

# אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה

מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל

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Shmuessen from  
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פרשת ויצא

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לעילוי נשמת  
מנחם מנדל יחזקאל בן יששכר  
בעריש הלוי ז"ל שרייבר  
לכבוד היארצייט ג' כסלו

## פרשת ויצא

וַיַּחְלֵם וְהִנֵּה סֵלֶם מֵצֵב אֶרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה, וְהִנֵּה מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ:  
(בראשית כ"ח י"ב)

*And he dreamed; and behold there was a ladder standing on the ground while its head reached the heaven; and behold malachim of Hashem were ascending and descending on it.*

וְעֵינֵי לֵאָה רַכּוֹת, וְרַחֵל הֵיְתָה יִפְתַּת תֶּאֱרַר וְיִפְתַּת מְרָאָה: (כ"ט ט"ז)

*The eyes of Leah were tender; [whereas] Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance.*

רש"י: רכות. שהיתה סבורה לעלות בגורלו של עשו ובכחה, שהיו הכל אומרים, שני בנים לרבקה ושתי בנות ללבן, הגדולה לגדול והקטנה לקטן:

### The 'Tender' Eyes of Leah

When the *passuk* first introduces us to our *Imahos*, Rochel and Leah, the *passuk* tells us *וְעֵינֵי לֵאָה רַכּוֹת* / *The eyes of Leah were tender; [whereas] Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance*. The *passuk* seemingly seems to be informing us about the inferior appearance of Leah compared to the beauty of Rochel. Whereas Rochel was indeed thoroughly beautiful, Leah had a noticeable physical defect which detracted from her beauty – her eyes were tender and constantly tearing (רשב"ם ב"ב קכ"ג). However, the Gemara (שם) questions this. Even regarding a non-kosher animal, the *passuk* is so careful to refrain from spelling out its shortcoming directly – and it rather goes out of its way to refer to the animal as *טמאה* / *impure*, as opposed to the straightforward expression *איננה טהורה* / *not pure*; certainly then, regarding the *tzadekes* Leah Imeinu, the *passuk* would not speak in an explicitly unfavorable manner!

The Gemara answers that the *passuk* is not intending to mention a negative characteristic of Leah, but a positive one. This is because the fact that Leah was teary-eyed was not a physical defect that was part of her natural makeup. Rather, it was an acquired state, reached after years of intense crying. In fact, she had cried so much that her eyelashes had fallen out. What was the terrible thing that she was crying about?

### Both Leah and Rochel Cried that Should not Be Married to Eisav Harasha

The Gemara explains that there was an assumed *shidduch* that would take place for these two girls. It was common knowledge that Rivka Imeinu had had two sons, while her brother Lavan had two daughters. Based on the societal norms of the times, it was quite obvious that the brothers would be matched with the sisters. 'Obviously,' maintained the prevalent wisdom, 'the older sister will be wed to the older brother, and the younger sister to the younger brother.' This assumption of the local population did not escape Rochel and Leah, and Leah calculated quickly enough that her husband-to-be was Eisav. This thought terrified Leah, and she spent her days and years tearfully davening and begging Hashem that this should not be. It was this praiseworthy crying, based on the commendable desire to be spared having to marry Eisav Harasha, which caused her eyes to become tender. It is thus not a fault that the *passuk* is mentioning, but a positive quality.

This intense weeping was not limited to Leah. After six years had elapsed from the time of Yaakov's marriage to Rochel, in which she was not granted a child, she, too, began worrying that she would be divorced by Yaakov, and thereby cast into the lot of marrying Eisav. In fact, Rashi (ל' כ"ב) tells us that this worry of Rochel was one of the merits which eventually caused her to have a child.

### The Reputations of Yaakov and Eisav

What emerges from this discussion is that both Rochel and Leah felt a strong aversion to being married to Eisav. My father used to quote from the Lomzer mashgiach, Rav Moshe Rosenstein how he analyzed this situation. Although Rochel and Leah grew up in the home of their father Lavan, far away from Yaakov and Eisav, we can assume that like the rest of the locals in their town, they heard descriptions of their cousins. Surely when they heard of the *shidduchim* that were collectively '*redt*' for them to these

two cousins, they did their own 'homework' on their suggested matches. What were the reports that they heard?

