

פרשת וישלח

I read 'Bible stories' years before I began learning Torah in Yeshiva. Looking back, I assume that the editors of the books that I read assumed that not every event should be told to children and only those events that would make a lasting impression should be presented in the storybook form that I read.

I imagine that their assumptions were correct and as we come to Parshas Vayishlach, one of the stories that was embedded in my psyche from a young age comes to mind. I read the book or books of Bible stories that I had over and over and, although I didn't know it at the time that it was part of Parshas Vayishlach, now that I do know its place in Chumash I cannot forget being enthralled with my reading that I repeated many, many times.

In those days I would have called it the story of Jacob and the angel. Perhaps at a certain point it switched to *Yaakov*, but I cannot remember that much.

Jacob fought the angel; Jacob was victorious and the angel changed his name to Israel/Yisroel.

I remember it vividly.

And, I have no doubt that many, if not the vast majority, of my readers remember the story with the same vividness as I do – even if subsequently when they were 10, or 11 or 12 years old, and maybe later on, they had the privilege to learn Parshas Vayishlach 'inside'.

Well, if that's your memory you are mistaken!

The angel, or now we call it the 'mal'ach', didn't change the name of Yaakov Ovinu. Hashem changed Yaakov's name to Yisroel and then, only after a number of months had passed.

So, if you don't know that – let us learn what happened with an emphasis on the name change and when it actually occurred.

We read in this week's Parshas Vayishlach (B'reishis Perek 32/P'sukim 27-30):

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחֲנִי כִּי עָלָה הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁלְּחֶךָ כִּי אִם בְּרַכְתֵּנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי מֶה שְׁמֶךָ
וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב: וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֵאמָר עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שָׁרִיתָ עִמָּךְ... לְקִיָּם

וְעַם אַנְשֵׁים וְתוֹכְלִי: וַיִּשְׁאַל יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּידָה נָא שְׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשְׁמִי
וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתוֹ שֵׁם:

The angel said to Yaakov, 'Send me away because it is dawn'; Yaakov said, 'I will not send you unless you bless me.' The angel said to him, 'What is your name?'; he said, 'Yaakov'. The angel said, 'Yaakov will no longer be said to be your name, but only Israel because you have fought with G-d and with men and you were able. Yaakov asked and he said, 'Tell me, please, what is your name?' and he said, 'Why do you ask for my name?' and he blessed him there.

Rashi teaches us:

לא יעקב - לא יאמר עוד שהברכות באו לך בעקבה וברמיה כי אם בשררה ובגלוי פנים, וסופך שהקדוש ברוך הוא נגלה עליך בבית אל ומחליף את שמך, ושם הוא מברכך, ואני שם אהיה ואודה לך עליהן, וזהו שכתוב (הושע יב/ה¹) וישר אל מלאך ויוכל בכה ויתחנן לו, בכה המלאך ויתחנן לו, ומה נתחנן לו (שם) בית אל ימצאנו ושם ידבר עמנו, המתן לי עד שידבר עמנו שם, ולא רצה יעקב, ועל כרחו הודה לו עליהן, וזהו ויברך אותו שם, שהיה מתחנן להמתין לו ולא רצה:

Not Yaakov – [The angel meant to say] 'It will no longer be said that the blessings came to you, Yaakov, with ruse and trickery² – rather [it will be said]

¹ The entire verse reads:

וַיִּשֶׁר אֶל מְלָאךְ וַיִּכַּל בְּכָה וַיִּתְחַנֵּן לוֹ בֵּית אֵל יִמְצָאנוּ וְשֵׁם יִדְבַר עִמָּנוּ:
He took office over the angel and he was able; he cried and he begged him, 'He will find us in Beit El and there He will speak with us.'

² When Eisav discovered that Yaakov received the blessings that Eisav thought were due to him, he told his father that Yaakov had tricked him twice.

The Torah has words for tricking and misleading, but, nonetheless, Eisav coined a new term as we read (B'reishis Perek 28/Posuk 36):

וַיֹּאמֶר הֲכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה פְעַמַּיִם אֶת בְּכֹרְתִי לָקַח וְהִנֵּה עַתָּה לָקַח בְּרַכְתִּי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֶצְלָתָ לִי בְרָכָה:

Eisav said, 'Is that why he called his name Yaakov and he *Yaakoved* me with this twice; he took my birthright and behold now he took my blessing;' he said to Yitzchak, 'do you not have a blessing to confer upon me.'

As I am writing, I looked at the dictionary/encyclopedia that my computer has and entered the word 'jew', with a small j.

they came to you by virtue of your position and openly. Eventually Hashem will appear to you in Beit El and change your name. There He will bless you. I, the angel of Eisav, will be there and acquiesce to the fact that the blessings are yours.'

That is the meaning of the verse in Hoshea: 'He took fought the angel and he was successful; he cried and begged him.' This means that the angel cried and begged Yaakov. About what did the angel beg? 'In Beit El G-d will find us and there He will speak to us. Wait for me, the angel of Eisav, until He will speak with us there.' Yaakov did not want to wait. The angel was forced to acquiesce that the blessings were duly Yaakov's.

That is the meaning that 'he blessed him *there*.' The angel begged that Yaakov should wait and Yaakov did not want to.

