

## פרשת ויחי

Some may think that it is quite complex, or even contradictory. But it is really pretty simple if you think about it.

On the one hand, the Torah endorses the righteousness of Reuven more than once. Although we may wonder why he didn't do more, the Torah testifies that Reuven wanted to save Yosef from death- and he did so.

We read (B'reishis Perek 37/Posuk 22):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם רְאוּבֵן אֶל תִּשְׁפְּכוּ דָם הַשְּׁלִיכוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל הַבּוֹר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיֵּד אֶל  
תִּשְׁלַחוּ בוֹ לְמַעַן הִצִּיל אֶתוֹ מִיָּדָם לְהָשִׁיבוֹ אֶל אָבִיו:

Reuven said to his brothers, 'Do not spill blood; cast Yosef into this pit that is in the wilderness and no hand should be sent against him;' [he did so] in order to save Yosef from their hand to return Yosef to his father.

Furthermore, even when after coarsely interfering in his father's personal life after the death of Leah I'meinu, we read earlier (ibid. Perek 35/Posuk 22):

וַיְהִי בְּשָׁנָן יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ הַהוּא וַיֵּלֶךְ רְאוּבֵן וַיִּשְׁכַּב אֶת בִּלְהָה פִּילְגֶשֶׁת אֲבִיו וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל  
פ<sup>1</sup>

וַיְהִי בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר:

It was when Yisroel dwelled in that land, Reuven went and laid with Bilhah the concubine of his father and Yisroel heard;

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<sup>1</sup> In this verse in the Torah, its final phrase:

וַיְהִי בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר:

And the sons of Yaakov were twelve.

is written on the following line, with a large space between it and the first part of the Posuk which was on the previous line. The letter פ in the printed Chumash which we left here means פתוחה פרשה. A *Parsha Pasucha* is when a line in the Torah is left open at its end and instead of the following Posuk being written on the same line, it starts on the next one. There are many 'open Parshos' in the Torah.

Here, the Posuk itself is divided between lines and we have written it that way.

And the sons of Yaakov were twelve.

Rashi writes here:

וישכב - מתוך שבלבל משכבו מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו שכבה. ולמה בלבל וחלל יצועיו, שכשמתה רחל נטל יעקב מטתו שהיתה נתונה תדיר באהל רחל ולא בשאר אהלים ונתנה באהל בלהה, בא ראובן ותבע עלבון אמו, אמר אם אחות אמי היתה צרה לאמי, שפחת אחות אמי תהא צרה לאמי, לכן בלבל:

*And he laid* – Because Reuven mixed Yaakov's bed the Torah considers it as if Reuven had laid with her.

Why did he mix the beds and profane his father's bed<sup>2</sup>? When Rochel died Yaakov took his bed that was permanently in the tent of Ohel, and not in the other tents, and he placed it in the tent of Bilhoh. Reuven came to protest against the insult to his mother. He said, 'If my mother's sister was a competitive wife to my mother, should the maidservant of my mother's sister be a competitive wife to my mother?' That is why he mixed the beds.

ויהיו בני יעקב שנים עשר -ורבותינו דרשו ללמדנו בא שכולן שוין, וכולן צדיקים, שלא חטא ראובן:

*The sons of Yaakov were twelve* – [Since we already know this information, why is it written – and why is it written here?] Our Rabbis interpreted this Posuk to teach us that all of the sons of Yaakov were equal; all were righteous. This teaches that Reuven did not sin.

On the other hand, when we learn this week's Parsha, we see that Yaakov's attitude towards Reuven when he bestowed his final charge to him and his brothers was very different in its approach to Reuven than it was to many<sup>3</sup> of brothers.

We read (B'reishis Perek 49/P'sukim 3-4):

רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹרִי אֶתְּהָ כַּחֲי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי יִתֶּר שְׂאֵת וְיִתֶּר עָז: פָּחַז כַּמִּים אֶל תּוֹתֵר כִּי עָלִית מִשְׁכְּבִי אָבִיר אֶז חֲלִלְתָּ יְצוּעֵי עָלֶה:

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<sup>2</sup> Immediately we will bring the source of this phrase.

<sup>3</sup> But it wasn't different from all of the other brothers. Shimon and Levi were not directly blessed either.

Reuven, you are my first-born; my strength and the first of my power; you should have more heights and more power. Because you were impulsive like water you will not have more; because you went up on the bed of your father; you then profaned the bed upon it.

Rashi explains:

יתר שאת - ראוי היית להיות יתר על אחיך בכהונה, לשון נשיאות כפים:

*More heights* – You were worthy to have more than your brothers to receive the *Kehunah*. שאת, heights, is an expression of נשיאת כפים, ‘raising the hands’, the blessings that Kohanim bestow.

ויתר עז - במלכות, כמו (שמואל א ב/י<sup>4</sup>) ויתן עז למלכו. ומי גרם לך להפסיד כל אלה:

*Greater strength* – for royalty as the verse says – Hashem will give strength to His king.

What caused you to lose all of this, the *Kehuna* and the royalty?

