

Rabbi's Article II

Jacob's Promise

In this week's Torah-portion we are told (-Genesis 28:20), "And Jacob uttered a vow, saying, 'If G-d will be with me, and He will guard me on this way, upon which I am going, and He will give me bread to eat and a garment to wear. (-verse 21:) And if I return in peace to my father's house, and the L-rd will be my G-d. (-verse 22:) Then this stone, which I have placed as a monument, shall be a house of G-d, and everything that You give me, I will surely tithe to You.'" Of the second phrase of verse 21, "And the L-rd will be my G-d," Rashi (-[Link](#)) sees it as still part of the condition, while Nachmanides (-[Link](#)) sees it as part of the promise. According to Nachmanides, the reason why this part of the promise is not in verse 23, is because the promise of, "And the L-rd will be my G-d," is more connected to the condition of (-verse 21), "And if I return in peace to my father's house," than it is to the promise of (-verse 22), "Then this stone..." Hence, there are two categories to the promise (1: verse 21, and 2: verse 22). So too, there are two categories to the condition, 1: (-verse 20), "If G-d will be with me, and He will guard me... and He will give me... and a garment to wear," and 2: (-verse 21), "And if I return in peace to my father's house," in which Part 1 is what G-d will do ("If G-d will... He will guard me... He will give me..."), while Part 2 is expressed as if it is done automatically ("if I return," rather than, "You will return me").

The meaning behind this is, Jacob's leaving from Be'er Sheba, Israel, to *Charan* (Rashi, Genesis 11:32, "(place of the) *Charan Af* (anger) of G-d,") was a descent for the purpose of an ascent. And the ascent is on three levels:

- (i) Through this that, while being in Laban's (-[Link](#)) home, a place of dishonesty and idol-worship, Jacob nevertheless, emerged, "Perfect from sin," Jacob ascends to a higher plain than he was before the descent. This ascent is that of (-Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah, Chapter 7 Law 4), "In the place where Returnees (*Baalei Teshuvah*; Repented) stand, even the completely righteous are not able to stand," for, "he has tasted sin and yet, separated himself from it, conquering his [evil] inclination."
- (ii) It is specifically in *Charan* that Jacob fulfilled the commandment (-Genesis 1:28), "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it," as his father Isaac directed him (-ibid 28:2-3), "And take yourself from there a wife... G-d bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you."
- (iii) Jacob's refining and elevating --through working with the sheep of Laban for 20 years-- the *Holy Sparks* (-[Link](#)) there, caused an ascent by Jacob, to the point of (-ibid 30:42), "And the man (Jacob) became exceedingly wealthy."

"The actions of forefathers are signs for their offspring" (-MaHRSh"A, Avodah Zorah 8b; See Bereishit Rabbah 48:7)," and hence, these three categories of ascent exist within the descent of every Jewish soul, as well:

- (i) Through this that, while the righteous soul descends and clothes itself into the *Animal Soul* and body, which cover and conceal Divinity, and nevertheless it fulfills its mission of Torah and Mitzvot, the soul is elevated to the level of Returnees ("And the spirit returns to the G-d").
- (ii) It is specifically in this descent that the soul fulfills the commandment (-Genesis 1:28), "Be (spiritually) fruitful and multiply," in Torah and Mitzvot.
- (iii) Through the soul's service to G-d here below with the *physical*, it fulfills G-d's desire for us, "Making for Him a dwelling place here below." And thus, the soul is elevated to a higher level than it was before its descent. In the aspect (iii) of, "Making a dwelling place for Him in the Below," the service of, "In all your ("in the Below") ways know Him," and, "All your ("in the Below") actions be for the sake of Heaven," is even deeper than the service of Torah and Mitzvot, and hence, is a greater elevation for the soul preforming the 'mundane' service of, "In all your ways know Him," and, "All your actions be for the sake of Heaven."

And so too, the aspect (i) of the soul's, "Elevated to the level of Returnees," service of, "your ways," and, "your actions," is deeper than the service of Torah and Mitzvot. For the ultimate heights of the *Returnee*, is not when, "conquering his [evil] inclination," allowing for the soul to then impose itself in doing Torah and Mitzvot, but rather, it is the transformation of the *Animal Soul* and body themselves, in having their ("your") ways and actions be for knowing, and the sake of, G-d! Deeper yet, a virtue specifically within *Returning*, is that it expresses the deepest connection of the soul to G-d, in that even after the separation of sin, the soul can still *Return* to G-d. So too, it is specifically the aspect (iii) of service of a person's *mundane* and *self-centered*, "Your ways," and, "Your actions," being solely for the sake of G-d that one sees the soul's deepest *Returnee* connection to G-d.