*'Yaakov, the younger one, stays in the Beis Medrash the entire day – and a good portion of the night. He learns, and learns, and learns, and learns some more. He is not known to possess any particular skill or charm.*

*'He does not practice a trade, and there is no clear prospect of a profession for him. He does not know medicine to become a doctor, nor the local laws to become a lawyer. He definitely does not show any interest in becoming an accountant. He is not good with his hands either, whether in fine arts or in construction work. He is not good at sports, and he does not seem to enjoy following them. In general, he does not engage in much recreation.*

*'In short, Yaakov does one thing, period. He learns.'*

What about Eisav?

*'Eisav is a well-polished man, and quite charming to boot. He speaks in a sharp, cunning fashion, with a sophisticated, worldly mannerism. He is great with his hands, and he has made himself into a world-famous hunter. He is a strong man, even defeating the powerful Nimrod in battle. He has a great future in store for him. On the recreational front, Eisav loves having a good time, and is a great sports player. On all ends, Eisav is a great catch!'*

### **Leah and Rachel Passed Up on the Pleasurable Life of Eisav in Favor of the Ruchniyus of Yaakov**

How did Rachel and Leah react to these descriptions? We would assume that both of them would desperately desire to be married to the successful Eisav, rather than the *schlepper*, Yaakov. After all, they did not grow up in the homes of the *Avos Hakedoshim*, receiving a solid education about the virtues of a Torah life. They grew up in the home of the *reshaim*, Lavan and Besuel!

*In our terms, we would say that were raised in a nonreligious home, and they were sent to a completely secular public school.*

And yet, with their 'secular' upbringing and all, we still find both Leah and Rachel vigorously desiring and doing all they could to be able marry Yaakov rather than Eisav. How is it that they came to reject the glamorous lifestyle available to them were they to marry Eisav, and instead chose the poor, nondescript life that Yaakov would bring them?

*When married to Eisav, they could go to the department store with their credit card, and not pay any attention to prices. When the cash register rings up the bill, they would tell the cashier, 'Don't even tell me the price; I don't want to hear it. Just take my credit card and swipe!'*

*When married to Yaakov, every visit to the supermarket would be an ordeal. They must check to see which brands of groceries are on WIC. They could only buy the already half-spoiled produce which is on sale. At the cash register, they are forced to return a few items to the shelf, because the bill is too high.*

What could possibly cause them to choose the lifestyle of Yaakov over that of Eisav, without any prior education or information given to them about the other-worldly benefits of Yaakov's lifestyle?

### **Leah and Rachel Understood on their Own the Aimlessness of Eisav's Lifestyle**

We are forced to conclude that one can achieve true understanding by himself, without any positive upbringing to help him in the process. Leah and Rachel realized entirely on their own that all the glamor and promise of Eisav's lifestyle results in utter emptiness.

*True, they could have an entire closet set aside for all the different shoes they would have, for all the constant events they were attending. They could have three brand new luxury*

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הר"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל  
פרשת ויצא

*cars. They would go on great trips, and they could spend as much money as they please on all sorts of jewelry and expensive gifts during those trips.*

*True, they would have a great time.*

*...but then what?*

Where does all this pleasure take a person? He enjoys each new gadget for a few minutes until he is ready for the next one. When the few moments of pleasure are over, what can he say that he gained from that pleasure? He walks away with absolutely nothing.

Leah and Rochel understood that the pleasure in Eisav's life is completely artificial and that it leads nowhere. Both of them concluded that the only true, lasting pleasure is a life of *ruchniyus*. Indeed, there is suffering, but there is also meaning and fulfillment throughout one's life. Afterward as well, a person who leads such a life enters an existence of the ultimate contentment – closeness to Hashem. Without any outside influence, Rochel and Leah perceived which of the two lifestyles is the truly fulfilling one, and which is one of artificiality and emptiness.

