בס"ד

Inspired Torah perspectives for our wondrous generation

Eilecha weekly

EILECHA

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WRITTEN BY: R' YAAKOV KLEIN AND R' BINYAMIN CASPER
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...וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹקִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ׃

MEKOR

BEREISHIS 28:12

And he dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward; and behold! Angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it.

MEANING

BECHOR SHOR, CHIZKUNI

Yaakov Avinu experienced a prophetic revelation in which he saw what appeared like a ladder upon which angels would ascend and descend. Because it seemed that the angels were first ascending and then descending, Yaakov understood that this must be a holy place, a place of angels - the future site of the Beis HaMikdash.

MESSAGE

KEDUSHAS LEVI, NEFESH HACHAYIM

As the world continues to grow more and more interconnected and the link between disparate systems across every level of human functionality grows more stark, we are becoming increasingly aware of the way in which the repercussions of a seemingly "local" event echo far more widely than we might imagine. The tzaddikim teach that this principle is even truer in the realm of our individual spiritual efforts and personal growth: a few words of *tefillah* whispered with sincerity, a few lines of *Gemara* with *Rashi* and *Tosafos*, a small act of *chessed* - these soul-revelations have an enormous impact on all the heavenly realms, changing the equilibrium of the world. Unfortunately, the same is true for egotistic acts of lowliness; these, too, have their effect.

The tzaddikim see this lesson hinted to in Yaakov Avinu's dream: **וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה** - Yaakov sees a symbolic representation of the Jewish person; his feet firmly rooted in this world, in the realities of his own personal life. **וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה** - But in truth, his actions impact the state of the very heavens above. **וְהִנֵּה מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹקִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים** - The very angels ascend or descend, **בּוֹ** - depending on his actions. *How incredibly powerful we are!*

FINDING LIGHT IN CHARAN

THE MIDRASH STATES that before his departure from Be'er Sheva to work in the fields of Lavan, Yaakov Avinu considered the lives of his forbearers and grew discouraged. (*Bereishes Rabbah* 68:1) "אשא עיני אל ההרים - אל תקרא **הרים** אלה **הורים**" - Yaakov looked at the elevated lives of Yitzchak and Avraham, lives shining with Torah and intense spirituality, and was frustrated with his lowly lot. But then he strengthened himself, saying, "עזרי מעם ה'"; "Just as they remained bound with the Creator, so will I stay close to the Master of the world."

The Ishbitzer explains that Yaakov Avinu's initial discouragement was founded upon the assumption that busying himself with the mundane responsibilities of making a living in Charan would necessitate distance from Hashem and His service. However, he soon came to the realization that because "there is no place vacant from Him," and, "His Glory fills the earth"; he would be able to remain connected to Hashem as a shepherd as well, not despite his occupation, but specifically because of it.

The Gemara (*Niddah* 30b) states that before a soul is sent down to the physical realm, it is taught that the world below is fraught with spiritual danger and sworn to a life of righteousness. The Lubavitcher Rebbe teaches that the entire purpose of the soul's descent is to reveal the G-dliness concealed within the mundanity of human life; to turn the human experience into a dwelling place for Hashem's presence. This, he explains, is the meaning of the first verse in our parsha: "**וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב** - **מֵבְאֵר שָׁבַע**": This refers to the departure of the soul from the upper realms after the vow ("שְׁבוּעָה") is taken, "**וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה**": The word "חָרָנָה" may be read "**חָרָן - ה**". The reason for the soul's descent to this world is to demonstrate that hidden deep within the "**חָרָן**", the wrath of an existence apparently devoid of G-dliness, is the final "**ה**" of Hashem's Name, the *Shechinah* which longs to be revealed in the depths of physicality.

This idea is expressed once again in Yaakov's famous dream. In this vision, Yaakov Avinu sees a ladder stretching from heaven to earth upon which angels are ascending and descending. The ladder symbolizes the Jew's task to draw his earthly endeavors up to heaven, and to draw heaven down into his earthly endeavors. The stones which unify under Yaakov's head represent the ability for the disparate responsibilities of a Jew's life – both the overtly spiritual in nature, and the seemingly mundane – to become unified with the light of a common purpose, a single striving: to serve as a means toward closeness with Hashem. If there is one thing that all of our unique life circumstances have in common, it is the potential to use them as an opportunity to reveal the light of Hashem's presence in the world. It makes little difference where one lives, what one does, or how one makes a living. Every inch of physicality is occupied by another ladder stretching heavenward; the abiding ability to encounter the Master of the world and channel His light into the world with honesty, health, clarity, and joy. To discover the "**ה**" within **חָרָן**– this is the goal of life.