פחז כמים - הפחז והבהלה אשר מהרת להראות כעסך, כמים הללו הממהרים למרוצתם, לכך אל תותר - אל תתרבה ליטול כל היתרות הללו שהיו ראויות לך. ומהו הפחז אשר פחזת כי עלית משכבי אביך אז חללת - אותו שעלה על יצועי, שם שכנה שדרכו להיות עולה על יצועי:

*Impulsive like water* – the impulsivity and confused haste that you hurried to show your anger are like water that flows rapidly.

Therefore, you will not receive more. – You will not have more and receive all of these extras that were fitting for you.

What is the ‘impulsivity’? It was when you went up on the bed of your father – then you profaned it when you went up on the bed.

The Shechinah was regularly upon my [Yaakov’s] bed.

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<sup>4</sup> The entire verse reads:

ה' יחיתו מריביו עליו בשמים ירעם ה' ידין אפסי ארץ ויתן עז למלכו וירם קרן משיחו:  
Hashem, those who fight You will be broken from the heavens; Hashem will thunder against them; He will judge the corners of the earth and give strength to His king and raise the horn of His Moshiach.

These sources are not contradictory. Reuven's distress was justified. He did not sin; he was righteous just like the rest of his siblings.

However, Reuven the way in which Reuven expressed his distress was inappropriate and impulsive. He did not bother to consider the decision-making process of Yaakov when the latter chose to place his bed in the tent of Bilhoh. He did not bother to weigh the implication of his interference in the very personal life of his father.

The Shechinah that was present with Yaakov, even in moments of intimacy, decreed that such should be the situation regarding the location of Yaakov's bed<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> We have another example of the Shechinah being by the bed of Yaakov but the explanation there is not the same as the one that we have written here.

We read regarding Yosef's response to Yaakov's request that Yosef would assure Yaakov's burial in Eretz Yisroel and Yaakov's response to Yosef. The Posuk (Perek 47/Posuk 31) reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר הַשְּׂבָעָה לִּי וַיִּשְׁבַּע לוֹ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל רֹאשׁ הַמֶּטֶה:

Yaakov said to Yosef, 'Make an oath for me' and Yosef made the oath for him; Yisroel prostrated himself towards the head of the bed.

Rashi writes:

על ראש המטה - הפך עצמו לצד השכינה מכאן אמרו שהשכינה למעלה מראשותיו של חולה.  
*At the head of the bed* – Yaakov turned himself to the direction of where the Shechinah was. From here they said that the Shechinah is found above the head of one who is ill.

We learn a fascinating fact here. The Shechinah that Yaakov talks about in his words to Reuven was a Shechinah that was there for Yaakov alone. However, the Shechinah which was there when Yaakov bowed down was not there for him alone, uniquely. It is the Shechinah that is present for all who are infirm.

Thus, we see that the Shechinah was uniquely present for Yaakov *davka* in instances of intimacy!

Compare this to Rashi in on our Parsha in the Posuk cited above Perek 49/Posuk 3 d.h. *v'reishis o'ni* and contrast it with the words of Bil'am that we read in Parshas Bolok (B'midbar Perek 23/Posuk 10 and Rashi there d.h. *u'mispar*) and as it is explained in Masseches Nidah 31 a.

And because of that impulsivity Reuven no longer was eligible for the *Kehunah* or for the royalty.

Thus, these sources are not contradictory. Reuven was correct in having an objection but he did not act correctly in dealing with that valid objection. Being correct is not sufficient. One has to deal with the objection correctly.

However, it is not so simple to fathom what is meant in the blessing that another of Reuven's brothers received because that blessing, in and of itself, seems to be self-contradictory.

We read the following challenging verses regarding Yissochor (Perek 49/P'sukim 14-15):

יִשְׁשַׁכֵּר חֲמֹר גָּרָם רֵיֵץ בֵּין הַמְּשַׁפְּתִים: וַיֵּרָא מְנוּחָה כִּי טוֹב וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ כִּי נְעִמָּה וַיֵּט  
שָׁכְמוּ לְסָבֵל וַיְהִי לְמַסַּע עֶבֶד:

<sup>6</sup>Yissochor is a strong-boned donkey, stretching out between the resting stops. He sees that rest is good and the land is pleasant so he will bend his back to the load, working like a slave.

This blessing that is bestowed upon Yissochor, beyond the difficulty of understanding its individual words and interpreting their context, seems to be in opposition to itself.

In the second verse we see that Yissochor values *מנוחה*, rest, and then the Posuk tells us that he gave himself willingly to hard work and for servitude.

What can be the meaning of these words that contain a blessing for Yissochor and all those who are with him?

Rashi writes:

יִשְׁשַׁכֵּר חֲמֹר גָּרָם - חֲמֹר בַּעַל עֲצָמוֹת, סוֹבֵל עוֹל תּוֹרָה כַּחֲמֹר חֲזָק שְׂמִטְעִינִין אוֹתוֹ  
מִשְׁאוּי כַּבֵּד:

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Related to these sources are Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Siman 240/s'if 17 and Siman 3/s'if 6 and the commentators there.

<sup>6</sup> These difficult verses are translated elegantly by Rav Aryeh Kaplan ZT"l in his "Living Torah". Here, we have used his translation almost completely, according to Rashi.

