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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת ויצא

ויאמר ה' אל יעקב שוב אל ארץ אבותיך ולמולדתך ואהיה עמך. וישלח יעקב ויקרא לרחל וללאה השדה אל צאנו. ויאמר להן ראה אנכי את פני אביכן וכו'. ויאמר אלי מלאך האלקים בחלום וכו', קיום צא מן הארץ הזאת ושוב אל ארץ מולדתך. ותען רחל ולאה ותאמרנה לו העוד לנו חלק ונחלה בבית אבינו וכו', ועתה כל אשר אמר אלקים אליך עשה. (בראשית לא, ג-טז)

And Hashem said to Yakov, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your native land, and I will be with you." Yakov sent and summoned Rochel and Leah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, "I have noticed that your father's disposition ... And an angel of Hashem said to me in the dream ... 'Now – arise, leave this land and return to your native land.' " Then Rochel and Leah replied and said to him, "Have we then still a share and an inheritance in our father's house? ... So now, whatever Hashem has said to you, do." (Bereishis 31:3-16)

In this week's *Sidrah*, we learn that after twenty years of labour in Charan, Yakov Avinu decided to leave with his family and return to Eretz Yisroel. The decision was prompted by the realisation that Lavan's family resented Yakov's success. Hashem communicated a prophecy to Yakov, instructing him to leave and indicating that His Presence would only rest with Yakov upon his return to Eretz Yisroel. Yakov then spoke to his wives and sought their consent, which they gave wholeheartedly.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* cites R' Elyah Lopian, who questions the dialogue between Yakov and his wives. When Yakov summoned his wives, instead of immediately telling them that Hashem had commanded their return home, he began by depicting how difficult and unfair their situation had been with Lavan. He described in great detail the hard work he had done and the terrible treatment he had received in return. He recounted how his wages had been changed a hundred times and how only through prophetic dreams was he able to survive Lavan's mistreatment and prosper. Why did Yakov speak this way? Couldn't he have simply stated, "We need to move because this is the will of Hashem"?

Furthermore, the response of Rochel and Leah is quite puzzling. They replied by supporting Yakov's claim by stating that they had no share or inheritance in their father's house and that they felt as if they had been treated like strangers sold off. They concluded their argument with the phrase *ועתה*, so now, whatever Hashem has said to you, do. This wording is shocking! Their speech suggests that they were willing to comply and follow Hashem's directive only because they felt alienated from their father's household. It implies that if they had a loving and generous father, they wouldn't have felt the need to submit to Hashem's command?!

R' Elyah explained that from here we learn an important lesson concerning Avodas Hashem. One should not approach Torah and *mitzvos* only out of a sense of obligation, saying or thinking, "It's true that serving Hashem and observing the Torah may involve great suffering and a difficult life, but it's worth the sacrifice in this world for the sake of the next." Instead, Hashem wants us to recognise that

serving Him can bring us the greatest good, even in this world. While it is true that the principal reward for our deeds is in Olam Habah, we should not view Olam Hazeah merely as a place of suffering and sacrifice. Rather, it should be seen as an incredible place of goodness when we fulfil Hashem's will.

R' Elyah encourages us not to assume that those who possess the luxuries and desires of this world find true happiness. If we could get them to speak honestly and openly, what would they reveal? Ultimately, they would confess a common secret: they are neither happy nor satisfied. The reason for this is straightforward. As long as a person has negative character traits, they cannot attain genuine happiness. This concept is highlighted in the Mishnah from Pirkei Avos (4:21), which states: הַקְנָאָה הַקְנָאָה, מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם, *Jealousy, lust and glory remove a man from the world.* These harmful desires create a void and an insatiable ambition that leads to a miserable and frustrated life. True happiness can only be achieved by those who dedicate their thoughts, desires, enthusiasm, and ambitions to the pursuit of Torah and *mitzvos* – living life following the will of Hashem.

This clarifies the lengthy and confusing dialogue between Yakov and his wives. Of course, they were eager to fulfil Hashem's command under any circumstances. However, they aimed to convey that their actions were not a sacrifice for Hashem; instead, they believed it was the best decision for their lives in this world as well. They exhibited their joy in performing Hashem's will, recognising that living by His principles leads to a life filled with happiness and true joy.

In Koheles (12:13), Shlomo HaMelech concludes: סוּף דְבַר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמַע אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים יִרְא וְאֶת מִצְוֹתָיו שִׁמּוֹר, *The sum of the matter, when all has been considered: Fear Hashem and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.* Given this, why did Shlomo find it necessary to write the entire *sefer* of Koheles, detailing how he explored and experimented with everything under the sun, only to declare, "הַכֹּל הַבְּלִים הַכֹּל הַבְּלִים, *Futility of futilities! All is futile!*"? Why not get straight to this definitive conclusion?

According to the above concept, this can be understood clearly. The way for a person to develop a positive attitude toward Avodas Hashem and not perceive it as a sacrifice is by realising that true happiness cannot be found elsewhere. Only after Shlomo elaborated on the futility and emptiness of this world did he proclaim his final conclusion: that Torah and *mitzvos* are the only pursuits worth pursuing. We should not view the Torah as a sacrifice; instead, we should recognise it as the single path to a life of happiness and fulfilment.

Let us embrace this life-changing lesson: living a life dedicated to Torah and *mitzvos* is not a life of sacrifice, but one of true joy. No worldly distractions can offer genuine happiness, and we must strive to internalise and appreciate this truth. Just as Yakov and his wives recognised that Hashem's will was truly the best for them, we too should seek to understand that true goodness is by following the teachings of the Torah and performing Hashem's will.

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to parshasheet@gyalumni.org.