

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 133

Vayetze | The Special Connection Between Parents and Children



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

פרשת ויצא | אנגלית

...❧ PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL ❧...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A City named Charan	1
Laban's Genealogy	6
Who Are You - Laban the Aramean	6
Laban and his Schemes	9
Laban's Deceptions	11
Fire of the Soul	12
Defining Education	13
Jacob's brothers	15
Respect for Others – A Duty	17
Children or Servants ?	17
Respect - The Key to a Child's Soul . . .	18
Sharing - The Foundation That Stands . .	19
Appreciation - the Secret to Success . .	20
Summary and Practical Conclusions: . . .	23



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Parshat Vayetze

A City named Charan

On the eastern horizon, the rays of the sun began to spread in every direction. A new day had begun.

The residents of the city of Charan woke up to a new day, organized themselves, and prepared to leave their homes, each to their occupation.

The sound of drums, coming from the local temple, reminded the city's inhabitants that they needed to pay homage to the idols. Those who were more devout bowed to them and offered incense.

The scents of the foreign worship spread and filled the entire city, and the beating of the drums that still resonated in their ears stirred their hearts and inflamed their passions...

The forces of impurity ruled Charan. The desire to stand out and gain attention led them to

dress immodestly and squander their money on vanity. Social pressure swept everyone into a whirlwind of competition, envy, and hatred.

The crooked and impure education system disrupted the entire system of self-thinking, and caused total confusion. The leadership and authority was in the hands of the students, while the parents and teachers were required to receive their permission to educate.

The teachers, deprived of any authority to educate, removed the students from all responsibilities. The children grew up accordingly without boundaries, without guidance and without criticism.

The powerful ruled and set the path. Those who did not go with them were condemned to isolation from society. The

2 ...❧ PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL ❧...

Parshat Vayetze - A City named Charan

stronger were always right. Those smart enough to bow their heads to the strong could

survive, while the simpletons who didn't understand this were condemned.

❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧

1. To establish blessed children, parents are required to invest, more than just a little, as will be discussed further in our conversation.

In this context, Rabbi Moshe Weinstock, recounts a story he heard (Hamevaser HaTorani, issue 327, page 22):

The small study room was prepared and arranged for study. Two large volumes of the Talmud lay on the table, waiting to be opened. Next to the table sat Dovid'l, the young student, with eyes full of curiosity, closely following the actions of the elderly teacher. The latter approached the large window in silence, opened it wide, rested his hand on the windowsill, supported his high forehead with his hand, fixed his gaze somewhere up in the cloudy sky, and sank into deep contemplation and thoughts...

A moment passed, and then another, and the teacher stood by the window in the same posture, his gray beard and sideburns rustling lightly in the cool morning breeze of Jerusalem. Suddenly, without any prior warning, a tremor coursed through the teacher's body, as if he had grasped a sharp thorn. A sudden outburst of emotion was clearly visible on his face, and a moment later, the tears appeared. Streams of tears began to flow from his eyes.

For long minutes, the teacher convulsed with emotional weeping, then he rummaged in his pocket, pulled out a handkerchief made of bright fabric, wiped his eyes with it, and carefully wiped away his tears. Now, a broad smile reappeared on his lips. "Come, my dear students," he called out with a lively and enthusiastic voice, "come, let's open the Holy Talmud together. Let's begin our studies..."

This story took place in Jerusalem of the 1850s:

In the beginning of the decade, in the start of the year 5611 (1850), Rabbi Elazar Mendel of Lelov, of saintly memory, ascended to Jerusalem, along with his son Dovid'l, the seven-year-old, who would later become known as the righteous Rabbi Dovid'l Biderman of Lelov. The initial days of Rabbi Elazar Mendel in the Land of Israel were marked by tremendous suffering and poverty, his home empty of all material wealth, often lacking even a dry piece of bread for his children.

Although the house was devoid of provisions, when it came to the education of his beloved son, Rabbi Elazar Mendel spared no expense. After careful investigation and inquiry, he found a 'melamed,' a teacher, from the renowned scholars of Jerusalem; a Jew

Parshat Vayetze - A City named Charan

Thus, many suffered from loneliness and abuse, and lost their self-confidence. And as we know, the loss of self-confidence like a snowball, grows bigger from moment to moment, even

family members often don't understand how the deterioration happens so rapidly...¹

Let us discuss some of these educational tragedies, but first, let us refresh our memory...

❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧

from the community of 'Perushim' (those who were removed from everyday mundane life) who was highly respected for his fear of G-d and knowledge of the Torah. It was with this teacher that the young son would commence his studies.

The private tutor, hired for a handsome sum, proved to be an outstanding educator. The Talmud and the commentators poured forth from his mouth in a clear and rich language, and his profound teachings were interspersed with countless pieces of Torah wisdom. But there was something extraordinary in his behavior, something unusual: every morning, before he would sit in his chair and open the large Talmud, he would approach the window look out into the heaven and burst out in intense weeping.