Thus, we see that that unique meeting of Yaakov Ovinu and the angel, there were two items on the agenda. One was the acknowledgement from the side of Eisav that the blessings were rightfully given to Yaakov. The other item was the name change.

The angel wanted to postpone the acknowledgement of Yaakov being the rightful recipient of the blessings. The angel did not intend to change the name of Yaakov.

When did the name change take place?

This is the response:

jew (Verb)

To bargain, to attempt to gain an unfair price in a business deal; to defraud.

Eisav was the inventor of taking a name of the Jewish People, in this case, Yaakov, and transforming it into a verb with a pejorative meaning.

Thus when we say (Midrash Tanchuma Parshas Sh'mos (24):

עשו שונא ליעקב

Eisav hates Yaakov

we are referring to an ongoing historical phenomenon, founded by Eisav HoRosho'.

Following Yaakov's meeting with Eisav which took place immediately after the encounter with the angel, we read (Perek 33/Posuk 17):

וַיַּעֲקֹב נִסֵּעַ סֻכֹּתָהּ וַיִּבֶן לּוֹ בַּיִת וַלְמִקְנֵהוּ עָשָׂה סֻכֹּת עַל כֵּן קָרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם סֻכּוֹת:

Yaakov traveled to Sukkos and he built a home and for his cattle he built Sukkos; therefore he called the name of the place Sukkos.

Rashi teaches that Yaakov spent a year and a half in that place. He writes:

ויבן לו בית - שהה שם שמונה עשר חדש, קיץ וחורף וקיץ. סכות קיץ, בית חורף, סכות קיץ:

He built a home – He spent 18 months there, summer, winter and summer. Sukkos is summer, house is winter and Sukkos is summer.

Yaakov then comes to Eretz Yisroel and the incident in Shechem occurs.

Finally, after a number of months³, Hashem gives Yaakov Ovinu a new Mitzvah. we read (B'reishis P'sukim 1, 6-7, 9-13):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיךְ לְקִיּוֹם אֶל יַעֲקֹב קוּם עֲלֵה בֵּית אֵל וְשָׁב שָׁם וַעֲשֵׂה שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַאֲלֹהֵי הַנְּרָאָה אֲלֵיךְ בְּבִרְחֹךָ מִפְּנֵי עֲשׂוֹ אַחִיךָ:

וַיֵּבֵא יַעֲקֹב לּוֹזֶה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן הוּא בֵּית אֵל הוּא וְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ: וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא לְמָקוֹם אֵל... לְבֵית אֵל כִּי שָׁם נִגְלוּ אֵלָיו הָאֱלֹהִים... לְקִיּוֹם בְּבִרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אַחִיו:

וַיֵּרָא אֲלֵיךְ לְקִיּוֹם אֶל יַעֲקֹב עוֹד בְּבֹאוֹ מִפְּדַן אֶרֶם וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֲלֵיךְ לְקִיּוֹם שְׁמֶךָ יַעֲקֹב לֹא יִקְרָא שְׁמֶךָ עוֹד יַעֲקֹב כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה שְׁמֶךָ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֲלֵיךְ לְקִיּוֹם אֲנִי אֲלֵיךְ לְשֵׁן דִּי פְּרָה וּרְבֵה גוֹי וְקָהַל גוֹי יִהְיֶה מִמֶּךָ וּמְלָכִים מִחֲלָצֶיךָ יֵצְאוּ: וְאֵת הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם וְלִיִּצְחָק לְךָ אֶתְנַנֶּה וְלִזְרַעְךָ אֶחְרִיךָ אֶתְּנֶה אֶת הָאֶרֶץ: וַיַּעַל מֵעֵלְיוֹ אֲלֵיךְ לְקִיּוֹם בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר אֹתוֹ:

³ Yaakov Ovinu was separated from his father Yitzchak for 24 years. Two of those years he spent in *Yeshivas Shem v'Eiver*, 20 years in the house of Lovon and 18 months in Sukkos. The Torah does not tell us how long Yaakov was in Shechem - but it would seem to be about six months in order to equal the 24 years of his separation from his father.

For the computation of the 24 years, see the final Rashi to Parshas Toldos, B'reishis Perek 28/Posuk 9.

G-d said to Yaakov, 'Arise and ascend to Beit El and live there and make there an altar for G-d Who appeared to you when you fled from before your brother Eisav.'

Yaakov came to Luz that was in the Land of Canaan, which is Beit El, Yaakov and all the people with him. He built an altar and he called the name of the place 'G-d of Beit El' because there G-d revealed Himself when he fled from before his brother.

G-d appeared to Yaakov again when he came from Padan Aram and He blessed him. G-d said to him, 'Your name is Yaakov, no longer will your name be Yaakov but only Yisroel will be your name' and He called his name Yisroel.

G-d said to him, 'I am Almighty G-d, be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a community of nations will be from you and kings will come out from your loins. The land that I gave to Avraham and Yitzchak I will give to you and to your seed after you I will give the land.' G-d went up from above him at the place where He spoke with him.

It was not the angel that added the name of Yisroel to Yaakov Ovinu. The angel merely foretold the events that would occur.

The event of the name-changing occurred in Beit El.

Although in terms of the Parshos that we read, it was only last week in Parshas Vayetze when we visited Beit El. It was there that Yaakov, on his way out of Eretz Yisroel, had his momentous dream and received the Divine promise of the Ribbono Shel Olom.