*Yissochor is a strong-boned donkey* – A donkey with many bones who is able to bear the yoke of Torah like a strong donkey that they load with a heavy bundle.

רבץ בין המשפתים - כחמור המהלך ביום ובלילה ואין לו לינה בבית וכשהוא רוצה לנח רובץ לו בין התחומין בתחומי העיירות שמוליך שם פרקמטיא:

*Crouches between the resting stops* – like the donkey that goes day and night and has no organized place to sleep. When it wants to rest between the borders, it crouches to rest between the borders of the cities to which it travels and brings goods to there.

וירא מנוחה כי טוב - ראה לחלקו ארץ מבורכת וטובה להוציא פירות:

*It sees that rest is good* – Yissochor saw his part of Eretz Yisroel was blessed and good to produce fruit.

ויט שכמו לסבול - עול תורה:

*It bent its back to bear* – the yoke of Torah.

ויהי - לכל אחיו ישראל:

*And it became* – for [the benefit of] his brethren Israel...

למס עובד - לפסוק להם הוראות של תורה וסדרי עבורין<sup>7</sup>, שנאמר (דברי הימים א יב/לג<sup>8</sup>) ומבני יששכר יודעי בינה לעתים לדעת מה יעשה ישראל ראשיהם מאתים, מאתים ראשי סנהדראות העמיד, וכל אחיהם על פיהם:

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<sup>7</sup> עיבורין refers to the determination if a year would be a מעוברת, leap-year, with 13 months instead of the standard 12. The computations that were required, together with data regarding the weather of a particular year, were burdensome and complicated. Yissochor was designated as particularly apt and gifted in that regard.

<sup>8</sup> The entire verse reads:

וּמִבְנֵי יִשְׁשַׁכָּר יוֹדְעֵי בִינָה לְעֵתִים לְדַעַת מַה יַעֲשֶׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאִשֵׁיהֶם מֵאֵתִים וְכָל אַחֵיהֶם עַל פִּיהֶם:

From the sons of Yissochor who know the understanding of the times to know what Israel should do, its courts-heads and all of their brethren, according to their word.

Rashi writes:

ומבני יששכר יודעי בינה לעתים - שיודעים לתת עצה לפי הענין של מעשה שצריך לדוד להתייעץ היאך יחזק המלכות מפני בני שאול:

*Working like a slave* - to *pasken* Halachos for them and how to make the calendar as it says, 'From the sons of Yissochor who know to understand times; what will Israel do so that the "two hundred heads" will know what to do?'

The "two hundred heads" are the heads of the courts that he appointed and all of their brethren follow their word.

We sense the honor that Yaakov Ovinu was giving *Shevet Yissochor*. They were to be supreme in Torah learning and authority.

Moshe Rabbenu repeated the gist of this honor in *his* blessings to Yissochor.

We read in Parshas V'zos haBracha (D'vorim Perek 33/Posuk 18):

וְלִזְבוּלִין אָמַר שְׂמַח זְבוּלִין בְּצֵאתְךָ וְיִשְׁשָׁכְר בְּאֹהֶלְיָךְ:

Moshe said to Zevulun, 'Zevulun, be happy in your travels and Yissochor, in your tents.'

Rashi writes:

ויששכר - הצלח בישיבת אהליך לתורה לישב ולעבר שנים ולקבוע חדשים, כמו שנאמר ומבני יששכר יודעי בינה לעתים ראשיהם מאתים ראשי סנהדראות היו עוסקים בכך. ועל פי קביעות עתיהם ועבוריהם:

*And Yissochor* – Be successful in your dwelling in your tents for Torah. To sit and to decide upon leap years and to decide on the beginning of the months. This is as it says, From the sons of Yissochor who know to understand times; what will Israel do so that the "two hundred heads" will know what to do?'

The Midrash also gives expression to Yissochor's unique involvement in Torah. We read (B'reishis Rabba Parshata 98/12):

וירא מנוחה כי טוב, זו התורה, שנאמר (משלי ד/ב<sup>9</sup>) כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם

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*From the sons of Yissochor who know the understanding of the times* – They know to give counsel for a particular matter of what should be done. Dovid HaMelech needed them for advice on how to strengthen his rule to be protected against Shaul's sons.

<sup>9</sup> The entire verse reads:

כִּי לְקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם תּוֹרַתִּי אֵל תַּעֲזֹבוּ:

*He saw rest that it was good* – This refers to Torah as it says, ‘Because a *good* purchase I Hashem gave to you.’

Besides what appears to be an inner contradiction in the verse, does it not seem strange that learning Torah is termed מנוחה, rest?

We understand that Torah requires supreme effort as we learn in Masseches Megillah (6 b):

ואמר רבי יצחק, אם יאמר לך אדם: יגעתי ולא מצאתי - אל תאמן, לא יגעתי ומצאתי - אל תאמן, יגעתי ומצאתי - תאמן. הני מילי - בדברי תורה.  
Rabi Yitzchak said, ‘If a person will tell you “I labored and did not find answers”, do not believe him. If a person says, “I didn’t labor and I did find answers”, do not believe him. If a person says, “I labored and found answers’, believe him. This is said in regard to *Divrei Torah*.

