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PARSHA INSIGHTS

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

IN THE MIDST OF THE DARKNESS

“He (Yaakov) encountered the place” (28:11)

The spiritual masters explain that the word “*vayifga*” — “he encountered” — is an expression of prayer, and it is from this word that we derive that Yaakov instituted Ma’ariv, the Evening Prayer. The reason that the Torah did not plainly say “he prayed” is to teach that the earth contracted for Yaakov and made his journey shorter.

What does prayer have to do with the contraction of the earth?

In verse 15 Yaakov says, “*Surely G-d is in this place, and I did not know!*”, implying that indeed this place was very distant from being able to sense the Presence of G-d. So much so that Yaakov was surprised to be able to sense the

Divine Presence there.

Inside Yaakov there was a tremendous desire to be close to G-d, and it was for this reason that the earth contracted, and Mount Moriah came to meet Yaakov.

There is a message here for us all:

However distant we may feel from G-d, and however dark our world may seem, if we make a sincere effort, G-d will move mountains to bring us close to Him.

That, in essence, is the concept of the Evening Prayer, Ma’ariv — to reveal the light in the midst of the darkness.

• Sources: *Sfat Emet in Talelei Orot*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be’er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother’s family.

After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation, and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel’s older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and

Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and, in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. G-d finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

BAVA METZIA 72 - 78

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: “Whoever has money and lends it without witnesses present transgresses the Torah prohibition of ‘You shall not place a stumbling block before a blind person’ (Vayikra 19:14).”

This *gemara* follows a *mishna* which teaches the numerous possible Torah prohibitions that the various participants — such as the lender, borrower, witnesses and guarantor — transgress when they are involved in a loan that demands interest (“*ribit*”) to be paid in addition to the principle. This statement by Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav in the *gemara* teaches that a lender may also be transgressing a negative command of the Torah even when he lends without charging interest in certain cases. If a lender loans money without witnesses to the loan he transgresses the *lav* of “*Lifnei Iver*”. Why? Since there were no witnesses present at the time of the loan, the borrower may think he can get away without paying back the loan, and be believed, since the lender has no proof that a loan ever took place. In this sense the lender is “putting a stumbling block” in front of the borrower, since he is handing him the opportunity to steal from him (Rashi). Rather, the lender should ensure that witnesses are present, or that a document that records the details of the loan is written and given to the lender.

The Sage Reish Lakish adds in the *gemara* that a lender without witnesses is opening himself up to bring curses upon himself. If he requests repayment of the loan and the borrower denies owing the money, other people will curse him, saying that he is speaking slanderously about a righteous person. Reish Lakish cites that Tehillim 31:19 hints to this message.

The prohibition against lending money without witnesses applies even to a loan made to a Torah scholar. This is evidenced by a case taught in the *gemara* in which Ravina refused to lend Rav Ashi money with witnesses, in order to not transgress. Rav Ashi said to Ravina: “All the more so am I concerned about lending to you without witnesses, since you are so wrapped up in your Torah study that you are liable to forget about the loan, and I would end being cursed by the people (Rashi).”

All of the above scenarios of lending without witnesses are codified in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 70:1. The Aruch Hashulchan notes that many people are not careful to lend only in the presence of witnesses (or with other proof), and suggests a reason for this common behavior. The people involved in the loan, he writes, know each other, and trust each other, and they are confident that the lender will not eventually deny having borrowed the money. I heard many years ago from a great Rabbi in Jerusalem that if the amount of the loan is relatively small, then it can be assumed that the lender will forgive the debt (“*mochel*”) in the event that the borrower denies the loan.

The Rashash notes the seemingly unusual wording used by Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav to state the halacha in the *gemara*: “Whoever has money and lends it without witnesses transgresses the Torah prohibition....” Obviously we are dealing with a lender who has money — otherwise there would be nothing to lend! The Rashash suggests that this prohibition perhaps applies *only* to a lender who is wealthy — i.e. “has money”. Only if the lender has much money is there concern that the borrower may be brazen enough to deny having borrowed, since he feels that the lender will not “miss” having this particular loan returned. However, if the lender is not wealthy there is no real concern that the borrower will act brazenly to the generous, not wealthy lender, and will therefore not deny having received the loan from this kind, gracious (and perhaps needy himself) lender.