At first, young Dovid'l believed it to be a one-time occurrence. As days passed, however, he realized that it was a regular and precise ritual that repeated itself exactly every day. The father, the righteous Rabbi Elazar Mendel, who took a great interest in his son's progress, was very surprised when he heard about this behavior of the teacher. On the first opportunity, he called the teacher to his room, inquired about the nature of his

daily weeping, and requested to know the secret. At first, the teacher hesitated, trying to keep his secret, but in the end, he was obliged to obey the command of Rabbi Elazar Mendel. Reluctantly, he began to recount the story:

The sounds of weeping and cries of a deeply anguished heart emanated from the room of the holy Rabbi Yissachar Ber, the holy elder of Radushitz. The voice belonged to a Jewish woman, a broken soul whose husband had abandoned her several years earlier and had disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him. "Rebbe, please save me, the waters have reached my soul; I can no longer bear the intense suffering..."

The heart of Rabbi Yissachar Ber ached at the sight of the misery of the unfortunate soul. "How can I help?" he asked with a voice full of pain.

"Simply," the woman replied, "I beg the Rabbi to use his prophetic vision to seek and discover my husband's whereabouts in the world." She pleaded desperately.

"Rabbi Yissachar Ber listened to the words and delved into deep thoughts.

Parshat Vayetze - A City named Charan

'Zalman Dovid' - the Rebbe called after a few moments to his faithful servant - 'Go out right now to the street of the city, and grab the first gentile who passes by and bring him here, do not let him escape in any way'.

A few minutes passed, and loud exchanges were heard from the street. 'Leave me alone, what do you want from me? Why should I come with you?'. The shouts came closer, and after a moment, the door of the house opened, and the figure of Zalman Dovid, the faithful servant, appeared in the doorway, followed by a hefty gentile dressed in a peasant's coat.

'**What** is your name?' the Rebbe of Radoshitz asked directly to the guest who stood, bewildered, as though he didn't understand what was happening.

'**My** name is Zlavak,' the gentile replied in a hurry and asked to leave the room immediately.

The holy Rebbe stared at him with his sacred gaze, and it was evident that he was not satisfied with the gentile's answer. 'No, no! Your name is not Zlavak,' the Rebbe of Radoshitz called out - 'I command you to tell us your true name!'

The gentile persisted and stuck to his initial claims. 'My name is Zlavak Zalbovinski. I live in the nearby village, and I make a living by selling firewood. I don't understand what you want from me?!...

To those standing around, the entire scene seemed strange and bizarre. The peasants words sounded completely convincing, they

couldn't understand why the Rebbe was not impressed at all by what he was saying.

Once the Rabbi Yissachar Ber realized that the man did not intend to tell the truth, he had no choice but to declare severe threats and terrible warnings about the punishments waiting for him if he continued to deny the truth...

And then the unthinkable happened, the innocent gentile suddenly changed his tune.

'**You** are right, Rabbi, my name is not Zlavak, I am Jewish, my real name is Tzvi Leib,' the man mumbled in Yiddish with embarrassment, completely stunning everyone there. At that very moment, a horrifying scream was heard from the adjacent room, 'holy Rabbi, it's my husband, I have no doubt that he's my missing husband,' the distraught wife called out loudly.

'**Give** your wife a bill of divorce right here and now,' the Rebbe declared sternly to the startled husband. Without a delay the Rebbe convened a special court, and the husband gave his wife a get (bill of divorce), freeing her from her bonds immediately."

I witnessed this whole incident myself, as I, the Jerusalem teacher, was present that day at the house of the Rebbe of Radoshitz, watching the unfolding of the events...

This made a profound impression on me. After all, not every day does a person have the opportunity to witness

Parshat Vayetze - A City named Charan

the manifestation of the divine spirit in such a simple way.

I decided to sneak into the Rebbe's room at night, to observe closely his actions and behavior during the night. I secretly entered the Rebbe's room without anyone noticing. I found a hiding place behind one of the cabinets, sat inside it, and waited with a pounding heart for the Rebbe's arrival.

In the late hour of night, after completing his daily routine and his holy work, the holy Rebbe entered his room and closed the door behind him. I followed his footsteps with great difficulty through the hidden peephole, but within moments, the Rebbe turned to me with his voice and asked me to come out of my hiding place. I was filled with a terrible fear, but I had no choice but to leave my hiding place.

With great effort, I exited my hiding place and stood before the Rebbe with eyes full of shame.

'Young man,' the Rebbe turned to me with compassion, without any hint of anger or annoyance, 'please tell me, what is your wish?'

I didn't hesitate twice and answered with sincerity: 'Fear of Heaven, Rabbi, bless me that I have fear of Heaven.'

The Rebbe of Radoshitz closed his holy eyes, blessed me, and said, 'May it be G-d's will that from this day onward, every time you engage in holy Torah study, thoughts of repentance will awaken within you'...

From that moment on, tens of years have passed, and I have since immigrated to the Holy land and settled in Jerusalem. Yet till this very day in my old age, not a day goes by in which I'm not awakened with feelings of repentance, in fruition of the blessing of Rebbe of Radoshitz.

The Rebbe Rabbi Eliezer Mendel sat in silence, contemplating the remarkable tale he had just heard. 'Your story indeed resolves my initial question,' he responded, carefully choosing his words, 'but now I have a different question. Please tell me, how can you claim that you belong to the 'Perushim' and are opposed to 'Chassidism' after you personally witnessed such a miraculous and extraordinary event? How could you not become an enthusiastic follower of the holy Rebbe of Radoshitz after you were present at that moment?'