To be great in Torah requires supreme effort. Rav Shlomo Wolbe ZT”L explains in *Aley Shur II* (Page 61) that one of the basic ingredients of a person who is a *Godol BaTorah* is the supreme, ‘super-human’ efforts that he makes for his intensive learning to be successful.

Such intensive efforts do not seem to be a recipe for *Menuchah* whatsoever!

And, yet, since the Torah refers to this unique combination that belongs to Shevet Yissochor as *menuchah*, rest, we must attempt to have an overview of what ‘rest’ is and how it is related to the tiring labor to which the donkey of burden, *Yissochor* of Israel, is encumbered.

In order to seek a solution, let us remember a request that was made by Yaakov Ovinu and the Divine response to that request.

We read in Parshas Vayeshev (B’reishis Perek 37/Posuk 1):

וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגְוִרֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:  
Yaakov dwelled in the Land of Canaan.

Rashi explains (Posuk 2):

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Because I Hashem have given you a good purchase; do not forsake My Torah.



וישב ביקש יעקב לישב בשלוח, קפץ עליו רוגזו של יוסף. צדיקים מבקשים לישב בשלוח אומר הקדוש ברוך הוא לא דיין לצדיקים מה שמתוקן להם לעולם הבא, אלא שמבקשים לישב בשלוח בעולם הזה:

*Yaakov dwelled* – Yaakov sought to dwell in tranquillity. The incensed matter of Yosef jumped up upon him. The righteous seek to live in tranquillity. [But] Hashem says, ‘It isn’t enough for the righteous that Olom HaBo is prepared for them? But, they seek tranquillity in this world?’

Shouldn’t we ask, ‘what is wrong for Yaakov seeking tranquillity and respite from the tumultuous life that enveloped him from his mother’s womb?’

We read in Parshas Toldos (ibid. Perek 25/Posuk 22):

וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם כֵּן לָמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי וַתִּלְךְ לְדָרֵשׁ אֶת ה':  
The sons crushed each other in her innards and Rivka said, ‘If so, what is this that I am?’ She went to seek Hashem.

Years later, the Torah tells us (Perek 27/Posuk 41):

וַיִּשְׂטֵם עֵשָׂו אֶת יַעֲקֹב עַל הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַכּוֹ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו בְּלִבּוֹ יִקְרְבוּ יָמֵי אָבִל אָבִי וְאַהֲרָגָה אֶת יַעֲקֹב אָחִי:

Eisav hated Yaakov because of the blessing that his father blessed him and Eisav said to himself, ‘soon will be the time to mourn for my father and I will kill my brother Yaakov.’

Soon after this plan of Eisav is revealed to us, Yaakov Ovinu has a new nemesis. We read in Parshas Vayetze Perek 29/Posuk 14):

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לָבָן אַךְ עֲצָמֵי וּבָשָׂרִי אַתָּה וַיֵּשֶׁב עִמּוֹ חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים:

Lovon said to Yaakov, ‘But you are my bone and my flesh’; Yaakov dwelled with Lovon for a month of days.

Rashi explains:

אך עצמי ובשרי - מעתה אין לי לאספך הביתה הואיל ואין בידך כלום, אלא מפני קורבה אטפל בך חדש ימים, וכן עשה ואף זו לא לחנם שהיה רועה צאנו:

*But you are my bone and my flesh* – Based on the above, I have no obligation to bring you into my house since you have no possessions with you. But,

since we are relatives, I will take care of you for a month. So Lovon did, but not for free because Yaakov shepherded Lovon's flocks.

Seven years later we read (ibid. P'sukim 25-26):

וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַהֲנִהּ הוּא לְאָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל לֵבָן מַה זֹאת עָשִׂיתְ לִי הֲלֹא בְרַחֵל עֲבַדְתִּי עִמָּךְ  
וְלָמָּה רָמִיתָנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר לֵבָן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה כֵן בְּמִקְוֹמִינוּ לְתֵת הַצְעִירָה לְפָנַי הַבְּכִירָה:

It was in the morning and behold she is Leah; Yaakov said to Lovon, 'What is this that you did to me? Did I not work with you for Rachel; why did you cheat me?'

Lovon said, 'In our place it is not done to give the younger one before the older one.'

After the birth of Yosef, when Lovon and Yaakov came to an agreement about the wages that Yaakov would receive, we read of Lovon's treachery (ibid. Perek 30/Posuk 35):

וַיִּסַּר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת הַתִּישִׁים הָעֵקֶדִים וְהַטְּלָאִים וְאֶת כָּל הָעֵזִים הַנִּקְדוֹת וְהַטְּלָאֵת כֹּל  
אֲשֶׁר לֵבָן בּוֹ וְכֹל חוּם בְּכֹשָׁבִים וַיִּתֵּן בְּיַד בְּנָיו:

On that day Lovon removed the dotted and patched male goats and all of the female goats that were dotted and patched, anything with any white in it; and all of the brown in the sheep and gave them to his sons.

