



# THANK YOU HASHEM

## For Shabbos Kodesh!

### Parshas Vayeitzei

#### HaMeor Shebah

*A Short Burst of Relevance*

וַיֶּאֱהֱב גַּם-אֶת-רַחֵל מִלֵּאָה...

*Indeed, he loved Rachel more than Leah...*

IN THIS WEEK'S parsha we read that Lavan tricked Yaakov Avinu into marrying Leah despite his having worked seven years for the privilege of marrying Leah's sister, Rachel. Chazal teach us that because he had anticipated Lavan's deceit, Yaakov had given Rachel a special sign so he could ascertain that she was indeed the woman he was marrying. Unable to tolerate Leah's shame, Rachel told her the secret sign she and Yaakov had made, enabling Leah to marry Yaakov Avinu instead of her. The Berditchover Rav explains just how broad Rachel's act of kindness truly was. On the verse, "And Leah's eyes were weak", Rashi comments that Leah was constantly crying for fear that, being the older daughter, she would marry Eisav, Yitzchak's older son, while Rachel, the younger daughter, would marry Yaakov, Yitzchak's younger son. Surely, Rachel was aware of this arrangement as well as the implication; it was she who would bring the *shevatim* into the world. All of klal Yisrael would come from her; all of the Torah, mitzvos, and *mesiras nefesh* of the Jewish nation throughout history would be credited to her spiritual account, garnering unimaginable reward in the world to come. This means that in giving Leah the signs, Rachel wasn't only giving away her soulmate – she was giving away her entire portion in the world to come! From Rachel's perspective, allowing Leah to marry Yaakov meant that her portion would fall with Eisav, forcing her to spend her life in an impure environment

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instead of living in Yaakov's tent of Torah and *tefillah* and serving as the matriarch of the Jewish people. Still, Rachel was willing to give away a lifetime of spirituality and her portion in the world to come to spare her sister pain. Based on this concept, the Berditchover reads our verse in the following way: "**Vaye'hav gam es Rachel**", "And Yaakov loved Rachel even more than he did before", "**m'Leah**" not "more than", but *because of* the incredible sacrifice she had made for her sister, Leah. 🙏

#### Parsha Roundup

*A 60-second Review*

- 👑 Yaakov Avinu journeys to Charan. On the way, he sleeps and dreams of a ladder reaching from heaven to earth. In the morning, Yaakov turns the stone that had unified under his head into an altar.
- 👑 Yaakov works for his uncle Lavan for seven years in order to marry Rachel. Lavan tricks Yaakov and he marries Leah. After agreeing to work another seven years, Yaakov marries Rachel as well.
- 👑 Leah gives birth to six sons and a daughter. Rachel remains barren. Rachel gives Bilah, her maidservant, to Yaakov to bear children for her, and two more sons are born. Leah does the same with her handmaid, Zilpah, who gives birth to two sons as well. Rachel's prayers are answered, and she gives birth to Yosef.
- 👑 Having been in Charan for fourteen years, Yaakov desires to return home. Lavan persuades him to remain. Yaakov prospers for six years after which he stealthily leaves Charan to avoid an encounter with Lavan. Lavan pursues Yaakov and is warned by Hashem not to harm him. The two make a pact and Yaakov travels on to Eretz Yisrael, where he is met by angels.

## P'nimiyus haParsha

### An Encounter with the Soul of the Torah

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲכֵן יֵשׁ ה' בְּמִקְוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי...

*Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely Hashem is present in this place, and I did not know it!..."*

IN THIS WEEK'S parsha, Yaakov Avinu sleeps in the place where the Beis HaMikdash is destined to stand. Upon awakening, he says, "Surely Hashem was in this place, and I did not know." The tzaddik Rebbe Reuven of Djarnovitz saw this verse as containing an important message for all Jews, in every generation.

One of the primary halachic authorities for Ashkenazic Jewry, the Rama, begins his famous work with the words, "I have placed God before me, always' – this is a primary principle of Torah." He explains that when a Jew lives with "God-consciousness", the awareness of Hashem's imminence, his actions – seen as being in the presence of the King of kings – are bound to be more refined. The Hebrew word for "sin", "cheit" also means "to miss". To sin is to veer off this enlightened path of faith, to lose touch with a perspective that sees the earth as illuminated with Hashem's infinite glory. Failing, in a moment of weakness, to "place G-d before us" is akin to falling asleep in a spiritual sense. Later, when in a moment of brokenness and shameful regret, we strive to return to His loving arms once more, we are awakened, and again step back onto the primary path of our life which is illuminated with Hashem's presence.

The holy Zohar explains that the name "Yisrael" is used to refer to our nation when we are in an elevated state. When we fall from

this level, we are referred to by the name, "Yaakov".

