

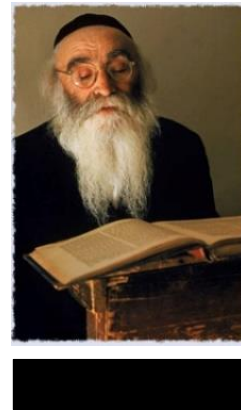
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The Parasha in our Times

שמחת שלמה

Parasha insights with practical lessons for day-to-day life, culled from the shiurim of **Rabbi Shlomo Simcha Levin** zt"l. Based on the teachings of his father the Tzaddik of Jerusalem, **Rabbi Aryeh Levin** zt"l.

פרשת ויצא - Parshat Vayetzei

The Virtue of Unity

On his way to Charan, Yaakov stopped over to rest in Beth El. The passuk relates that he took a few stones and placed them above his head. However, when he awakes, the passuk says that Yaakov took "the stone" he had placed above his head. Here there is only mention of a singular stone. Rashi quoting the sages, explains, that the stones Yaakov had originally surrounded his head with, began quarreling with each other. Each wanted to be under the head of Yaakov. Therefore, Hashem took them all, and merged them together into one stone. That is why, when he awoke, there was only one stone. Yaakov then took the stone and established it as a monument.

This Midrash needs to be understood. Why did Hashem make such a miracle? Did it bother anyone that the stones were fighting with other that Hashem had to actually

perform such a miracle, that the stones all combined together into one stone. Moreover, why did Yaakov then establish this stone as a monument? What is the significance behind this?

Perhaps this can be understood according to the words of the Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer, quoted by the Ramban. The Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer says that Yaakov had originally placed twelve stones around his head, symbolizing the twelve tribes that were destined to be born to him. The twelve stones turned into one, signifying that they are all destined to be "one". As the passuk states (Divrei Hayamim 1, 17:21), "who is like your nation, one people in the land".

According to this, we can understand why it was so important for Hashem to combine all the stones together. Since the stones represented the twelve tribes, when they were arguing between each other, it signified the friction and divisions that would emanate from them. Hashem then merged them all as one, to inform Yaakov, that eventually they will all be united together as one.

Yaakov then established the stone as a monument. The Ramban writes that Hashem took the stone and embedded it within the "Even Shitiya" – the cornerstone the world stands upon, which is also the cornerstone of the Bet HaMikdash. Signifying that is our unity that the world stands on, and is the foundation for the presence of God to dwell amongst us in this world.

If we contemplate the nature of the argument between the stones, it defines so accurately the cause for friction that so commonly divides the Jewish people. The stones were quarreling with each other that Yaakov place his head on them. Unfortunately, it is many times spiritual matters that serve as the root cause for machlokes and discord among Klall Yisrael.

The seforim tell us, that the twelve tribes represent twelve paths and methods, of how to serve Hashem. Naturally, when people are of different opinions and philosophies, they are likely to resent each other. However, this is not the way it is supposed to be. It is legitimate to disagree and be of a different mindset. But that should not disturb the feelings of love and friendship we should feel for each other.

Hashem purposefully created the Jewish people combined of twelve tribes. Each with its own unique method and way of serving Him; when combined altogether, they generate a unique completeness which brings great pleasure and satisfaction for Hashem. This is the ultimate goal, that Am Yisrael be together as one in Eretz Yisrael, each tribe serving Hashem according to their own specific teachings. Without any conflict or emotional separation dividing them.

People only have good intentions, they mean for the best, but eventually if the result is machlokes, it is unfavorable and even detrimental. My father, R' Aryeh, could not abide machlokes, even when intended completely for the sake of heaven.

In a letter, he writes as follows:

"It is so very difficult and painful for me to witness the friction created by the different political parties, which I am so disgusted by. "Truth" has gone absent, and the people are divided into many groups. Even if they perceive that their intentions are purely for the sake of heaven, let them at least all combine into one stone, and not quarrel with each other..."

Editor's note:

This week on the 4th of Kislev, was the third anniversary since the passing of R' Shlomo Simcha zt"l. How befitting are his words regarding the virtue of unity to his very own nature. R' Shlomo Simcha himself was like a magnet drawing people from all segments and sectors of

Klall Yisrael, to him. His infinite love to every Jew, made everyone feel comfortable and at ease while in his presence. Whenever he heard of a machlokes that erupted, it would cause him untold pain and discomfort.

Already at his Bris, he had part in adding unity to Klall Yisrael, when Rav Sonnenfeld and Rav Kook both met there together. R' Shlomo Simcha related, that the attendees had actually intended to arrange it so that the two Rabbis not meet each other, due to the strong arguments that were known to be between them. Rav Kook was supposed to serve as sandak, and so to Rav Sonnenfeld they mentioned a later hour as the time that the Bris was to take place, so that he would come in time for the seuda. However, Rav Kook, who was not very punctual, came late. While Rav Sonnenfeld, like usual, came exactly on time. That is how the two Rabbis ended up meeting each other.

The attendees were certain that just because there were extremely different opinions between the two, there must be feelings of resentment between them. However, the divine providence arranged for them to meet, so that all would see that there were no animosity between them. It was only a disagreement and difference of ideology that separated them, not a personal dispute.

Just as R' Shlomo Simcha merited entering this world in peace, he merited bringing peace when departing from it. At his funeral there were gathered Jews from all segments and backgrounds. Among them great rabbinical figures, who among the general public may have been perceived as having resentment to each other... There, at the funeral, everyone witnessed the respect and honor that they accorded each other, and the true side of their relationships.

May his memory serve as a blessing for us!

This publication is available weekly at Gal-Paz Music, Geula.

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