Yaakov's success was not deterred and not appreciated by Lovon and his family. The Torah makes such quite clear (Perek 31/P'sukim 1-2):

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת דְּבָרֵי בְנֵי לֵבָן לְאֹמֶר לְקַח יַעֲקֹב אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לְאָבִינוּ וּמֵאֲשֶׁר לְאָבִינוּ עָשָׂה  
אֶת כָּל הַכָּבֵד הַזֶּה: וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶת פְּנֵי לֵבָן וַהֲנִה אֵינֶנּוּ עִמּוֹ כְּתַמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם:

Yaakov heard the words of Lovon's sons saying, 'Yaakov took all that our father had and from that which was our father's he made all of this honor.' Yaakov saw the face of Lovon and behold it was not with him as in prior times.

Yaakov expressed his sorrows and worries to Rachel and Leah as we read (Perek 31/Posuk 7):

וְאָבִיכֵן הִתֵּל בִּי וְהִחֲלַף אֶת מִשְׁכַּבְתִּי עִשְׂרֵת מַנִּים וְלֹא נָתַנּוּ אֵלַי לִיקִים לְהָרַע עִמָּדִי:

Your father mocked me and he changed my wages 10 times<sup>10</sup>; but G-d did not let him do me evil.'

Yaakov fled Lovon and Lovon pursued with the nefarious plans that are evident in the Divine warning that Lovon received. We read (ibid. P'sukim 22-24):

וַיִּגַד לְלִבֵּן בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי כִּי בָרַח יַעֲקֹב: וַיִּקַּח אֶת אָחִיו עִמּוֹ וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אַחֲרָיו דֶּרֶךְ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וַיִּדְבֹּק אֹתוֹ בְּהַר הַגִּלְעָד: וַיָּבֹא אֵלָּהֶם... לִקְרִי' אֵל לִבְנֵי הָאֲרָמִי בַחֲלֹם הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַשָּׂמֶר לָךְ פֶּן תִּדְבַּר עִם יַעֲקֹב מִטוֹב עַד רָע:

It was told to Lovon on the third day that Yaakov fled. Lovon took his brothers with him and he pursued Yaakov on a seven – day long road and he reached him at Mt. Gilad. G-d came to Lovon the Arami in a dream at night and He said to him, 'Be careful lest you speak with Yaakov from good to bad.'

Lovon was out of the picture; he is never heard from again. But Eisav, who has been lurking in the background, reemerges as we read (Perek 32/P'sukim 7-9):

וַיָּשֻׁבוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים אֶל יַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר בָּאוּ אֵל אָחִיךָ אֶל עֵשָׂו וְגַם הֵלֵךְ לִקְרַאתְךָ וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ עִמּוֹ: וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיִּצָּר לוֹ וַיַּחֲץ אֶת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וְאֶת הַצֹּאן וְאֶת הַבָּקָר וְהַגְּמָלִים לְשְׁנֵי מַחֲנֹת: וַיֹּאמֶר אִם יָבֹא עֵשָׂו אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה הָאֶחָד וְהִכּוֹהוּ וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנִּשְׁאָר לְפָלִיטָה:

The messengers returned to Yaakov saying, 'We came to your brother, to Eisav and he is also going to meet you; he has four hundred men with him.' Yaakov was very afraid and it was distressing to him and he divided the people who were with him and the sheep and the cattle and the camels into two camps. Yaakov said, 'If Eisav will come and smite one camp then the remaining camp will escape.'

The woes of Yaakov are not over. The episode with Shechem begins as we read (Perek 34/P'sukim 1-2, 25, 30):

וַתֵּצֵא דִינָה בַת לֵאָה אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב לְרֵאוֹת בְּבָנוֹת הָאָרֶץ: וַיִּרָא אֹתָהּ שָׁכֵם בֶּן חַמּוֹר הַחִוִּי נָשִׂיא הָאָרֶץ וַיִּקַּח אֹתָהּ וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ וַיַּעֲנֶנָּה:

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<sup>10</sup> Rashi writes:

עשרת מנים - אין מונים פחות מעשרה:

*Ten times* – each 'time' is at least the value of '10'.

Dina the daughter of Leah who was born to Yaakov went out to see among the girls of the land. Shechem ben Chamor the Chivite the prince of the land saw her and he took her and he laid with her and he afflicted her.

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְּהִיוֹתָם כְּאֲבִים וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁמֵעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחֵי דִינָה אִישׁ חֲרָבוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ עַל הָעִיר בְּטַח וַיַּהַרְגוּ כָּל זָכָר:

On the third day when the people of Shechem were in pain, the two sons of Yaakov, Shimon and Levi, the brothers of Dina, took each man his sword and they came securely upon the city and they killed all the males.

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל שְׁמֵעוֹן וְאֶל לֵוִי עַכְרָתֶם אֶתִּי לְהַבְאִישׁנִי בְיֵשֶׁב הָאָרֶץ בְּפָנְעֵנִי וּבְפָרְדִּי וְאֲנִי מֵתִי מִסָּפֵר וְנֶאֱסָפוּ עָלַי וְהַכּוּנִי וְנִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֲנִי וּבֵיתִי:

Yaakov said to Shimon and to Levi, 'You have sullied me to make me rank among those who dwell in the land of the Canaanites and the Prizites and I am just a few people and they will gather against me and they will smite me and I will be destroyed; I and my household.'

