

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

If You Build It, He Will Come

Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and traveled to Charan. He encountered the place and he stayed there for the night. (28:10-11)

“He encountered.” Our Sages explain that this implies prayer. (Rashi)

When [Yaakov] arrived in Charan, he said, “Can it be that I passed [Mt. Moriah], where my forefathers prayed, and I didn’t pray [there myself]?” As he decided to turn back, *kaftza lei ar’a*—the land contracted toward him, and immediately “he encountered the place.” (Talmud, Chullin 91b, referenced and explained by Rashi)

Hashem sometimes helps righteous people travel quickly. This is called *k’fitzas haderech*—literally, “a contraction of the road.” But what happened to Yaakov seems to be much more dramatic. Hashem brought Mt. Moriah to him! Why did Hashem do this?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (in *Darash Moshe*) explains that Yaakov knew he was going somewhere filled with wicked people like Lavan, and he was overwhelmed. He had lived until now in the presence of Avraham and Yitzchok. He had studied in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever. Now he was heading into a hostile environment, and he was daunted by the challenge of remaining true to his Jewish ideals.

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
ALTER RAUBVOGEL

Hashem, though, showed him otherwise—and He didn’t just convince Yaakov that he had what it took to preserve his character. Hashem brought Mt. Moriah to Yaakov, to demonstrate that wherever a person is, he can create his own holy bubble, where Hashem’s Presence can rest.

Yaakov understood that lesson. He saw that even as he traveled, he stood in the place where his forefathers had prayed, and he prayed, too.

But Yaakov still thought that this pocket of holiness would never be the same as the environment he’d left behind. So, as he slept, Hashem showed him a heavenly ladder, standing in this very space. Hosts of angels were coming and going, as they took turns escorting him on his travels. Yaakov woke up and realized how sacred this place really was.

Rav Moshe says that this is a lesson for us, too. We should never settle for mediocrity, in the mistaken assumption that our humble generation will never achieve much. We must always strive for greatness. Wherever we are, we can create a space for the same holiness that our forefathers enjoyed. 🕊

A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

What non-Hebrew words are used in the *parasha*?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🕊

THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME’AH SHE’ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Reuven was looking to sell his house and asked a realtor to sell it for a reasonable price. The realtor soon returned with a potential buyer who was prepared to pay a certain price. Reuven agreed to the price and wrote a contract with the buyer.

The next day, Reuven met his good friend Shimon who asked him why he refused to sell his home to him, despite offering the realtor a higher bid. Reuven responded that he had no idea of Shimon’s exchange with the realtor; had he known, he definitely would have sold the house to his good friend Shimon instead.

The story emerged that the buyer had offered the realtor a very high commission, so the realtor, with his own best interest in mind, only brought the buyer, not Shimon, to Reuven.

Q May Reuven annul the sale with the claim that it was a *mekach ta’us* (mistaken, invalid sale) and instead sell his home to Shimon, who offered a higher price?

A The sale is valid and not a *mekach ta’us* because there was no inaccuracy with the actual sale; Reuven met the buyer and they agreed on a price. The mistake was tangential. Had Reuven known that his friend Shimon was willing to pay more, he would definitely have sold his home to him.

Although the sale cannot be annulled, it’s sensible that the *Beis Din* (Jewish Court) should confiscate the commission that the realtor received from the buyer because he acted deceptively toward Reuven.

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED

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The Gemara in tractate *Kiddushin* discusses a scenario where one sends a messenger to betroth a woman for him. Instead, the messenger betroths the woman to himself! The Gemara states that although the messenger acted deceptively, the woman is betrothed to him. The *Ra"n* explains that the Gemara is teaching that we don't say since the messenger acted inappropriately, we in turn should act to him inappropriately and have his betrothal reversed. In any event, the betrothal is valid.

Perhaps this logic may be only regarding betrothal, a very severe matter with many ramifications. Regarding the commission fee which was earned deceptively, however, we may suggest that this indeed can and should be confiscated from the realtor. He is not trustworthy, and we should penalize him for his dishonesty. 🍷

GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL



GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

Moshe Markovitz was only eight years of age, and even though he had been through so much already, he had to absorb another painful blow. He had been orphaned from his mother as an infant. He had lived in extreme poverty with his father and it was normal for him to go to bed hungry. And now his father had died and left him completely alone. In the poor European village he lived in, he took to begging to keep

himself alive. Soon after, Yossel the shoemaker noticed him begging and kindly offered to take him on as an apprentice, and Moshe gratefully accepted. Years passed and Yossel noticed that Moshe began to look troubled and asked why he was looking glum. Moshe responded, "I am so thankful that you are teaching me a trade, but I have not been able to go to cheder since my father passed away, and I have never learned to read or write. My ignorance bothers me." "Moshe, after we're done for the day you should go to the shul and ask around to see if anyone will teach

you to read. If you keep at it you will learn to read." Moshe was encouraged and followed Yossel's advice. Slowly Yossel learned to read. Once he learned to read, he began to ask people to help him learn to write. It was embarrassing to constantly tell people that even though he was almost an adult he did not know how to read or write, but he persevered, and one day Moshe Markovitz progressed in his Torah learning to the point that he began to write his own *sefer*, his own book of novella on the Torah. All from a boy who was left on his own that refused to give up. 🍷

BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Although Rabbi Yaakov Dovid Willowski (*Ridbaz*), author of a monumental commentary of the Jerusalem *Talmud*, famously gave a dire prediction for the future of Torah observant Jewry in America after his experience in the Chicago rabbinate, it was his own son-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Konvitz, who was among those who helped raise the standard of observance in America and helped transform America into a place where the Torah observant Jew could thrive. Offered several Rabbinic posts in America while still in Europe, Rabbi Konvitz turned them down in order to join his father-in-law the *Ridbaz* in the founding of a yeshiva in Safed, Israel to which the *Ridbaz* had moved after leaving Chicago. Rabbi Konvitz's responsibilities to the yeshiva led him to take his first trip to America in 1908 to raise funds, and he spent over a year creating a group who agreed to continuously help the yeshiva. Due to the outbreak of World War I, the situation of Jews in general in Safed under Turkish rule became dire and Rabbi Konvitz again traveled abroad to raise funds for the Jews there. It was not deemed safe to travel back to Israel during the war years and so he accepted a rabbinic position in the America. He would not return to Israel again in his lifetime. He served as rabbi in Elizabeth, Trenton, and Newark, New Jersey, in each place working tirelessly and tactfully to bring order to the *kashrus* and meat industries and to strengthen the Torah education systems. He was as well heavily involved on the national scale with the *Agudas Harabbonim* (Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the USA and Canada), including a stint as its president, and the *Vaad Hatzalah* (Jewish Rescue Committee) together with Rabbi Eliezer Silver, who was also a close friend, until his untimely death in 1944. 🍷

SOURCE: Konvitz, Milton R. "Rabbi Joseph Konvitz: A Son's Memoir." *The Torah U-Madda Journal*, vol. 8, 1998, pp. 151-180.

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