

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה

מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל

Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe Rabinowitz zt"l

פרשת ויצא

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Dedicated
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פרשת ויצא

וַיְהִי בַּבֹּקֶר וַהֲגִה הוּא לֵאמֹר אֵל לָבֹן מָה זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי הֲלֹא בְרַחֵל עַבְדְּתִי עִמָּךְ וְלָמָּה רָמִיתָנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר לָבֹן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה כֵן בְּמִקְוֵמִנוּ לָתֵת הַצָּעִירָה לְפָנַי הַבְּכִירָה: (בראשית כ"ט כ"ה-כ"ו)

Being Honest with Yourself

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz used to often speak about how terrible it is for one to be dishonest with others. Trickery, manipulation, double-crossing others – there is simply no place for them in Jewish life. I always like to add to this that there is another form of dishonesty that is perhaps even worse – being dishonest with oneself. Deceit can destroy lifelong relationships and cause decades of income to vanish in an instant – but being untruthful to our own selves can be far worse. The entire concept of learning *mussar* and trying to perfect ourselves is all based on honesty; if we can't look into the mirror and admit to our flaws, then we will simply remain stagnant for the rest of our lives.

I had a roommate in the Mir who took ill around Chanukah time one year. He was taken to the hospital for a while, and when he was more or less on the mend, he was discharged. He wasn't fully recuperated, though; he had to spend the next few weeks resting up at the home of a yungerman in the Yeshiva. A few months later, this bachur was feeling like his old self again – but his mother really wanted him to get checked out by his family doctor in England to ascertain that he had completely overcome the illness.

Now, the rule in the Mirrer Yeshiva at the time was that if a bachur wanted to get a parting bracha from Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, he could only ask for one after Purim. This rule was implemented due to the fact that many bachurim often had reasons why they had to leave before the end of the zman, but these valid reasons often came along with less important reasons that caused them to want to leave even earlier (they had a brother's chasunah at the end of Adar, but they're uncle was also having his fiftieth birthday a couple of days before that, and his parents 25th anniversary was a week before that, so he ended up leaving around Tu B'shvat). In order to prevent this early exodus from getting out of hand, the bachurim were informed that they could only get a bracha from Rav Chaim after Purim.

At his mother's behest, this bachur decided to go ask Rav Chaim if he could have an exception to the rule due to his need to see the doctor at home. His Yiddish wasn't too great, though, so he asked if I could come along to be his interpreter. So, the two of us went to Rav Chaim.

I began the conversation by asking Rav Chaim if my friend can have permission to leave early. Rav Chaim immediately responded that the Yeshiva had a rule, so I went on to explain that my friend was ill for a while and his mother really wanted to get him checked out. Rav Chaim was just sitting there, quietly listening, without saying a word. After a brief silence, my friend asked me: "Can you explain that my mother had originally wanted me home Chanukah time when I first took ill, and I chose to stay until now in order to not disrupt the zman? Now that it's after Rosh Chodesh Adar, and she still really wants me to come, shouldn't I finally give in to her wishes?"

I repeated these words to Rav Chaim, and he suddenly sat upright and asked: "Ask the bachur – did he learn the halachos of kibbud av v'em over the past few months?" So I asked him, and he shook his head. Rav Chaim then continued to ask: "Did he learn any mussar about kibbud av v'em?" Once again, my friend shook his head.

Rav Chaim then clarified his point. "I don't understand something. Your friend here didn't listen to his mother Chanukah time, yet suddenly now – he feels the need to heed her call for him to return home. If he didn't recently study the halachos or the hashkafos behind kibbud av v'em – then what caused this sudden change of heart?" I asked my friend these words, and he shrugged his shoulders. "I'll tell you what changed," Rav Chaim concluded. "Back during Kislev, he wanted to stay in Yeshiva, so that's what he chose to do. Now, he's ready to leave, so he decided to go. And now he's blaming it on his mother? That's not called being honest with yourself." We got the point, and we left.