Nevertheless, beyond the soul's great ascent of aspect (i)'s *Returnee Heights* of, "Your ways," and, "Your actions," is the soul's greatest ascent of aspect (iii)'s, "Making a dwelling place for Him in the Below." The reason being that the soul's connection to G-d is all about the "soul's natural being-ness." Hence, even when the soul's connection is intensely great through the *Returnee* experience of, "Your ways," and, "Your actions," being solely for the sake of G-d," nevertheless, this is all still only about the, "soul's natural being-ness." However, in transforming the physical into a dwelling place for G-d, it is not about the, "soul's natural being-ness," but rather, is possible only out of G-d's infinite oneness, in which the physical and the spiritual are equally but abodes for G-d. Hence, through the soul's service of, "Making a dwelling place for Him in the Below," the soul's connection to G-d is now also elevating into this infinite oneness of G-d.

Deeper yet, all these *ascents* of the soul are not the ultimate purpose of the soul's descent. Rather, --as explained in *Tanya* (-Chapter 37)--, the soul's descent is not for its own sake, but for the sake of refining and elevating the *Animal Soul*, the body and all its physical possessions, into being connected and unified with G-d. For this physical connection with G-d is not about the *Light* and *Revelation* of G-d, but about the Essence of G-d. Hence, the soul's work of, "Making a dwelling place for Him in the Below," must be done, not with the *Light* and *Revelation* of the, "soul's natural being-ness," but rather, it must be done with total and utter humility and self-negation!

The Parsha

Inspiration

The portion of Vayeitzei Jacob on his way to Chorán, camped at mount Moriah. In his dream he saw angels ascending and descending a ladder. G-d appeared and blessed Jacob, promising him a safe return. Upon awakening Jacob consecrated the stone he had placed under his head and vowed that if G-d provides his basic necessities during his sojourn, he will reciprocate accordingly.

Arriving in Chorán at the home of his uncle Lavon, Jacob agreed to work as a shepherd for seven years, in order to marry his younger daughter Rachel. Lavon did not keep his word and substituted his older daughter Leah. He later agreed to offer Rachel as well, for an additional seven years of work.

Leah gave birth to Jacob's first four sons, Reuben, Shimon, Levi, and Judah. Rachel who remained barren offered her maid Bilha as a wife to Jacob and two sons were born, Dan and Naftali. Afterwards Leah offered her maid Zilpah as a wife, and she bore two sons to Jacob, Gad and Asher.

Leah gave birth to two more sons, Yissachar and Zevulun. She also gave birth to a daughter Dina. Then G-d remembered Rachel and she gave birth to a son Joseph.

Jacob decided it was now time to return to his homeland. It was readily agreed that he would take as payment the (few) spotted and streaked sheep from amongst Lavon's herd. Yet G-d blessed him abundantly and the sheep multiplied. Jacob and his family departed without bidding farewell to Lavon. Upon learning of the hasty departure, Lavon pursued and confronted Jacob at mount Gilad. After inquiring about his children and grandchildren, he chided Jacob for stealing his idols when in fact it was Rachel who took them. Before leaving they came to terms and made a peace treaty. Heavenly angels escorted Jacob on his journey back home.

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 And these two different categories of service -- (1) Torah and Mitzvot, and (2) "Making a dwelling place for Him"-- are the two categories of the *condition* -- (1) "If G-d will be with me, and He will guard me --to, "conquering his [evil] inclination,"-- and He will give me bread -- Torah-study-- and a garment --Mitzvot-observance--," and (2) "return in peace to my father's house --the Return of, "Your ways and your actions,"-- which then bring about the two categories of the *promise* --(1) "And the L-rd will be my G-d --the ascents of the soul" and (2) "Then this stone... shall be a house of G-d --Making a dwelling place for Him"--.

Appreciation

We gratefully acknowledge with thanks all donations received during the past weeks from members and friends.

- Mr. Jonathan Heller
- Mr. Menachem M. Lipszyc
- Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Mizraji
- Mr. Chai Yaakov Plishtiev
- Mr. & Mrs. Hector Riviera

Occasions

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| <i>BirthDay</i> | |
| 11 Kislev | Alexandra Mundlak |
| 11 Kislev | Jeri Veingrad |
| 12 Kislev | Adam Higer |
| 12 Kislev | Yehoshua Tacher |
| <i>Yahrtzeit</i> | |
| 9 Kislev | Mordechai Vainstein Grandfather of Moises Vainstein & Raquel Kopetman |
| 10 Kislev | Mordechai Sterentahl Grandfather of Rosi Behar, Elena Salomon, & Sylvia Levy |
| 14 Kislev | Joel Salomon Father of Leland Salomon |

LET'S GATHER FOR A MINYAN!

FRIDAY NIGHT: 5:30 PM
 SATURDAY:
 SHACHARIT: 9:30 AM ~ TORAH-READING: 10:30 AM ~ MINCHA: 5:00 PM



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