We read the Word of G-d that was given to Yaakov (B'reishis Perek 28/P'sukim 14-15):

וְהָיָה זְרַעְךָ כְּעֵפֶר הָאָרֶץ וּפְרָצְתָּ יָמָה וּקְדָמָה וּצְפוֹנָה וְנִגְבָּה וּנְבָרְכוּ בְּךָ כָּל מְשֻׁפָּחַת
הָאָדָמָה וּבְזָרְעָהּ: וְהָיָה אֲנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וּשְׁמִרְתִּיךָ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ וְהִשְׁבַּתִּיךָ אֶל הָאָדָמָה
הַזֹּאת כִּי לֹא אֶעְזָבְךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם עָשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ:

'Your seed will be like the dirt of the land and you will expand to the west, to the east, to the north and to the south and all the families of the earth will be blessed by you and by your seed. Behold, I Hashem am with you and I

will guard you wherever you go and I will return you to this land; because I will not forsake you until I have done all that I have promised you.'

Now Yaakov Ovinu has return to Beit El. It certainly seems to us that the promise has been fulfilled in the most part. It is true that the blessing of ופרצת has not been fulfilled in terms of the family of Yaakov taking possession of all of Eretz Yisroel, in all of its directions. The children of Yaakov were still young; it would certainly not be a blessing if they would spread out in their early youth.

However, when we read about the increased riches of Yaakov Ovinu, we did see that the blessing was fulfilled to its appropriate level at that particular time.

The Torah wrote in last week's Parshas Vayetze (Perek 30/Posuk 43):

וַיִּפְרֹץ הָאִישׁ מְאֹד מְאֹד וַיְהִי לוֹ צֹאן רַבּוֹת וּשְׁפָחוֹת וְעֶבְדִּים וּגְמָלִים וְחֲמֹרִים:

The man spread out very, very much; he had many sheep and maidservants and servants and camels and donkeys.

Not only does the Torah use a form of the word ופרצת to indicate that he 'spread out', but, additionally, instead of referring to him by his name, Yaakov, the Torah writes האיש – the man. Why?

We have learned elsewhere that the term איש does not merely mean a person, or a male. The term איש, when the context is appropriate, implies importance and significance as Rashi teaches us in Parshas Sh'lach⁴.

⁴ We read there (B'midbar Perek 13/Posuk 2):

שְׁלַח לְךָ אַנְשִׁים וַיִּתְרוּ אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטֵּה אֲבֹתָיו תִּשְׁלְחוּ כָל נָשִׂיא בָהֶם:

Send for yourself men and they will tour the Land of Canaan that I Hashem am giving to B'nei Yisroel, one man each for the tribes of their fathers you shall send; each a prince in the tribes.

The next verse reads:

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה מִמִּדְבַּר פָּאֲרָן עַל פִּי ה' כְּלָם אַנְשִׁים רָאשֵׁי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה:

Moshe sent them from the Poron wilderness according to the Word of Hashem; they were all men, heads of B'nei Yisroel they were.

The repetition of אנשים in this latter verse cannot be to inform us of their gender. That was taught in the previous verse. Thus Rashi teaches in this latter verse the purpose of writing אנשים:

כלם אנשים - כל אנשים שבמקרא לשון חשיבות, ואותה שעה כשרים היו:

Thus, it would certainly seem that the Divine promise to Yaakov had been fulfilled. Why, then, would it have been necessary for Hashem to ‘remind’ him to build an altar to give thanks? Why didn’t Yaakov decide on his accord that he should give thanks?

However, as is usually the case, the answer has already been provided even before we have raised the question.

At the beginning of this week’s Parshas Vayishlach, we read the prayer that Yaakov Ovinu offers before the Ribbono Shel Olom in advance of his meeting with his brother Eisav, a meeting that was rapidly gathering more and more ominous overtones (Perek 32/P’sukim 10-13).

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֵלֶיךָ... לֵיְקִי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְיֵא... לֵיְקִי אָבִי יִצְחָק ה' הָאֵלֵּי שׁוּב לְאַרְצְךָ
וְלִמְוֹלָדְתְּךָ וְאִיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ: קִטְוֹנֹתִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל הָאֲמֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת עַבְדְּךָ כִּי
בְּמִקְלִי עִבְרָתִי אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הֵייתִי לְשָׁנִי מִחֲנוֹת: הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשׂוּ
כִּי יֵרָא אָנֹכִי אֵתוֹ כֵּן יָבֹא וְהִכְנִי אִם עַל בְּנֵי: וְאַתָּה אֲמַרְתָּ הַיֵּטֵב אִיטִיב עִמָּךְ וְשִׁמְתִי
אֶת זְרַעְךָ כְּחוֹל הַיָּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִסְפָּר מֵרֹב:

Yaakov said, ‘G-d of my father Avraham and G-d of my father Yitzchak, Hashem Who said to me, “return to your land and to your birthplace and I will treat you well.” I have become small because of all of the kindnesses and all of the truth that You did for Your servant because with my staff [alone] I crossed this Jordan River and now I have become two camps. Save me, please, from the hand of my brother, from Eisav because I am fearful of him lest he come and smite me, mothers and children. You, Hashem, said, “I will be very good for you and I will place your seed like the sand of the sea that cannot be counted because it is so much.”’