And there was personal tragedy as well. We read (Perek 35/Posuk 8):

וַתָּמָת דְּבִרָה מִיְנֻקֹּת רִבְקָה וַתִּקְבֹּר מִתַּחַת לְבַיִת אֶל תַּחַת הָאֵלוֹן וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אֵלוֹן בְּכּוֹת:

Devorah, the nursemaid of Rivka died and she was buried below Beit El, under the *a'lon*-tree and Yaakov called the place 'the *a'lon* of crying'.

Rashi writes:

תחת האלון - ואגדה נתבשר שם באבל שני, שהוגד לו על אמו שמתה...

*Underneath the a'lon-tree* – The Agadda teaches that Yaakov was told there of another mourning – he was told that his mother, Rivka l'meinu, died.

A greater tragedy ensues (P'sukim 16-19):

וַיִּסְעוּ מִבֵּית אֵל וַיְהִי עוֹד כְּבָרַת הָאָרֶץ לְבּוֹא אֶפְרַתָּה וַתֵּלֶד רָחֵל וַתִּקְשׁ בְּלִדְתָּהּ: וַיְהִי בְּהַקְשִׁיתָהּ בְּלִדְתָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמִּילָדָת אֵל תִּירָאִי כִּי גַם זֶה לָךְ בֶּן: וַיְהִי בְּצֵאת נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי מָתָה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶן אוֹנִי וְאָבִיו קָרָא לוֹ בְנֵי־מִיָּן: וַתָּמָת רָחֵל וַתִּקְבֹּר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרַתָּה הוּא בֵּית לָחֶם:

They traveled from Beit El and it was a day's journey<sup>11</sup> to come to Efros and Rochel was giving birth and she had difficulty in her birthing. And when her birthing became harder, the midwife said to her, 'Do not be concerned; this one is also a boy for you.' And it was when her soul departed because she was dying, she called his name *Ben-Oni* and his father called him Binyomin. Rochel died and she was buried on the road to Efros which is Beit Lechem.

Why wouldn't Yaakov want peace and tranquility? Who wouldn't? How great was his suffering! Certainly it appeared to him to be unending.

In Sefer Iyov (Perek 5/Posuk 7):

כִּי אָדָם לְעֵמֶל יוֹלָד וּבְנֵי רֶשֶׁף יִגְבְּיֵהוּ עוֹף:

Man was born for toil; just like birds are born to fly<sup>12</sup>.

If man was born to toil, then it does it not follow that one cannot have tranquility and rest as well?

Why was man born to toil?

Malbim here presents us with a practical lesson. He writes:

שהאדם נולד לעמול ביגיע כפיו, ובעמלו יביא לחמו, והעושה עושר שלא בעמל וביגיע כפים הוא עמל ואון ולא יצמיח ולא יתקיים ביד בניו, סוף דבר שעקר הצלחת האדם תלוי בהשתדלותו ובעמלו ויגיע כפו...

Man was born to toil with the wearying efforts of his hands and with his toil he will have his food. One who attains wealth without toil and without the wearying efforts of his hands - that toil is fruitless and the wealth will not grow and will not remain in the hands of his offspring.

The bottom line is that the fundamental success of a person is dependent on his efforts and his toil and upon the wearying efforts of his hands.

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<sup>11</sup> There are many explanations to the phrase *כברת ארץ* which also appears in this week's Parshas Vayechi (Perek 48/Posuk 7). One explanation is that it is the amount that can be plowed in one day.

<sup>12</sup> This translation of the second phrase of the verse is according to Ibn Ezra. There are other and varied explanations.

Maharal (Chidushei Aggados Masseches Sanhedrin 99 b) presents a more philosophical/hashkafic approach. He writes:

האדם הזה מצד שהוא בעל גוף וכל בעל גוף אי אפשר לו שיהיה נח, כי ההנחה  
ראויה אל הדבר שהוא נבדל...ולפיכך האדם שהוא בעל גוף הוא בעל עמל.

ועוד כי האדם הוא בכח ולא בפעל, כי כל גשם הוא בכח ולא בפעל, רק הנבדל הוא  
בפעל ולפי מה שהוא נבדל אם הוא נבדל לגמרי הוא בפעל הגמור...וכל שהוא בכח  
ראוי אליו העמל שהוא יציאה אל הפעל, ולפיכך אדם לעמל יולד...

Man, from the aspect of him being corporeal – anything that is corporeal cannot be at rest and inactive. Rest and inactivity are appropriate for that which is *nivdal*<sup>13</sup> – separate from bodily beings and without corporeality. Therefore, man who is corporeal is one who is a toiler.

Furthermore, man has potential that is not actualized. That is because all that is physical has potential that is not actualized. Only that which is *nivdal* is actualized [and not only in potential]. That is because that which is *nivdal* is completely *nivdal* and thus completely actualized.

