

Parashas  
Vayeishev

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כ"ג כסלו תשפ"ו

5786

י"ל ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הר"צ

רבי גמליאל הכהן

רבינוביץ שליט"א

# טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

## טיב הפרשה

לפרט היטב את בקשתו בתפילתו

*Be very specific when requesting in one's  
Tefillah*

וַיִּמְצְאוּ אִישׁ וְהִנֵּה תַעֲהַ בְּשָׂדֶה וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מֶה  
תְּבַקֵּשׁ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת אַחִי אֲנֹכִי מִבְּקֵשׁ הַגִּידָה נָא לִי אֵיפֹה הֵם רְעִים: (לז,  
טו טז)

**A man found him and behold! – he was blundering in the field, the man asked him saying, "What are you looking for?" And he said, "My brothers do I seek, tell me please, where they are pasturing." (37:15-16)**

Rashi explains: A man found him – this is Gavriel (Tanchuma Vayeishev 2a), as it says (Daniel 9:21), 'וְהָאִישׁ גְּבִרְיָאֵל', – 'and the man, Gavriel'.

Behold, the word "**leimor**" applies when someone says something to another person and instructs him to say this matter to others, similar to all the commands that Hashem commanded Moshe, where it says "leimor," and its meaning is that he should say this command to Israel. But in the *posuk* before us the word "leimor" is not understood, because the man did not tell him anything to convey to others. And if the man's intent was that Yosef should answer him regarding what he already knew, meaning what he was seeking in Shechem, it would have been sufficient that he said to him, "What do you seek?", so why was there a need to add "leimor"?

And it is possible to say that after Yosef wandered in the field, he requested from Hashem that He provide him the correct path, but he did not articulate his intention well, that his intention was the path upon which his brothers had gone. Therefore, it was arranged from Heaven that the angel Gavriel appeared before him, in order to teach him that prayer requires articulation of the lips, and he must explain his speech properly, and he must not skip any detail of the reasoning of his heart. Because if he does not articulate his speech properly, and only requests the correct path, his request can be interpreted in several ways, and even if he is worthy of having his prayer answered, he will not be answered as is fitting. Instead of being directed to the correct path to his brothers, he could be shown the correct path to his father's house. And this is what is meant by his saying "leimor," that he instructed him how to speak before Hashem and how to request from Him.

And according to this one can say that the *posuk* that follows was not a response to the angel Gavriel, but rather that he fulfilled Gavriel's instruction and articulated his words clearly before Hashem, and said to Him, "It is my brothers whom I seek," and therefore, "Tell me please where they are pasturing." And then it was Gavriel himself who became the agent whom Hashem Yisbarach arranged to inform him that they went to Dosan, and to show him the way there.

## טיב המערכות

שהחיינו והגיענו לזמן הזה

*Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to  
this season*

It is told about HaRav HaKadosh of Bluzhov זצוק"ל that after he passed through the terrible Holocaust he lived in the United States, and there he would draw our Jewish brothers close to their Father in Heaven. One of his acquaintances was a man who also passed through the terrors of the Holocaust, and to the sorrow of every heart he left the path of the Torah and distanced himself from it. But from time to time he would come to the Bluzhover, mainly at special times. And behold, one year during the days of Chanukah that man appeared and came, and in his hand was a special gift for the Rebbe: a royal and magnificent menorah for Chanukah, made entirely of pure gold and adorned with many carvings, astonishing in its beauty. The menorah had belonged to HaRav HaKadosh of Ruzhin זי"ע; his ancestors had bought it for a vast sum of money, and now he came to the decision that it was not fitting that such a holy and special menorah should be in the house of a wicked man like himself, and therefore he was giving it as a gift to the Rebbe.

The Bluzhover was very moved by the special gift and gazed at it for a long time, and suddenly the Rebbe turned to that man with a question: "Tell me please, what was your feeling toward this menorah when it was in your house?" The man answered the Rebbe: I will admit the truth, that every time I would see it in the center of the display case, I would be ashamed of my deeds, and I would stand near it and cry greatly over my evil path that had distanced so much from those righteous ones who used this menorah. "If so," said the Rebbe, "I cannot accept this gift from you. Leave the menorah in your home so that at least some spark of Judaism will remain within you." With no choice, the man returned the menorah to his home, and indeed after some time he began to return to his origin, and in later days the man thanked the Rebbe for not agreeing to accept the menorah from him, and in its merit he returned in complete repentance.