A wry smile appeared on the face of the elderly teacher, and he replied simply, 'Please forgive me, but wouldn't you agree that these were merely 'tricks of illusion', that the Rebbe of Radoshitz performed that day?'

This final sentence completely changed the entire exchange. The dismissive response of the teacher horrified the pure heart of the Rebbe of Lelov. On that very day, Rabbi Elazar Mendel of Lelov removed the teacher from his position and sent him away. 'A teacher who lacks complete faith in the righteous of the generations will not teach Torah to my son'!..."

Laban's Genealogy

The great flood had ended. Noah and his wife, and his children Shem, Ham, and Japheth, together with their wives, emerged from the ark, and the land began to be populated once more. From Noah's son, Shem, came Arpachshad, and from him, Shelah; from Shelah, Eber; and from Eber, Peleg. Peleg became the father of Reu, and Reu, the father of Serug, and Serug, the father of Nahor (the first).

In the year 1878 to creation, Nahor I's son was born, and was named Terach.

When Terach grew a little older, he began to prosper in his political career. With sure steps, he walked through these dark paths and corridors of evil and cruelty, slander and persecution, humiliation and trampling on others, until finally, at the age of seventy, he obtained the coveted

position of Viceroy to the wicked king, Nimrod.

Terach had two wives: one named Amatlai daughter of Karnevo, who gave birth to Abraham and Nahor II and the other wife, who gave birth to Haran.

Haran then married and had a son and two daughters. He named his son Lot, and his daughters Milcah and Iskah.

Abraham married his niece (Haran, his half-brother's daughter) Iskah (better known as Sarah), while his brother Nahor II married her sister Milcah, who begot him eight children: Uz, Buz, Kemuel, Kesed, Chazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.

Bethuel married a woman, and they had two children: Laban and Rebecca.

This Laban, the son of Bethuel, became famous worldwide...

Who Are You - Laban the Aramean

Our great forefather Abraham, who hadn't heard his name? He was the one who dispelled the fog

of G-dlessness in the world and showed that there exists a Creator.

Bethuel, Abraham's nephew, was one of those who had heard his lessons on faith. However, this did not affect him, he had a special passion for lowly material desires and this passion extinguished the fire of faith.

However, unlike in faith, he excelled in politics. Bethuel was appointed as the ruler of Charan. This high position allowed him to expand further the scale of his sins.

Bethuel named his son Laban. Laban possessed quite remarkable abilities. With a thirst for knowledge and the sciences, he excelled in acquiring all kinds of knowledge. At a very young age, he had already written his doctoral dissertation, and obtained a professorship. However, unfortunately, he directed all his abilities in the wrong direction. Instead of following in the

footsteps of his great uncle Abraham, connecting with the Creator, he chose to join the forces of evil. It was much easier.

The holy book of Zohar says the following:²

“Rabbi Aba said: Everyone knows that Laban was the greatest expert in natural sciences and magic. His knowledge of magic was greater than that of Beor and of his son Balaam. Moreover, Laban was the most skilled sorcerer of all generations.”

In addition to everything else, Laban had great charisma. Everyone who met him felt trust and respect for him. And Laban, having gained their trust, ensnared the poor people in his nets, using them for his own purposes.³

Let us continue and refresh our memory.

—*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*—

2. Parshat Vayishlach 166b

3. **Today** too, there are 'stars' like these, who outwardly appear to be doers of good, but their hearts are as black as coal.

In connection to this, there's a story that goes as follows (Yerushalayim Shel Ma'alach vol. 1, p. 65):

It was in the year 5640 (1880), Dr. Hertzberg, an envoy of the 'Jewish

Parshat Vayetze - Who Are You - Laban the Aramean

enlightenment', arrived in Jerusalem to establish an institution for orphans. Superficially, their intention seemed innocent, but their true goal was to divert the hearts of young Jews from faith to heresy.

The Gaon Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin, the "Seraph" from Brisk, sensed the hidden purpose behind this endeavor and sent out a warning throughout Jerusalem.

Dr. Hertzberg, who held Austrian citizenship, naturally, made connections with the Austrian Consul in Jerusalem.

On one occasion, the Austrian Consul met with Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. During their conversation, the Consul asked Rabbi Sonnenfeld why they opposed Dr. Hertzberg so vehemently. The Consul said he personally knew Dr. Hertzberg, and he was a religious Jew. Often during his visits, Dr. Hertzberg told the Consul about his various educational plans for the region. For example, he mentioned that religious education in Jerusalem was not yet at the appropriate level, and he had plans to reform and modernize it according to contemporary European standards.

The Gentile Consul wryly shared with Rabbi Sonnenfeld an episode that had happened earlier:

"**About** a month ago," the Consul began, "I was invited by Dr. Hertzberg to visit his school, which he founded. Since that day happened to be unexpectedly busy for me, I decided to go to the school only after the

night had fallen. When I arrived in the schoolyard, I was deeply moved. I saw all the school's children arranged in rows, under the open sky, reading prayer books by moonlight. When I asked what was happening, Dr. Hertzberg explained to me that the children were holding a 'New Moon Prayer' Ceremony as they do every month. After this prayer they went to the cafeteria and all washed their hands before partaking of the meal. As I later learned, these practices are only observed by religious Jews. So, as you can see, Dr. Hertzberg is indeed religious, and his school is religious !

