

Your Ticket

“Yaakov settled in the land where his father lived, the land of Canaan” (Bereshis 37:1). Rashi (37:2) relates that Yaakov Avinu wished to settle down to a tranquil life. However, the anguish of Yosef’s kidnapping pounced upon him. Hashem says, “Are tsaddikim not satisfied with what awaits them in *Olam Habbo* (the Next World)? They expect to live at ease in *Olam Hazzeh* (this world) also?”

Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt”l, the Mashgiach of Mir is a bit puzzled by this sharp statement. Why should Yaakov not live in tranquility? After all, how would he spend his time? He would surely not waste it on frivolities. When he left his father’s home on the way to Charan, he stopped at the Beis HaMedrash of Shem and Ever. There he learned Torah uninterrupted for fourteen years. As the verse states, “And he lay down in that place” (Bereshis 28:11). Rashi explains that this night he lay down. However, the entire fourteen years that he was with Shem and Ever, he did not lie down at night because he was learning Torah. It is clear that Yaakov only wanted tranquility in order to serve Hashem better.

Rav Yerucham relates that this parasha teaches us a foundation of the Torah – the relationship between Olam Hazzeh and Olam Habbo. Olam Hazzeh is the world of challenges. A life without the anguish of Yosef is like Olam Habbo for Yaakov Avinu. It is as if he requested to reach Olam Habbo by skipping Olam Hazzeh. Rav Yerucham then gives a compelling example of how Yaakov earned his Olam Habbo with the trials and tribulations of Olam Hazzeh.

“I have sojourned with Lavan” (Bereshis 32:5). The Hebrew word for “I have sojourned” is “*garti*”. The same letters spell “*taryag*” the gematria of 613. As Rashi explains, “I lived with this evil man, and I observed the 613 mitzvos. I did not learn from his wicked deeds.” The Gemora (Avodah Zara 3b) states that Lavan will come to give testimony that Yaakov Avinu is above suspicion of stealing. Lavan will testify, because that scoundrel is the one who brought out the best in Yaakov. He tricked him into marrying the wrong daughter. He made him work an extra seven years. He lowered his wages 100 times. In such an environment, Yaakov Avinu showed his

greatness and did not steal one thing. “When you searched all of my things, did you find any of your household items?” (Bereshis 31:37). The Medrash Rabba asks, “Is it possible for a son-in-law who lives with his father-in-law to not use one vessel? Yet here Lavan searched all of Yaakov’s possessions and did not even find one small needle.” That is the extent of Yaakov’s honesty. Yet he would never have achieved such a high *madrayga* (spiritual level) if he had not undergone the challenge of living with Lavan, the master trickster. That difficulty was his ticket to Olam Habbo.



Kinderlach . . .

The train is going to pull away from the station. It’s destination . . . a wonderful place. Everyone wants to board that train. You only need one thing – a ticket. With a ticket, they let you board. Without one, no amount of persuasion in the world will get you a seat. Where do you buy the ticket? Where is the cashier? Where is the ticket line? Good news. You do not have to wait in line. Hashem will send the ticket directly to you in the form of life’s difficulties and challenges. You earn that ticket by growing from each challenge. Rav Yerucham says that we should evaluate each challenge. How did I approach it? How did handle it? What am I like after it is over? Did I grow from it? Am I on a higher level? Earn your ticket, kinderlach. The train ride is great.

Miracle Oil

Why do we celebrate eight days of Chanukah? The Greeks entered the Beis HaMikdash and defiled all of the oil that was used to light the menorah. All except

one flask. That oil, which would have naturally burned one day, instead burned for eight days. Only the last seven days of burning were miraculous. Why, then do we celebrate eight days? This famous question is asked by the Beis Yosef. To begin to answer it, let us first understand why the Greeks wanted to defile all of the oil. The oil lit the menorah, which represented the light of Torah. As the verse states, “Because the lamp is a mitzvah, and the Torah is light” (Mishlei 6:23). The goal of Greeks was to destroy the Jews spiritually, not physically. By defiling all of the oil, they wanted to extinguish the light of Torah in the world. Amazingly, they overlooked one flask.

Rav Shlomo Brevda, Shlita, in his sefer “L’hodos U’l’hallel” shares a deep insight. The flask that survived was itself a miracle. How could they overlook it? Therefore, it is no surprise that other miracles came from this miraculous flask. This flask is a parable to our generation. After all of the trials and tribulations of 2000 years of exile, pogroms, holocaust, and assimilation, the Jewish people have survived. Anyone who has remained faithful to Hashem and His Torah in our days is a living miracle, like the miraculous flask. Therefore, we can expect miraculous things to come from him.

Kinderlach . . .

You are a living miracle. What does that mean? You can accomplish miracles. Do not ever think that any spiritual accomplishment is out of your reach. “I cannot learn that Mishna. It is too hard for me.” “I cannot make peace with my friend.” “I cannot listen to my Imma; I don’t have koach (strength).” You do have koach. Just try a little harder. Chanukah is coming, the time of miracles. You will succeed. You are the stuff of which miracles are made.

Parasha Questions

- Why did the Sar Ha’mashkim forget Yosef? (Rashi 40:23)
- How did the Sar Ha’ofim know that Yosef’s interpretations of the dream were correct? (Rashi 40:5)
- What were the sins of the Sar Ha’mashkim and the Sar Ha’ofim? (Rashi 40:1)
- Who sold Yosef, to whom did they sell him, and for how much money? (37:28)
- Why did Yitzchak not reveal that Yosef was alive? (Rashi 37:33)