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תשפ"ה RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS VAYEITZAI

## GATE 231 NEVER CLOSES FOR AM YISRAEL

*Parshas Vayeitzei* differs from every other *parsha* in the Torah. Its uniqueness is that there is absolutely not even one paragraph in its entirety. It is like a run on sentence with without a pause. What message is the Torah sending to us by writing it in this connective fashion?

The Ohaiv Yisrael writes concerning this *parsha* that one must be wowed by its contents and on-going story of Yaakov's seemingly mundane episodes. He leaves his home and goes to Lavan. On his journey there the Torah tells us where he sleeps, how he prepares to go to sleep, the contents of his dream, his conversation with Rachel, his marriage with Rachel and Leah, the challenging pressures that Yaakov experienced being a shepherd for Lavan the evil swindler, the details of the rods that Yaakov carved on them to ensure that the sheep that would be born will belong to him and not his father in law, thereby keeping all his business dealings with Lavan 100% wholesome and honest.

Needless to say all these seemingly mundane episodes became part of the Torah which we learn and study in depth in the *Chumash* and Torah *Sh'beal Peh*. One would rightfully think that Yaakov who is named the choice of all the *Avos*, would leave to us a legacy in the Torah replete with profound concepts, celestial movements, and sublime life meanings, instead of his complex business dealings and strategies against an evil fraudster father in law. Yet if we were learners of Kabbalah we would realize that this long period of dealing with his and Lavan's sheep is one the most deepest of the Kabbalistic secrets revealed and fully understood by only a few privileged righteous individuals in every generation. This alone will tell us that we have a totally wrong shallow interpretation and incorrect perspective of **all** of Yaakov's episodes in this *parsha*.

וַיִּקֶץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנֵתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲכַן יֵשׁ ה' בְּמִקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֵנִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי when Yaakov awakes from his sleep during which he dreamt of a ladder based on earth and ascending to the heavens, he declared it is true that there is Hashem in this place and up until now I did not realize it. The Ohaiv Yisrael explains Yaakov's surprising revelation that for the 14 years he was steeped in deep learning nonstop in the *Beis Medrash*es of *Shaim* and *Aiver*. There he did not even sleep at all for that would be a waste of precious time. However, it was here at the *Makom Hamikdash* that Yaakov realized the stark truth that even in one's sleeping which is called part of death, one can nevertheless contact Hashem who will reveal to him the secrets of the universe.

The Baal Haturim writes that the word סולם ladder is *gematria* מִמּוֹן money. Earthly possessions such as money even though it is situated on earth, nevertheless reaches to the heavens if it is utilized for the purpose to bring about Hashem's honor such as *tzedakah*, purchasing objects of *kedusha* to perform *mitzvos*, food for Shabbos, paying for *chinuch*, *chesed*, even vacations if the right intent is included in the package.

One of the most challenging *Halachos* to fulfill is found in *Orach Chayim Siman 231* where the *Mechabair* brings the *passuk* בְּכֹל דְרֹכֶיךָ דַּע ה' in all your (mundane) ways, know and connect to Hashem. In permissible activities called רשויות, such as eating, drinking, walking, sleeping, etc, where there is no particular commandment to observe during these experiences, nevertheless we are instructed to connect these activities to Hashem thereby elevating and sanctifying them. This was Yaakov's new, revelation at the dream of the Ladder. Not only through learning can one experience a G-d Event. Rather at which ever place one is standing, ה' בְּמִקוֹם הַזֶּה He can partner with Hashem at that very moment.

