

Our *Parashah* relates the beginning of *Yisrael's* exile, in the face of its first enemy, R' Baruch Leizerowski z"l (1908-2000; rabbi in Lodz, Poland; post-war Munich, Germany; and Philadelphia) noted in a 1954 *Derashah*. Esav wanted to kill Yaakov, so Yaakov needed to flee. Esav hated Yaakov because he claimed that Yaakov took the blessings that belonged to him, and so it has been in every generation since: Esav's descendants hate Yaakov's descendants and claim that the latter have stolen their wealth, their business opportunities, and so on. Based on these and similar excuses, they aim to wipe out Yaakov and his family. Yaakov, having no choice, must flee from one enemy--Esav--to the land of another enemy--the destructive and deceitful Lavan.

Along the way, "He encountered the place and spent the night there, because the sun had set" (28:11). Our Sages teach that the sun set early that day. While it was still bright outside, it suddenly, unexpectedly, became dark. This, too, is the story of the Jewish People in exile: on the one hand, the world seems to be enlightened by science and technology, but, on the other hand, we sense that darkness pervades the world.

In the midst of all this, *Hashem* shows Yaakov what he desires most to see: the place of the *Bet Hamikdash* (see 28:17). *Hashem* is telling Yaakov, "In this bitter and dark time, take refuge in My holy place--in My *Shuls* / synagogues and *Batei Midrash* / Torah study halls." That is where *Hashem* is directing us, Yaakov's children, when He brings darkness in the middle of the day. (*Ta'am Baruch* p.139)

Shabbat

R' Aharon Lichtenstein z"l (1933-2015; co-*Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshivat Har Etzion*, popularly known as "Gush") writes: When measured by the number of hours devoted to it, or by the level of public participation in it, prayer seems to play a much more significant role in our lives on *Shabbat* than on weekdays. This is not entirely surprising: first, we can afford to spend more time in *Shul* on a non-workday than on a workday, and, second, our feeling of spiritual elevation on *Shabbat* aids us in praying.

Given that, continues R' Lichtenstein, the form that our prayers take on *Shabbat* is, perhaps, surprising. If one would ask a typical person what *Tefilah* / prayer is, he or she would probably answer that *Tefilah* means asking *Hashem* to provide whatever we need, as we do in the middle thirteen blessings of the weekday *Shemoneh Esrei*. Yet, with all the time we spend praying on *Shabbat*, we do not make such requests.

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 119b) states: "If one prays on *Shabbat* night and says 'Vy'chulu,' the Torah views it as if he became a partner with *Hashem* in Creation." One explanation of this statement, writes R' Lichtenstein, is that offered by R' Aharon Hakohen of Lunel z"l (early 14th century; Provence and Mallorca) in his work *Orchot Chaim*: "Is it not an insult to G-d to suggest that He has a partner? Perhaps the meaning is as follows: By reciting 'Vy'chulu,' one demonstrates that he believes unquestioningly in Creation, as if he had witnessed it personally, and even taken part in it."

R' Lichtenstein continues: More simply, the *Gemara's* description of one who recites the *Shabbat* prayers as *Hashem's* partner in Creation reflects the combination of *Dveikut* / attachment to *Hashem* and *Bitachon* / trust in *Hashem* that give a *Shabbat*-observer a feeling of protection and security. This feeling is reflected in our interpersonal interactions on *Shabbat*, in our singing of *Zemirot*, and in our general feeling of ease. We say in one of the *Zemirot*, "Today is a day of light and joy for *Yisrael*"; it is a day of sweetness, a day of protection within the cocoon of family. On this day, we do not feel the need to spell out specific requests to *Hashem*. (*Mussar Aviv* p. 117)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Back issues at: www.TheTorahSpring.org

Donations to *Hamaayan* are tax deductible.

Donate online: <https://www.paypal.com/US/fundraiser/charity/1234402>



Sponsored by the Katz family

on the *yahrzeit* of Chana Eidel bat Moshe Aharon Reiss a"h

“Lavan said to Yaakov, ‘What have you done that you have deceived me . . . Why have you fled so stealthily, and cheated me?’” (31:26-27)

We say in the *Pesach Haggadah*, “Go and learn what Lavan the Aramean attempted to do to our father Yaakov! For Pharaoh decreed only against the males, whereas Lavan attempted to uproot everything, as it is said (*Devarim* 26:5), ‘An Aramean attempted to destroy my father.’”