### **The Punishment of the *Malachim***

Let us discuss a different point in our *parshah* which will lead us back to the point we are discussing:

When Yaakov lay down to sleep at Har HaMoriyah, he dreamed of *malachim* ascending a ladder to *Shamayim*, while others were descending. The Medrash (ב"ר נ' ט') explains that these *malachim* were the same ones who had been sent to destroy Sedom 138 years earlier. At that time, they had said the words *כי משחיתים אנהנו את המקום הזה* (י"ט ט"ג) / *For we are destroying this place*. Chazal tell us that uttering these words was considered a sin (as we will explain below), and as a punishment for this, they were not allowed back to *Shamayim*. These same two *malachim* now beheld the face of Yaakov Avinu for the very first time in their 'lives'. To their great shock, they discovered that Yaakov's face was none other than the fourth image on the *Kisei HaKovod* itself! As there was now a 'direct route' to *Shamayim* available in the form of the ladder that Yaakov viewed in his dream, these *malachim* took advantage of it, and they rushed back up to *Shamayim* to inform their fellow *malachim* of this astonishing discovery. All the other *malachim* immediately came down to witness this amazing sight.

The sin of the *malachim* seems difficult to understand. The fault seems to lie in the fact that they used the language '*We are destroying*', which implied that they were destroying Sedom through their own power, without the help of Hashem. However, it is difficult to understand where there is such an implication in their words. After all, they were indeed sent to destroy Sedom, and that this where they were headed. What is wrong with them stating that they are on their way to accomplish the mission on which they were sent?

### **Hashem's Dispute with the *Malachim* Regarding the Creation of Man**

Rav Gedalya Schorr explains this Medrash based on a Gemara (סנהדרין ל"ה:) which tells us of a discussion between Hashem and the *malachim* prior to the creation of man. Hashem asked one group of *malachim* their opinion regarding man's creation, and they responded that in their opinion, it was not a smart idea. They said to HaKadosh Boruch Hu the words *מה אנוש כי תזכרנו* (תהילים ה' ה') / *What is a human being that You should remember him?* He is full of sin and certainly unworthy of creation!

Upon hearing the *malachim's* response, Hashem burned that group of *malachim* in a fire. The same scene repeated itself for a second group of *malachim*, and they, too, were burned. When Hashem asked the third group, they had already learned their lesson. 'Hashem,' they said, 'do as You see fit!' Clearly though, the third group also saw no purpose in the creation of man, yet they had learned to keep their thoughts 'to themselves' when asked by HaKadosh Boruch Hu.

### **At the Destruction of Sedom, The *Malachim* Felt Victorious**

When Hashem sent the *malachim* to destroy Sedom, it was as if 'confirmed' that indeed, man did not deserve to be created. After all, they were being destroyed on account of their sins. This irony did not pass over the *malachim*, and they understood full well the implication of their mission. When they uttered the words *כי משחיתים אנהנו* / *we are destroying*, there was a slight element of triumph in their voices.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל  
פרשת ויצא

*"Ok, you want us to destroy Sedom? Sure, we'll destroy it!" – The undertone in their voices was evident. They were as if adding, "Uh, by the way, didn't we once say that we don't even know why people should be created?"*

### **Yaakov Avinu Made Hashem Be Victorious**

As punishment for the *malachim* for the arrogant attitude in their words, they were expelled from *Shamayim*, and they were forced to remain on Earth. When did their sentence end? When they saw the face of Yaakov Avinu and recognized it from the *Kisei HaKovod*. Suddenly, they were faced with the full extent of the glorious levels that man could reach – levels which are unattainable for *malachim*. Now, there was clearly a purpose in man's creation, for only he could reach such heights of perfection in *Avodas Hashem*. When the *malachim* felt the urge to share their discovery with their fellow *malachim*, they were thereby admitting their error. The time had then come for them to be allowed back into *Shamayim*.<sup>1</sup>

### **A Mashal About Our Stay in this World**

To better appreciate the 'exchange' between Hashem and the *malachim*, let us cite a *mashal* which the Medrash (מדרש רבה קהלת פרשה ה' סימן כ') gives on the *passuk* (קהלת) כאשר יצא מבטן אמו ערום ישוב ללכת כשבא (The way one left his mother's womb unclothed, so will he return as he came):