The tzaddik sees our verse as hinting to the above ideas. "**Vayikatz Yaakov mishnaso**": When a Jew who has fallen into sin, momentarily "missing" the target of his existence, wakes up from this lower state of "Yaakov", "**Vayomer achein yeish Hashem b'makom hazeh**": He returns to the realization that Hashem is present within each particle of physicality and every life-circumstance; even in the very yetzer hara that caused him to sin. "**V'anochi lo yada'ati**": But alas, he fell into fleeting, meaningless, and spiritually destructive behavior because he lost touch with that *daas*-knowledge, forgetting that each and every Jew lives even the most mundane elements of life in the presence of the King.

As the first halacha in Shulchan Aruch, the task of maintaining consciousness of Hashem's presence is of paramount importance. In a certain sense, all of the myriad subsequent *halachos* which cover every waking moment and every area of the human condition are for the purpose of aiding this endeavor by reminding us of the God in accordance with Whose Will we attempt to live. May we merit to attain this lofty level of "*shivisi Hashem l'negdi samid*" and hold tight to His love and belief in us so that we never fall asleep! 🙏

**“Maintaining G-d-consciousness protects against spiritual slumber. A Jew lives life in the throne room of the king.”**

## Profiles of Tzaddikim

### Biographical sketches of the Chassidic Masters

#### Rebbe Yaakov Yosef of Polonye zy"א

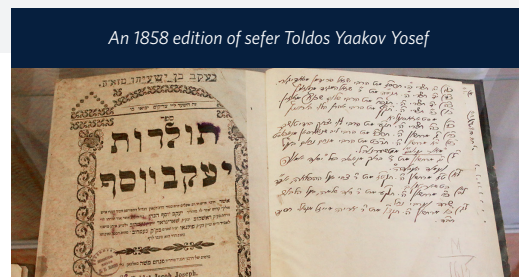
REB YAAKOV YOSEF of Polonye was born in 1710 (5471) in the Ukraine. From a very young age, Reb Yaakov Yosef exhibited exceptional mastery over his studies.

A descendant of Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli, his attachment and connection to the secrets of Torah, specifically the writings of the Arizal, was readily apparent. Reb Yaakov Yosef eventually became the Rav of the town of Sharogrod during the years in which the movement of Chassidus was beginning to spread. Like many others unfamiliar with this emerging path of *avodas Hashem*, Reb Yaakov Yosef, who was known for his stern nature, stood in ardent opposition to the Baal Shem Tov and his students.

Nevertheless, after meeting with the Baal Shem Tov for several hours, Reb Yaakov Yosef emerged a new disciple, dedicated to spreading his Rebbe's teachings and illuminating the world with the light of *pnimiyus haTorah*. Unfortunately, his community did not approve of the Rav's newfound passion for Chassidus. Reb Yaakov Yosef was eventually forced to resign his post, taking a position first as the Rav of Rashkov and then Nemirov, until finally taking a permanent position as the Rav of Polonye.

Although Reb Yaakov Yosef didn't succeed his Rebbe as the leader of the movement, he was the closest student of the Baal Shem Tov. His work *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, the *sefer* by whose title many warmly refer to this incredible tzaddik, was the first Chassidic work ever published. While this *sefer* is filled with Reb Yaakov Yosef's own profound philosophical concepts and deep Chassidic thought, he spent much of his time recording the teachings of his *Rebbe*. In fact, the Baal Shem Tov is quoted more than 280 times in its pages. This profound *sefer* occupies a sacred and preeminent place among the writings of the Chassidic masters and is an incredibly foundational journey through the writings of the Baal Shem Tov.

*Zechuso Yogen Aleinu! This section is written by R' Akiva Bruck, author of "From Behind the Curtain" (Mosaica Press). 🙏*



## Tohameha

### Tasting the Depth of Shabbos Kodesh

AS WE HAVE learned, Shabbos is connected with the creative stage of **Binah** and the soul-level of **Neshama**. The Chernovitzer teaches that the *Sefirah* of **Binah** is associated with the divine Name “**Kah**”, as the verse states, “*Kol haneshama tehallel Kah*”. One should have extra *kavanah* when saying these words during the *pesukei d’zimra* of Shabbos Kodesh. On Shabbos morning, we also sing the *pasuk*, “*Samachti b’omrim li beis Hashem neileich*”, “I was joyous when they said to me, ‘let us go to the house of Hashem.’” The Mekubalim teach that the *Sefirah* of **Binah** is called “*beis Hamelech*”, the house of the King. There are a number of reasons for this connection. The first relates to the feminine, womb-like aspect of **Binah** - analytical cognition which develops and expounds upon axiomatic principles, as one’s wife is referred to as “*beiso*”. Another is that the concept of a house in and of itself is also associated with the womb in that it represents the arena within which man develops and utilizes the food, drink, and other energy sources he brings home to propel him forward when he leaves the house once more. Thus, we recite this verse on Shabbos morning to express our great joy over entering this purifying and transformational energy of Shabbos, the *Sefirah* of **Binah** - “**Samachti b’omrim li**” - a Jew should be very joyous when, “**beis Hashem neileich**” - he wakes up on Shabbos morning into the incredible holiness of “*beis Hashem*”, the *Sefirah* of **Binah**. 🕎