The commentators note that that it would appear that this prayer of Yaakov was unnecessary. Everything that he requested was already promised to him by Hashem on his way to Choron, as we read in the beginning of Vayetze.

But the answer is found in the word קִטְוֹנֹתִי I have become little. Rashi explains:

They were all men – every use of the term אנשים in Tanach implies importance. At that moment, the spies were all ‘kosher’.

קטנתי מכל החסדים - נתמעטו זכויותי על ידי החסדים והאמת שעשית עמי, לכך אני ירא, שמא משהבטחתי נתלכלכתי בחטא ויגרום לי להמסר ביד עשו:

I have become small – ‘My merits have decreased because of all the kindnesses and truth that You did with me. That is why I am fearful. Perhaps since when You made the promises for me I have become dirty with sin and that will cause me to be delivered into the hand of Eisav.’

Let us interpolate from what Yaakov Ovinu said here prior to meeting Eisav to what he must have felt after meeting with Eisav and safely escaping his claws⁵!

If, in his humility, Yaakov felt undeserving prior to meeting Eisav, all the more so he would have felt undeserving after leaving that encounter without harm befalling him.

Perhaps, Yaakov Ovinu thought that the fullness of the Divine promise made to him as he left his father's house would never reach fruition, could never be actualized to its ultimate extent, and therefore, the altar would not be built.

And, thus Hashem had to make that command to him to build the altar, informing him that he was still meritorious.

And in consonance with that command HaKodosh Boruch changed the name of our final forefather from being only Yaakov to also being Yisroel.

And what was the conclusion of the Divine Revelation?

We read above:

וַיַּעַל מֵעָלָיו אֱלֹהִים...לִקְרִים בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֶת־וְ:

G-d went up from above him at the place where He spoke with him.

What does this verse come to teach? What else would we have expected?

⁵ There are two interpretations regarding Eisav's feelings at that meeting. One says that momentarily he was overcome with powerful positive emotions of affection for his brother and the other interpretation says that he wanted to harm him but was unable.

See Perek 33/Posuk 4 and Rashi and other meforshim.

It seems that its point is that when Hashem finished speaking with Yaakov, He left him.

Why would we need a special verse about that?

Furthermore, regarding the final phrase of the verse, Rashi writes:

במקום אשר דבר אתו - איני יודע מה מלמדנו:

*At the place where He spoke to him – I do not know what this teaches us*⁶.

Radak offers two explanations, *p'shat* and a Midrash.

He writes first:

ויעל מעליו א...ל"קים - כמו שנאמר באברהם "ויעל א...ל"קים מעל אברהם" נסתלק כבודו שנראה לו במראה וראהו במראה בעת שנסתלק.

*G-d went up from above him – this is as what is written regarding Avraham Ovinu – ‘Hashem went up from above Avraham’. The Glory of G-d went up – it appeared to him in a vision*⁷. Yaakov [and Avraham] saw the vision of G-d when it went up.

⁶ Ramban, without mentioning Rashi's comment, writes what this phrase teaches. *Gur Aryeh* seems stunned that Rashi cannot offer an explanation which *Gur Aryeh* says is obvious.

Sifsei Chachamim explains Rashi.

But, we understand that Rashi's "I do not know what this teaches us" requires study no less than those instances when he tells us the meaning of a verse.

⁷ At the end of Parshas Bha'alochea, HaKodosh Boruch teaches Aharon and Miriam the distinction between the prophecies of all other *Nevi'im* and those of Moshe Rabbenu. We read there (B'midbar Perek 12/P'sukim 6-8):

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמְעוּ נָא דְבַר יְהוָה אִם יְהִי נְבִיאֵכֶם ה' בְּמַרְאֵה אֱלֹהֵי אֲתוֹדֵעַ בְּחִלּוֹם אֲדַבֵּר בּוֹ: לֹא כֵן עֲבָדֵי מֹשֶׁה בְּכָל בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא: פֶּה אֶל פֶּה אֲדַבֵּר בּוֹ וּמַרְאֵה וְלֹא בְּחִידוֹת וּתְמִנַּת ה' יְבִיט וּמִדּוּעַ לֹא יִרְאֶתֶם לְדַבֵּר בְּעַבְדֵי בְּמֹשֶׁה:

G-d said, 'Listen now to My Words: if your prophet [has a prophecy], Hashem will make Himself known to him in a vision; in a dream I will speak to him. It is not so with my servant Moshe; he is trustworthy in all of My house. I will speak to him mouth to mouth; he will see, not with hints; he shall see the picture of G-d; why are you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moshe?

The verse regarding Avraham is found in Parshas Lech Lecho. We read there (B'reishis Perek 17/Posuk 22):

וַיְכַל לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ וַיַּעַל אֱלֹהִים מֵעַל אַבְרָהָם:

Hashem finished speaking with him; G-d went up from above Avraham⁸.

I think what Radak means is that one should not think that G-d's departure was abrupt or a result of improprieties on the parts of Yaakov and Avraham. Rather, by teaching us that their vision of the Divine included the departure of the Divine, then we know that departure itself and the reasons for it were part of the revelation to which these prophets merited.