We stand at the threshold of the days of Chanukah, about which the righteous have said that the spiritual influences that one can receive during the days of Chanukah cannot be attained throughout the entire year, particularly at the time of lighting the candles and contemplating the candles. Therefore, it is fitting that we be wise to make good use of the holy time and to prepare in advance the place where the menorah will stand, and of course to approach the lighting with awe and love. And after the lighting, not to flee immediately like a child running away from school, but rather to linger near the candles and contemplate them, we and our children, and to grasp every drop of light that enters and illuminates the soul.

Tiv HaMoadim - Chanukah

This matter is indeed a great principle in the service of prayer, that a person must specify his request in all its details and particulars. And although we believe that HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows the desires of our heart and knows well what we intend with our words, nevertheless it is upon us to articulate our speech very clearly, because sometimes it is impossible to reject a person's prayer and it must be attended to, but since he has prosecutors against him, they attempt at the very least to distort his intention. As a result, he does not receive what his heart desires. But if he articulates his speech beautifully, then there will no longer be an opening for the accusers to twist and distort his intention.

We see something similar in the Zohar HaKodesh (Vol. I, 169a) in the previous parashah, where it derives from the prayer of Yaakov for salvation from Eisav, that a person must expand his speech in his prayer in a manner that leaves no room for error in his intention. Therefore, Yaakov said (above, 32:12), **‘הצילני נא מיד אחי מיד עשו’** - **“Rescue me please from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav,”** because if he had sufficed with saying “from the hand of my brother,” his intention could have been interpreted regarding other relatives who are also called brothers. Therefore, he extended his words and said “from the hand of Esav,” so that it would be understood that his intention was toward Esav and not toward another brother. These matters are also explained in the Midrash (Esther Rabbah 7:24), and these are its words: “A parable of a man who was walking on the road, and from the hardship of the journey his ankle was sprained. He said: If only I had a donkey. Immediately after he completed his prayer, a Roman passed by whose donkey had just given birth to a colt, and he commanded the wanderer to carry the colt on his shoulder. The wanderer said: My prayer was answered, for I requested a donkey and they gave me one, but I did not pray properly, for I did not articulate

whether I desired a donkey to ride upon, or a donkey which they would place upon my shoulder.”

See also the words of the Maharsha (Bava Basra 25b), and these are his words: “One can explain this in the manner I heard with a jesting tone regarding the verse (Koheles 5:9), **‘אוהב כסף לא ישבע כסף’** - ‘One who loves money will not be satisfied with money,’ that there was a man who loved money exceedingly and requested from the Almighty that whatever he would touch with his hand would become money, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu fulfilled his request. And behold, when he came to eat bread, his hand touched it and it became money, and he had nothing to eat. And this is the meaning of ‘he will not be satisfied with money.’” End of quote. From all of this we learn that prayer depends solely upon articulation of the lips.

We find something similar also with Moshe Rabeinu, when the wicked Pharaoh requested from him to pray to Hashem to remove the plague of frogs from him. Moshe said to him (Shemos 8:5), **למתי** - **“For when shall I pray for you and for your servants and for your people?”** With this Moshe taught

us that the one who prays and requests from Hashem Yisbarach must specify his request clearly. Therefore a general prayer to remove the frogs from Egypt as a whole would not suffice, because then it could be interpreted that his intention concerned only the important people, since they are primary, or that his intention was only the removal of the frogs from the public places of the land which are used by all, but that the frogs in the houses would remain. Only when he expands his speech and specifies all categories of people in Egypt will he merit that his prayer rise favorably and all will indeed be saved from their distress. And for this reason Moshe added and emphasized, **רק ביאור**, ‘Only in the river shall they remain,’ to inform Pharaoh that concerning what he specifies and details in his prayer, he will merit to be answered, and concerning what he does not specify, he will not merit to be answered.

Besides the reason we stated, that the need to specify prayers is in order that the matters be clear and that the prosecutors not have a means to interpret his prayer differently, there is an additional reason for which prayers must be explicit: that prayer must be said from the depth of the heart, because thereby a person is considered like a pauper at the doorway, arousing mercy. As Chazal said (Berachos 28b): “One who makes his prayer fixed, his prayer is not supplication,” meaning that such a prayer is not desirable before the Omnipresent because it is not supplication. And in order that he indeed merit this, it is fitting that he specify his request clearly, because thereby the one who prays places the weight of the trouble before his eyes, and his mercy is aroused upon the one for whom he is praying, and thus his prayer is said from the depth of the heart. Such a prayer makes a great impression.

