בס"ד

Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick

Parshas Vayeitzei 5787 *Year 17 #698* **פרשת ויצא תשפ"ז**

A perplex question: How Could Yaakov Sleep in Such a Holy Place?

וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, וַיִּקַּח מֵאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו, וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא. (בראשית כח, יא) *"He encountered the place and stayed the night there because the sun had set; he took from the stones of the place and placed them at his head, and he lay down in that place."* (28:11)

Yaakov lay down to sleep in that place. This raises a question: How could Yaakov lie down to sleep on the site of the Beis HaMikdash, when one may not even sit there, as the Gemara (Yoma 25a) states, אֵין יְשִׁיבָה בָּעֲזָרָה אֶלָּא לְמַלְכֵי בֵּית דָּוִד בִּלְבָד *"there is no sitting in the Azarah except for kings of the House of David alone"*; If sitting is forbidden, lying down to sleep is all the more so. One might answer that Yaakov simply did not know the place was holy. Indeed, Rashi says so explicitly. When Yaakov woke up: וַיִּיקַץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְּׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאָנֹכִי לֹא יָדָעְתִּי. (כח, טז) "Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said: Surely Hashem is in this place, and I did not know." (28:16) He said: Now I know this place is holy. And Rashi concludes: שֶׁאִם יָדַעְתִּי לֹא יָשַׁנְתִּי בְּמָקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ כָּזֶה. "For had I known, I would not have slept in such a holy place." It follows that Yaakov did something that was not proper. But that itself is difficult, for the Gemara (Chulin 9b) teaches: אֵין הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מֵבִיא תַּקָּלָה עַל יְדֵי צַדִּיקִים. Hashem does not bring a stumbling block upon the righteous." So how could Yaakov lie down to sleep there?

Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz in his Sefer Tiferes Yonoson has a clear foundation in Rashi on this very verse. On וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו, Rashi writes: עָשָׂן כְּמִין מַרְזֵב סָבִיב לְרֹאשׁוֹ, שֶׁיָּרֵא מִפְּנֵי חַיּוֹת רָעוֹת — "he arranged them like a gutter around his head, because he was afraid of wild animals." The verse itself tells us Yaakov felt in danger. And since פִּקּוּחַ נֶפֶשׁ overrides nearly every prohibition, sleeping there was permitted, even required.

The heilige Taz in his Sefer Divrei Dovid, builds on Rashi's comment on כִּי בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ: הָיָה לוֹ לִכְתֹּב "וַיָּבֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ" מַשְׁמַע שֶׁשָּׁקְעָה לוֹ חַמָּה פִּתְאוֹם שֶׁהַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיָּלֶן שָׁם", "כִּי בָא לֹא בְעוֹנָתָהּ, כְּדֵי שֶׁיָּלִין שָׁם "It should have said 'the sun set and he stayed there'; 'because the sun had set' implies the sun set for him suddenly, before its time, so that he would stay there" (based on Chullin 91b and Sanhedrin 95b). The words "so that he would stay there" show that the sunset was Hashem's own doing, which the Taz reads as a Divine permission to sleep in a holy place.

The Kesav Sofer answers that after fourteen sleepless years, this sleep was a necessity for continued learning, not a leniency, as Rashi quotes: כָּאן שָׁכַב, אֲבָל כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהָיָה בְּבֵית הַמִּדְרָשׁ שֶׁל שֵׁם וְעֵבֶר לֹא שָׁכַב. "Here he lay down; but the entire time he was in the study hall of Shem and Ever, he did not lie down." Yaakov had not slept for a long time, and he had to sleep so that he could go on learning. His sleep was therefore not for bodily pleasure but for the sake of his soul and his Torah study — and for that reason he was permitted to sleep there.

The Kesav Sofer brings a proof from the Gemara (Chullin 91b) on the verse: וְהִנֵּה מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹקִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ. (כח, יב) behold, angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it." The angels went up above and came down below, saw him sleeping, and wanted to harm him. In the Kesav Sofer's understanding, the angels wanted to harm Yaakov because he was sleeping in so holy a place. But then: וְהִנֵּה ה' נִצָּב עָלָיו. (כח, יג) "And behold, Hashem stood over him." Hashem, Who knows a person's thoughts, protected him from the angels, because Yaakov's sleep was Leshem Shamayim — for the sake of Heaven. (Thus far the words of the Kesav Sofer.)

We could bring a further proof for the insight of the Kesav Sofer' and add that the word "אָנֹכִי" refers to the Torah. Hashem said to Yaakov: וְהִנֵּה אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וּשְׁמַרְתִּיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ. (כח טו) "Behold, I [Anochi] am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go." The heilige seforim teach that אָנֹכִי alludes to the Torah, which opens with that word: אָנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים. (שמות כ, ב) "I am Hashem your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." So Yaakov had a hint from the word אָנֹכִי: in order to have strength to learn, he was permitted to sleep there. This is why the verse says just then, וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא — "and he lay down in that place."

