

אושר החיים

לע"נ ר' חיים יוסף ליב בן ר' שאול יצחק ז"ל

Machshava: The Foundation of Our Lives

Parshas Vayechi first begins with recounting the years of *Yaakov Avinu* in *Eretz Mitzrayim*. The *posuk* then continues with a general counting of his life. In both these instances, the *Torah* refers to him by his first name of "Yaakov." Only in the next *posuk*, when telling of how he was nearing death, the *Torah* switches to his other name, "Yisroel" (*Bereishis* 47:28-29). Why is this so?

Perhaps, we could explain this in the following manner. The *gemara* (*Shabbos* 152a) tells us, that as a *Talmid Chochom* ages, his wisdom is increased, as opposed to an *am ha'aretz*, who becomes more foolish with age. The commentary *Anaf Yosef* (in *Ein Yaakov*) explains, that a person is comprised of both a materialistic nature as well as an intellectual one. It is the job of man to elevate his materialistic temperament through the means of his intellect, to be used for the sake of Hashem. The *gemara* means to tell us, that as the *Talmid Chochom* gets older, his materialistic nature weakens, thereby allowing his intellect; his 'wisdom,' to take greater control. Thus, he becomes more and more *l'sheim shomayim* as he ages. The *Am Ha'aretz*, on the other hand, who had steeped himself in a world of corporeality throughout all his years, will find that along with his physical nature diminishing with age, his intellect will also become weaker.

When *Yaakov* was fighting with the *saro shel Eisav*, he was given the name "Yisroel." *Rabeinu Bechaye* explains the dichotomy between these two names. *Yaakov*, coming from the word 'eikev,' or 'heal,' symbolizes a state of lowliness. The name *Yisroel* represents 'being elevated' ('*srara*'), referring to the ability of man to use his intellect to take control of his materialistic nature. Thus, *Yaakov* elevated himself by being connected to his intellect – "*ki sarisa im Elokim*." Although he also needed to have an association to this world – "*vi'im anashim*" - it did not however, detract much from his pursuit of *ruchnius*.

We may now explain why it is that when describing the years *Yaakov* lived, both in general and in *Mitzrayim*, the *Torah* used the name "Yaakov", while regarding his *petirah*, it states the name, "Yisroel." This was possibly meant to highlight how, as he neared his death, the great spiritual nature of *Yaakov* which emanated from his intellect was more conspicuous. We see that, despite always living in a mundane world – and, no less, in *Mitzrayim* of all places – when his body physically weakened while nearing his *petirah*, his spiritual intellect truly stood out. This signifies how *Yaakov Avinu* lived his life continuously growing in *machshava*.

We learn that the bedrock of *Yiddishkeit* is using one's intellect; *machshavah*. Although we may never expect to live on such an exalted level as *Yaakov*, we should certainly aspire to have every aspect of our life guided by *machshava*. When we put thought into our actions and *mitzvos*, then we live an entirely different life - we live in a completely different world. *Machshavah* gives a *chiyus* in everything we do.

ויחי
תשפ"ה

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Tefillah and Hishtadlus

In Parshas Vayechi, Yaakov tells Yosef (בראשית מ"ח כ"ב), "I have given you an extra portion over your brothers, which I have taken from the hands of the Emori *בְּחַרְבִּי וּבְקִשְׁתִּי* - with my sword and my bow." Rashi explains that *my sword* refers to his *chochmah* – Torah wisdom, while *my bow* refers to his *tefillah*.

The *bow* can be explained allegorically that the more one pulls back on it, the further the arrow will go. Similarly, the more effort one puts into his *davening*, the more benefit he will reap from that *tefillah*. Yet, this is only so provided that the conditions necessary for *tefillah* to work have been met - as we will explain below.

We have previously asked a question regarding *tefillah* from a *pasuk* in *Ashrei* and given an answer to it. Being on the topic of *Tefillah* now, we would like to ask this question once again, and offer a possible alternative explanation.

The *pasuk* in *Ashrei* states, "קרוב ה' לכל קראיו, לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת". We asked: Is the first part of the *passuk* correct - that *Hashem* is near to **all** those that call out to Him, or is the second part correct - that *Hashem* is close only to those who call out **in truth**? Very often people *daven* many heartfelt *tefillos* for something, and they are disheartened when they don't get the results they wanted. The following *mashal*, which Rav Shalom Schwadron said over from the Dubno Maggid, can shed light on this issue and reconcile the seeming contradiction in the *pasuk*.

There was a wealthy person in town who was well known for his open hand and caring heart. One day, one of the poor people in town met this benevolent man on the street and cried to him that he needed a certain amount of money for something important. The wealthy man told him: "Come to my house at 1 in the afternoon, and I will be waiting to give you the money." When the time arrived, the rich man was waiting in his parlor, but the poor man never showed up! The next day, the same thing happened. The pauper met the rich man on the street, begged him for money, received an appointment, and didn't show up. This went on for several days, until the rich man finally told him, "Do you realize how much of my time you wasted?! Every day I sit in my study waiting for you, and you don't show up! Forget the whole thing!"

By now, the lesson might be clear. Sometimes, someone will *daven* for success in learning, with tremendous intent by "*V'ha'arev na*" and "*Ahavah Rabbah*". Day after day, he *davens* with much feeling and *kavanah*. However, when it comes to "show up"; to put extra effort into his learning, *Hashem* has to ask him, "Where were you?"

For our *tefillos* to be answered, we must show *Hashem* that we are sincere in our requests, putting in our own efforts to make it happen.

Now, we can explain the *pasuk*: "קרוב ה' לכל קראיו" -- *Hashem* is indeed near to all those who call out to Him. "לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת" -- *Hashem* merely wants that those who call out to Him are truthful, doing their part to make it happen.