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Interestingly, the number of the *Siman* in *Shulchan Aruch* which talks about this בכל דרכיך דעהו is 231. I believe it is not a coincidence but rather Heavenly inspired as we shall now explain. *Kabbalah* writes that the world was brought into existence with a Divine creative energy originally emanating in the Ten Utterances found in *Bereishis* in the shape of the letters of the *Lashon Hakodesh* alphabet as it flows down the chain order of creation. Each letter of the *Aleph Beis* represents a certain configuration of energy which when combined can create a physical form. This explains the speech metaphor used in creation, "Hashem said let there be light" Hashem created through the Ten Utterances which were enumerated in the first *perek* of *Bereishis*. The speech metaphor is not a mere anthropomorphism but according to the *Kabbalah* is exact. When Hashem said "let there be light" it represents a condensation and contraction of infinite energy into the combination of the letters אור. The letters אור contain all the creative divine energy to create physical light. This knowledge of creation through letters, was known to Adam who named all the creatures through perceiving their spiritual source and ascribing to them a name which describes the flow of creative energy into them. The *Sefer Yetzirah* speaks of 231 gates through which the world was created with 231 combinations of letters.

This concept and mission is hinted in the very name of ישראל which is split into two words יש---רלא there are 231, referring to 231 gates with which the world was created. It is our mission to redeem these holy sparks and sanctify Hashem's name.

Even though we have minimum understanding of this analysis, let us accept the general fundamental concept of world creation through the letters with 231 combinations. There is a direct link between this gates and *siman* 231 in *Shulchan Aruch*. A person might complain Look I do so many *mitzvos* and I learn Torah for Hashem so why do I have to eat sleep and work my business also for Hashem. Isn't there anything I can do just for Me? The answer to this complaint is 231, that any physical creation, the bed you lie on, the food you eat, the computer you use at work, all were created and constantly being sustained by Hashem's constant flow of energy. Whether it's the apple you are about to eat, the scenery you enjoy, or the *tefillin* you wear, they are all in existence because of the letters which Hashem designed for the creation of His world. This conveys that everything created is purposeful with the goal to be sanctified and elevated to its creator. When one understands the 231 gates through which the universe was created and sustained, the challenge of *Siman* 231 בכל דרכיך דעהו will be embraced as an opportunity to bring Hashem into your daily life more often.

For example, If a mother would feel that she is raising Hashem's children besides her own, chores galore, cooking, laundry, cleaning, and that her house's contents originate from the holy letters of *Lashon Hakodesh*, she might have an easier time in embracing her holy mission rather than looking at it with disdain. The correction is about reframing a misinterpreted world of nature that surrounds us. Rather, beneath the façade is a world of souls and sparks of energy emanating from the radiant letters of the *Aleph Beis* that give form to what we see, hear, feel, touch, and smell.

When Yaakov realized the visions that he saw in his dream, he understood that Hashem is called *Makom* because He is the *makom* of the world. No matter where Man is, Hashem is in the same place. One just has to let him into your space and share with Him your experience. This is the intention of Yaakov when he said after waking up יהו' במקום הזה ואנכי לא ידעתי that even in this place during my sleep, יהו' במקום הזה Hashem's presence is here, then surely when I am awake and active the same applies. The *gematriah* of יהו' במקום הזה (26, 188,17) also adds up to 231. This teaches that whichever *makom*, הזה, this one in front of

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me, during any part of his day, he can say if I let Hashem in He will enter and the mundane earthly experience will transform into a heavenly glorification to Hashem my Creator.

בכל דרכיך דעהו **אנכי לא ידעתי** I did not realize up until now that my own private affairs that are not commandments from Hashem are also included in the Torah in an unspoken mitzvah of דעהו.

**אכן יש יהו' במקום הזה עה"כ** is the *gematria* **תריג** corresponding to the 613 mitzvos that Hashem commanded *Bnei Yisrael* to fulfill. The Torah is relating to us that the דברי רשות the permissible regular acts we do during our day become sacred as the *mitzvos* because we sanctified the profane and made it holy.