Radak continues with the second segment of his *peirush*:

ובבראשית רבה (פרשתא ב) אמר ר' שמעון בן לקיש האבות הן הן המרכבה:

And in Midrash B'reishis Rabba [we read regarding our verse and the similar one regarding Avraham]: Rabi Shimon ben Lokish said, "the Patriarchs are the Chariot of the Shechinah."

Rabi Shimon ben Lokish was referring to the remarkable vision of Yechezkel HaNovi, מעשה המרכבה, the vision of 'the Chariot', that we read at the beginning of the latter's Sefer.

We are limited in our explanation of מעשה המרכבה. Besides our own inability to fathom what Yechezkel saw, we learn in the Mishnah in Masseches Chagiga (Perek 3/Mishnah 1):

אין דורשין...במרכבה ביחיד אלא אם כן היה חכם ומבין מדעתו...

We do not interpret the vision of the Chariot even with one student, unless he was wise and understanding on his own accord.

And in fact, on one of the verses there (Perek 1/Posuk 27), Rashi writes:

Of course, this needs explication regarding the different times of מראה, but that is not our subject here.

⁸ We will soon discuss the context of this verse.

לא ניתן רשות להתבונן במקרא זה:

Permission was not given to comprehend this verse.

We do know that the Ovos and Dovid HaMelech were essential facets of that Chariot and thus, as it were, the Ovos were the means of how Hashem was known in this world⁹.

And, it would appear, that there were times that Hashem was more evident in this world and times when it was less so.

When Hashem goes from above Avraham and Yaakov it would mean, therefore, that He became less evident in the world.

And thus we can begin to fathom the continuation of Radak's explanation that deals with the Midrash that he writes, not the *p'shat*-explanation:

במקום אשר דבר אתו - להודיע כי אותו המקום היה מקום קבול השכינה ומקום הנבואה ובאותו המקום דבר עמו בראשונה ובשניה, וזהו המקום נבחר שאמר הנביא ושם ידבר עמנו (הושע יב/ה¹⁰) ושם הציב יעקב אבינו מצבות בראשונה ובשניה, ומה שאמר ויעל מעליו, רמז בו שעתיד הכבוד לעלות מאותו המקום, מיום שהעמידו בו העגל:

In the place where He spoke with him – This informs that that place was the place where the Shechinah was received, the place of prophecy. In that place Hashem spoke to Yaakov for the first time and for the second time. This was the chosen place regarding which the Prophet Hoshea said, “There He will speak with us”. That is where Yaakov erected the pillars the first and second time.

⁹ There are literally hundreds and hundreds of commentaries and essays regarding central aspects of this concept and many more dealing with various nuances. It should be understood that what will be written here will be far from comprehensive.

¹⁰ We saw this verse at the very beginning of this Dvar Torah, in footnote 1. We will remind ourselves of how it reads in its entirety:

וַיֵּשֶׁר אֶל מְלָאָךְ וַיְכַל בְּכֹה וַיִּתְחַנֵּן לוֹ בַּיִת אֵל יִמְצְאֵנוּ וְשָׁם יְדַבֵּר עִמָּנוּ:

He took office over the angel and he was able; he cried and he begged him, ‘He will find us in Beit El and there He will speak with us.’

That which it says that ‘Hashem went up from above him’ is a hint that in the future the Glory of G-d will go up from that place – from the day that the golden calf was placed there.

Radak is teaching that there are certain places chosen that make the Shechinah more accessible to those who deserve to receive it. Beit El was one of those places.

As Kli Yokor explains here:

ולי נראה שבא ללמדנו שהאבות הן הן המרכבה, ושבת המקדש שלמטה מכוון כנגד בית המקדש של מעלה כידוע, שיעקב היה עכשיו בבית אל ולוּז, ושם שער השמים כי שני מקומות אלו נתחברו עם הר המוריה כמבואר למעלה בפרשת ויצא (כח/טז¹¹).

I think that this verse comes to teach us that our forefathers were the Chariot and the Beis HaMikdosh that is below [on earth] is directly positioned opposite the Heavenly Beis HaMikdosh as is well-known. Yaakov, now, was in Beit El and Luz¹² and there is the ‘gate to heaven’ because the two places of Beit El and Luz are connected with Mt. Moriah [where the earthly Beis HaMikdosh stood] as was explained above in Parshas Vayetze.

And thus, there are times, but not all times, that the Patriarchs were able to bring the Shechinah to this world.

And this was the proper time. That is what the Netziv explains in this section as to why Yaakov Ovinu did not immediately build an altar – why he waited for G-d’s command. He writes:

¹¹ That verse reads in its entirety:

וַיִּקָּץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵינֶן יֵשׁ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי:
Yaakov awoke from his sleep and he said, ‘In truth there is G-d in this place and I did not know.’

See what Kli Yokor wrote there and see Rashi in that same section in the following verse (17).

¹² It seems that Kli Yokor holds that Beit El and Luz were distinct places although the Torah implies differently when it writes in Parshas Vayetze (B’reishis Perek 28/Posuk 19):

וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא בֵּית אֵל וְאוּלָם לִזְ שֵׁם הָעִיר לְרֵאשֶׁנָּה:
Yaakov called the name of the place *Beit El*, but *Luz* was the name of the city originally.

...דראוי היה ליעקב תיכף בבואו לבית אל להציב מצבה ולהקים נדרו, אבל הקדוש ברוך הוא עכבהו עד בוא דברו, היינו שיבין דעת ה' שהגיע שעה רצויה לכך...

