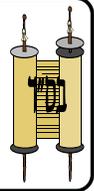




Kindert Torah

Parashas Vayetze



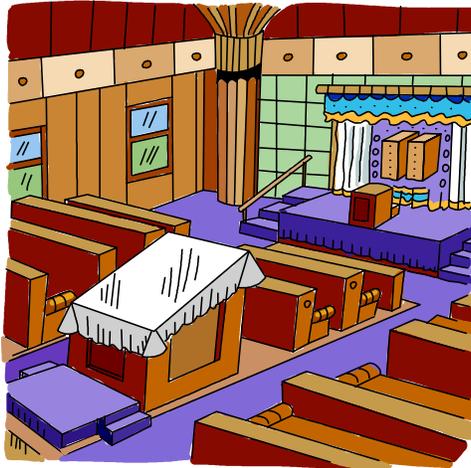
Ahavas Torah

“What time is it?”
 “Two in the morning. You look tired.”
 “I am tired, my dear chavrusa. It has been a long day of learning Torah.”
 “You may be tired, but you are learning very well. Your mind is sharp.”
 “Thank you. I need the encouragement to overcome this tiredness and keep learning.”
 “Let me tell you a story about Yaakov Avinu from this week’s parasha. It will give you *chizuk* (strength). Eisav was planning to kill his brother Yaakov. Therefore, Yaakov had to flee. He left his home to make his way to his uncle Lavan in Charan. On the way he stopped at the Beis HaMedrash of Shem and Ever to learn Torah.”
 “How long did he stay there?”
 “Fourteen years.”
 “That is no small detour. Fourteen years is a tremendous amount of Torah learning.”
 “True. However, it is even more than you think. I will explain. After the fourteen years, Yaakov Avinu resumed his journey. He reached the future site of the Beis HaMikdash and he lay down there, as the verse states, ‘And he lay down in that place’ (Bereshis 28:11). Rashi points out - **Here** he lay down. However, the fourteen years that he learned in the house of Ever he did not lay down at night, because he was toiling in Torah (day and night). On this subject, Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt”l, brings us an insight from the Alter of Kelm.

“How quickly we read this verse! We pass right by without even taking the time to stop and think. Even the simple meanings of the words are incomprehensible! Imagine not sleeping even one night. How tired we would be, dragging ourselves through the next day - weak and incapable of functioning. What about two nights without sleep? We would be crushed. Three nights, four nights - impossible. Here we learn that Yaakov Avinu did not lie down to sleep for fourteen years straight! That is more than five thousand nights! What could motivate a man to do such a thing? Only an intensive love of Torah, far beyond our comprehension.”
 “You are right, my dear chavrusa. That is very inspiring. You have given me the motivation to continue learning. I am a descendant of Yaakov Avinu. His love of Torah is in my bones. If he could stay up for over five thousand nights learning Torah, I can stay up this one Erev Shabbos. Come, let’s get back to the Gemora.”
 “I am with you my dear chavrusa, five thousand percent!”

*Kinderlach . . .
 We love Torah! It is in our genes. The more that we learn it, the more we love it. There is a famous story about the Chazon Ish, zt”l. He described how the Torah gets sweeter the longer you learn it. If you learn for three to four hours straight, you begin to taste its sweetness. After five hours, you feel elevated. Six hours of learning allows you to forget about Olam Hazzeh, and be concerned only with spiritual matters. After seven hours, you*

feel close to Hashem. After eight hours, no thought of materialism can enter your heart. After nine hours, you become totally sanctified. Nine hours is not even one day. Can you imagine fourteen years – five thousand days? Kinderlach, we may not be on the level of Yaakov Avinu to go five thousand nights without sleep. However, we can be inspired by his Ahavas Torah. We can also take the Chazon Ish’s advice about how to taste the sweetness of the Torah ourselves. Kinderlach, the Torah is the best sweet treat in the world. Learn it! Taste it! Enjoy it! Love it!



The Holy Places

“What a beautiful morning,” Chaim thinks to himself. “I cannot wait to get to the Beit HaKinesset and thank Hashem for everything that He has given me, including this beautiful day.”

Chaim reaches the door of the Beit HaKinesset, walks in, takes a siddur, proceeds to his regular seat, and puts on his tefillin. He prays the Pesukei D’zimra and Kriyas Shema with great kavannah. He reaches the beginning of the Shemoneh Esray, and the congregation quiets down to begin the silent prayer. He bows at the beginning of the first bracha, and is suddenly disturbed by an annoying noise. A little boy is loudly munching away at a bag of potato chips. They sound delicious, but definitely disturb his kavannah. The boy continues chomping away thru Shemoneh Esray until the bag is empty. He reaches up his hands and says, “Abba, I want more.” Chaim wonders if anyone is able to concentrate after that. Now the repetition of the Shemoneh Esray begins. Two men start chatting about the news and weather.

“How could they do such a thing?” thinks Chaim. “They are speaking about mundane matters in a holy place.”

The tefillah continues to the end. Two men discuss a business deal while removing their tefillin. Chaim finishes his prayers and walks toward the door. At the back of the room stand two men - a moneychanger and his customer. They exchange money and conclude their business inside of the Beit HaKi-

nesset. Chaim is beside himself. “What has happened to the holiness of this place?”

“Yaakov) became frightened and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of Hashem!’ (Bereshis 28:17). The sefer Eved HaMelech points out that this verse teaches us to fear our holy places. Yaakov Avinu was in the place where the Beis HaMikdash was destined to be built - the holiest spot in the world. It was truly an awesome site, which struck fear into his heart. Similarly, we are commanded to imbue our hearts with fear of our holy places - Bottei Kinesiot and Bottei Midrashim. Why? The Eved HaMelech continues to explain that the true awe is not for the place, rather for The One Who dwells there (so to speak) - The Almighty. He is The One Who commanded us to revere His places where His *Shechina* (Divine Presence) rests. Respecting these places is really an aspect of Yiras Hashem.

How do we fulfill this mitzvah? When we are in holy places, our speech, thoughts, and deeds should all be permeated with *Yiras Shomayim*. We must think and speak only of holy matters. Discussing the news or any other mundane matter violates this holiness. Conducting business there is strictly forbidden. Not only does it lessen the sanctity of the place, it also lowers your own *madrayga* (spiritual level) of *Yiras Shomayim*.

A top expert on education once commented that a child who is too young to understand what a Beit HaKinesset is should not be brought there. He will treat it like any other place and behave like a child. In addition to disturbing the people who are praying, he also lowers the sanctity of the holy place. Worse than that, he mistakenly learns from the earliest age that the Beit HaKinesset is a place to relax, play, and eat peckalehs. This is definitely the wrong attitude to begin with, and will only impair his ability to develop proper respect of the place.

*Kinderlach . . .
 Hashem dwells in His holy places. Going there is a privilege. Abba will let you go when you are old enough to appreciate the holiness and behave with the proper respect. When you enter the Beit HaKinesset, you will feel Hashem’s Awesome Presence. You will act differently, as if you are in a different world. You will leave that childish behavior behind. This is a place where the Shechina dwells. How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of Hashem.*

Parasha Questions:

- What name did Lavan call the place of his bris with Yaakov? What name did Yaakov call it? (31:47)
- For what reason was Yaakov permitted to cross the border between him and Lavan? (Rashi 31:52)

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