Just to finish the story: Rav Yitzchok Ezrachi, Rav Chaim's son-in-law, heard about our conversation, and he went to his shver and told him that this bachur wasn't merely under the weather – he had undergone a tremendous amount of yesurim! He had experienced a severe illness! When Rav Chaim heard that, he immediately understood that this was truly a good reason to send the bachur home. He summoned the bachur, and began to cry, saying: "You went through yesurim? I didn't know about this! I know what yesurim feel like! I'm sorry for not allowing you to go. Please listen to your mother and go home at once." He bentsched the bachur warmly and sent him on his way.

The ending of the story brings out Rav Chaim's extreme sensitivity to other's feelings – but the main part of the story that I want to bring out is our initial conversation with him. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz had taught my friend and I a lifelong lesson: be honest with yourself! Always ask yourself – what is the impetus that's driving me to do this? What is the deep-down reason why I want this so badly?

Yaakov Made the Condition Crystal Clear

When Yaakov made up to work for Lavan for seven years on the condition of receiving Rochel as a wife, the *pasuk* uses the famous *lashon* of בְּרַחֵל בְּתֶךְ הַקְטָנָה, which Rashi explains was meant as a deterrent to prevent Lavan from tricking him in various ways. If he would simply say Rochel, then Lavan could have given him any other Rochel in the street, so he had to say בְּתֶךְ; if he would just say those two words, then Lavan would simply swap his daughters' names in order to give him Leah. So Yaakov chose to say all three words to avoid any sly games. Yaakov also made sure to mention to as many people as possible that he was working 'for Rochel,' so that it should become a known fact in town that he was promised the younger sister and not the older one. On top of that, he made up a secret password with Rochel in order to ascertain that she was indeed the *kallah* on the night of the wedding.

Indeed, on the night of the marriage, Yaakov was certain that he was marrying Rochel. The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh goes so far to say that because Yaakov was with Leah while his mind was actually on Rochel, he inadvertently affected his firstborn son – Reuven – with the character flaw of כְּחֵזֶה כְּמִים, which ultimately cost him the *malchus* and the *kehunah* of Klal Yisroel. He therefore explains that Yaakov's primary *ta'nah* on Lavan the next morning was "למה רימיתני" – "Why did you fool me?" – because had Lavan forced him to knowingly marry Leah first and only afterward marry Rochel, then at least he would do it intentionally and not cause any negative

affect on his children. But now that Lavan tricked him into being with someone other than who he thought – he caused him to damage his own future son's prospect for reaching his greatest potential.

Lavan Had His Own Calculations

The Ohr Hachaim then dissects Lavan's response to Yaakov. Lavan begins by saying: "First of all, our original agreement about you marrying Rochel – that's not off the table. I still plan on giving her to you. I didn't trick you!"

Let's say someone orders a refrigerator from the local appliance store. A few days later, a brand-new oven shows up at his front door. He calls the store manager and bellows: "You messed up my order! I paid for a refrigerator, not an oven!"

"Oh, no need to worry," the manager answers calmly. "Your refrigerator is on the way; it should be coming in a few days. I just figured that you probably need an oven for your new house as well, so I sent you one. If you want, you can return it and just keep the refrigerator."

So, Lavan's first line of defense was that he didn't really trick Yaakov, he simply gave him a different form of payment for the time being, but was more than willing to present him with the original form of payment in the future as well.

The second line of defense was the blame game: לא יעשה כן במקומינו – "This wasn't because of me! I would surely give you Rochel first as we discussed; but the people in my town – they simply wouldn't allow it! It would cause a big *shidduch* crisis if we would allow our younger daughters to get married before their less-beautiful older sisters. Nobody would end up marrying the older ones! So, you see... I couldn't simply ignore the demands of my fellow townspeople!"

Lavan's third line of defense was deflecting the blame onto Yaakov. It went something like this: "You see, when you first came here seven years ago, my daughters were still both young. I was sure that at the end of your promised years of work, Leah would be long married. But, alas, she was not. So, when you came to me and asked for your wife, I was sure you meant Leah! After all, doesn't everybody in this town know that the younger one never goes before the older one? I was certain that after seven years of work and Leah was still single – you would surely take her first, as is the custom of this town. I didn't think twice when you said, 'give me my wife,' because I was sure you meant Leah! That's what anybody would assume in this situation. Yaakov, this was your fault, not mine! You should have clarified that you were demanding a break in tradition!"

