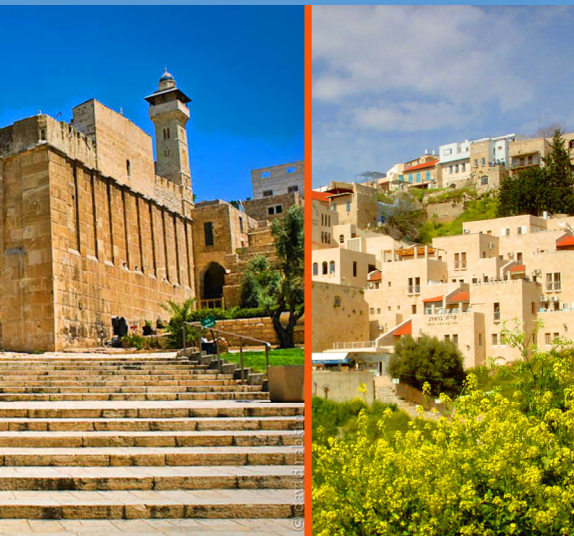


A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



“CHEVRON VS TSFAS”

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week’s Torah portion discusses how Yaakov bought property outside of the city of Shechem. Living in the land of Israel is a fulfillment of the mitzva of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael. According to Rav Moshe Feinstein settling and living in the land of Israel is called a mitzva kiyumis. This means that if one does it, it is a great mitzva and he or she gets great spiritual reward and blessing. But one is not obligated to do it, and it is not a sin if one does not.

The Avnei Nezer in Yorah Deah 454 (at the end) writes that “even to those who live in the diaspora, it is a great mitzva to purchase a portion of land in Eretz Yisrael, especially if this will



RELATIONSHIPS ARE FUELED BY COMMUNICATION

In this week’s Parsha, Vayishlach, we find our father Yaakov returning to the Land of Israel with his family. Along the way he becomes aware that his brother Eisov is coming to “greet” him with 400 warriors. Yaakov understands that his brother has not forgotten what he had done and is planning on killing Yaakov and his family. Yaakov beseeches HaShem for protection. *“And Yaakov said ‘O God of my father Avraham, God of my father YitzchokI have already become too small from all the kindness which You have rendered Your servant Deliver me, I pray to You, from the hand of my brother for I fear him ... And You have said ‘exceedingly good I will do to you’”* There are three parts to Yaakov’s prayer;

1. I have received so much kindness from You much more than I deserve
2. Please save me from Eisov
3. You promised me that You would do with me exceeding goodness

There are two questions that strike me. The first is why must Yaakov pray at all if HaShem promised him to do exceeding goodness which evidently implies that he will be protected from Eisov? My second question is if he must pray and seek HaShem’s protection, why does he begin with his first statement that he has already received more than he deserves? It seems counterintuitive when asking a favor to preface your request by stating that you have already received more than you deserve.

To answer the first question we must appreciate the function of prayer. Why does HaShem require us to pray? Does He not know what our needs are? Is He not interested in caring for us? If He is not, what good will it do if we pray?

The function of prayer is not for HaShem’s purpose. He knows our needs and He plans to provide us those needs. However, HaShem designed this world in a

provide a livelihood for them. Even if they live in the diaspora it will be considered a bit as if they are living in Eretz Yisrael". Rav Tzvi Berkowitz explains that the Avnei Nezer means that it is a mitzvah if it will help the land be settled by Jews.

This leads us to the following dilemma. Chaim and Rachel lived in America and they wanted to purchase real estate in Eretz Yisrael in order to fulfill this mitzvah discussed by the Avnei Nezer. They did not plan to live there immediately but hoped one day to settle in Eretz Yisrael when it made sense. In the meantime, the land would be rented by Jews. They narrowed down their choices to two options. One option was to buy land in the holy city of Tsfas. The other option was to buy land in Chevron, not far from the Mearas Hamachpela. Tsfas is a city that is filled entirely with Jews, but, being a relatively "modern" city it does not have any significance in the times of Tanach. Chevron on the other hand, is primarily populated by non-Jews, and would be difficult to ever live there. However Chevron, the city of the Mearas Hamachpela, is one of the holiest cities in the world.

Chaim and Rachel wondered where it would be preferable to purchase land. Would it be better to purchase land in a city filled with Jews? Or would it be better to purchase land in a very holy city filled with gentiles?

What do you think?