Rabbi Sonnenfeld listened carefully to the Consul's story until he had finished, after which he responded:

"**Undoubtedly**, the Consul remembers the imprisonment of Dr. Hellmer, the personal friend of the Austrian Minister of War during the previous century. The Consul nodded in agreement, and Rabbi Sonnenfeld continued, 'We all know that Dr. Hellmer was the Minister's chief adviser and confidant, and that all of his actions and plans were approved by the Dr. This was to the extent that he was honored with the appointment as personal tutor for the minister's children.

However, one evening, everything changed. The Minister went for a walk with his eldest son. As they walked, the boy suddenly burst into a French marching song, which deeply offended the Minister, who was extremely loyal to his nation. He asked his son where he had learned this French song and who had taught it to him. The boy responded that his private tutor,

Laban and his Schemes

Our forefather Jacob was already 63 years old. His parents, Isaac and Rebecca, call him and tell him that it's time to find a wife, and that he must go to Charan to find a wife there.

Jacob is puzzled. To Charan, to the swindler Laban's house, and to take his daughter as a wife? However, despite all these thoughts, Jacob's obeys his parents' command unquestioningly.

However, Jacob realizes that if he wants to remain whole, retaining his purity and piety, he would have to prepare himself

thoroughly. He goes to the Torah tents of Shem and Eber, and begins to study Talmud for the next 14 years.

In the year 2,185 to creation, after 14 years of study, Jacob felt that he was sufficiently spiritually strengthened by the study of the Torah, and he felt that he could finally fulfill his parents' command, and continued his journey to Charan.

Arriving in Charan, Jacob meets shepherds with their flocks near a well. When he asks if

❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧

Dr. Hellmer, taught it to him, as part of his French studies, to which he dedicated hours each week. Upon hearing this, the Minister stopped the walk and returned to his room in rage. He called Dr. Hellmer and, when he appeared before him, he was furious.

He scolded Dr. Hellmer for imposing a foreign culture upon his children when, at the time, brave young men were dying on the battlefields, shedding their blood to defend their homeland and heritage. He was extremely angry, and he sentenced Dr. Hellmer to life imprisonment.

You understand - Rabbi Sonnenfeld continued - a faithful person's heart cannot belong to both the homeland and to the enemy, a person with a double face is called a 'traitor.'

The 'Jews of the enlightenment' are 'traitors'. On one hand, they may follow the commandments, but on the other hand, they make an alliance with the forces of impurity, and consequently, despise the L-rd and perform actions against his will. Dr. Hertzberg is not a religious Jew; he is a traitor!"

they are familiar with Laban, they answer in the affirmative:
"We are familiar..."

Right there, at the well, Jacob meets his cousin Rachel, and they then and there agree to get married. Rachel runs home to share the joyful news with her father.

Laban runs out to the well to greet Jacob. 'Oh, how similar you are to the great uncle Abraham. Do you too, read these big books...

Well, what are they called ?...

'Talmud'.

'**Yes**, Talmud. You read them too ?'

'**Yes**, Uncle. This contains much of G-d's wisdom. You should also try and learn it.'

Laban sighed and thought to himself: 'G-d have pity on you, such a devout fellow, I have my work cut out for me, to teach you a thing or two of heresy, but

I'll need time for that."⁴

'**Oh** well, I understand you didn't come here because you missed my family.

'**Right**. I want to marry your daughter Rachel.'

Laban heard, and gleefully rubbed his hands: 'Wonderful, now I have the means to delay him !

Laban turned to Jacob with a righteous and merciful expression on his face, and in a voice full of compassion said: 'Jacob, do you know how many people desire to be my son-in-law ? Do you know how many people want to Rachel's hand in marriage ?

'**If** I wanted to, I could demand an exorbitant amount of money for it, but I have a soft spot for relatives, and I'm ready to give you my daughter in exchange for only 7 years of labor !

Jacob agreed, and immediately Laban began his deceitful tactics.

❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧

4. As we say in the Passover Haggadah "Pharaoh only decreed on the boys, while Laban wished to uproot everything." Laban

did not seek in Jacob cheap labor, rather he wished to uproot Abraham's beliefs from the world, beginning with his grandson Jacob.

Laban's Deceptions

Ultimately, Jacob served Laban for twenty years, during which he married his four wives, and eleven sons and a daughter were born to him.

At the end of this period, Jacob called his wives into the field (to prevent eavesdropping) and said to them: "I see that your father's attitude towards me has changed. But the G-d of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength. Yet your father has cheated me, changing my wages tenfold, but G-d did not allow him to harm me."

Laban employed all his might to make me abandon my faith in the Creator, using all sorts of unholy influences but he failed. He attempted to make me break the Sabbath, but failed.

Now, the Al-mighty revealed Himself to me, saying, "Return to the land of your fathers, and I will be with you. Are you ready to go with me?"

Rachel and Leah answered him, saying, "Do we still have a share and inheritance in our father's house? Aren't we considered as strangers by him, for he has sold us and has consumed the money given for us? All the wealth that G-d has taken from our father, belongs to us and our children. Now, whatever G-d has told you, do."