*This section is adapted from the sefer “Sidduro Shel Shabbos” by R’ Chaim of Chernowitz zy”a (1760-1816)*

## Chassidus 101

### Exploring the Foundations of Chassidus

SHLOMO HAMELECH WRITES, “A fool believes everything, but a cunning man understands his steps (*Mishlei* 14:15).” Commenting on this verse, the Baal HaTanya revealed a most fundamental truth regarding the *emunah* of a Jew. Each and every Jew, from the lowliest of *reshaim* to the greatest tzaddikim, forever maintains his faith in the Master of the world. *Emunah* is something which is beyond comprehension, inherent and imbedded within our souls, constantly guiding us closer to Hashem.

The Baal HaTanya explained this teaching from Shlomo HaMelech to be hinting to our relationship with Hashem. The Master of the world is infinite, beyond our limited comprehension. Nevertheless, “*Pesi yaamin l’chol davar*,” our super-rational faith in His constant guidance is unwavering, regardless of circumstance - “*l’chol davar*”.

While this is a beautiful teaching, each and every one of us is placed in different circumstances and situations which often test our *emunah*. The Alter Rebbe writes further that all of our doubts and feelings of uncertainty in times of difficulty are merely tactics of the *yetzer hara* in his quest to pull us further away from Hashem. If *emunah* is a quality inherent to the Jewish soul, any doubts regarding one’s faith in our Creator lack true substance. They are merely obstacles for us to overcome.

Many commentaries discuss the reasons as to why the entire sefer Bereishis elaborates on the lives of our forefathers. In the

very beginning of his commentary to the Torah, Rashi asks why the Torah doesn’t begin with the first mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon. After all, it would seem that the Torah’s main message is our responsibility to fulfill Hashem’s mitzvos. Yet, the Master of the world wanted us to first read through these *parshios*, detailing the many events which took place during the lives of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov in order for us to understand just how foundational this quality of *emunah* is.

It’s hard to comprehend the difficulties our forefathers endured, the constant battles, both physical and spiritual, which they faced and overcame. During these formative moments, when the soul of our nation was beginning to develop, it was the unshakable *emunah* of our *Avos* and *Imahos* which served as the foundation of our eternal bond to Hashem. It was their unwavering commitment to bringing the world closer to Hashem that enables each and every one of us to achieve the same.

The *emunah* inherent to the Jewish soul is a quality that enables each and every one of us to overcome all and any obstacles we may face. The tzaddikim teach that *emunah* is associated with the *raglayim*, feet. Just as our feet enable us to walk and represent our physical foundation, *emunah* is a quality woven into the very fabric of our souls, allowing us to traverse the many difficult obstacles we face in this world and emerge victorious, constantly drawing ourselves ever closer to our Father in heaven. 🕎

*This section is written by R’ Akiva Bruck, author of “From Behind the Curtain” (Mosaica Press)*

## A Quick Mayseh

*A Story to Warm the Heart*

RAV YOSEF YITZCHAK Shneersohn of Lubavitch, the Rebbe Rayatz, once related the following story.

When I was four years old, I asked my father: “Why did Hashem make people with two eyes? We were created with a single nose and a single mouth, so why not one eye as well?”

“Do you know the Alef-Beis?” asked my father. “Yes”, I replied.

“Then you know that there are two very similar Hebrew letters, the *Shin* and the *Sin*. Can you tell the difference between them?”

“The *Shin* has a dot on its right side, the *Sin* on its left,” I answered.

“Well done!”, my father exclaimed. “From this we learn that there are things which one must look upon with his right eye, with affection and empathy, and there are things which are to be looked upon with the left eye, with indifference and detachment.”

“When it comes to something holy, such as a Siddur or another Jew, one should look with the right eye. However, when it comes to a candy or toy, things related to this fleeting and physical world, one should look with the left eye.”

*Like the young Rebbe Rayatz, we also know the aleph-beis. Let's try to work on attaining this understanding that our two eyes imply two ways of looking at the world. And one must always look upon another Jew with the right eye, finding holiness and sweetness at his core. 🤴*

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“THANK YOU HASHEM  
FOR SHABBOS KODESH! WEEKLY”  
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