



RABBI GROSSMAN ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA



And His Right Hand Would Embrace Me Parshas Va'Yetzeh

It was dark in the bus from Natzrat Elit to Migdal Ha'Emek. I illuminated the Talmud tractate of Baba Metziah which I had with a small flashlight. At one of the bus stops a good looking young man with shoulder length hair got on the bus. The hippie sat next to me and took interest in the Talmud I was holding. I asked him where he was headed to. He told me his destination was Haifa. I continued to inquire about him and learned that he was an immigrant from Morocco, his father serving as a prominent judge in the religious court there. His family immigrated initially to France, and one day his father unexpectedly died, leaving the family bewildered and in great pain in a foreign country. His mother decided their place was in Israel. He started studying in a yeshiva, while learning Hebrew in an *Ulpan*; a Hebrew language school. With no paternal guidance, he began to grow distant from a religious way of life.

I looked at him with pity, sorry for his hard life. I tried to encourage him and engaged him in conversation.

"What are you studying?" he asked me suddenly. Chapter four, I answered, *Hamafkid*, on the laws of deposits. His eyes shone, "That was the last chapter I studied before leaving the yeshiva". He started quoting from memory: "A man once deposited jewels with his neighbor. When he demanded, 'Give me my jewels,' the neighbor replied, 'I do not know where I put them ... Rabbi

Nachman went and had his house seized."¹

I was amazed by his accurate memory. "Do you remember the Talmud's conclusion?" I asked, "Of course – 'The law is that an evaluation can always be redone, because it is said, And thou shall do that which is right and good'".

I embraced him warmly. He was very moved, and I shed a tear as well.

"And thou shall do that which is right and good", I told him. Our Sages teach us the proper methods of conduct with our fellow beings, even if common sense indicates otherwise. And thou shall do that which is right and good,

I patted him on the back. This phrase should be understood literally as well, doing the right thing in G-d's eyes, as well as human perception.

We parted ways, and I invited him to Migdal Ha'Emek, promising to treat him like a son. He seemed embarrassed by my invitation, which turned out to be the first he received in Israel, as well as the first embrace he had received since he was very young.

On the verse in our weekly Parsha: "And Yaakov kissed Rachel, and he raised his voice and wept"², Rashi commentates that Yaakov wept because: "Since he came (to Lavan) empty-handed, he said, "Eliezer, my grandfather's servant, had nose rings, and bracelets and sweet fruits in his possession, and I am coming with nothing in my hands. He had nothing because Eliphaz, the son of Esav, had pursued him to kill him at his father's orders; he (Eliphaz) overtook him, but since he had grown up in Yitzchak's lap, he held back his hand. He said to him (Yaakov), "What shall I do about my father's orders?" Yaakov replied, "Take what I have, for a poor man is considered as if he is dead".

If we delve into Rashi's words we can learn an essential concept. Eliphaz had pursued Yaakov to kill him at his father's orders. What caused Eliphaz to refrain from carrying out his father's command?

¹ Tractate Baba Metziah, 35a.

² Bereshait, 29, 11.

“Since he had grown up in Yitzchak’s lap, he held back his hand”. That is the reason. Even though he was wicked and prepared to commit murder, he had nonetheless absorbed something from his grandfather. He did not have a mere acquaintance with his grandfather, but as Rashi stresses, he grew up on Yitzchak’s lap.

When we encounter a weaker individual, someone faltering, like Eliphaz who grew up in unstable surroundings, encompassed by evil, it is imperative that we raise him on our lap; embrace him warmly, engulfing him with affection, thus committing a great Mitzvah.

We shall not shirk from this responsibility, saying to ourselves, why get involved? Does this brief embrace have any affect it all? Would a slight smile be enough to change one’s wicked ways?

Think about it: Yaakov stands helpless, facing his nephew’s sword. Why would he assume that Eliphaz would lay down his weapon?

“Since he had grown up in Yitzchak’s lap”. The case is different when one has grown up in the lap of Yitzchak, receiving love, warmth and appreciation from his grandfather. From here we can learn the power of unconditional love and the giving to another, a power which can affect anyone and bring him back to the proper path.

After two weeks a received a postcard. The postcard read: “I saw you in the darkness of the bus, and was very moved. I will come visit you next Shabbat, for I need your words, I tend to fall and do not wish to so. Speak to me a bit; encourage me a bit, for powerful waves are drawing me into the depths”.

I read these words with tears in my eyes. I learned the affect of a brief embrace, a bit of appreciation and a smile. I awaited his visit with great anticipation.

Erev Shabbat, a few minutes before candle lighting, I heard a gentle knock on the front door. The young man stood there, he had gathered his hair in a ponytail, and placed a Kipa on his head.

“Welcome”, I invited him in. “Greetings Rabbi. I have decided to choose the path of “And thou shall do that which is right and good”.