Jacob promptly gathered all his possessions and set out. When Laban learned of Jacob's departure, he pursued him and, after seven days, he caught up to him, with an aggrieved expression. Laban said, "What have you done? You have stolen my heart and taken my daughters away like captives with the sword. Why did you secretly flee and deceive me without telling me? I would have sent you away with joy, with songs, with drums, and with harps. You did not allow me to kiss my sons and daughters. Now you have acted foolishly. My hand is strong enough to do evil to you. But the G-d of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful about

speaking with Jacob from good to bad.' Now, you left because you greatly desired your father's house, but why did you steal my g-ds?"

Jacob replied, "I have serviced you twenty years: fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for livestock. During all this time, you changed my wages ten times."

In the holy book of the Zohar, the various tricks and deceit employed by Laban are recorded. The Zohar tells us that Laban attempted to harm Jacob

in ten different ways through witchcraft and spells, but he failed. Jacob remained steadfast in his righteousness.

While remarkable that Jacob withstood Laban's opposition and ideology, it is however understandable in light of the many years of studying Torah and spiritual self-improvement under the guidance of his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac. But how did he raise his children in such an environment? How did he mold them into such righteous individuals in such a lowly place?

Fire of the Soul

The prophet Obadiah revealed the secret: "And the house of Jacob will be a flame." Jacob kindled the flame of holiness, purity, and devotion to the Creator, in the hearts of his children.

To clarify:

All the creations in our world consist of four elements: fire, air, water, and earth. Of these four, the one element most closely related to the manifestation of holiness, is fire. Many verses in the Torah

illustrate this. For example, "For the L-rd your G-d is a consuming fire." The Torah is compared to fire, "For My word is like fire, says the L-rd." The Shechinah (Divine Presence) is described as "a fire-devouring flame."

The books of Chassidut discuss many aspects of this flame of holiness.

My father, Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel, of blessed memory, would often explain as

Parshat Vayetze - Defining Education

follows: In all the other three elements, life can exist. Fish live in water; humans, animals, and birds in the air; and various living creatures inside the earth. However, no life at all can exist in fire. The element of fire is unique because nothing can be mixed into it. Everything that comes into contact with fire is consumed. Therefore, holiness is likened to fire. A person whose life is consumed by worldly passions and desires to approach holiness, the holy

fire will consume the negativity within them and their evil inclination.

Jacob, in raising his children, was able to ignite this fire in their hearts, "And the house of Jacob will be a fire." The forces of evil could not overtake his sons; they were consumed with a holy fire burning in their hearts.

How Jacob accomplished this is unknown. However, we will turn to the wisdom of our sages for insight.

Defining Education

If we go out on the street, stop random passers-by, and ask them, "What is education, in your opinion?"

The answer you will hear will be nearly unanimous: Education is instructing to a child how to behave, how they should conduct themselves.

However, my father, Rabbi Yoram OBM, had a different view. Here's what he said: "Education is not training. To educate means to create desire and curiosity."

To educate means to explain and show to a child, why it is worthwhile to behave in a certain way.

When we say that we need to explain to a child, we mean that we should focus on their understanding. A child should understand why it is worthwhile for them to behave in a certain way. If they don't understand, it means we haven't explained.

Everyone is born with their own disposition. Some children

are clever and understand everything the first time, while others need to be explained dozens or hundreds of times.

However, there is no place for despair because the sages have already said (Avot 5:23), "The more effort, the greater the reward."

Once a child understands and appreciates a subject, they develop a fervent desire to behave in a manner accordingly. This burning fire of desire is

precisely what Jacob bestowed to his children.

Similar to the above, when a person wants to understand and connect to a lofty concept, they should try to recognize and comprehend it rather than intimidate themselves with the greatness and loftiness of it.

This is the greatness of study of our holy Torah, which through its learning, an inner desire develops in a person to observe its commandments and draw close to G-d.⁵

❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧

5. Since we are now on the topic of 'developing a desire' to proper behavior in children, may I suggest a tried and true piece of advice, reading 'stories of the Righteous'.

There's much to expound on regarding the virtue of these tales, as we have previously written at length, however experience has shown that every child, boy or girl, who reads many stories of the righteous during their childhood, merits that their heart awakens to spirituality.

Therefore, every Jewish household should ensure that they have books that recount the histories of the righteous from the past generations and from those of more recent times.

It is essential that in every Jewish home, there be access to 'stories of the righteous'.

When we examine our Torah portion of Vayetze as well, it becomes clear that the entire portion is devoted to stories of the righteous.

The beginning of the Torah portion speaks of the immense power of our forefather Jacob in the study of the Torah, continuing with the description of his light that shined in all of the worlds.

This pattern continues throughout the entire Torah. We find extensive descriptions of our holy forefathers and the signs and wonders they performed,

Parshat Vayetze - Jacob's brothers

Perhaps some, reading the above, might think, "This all I need to know the secret of raising children and can put this booklet aside. Let me go and educate."

One must be patient and before engaging in education, and must

build the structure of education from its foundation. While obviously, it is impossible to lay the foundation of such a vast structure as the education of a Jewish child in this one booklet, let us talk about one aspect of Jewish education.

