

Kindler Torah

Parashas Vayetze

What's In It For Me?

"Hi Jake, how are you doing?"

"Hi guys. Just fine. What's up?"

"We're on our way up to the school's library to help move and cover the books. They are going to paint the room and they need lots of help. Do you want to come?"

"Are they paying you anything to help?"

"Well, we never asked. I don't think so."

"Are they giving you free food?"

"We didn't ask about that either. We just wanted to help out."

"Are they at least putting the names of the volunteers on the bulletin board so everyone can see who they are?"

"Guess what. We didn't ask about that either."

"Well, guys have a good time."

"Does that mean that you are not coming?"

"Why should I come? They are not giving you any money, food, or recognition. What's in it for me?"

"What's in it for you, Jake?"

"That's right. What's in it for me?"

"Do you mind if I answer your question with a little story?"

"Sure. I love stories."

"Yaakov Avinu goes to the home of his uncle Lavan to find refuge from Eisav and to look for a wife. He meets Rachel, Lavan's daughter, and the two decide to marry. He asks Lavan for his daughter's hand in marriage, and Lavan replies that he must work for seven years in order to marry Rachel. The time flies by, due to Yaakov's great love for Rachel. As the wedding day approaches, Rachel senses trouble. She knows that her father is a trickster, and may try to give her sister Leah to Yaakov as a bride. She makes up secret signals with Yaakov, so that he can identify her as the true bride. The wedding night arrives, and sure enough, Lavan comes to get Leah. Rachel is on the spot. Should she let Leah go without giving her the secret signals? Then Lavan's devious plot will be exposed. But what about poor Leah? She will be so embarrassed – an unwanted bride. What a humiliation. Of course, she should give her the signals. But what about Rachel? She is finished. She will never marry her beloved Yaakov. She may even marry his cruel brother Eisav. What should she do? What do you say Jake?"

"She should expose the plot. After all, she must worry about herself. She has her future to think about. Why should she give up a husband like Yaakov? What's in it for her?"

"That is one way of looking at it. I'll tell you what's in it for her. She saves Leah from embarrassment. Our sages tell us that it is better to be thrown into a fiery furnace than to embarrass someone. More importantly, she masters the art of self-sacrifice and giving to other people."

"That sounds interesting. Can you tell me about it?"

"Jake, there are two ways that we can relate to people. One is, 'What can I get from them?' The second way is, 'What can I give to them?' The one who always looks at people the first way will never be truly happy or fulfilled. He is always looking to get something. His wants will never be satisfied, because he can never have everything. Additionally, he will dislike people who do not give him what he wants. People will not like him because they know that he only wants to take from them."

"That sounds pretty miserable."

"It is. The giver, on the other hand, is a truly happy person. He is happy with what he has because he is not always looking to get things. He only wants to help people. By giving to people, he grows to love them. And they grow close to him."

"What a beautiful thought."

"Jake, it is reality. 'What's in it for me' is a good question. Helping others without pay or recognition is the best thing that you can do for yourself. You get much more than just a little money, honor, or a free meal. You get true happiness and good relationships with people. That's what's in it for you."

"Where's the library? I'm on my way to help. Now I really see what's in it for me."

Kinderlach . . .

Selflessly helping others is the mitzvah of gemilus chassidim. This mitzvah is rewarded both in this world and in the next. It is one of the three pillars upon which the world stands. It is the foundation of the entire Torah and the hallmark of the Jewish people. Help other people. There is a lot in it for you . . . and everyone.

Sweet Dreams

"Help me! Help me! Help! Help!"

Avi's father heard screaming coming from his son's bedroom. He burst in the door.

"What's happening Avi? Are you okay?"

"Where am I? What is happening? I was in terrible danger. I cried out for help. Then I woke up."

"Calm down, Avi. It was only a dream."

"Baruch Hashem, Abba. But it was so frightening."

"I can just imagine, Avi. I have had a few nightmares myself. However, I followed a simple piece of advice and they stopped."

"What was the advice, Abba?"

"It actually comes from the *parashas ha'shavuah*, Avi. Rav Yonason Eibushitz has a fascinating explanation of the verse, which states that Yaakov awoke from his sleep (Bereshis 28:16). He had been dreaming about a ladder with angels going up and down. The Medrash (Bereshis

Rabba 68:14) interprets the dream as foretelling of the four *golios* (exiles). Ordinarily, one would say that this is a bad dream. However, there is another Medrash (69:7) which explains that it could not have been a bad dream."

"Why not, Abba?"

"Because Yaakov Avinu learned Torah before he went to sleep. The verse states that Yaakov Avinu awoke from his sleep. The word for sleep is *'mishnas*. The Medrash points out that Rebbe Yochanan added the letter *'mem'* and therefore read the word *'mimishnas* – from his learning. This learning prevented bad dreams."

"What is the source for that, Abba?"

"The Gemora (Berachos 14a as explained by the Mahrshah) relates that one who saturates himself with Yiras Hashem by learning Torah before he goes to sleep will not suffer from scary dreams."

"That is wonderful!"

"There is more. I once heard Rav Shimon Pincus zt"l give a good piece of advice to use those hours of sleep productively. Do *teshuva* before going to sleep. Our *neshamos* (souls) are judged during the time when we are sleeping. A few moments of *teshuva* can turn sleep time into a period of forgiveness for our sins."

"Wow."

"He also said that if you go to sleep thinking about a *kasha* (difficult point in the Torah that you are learning), you may wake up with *teretz* (answer to the *kasha*)."

"Fantastic!"

"Therefore, Avi my dear son, take some time to learn Torah before you drift off to sleep. It will give you more than you ever dreamed of."

Kinderlach . . .

What do you think about as you lay your head on the pillow? I have a suggestion for you. Think about Hashem and His Greatness. He wrote the Torah, which is broader than the heavens and deeper than the sea. Think about the sugya (Torah subject) that you learned today, and its' difficult points. This Torah learning can help prevent bad dreams. Think about what you did during the day. Did you make mistakes that can be corrected? Do teshuva on those mistakes. Follow this advice, kinderlach, and you will awake in the morning physically refreshed and spiritually cleansed. You may even have the answers to your kashas on the sugya. Pleasant dreams!

Parasha Questions

- Why did Yaakov refer to Hashem as "Pachad Yitzchak," and not "Elokei Yitzchak?" (Rashi 31:42)
- Why did Rachel take Lavan's t'rafim? (Rashi 31:19)
- How fast did Lavan pursue Yaakov? (Rashi 31:23)
- How many times did Lavan change Yaakov's wages? (Rashi 31:7)

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