

Kinder Torah[®]

For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table — Parshas Vayetze

Dedicated in Memory of Rav Yosef Chaim Emmanuel zt"l



Your Influence

This week's parsha begins by telling us that Yaakov Avinu left Beer Sheva and went towards Haran. Rashi comments that it is not necessary for the Torah to write that he left Beer Sheva. It would be sufficient to write that Yaakov Avinu went towards Haran, and of course we would know that he left Beer Sheva. The Torah is teaching us that when a tsaddik inhabits a city, he exerts a tremendous positive influence on the city. He improves the whole quality of life there. When he leaves, that influence is gone.

Kinderlach . . .
Everything that you do is felt in our home, in school and in our neighborhood. When you behave as tsaddikim and tsidkonios, your mitzvos bring a beautiful influence into the home. There is shalom, holiness, Torah learning, chessed, and happiness all around you. We feel it here in our home and it is surely felt in the school and the neighborhood. As the Gemora says in Yoma 86a, people will say about you, "Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah, fortunate is his Rebbe who taught him Torah, oy for those people who do not learn Torah. He learns Torah, see how nicely he behaves?" Don't ever think for one minute that your good behavior goes unnoticed. We appreciate it! Keep up the good work!

I Didn't Realize

Yaakov Avinu, in his flight from Eisav went to sleep and dreamed his famous dream. A ladder that was resting on the ground reached up to heaven, with angels ascending and descending. "Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely Hashem is present in this place and I did not know'" (Bereshis 28:16). Rashi explains that had Yaakov known, he would not have slept in such a holy place.

The Netziv zt"l illuminates this event with a parable. Imagine that a person was sent by the king to a far away place. He did not even know where he was. He thought to himself, however, "If the king were here now, I would plead my case before him." The man went to sleep, and when he awoke, he was informed that the king had passed by while he was sleeping. He was very distressed because he had missed the king. However, he realized that this was a place the king frequented. Therefore, he cried out to the king, until he heard his pleas.

Kinderlach . . .
Yaakov did not realize that he was in a very holy place. Sometimes a similar thing happens to us. We are together with Abba in shul. We forget where we are, and begin to run around and play. Then we are reminded that shul is a very holy place. Oy vey! I could have been davening in this holy place! Instead I was playing. Kinderlach, do not let this happen to you. You should always realize where you are. When you are in a holy place, take advantage of the holiness to reach out to Hashem.

Silence

And Hashem remembered Rachel, He listened to her, and He opened her womb" (Bereshis 30:22). The Sifsei Chachomim explains that whenever the Torah states that Hashem remembers someone, He remembers a good deed or deeds that the person performed in the past and subsequently grants their request. The Medrash Tanchuma notes that Hashem remembered Rachel's silence. Yaakov wanted to marry Rachel. He sent gifts to her. Lavan intercepted the gifts and gave them to Leah instead. Rachel was quiet. The Medrash praises her silence by quoting the Mishnah (Avos 1:17). Shimon the son of Rabban Gamliel said, "All of my life I have been

raised among the sages and I have not found anything better for the body than silence." Our sages praise silence in many other ways. Rebbe Akiva said, "The fence that protects wisdom is silence" (Avos 3:17). The Gemora (Megilla 18a) writes, "The best medicine in the world is silence." "Those who listen to insults and do not answer back are beloved by Hashem. They will grow stronger as the rising sun from morning to midday." The Vilna Gaon zt"l writes in the name of the Medrash, "Each and every minute that a person seals his lips he merits to see the light that was hidden away (from the time of the creation of the world). This value of this reward is beyond the comprehension of any creature."

Kinderlach . . .
Let's go around the Shabbos table giving examples of when we should be silent. "When we are thinking of saying Loshon Hora." Very good Dovid. "When someone who will not listen to criticism says something insulting to us." Excellent Rivkah. "When we are bored and just want to say something silly." You're right, Chaim, it's better to say nothing. "When we are in the middle of an argument." So true, Esti. The other person cannot continue arguing with himself. Kinderlach, quiet is a beautiful sound.

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