Jacob's brothers

Back to the escape of Jacob from Laban:

The time for liberation had come. Jacob took his family, servants, animals, and all his

possessions, and set out on his journey back to the land of Canaan of his father Isaac.

At that time, Laban was not at home, he had gone to shear

❧ *Wellsprings of Wisdom* ❧

such as Moses, Aaron, Pinchas, and Joshua. In the other books of the Tanach, we find stories from the time of the Judges and the prophets who followed, such as the Prophet Elijah who sustained a woman and her son for an extended period with a small amount of flour and oil, and who revived the dead, as well as the abundant oil produced by Elisha. There were many many other miracles like these recorded and studied.

A person is obligated to study the entire Tanach, and these stories are an integral part of our Torah. One who studies them clings to the One who gave us the Torah. In the oral Torah, we also find many stories of the righteous, such as

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa and Honi the Circle Maker, among others.

We can see throughout all the generations that those who walked this path included great luminaries of Israel, such as the holy and Kabbalistic sage Rabbi Naftali Hertz Bachrach author of 'Emek HaMelech', a treatise on the miracles of the Arizal, may his memory be a blessing.

There is a general principle: anything that our predecessors practiced, is a mitzvah for us to do as well. Since our earliest sages wrote extensively about the great accomplishments and tales of righteous individuals, it is our duty to read and retell and treasure the stories of the righteous as well.

Parshat Vayetze - Jacob's brothers

his sheep, which he entrusted to his sons at a distance of three days away.

Back at the hometown of Laban they were aware that Jacob had fled, since as long as Jacob was at Laban's house, the well overflowed with water, but when he fled, the well dried up. The shepherds gathered at the well who found no water immediately sent to inform Laban. The messenger traveled for three days until he reached Laban, who angrily set out to return to his city and arrived three days later.

The shepherds of Charan, who sat with impatience without water for six days saw clouds of dust rising in the distance. Laban leaped from his horse and exclaimed, "Comrades, to war!"

Immediately, the strong and powerful men of town gathered and mounted their horses. "Laban, where are we headed?" "To Mount Gilead, where Jacob is camping", was the reply.

After a day of rapid pursuit, they came close to Mount

Gilead and made camp for the night.

In a dream, an angel appeared to him and warned him not to harm Jacob.

The next morning, when Jacob and Laban met, Laban said to Jacob: "It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father said to me last night: Beware of speaking to Jacob either good or bad." (Genesis 31:29).

Jacob and Laban decided to make a non-aggression pact, and as a symbol of the pact, they decided to create a pile of stones, as recorded in the Torah: "Now, come, let us form a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between me and you. And Jacob took a stone and raised it as a monument. Jacob then said to his brothers, "Gather stones," and they took stones and made a mound. And they ate there on the mound."

Who are these brothers? As far as we know, Jacob had only one brother Esau, who wasn't present during the meeting with Laban.

Parshat Vayetze - Respect for Others – A Duty

The Targum Yonatan renders the verse: "Jacob said to his sons, whom he called brothers, 'Gather stones,' and they gathered, piled a mound, and ate on the mound."

Rashi similarly writes: "These are his sons, who were

like brothers to him, they who come to help in times of trouble and in battle."

The question begs itself, why does Jacob call his sons 'brothers' ?

Let us examine the following points:

Respect for Others – A Duty

Within each of us resides a divine soul, a part of the Creator Himself. Just as we are obligated to show respect to the Creator, we are also obligated to respect every human being, for they contain a spark of divinity within them. When a person fails to show proper respect for their fellow human beings, and especially if they mistreat them, they are infringing upon the most sacred part of a person – their soul.

In many sources, it is said that a person's soul is called "kavod"

(honor)⁶. Every person requires respect, and if no one pays attention to them, it can have a detrimental effect on their mental well-being. This is even more crucial for children; whose identities are still in the formative stages.

Children spend their days with their parents, and if their parents, G-d forbid, mistreat or neglect them, it creates a wound that is hard to heal. Each time a child encounters the parent who hurt them, feelings of resentment are triggered.

Children or Servants ?

It's beneficial and appropriate for children to help with household

chores. The responsibility for household tasks should be shared



6. Likkutei Moharan 1:7

Parshat Vayetze - Respect - The Key to a Child's Soul

among all family members, and children should become accustomed to their future family life.

However, it's essential to know how to approach this. Children are not servants sent into the world to assist us; rather, they are entrusted to us by the Creator for us to nurture, educate, and care for.

If someone forces their children to do anything and punishes them when they fail to comply, they are treating their children as servants. When such a child grows up and starts their

own family, their association with household chores will be linked to tension and humiliation. There is little chance that they will respect their parents.

But if household tasks are presents to the child in a way that emphasizes how much they rely on them and how much they need their help, it fosters a different kind of relationship. When the child accomplishes something, they should be praised and commended, even if the result is subpar. This kind of upbringing prepares children to properly serve the Creator.

Respect - The Key to a Child's Soul

For a child to be receptive to their parents and take their words seriously, they need to feel genuinely loved and recognized for who they are. Parents need to understand that a positive approach to their children is crucial, and requires showering them with love and affection. Without them, a child may feel alienated and unwanted, this can potentially lead them down the wrong path unfortunately.