May Hashem Yisbarach be our help, that our prayer should be mercy and supplication before the Omnipresent Baruch Hu, and that we merit to be saved through it in every good matter.

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‘מס הכנסת כלה’  
The Hachnasas Kallah  
‘Fund

The last thing one can call me is “lazy.” I arrive at shiurim and at davening on time, and also to the work that HaKadosh Baruch Hu arranges for me, whether it is difficult or easy, I do it with great diligence.

Baruch Hashem I have enough for my livelihood, but not enough to marry off children. Every wedding has its own miracles. I came to repair a lock in someone’s door. The lock had a complicated magnetic mechanism. I told him that I did not manage to repair it, and that was after two hours of failed attempts. He wanted to pay me for my time, but I refused to take payment. He knew that I needed to marry off children and he said: “Just now I have a very large deal that is supposed to be closed soon. If the deal closes, I will give you hachnasas kallah, one fifth!!!”

A few days later he invited me for a cup of coffee and gave me a dreamlike sum, one fifth of the deal. This is not someone who knows me very much, simply HaKadosh Baruch Hu placed it in his heart to give me. On the day of the wedding, I was missing fifteen thousand shekels to pay that day for the orchestra and the hall... I did something I had never done and I violated the one rule I had accepted upon myself without a vow, not to take loans, and especially not loans without calculation, when I do not know at that time from where I will repay the money. I stood in a gemach and requested a loan based on income that I was supposed to receive. But the owner of the gemach explained to me that I must bring people with pay stubs who would serve as guarantors for the loan, and also that it takes time to approve such a loan and not from one moment to the next... I said thank you and went on my way. HaKadosh Baruch Hu arranged for me a friend who lent me the money with a happy heart, but in my heart I felt bad about the loan. On the way to the wedding the accountant called me and told me that I am owed an income tax refund. The sum was unbelievable: fifteen thousand nine hundred and sixty!!! Hashem did everything so that I would dance with joy and with goodness of heart!!!

ל.א.צ.

In the Paths of Our Forefathers

וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו בארץ כנען (ל, א)

*Yaakov dwelt in the land of his father’s sojourning, in the land of Canaan (Bereishis 37:1).*

**What is the Torah teaching us here? Is it not a well-established principle in our holy Torah that “the deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children”? The Ramban z”l has already established at the beginning of Parashas Lech Lecha (12:6) that the reason the Torah relates in detail all the events and episodes of our holy forefathers is not, *chas vechalilah*, to tell mere stories, but to serve as a sign and a lesson for their descendants — to teach them proper traits and paths of life. As the Zohar writes (3:149a): “May the spirit of those be blasted who say that the Torah is but a collection of stories.” Accordingly, we must understand what the Torah means to teach by telling us that Yaakov dwelt in the land of his father’s sojourning.**

The main lesson derived from *Yaakov dwelt* is as follows: Where did he find good and peaceful dwelling? — *in the land of his father’s sojourning*. When he lived in the land of his father, he kept to the ways and paths of his forefathers. Not so, however, in the twenty-two years he spent in the house of Lavan, for then it was not said of him, *he dwelt*, since his stay there was neither restful nor settled. As Yaakov himself said at the beginning of *Parashas Vayishlach* (32:5), *עם לָבָן גֵּרְתִּי* - *I sojourned with Lavan*, employing the language of sojourning, as the tribes later said to Pharaoh when they left their land and descended to Mitzrayim, *לָגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם* - *we have come to sojourn in the land* (Bereishis 47:4) — emphasizing that they were only temporary residents there.

All this teaches that the true and fixed place of a Jew’s residence is only in the heritage of his forefathers, following in their ways and emulating their deeds. Therefore, only when Yaakov returned to his father’s house does the Torah use the expression, *and he dwelt*, meaning a settled and permanent residence — for there was his true place and inheritance, in the attachment to the house of his fathers.

Hence, the Torah precisely uses the expression, *and he dwelt* — a term of settlement and composure — to teach that a person finds no true rest in this world except when he follows the path of his ancestral tradition. Then it may be said of him, *and he dwelt* — that he sits firmly in his place, for that is his rightful station, the root of his soul and its true abode.