It would have been appropriate for Yaakov to have immediately built a monument and to fulfill his vow when he returned to Beit El. But, Hashem held him back until He spoke His Word – that is so Yaakov would understand the ‘mind’ of Hashem that the building of the altar had to be done at its proper time.

And, there are times when, despite the greatness of the individuals involved, that the Shechinah refuses to lower itself to this world.

That is what occurred, explains Radak, when Y’rov’om ben Novot placed the two golden calves in Beit El. We read in Sefer M’lochim (Perek 12/P’sukim 28-29):

וַיַּעַץ הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁנֵי עֲגָלֵי זָהָב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם רַב לָכֶם מֵעֲלוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָעֲלוּךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת הָאֶחָד בְּבֵית אֵל וְאֶת הָאֶחָד נָתַן בְּדָן:

The King Y’rov’om consulted and he made two golden calves and he said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; these are your gods, Israel, who took you up from the Land of Egypt¹³.’ He placed one golden calf in Beit El and one he placed for Shevet Dan.

Although, there are no verses telling us explicitly of Yitzchak’s service as part of the Chariot, we find a complete commonality between the two verses that tell us regarding the service of Avraham and Yaakov as the Chariot.

In Parshas Lech Lecha, the name of Avraham was changed and there we learn about his service as part of the Chariot.

In our Parshas Vayishlach, Yaakov’s name is changed – and here, too, we learn about his service as part of the Chariot.

¹³ We cannot escape the parallel between this event and the episode of *the Eigel HaZahav* as we read in Parshas Ki Siso (Sh’mos Perek 32/Posuk):

וַיִּקַּח מִיָּדָם וַיִּצַר אֹתוֹ בַּחֶרֶט וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ עֵגֶל מִסֹּכָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּה אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָעֲלוּךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

Aharon took the rings from their hands and he formed it with an engraving tool and he made it a molten calf; the people said, ‘This is your god, Israel, who took you up from the Land of Egypt.’

And as we see the name changes of Avraham and Yaakov and their placement as the Chariot of Hashem at that moment we are also able to see the different aspects that their names represent.

The change of name from Avram to Avraham indicates the new responsibilities that are placed upon him. His role has expanded to be responsible for the entire world. Thus HaKodosh Boruch Hu said to him when his name was changed (B'reishis Perek 17/Posuk 4):

אָנִי הִנֵּה בְרִיתִי אֵתְךָ וְהָיִיתָ לְאָב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם:

I Hashem, behold this is My covenant with you; you will be the father of many nations.

On the other hand, the implication of the name Yisroel was quite different. As we read earlier, the name had a very specific focus:

כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעִם אַנְשֵׁי וַתּוֹכַל

Because you have fought with G-d and with men and you were able.

Their names imply that Avraham Ovinu was focused on the nations of the world; Yaakov Ovinu was focused on G-d.

What is the meaning of those implications when we know that the focus of Avraham Ovinu was certainly on HaKodosh Boruch Hu. It was he who brought belief in G-d to the masses as Rashi writes in the beginning of Parshas Lech Lecha on the verse (B'reishis Perek 12/Posuk 5):

וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת לוֹט בֶּן אָחִיו וְאֶת כָּל רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ וְאֶת הַנַּפְשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ לְלֶכֶת אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן:

Avram took his wife Sarai and Lot, his brother's son and all of their property that they acquired and the souls that they made in Choron and they went out to go to the Land of Canaan and they came to the Land of Canaan.

Rashi writes:

אשר עשו בחרן - שהכניסן תחת כנפי השכינה, אברהם מגייר את האנשים, ושרה מגיירת הנשים, ומעלה עליהם הכתוב כאלו עשאו.

That they made in Choron – He brought the people under the wings of the Shechinah; Avraham converted the men and Sarah converted the women. The Torah regards them as they made those people.

The involved, technical and elaborate commentary of Meshech Chochmoh on a seemingly uninvolved, non-technical and simple verse in our Parsha will shed light on the implication of these two names.

The verse (B'reishis Perek 33/Posuk 18) reads:

וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן בְּבֵאוֹ מִפְּדַן אֲרָם וַיַּחַן אֶת פְּנֵי הָעִיר:

Yaakov came whole to the city of Shechem that was in the Land of Canaan, when he came from *Padan Aram*, and he encamped facing the city.

The Midrash B'reishis Rabba (Parshata 11) says that this verse implies the Shabbos observance of Yaakov Ovinu; on Shabbos he stayed facing the city but did not enter into it because of the prohibition of *techum Shabbos* not going more than 2000 *amos* from outside an inhabited area. The Midrash discusses the question as to why there is no specific mention of Shabbos by Avraham Ovinu, although he observed the entire Torah, and there is such a mention, or at least a hint of such, regarding Yaakov Ovinu. It is in that context that Meshech Chochmoh draws our attention to the different tasks that were before Avraham and Yaakov and we will relate those different tasks to their respective new names¹⁴.

We read:

...נפש המשכלת מבני נכר די לו בשבע מצוות. אולם נפש הישראלי, מקורו ממקום גבוה - חלק ה' ממעל - אם אין לו כל התורה בכללה ובפרטה, אז אינו בחיותו. כי עם ישראל המה מעון ומכון לאלקות בעולם השפל...ולכן אברהם חפש להפיץ שיטתו ודיעותיו באלקות לכל באי עולם, באשר חשב כי הוא יחיד...