• Bava Metzia 75b

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

SHA'AR HARACHAMIM — THE SEALED GATE

Why is this gate, known as Sha'ar Harachamim (Mercy Gate), sealed? At one time this gate was the only direct entrance to the Temple Mount area from outside the city. When the Muslims became aware of an ancient tradition that



Mashiach would come through this gate on his way to redeeming Israel, they sealed it in order to block his arrival. They made another move that they hoped would discourage the redeemer by burying their dead in front of the gate.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. G-d compressed the entire Land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
4. Yaakov said "I will return with *shalom*." What did he mean by "*shalom*"?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why did Rachel, and not her brothers, tend her father's sheep?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
9. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
10. How old was Yaakov when he married?
11. What did Rachel find enviable about Leah?
12. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
13. Who was Leah's handmaiden? Was she older or younger than Rachel's handmaiden?
14. How do you say *dudaim* in Arabic?
15. "G-d remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. G-d forbade Lavan to speak to Yaakov "either of good or of bad." Why didn't G-d want Lavan to speak of good?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into *Eretz Yisrael*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
4. 28:21 - Completely without sin.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren't born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
9. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
10. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
11. 30:1 - Her good deeds, thinking they were the reason Leah merited children.
12. 30:5 - Dan.
13. 30:10 - Zilpah. She was younger.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn't be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - "Yosef" means "He will add." Rachel asked G-d for another son in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:24 - Because the "good" that comes from wicked people is bad for the righteous.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahaduta*, meaning "wall of testimony."
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.

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YAAKOV AND LEAH

Vayeitzei

In this week's Torah portion it is difficult to determine Yaakov's true feelings towards Leah. After having been tricked into marrying Leah, Yaakov then marries Rachel after committing to seven more years of labor for Lavan. The Torah tells us that Yaakov "...consorted also with Rachel, and loved Rachel even more than Leah." The Torah seems to be telling us that although he loved Leah, he loved Rachel even more. The problem is that the Torah then tells us immediately that "G-d saw that Leah was *hated*, so he opened her womb." After Leah gives birth to her first-born, she says, "Because G-d has discerned my *humiliation*, now my husband will love me." Then, after giving birth to her second son, she says, "Because G-d has heard that I am *hated*, He has given me this one also."

From the last three quotations it appears that Leah was hated by Yaakov, while the first quotation seems to indicate that she was certainly loved, just to a lesser degree than Rachel. Abarbanel explains that there is actually no inconsistency. The first verse is not an indication that Yaakov loved Leah. (Perhaps, as Ramban explains, Yaakov had consistently negative feelings toward Leah as a result of her having deceived him on his first wedding night.)

Abarbanel offers a grammatical explanation of the first

verse quoted. The literal translation of that verse is Yaakov "consorted also with Rachel, and loved Rachel *from* Leah." The Hebrew letter *mem*, which literally means "from", can also mean "because of". Now the verse translates as he "loved Rachel *because of* Leah." Abarbanel explains that because of Yaakov's total inexperience with women, his desire for a particular woman, i.e. Rachel, was intermingled with his basic desire for any woman. Therefore, when he had relations first with Leah, this aspect of his physical desire should have been satisfied, and his ardor for Rachel should have cooled somewhat. However, the opposite occurred. After marrying Leah, rather than having his connection to Rachel diminished, it was actually augmented. He now realized that his feelings toward Rachel went far beyond simple physical desire, as that aspect had already been experienced. Thus, *because of* his experience first with Leah he experienced a deeper and more authentic love for Rachel. Furthermore, having been with Leah, his love for Rachel took on a second dimension. His initial love for Rachel was for who she was, independent of others. But now, however, he could compare her to Leah, and see even more clearly how she completely fulfilled his purpose in life. Again, it was *because of* Leah that Yaakov's love for Rachel deepened.

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אחינו כל בית ישראל

"Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon."

FORBIDDEN PRAISE

From: Melanie

Dear Rabbi,
There are two people I know who are not on good terms. In my opinion one is the antagonist who makes up false accusations about the other. The antagonist, let's call her A, was part of a group conversation where the other, let's call her B, was mentioned. I took the opportunity to praise B to the others in a way that A would see how everyone thinks highly of B and thereby indirectly realize that her bad opinion of B is wrong. But, rather than A silently accepting the message, she started arguing how everybody's good opinion of B is wrong. Afterwards, one of my friends said I was guilty of "lashon hara" (slander), since I "caused" A to speak against B. Can this be so? I praised B! It was A who spoke evil of her. Is possible that I transgressed lashon hara, not her?

Dear Melanie,

I certainly admire your good intentions in defending B and trying to thereby diffuse the tension between A and B. But as a mollified version of the adage implies, good intentions often pave the way to "undesirable" places.

And even if your good intentions should be acted upon, it seems it could and should have been done differently.

Regarding A, assuming you're correct that she's the antagonist and cause of the tension, if she spoke ill of B in front of the rest of the group, she certainly transgressed the prohibition of *lashon hara* herself. She didn't have to speak that way, but she nevertheless chose to do so.

However, when you praised B in front of A, knowing that she thinks the opposite of her, perhaps intending to silence her in the presence of others, you actually set her up to speak against B in front of the very group you thought would

silence her. In this way your praise of B was, in a sense, slandering her. Had you not intentionally praised B, A would not have attacked her as she did. Thus, your indirect role is also a form of *lashon hara* called "*avak lashon hara*" — "the dust of slander".

This is derived from the verse that King Solomon wrote in his wisdom (Prov. 27:14), "He who blesses his friend in a loud voice early every morning, it shall be considered a curse for him". The reason is as above, his intention to praise and benefit his friend ends up causing his friend harm, when, as a result of his praise, others disparage him (Rambam, *De'ot* 7:4).

Perhaps what should have been done, and may still be done, is as follows: Rather than your being involved directly, (since even beforehand, and certainly now, A perceives you to be partial), try to get someone whom A respects and would consider to be unbiased in this matter to speak to A privately without putting her on the spot and on the defense.

This person can empathize with A's position while also asking her to consider that the reality might nevertheless be different than she thinks. This person might mention that without A's realizing it, B feels, and appears to others, to be the victim. It might be suggested to A to consult with others privately and calmly with an honest intention to explore this possibility. If A agrees, others who she might consult should likewise be prepared to be both empathetic but honest. This might ultimately lead to a direct or mediated conversation between A and B to settle their differences.

With wisdom and sensitivity it is likely that peace may be established between A and B, or at least a cessation of hostilities reached. But if this is not the case, or until it is, one must certainly think seriously how praising someone to his or her enemies might induce *lashon hara* that the "praiser" might thereby have a part in.

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

ARRIVING LATE TO THE PRAYER SERVICE

If one arrives to pray Mincha and finds that the congregation has already begun praying the Shemoneh Esrei he should not begin praying his own silent prayer unless he is able to finish before the prayer leader reaches *kedusha* in the repetition.

Since the entire congregation bows at the beginning and end of the *modim* blessing, even one who is not praying must bow with them. Accordingly, one who arrives after *kedusha* should not start praying unless he is able to finish before the prayer leader reaches the blessing of *modim*, so that he can bow with the rest of the congregation. One is also allowed to pray if he will reach *modim* or one of the other blessings where one bows (e.g. *birkat Avot*) together with the prayer leader, since in this way he will be able to bow together with everyone else.

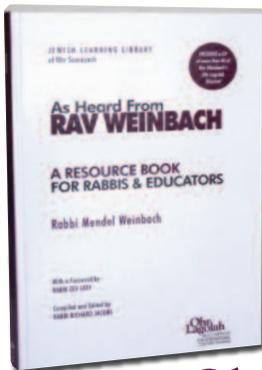
The Rema writes that the rule of waiting applies to saying “Amen” to both the blessings of “*Ha-kel Hakadosh*” (the Holy G-d) and “*Shomeya Tefillah*” (Who hears prayers). Therefore, those that follow his rulings should not start praying before answering to the blessing of “*Ha-kel Hakadosh*”. One must also make sure to complete the Shemoneh Esrei in time to answer Amen to the blessing of “*Shomeya Tefillah*”.

The above rules apply only when there will be enough time to pray afterwards. However, if it is nearly sunset and there is not enough time to wait, one should pray right away. And if he happens to be in the middle of one of the blessings when the prayer leader says *modim* he should bow with everyone else. However, one does not bow if he is at the beginning or end of a blessing (except for *modim* or *Avot*).

During the Shacharit morning prayer, when one must connect the “Blessing of Redemption” with the Shemoneh Esrei, one does not wait to say *kedusha*, but instead begins the Shemoneh Esrei immediately after the Blessing of Redemption.

One may also wait before completing the blessing in order to answer *kedusha*, and afterwards complete the blessing, thereby fulfilling both the requirement of connecting Redemption with the Shemoneh Esrei as well as answering *kedusha*. (Shulchan Aruch HaRav)

During the Ma’ariv prayer one who comes late must be sure he can finish the Shemoneh Esrei before the *kaddish* that is recited immediately afterwards by the prayer leader. If not, he should not pray until after answering *kaddish*. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 109:1)



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WHY? WHICH “WHY”?

In the Hebrew language there are two words which mean “why?” — *madua* and *lamah*. In many instances these two words seem to be used interchangeably. In fact, some early grammarians such as Ibn Parchon and the Radak explain that the two words are synonymous. Nonetheless, as we have demonstrated time and again, the Hebrew language is not mere happenstance, and no two words can mean *exactly* the same thing. So how can we differentiate between *madua* and *lamah*?

Rabbeinu Yonah ibn Janach (990-1050) writes in his *Sefer Rikmah* (also cited by Radak) that *madua* is a contraction of the phrase *mah deah*, which means “what thinking”, as if to ask what thinking or rationale there is behind a certain occurrence or action. This explanation is also found in the commentary of Ibn Ezra (to Exodus 18:14), and is alluded to by Nachmanides (to Genesis 30:20) who writes that *madua* is a contraction of two words, but does not elaborate further.

The word *lamah* can similarly be seen as a compound word made up of the prefix *la-* which means “for” and the root word *mah* “what”. Accordingly, when one asks *lamah* one asks for what objective does such-and-such exist.

Partially based on these ideas, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Meckelenberg (*Ha’Ktav V’Hakabbalah* to Exodus 5:4) and the Malbim explain that when one asks *madua*, he means to question what is the effective cause of something, while *lamah* asks for its ultimate purpose (i.e. its final reason).

In a slight departure from this approach, Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer explains that *madua* is used when one questions the cause of something seemingly bizarre or out of the ordinary. On the other hand, *lamah* has the connotation of asking “why” in a complaining fashion (e.g. “Why

are you doing this to me?”) or with a rebuking tone (e.g. “Why did you do such-and-such?”). The word *lamah* has the implication that the matter at hand is somehow wrong, while *madua* simply asks for more information without implying anything positive or negative. Similarly, others explain that the word *lamah* is used when rhetorically asking “why”. Meaning, one who asks *lamah* does not expect a serious answer; he simply wants to state his objection. When one uses the word *madua* to ask “why” he genuinely seeks to address his query, and anticipates a true answer.

Some explain that the word *madua* is specifically used when questioning the rationale of a specific ruling or command, while *lamah* can be used to ask why in other contexts.

To summarize, there are two words in Hebrew which mean “why”: *lamah* and *madua*. While some authorities try to explain that the two words are equivalent, others find slight differences in their connotations. Some explain that *lamah* seeks to find the ultimate purpose of something while *madua* seeks to find its immediate cause. Others explain that *lamah* implies something negative about that which he is questioning, while *madua* has a neutral implication. A third view explains that why-questions using *lamah* are generally meant rhetorically, while such questions using *madua* seek an answer in earnest.

All of these different nuances are reflected in a simple word change in Hebrew, but in English, we’re stuck with just asking: “Why?”

S U B S C R I B E !

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AFRICAN DELEGATION VISITS OHR SOMAYACH

Late on the holy Shabbat eve of this past Parshat Chayei Sarah, the “Dark Room” of the Slonimer Chasidim in Meah Shearim was lit up by the presence of a group from Ohr Somayach. They had just come from a *tishe* at Toldos Avraham Yitzchok, where they experienced a “minor earthquake” caused by the rapturous singing of the young men in bleachers reaching up to the rafters. They were already on a spiritual high. In Slomim, after the *tishe*, the Chasidim retreat to an unlit and totally dark hall for an additional connection to the holiness of Shabbat. As the soulful *nigunim* (tunes of singing) were picked up by the crowd, the spirits of the Ohr Somayach group soared. While this may not sound unusual, the group was not the usual collection of visiting young men from the Yeshiva, but high-powered businessmen and CEOs from Africa, Israel and England. The group was multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious. They came together for an amazing Shabbat experience organized and led by Rabbi Avrohom Connack, Rabbi Reuven Geffen and Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz, of our staff.

The contingent of South African Jewish businessmen was led by **Sean Melnick** (who has been the mainstay and chief recruiter of the “Executive Learning Programme” from its start five years ago) and who is the Chairman of the Board of Peregrine Holdings, Ltd. a South African publicly-traded company, and also of its UK subsidiary Stenham, Ltd. of London, a large asset management and investment group with billions of dollars in assets. There was another part of this group consisting of African CEOs led by **Raoul Gamsu**, who is CEO of Consolidated Infrastructure Group, which operates across 23 African countries providing power, logistics, oil and gas, and waste services. Raoul’s group included:

Clive Zulberg: CEO of Stallion Holdings (Pty) Ltd., a multi-services group which operates predominantly in the Security Services sector, with more than 12,000 employees spread over six African countries.

Christopher Whitfield: CEO of the Batswadi Group, a healthcare company primarily focused on Biotechnology sales, marketing, research and development.

Rowan Crowie: CEO of Holdings (Pty) Ltd. and Enza Construction (Pty) Ltd., a property and infrastructure group that has many subsidiaries operating in the property development, infrastructure development and construction space in Africa.

Themba Mkhwanazi: CEO of Kumba Iron Ore Limited, which is one of the largest producers of iron ore in the world. It has over 8,500 employees and income in the billions of dollars a year.

Adam Craker: CEO of IQ Business, the leading independent management consulting firm in Africa. IQ Business works with clients across Africa, Australia and the UK, mainly in consumer segments (financial services, retail and telecommunications).



The Shabbat experience, which was centered in the Old City and began with *davening* at the Kotel and meals at the home of Sean Melnick, was the culmination of a four-day program called the “Executive Learning Programme”. This event was organized and led by Rabbi Avrohom Connack, a former South African who teaches the highest level *shiur* in the Beit Midrash at Ohr Somayach. The core group, consisting of ten South African businessmen, spent Thursday, Friday and Sunday at the Yeshiva learning *gemara* with intensity, and also hearing *shiurim* in Chumash and from Rabbis Brietowitz and Dovid Kaplan; in philosophy from Rabbi Dovid Gottleib; Mussar (Ethics) from Rabbi Pesach Segal, and lectures on various topics from Rabbi Avraham Riesman, Rabbi Nachshon Schiller, Mr. Dovid Olesker and the Rosh HaYeshiva Rav Nota Schiller. A highlight of the extremely *leibadik* (lively) Friday night dinner with much singing and dancing was an address by one of our Center students, Betzalel Yedidya from the Cameroons. Betzalel is from noble ancestry on both sides of his family.

As they left the “Dark Room” a number of participants (and not just Jewish ones) told him that it was the most exciting and meaningful experience they had had in their lifetimes.

The Executive Learning Programme has become a yearly event, and the appreciation of the attendees was expressed by one participant in the following email received by Rabbi Connack:

Dear Rabbi,

Thanks so much to you and your esteemed colleagues for putting on such a fantastic programme this past weekend.

The memories will live with me forever, but more importantly, G-d willing, the benefits should continue to have a positive impact on my life (and my family’s life) going forward.

I will certainly spread the word about the good work that you are doing, and the wonderful acceptance of all people, no matter what their backgrounds, into your organisation.

Wishing you all the *mazel* and *brocha* going forward that you deserve.

Kind regards,
Ivor Klitzner
CFO – Chief Financial Officer
Consolidated Infrastructure Group Limited