*A fox was walking around a vineyard, trying to get inside. The problem was that the vineyard was surrounded with tall fences on all sides, and there was no way for this poor fox to enter. The fox continued circling the vineyard, hungrily eyeing the delicious grapes contained within. After a few minutes, the fox noticed a small hole in the fence. The fox was overjoyed as he prepared to climb through the hole and eat grapes to his heart's content. After a few attempts, however, the fox hit upon a disappointing realization: He was too chubby to fit inside the hole. Desperate for some grapes, the fox devised a plan. He starved himself for three days, until he became emaciated enough that he was able to fit through the hole. The fox climbed through, and boy, did he eat! He gorged himself with grapes as if the world was coming to an end.*

*After eating his 'fill', it was time for the fox to leave the vineyard. To the fox's dismay, however, he had eaten so much that he was again unable to fit through the hole! If he would not leave, the owner would eventually discover him and kill him! Having no alternative, the fox was forced to fast for another three days, until he was again able to climb through.*

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<sup>1</sup> I heard a similar explanation from Rav Shlomo Brevda regarding the incident in the Gemara (ב"מ נ"ט:) in which Rabbi Eliezer was involved in a *machlokes* with the other *chachamim* regarding the *tumah* status of a certain oven. Rabbi Eliezer brought various signs to demonstrate the correctness of his position. Finally, he declared, "Let it be proven from *Shamayim* that I am correct!"

A Heavenly Voice then issued forth exclaiming, "Why are you starting with Eliezer my son, of whom the *halacha* follows his rulings in every instance?!"

The case seemed closed at that point, for after all, Hashem Himself had sided with Rabbi Eliezer! However, even this did not faze the *chachamim*. Rabbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and announced *היא בשמים היא* /"The Torah is no longer under *Shamayim's* jurisdiction!" i.e. The *chachamim* of this world determine the *halacha*!

The Gemara relates that Rabbi Nosson later asked Eliyahu HaNavi how Hashem reacted to Rabbi Yehoshua's retort. Eliyahu replied that Hashem 'smiled' and said *בני נצחוני בני נצחוני* /"My children have defeated Me!"

Rav Brevda explained a different meaning in the words of Hashem. *בני נצחוני בני* means 'My children have given Me *ניצחון* /victory over the *malachim* in the question about whether man should have been created!' i.e. There is now a justification for the creation of man, because a *malach* can never reach a *madreigah* in which he has the power to 'overrule' Hakadosh Boruch Hu Himself. Only a person can reach such a lofty level, and hence, the *kiddush Hashem* that only human beings can achieve necessitates their creation.

שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל  
פרשת ויצא

*As the fox left the vineyard, he turned around to face it. "Vineyard, vineyard," he exclaimed in a sad tone, "how great you are and how superior are your fruits! Yet what benefit have I had I had from you? I am forced to leave exactly as I have come!"*

The Medrash explains that in a similar way, a man who spends his time in this world involved in amassing worldly pleasures and possessions, will discover upon leaving this world that he has nothing to take with him. He may have been a multi-millionaire – and yet what benefit does he have from it, when he leaves the world completely emptyhanded?

### **The Continuation of the Mashal**

In order to bring ourselves to the full understanding of this Medrash, let us present what Rav Yankel Galinsky would add to the *mashal*, and from there we will connect it with the theme we are discussing:

*Suppose that after the above incident occurred with that particular fox, a whole group of foxes gathers around the vineyard. All of them heard of the vineyard's great fruits, and they all heard as well the previous story of the fox. They stand around the vineyard, wondering if there is some way in which they could get inside and enjoy the fruits, without running into the issue of the first fox. As they are discussing their situation, two yeshiva bachurim walk by.*

*The foxes grab their chance. "Tell us" they say to the bachurim, "do either of you have any advice for us?"*

*The bachurim think for a few moments, until one of them comes up with a suggestion. "I have an idea," he says. "First, starve yourselves just like the first fox did, and enter the vineyard. Once you are inside, however, you will begin to act differently than the first fox. Rather than stuffing yourselves with grapes right there, fill up small bags with grapes. Then, you can stick packages of grapes through the fence. Stick as many packages through the fence that you can, until you hear the owner approaching. You will then easily jump through the fence with your still thin bodies, and you will be free to enjoy the grapes for many days!"*

*The foxes hear the bachur's idea and they think it is absolutely brilliant. They are about to begin with the plan, when the other bachur speaks up. "The idea is terrible and will be completely ineffective!" he announces.*