For the intelligent soul among non-Jews, it is sufficient to learn and observe the seven Noachide commandments. But, for the Jewish soul, the source of

¹⁴ This is an intricate commentary with Halachic references that may be unfamiliar to many. We are not attempting to bring the entire commentary here. There are a number of additional wonderful ideas that are presented that enhance what we have written as well presenting thoughts that we do not mention here. The serious reader who would want to appreciate the entire passage would do well to learn it with the many notes that accompany this passage in Rav Copperman's ZT"L edition.

which is in a high place – part of G-d above – if it is without the entire Torah with its specifics – then the soul has no life. This is because the People Israel are the home and base of Divinity in this lowly world. Therefore Avraham sought to spread his ideas and knowledge regarding Divinity for all in the world because he thought that he was the only who possess these beliefs.

לא כן יעקב, ראה שמיטתו שלמה, ובזרעו די שיהיו מעון ומרכבה לשכינה, וכמו שהבטיחו, וראה שה' ניצב עליו, ראה להיפוך כי בניו יהיו נפרדים מעמים אחרים, מוגבלים בתחום... כן במצרים היו יושבים בארץ גושן נפרדים מהעמים. וכן לדורות באומה... וזה מליצתם שאברהם 'קיים עירובי תבשילין' - להכניס אורחים ולקבל גרים תחת כנפי השכינה, אבל לא 'קבע תחומים', שמא ימנע אחד מלבוא לשמוע דיעותיו. לא כן יעקב, 'קבע תחומים' להגביל ולתחום בין עם ישראל לעמים...

Yaakov was not the same. He saw that 'his bed was complete'¹⁵ and that his seed by itself would be sufficient to provide a home and be the Chariot for

¹⁵ Following the death of Rachel I'meinu, we read in our Parsha (Perek 35/Posuk 22):
וְיָהִי בְּשָׁכְנוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ הַהוּא וַיֵּלֶךְ רְאוּבֵן וַיִּשְׁכַּב אֶת בִּלְהָה פִּילְגֶשֶׁת אֲבִיו וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל (פ) וַיְהִי בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר:

It was when Yisroel dwelled in that land, Reuven went and lay with Bilhoh the concubine of his father and Yisroel heard
The sons of Yaakov were twelve.

Rashi writes:

וישכב - מתוך שבלבל משכבו מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו שכבה.
He lay – Reuven mixed the bed of his father [moving it from the tent of Bilhoh to the tent of Leah] and the Torah writes it as if he was intimate with her.

ויהיו בני יעקב שנים עשר - משנולד בנימין נשלמה המטה... ורבותינו דרשו ללמדנו בא שכולן שוין, וכולן צדיקים...:

The sons of Yaakov were twelve – With the birth of Binyamin the 'bed' of Yaakov was complete and our Rabbis interpreted this verse [conjoining Reuven's behavior and numbering all of the children of Yaakov together] to teach all were equal; all were righteous.

The letter פ that we wrote in parentheses indicates that that there is a break in this verse in the Torah. Although it is one Posuk, the words following the letter פ appear on the next line in the Torah

the Shechina – as Hashem promised him and as he saw then Hashem stood above him at the ladder¹⁶.

Yaakov saw the opposite of what Avraham saw. He saw that his sons should be separate from the other nations and bound by boundaries. That is the reason that in Egypt they lived in the Land of Goshen, separate from the other nations. And so for all of his generations of the Nation of Israel.

That is the meaning of the phrase that Chazal used that Avraham observed the Halachah of *Eiruv Tavshilin* – to bring in guests and to accept converts who would come under the wings of the Shechinah.

But Avraham did not fix *techumim* –boundaries so that he would not prevent anyone from coming to hear his ideas.

Yaakov was different. Yaakov set *techumim*-boundaries to limit and to make a boundary between the People of Israel and the nations of the world¹⁷.

¹⁶ See the commentary of Meshech Chochmo to the beginning of Parshas Vayetze where Hashem appears to Yaakov Ovinu ‘standing above him’ from the top of the ladder.

¹⁷ At first glance, one might surmise that there is a conflict between what Meshech Chochmoh writes here and his commentary to Posuk 1 in Perek 35. He writes there:

ועשה שם מזבח וכו' ויבן שם מזבח וכו' כי שם נגלו אליו האלקים (פסוק ז). הענין, דמדתו של יעקב אחוזה בתרין דרועין - חסד ודין, והוא המתקת הדין הנקרא רחמים.

Make there an altar, he build there an altar, because there G-d appeared to him – the subject of this is that the central attribute of Yaakov was bound by two limbs – *chesed*-kindness and *din*-strict justice [which were the central attributes of Avraham Ovinu and Yitzchak Ovinu, respectively].

Yaakov was the combination of both and that is ‘sweetening strict justice’ and refers to the attribute of mercy.

In our passage, Meshech Chochmoh does not mean to say that Yaakov Ovinu was not kind or merciful, contrasting him with Avraham Ovinu.

What we learn from our passage in Meshech Chochmoh is that recipients of the kindness and mercy of Yaakov Ovinu were members of Am Yisroel whereas the recipients of kindness and mercy of Avraham Ovinu were the entire world.

