WARMTH & WISDOM

Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דזעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Seuda Shlishis Parshas Chayei Sara
(חדוותא דזעיר אנפין עמוד ק"פ)

After Eliezer relates his story to Lavan and Besuel they declare;

וַיַּעַן לָבָן וּבְתוּאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵה' יָצָא הַדָּבָר לֹא נוּכַל דַּבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ רַע אוֹ טוֹב.
הִנֵּה רִבְקָה לְפָנֶיךָ קַח וָלֵךְ וּתְהִי אִשָּׁה לְבֶן אֲדֹנֶיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה'

And Lavan and Besuel answered and they said, 'This matter has come from Hashem, we are unable to speak with you negatively or positively. Here is Rivka before you, take her and go, and she will be a wife to the son of your master as Hashem has said.'

These pious statements seem incongruous when we see *Chazal's* description of their character.

In *Parshas Toldos* (כ"ה:כ), in describing Rivka Imeinu, Rashi writes, "She was the daughter of a *rasha* (Besuel), the sister of a *rasha* (Lavan), and her place was one of *reshaim*"

***Chazal* teach us (ילקוט שמעוני רמז ק"ט) that Besuel wanted to kill Eliezer by poisoning his food, and that Besuel both sinned himself, and led his community to sin.**

The Torah teaches us that Lavan was more wicked than Pharaoh, as we say in the *Hagada Shel Pesach* - אֲרַמִּי אֹבֵד אָבִי - An Aramian (Lavan) tried to destroy may father (Yaakov). For Pharaoh's decrees were only meant to kill the males, whereas Lavan sought to uproot everything."

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However, from their above declaration to Eliezer, they seem to be not only decent characters, but even people "whose mouths regularly mention the name of Hashem".

How can we explain this sudden transition from being lowly sinners and murderers, to people who state their ready agreement to Eliezer's request with such inspiring words?

Perhaps this can be understood in light of a *chidush* of the *Pnei Menachem zy"a*.

"The wife of Potiphar was such a wicked woman. How did she merit having a daughter such as Osnat (who married Yosef Hatzadik)? It could be because when Yosef ran away from Potiphar's wife, the Torah tells us that he left his garment in her hand. The presence of that garment left a *nekuda* of *kedusha* with her."

In other words, the presence of a garment worn by Yosef Hatzadik, in her house, left an impression that enabled that home to produce Osnat, Yosef's wife.

In our case as well. Eliezer brought into Besuel and Lavan's house the holy fruits of *Eretz Yisrael* that Avraham Avinu had sent with him. Also, Eliezer *davened* in their property. (The *tefillah* of Avraham Avinu's servant must have been extremely powerful, "with thunder and lightning"). Those *tefillos*, combined with the *peiros Eretz Yisrael*, left such a powerful impression on Lavan and Besuel that they temporarily abandoned their wickedness, agreed to Eliezer's request, and even blessed their sister before she travelled.

This concept also enables us to understand Lavan's behavior later on. After pursuing and overtaking Yaakov and his family. The Torah tells us,

וַיַּשְׁכֵּם לָבָן בַּבֹּקֶר וַיְנַשֵּׁק לְבָנָיו וְלִבְנוֹתָיו וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָהֶם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיָּשָׁב לָבָן לִמְקֹמוֹ - And Lavan rose early in the morning and he kissed his sons and his daughters. And he

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blessed them and then went and returned to his place. (בראשית ל"ב.)

The Seforno zt"l comments;

"*Chazal* have already stated, (מגילה ט"ו.) - אַל תְּהִי בִּרְכַּת הֶדְיוֹט קַלָּה בְּעֵינֶיךָ - Do not view the blessing of a simple person lightly. The Torah tells us of Lavan's *bracha* to his daughters, so that we should learn that a father blesses his children with all of his soul. How much more so if a true *Tzelem Elokim* blesses his child, as we find Yitzchak Avinu saying to Eisav, בַּעֲבוּר תְּבָרֶכְךָ נַפְשִׁי" - so that my *nefesh* will bless you." (בראשית כ"ז:ד)

This statement of the *Seforno* is amazing. We must remember that Lavan wasn't just a run of the mill "simple person". He was a terrible *rasha*! He was the Aramenian who wished to uproot *Am Yisrael* even more than Pharaoh did. Lavan himself told Yaakov that if Hashem hadn't stopped him by appearing to him in a dream, he had the ability and the desire to harm Yaakov.

How could the *Seforno* identify Lavan's *bracha* as the source that reveals the power of a parent's *tefilla* for their child.

Perhaps this can also be explained in light of the *Pnei Menachem's chidush*. Yaakov and the *shevatim* lived in Lavan's house for many years. This certainly must have left some impression on Lavan's *nefesh*. Now, after pursuing and overtaking Yaakov Avinu and his family, he entered their tents. The powerful *kedusha* that was present there, momentarily awakened something positive in him so that his *bracha* was at least at the level of "the blessing of a simple person."

However, let there be no mistake. When Lavan returned home, he reverted to his usual state of wickedness.

We have learned that even the presence of an inanimate object that belonged to a *tzadik* leaves an impression of *kedusha*. The *tefilla* of a

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tzadik on behalf of a Jew is even more powerful. It can even elevate and transform the hearts of Jews who habitually transgress the worst *aveiros*.

Therefore, if even the heart of a *rasha* like Lavan could be temporarily transformed by an impression of *kedusha*, how much more so can we, the Jewish people, be drawn to *kedusha* by the *tefilla* of a *tzadik*, an item that belonged to a t*zadik*, or eating the *shirayim* of a *tzadik*. They can all leave an impression on us and awaken our *nefesh*.

לעוֹרְרֵנוּ לִקְדֻשָּׁה וּלְטָהֳרָה וּלְכָל מְלֵאכֶת הַבּוֹרֵא בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב מֵרֹב כֹּל אכי"ר.

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