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ויצא

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ה' How We Serve

By Ariel Jeselsohn

In this week's פרשה, פרשת ויצא, we learn about the famous dream that יעקב אבינו had, with the angels going up and down the ladder. After יעקב אבינו wakes up from this spiritually uplifting experience, where ה' speaks to him for the first time in his life, he praises ה', and builds a מצבה, and names the place בית אל to honor ה'. יעקב אבינו then makes a condition saying that if ה' will be with him, and give him food, and clothing, and returns him home safely, then ה' will be his G-d. At first glance all of this makes perfect sense. יעקב אבינו just had a dream, where ה' talks to him for the first time in his life, and he is exposed extreme godliness, where he is promised by ה' that he will have lots of children, so what does יעקב אבינו do next? He praises ה'. All of this makes perfect sense. However, if we look at the end of יעקב אבינו's vow, we see something very interesting. At the end of his vow, יעקב אבינו says that if ה' brings him back to his fathers house safely, then ה' will be his G-d. This statement of יעקב אבינו arouses many questions: Was ה' not his G-d previously? Does ה' need to prove Himself in order to be our G-d? Is our belief in G-d conditional? Obviously none of these are true. So what is going on when יעקב אבינו says this?

According to רש"י, when יעקב אבינו says "והיה ה' לי לאלקים", he's not subjecting his belief in G-d to a condition. רש"י thinks that ה' being יעקב אבינו's G-d is just another component of the condition, similar to that which יעקב אבינו says "If ה' will be with me", as opposed to the end result of the condition. Rather, the end result of the condition is the following פסוק: ואלה האנשים אשר שמתי מצבה יהיה בית אלקים וכל אשר תתן לי עשר: פסוק. According to רש"י, יעקב אבינו is saying that if ה' will be his G-d, then he will make the rock a מצבה for ה', and everything יעקב אבינו receives, he will set aside as מעשר for ה'. According to רש"י, יעקב אבינו's statement: "והיה ה' לי לאלקים", is not problematic.

רמב"ן, however, disagrees with רש"י. רמב"ן says that "והיה ה' לי לאלקים" is not part of the condition, like רש"י says. Rather it is a vow, and יעקב אבינו really was subjecting the worship of ה' to his safe return to the house of his father, ארץ ישראל. According to רמב"ן, יעקב אבינו was saying that only if ה' returns him home safely to Israel will he then serve ה'. However, I do not think that according to רמב"ן, יעקב אבינו was saying that ה' existence is dependent on his safe return to Israel. Rather, יעקב אבינו was saying that ה' can only be his G-d, and that he can only serve ה' at the place of this מצבה, in Israel, which will be a בית אלקים - House of G-d. יעקב אבינו's return to ארץ ישראל will enable him to serve ה', and actually enable ה' to be יעקב אבינו's G-d. As a proof, רמב"ן quotes the גמרא in כתובות קי. The גמרא there says that it is better to live in Israel in a city full of idolaters, than in חוץ לארץ in a city full of Jews דומה. "שכל הדר בארץ ישראל דומה - כמי שיש לו אלוה וכל הדר בחוצה לארץ דומה כמי שאין לו אלוה" - whoever lives in Israel is like someone who has a god, and whoever lives outside of Israel is like someone who has no god. The גמרא even goes so far as to say that whoever lives in חוץ לארץ, it is as if he's עובד עבודה זרה, worships idols. From this גמרא that the רמב"ן quotes, we see that if someone lives outside of Israel, they have no G-d. When יעקב אבינו said that in order for ה' to be his G-d he needs to return to Israel, he was just saying what this גמרא is saying. ה' was only able to be יעקב אבינו's G-d in Israel, because outside of Israel, it was as if יעקב אבינו had no G-d, so ה' could therefore not be יעקב אבינו's G-d outside of Israel. Therefore, יעקב אבינו had to return to Israel in order to serve ה'.

Obviously, the גמרא in כתובות should not be taken 100% literally. ה' is still our G-d, no matter where we live, and we are able to serve ה' even when we are in גלות. But I think the point יעקב אבינו, and the גמרא in

are making, is that we are only able to serve 'ה to the fullest extent, if we are serving Him in Israel. The Rambam in his פירוש on the תורה also says that a מצוה's fulfillment is not complete, unless you do that מצוה in ארץ ישראל. Of course if we do מצוות in חוץ לארץ it is still a great thing, and we still get a reward, but you are only able to do 100% of the מצוה if you perform it in Israel. Therefore, may we all be זוכה in the bringing of משיח, and may the בית המקדש be rebuilt בימינו, so we can serve 'ה in ארץ ישראל, and fulfill what יעקב yearned for so many years ago.

Self Control

By Binyamin Orkaby

Midway through פרשת ויצא, יעקב finds himself confronted by רחל, his wife. She says "הִבְהִילִי בָנִים" (בראשית ל:א) "give me children, and if not I will die." This statement of רחל is prefaced with the פסוק saying "וַיִּתְרָא רָחֵל כִּי לֹא יִלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב וַתִּקְנֶא רָחֵל בְּאֲחֵתָהּ" "and רחל saw that she had birthed no children, and she was jealous of her sister". רחל being jealous of her sister is a rather nonspecific statement. Why is רחל jealous of her sister? Furthermore why is רחל at all jealous? Aren't צדיקים not supposed to be jealous?

רש"י answers all three of these questions with one answer. He says that רחל was jealous of her sister's good deeds. The לועז further explains that normally one is not allowed to be jealous, but when the jealousy is about someone's religious identity than it is allowed. For example if ראובן were to see שמעון learning and be jealous of שמעון's learning and because of that jealousy he, ראובן, would go and learn more, that would be a positive use of jealousy. So too רחל was jealous of לאה's good deeds, which, at least to רחל's eyes, was why לאה had children and she didn't.

The אור החיים asks on the next פסוק when "וַיִּחַרְאֶף יַעֲקֹב בְּרַחֵל" "יעקב becomes very angry with רחל", what was the reason that יעקב got angry? The אור החיים explains that יעקב was angered because רחל had uttered a curse when she had said "מִתֵּה אֲנִי" "or I will die". For the words of a צדיק even in this off hand manner always come to pass. therefore, says the אור החיים, יעקב wasn't by רחל so much as for her, as the פסוק says בְּרַחֵל which implies for her, rather than at her. Additionally the אור החיים adds that יעקב was also angered by the fact that she had said "הִבְהִילִי בָנִים" "give me children" rather than עלי, pray for me, as the פסוק says "הֲתִתֶּנִּי אֶל־לֵקִים אֲנִי" "can I take the place of 'ה?

This interaction between רחל and יעקב teaches us the importance of not letting our emotions take control of our actions. However, it also teaches us that even certain emotions which we generally use with a negative connotation can be good, if they are had for the right reasons. Additionally we can learn to not be loose with our tongues and to think about the consequences for our words before we say them. May we be זוכה days of שמחה ואהבה happiness and love, where jealousy and anger will have no hold upon us.

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