*They all wonder what this bachur has against the plan, and he explains himself. "Yes, theoretically, the idea makes sense. But you are forgetting your own nature. You foxes have no self-control, and you will be unable to restrain yourselves from feasting on the grapes right then and there. In the end, the owner will catch you while you are busy gobbling, and he will shoot you before you can escape. Don't even try it!"*

*Several days later, these same two bachurim pass by the vineyard. As they walk, they notice a dead fox with a bullet in its head. The second bachur gives a triumphant look to the first bachur. "You see? I was right. The foxes could not control themselves!"*

*They continue walking a few hundred feet when they pass by a different scene. There is a fox munching on some grapes, while sitting contentedly near several hundred packages of grapes. Now, the first bachur looks at the second one with a victorious expression. "You see? There was a fox that could control himself!"*

In this addition to the *mashal*, we convey an important point regarding our choices in our *Avodas Hashem*. The logical and wise choice for the foxes was abundantly clear. They had a bachur explaining it to them patiently, and they understood the simple truth in his words. And yet, they still could not control themselves from acting differently. Only a few foxes were able to take hold of themselves and act according to what they knew was the rational path for them.

### **It is Clear that We must Prepare for Olam Haba**

These 'packages' represent our *avodah* in this world. Rather than trying to grab all the physical and worldly pleasures possible for ourselves while we are in this world, the wise choice is to engage in Torah and *mitzvos*. Through this, we are sending packages to the Next World, where we can truly enjoy the true Pleasure of Creation – closeness to Hashem.

The strategy we have said is clear to all, and it is obvious that it is the only logical and rational path for one to take. Moreover, we are all aware that even beside for the reward in *Olam Haba*, a life of Torah and *ruchniyus* is the only way we feel contentment even in this world.

- *We are all aware that when we force ourselves to concentrate through a davening, we feel fulfillment and a closeness to Hashem, to which no earthly pleasure even comes close. When, however, we allow ourselves instead to speed through the davening while our minds are busy reviewing the events of the previous day, we feel the most empty and hollow feeling inside. It is certainly worthwhile to concentrate rather than daydreaming.*
- *When we control ourselves from issuing a nasty comment to a family member who is irritating us, the resultant shalom is worth millions of dollars. When we say the harsh word, we bring a terrible atmosphere into our home, one which is not enjoyable for anyone. It is certainly not worth whatever momentary, little satisfaction we will feel when uttering the line.*

As we demonstrated earlier from the behavior of Rochel and Leah, one can arrive at the correct understanding, even without any education to that effect from one's surroundings.

### **Most People Are Unable to Behave According to the Dictates of their Own Understanding**

There is no secret about what is the logical, wise path for us to follow. And yet, so many people fall through because they simply cannot control themselves. They know that they will be better off when doing what is right, and nevertheless, they cannot stop themselves from fulfilling their own urges.

When people are unable to control themselves, they are reinforcing the claim of the *malachim* that the creation of man was pointless. The *malachim* who destroyed Sedom hinted to HaKadosh Boruch Hu, 'You see? They could not control themselves!' When they then saw Yaakov Avinu, Hashem was 'vindicated'. Yaakov understood the true direction in life, and he followed it with such complete self-control that his face was on the *Kisei HaKavod*. 'You see?' says Hashem. 'Yaakov controlled himself and he reached a *madreigah* which a *malach* could never reach!'

### **In Conclusion**

We must remember this important lesson in our lives. It is generally clear what is the wise choice for one to follow in his life, and like Rochel and Leah, one can even come to this conclusion on his own, without any prior upbringing. We are all aware that a life of *ruchniyus* brings us benefit and reward in *Olam Hazeh* and *Olam Haba*, while a life of following one's desires brings only destruction and emptiness. Yet as many people that are aware of this, there are precious few who actually behave according to this understanding. Most people simply lack the necessary control over their own selves to be able behave properly.

Let us bs"d take a hold over ourselves, such that we will achieve blessing and closeness to Hashem in this world and the Next, and such that Hashem could take pride in us. Let us help Hashem demonstrate to the *malachim* that indeed, the creation of man was worthwhile.

HaKadosh Boruch Hu should help us reach this *madreigah*.

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