Lavan then concluded by making himself sound like a decent fellow. "You're concerned that you'll have to wait for Rochel? Oh, don't worry about that... I'll give her to you right after *sheva brachos*! And it's fine, I'll trust you that you'll give me another seven years of work..."

Yaakov's Incredible Devotion to His Work

Once we're mentioning Yaakov's work for Lavan – we must pause for a moment to discuss how unbelievable his work was. The *pesukim* tell us that Yaakov barely slept while watching the

sheep; he weathered scorching heat by day and frigid cold by night. If something went wrong with one of the sheep, Yaakov would bear the loss and take responsibility for it, whether the loss happened by night or by day. These descriptions sound far beyond what any employee would do. In fact, the Gemara (Bava Metzia 93b) brings a dispute regarding Yaakov's work: Rav Chisda says that Yaakov's work was actually the way every worker is obligated to treat his job; Rabbah, on the other hand, maintains that Yaakov's extreme vigilance is not to be expected from regular workers. If it's accepted that workers go to sleep at night, then he's permitted to do so as well; all in all, he's required to follow the accepted norms.

Don't Assume Everyone Else Has Your *Cheshbonos*

Now, what's the true answer to Lavan's excuses and accusations that the mix-up was really Yaakov's fault? The Ohr Hachaim says that although it was accepted practice for people to marry off their children in the order of their age – if there was an express agreement to do otherwise, then it is the responsibility of the party that wishes to break the agreement to clarify first. This is of course obvious to most people; the proper approach would be for Lavan to tell Yaakov as follows: "Listen, Yaakov. I was hoping that Leah would be married by the time seven years went by. But that's not the case. So, I can give you two options: either you marry Leah first, or you can wait until she's married so that I can give you Rachel." All he had to do was be a *mentch*; discuss it, open a conversation about the issue. It sounds simple, but to someone whose mind is crooked – the original logic sounds very plausible.

We must take out of this Ohr Hachaim a *halacha lemayssa* lesson. Let's give a *mashal*:

A person is trying to park his car. He sees that the sign says 'no parking,' but he comes up with a whole lomdus about how really the law wasn't referring to his particular situation. This lomdus may make him feel better about parking there – but it doesn't work for the police officer. When he comes back a few minutes later, there's a hefty ticket sitting on his windshield. He can get frustrated about his misfortune, but he'd be a fool to blame the cop for not thinking of his lomdus. It's very nice that he concocted a whole shtickel torah about why what he did wasn't mamash wrong, but how can he blame the cop for following the basic rules in the book?

The fact that you have a reason to justify your actions doesn't automatically mean that the other party will see it that way as well. It may be a good *cheshbon*, but you have to understand that you're not following the regular mode of logic that everyone else is operating with. If you're coming with a *chiddush* – then you must explain yourself before you act on it!

In the apartment building that I lived in while I was in Toronto, everyone was granted a right to one parking spot. At one point, I didn't have a car, and one of my neighbors had just purchased his second one. So, he asked me if it would be okay for him to use my parking space for his second car. "No problem," I said. "But I just want it to be clear that in the event that I get a car, this parking space will be mine again."

My neighbor was taken aback by this. "Come on, Moshe! You really think you need to tell me that? Obviously I'm going to stop parking there if you get a car!"

Rav Scheinberg happened to have been visiting Toronto at the time, so I asked him: "Was it correct for me to mention to my neighbor this condition?"

"Of course!" Rav Scheinberg replied. "The vast majority of dinei Torah happen because people fail to clarify all the details before they make an agreement. It's so important to speak everything out prior to the deal!"

We're taking two points out of this *parshah* with Lavan:

1 – Be honest with yourself. Look inwardly and find out what's driving you to do what you're doing – and decide whether it's really an appropriate and correct motive.