The holy Arizal wrote (*Shaar haKavanos, Derushei Aleinu Leshabe’ach, derush 1; Pri Etz Chaim*, introduction to *Shaar HaTefillah*) that one should not deviate from the *nusach* (traditional prayer liturgy) of his forefathers, for there are twelve gates in Heaven corresponding to the twelve tribes, and each tribe has its special gate through which its prayers ascend by way of its particular *nusach*. If one changes from the *nusach* of his fathers, he confuses the gate and enters through a portal that does not belong to him — for there is not his place.

(See further *Shu”t Chasam Sofer, Orach Chaim 15b*, and *Shu”t Divrei Chaim, 2:8* — all their words burn like coals of fire.)

A wondrous story was told by one of the great *rabbanim* — a tale that teaches how a person must always cleave to the ways of his forefathers, and how powerful is the influence of the fathers upon their descendants and their descendants’ descendants, even after many generations, when they continue to walk in their ways and emulate their deeds.

Once, while sitting in the *beis hora’ah*, related the rav, there entered a trustworthy Jew with a most difficult and intricate halachic question.

After presenting his serious query, he made an unusual request: “I beg of the rav,” said the man, “to rule decisively and clearly according to the strict truth of the law — without seeking or finding any leniencies or dispensations at all — for I am a descendant of the *gaon* Rav Akiva Eiger zt”l!”

The reason he gave for his request seemed somewhat strange, and I asked him: “What connection does your illustrious lineage to the *gaon* Rav Akiva Eiger have to your halachic question?”

The man explained: “I have read in the chronicles, and it is a tradition in my family, that my ancestor, the *gaon* Rav Akiva Eiger zt”l, would weep copiously during his prayers in *Birchos HaTorah* when he said ‘And may we and our offspring and the offspring of our offspring — all of us — know Your Name and study Your Torah...’ At that time, he would pour out his heart in supplication, entreating Hashem that his descendants should walk in upright and good paths, be scholars and God-fearing men.

Therefore,” the man concluded, “I must be most careful to fulfill the *tefillah* and request of that holy ancestor, that I not, *chas veshalom*, stumble in any matter of sin. Thus, I ask that you not be lenient in my case nor search for any dispensation.”

In one of his public sermons before a large congregation, the rav recounted this wondrous story — which had occurred to him personally — and concluded with the moral lesson to be drawn from it:

We see how far reaches the attachment of a Jew to the ways of his forefathers — that even after many generations the descendants remain bound to their ancestors. And how powerful is the prayer and entreaty of a saintly tzaddik, so lofty that the upper and lower worlds tremble before him, whose prayer continues to act and bear fruit for many years thereafter, upon his descendants after him — that they should remain upright, God-fearing, and pure from every trace or shadow of sin.

Among the audience who heard that stirring and fiery sermon sat a Jewish man whose young son struggled greatly in his Torah learning. The devoted parents had tried every possible method to help and support him, spending large sums of money, yet all to no avail.

Now, hearing this remarkable story, the father resolved to try this very approach himself. “True,” he thought, “I am not Rav Akiva Eiger — not by any means — yet Hakadosh Baruch Hu hears and accepts the prayer of every Jew, especially when he pleads with tears on behalf of his children and descendants, that they should walk in the ways of their fathers and succeed in their Torah.”

From thought to deed — from that day onward, the father stood each morning for a long while during *Birchos HaTorah*, weeping and supplicating before his Creator, pouring forth many tears that Hashem open his son’s heart to succeed in Torah and set him upon the royal road. And indeed, an astonishing wonder occurred: within a short time — inexplicably and with no natural explanation — the boy’s heart and mind opened to understand his Torah learning. He began to study with great diligence and enthusiasm; the light of Torah began to shine within him; he experienced the sweetness and delight of Torah; and before long, he became one of the outstanding scholars of the holy yeshivah.

It was a marvel to behold!

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Let me now recount before you an extraordinary story, from which we may learn how even the observance of a small ancestral custom — performed unintentionally — once saved the soul of a Jewish man from descending into the pit of destruction, and through the merit of that attachment to the ways of his

forefathers, he merited to return to his source in complete *teshuvah*.

It once happened that our master, the holy *gaon*, the Minchas Elazar of Munkatch *zt”l*, embarked on a long journey by train. Not far from him, in the same carriage, sat a man with his head uncovered, appearing in every way like a non-Jew. During the ride, the man took out from his bag his meal and spread it out on the small table before him. He laid upon a napkin a slice of bread, then drew from his bag a piece of sausage — of forbidden, impure meat, Heaven have mercy — and again took another slice of bread, placing it atop the sausage to “close” the sandwich properly.

