Jewish Tribune – Vayeitzei

**Means and Ends**

This week’s parsha tells of the famous dream of Yaakov Ovinu. The dream is a vehicle of prophecy and foretells wonderful things for Yaakov Ovinu and Klal Yisroel.

The ladder alludes to Har Sinai (the words סיני and סולם have the same gematria), the Torah, given at Har Sinai, becoming a bridge between heaven and earth.

The dream is also a portend of the four exiles and that the seemingly endless ascent of Edom/Eisov up the ladder will eventually come to an end. It also promises that Yaakov would receive Divine protection and that he and his children will return to Eretz Yisroel.

That being the case, Yaakov’s reaction when he wakes up seems hard to understand.

וַיִּיקַץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְּׁנָתוֹ, וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה, וְאָנֹכִי לֹא יָדָעְתִּי

And Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said:

“Surely Hashem is in this place and I did not know!”

Rashi tells that had he known the ground was sacred, he would not have gone to sleep.

Really?

Yaakov would not have gone to sleep there and not have had this amazing prophecy? Would it not be worth sleeping in this sacred place just to ensure and guarantee these momentous promises from HKBH?

The Gemoro in Bava Metzia (85b) tells a remarkable story. One time, R’ Yehuda Hanossi decreed a fast and asked R’ Chiya to lead the tefilos. During chazoras hashatz, when R’ Chiya said “mashiv horuach” the wind starting blowing. When he said “morid hageshem”, it started to rain. When R’ Chiya was about to say “mechaye meisim” (He restores life to the dead), the ground started to shake. A heavenly voice declared “Who has revealed secrets in the lower world?!”

Eliyohu Hanovi was quickly dispatched to distract R’ Chiya and techiyas hameisim was averted.

Tosfos (86a) ask a seemingly strange question. How could R’ Yehuda Hanossi have asked R’ Chiya to be the Chazzan, surely the Gemoro says in Megilla (24b) that R’ Chiya could not differentiate between the letters “ches” and “heh” and was therefore disqualified to be the chazzan. He should not have been allowed to daven at the omud!?

Really?

But he was so close to bringing about techiyas hameisim? He was going to end the golus and all the misery that goes with it!? I’m sure the tzibbur would have overlooked a few mispronunciations!

The Brisker Rov gives a powerful answer. Ends do not justify the means. Yes, the ends were indeed of major importance, but halocho is halocho. If the halocho says that this person is not allowed to daven, he cannot daven – end of story.

And that is what Yaakov Ovinu is teaching us. Indeed, the dream he had was historic and of momentous significance for himself, for the future of Klal Yisroel and for the entire world - but halocho is halocho. If you are not allowed to sleep on sacred soil, that is the end of the story. The methods used to achieve the end, however magnificent the end, have to accord with halocho.

It takes tremendous adherence to the truth and much yiras shomayaim to live by this principle – and it takes a Yaakov Ovinu to teach it to us.

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