

Parshas Vayeitzei

Rabbi Avi Metchik

In this week's parsha we find the story of Yaakov Avinu following the instructions of his mother Rivkah, and journeying to look for a suitable wife. The Torah relates that as he came to the land which was the ancestral home of his grandfather Avraham, Yaakov encountered a well. There were three flocks of sheep waiting beside the well, and Yaakov saw that the well was covered with an extremely large stone. He learned from conversing with the shepherds, that every day the shepherds and their flocks would need to wait until all the shepherds had arrived and only then would they have enough manpower to roll the heavy stone off of the well. The Torah then relates that Rochel arrived with the sheep of her father Lavan. When Yaakov saw Rochel, he came forward and rolled the stone off the well by himself, and then proceeded to water the sheep of Lavan.

Rashi on the above incident comments that Yaakov removed the stone with great strength. However, in Tefillas Geshem which we recite on Shemini Atzeres morning, we refer to this incident with an interesting phraseology. We say *Yichad lev viga'al even*, Yaakov concentrated his heart and rolled off the stone, and we ask Hashem to send us rain in the upcoming year in this merit. What do we mean when we say that Yaakov "concentrated his heart" and therefore was able to roll off the stone? Rashi seems to imply that Yaakov was able to accomplish this task with his brute strength, what is the connection to "concentrating his heart"?

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l, the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, explains that the message of Rashi and the recounting

of the story in Tefillas Geshem are complimentary. He says that we find many times that when people are faced with tremendous tests they suddenly are able to perform physical feats they never dreamed possible. We have all heard stories of human beings who were able to lift cars in order to enable someone trapped underneath to crawl out.

When Yaakov saw Rochel he immediately began to envision the future generations of Klal Yisroel that they together would bring to fruition. He saw in his mind the twelve tribes they would create and he was not about

will send him strength, as if through a pipe, to accomplish what his ratzon says he needs to to achieve.

It is well know that the bechina, the entrance exam, to be accepted into Yeshivas Sha'ar Yeshuv consisted of only one question. Rabbi Freifeld would ask each prospective student "Do you want to learn?" If the answer was yes the boy would be accepted immediately. All that mattered was the ratzon, the level of desire that the boy had. This alone would determine his success in the yeshiva, not his background or present capabilities.

*“Nothing can stand in
the way of true ratzon.”*

to let anything get in the way of that goal, certainly not a measly large stone. Rabbi Shmuelevitz explains that indeed Yaakov rolled the stone off with great strength, but that strength came from "concentrating his heart". The strength of Yaakov was derived from his tremendous ratzon, his incredible desire to accomplish his vision. When we have a true desire to accomplish then things we never dreamed possible can be achieved. A person can uncover hidden treasure troves of talents and capabilities they never knew existed; nothing can stand in the way of true ratzon. The only question is if we truly desire it.

Rabbi Shlomo Freifeld zt"l, the legendary founder of Yeshivas Sha'ar Yeshuv in Far Rockaway, was fond of saying that the same letters that make up the word ratzon also make up the word tzinor, which means pipe. He explained that when a person has a true ratzon to accomplish something, then Hashem

Rabbi Freifeld once accepted a student with this one question bechina. The boy started to protest and said he is just a beginner and really does not know how to learn yet at all, how could he come to the yeshiva? Rabbi Freifeld replied to the boy "That's perfect! If you know how to learn already you can go to a different yeshiva, here our only requirement is ratzon, a true desire to grow".

On another occasion, Rabbi Freifeld posed the question to a different boy on the bechina. The boy answered that truthfully, at the present time he cannot say that he wants to learn. However, he continued "But I want to want to learn!" Rabbi Freifeld loved the answer and warmly accepted the boy into the yeshiva. Success or failure is solely dependent on the level of desire that a person has to succeed. Good Shabbos!

