



Tiferet

ת פ א ר ת



TIFERET UPDATES

This Week in Tiferet

This week was a challenging one for Eretz Yisrael, as all of us tried to stay strong in the face of our enemies. The students of Tiferet banded together with acts of Chesed to help our brothers and sisters in their time of need. On Sunday, our students organized a food and clothing drive, under the auspices of **Standing Together**, which provides material assistance for our brave soldiers. And on Wednesday, our students put together a **Carnival** for families from the South, where school had been cancelled for over a week and morale was low. The families that came were overwhelmed by the

תורת תפארת

The Making of a Gadol

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Parshat Vayeitzei

I was once in a shopping mall in Toronto and a serviceman working in the mall approached me, asking if I was an Orthodox Jew. I responded in the affirmative. He then said to me that "Jews are called the children of Israel and Israel is Jacob. You Jews have learned from Jacob who cheated his brother, Esau out of his birthright and that's why all Jews are liars and cheaters." After his tirade, he stormed off and I was left stunned and wondering if he had a point. Isn't it true that Yaakov cheated by dressing up as Esav and Yitzchak's bracha was given to Yaakov under false pretenses?

The Ibn Ezra posits that Yaakov did lie. The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 27:8) also teaches that "When Yaakov entered to obtain the brachot, he entered by deception." If the Ibn Ezra and the Midrash are correct, why do we call Yaakov the Ish Emet?! I would like to suggest that what makes a person great is not that they were always great; rather, that they struggle and overcome their faults and excel in an area of their avodat Hashem with which they struggled mightily.

Avraham is known as the Ish Chesed. Yet the Zohar suggests that at one point in his life, Avraham did not act with the kindness and sensitivity that we expect of our great forefather. The Zohar tells of an Avraham that excluded the poor and downtrodden in his celebration, instead preferring to only invite the elite of society. How could this be? Perhaps Avraham became the Ish Chesed because he learned from his mistakes. Avraham wasn't born an Ish Chesed but through hard work and struggle became the Ish Chesed.

Rabbi Akiva was one of the greatest scholars in Jewish history. His statement of אהבת תורה is one of the most well-known and repeated statements of Chazal. Yet, we learn that the 24 thousand students of Rabbi Akiva died for not treating their peers with respect. How could this be possible in an institution run by one of the greatest Torah giants whose mantra was "Love your neighbor as yourself; this is the pillar of Torah"? Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson offers that Rabbi Akiva made his famous statement of the importance of treating your fellow Jew with respect only after the death of his students. Rabbi Akiva learned from his mistake and rectified it, making this teaching his mantra as a result.

Similarly, according to the Gemara, Shammai pushed away several potential converts and almost slammed the door in their faces. How do we reconcile this Shammai with the Shammai who teaches הוי מקבל את כל אדם בסבר פנים יפות? The Rebbe teaches that

This Week in Tiferet (continued)

time and effort that went into this event. We are very proud of our students for using this opportunity to focus on the needs of others around them.



תורת תפארת (המשך)

Perhaps after Shammai saw the success of Hillel in converting these people, he realized his error and dedicated himself from then on to greet everyone with a cheerful countenance.

The serviceman in the mall was most likely an anti-Semite but he was gravely mistaken to charge all of Yaakov's descendants with being liars and deceivers. The Torah approach is not to ascribe perfection to our Avot and Imahot. Kohelet teaches that there is no man that doesn't sin. The greatest amongst us miss the mark once in a while. What we learn from them is not their mistakes but from how they approach their shortcomings. We gain inspiration from how our ancestors such as Yaakov overcame challenges and become great despite them.

Ultimately, this is the legacy of Am Yisrael. We are not perfect. Our strength lies in our ability and determination to learn from our mistakes, overcome adversity and achieve greatness. Nothing gets in our way, not Anti-Semitism in all of its guises, physical attacks, and spiritual confrontations. We persevere and we overcome. This past week gives testimony to the strength and determination of the Jewish people. May Hashem grant us peace and the vanquishing of our enemies.

"If I Were A Rich Man" Sara Wolf (Tiferet 5773)

"Behold, there was a ladder planted on the ground, its top reached the heavens."
(28:12). What is the significance of this ladder?

One interpretation is that Hashem is showing Yaakov two of his descendants-Moshe and Korach. The top of the ladder symbolizes Moshe who "reached into the heavens" and the bottom that is planted in the ground represents Korach who was swallowed up by the Earth. But what is the reason for showing these to Yaakov?

The Baal Haturim explains that the numerical value of the ladder, sulam, is the same as the numerical value of money, mammon, as well as poverty, oni. A ladder is therefore a metaphor for wealth and poverty. A ladder, just like money, can elevate a person to the highest heights, but can also bring him down to the lowest depths.

If Hashem decides to give someone money, it can either be a curse or a blessing. Someone can use his money to promote his spiritual growth and give charity and do chesed, and that will elevate him to high spiritual heights. But he could also use his money to indulge himself in all the pleasures this world has to offer, and that will degrade him to the lowest of lows. Both Moshe and Korach were wealthy men, but while Moshe's money only led him upwards towards being the greatest prophet that ever existed, Korach was corrupted by his wealth and become so power-hungry that he questioned Moshe's leadership.

Poverty also has this same power. A person who suffers from poverty can either be led to a life of sin or to a life of freedom and blessing. One who passes his test of poverty is then freed from all the restrictions that money entails. He can now focus on a life of Torah, personal growth, and spirituality. His happiness is no longer dependent on his wealth. (Rabbi Frand)

This time of Thanksgiving encourages us to be thankful and content in whatever Hashem has blessed us with. Whether we live in wealth or poverty, it is what we need to connect to Hashem, no matter the size of our bank accounts.