See Chashukei Chemed Baba Basra page 279

The answer will be posted next week on Achim.org



*“Go forth... to the land that I will show you.” (B'reishis 12:1)
The commandment to settle the Land of Israel is a great one – so much so that it is the first commandment ever decreed upon a Jew.*

**Rabbi Meir Yechiel
of Ostrovtsa**

way that without our turning to Him in prayer He will not provide it. In other words, even though He intends to support us He waits for prayer to provide that support. (By the way, it need not be the prayer of the one who has the need. Somebody else can pray and that works as well.) The reason He designed it so is because He wants us to develop a relationship with Him. Were He to provide our needs without our asking for them we would come to think that our needs are provided naturally and there would be no avenue along which to build a relationship. Relationships are built upon the appreciation one has for the other. When we are needy our heart becomes open and soft with a touch of vulnerability. As we turn to HaShem in prayer in that delicate state we fill ourselves with a deep relationship with HaShem. Our emotions are primed to connect to HaShem in a way that would otherwise not be possible.

A dear friend of mine told me how through his sickness he became closer to HaShem. The reason was that his sickness opened his heart and with that open heart he turned to HaShem.

That mix brought him closer. This is the function of prayer. And this why HaShem designed His world that we must pray to Him before receiving His blessings.

So, while it is true that Yaakov was promised by HaShem to be protected, he nevertheless had to request that protection in order to turn to HaShem when his heart was vulnerable and open it to Him, thereby deepening his relationship with HaShem.

Let us now attempt to address my second question.

The reason one should not preface a request by stating their undeservingness is because they are hurting their chances of obtaining their request. Nobody wants to fill the request of a person who is undeserving. However, Yaakov knew that HaShem will fill his request for protection because it was promised to him. His protection will come by virtue of the promise that HaShem gave him. The only reason for praying is to open up his vulnerability to HaShem thereby deepening his relationship with HaShem. If that is the case, Yaakov's being undeserving will create an even deeper relationship with HaShem.

How fortunate we are to be the people with whom HaShem wishes to have a relationship! Let us take advantage of that position.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

Let's examine two Pacific coast water birds. The Ousel, is a very friendly little bird that lives near mountain streams. It can usually be found where the water is swift-flowing and splashy. This buoyant bird will be floating along, apparently weightless, and then suddenly sink to the bottom like a piece of lead. There he walks around picking up bits of food on the streambed. After taking his fill, he goes over to the bank, shakes himself, and mysteriously sets himself afloat again like a wisp of smoke.

It has been discovered that this strange bird has some special equipment—a muscular apparatus that can instantly exhaust every bit of air from its body, letting it sink down; then when it walks out, it can take in air again and float off once more. Hashem provided this particular bird as He did because He saw that it needed this for survival.

Another kind of bird found on the Pacific coast called a Long-billed Curlew, lives on a diet of large worms that live in holes in the sand. Because this worm is down at the very bottom of its hole, the bird must go down to get the worm out. It so happens that, although its beak is exactly the right length to reach into the hole, the narrow hole keeps the beak squeezed shut. What a predicament—to be able to see and reach a luscious worm but not be able to

SPECIAL BIRD TOOLS

open his beak to pick it up! Do you know what Hashem arranged for this particular bird? He created a tiny flap much like a surgeon's forceps at the bottom of the beak. The end of the beak has separate muscles to control it, and acts like a finger. With this special organ the bird can pick up the worm, back out of the hole, and gobble it down!

Isn't it wonderful that Hashem thought of a little bird and made something special so it could get its food conveniently? Just as He loves the little birds and provides the things to make their existence comfortable, so is He willing to provide everything that we might need.

Love the wonders in nature? Join us on December 26th at Etz Chaim for an amazing animal show appreciating the miracles in nature. More info at achim.org

THIS BIRD HAS A MUSCULAR APPARATUS THAT CAN INSTANTLY EXHAUST EVERY BIT OF AIR FROM ITS BODY, LETTING IT SINK DOWN. IT CAN THEN TAKE IN AIR AGAIN AND FLOAT OFF ONCE MORE.

HOLY STONES, HOLIER PEOPLE

A noted leader in the Zionist movement once came to see Reb Aryeh Levine. When the visit was over, Rav Arye went to accompany the man a short distance on his way (as his custom was). As they left the house together, there were religious children of the neighborhood playing near the threshold, engrossed in their games. Reb Aryeh stooped down and patted their faces with fatherly (or grandfatherly) affection and he gently murmured within earshot of his guest, “If it is a mitzvah to have a compassionate love for the stones and earth of the land of Israel—as the verse says, “Thy servants hold her stones dear and compassionately treasure her dust” (Psalms 102, 15)—how much more do we have to love the children of the land!” (A Tzadik in Our Times)

IF IT IS A MITZVAH TO HAVE A COMPASSIONATE LOVE FOR THE STONES OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL, HOW MUCH MORE DO WE HAVE TO LOVE THE CHILDREN OF THE LAND!



The Jewish people need connection; both a connection to Hashem as well as to each other, now more than ever. Achim is building a community-wide learning network for all members of our Jewish community in order to deepen their relationship with Hashem and deepen their relationship with each other.

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