2 – Be perfectly honest and up-front with others. Even if you have a great *chesbon*, and even if you're convinced that your mindset is the obvious one – speak it out clearly. Don't assume that your thought process is the only factor in the equation.

Being perfectly honest with ourselves will greatly benefit our relationship with the Ribono shel Olam. We must put a tremendous emphasis on it!

נִחְשֵׁתִי וַיְבָרְכֵנִי ה' בְּגִלְלָהּ (בראשית ל' כ"ז)

רש"י: שעל ידך בזה לי ברכה, כשצאת לכאן לא היו לי בנים, שנאמר (לעיל כ"ו) והנה רחל בתו בזה עם האנן, אפשר יא לו בנים והוא שולח בתו אלל הרועים, ועכשיו היו לו בנים שנאמר (להלן לא א) וישמע את דברי בני לבן:

The Ingratitude of Lavan's Sons

We find that as long as Yaakov was in town, Lavan saw tremendous blessing in his home. Rashi points out that we see from the fact that Lavan had sent his daughter to the well that he must not have had sons. Why would he endanger his daughter if the same job could be done by a man? But later on (Perek 31 Pasuk 1), we find that the *pasuk* describes how Yaakov overheard "the sons of Lavan" talking about how Yaakov became wealthy off their father's back. From here we see that during the duration of Yaakov's stay, Lavan was blessed with sons.

I have a *kasha* on this Rashi, though: why did Rashi have to go all the way to that *pasuk* in order to bring his proof? We already see a couple of *pesukim* earlier (Perek 30 Pasuk 35) that Lavan removed all of the abnormally colored sheep from his flock and gave them to "his sons" in order to minimize the chances of Yaakov getting wealthy off of his flock. Couldn't Rashi already prove from this *pasuk* that Lavan had sons?

I think we can answer that Rashi was trying to teach us a lesson by specifically citing the *pasuk* that he did. In that *pasuk*, we see how Lavan's sons were lamenting their great loss by having Yaakov around. "Did you see that fellow, Yaakov? Because of him, we're losing everything! He's taking all our wealth away. If not for him, our father would have so much more!" Rashi was pointing out the tremendous lack of *hakoras hatov* that Lavan's sons had for Yaakov. Did they even realize for a second that their entire existence was only due to Yaakov's presence? Had they paid a little more attention, they would have heard their own father admitting – "ניחשתי ויברכני ה' – בגללך" – *I have learned by divination that Hashem has blessed me on account of you.*

Noticing the *Hashgacha* at All Times

We always mention the Ohr Hachaim that says regarding the *akedah*: we say in *Shema* "ואהבת את ה' אלוך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך" – and these were all included in Hashem's request of Avraham to sacrifice his son! בכל לבבך – Avraham loved Yitzchok with his whole heart; בכל נפשך – Yitzchok was Avraham's entire *neshama*; he was the entire future of Avraham's work in the world! And בכל מאדך – Avraham didn't need his money, he just wanted to support Yitzchok so that he could go on to live a life of serving Hashem! And yet, Hashem wanted him to give it all up. That's the quintessential *ahavas Hashem*! But the main point I want to focus on is the last thing the Ohr Hachaim says: do we really think for a second that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted Yitzchok as a *korban*? Of course not! He wanted to give Avraham this great *zechus* of exercising *ahavas Hashem* to its fullest. This would benefit his children and grandchildren for generations to come.

We often get stuck looking at the small picture in front of us and struggle to grasp why Hashem is testing us. We begin to ask questions; we begin to wonder why this happened or why that happened... can't we stop for a moment and realize that *everything* is good for us? Every single hardship, every single mishap, every single *nisayon* is there for our benefit! Do we want to look like the sons of Lavan who were so focused on Yaakov getting rich that they forgot that their very existence was because of him in the first place? We have to stop getting stuck on the things that seem inconvenient or even unfortunate and begin to recognize the bigger picture. We may never know that this particular misfortune is actually our greatest benefit!

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