



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Vayetzei 5763

At the end of Parshas Vayetzei, Yaakov Avinu wants to construct a pile of stones that will separate him from Lavan.

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְאֶחָיו לְקַטּוּ אֲבָנִים וַיִּקְחוּ אֲבָנִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ גֵל וַיֵּאָכְלוּ שָׁם עַל הַגֵּל
(And Yaakov said to his brothers, gather stones, and they took stones and made a mound, and ate on top of the mound). (Bereishis 31/46).
The reference to his brothers is puzzling since his only brother was Eisav. Rashi explains, “these are his sons who were as brothers to him, drawing close to him in times of trouble and war.”

However, a few pesukim later, we find another reference to Yaakov’s brothers. וַיִּזְבַּח יַעֲקֹב זֶבַח בְּהָר וַיִּקְרָא לְאֶחָיו לֵאמֹר אֱכֹל לֶחֶם וַיֵּאָכְלוּ לֶחֶם וַיִּלְינוּ בְּהָר
(And Yaakov brought a sacrifice on the mountain and called to his brothers to eat bread. And they ate bread and slept on the mountain)
Here, Rashi explains that in this case, the reference to brothers means, “those among Lavan’s people who loved him”.

We need to understand the basis for the discrepancy in Rashi’s *peirushim*. We also need to identify who among Lavan’s people loved Yaakov. It seems reasonable to assume that those people who accompanied Lavan were also *reshaim*. We see that Lavan’s sons, (who were only born in the *zechus* of Yaakov Avinu (Bereishis Rabbah 31/1)) not only were ungrateful, but actually persecuted Yaakov and his children. Those companions who accompanied Lavan in his pursuit of Yaakov certainly shared his intention of killing Yaakov. Who then, could Rashi have been referring to when he said that the “brothers” Yaakov invited to the meal, were his *ohavim* among Lavan’s gang?



[1]

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The explanation lies in Chazal's saying (Shabbos 32a), that "by the doorway of a store, where food is being shared, many brothers and friends are to be found. In a place of poverty, you find no brothers and friends."

When someone is successful and wealthy, he finds himself surrounded by people who love him and flatter him. Everyone praises him and thanks him. However, in a time of trouble, when he needs their help, most of them disappear. Only a few true friends will stand by him when he faces danger or deprivation.

I often share guidance that I received from the Gerrer Rebbe the Beis Yisrael zy" a. One afternoon, he summoned me and spoke with me about ways to help students in a certain yeshivah who were struggling in matters of *kedusha*. (It wasn't a *chasidishe* yeshiva, but the Rebbe cared about everyone in the way that a merciful father cares about his children). After that discussion, he picked up the latest newspaper and drew my attention to a small announcement on the last page. It was an expression of consolation to someone who had lost his father.

The Rebbe said with pain, "Look at this and understand something about the way of the world. This man who passed away was one of the greatest supporters of Torah institutions. All the high and mighty used to honor him and praise him. When someone in his family made even the smallest *simcha*, this same newspaper was full of lavish *mazal tov* announcements, filled with lavish praise about him. In the last years of his life, he lost his wealth. Now that he has passed away, no one remembers him."

The Rebbe said that he doesn't know how all those whom he supported financially for so many years can be so ungrateful. He concluded by telling me, "This is the way of the world, in times of trouble, friends disappear and a person finds himself totally alone."



[2]

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We can now understand Rashi. When Yaakov needed people who would work hard and help him gather stones, the only people he could turn to were his own sons, who truly loved him. No one in Lavan's group would help him. However, when Yaakov made a *seuda*, members of Lavan's group suddenly approached him with great love and brotherhood, despite their having previously persecuted him.

We all have to internalize this fundamental principle. Not everyone who is happy to join you for a meal is a true friend. Only those who stick with you in the most difficult times are your real friends. It takes a lot of work to acquire such friends. That is why *Chazal* told us, *knei lecha chaver*.

The only way to acquire a true friend is to do all that you can to be a good friend to others. You should look for opportunities to let someone who is suffering know that you are standing by his side and not abandoning him. You should seek out those who are impoverished or persecuted and become the "brother" who saves them from feeling that they are alone and abandoned. Someone who is willing to accept the difficult *avoda* of true friendship, will himself benefit from true friends who stay with him "through thick and thin".

My grandfather zy" a, who founded this Beis Medrash, was truly a "brother" to anyone undergoing difficulty, no matter who they were. He was constantly surrounded by suffering, bitter souls, who knew that he was always there for them.

I often share something that I witnessed when I accompanied my grandfather to the *Kosel HaMaaravi*. After my grandfather finished *davening*, he noticed a man who was familiar to him. Over time this person had drifted away from Torah observance and adopted a lifestyle that was drastically different from the one he had grown up with. He was standing in the plaza looking alone and confused. My grandfather immediately approached him and tried to lift his spirits with *divrei chizuk* and encouragement. The man told my grandfather that after all of the *aveiros* he had committed, there was no hope for him.



[3]

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That statement caused the Rebbe to tremble. He declared, "I am prepared to take a *shvuah*, swearing by the *kedusha* of the *Kosel Hamaaravi* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves you more than he loves me." This wasn't an insincere statement that was simply meant to comfort the suffering man. Despite the fact that he suffered from pain and bleeding in his feet. He walked all the way back to the *Kosel*, placed his hands on the holy stones and said, "I swear by the *kedusha* of the *Kosel* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves this man more than he loves Yochanan ben Chava Twersky."

When the man heard this, he burst into tears and began a process of *teshuva* that resulted in his living a life of Torah and *Yiras Shamayim*.

If we follow in my grandfather's footsteps and do all that we can to support, strengthen and encourage each person in need, especially those who have fallen spiritually, I am sure that he will be a *meilitz yosher* for us in our times of need. אכי"ר



[4]

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