

GREAT FOR SHARING
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בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
VAYEITZEI

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Our *Parshah* opens with Yaakov taking leave of his family and travelling to *Charan*, home of his uncle, Lavan. Unwritten, though, is the fact that Yaakov made a stop along the way — spending 14 years at the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, studying what it means to be an *eved Hashem*.¹

The Chofetz Chaim² (R' Yisroel Meir Kagan 1839–1933) is troubled by this fourteen year pause in Yaakov's travels. Yaakov wasn't sightseeing; he was on a quest to build the future Jewish nation. Torah is important, but everything has a time and place; wasn't it was time to head to Lavan, marry Rochel, and build the nation from the *Shevatim*?

The Chofetz Chaim explains that Yaakov knew that his uncle would never allow him to marry Rochel without some form of payment, and that Yaakov would have to work tirelessly for his uncle. In such an environment, not only would Yaakov have little time to study, but he would be subject to the influence of his surroundings, of Lavan, his children, and the people of *Charan*.

Thus, Yaakov spent almost a decade and a half in yeshiva, in order to fortify himself against this influence.

The Chofetz Chaim then turns to the people of his generation (about one hundred years ago). If Yaakov felt the necessity to push of the destiny of the Jewish nation in order to reinforce and secure himself against the challenges life will present, do we not owe it to ourselves to do the same?

Torah protects, both in a mundane sense, and in a spiritual one as well. And much like students spend years learning the skills of life before they are let loose in the world, it is critical that we learn the Torah, grasping Hashem's understanding of how He wants to the world to be, before we head out into the open world.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

The Torah is the direct connection that we have with Hashem Himself. It is His Word, the only lasting vestige we have from the time Hashem revealed Himself to the world at Sinai.

There are times where we find things in the Torah that may 'rub us the wrong way,' may not make sense to us from our perspective. Our job, though, is to recognize that the Torah is true, and we have to acclimate our thinking to the Torah's, and not the other way around.

How does one do so? How does one appreciate the moral clarity the Torah provides, the beacon of light in the smog of societal influence and pressures?

The Torah is more than a set of laws, it is a guidebook meant to tell humanity how to live. When we grasp that the Creator of humanity has given to us mortals the guidebook to life, when we appreciate what we hold in our hands, the words that we study take on a new meaning.

Now, every word is laden with significance, every letter something to hold dear. The more we appreciate the Torah, the greater the Torah's impact will be.

1 Rashi on Bereishis 28:11 s.v. וישכב במקום

2 *Shemiras Halashon* Vol 1, Gate of Torah 9

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The singular greatest joy for those who are wise of heart is the profound happiness that accompanies Tikkun HaMiddos, successful character improvement. - R' Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz zt"l, *Sefer Chazon Ish Emunah U'Bitachon* 4:15

A HEFTY PRICE TO PAY

“Look, it’s simple. You purchase the item and fill out the rebate. You send the item to us. We reimburse you for the purchase, and everyone goes home happy. We get the item, and you get free points on your credit card. What do you have to lose?”

Netanel* truly wasn’t sure what he had to lose. Something about it, though, made him... uncomfortable. He had seen an advertisement that claimed that he could rack up credit card points at no cost. He called the number, and was told the idea worked very simply. Retailers often have sales, but they might limit the amount of purchases per person for a particular item. They do this to ensure that the items are not being bought for resale.

However, the fellow who ran the advertisement had a simple way to get around this. He offered to reimburse anyone who purchased the items that he told them to purchase. What was in it for them? They could spend tens of thousands of dollars on their credit cards, and have the money reimbursed. Thus, they could get credit card points to use on travel, gift cards, and so on, at no cost. Win-win!

Or was it? Netanel simply didn’t feel comfortable with such a scheme. The retailers had this policy for a reason, and was it proper to get around it? He just wasn’t sure. So, he called his rebbi.

After some discussion, Rabbi Zuckerman said, “Look, according to *halacha* it may be fine, but it does seem that there might be a moral issue. The Torah tells us to act upright at all times — tell me, is this the type of person you envision yourself as? I cannot tell you what to do, but think about what you will gain, and what it will cost you.”

After some deep thought, Netanel decided against this venture. It was not worth numbing his sensitivities to the value of other people’s money, even a faceless corporation.

Life went on. One day, Netanel was speaking with a friend who mentioned there was a terrible rumor. The fellow who was offering to reimburse people’s purchase simply stopped. People were left with thousands of dollars of credit card debt, and no way to pay it off.

After the initial surprise wore off, Netanel said a silent thank you to his rebbi, and to the Torah which kept him out of trouble.

**Names have been changed, based on a true story.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- No matter how difficult it is for one to deal with one’s baser desires, learning Torah is an effective means of conquering one’s inclinations.¹
- The purpose of a Jewish king is not to defend the land from enemies; rather, it’s to be a role model in keeping the Torah.²

¹ *Pnei Yehoshua* on *Kiddushin* 30b, s.v. שם תנא דבי

² *Collected Writings of R’ Samson Raphael Hirsch*, Vol IV, pg. 275