EACH AND EVERY LIFE CIRCUMSTANCE MAY BE USED AS A VEHICLE FOR CLOSENESS WITH THE MASTER OF THE WORLD.

- The Lubavitceher Rebbe zy"a

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בס"ד

Lean On Me, Brother

Based on a *sicha* given by the Tolna Rebbe *shlit"a* (Parshas Vayeitzei, 5763)

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The final section of the *parsha* records the pact made between Yaakov and Lavan as they parted ways.
Twice in this narrative, we find Yaakov turning to אֶחָיו – "his **brethren**" – and inviting them to join him for two different activities:

Collecting stones for a monument	**Feasting at the site of the pact**
וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב **לְאֶחָיו** לִקְטוּ אֲבָנִים וַיִּקְחוּ אֲבָנִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ גָּל וַיֹּאכְלוּ שָׁם עַל הַגָּל [בראשית לא:מו]	וַיִּזְבַּח יַעֲקֹב זֶבַח בָּהָר וַיִּקְרָא **לְאֶחָיו** לֶאֱכָל לָחֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ לֶחֶם וַיָּלִינוּ בָּהָר [בראשית לא:נד]
Rashi's explanations of the two instances of the word 'אֶחָיו':	
"הֵם בָּנָיו שֶׁהָיוּ לוֹ אַחִים, נִגָּשִׁים אֵלָיו לְצָרָה וּלְמִלְחָמָה." Yaakov's **children**, "who were 'brothers' for him, **joining him in distress and battle**."	"לְאוֹהֲבָיו שֶׁעִם לָבָן." Yaakov's **friends** among Lavan's men, whom Yaakov invited to join his feast.
Why does Rashi give two different interpretations to identical words in the same paragraph?	

The Tolna Rebbe comments on the significance of the different meanings of אֶחָיו, and makes the following distinction:

Individuals who help shape and solidify values	**Individuals who only show up for celebrations**
Collecting stones symbolizes the difficult, tedious work entailed in creating boundaries to preserve our ideals.	The feast Yaakov arranges celebrates an important feat, but the request to join the meal was not a difficult one to oblige.
These "brothers" are especially crucial at this moment of Yaakov's emancipation from Lavan. The two sides couldn't even agree on the same name for the monument, so, although some strife lingered following the pact, Yaakov had his closest confidants by his side for *chizzuk*.	There are other types of "brethren" who are prepared to join only during times of "feasting" - in periods of success and celebration. In times of crisis and distress, in predicaments when effort and dedication are critically needed, these fickle 'fair-weather mates' are noticeably absent.
When it comes to difficult work, one can expect the assistance and perseverance only of his brothers, his comrades who unite and "join him in distress and battle."	Acquaintances are happy to come out of the woodwork and show up for a delicious barbecue, but that isn't the measure of a true friend or a brother.

- The *Beis Yaakov* of Ishbitz explains why Avraham instructed Sarah to tell Paraoh she was his **sister** (12:13) - אִמְרִי־נָא **אֲחֹתִי** אָתְּ: The relationship of a **real אח** is defined as an **unbreakable bond, even in terribly dark places and challenging situations**, i.e., Mitzrayim. In a way, a sibling relationship is even stronger than that of spouses, because sibling bonds are inseverable.
- Avraham was telling Sarah that no matter what happens while in Mitzrayim, they are inseparable and connected forever.

- Rashi's comments in Vayeitzei highlight the importance of being "brothers" who are eager to join "in distress and in battle."
- Loyal and committed friends and family members feel an airtight bond and are readily available for one another, whether they be called upon for the peaks of happiness or valleys of sorrow.
- The truest friends come together not only for "feasts," but also for the work-intensive challenges that we all experience. These times, with the help of dedicated people, build character, deepen relationships, and reinforce priorities and values.
- Mishlei 17:17 states: בְּכָל־עֵת אֹהֵב הָרֵעַ **וְאָח** לְצָרָה יִוָּלֵד - "a friend loves at all times, and a **brother** is born for crisis."
- The way to ***have*** genuine friends is to ***be* an אח לְצָרָה ourselves in support of others**, to search for ways to help those who are struggling in crisis. By lending a hand, *b'siyata d'Shmaya*, we will be rewarded with strong, genuine friendships.

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