When it was all prepared, he began cutting the sandwich into small pieces, preparing to partake of his sumptuous meal. Suddenly, the holy Rebbe of Munkatch was seized with a spirit of holy zeal. Watching the man’s actions from nearby, he turned to him and exclaimed: “*Teiere Yid!* — Precious Jew! It is forbidden for you to eat this! How can you dare so brazenly to transgress such a grave prohibition of the Torah?”

The man, however, ignored him, and with a smirk replied, “Why does the rabbi think that I am a Jew?” He then prepared to continue eating.

But the holy Rebbe, whose heart burned with a fiery zeal for Heaven, continued to protest, warning the man repeatedly of the severity of his sin. He even explained why he repeated his rebuke again and again, though it seemed to have no effect — for we are commanded in our holy Torah (*Bava Metzia* 31a) concerning the *pasuk*, הוֹכַח תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת עַמִּיטָךְ - *You shall surely rebuke your fellow* (*Vayikra* 19:17) — “even one hundred times!”

The Rebbe would not rest nor remain silent, and continued to admonish the man from the depths of his heart: “Remember that you are a holy Jew! Be aware that *Chazal* taught (*Sanhedrin* 44a), ‘A Jew, even though he has sinned, remains a Jew.’ And has not the wisest of all men already warned us in *Kohes* (11:9), וְדַע כִּי עַל כָּל אֵלֶּה יִבְיָאךָ בְּמִשְׁפָּט - *But know that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment.*”

The Rebbe’s words, spoken with such deep emotion and evident concern for the man’s soul, penetrated the hardened heart of that distant Jew. Suddenly, his heart broke within him; in a storm of feeling, he threw his entire meal into the trash and burst into bitter tears. He rose trembling from his seat, approached the holy Rebbe, and asked in astonishment, “How did you know that I am a Jew? For it is already many long years since I have drifted far from my people and faith, and none of my friends or acquaintances even knew that I am a Jew at all!”

The Rebbe of Munkatch embraced him

lovingly, kissed his head, and explained gently, “As I watched how you prepared your meal, I noticed that you did not bite directly from the loaf, nor did you hold the whole sandwich in your hands to bring it to your mouth. Instead, you cut small pieces from it with a knife. From this I discerned that you are a Jew, for this conduct is none other than an ancestral custom!”

“This manner of eating is found only among Jews, as ruled in *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* (170:10) in the laws of proper table manners, ‘A person should not bite off a piece of bread and place the remainder on the table.’

“Such a manner is not found among the nations, for its source is the *Shulchan Aruch*! Hence, I realized that you are a Jew, and this practice of yours is a remnant of the ways of your forefathers — instilled in you by your upright and faithful parents among the people of Yisrael.”

The man was deeply moved by the Rebbe’s insight and the holiness of his words. Overcome with emotion, he admitted that every word was true:

“Indeed, I was born and raised in a proper Jewish home. My father and mother were good and faithful Jews, loyal to Hashem and His Torah. I remember well how they would always cut the bread at the table before eating and would never bite directly into it like the gentiles. From them I learned this upright practice. But in the upheavals and troubles that befell our people during the First World War, I cast off the yoke of Torah and mitzvos, Heaven spare us, and was swept away by the winds of the secular movements of that difficult generation — until I sank to the lowest depths.”

When the Rebbe saw that a small opening of repentance had been formed in his heart, he drew him close with great love and affection. Throughout that long journey, the Rebbe seated him at his side, speaking to him words of *mussar* and encouragement, assuring him faithfully that there is never cause for despair — for we are promised (*Shmuel* II 14:14): וְחָשַׁב מִחֲשָׁבוֹת לְבִלְתִּי - *For He devises means that none be banished from Him.*

Our holy *sefarim* explain that even those who are “banished” are never entirely lost, and a good rectification may yet be found for them.

Ultimately, that man did not take leave of the tzaddik until he had repented completely. He accepted upon himself to be meticulous in observing every detail of Torah and mitzvos, whether minor or major, in full accordance with the *Shulchan Aruch*. From that time forth, he became a devoted chassid of the holy Rebbe of Munkatch *zy”a*. We learn from this true and faithful story to what extent the influence of ancestral ways can reach — that even a Jew who has fallen to the very lowest depths, through maintaining, even casually, a small custom he saw practiced in his parents’ home, may find in it a doorway and a vessel for returning in complete *teshuvah* to his Father in Heaven.