hope has been lost." – Sefer HaBrit

A TRUE STORY

The Torah Will Never be Forgotten in Israel

It is written, "Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramean, because he did not tell him that he was fleeing" (Genesis 31:20).

For many years, the Russian government tried to damage the purity of the Volozhin yeshiva, demanding that it teach its students the language of the state. However the Rosh Yeshiva, the gaon Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin Zatzal, rejected such demands. Even when he was offered a compromise, he refused. Surprised by his refusal, one community leader addressed the Rosh Yeshiva and asked, "Is it not a fundamental principle that when faced with a choice between two evils, one should choose the lesser of the two?" The Rosh Yeshiva replied, "We see that when Abraham arrived in Egypt, he was afraid for Sarah's safety. Yet if he wasn't even afraid of Pharaoh himself, then what was he afraid of? The answer is that Abraham feared Pharaoh's border guards, for they were simple people. What did he do? He resorted to natural means by hiding Sarah in a chest. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, showed him that the situation was exactly the opposite of what he thought, for the crude guards were actually afraid of touching her, and they 'praised her to Pharaoh.' It was precisely Pharaoh himself who feared nothing, and he was the one who wanted to harm Abraham.

"A similar situation occurred when Jacob wanted to flee from Laban. Instead of clearly telling Laban that he intended to leave, and instead of trusting Hashem that everything would be alright, Jacob chose a natural path and fled from Laban by deceiving him. In the end, Laban pursued and overtook him, and if Hashem had not warned him against saying anything to Jacob, either good or bad, he would have attacked him. Thus Hashem has instructed us how to act: We must have faith in Him from the very beginning."

The Rosh Yeshiva continued his explanation, his voice filled with emotion: "I will not allow the Russian language to penetrate the yeshiva, and even if it closes as a result, I am certain that the Holy One, blessed be He, will eventually reopen it, for I am confident that the Torah will never be forgotten in Israel!" – Peninim MiShulchan Gavoha