On the face of it, according to all these approaches, we still need to understand Rashi's derashah:—שֶׁאִם יָדַעְתִּי לֹא יָשַׁנְתִּי "had I known, I would not have slept." This derashah implies that Yaakov really did not know it was a holy place. (If he slept for pikuach nefesh, or because Hashem signaled permission, or for the sake of Torah, why would he say he wouldn't have slept had he known?) It is well known that אֵין מְשִׁיבִין עַל הַדְּרוּשׁ — "one does not raise objections against a homiletic interpretation." Still, it is a precise reading of Rashi's words, and the matter requires further study וְצָרִיךְ עִיּוּן *(Yehuda Z. Klitnick 5787)*

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STORY OF THE WEEK (*By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)*

The Blessing of the Munkatcher Rebbe that never came, was a Blessing

R' Aharon Rothman z"l grew up in Hungary, in a home of Torah. As a young man he went to Munkatch to learn under the heilige Minchas Elazar, Rav Chaim Elazar Spira, the Munkatcher Rav. He spent seven years there. Aharon became a beloved talmid (student).

In 5696 (1935–36), an official envelope arrived. Inside was a notice from the government: Aharon Rothman was to report for service in the army. For a yeshiva bochur such a notice was frightening. The army meant years away from the beis medrash, surrounded by soldiers who mocked religious Jews, with treif food in the army dining hall, and the Shabbos trampled under marching boots.

But Aharon was not alarmed. He knew there was a way out. Certain army doctors were willing to look away for the right price. A bochur would come for his medical examination, money would quietly change hands to the doctors, and the doctor would declare him unfit for service. He would go home free.

There was also an established custom. Before going to the doctor, every bochur would go in to the Munkatcher Rav for a bracha. The Rav would bless him, the bochur would travel to his examination, and, Baruch Hashem, it always worked. One after another, Aharon's friends came back exempt. Not one of them had to serve. So Aharon was calm. He would do what his friends had done: go to the Rav, receive his bracha, see the doctor, and come home. He had seen it work for others again and again.

Aharon went in to the Rav's room. He expected a warm smile and a quick blessing, the same as everyone else had received. Instead, the Rav's face clouded over. He looked at Aharon with deep worry, and with real pain in his voice he said: "Oy vey… my Aharon will have to serve in the army." The Rav continued, "To serve in the army is a dangerous thing. It is no good for the body, and no good for the soul. How will a Jew keep kosher there? How will he keep Shabbos? And beyond that, it is a terrible danger to life and limb."

Aharon's heart pounded. What did this mean? Why was the Rav speaking as though it had already been decided? All his friends had walked out of this same room with a bracha and walked out of the army office free. Why was it different for him? Had he done something wrong? Was there some judgment against him in Heaven? He left the Rav's room shaken, and the Rav's words stayed with him the whole time.

With a heavy heart, Aharon set out for Budapest, the capital of Hungary, where he was to stand before the army doctors. The whole journey he kept hoping. Maybe the Rav had only been worried in the moment. Maybe if he asked once more, the Rav would bless him.

When he arrived in Budapest, he decided to try. He would call the Rav. This was no simple matter. In those days there were no telephones in every home. Phones existed in only a handful of places in town. In Munkatch, one of them was in the office of the Kollel of R' Meir Baal HaNes, Aharon found a telephone in Budapest, gave the operator the number, and waited as the line clicked, and a voice answered. It was a close relative of the Munkatcher Rav. Aharon quickly explained who he was and asked him, please, to mention his name before the Rav, to tell the Rav that he was in Budapest and about to be examined for the army. "The Rav is right here," the man said. "You can speak to him yourself."

The Rav came to the phone. With his voice trembling, Aharon said, "Rebbe, I am in Budapest. I am about to go in to the doctor for the examination. I beg the Rebbe for a bracha." The the Rav spoke softly: "Aharon… I cannot help you." And the line went dead. The Rav had put down the phone.

Aharon felt at that moment, standing alone in a strange city with the silent receiver in his hand. He did not understand it. With a broken heart, he went in to the doctor. Aharon Rothman was taken into the army, and he served for nine years, from 5696 until 5704 (1936–1944). Those were hard years. He struggled to keep the mitzvos, guarded his Shabbos as best he could, and longed for the beis medrash he had left behind.

In 5704 (1944), the darkness fell on the Jews of Hungary. The Jewish communities were rounded up, packed into cattle cars and sent to Auschwitz. All of Aharon's friends, the bochurim who had received the Rav's bracha, bribed the doctors and gone home free, were taken to the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Not one of them survived.

Aharon Rothman,. because he was serving in the army, he was not deported to Auschwitz. The army service became his shelter, and he survived. R' Aharon went on to live ninety-eight years, building a beautiful torah family that until this day relate his story forward. This carried a lesson to them: sometimes the bracha we are denied is the greatest bracha of all.

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