

Excerpt from the book, "And Now I Know"

THE BOOK OF BEREISHIT

PARSHAT TOLDOT

“And it was that Yitzchak was old and his eyes were dim and he called to Esav, his older son and said to him, ‘My son’. And (Esav) said to him ‘Here I am.’ And he (Yitzchak) said to him, ‘I am old and I don’t know the day of my death. And now, take your quiver and your bow and go out into the field and hunt me some venison.” (Beraishit 27:1-3)

The Torah goes on to say that Yitzchak wanted to bless Esav but needed to eat the meat that Esau had killed and prepared first. Since there is no punctuation in the Torah, it is possible to read verses several ways. Therefore, we can read the words “I don’t know the day of my death and now” as one sentence. It sounds awkward to read the sentence that way but if we fill in the missing words, there is a powerful message to be learned.

The fact is that no one knows the day of their death. All anyone has is the “now”, this moment to live. Yitzchak’s message in his old age to Esav is to live now, go out into the field of the world and capture the moments that are waiting for you. Hunt the sparks of holiness that are clothed in the material world, and cook them, raise them up to their source. Live as if this was your last day on earth and then you will be filled with passion and vigor. Man is the hunter, so be a man. Let death be your ally in showing you how to live. The bow and arrow represent man’s ability to “shoot” his intentions far away in time and space; they are our prayers to our Higher Power. The wild game are our dreams and aspirations, the goals we want to reach in our lifetime. They are out there in the field waiting for us to capture them. And the only way to accomplish that is to be present in this moment.

The practice of mindfulness cultivates the awareness of the present moment. The more we practice, the more we will be able to control our thoughts and stay present . And that practice spills over into our day, into everything we do.

PARSHAT V'YATZE

“And he (Yaakov) said to him (Lavan), ‘You know how I worked for you and how I kept your flocks with me. The small number of sheep you gave me to look after has become a great herd and G-d has blessed you because of me. And now, when will I begin to work for myself, for my own household?’” (Beraishit 30:29-30)

Yaakov said these words to his father-in-law, Lavan after working for him for 20 years. Fourteen of those years he worked in order to acquire his two

wives, Rachel and Leah. Six years he worked to increase Lavan's flocks. At this point, Yaakov wanted to work for his own household of two wives, two maidservants, and eleven children.

Every man (person) comes into this world with a mission, a task that he is meant to accomplish in his lifetime. Every person has unique gifts to contribute to bring light into the darkness. But it often takes a long time for a man to identify his unique gifts and discover what his mission is. Prior to his discovery, he works for someone else, helping that person realize his or her dreams. This time is not wasted; it is his apprenticeship in life. It helps build a person's character and skills.

But then this man senses that it's time to spread his wings and fly, to reveal his uniqueness and make his contribution for his family, tribe, and most importantly to himself. This moment of realization is the "now" that he inhabits fully, no longer able to delay his task. The world needs him to step into his power.

Yaakov is called the "choice" of the three patriarchs. He is renamed Israel and all his descendants are called the Children of Israel – making him our primary father. This moment in the Bible, where Yaakov wakes up to his purpose is "the now" that places him in the eternal present. Soon after, Yaakov stepped into his power as a prophet of G-d. On his journey from Lavan's home back to Israel, he 'wrestles' with an angle of G-d (Beraishit 32:24-32). His intimate embrace with the great power of the Creator, empowered him to be the great man he was meant to be.

PARSHAT V'YESHEV

"And they saw him from a distance and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. They said to one another, 'Here comes that dreamer. And now, let us get together, kill him, and throw him into one of the pits. And we will say that a wild beast ate him, *and we will see what will become of his dreams.*'" (*Genesis 37:18-20*)

Rashi quotes Rabbi Yitzchak, who says, "This verse cries out to be explained" for the plain meaning makes no sense. Yosef's brothers are so angry with him for his dreams of domination, that they plan to kill him. They even thought of a good explanation to give to their father about what happened to their younger brother. But then the end of verse 20 doesn't make sense. The brothers state that after killing Yosef, "we will see what will become of his dreams." If they kill him, obviously his dreams will not come to fruition. So Rabbi Yitzchak explains that in this part of the verse "the Holy Spirit is

speaking here.” The brothers were speaking with G-d’s voice as He challenged, ‘We will see whose word will be established, yours or Mine.’

The brothers murderous conspiracy is introduced by the words, ‘and now’. The words are really not necessary for the simple understanding of the verse. It is a general rule in Torah study that any words that appear to be superfluous, are actually coming to teach us something. The teaching here is that in order to hear G-d’s voice or speak with G-d’s voice as in prophecy, one has to be in the ‘now’. The present is the unique moment that is available to each of us to inhabit each time we take a breath. For it is only in the now that we can intuit G-d’s Will for us and hear His message.

The message to us is that though we make plans and think we are in control of our lives and the events that will take place, we must never forget that ultimately it is G-d’s Will that is established. The more we can live in “the now”, the more we will be living in harmony with and acceptance of the Divine Will.