We can now proceed to have a new understanding of the name Yisroel.

We are accustomed to understand that the verse that explains the name of Yisroel that was given to Yaakov refers to the fact that Yaakov Ovinu overcame the angel of Eisav. However, we can also understand that the words שרית עם א...ל'קים ותוכל could be translated as:

You were a high officer with G-d – and you were able and successful.

That is, Yaakov Ovinu, as his name was changed to Yisroel, became part of the Chariot and he, as it were, partnered with G-d. The task was formidable but ותוכל, he was successful.

What was that success?

The Chariot was to proclaim G-d's Presence in this world. That is what Malbim means when he writes (B'reishis Perek 17/Posuk 7):

הוא להיות לך לא...ל'קים, שתחול עליך הא...לקות שתהיה מרכבה לשכינה ושימשך
הדבוק ביני ובינך עד שאקרא א...ל'קי אברהם,

Hashem will be your G-d, [Avraham]. His divinity will come upon you when you will be the Chariot for the Shechinah. Your task to take and expand the connection between Me and you until I Hashem will be called 'The G-d of Avraham'.

Not only are we to be called G-d's children. He Yisborach is to be called Avraham's G-d. By virtue of the greatness of Avraham, people will begin to fathom the greatness of G-d.

However, we are now forced to face a unique challenge.

The name of Avraham belonged to our first Patriarch. His name is not our name. He was Avraham. We are his children, but we are not him.

On the other hand, we are not merely *B'nei* Yisroel. We are all *Yisroelim*. The name Yisroel is part of our identity.

If so, we, too are to meet the challenge of

כי שרית עם א...ל'קים ועם אנשים ותוכל

Because you have served as an officer together with G-d and *with men* and you were able and successful.

We are to be the Chariot of G-d when He chooses to reveal His Presence and we, as אנשים with its connotation of importance and significance, are to present it to mankind. We must partner with others to be the Chariot of the Ribbono Shel Olom in this world.

Can we meet that challenge?

Malbim says that we can. He interprets the following verse in Sefer Tehillim as a proof of that ability. We read there (Perek 24/Posuk 6):

זֶה דּוֹר דֹּרְשׁוֹ מִבְּקֶשֶׁי פְּנֵיהֶ יַעֲקֹב סְלָה:

This is a generation of those who seek Him; they seek Your Face, [it is] Yaakov [who is seeking Your Face] forever.

We are Yaakov/Yisroel. We are seeking His Face!

Malbim writes:

היה ה' נצב עליו ולא היו רק יחידים שהיו מרכבה לשכינה,

When Hashem stood over Yaakov [on the ladder], it was not only for the individuals who would serve as the Chariot for the Shechinah.

It was not only the Ovos. The potential for all of us to be part of a chariot exists.

Netziv writes in Parshas Ki Setze (D'vorim Perek 25/Posuk 9¹⁸)

להיות תמיד מרכבה לשכינה ואין כל אדם בישראל מצוה להיות בזה האופן, אבל מכל מקום אם בא ליד האדם מישראל עסק מצוה לשעה שאי אפשר לעשותה אם לא

¹⁸ The subject there is *Yevomoh* – the married woman whose husband has died and has no living descendants. That woman, the *Yevomoh*, can marry a brother of her deceased husband or can refuse such a marriage.

The act of refusal and the process that follows is called חליצה which refers to separation and in the Halachic context of Yibum it refers directly to the removal of the shoe from one of the brothers of the deceased.

In this passage, from which a short excerpt is taken, Netziv applies Kabbalistic concepts to the Mitzvos involved.

בהפשטות טבע העולם והוא המנעל מעל רגלו, הרי זה מצוה וחובה לעשות כך
באותה שעה, ויהא המצוה דוחה טבע גופו...

There is a concept that there should always be a Chariot for the Shechinah. But not every person of 'Israel' is commanded to be so always. But, nonetheless, when a person of 'Israel' has the opportunity to do a Mitzvah at a particular time, and then it is impossible for him to do it unless he removes from himself the natural order of the world. And that is symbolized by the removal of the shoe from his foot.

When such an opportunity comes it is a commandment and an obligation to do so at that time. The Mitzvah can override the 'nature' of his being.

The Ovos were the perennial Chariot of the Shechinah.

When possible, from the standpoint of the Shechinah, the Ovos were always the Chariot. They were always capable of overriding their 'nature' of their being.

We who have taken the name of Israel for ourselves are obligated to continue the role of our Patriarchs. It is not expected that all of us be the Chariot all of the time; it is expected, though, that there are unique individuals who can.

For the rest of us, we must be aware that when the opportunity arises we are to remove the shackles of our 'nature' that limit us and rise above them and harness ourselves to that Chariot for the times when we are capable.

The task is great; it may seem *meta*-human, beyond our capabilities.

Let us remember the word of the angel to Yaakov Ovinu:

ותוכל

You are able!

We are Yaakov; we are Yisroel. We are capable.

If we convince ourselves of our potential and our ability, then not only will we not pass up those opportunities with which we are presented, but rather, we will take the initiative to seek those opportunities that will allow us to fulfil our mission as B'nei Yisroel and promote the Presence of the Shechinah with us, with Klal Yisroel and the world as a whole.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock