Your Influence

This week's parsha begins by telling us that Yaakov Avinu left Beer Sheva and went towards Haran. Rashi comments that it is not necessary for the Torah to write that he left Beer Sheva. It would be sufficient to write that Yaakov Avinu went towards Haran, and of course we would know that he left Beer Sheva. The Torah is teaching us that when a tzaddik inhabits a city, he exerts a tremendous positive influence on the city. He improves the whole quality of life there. When he leaves, that influence is gone.

Kinderlach...
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Kinderlach...

Yaakov did not realize that he was in a very holy place. Sometimes a similar thing happens to us. We are together with Abba in shul. We forget where we are, and begin to run around and play. Then we are reminded that shul is a very holy place. Oy vey! I could have been davening in this holy place! Instead I was playing. Kinderlach, do not let this happen to you. You should always realize where you are. When you are in a holy place, take advantage of the holiness to reach out to Hashem.

Silence

And Hashem remembered Rachel. He listened to her, and He opened her womb” (Bereshis 30:22). The Sifsei Chachmomim explains that whenever the Torah states that Hashem remembers someone, He remembers a good deed or deeds that the person performed in the past and subsequently grants their request. The Medrash Tanchuma notes that Hashem remembered Rachel’s silence. Yaakov wanted to marry Rachel. He sent gifts to her. Lavan intercepted the gifts and gave them to Leah instead. Rachel was quiet. The Medrash praises her silence by quoting the Mishnah (Avos 1:17). Shimon the son of Rabban Gamliel said, “All of my life I have been raised among the sages and I have not found anything better for the body than silence.” Our sages praise silence in many other ways. Rebbe Akiva said, “The fence that protects wisdom is silence” (Avos 3:17). The Gemara (Megilla 18a) writes, “The best medicine in the world is silence.” “Those who listen to insults and do not answer back are beloved by Hashem. They will grow stronger as the rising sun from morning to midday.” The Vilna Gaon writes, “Each and every minute that a person seals his lips he merits to see the light that was hidden away (from the time of the creation of the world). This value of this reward is beyond the comprehension of any creature.”

Kinderlach...

Let’s go around the Shabbos table giving examples of when we should be silent. “When we are thinking of Loshon Hora.” Very good Dovid. “When someone who will not listen to criticism says something insulting to us.” Excellent Rivkah. “When we are bored and just want to say something silly.” You’re right. Chaim, it’s better to say nothing. “When we are in the middle of an argument.” So true. Eti. The other person cannot continue arguing with himself. Kinderlach, quiet is a beautiful sound.

I Didn’t Realize

Yaakov Avinu, in his flight from Eisav went to sleep and dreamed his famous dream. A ladder that was resting on the ground reached up to heaven, with angels ascending and descending. “Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely Hashem is present in this place and I did not know’” (Bereshis 28:16). Rashi explains that had Yaakov known, he would not have slept in such a holy place.