All that is potential requires toil which actualizes the potential. Therefore, man was born for toil.

And Maharal continues this theme in an additional commentary in his *Chiddushei Aggados* to Masseches Sanhedrin 106 a.

The Gemara there reads:

אמר רבי יוחנן: כל מקום שנאמר וישב אינו אלא לשון צער, שנאמר (במדבר כה/א) וישב ישראל בשטים ויחל העם לזנות אל בנות מואב. וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו

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<sup>13</sup> A 'nivdal' is a being that is Divinely created to be a connection between the infinite and completely incorporeal HaKodosh Boruch Hu, and the very finite and very corporeal human being.

See Moreh Nevuchim Chelek I/Perek 49 for an early mention of these *nivdalim* by Rambam.

בארץ כנען (לז/ב<sup>14</sup>) ויבא יוסף את דבתם רעה אל אביהם. ונאמר (שם מז/כז-כט<sup>15</sup>)  
וישב ישראל בארץ גשן.... ויקרבו ימי ישראל למות.

Rabi Yochanan said, 'Wherever it is written 'he dwelled' it is always an expression of pain as it says, "Israel dwelled in *Shittim* and the people began to be promiscuous to the daughters of Moav."<sup>16</sup>

[It says] "Yaakov dwelled in the land of the sojournings" of his father [and] "Yosef brought their bad reports to their father."

It says, "Yisroel dwelled in the Land of Goshen" and then it says, "The days of Yisroel to die approached."

Doesn't 'dwelling' imply that a person has found a place to set up their household, have permanence in their lives and remove the distractions that constant movement brings in its wake? Why should וישב imply pain?

Maharal writes:

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<sup>14</sup> The verse reads in its entirety:

אלה תלדות יעקב יוסף בן שבע עשרה שנה היה רעה את אחיו בצאן והוא נער את בני בלחה ואת בני זלפה נשי אביו ויבא יוסף את דבתם רעה אל אביהם:

These are the generations of Yaakov, Yosef was seventeen years old and he was shepherding sheep with his brothers; he was a lad with the sons of Bilhoh and the sons of Zilpoh, the wives of his father, and Yosef brought their bad reports to their father.

<sup>15</sup> The verses read in their entirety:

וישב ישראל בארץ מצרים בארץ גשן ויאחזו בה ויפרו וירבו מאד: ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים שבע עשרה שנה ויהי ימי יעקב שני חייו שבע שנים וארבעים ומאת שנה: ויקרבו ימי ישראל למות ויקרא לבנו ליוסף ויאמר לו אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך שים נא ידך תחת ירכי ועשית עמדי חסד ואמת אל נא תקברני במצרים:

Yisroel dwelled in the Land of Egypt in the Land of Goshen they became attached to it and they were very much fruitful and multiplied. Yaakov lived in the Land of Egypt seventeen years; the days of Yaakov, the years of his life, were 147 years. The days of Yisroel to die approached; he called to his son Yosef and he said to him, 'If please I have found favor in your eyes, place you hand under my thigh and do kindness and truth with me – do not bury me, please, in Egypt.

<sup>16</sup> Thus, following a statement of *yeshiva* we see suffering. We see similar outcomes in the following citations as well.

ענין הישיבה שגורמת תקלה לאדם...כאשר הוא יושב ונח כאלו הגיע כבר אל ההשלמה, ימשך אחר דבר זה העדר וחסרון, כי אין השלמת דבר בעולם שאין דבק בו חסרון, ולפיכך ימשוך חסרון והעדר אחר זה. ואין דבר זה דומה, כאשר האדם בעמל וחסר השלמה והוא עומד אל ההשלמה אין דבק בו חסרון...

וכל בעל עמל מורה שאינו בשלימותו בפעל, וכל שאינו בשלימתו הוא מוכן ועומד אל ההויה ואל ההשלמה ולא דבק בזה ההעדר והוא השטן...

That which is 'dwelling' causes man to stumble. When he is sitting and resting it is as if he has reached *shleimus*-perfection and the result will be that he will be deficient and lacking.

Nothing is complete in this world without having some lack connected to it. Therefore, lacking and deficiency will follow the person who is dwelling and 'settled'.

This is not true about someone who is toiling even though he has not actualized *shleimus* because he is actively involved towards the status of *shleimus* and therefore aspects of lack and deficiency, which is the Soton, is not attached to him.

Man was born to be active, to accomplish, to achieve, and most importantly to strive to *shleimus*. One who wishes to retire from such 'toil' is submitting notice to The Boss that they wish their activities terminated!

And man has such an ability to toil and to achieve, seeking *shleimus*. In fact, man has all abilities. That is what Malbim teaches in his commentary to Sefer Mishlei (Perek 6/Posuk 6). We read in Mishlei there:

לך אל נמלה עצל ראה דרכיה וחכם:

Lazy one, go to the ant; see its ways and be wise.

