Jewish Tribune – Vayeitzei

**Don’t delay, give today!**

While fleeing from his brother Eisov, on route to his uncle Lovon, Yaakov Ovinu wakes up from his famous dream and make a promise:

כֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן לִי עַשֵּׂר אֲעַשְּׂרֶנּוּ לָךְ

HKBH, if you will be with me and return me to my father’s house, I will give you a tenth from all that you give me.

Yaakov is following the hallowed ways of his father and grandfather. Avrohom, after his victory over the four kings gave a tenth to Malkitzedek and Chazal tell us that Yitzchok also gave ma’aser on his produce.

Parting with hard earned money is not easy and making a promise to do so, helps. Let me suggest two ideas to make it easier.

Just before Bnei Yisroel came out of Mitzrayim they are told to “borrow” gold and silver from the Egyptians.

דַּבֶּר נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם, וְיִשְׁאֲלוּ אִישׁ מֵאֵת רֵעֵהוּ, וְאִשָּׁה מֵאֵת רְעוּתָהּ, כְּלֵי כֶסֶף וּכְלֵי זָהָב.  **(שמות פרק יא, ב)**

*“Please speak into the ears of the people, and let them borrow, each man from his friend and each woman from her friend, silver vessels and golden vessels."*

Why does the Torah use the term “borrow”? There was no intention to give anything back! Bnei Yisroel were keeping this forever!

The Chiddushei HaRim explains that this was the first time the Bnei Yisroel would experience wealth en masse and they were being taught a fundamental lesson. Whatever we own and whatever we have is merely deposited to us for a limited time and we must use it as best as we can.

Imagine you rent a car. You go into the car hire place, deal with the paperwork and are taken to your car. It is invariably very clean (and a lot cleaner than your car at home!) and has that certain smell and fresh feel. You drive away quite carefully, not just because you are a little unfamiliar with the car, but because you know you will be returning it soon. You take care of it (more than your own car), knowing that when you return it, you will have to account for any damage.

We are merely custodians of any money HKBH blesses us with. And the first time wealth is given to Klal Yisroel as a whole, we are taught this lesson. It is not ours forever, we are merely borrowing it for a limited time and must use it carefully and wisely.

Another helpful lesson is given to us by the Chafetz Chaim. Sometimes we find it hard to give tzedoko because the words of Chazal לעולם אין אדם מעני מן הצדקה – a person does not become poor by giving tzedoko, is not always internalised.

The Chafetz Chaim gives the following moshol. A man walks into the post office with a package he wants to post. He carefully writes the address and puts some stamps on and hands it to the clerk who weighs it.

“I am sorry” says the clerk, “but it is too heavy. You need to put more stamps on it.”

Incredulous, the man replies: “But that will make it heavier!”

True, but it is those extra stamps that carry it through. Sometimes, it is that tzedoko we give that “carries it through”.

And as Rav Moshe Feinstein famously writes(**אגרות משה אה"ע ד:כו,ד**), giving a tenth applies to one’s time as well. And indeed all the resources and talents that HKBH has blessed us with. Perhaps this is alluded to in the words of Yaakov Ovinu: כֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן לִי, *everything* you give me.

Using our money, time, talents and resources wisely is therefore one of the important messages in this week’s parsha.

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