Parents must understand that education should be carried out with an approach of endearment, not with anger and criticism. Harsh discipline, punishments, and anger are not the way to educate a child. Neglect and disregard can be at least as damaging as physical punishments.

Children need to feel a sense of belonging with their parents. Thus, parents should

Parshat Vayetze - Sharing - The Foundation That Stands

show interest in their children's opinions and feelings, listen to them with both ears, and engage with them wholeheartedly.

In return, children will develop strong bonds of love, and they will feel that their parents are their best friends. Creating an atmosphere of open communication allows children to express themselves comfortably.

Sharing - The Foundation That Stands

To expand on the above idea:

One of the most important aspects of parenting is providing a child with a sense of belonging. By involving your child in everyday family life, you help them feel like an essential part of the family. It's important to listen to their opinions and engage with them in the decision-making process.

When you share your thoughts, concerns, and decisions with your child, you are fostering a sense of belonging. This participation gives your child a

Parents would do well to pray and ask G-d to guide them to know how to approach the soul of each and every one of their children.

Jacob, the great educator that he was, knew how to create a sense of closeness with each of his children, and therefore his children are referred to in the Torah as brothers: "And Jacob said to his brothers..." (Genesis 37:13).

sense of pride and security. It's a way of saying, "You matter. Your opinion is important." So, even if your child's words might sometimes bore or tire you, never show it. Always show interest in their thoughts, listen with both ears, and engage with all your heart.

There is an additional benefit to this. When your child reaches adolescence, they will face difficult challenges. By maintaining a strong sense of belonging and open communication, your child will continue to turn to you for guidance, sharing their

most personal concerns and problems.

However, when there is excessive distance and a lack of connection between parents and children, a significant gap can form, causing the child to feel alienated and disconnected from their family. Ultimately, children who lack a sense of belonging in their family might drift into negative environments or unhealthy relationships to compensate.

So, the role of a good parent

is to maintain a strong sense of belonging and provide a space where a child feels comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. This approach creates lasting bonds of love and trust between parents and children.

In summary, respect and honor are essential in raising children. A positive, loving, and understanding approach is more effective than harsh discipline. When children feel they belong and are valued in their family, they develop stronger self-esteem and healthier relationships.

Appreciation - the Secret to Success

In order for a parent to succeed in honoring their child, in order for a parent to create a sense of belonging and partnership, they must appreciate their child !

This is lesson we learn from our Torah portion:

Jacob, during his lifetime, ascended from one level to another, and after eighty-four years, he married Leah and Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah, and reached a

new, incredible level, that of a father. Over the next seven years, he had ten more sons and one daughter, Dinah. When his final eleventh son, Joseph was born, Jacob was ninety-one years old.

Being a father means recognizing and knowing that the Al-mighty chose you to be responsible for a soul (or multiple souls, the more children, the greater the level). It means providing for them materially and spiritually,

and guiding them on the path ascending upward.

It means understanding that the Al-mighty believes in you, and that you are worthy of being a parent. Therefore, you must to fulfill this role with love, joy, and self-confidence.

Jacob faithfully fulfilled his role, dedicating his spirit and soul to educate his children. The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah, Parshat 1, Verse 1) conveys this sentiment:

Jacob, our father, educated his children, guided them, and purified them, leaving no trace of impurity among them. As it is written: 'These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt' (Exodus 1:1), signifying that all of them were as righteous as he was...

Jacob knew that each child is a world unto itself, each child with its own strengths and inclinations, each child grasps and absorbs differently. If one wants to educate their children properly,

they must try to recognize and understand the unique qualities and weaknesses of each child, and strengthen their strengths and heal their weaknesses.

Jacob, our father, discovered and developed the unique characteristics of each of his children. As detailed in 'Avodat HaGershoni'⁷:

All the sons of Jacob had tremendous perfection, yet each had a specific quality, corresponding to the root of his elevated level:

-Reuben: The power of clear vision.

-Simeon: The power of clear hearing.

-Levi: The purity of thought and intentions. always focused on the greatness and loftiness of God

-Judah: The purity of speech.

-Issachar: Diligence in learning.

-Zebulun: Love for the Torah.



-Benjamin: Dedication to the Creator.

-Dan: Devoutness.

-Naphtali: Trust in the Creator.

-Gad: Compassion for one's neighbor.⁸

-Joseph: Virtuous Holiness achieved through distancing from impurity.

Jacob embraced each one, knowing how to educate and cultivate each of them in their unique ways.

May the Al-mighty grant us the ability to kindle in our hearts and in the hearts of our children the true desire to serve the Creator, as described in the verse "And the house of Jacob will be a fire."



Summary and Practical Conclusions:

A. Education means instilling in a child the desire to behave properly. This can be achieved by bringing the child to understand in a comprehensive manner why it is beneficial for them to behave as required. Education is not about telling a child how to behave or act, as many mistakenly believe. Or in other words, 'Education is not training, education is the creation of a desire.'

When we explain to the child, we are not focusing on the explanation of the parent, but rather on the child's understanding. The child needs to comprehend why it is in their best interest to behave in a certain way. If they don't understand, it's a sign that the explanation was insufficient.