Malbim writes:

לך אל נמלה עצל, כל כחות מעשה בראשית נטועים בנפש האדם, וכל כח ומדה שימצא האדם במין ומין מבעלי חיים ידע כי כן נמצא גם בנפשו, והרבה מדות יש בבעלי חיים שאינם צריכים להם לצורך חיותם, וה' הטביע בם מדה זו שילמד האדם ממנה לעשות כן כמו שאמרו חז"ל אלמלא לא נתנה תורה למדנו צניעות מחתול וכו', והנמלה נטע ה' בה מדת הזריזות לאסוף ולכנוס שממנה ילמד האדם שלא להיות עצל,



*Lazy one, go to the ant* – All the strengths in Creation are implanted in the soul of man. Any strength or positive attribute that man finds in any species of living things, he should know that that strength and attribute is also in his soul.

There are many attributes in living things that that are not requisite for them for their life but Hashem implanted in them a particular strength or attribute that man can learn from them to do the same as they do.

This is like what Chazal said<sup>17</sup>, 'if G-d hadn't given us the Torah we could have learned modesty from the cat etc.'

Hashem implanted the attribute of alacrity in the ant to gather and to bring in to its abode so that we could learn not to be lazy.

That is, when one withdraws from activity and toil to be in a state of *ישיבה*, sitting and stationary instead of being in a state of *עשיה*, doing, he is ignoring the very gifts that Hashem imbued in our environment to give us a boost as we seek the *shleimus* that He wants for us.

And now we are ready to revisit Yissochor and the blessing that his father Yaakov prayed for him.

What *מנוחה* did Yaakov Ovinu envision for Yissochor?

Midrash B'reishis Rabba (Parshata 98) says it is Torah.

Midrash Aggadah to our verse says that it refers to the Beis HaMikdosh.

However, neither of the above are restful enterprises.

At the World-wide Daf HaYomi Siyumim we recited:

אנו עמלים

We toil in Torah.

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<sup>17</sup> Yalkut Shimoni I'yov (520).

Service in the Beis HaMikdosh is called עבודה, labor.<sup>18</sup>

And thus we see the Midrash Or HaAfeila<sup>19</sup> that writes:

ראה שיש מנוחה לצדיקים בעולם הבא.

Yissochor saw that there is *menuchah* – in the World to Come.

But that Midrash was preceded by Targum Yonoson to our verse who writes:

וְחָמָא נְיִיחָא דְעֵלְמָא דְאֵתִי אַרוּם טָב

He saw that the *menuchah* in the World to Come is good.

And now when we see the commentary of *Seforno* on our verse we can understand Yaakov's intent in his blessing to Yissochor with greater depth. He writes:

וירא מנחה כי טוב. וזה ראה שהמנוחה בשלמות המושכלות אשר בו תנוח הנפש כענין ומצאו מרגוע לנפשכם (ירמיהו ו/טז<sup>20</sup>) שהוא הטוב והתכלית המכוון:

*He saw that menuchah was good* - That is, he saw that *menuchah* is the good. That is the *menuchah* that has intellectual *shleimus*-completeness through which the soul will have comfort. This is similar to the verse, 'find serenity for your soul.'

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<sup>18</sup> Of course, Leviim and Kohanim served in the Beis HaMikdosh for the service of Korbonos. But the Sanhedrin was located within its perimeter and Yissochor, who was designated for Torah greatness was to be part of the Sanhedrin.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Torah Shleima to our verse.

<sup>20</sup> The entire verse reads:

כֹּה אָמַר ה' עֲמְדוּ עַל דַּרְכֵיכֶם וּרְאוּ וּשְׁאֲלוּ לְנִתְבוֹת עוֹלָם אִי זֶה דֶּרֶךְ הַטּוֹב וּלְכוּ בָּהּ וּמְצְאוּ מְרֻגָּע לְנַפְשְׁכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא נֵלֵךְ:

So says Hashem, 'Stand on the paths see and ask regarding the passageways of the world: "What is the proper road?" And go on it' But they said, "We will not go."

Rashi writes regarding the meaning of the word מרגוע that we rendered as 'serenity':

מרגוע - מנוחה:

*Serenity – menuchah-rest*

That is the good and the goal of life.<sup>21</sup>

Physical rest may be antithetical to the *menuchah* of the Torah. *Menuchah* of the Torah provides inner peace and tranquility. Such inner peace and tranquility are reached when our soul knows that it is pursuing the path that is correct and proper. The pursuit of that path demands activity and toil.

A blessing is imparted to do more than give a *feeling* of love, care and concern. One who blesses the other, and one who seeks G-d's blessings, searches for the overall and encompassing status that will serve us the best, not just for the moment, but for all times.

The desire for permanent respite from the troubles and travails of the world is quite appropriate. Every prayer that we utter expresses that desire:

המברך את עמו ישראל בשלום.

He blesses His People Israel with peace.

However, to seek permanent respite from activity and accomplishment contradicts the very goals of our life in this world.

When we achieve and accomplish in this world then we can anticipate the blessed *menuchah* of Hashem's everlasting reward and benevolence.

Let us add these thoughts when we conclude Sefer B'reishis and proclaim,

חזק חזק ונתחזק

Be strong. Be strong. Let us be strong.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock

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<sup>21</sup> The commentary of Rav Yehuda Copperman ZT"L greatly enhanced our understanding of the Seforno.