Where in the Torah’s account of Yaakov’s encounter with Lavan is there any hint that “Lavan attempted to uproot everything”? R’ Yaakov Moshe Charlap *z”l* (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim’s Sha’arei Chesed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) explains:

Yaakov Avinu’s hallmark was the *Middah* / trait of *Emet* /truth, as we read (*Michah* 7:20), “Grant truth to Yaakov.” This is why Esav exclaimed, upon realizing that he had been tricked out of Yitzchak’s blessings (*Bereishit* 27:36), “Is it because he was called ‘Yaakov’ that he outwitted me these two times? -- He took away my birthright and see, now he took away my blessing!” (In Hebrew, Esav’s words make a play on the name “Yaakov.”) Esav was saying: Twice now, Yaakov has behaved out of character by using deceit!

R’ Charlap continues: In our verses, Lavan likewise accuses Yaakov of using deceit: “What have you done that you have deceived me . . . and cheated me?” This was how Lavan tried to “uproot everything”--he tried to stop the development of the Jewish People at its inception by trying to convince Yaakov that there is nothing special about him; that he was not even true to himself.

Why were Lavan and Esav wrong? R’ Charlap answers: In war, trickery is sometimes necessary (see *Yehoshua* ch.8), and Yaakov’s dealings with Lavan and Esav were akin to war. But we have shown over our long exile that we are a nation of integrity--the ultimate proof being that converts choose to join us, writes R’ Charlap. This, he adds, is why the passage that includes the phrase, “An Aramean attempted to destroy my father,” ends with a reference to converts (*Devarim* 26:11): “You shall be glad with all the goodness that *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, has given you . . . and the convert who is in your midst.”

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p.111)

A *Midrash* relates that, as Yaakov entered Yitzchak’s tent to take the blessings, he prayed (*Tehilim* 120:2), “*Hashem*, rescue my soul from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.” [Until here from the *Midrash*.] This is difficult to understand! writes R’ Mordechai Greenberg *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* emeritus of Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavneh in Israel). Wasn’t Yaakov going to Yitzchak with the specific intention of deceiving him?

R’ Greenberg explains: Yaakov understood that there is a time when deceit is necessary. He was praying, however, that deceit not become a way of life for him; that he never become comfortable with it.

(*Mi’darchei Ha’parashah: Toldot*)

“He took from the stones of the place and arranged them around his head, and lay down in that place.” (28:11)

Rashi z”l writes: The stones began quarreling with one another. One said, “This righteous man should rest his head upon me,” and another said “Let him rest it upon me.” *Hashem*, therefore, made them into one stone. This explains why we read later (28:18), “And he took the stone”--singular--“that he had put under his head.” [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Gedaliah Eisman *z”l* (1910-2011; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshiva Kol Torah in Yerushalayim) writes: Kayin, who murdered his brother Hevel, was cursed (*Bereishit* 4:12), “You shall become a vagrant and a wanderer on earth.” *Rashi z”l* explains (4:16) that wherever Kayin went the earth quaked beneath him, so that no one wanted him around.

R’ Eisman elaborates: Kayin’s great sin released a powerful force of impurity into the world, and this caused all of Creation to despise Kayin. Creation, which was still new at that time, was not merely a collection of dormant sticks and stones. Today, when G-d has concealed His presence, a thick “fog” covers the world and conceals spirituality and holiness. But that “fog” did not yet cover the world at that time; Creation had not yet lost the ability to feel the spirituality with which the Creator had infused the world. Thus, foreign as it may seem to us, the stones on which Kayin stepped could react to his impure presence, much as the stones in our verse could sense Yaakov’s holiness and react to his presence--though in exactly the opposite way that they reacted to Kayin’s presence. (*Gidulei Mussar: Elul* p. 187)



“And he experienced *Yir’ah* and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of *Elokim*, and this is the gate of the heavens!’” (28:17)

R’ Naftali Hertz Weisel *z”l* (1725-1805; German banker and prolific author of works of Torah commentary, Hebrew grammar, and *Mussar*) writes: The *Yir’ah* mentioned here cannot be fear of punishment for having slept at the future site of the *Bet Hamikdash*. Firstly, Yaakov did not realize that that was where he was (see verse 16), so why should he be punished? Secondly, *Hashem* had just promised Yaakov many blessings (see verses 13-15), so Yaakov knew that *Hashem* was not upset at him!

Rather, write R’ Weisel, our verse means that Yaakov suddenly felt that his heart was full of *Yir’ah* / awe and reverence of G-d, more so than he had ever experienced before. He had a feeling similar to that described in the verse regarding *Mashiach* (*Yeshayah* 11:2), “And a spirit of *Hashem* will rest upon him--a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and *Yir’ah* of *Hashem*.” Yaakov attributed this to being at a holy site, and so he exclaimed: “How awesome is this place!”

(*Imrei Shefer*)