B. Some children are blessed with a keen sense of understanding, and grasp things right away. Others may even after a thousand times, still not understand. However, in such a situation, we must not despair, as our sages have taught us: 'According to the effort is the

reward.' Once the child understands, a genuine desire to behave that way will be placed in their heart.

C. The approach to the education of a child, should be through understanding, not through threats and fears. The main goal is to nurture a desire in the hearts of the children. Before commencing education, it's essential to prepare the groundwork, dig the foundation, and build the structure.

D. One of the key points to understand in a child's psyche, is that every person, in general, and every child, in particular, has a deep-seated need for respect. This is true for adults but much more so regarding children. Children are sheltered under their parents' wings, and spend time with them every day. If a parent harms their honor, the wound formed in their soul will have a very hard time healing.

E. Another important point is that parents should involve their

Parshat Vayetze - Summary and Practical Conclusions:

children in household matters. For example: making beds, tidying up rooms, etc. This is how they share the burden with their parents and acquire a sense of responsibility for their future lives when they get married. However, with all the benefits of this approach, it's crucial to know how to ask for their assistance. You need to explain to the child in terms they understand why it's important for them to participate in household tasks and how it will benefit them in the future. When a child understands and comprehends, they will willingly engage in these tasks, and it will prepare them to help others.

F. If however, you treat children like servants, strip them of their right to choose, and dictate to them what they should do, they may "help" out of coercion, yet develop resentment, and their ability to lead a healthy family life in the future is diminished.

If, during her youth, a girl's parents forced her to do all the household work, taking away her choice, when she gets married, it will be tough for her

to lead a normal married life, to run a household. In all of this, her parents are to blame. A daughter is not a servant; you need to know how to ask for help and give thanks and appreciation. So, the foundation of everything is providing genuine respect.

G. For a child to be willing to listen to their parents and take their words seriously, they need to be convinced that their parents genuinely love them, know their existence and personality. Every parent must understand and express how crucial it is to have a positive attitude toward the child. It requires a significant infusion of love and affection.

H. Parents need to understand that education must be delivered with love, not through rudeness and anger. Rudeness and anger don't necessarily manifest through physical punishment or yelling; it's often about neglecting the child's emotional well-being. When a child feels unnecessary in their home, with no sense of belonging or contribution, they experience

Parshat Vayetze - Summary and Practical Conclusions:

the darkest aspects of life, and their mood is constantly low, making them vulnerable to a spiritual fall.

I. Parents must involve their child in the routine activities of the home. For instance, if you decide to replace the living room furniture, it's not something that directly impacts the child, but from the perspective of a sense of belonging – you should involve them. Offer them the opportunity –using kind and gentle words – to assist in selecting home furnishings, and more. Afterward, the child will go with a wonderful sense – I contributed to making decisions in my home. Through such a seemingly simple act, you infuse in the child an invaluable feeling of security and belonging.

J. When a parent creates a sense of belonging with their child, strong bonds of love develop between them, and the child feels that their father is, in essence, their best friend. You involve the child in your matters, and they involve you in theirs. This is a sacred

obligation, to provide children with the feeling that their father is their best friend. Therefore, it's essential to train yourself to lend an ear to your child's words, to take joy in their happiness and share their sorrows, allowing them to express themselves comfortably and pleasantly. Even if the child's words are tedious and tiresome, it's your responsibility not to show your impatience. You must show interest in their words, listen to them with both your ears and your heart.

K. All of this will be beneficial in the future because when they reach adolescence, God forbid, they'll face challenging trials. They will share their most personal matters with you, and you will be the only one they open up to. They will never do things behind your back because they know that there is someone at home who understands and values them.

L. For a parent to be successful in honoring their child and creating a sense of belonging and partnership, they must be willing

Parshat Vayetze - Summary and Practical Conclusions:

to accommodate the child. If, G-d forbid, they cannot accommodate the child and, worse yet, regard them as a 'black sheep,' they do not deserve the title 'parent.'

M. Parents need to pour their hearts out before the Creator and earnestly seek guidance on how to approach their children's souls and those of each of their children.

Shabbat Shalom !





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Shabbat Times Vayetze

12th of Kislev, 5784

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	4:14 pm	5:15 pm	5:43 pm
Miami	5:12 pm	6:06 pm	6:41 pm
Los Angeles	4:28 pm	5:25 pm	5:57 pm
Montreal	3:58 pm	5:04 pm	5:28 pm
Toronto	4:27 pm	5:31 pm	5:57 pm
London	3:43 pm	4:56 pm	5:12 pm
Jerusalem	4:21 pm	5:11 pm	5:44 pm
Tel Aviv	4:17 pm	5:07 pm	5:39 pm
Haifa	4:15pm	5:04 pm	5:36 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:19 pm	5:08 pm	5:41 pm

Pathways to the Heart

*From the Words of
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l*

A wise parent knows to divide their love evenly among their children. No child should feel that their parents' love is provided to their siblings more than to them.

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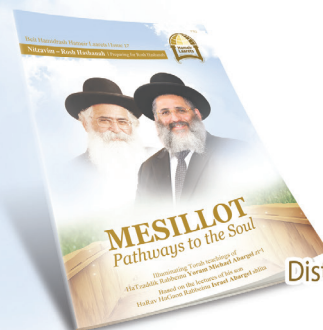
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