



xi`n oal yxid p`rl ycwen

Blinded By the Money

Yaakov is coming."
"Yaakov? Yaakov? My sister's son? Her husband's family is rich! When Eliezer, the servant of Avraham came looking for a wife for Yitzchak, he brought ten camels laden with riches along with him. I was so excited that I jumped in front of my father to meet him. I love money. Where is my nephew Yaakov?"

"And it was, when Lavan heard the news of Yaakov, his sister's son, he ran toward him. (Bereshis 29:13). Rashi explains that Lavan ran to meet Yaakov because he thought that he had brought expensive gifts with him.

"Where are Yaakov's riches? He did not bring any camels. Perhaps there is gold hidden under his clothes."

"He embraced him" (Bereshis 29:13).

"I don't feel any gold on his body."

"He kissed him" (Bereshis 29:13).

"I don't see any pearls hidden in his mouth. Where is his money???"

"And took him to his house" (Bereshis 29:13).
And so the relationship between Yaakov and Lavan began. When Yaakov arrived in Lavan's house, both were poor men. The presence of the tsaddik Yaakov in the home of Lavan, brought the blessings of prosperity. Lavan fathered sons, and his flocks began to grow and grow.

"Yaakov, you are a good worker, however, I must change your wages. You will have to get by with a little less money. I hope that it does not inconvenience you too much."

And so, Lavan failed to realize that his newfound wealth came from Yaakov. Instead he tried to swindle Yaakov by reducing his wages 100 times.

Yaakov also prospered. He fathered eleven sons and one daughter. The time had come for him to establish his own home.

"Please let me go to my place and my land. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served you" (Bereshis 30:25-26).

And so, they agreed that Yaakov would receive the spotted and speckled sheep and goats as his wage. Yaakov separated his sheep from Lavan's flocks. Then a great miracle happened. Yaakov's flocks multiplied and increased greatly, and he became a very wealthy man. How did Lavan and his sons react to Yaakov's prosperity?

"Yaakov has taken all that belonged to our father" (Bereshis 31:1). "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flock is my flock, and all that you see is mine" (Bereshis 31:43). Lavan

was obsessed with money. He was so jealous that he could not take pleasure in Yaakov's success. Instead, he tried to grab everything he could under the pretense that it was all his. He refused to see the Divine Hand, guiding prosperity his way.

Kinderlach . . . Gashmius (materialism) has a very strong effect upon us. It can blind us. The clearest and simplest truths in life can become cloudy when money is involved. The last verse of the haftorah states, "For the ways of Hashem are straight; the righteous walk in them and sinners will stumble over them" (Hoshea 14:10). Yaakov and Lavan both experienced open miracles. Yaakov thanked and praised Hashem. Lavan stumbled in a muck of greed and jealousy. He was blinded by the money.



Ask Nicely

Bring me my book."
"Bring it yourself, I'm not your servant!"
"You could at least do me a favor this one time, after all of the favors that I've done for you."
"Favors? What favors? I don't remember any favors. I've already done a million things for you, and you never thank me. You only know how to ask for more."
"Children, children, please stop talking like this. Do you hear yourselves? How are you speaking to each other?"
"What's wrong, Abba? We're just having a regular conversation."
"This should not be your regular tone of conversation. You are not speaking nicely at all. Yaakov Avinu teaches us the

importance of speaking nicely in this week's parasha."
"Where, Abba?"

"Yaakov said to them (the shepherds), "My brothers, where are you from?"' (Bereshis 29:4). The Shelah HaKadosh points out that it is fitting for a person to speak pleasantly, and with honor. For Yaakov called these shepherds, 'brothers'."

"I see, Abba. He did not even know them, yet he honored them by calling them brothers."

"Exactly. The Shelah HaKadosh relates something even more amazing."

"What, Abba?"

Hashem said to Yaakov, 'Return to the land of your fathers' (Bereshis 31:3). The time had come for Yaakov's family to leave Lavan's home. He was the head of the household and they were obligated to listen to him. How did he inform them of Hashem's command? He explained the whole history of Lavan's trickery to them in great detail. He then described the prophesy that informed him of Hashem's will. The Torah, which does not waste

a single word, writes ten verses to relate Yaakov's conversation. The Shelah HaKadosh explains that Yaakov could have commanded them directly. Instead, he explained himself. It is fitting for a person to relate his desires to other people in a way that they will want to do his will. Not just to command them directly. Even if they are bound to listen to him."

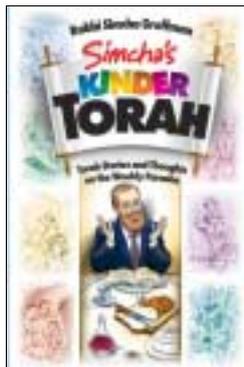
"I see, Abba."

"If you would like your brother to bring you a book, perhaps you can explain to him that you are in the middle of writing, and it would be difficult for you to get up. Tell him how much you appreciate him. Make him want to bring you the book."

"Abba, you have not just commanded me to speak nicely, you have made me want to do it."

Kinderlach . . . There are two ways to say something, the nice way, and the other way. "Get me a glass of water!" Wouldn't it be much nicer to say, "May I please have a glass of water?" "Finish your vegetables!" Perhaps you can say, "Vegetables are so important for your health. Eating them is really not so bad." Sweet words are the best spice for those vegetables. Ask nicely, kinderlach. Explain yourself. Make people happy to listen to you.

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Parasha Questions

- What happens when a tsaddik leaves a city? (Rashi 28:10)
- What would Yaakov do with all that Hashem gave to him? (28:22)
- What did Yaakov do when he saw Rachel? (29:10-12)
- How soon after his marriage to Leah, did Yaakov marry Rachel? (Rashi 29:27)
- Name the children of Yaakov, according to their order of birth and their mothers. (29:32-30:24)