Now with this new insight, we can reframe every seeming mundane experience that Yaakov had in this *parsha*. The staff that he used and carved on it different images was used as the middle pole in the *Mishkan* that miraculously connected all the planks together on three sides. The Zohar writes that these staffs were his way of putting on *tefillin* every day. The stones that he used to surround his head when he slept at the *makom Hamikdash* became attached to the *Even Shesiyah*. These are examples of daily regular mundane actions yet with Yaakov's *kavannah* they were transformed into incredible spiritual phenomenon. So too, every regular episode of Yaakov was connected to the soul energy that lies within nature and fulfilled with a Hashem consciousness.

In *Pardes Sadei* he elaborates on this concept that a promise of ופרצת ימה וקדמה וצפונה ונגבה was only given to Yaakov and not to Avraham and Yitzchak. The inheritance given to Yaakov was **בלי מצרים** without any boundaries. Where ever *Yisrael* conquers will belong to them as part of *Eretz Yisrael*. (Devarim 11,24). The reason being that Yaakov's *avodas Hashem* went beyond all boundaries of *mitzvos* and it even spilled over into the category of דברי רשות and בכל דרכיך דעהו. It is therefore *midah keneged midah* that he merited to inherit an unlimited *Eretz Yisrael* without borders so long as they conquered it.

A proof to this is alluded in the *passuk* (Devarim 32,12) **ה' בדרך ינחנו ואין עמו אל נכר**. Baal Haturim quotes this *passuk* as a supplement to the above **ינחנו גדולים ינחנו** as both are using the same word **ינחנו**. We can explain the connection as follows. The Metzudas Dovid on *Mishlei* (18 16) translates if one needs for his business to extend his connections to a broader base he should give presents. Our first *passuk* can now be interpreted with the same theme of **ינחנו**. Hashem בדרך himself, **ינחנו** will widen one's boundaries. Why would Hashem himself strive to do this? The answer is alluded to in the word **בדרך** which is the acronym of **בכל דרכיך דעהו**. Such an individual works to fulfill *Siman* 231 and strives to find Hashem in everything thereby expanding his boundaries to include even the everyday mundane activities. He doesn't address nature to help him but rather Hashem, who sustains nature and is its source. Such a person **אין עמו אל נכר** he doesn't have with him a strange force such as nature and its agents. Therefore Hashem Himself helps him to extend his boundaries both physical and spiritual.

The first *Sfas Emes* in the *parsha* writes that **יעקב מבאר שבע** means that Yaakov prepared himself to go in *galus* with the power of **באר שבע** which is the fountain of Shabbos which gives life sustenance to the days of the week. Shabbos is called **יומא דנשמתא** and one's body subjugates itself under it. By extending *kedushas* Shabbos into the week, it facilitates one's *bechirah* to perform his mundane activities with the consciousness of Hashem's definite involvement. Just as Shabbos is called **נחלה בלי מצרים** an inheritance without boundaries, if one can extend his Shabbos into the week, his matters of **רשות** will be elevated and sanctified just like the quality of Shabbos. This is hinted in the *gematria* of **אכן יש ה' במקום הזה ואנכי** with the six words equals 705 which spells **שבת** with its three letters. On Shabbos Hashem dwells upon the *Yid* even with the various *oneg* Shabbos that he experiences **אנכי**, because deriving pleasure on Shabbos is a

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mitzvah. This will train the mundane days with the humdrum activities that involve the אנכי to also be sanctified.

Now we can understand our original question מכל הפרשיות מה נשתנה הפרשה הזאת that there are no paragraphs. The answer is that by most people there are interruptions in *deveikus* with Hashem. One for instance can *daven Shemoneh Esrai* with *deveikus* but afterwards when he is busy with mundane conduct, he loses that *deveikus*. Yaakov the *bechir* of the *Avos* taught us that that everything can be sanctified by one realizing that all matters are likened to a ladder on earth but it can reach the heavens so long as one has the right *kavannah* when he does anything. This consciousness of Hashem doesn't allow for breaks and absences of continuous mitzvos because one sees all his daily conduct through the lens of 231 and שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד.

Gut Shabbos,

Rav Brazil