

## I WANT TO BELIEVE YOU! BUT IS THAT GOOD FOR ME?

### PARSHAS VAYETZE

Our forefather Yaakov had to work hard for Lavan for 14 years for the privilege of marrying Lavan's daughters, Rochel & Leah. Afterwards, Yaakov worked for Lavan to earn a living. Lavan changed the conditions for the wages at least one hundred times. Despite that, with Hashem's help, Yaakov became wealthy. At that point, Yaakov heard Lavan's sons saying that Yaakov had built up his wealth from their father, Lavan. "Yaakov has taken all that was our father's, and from that which was our father's he has built up all this wealth (Bereishis 31:1)." Lavan accepted the *loshan hara* of his sons and started treating Yaakov differently (31:2). Hashem then told Yaakov that it was time to leave Lavan's house and return home. After getting permission from his wives, Yaakov packed up his family and fled from Lavan's house. Lavan was away, tending to his sheep, so he was unaware that Yaakov had left.

Yaakov had a good reason to flee from Lavan while Lavan was away.

**Sforno** (31:21) says that the word **ויברח**, indicates departing without being pursued but being inspired by fear of damage and harm that is not imminent. **Or HaChaim** (31:20) says

that had Lavan had the slightest notion that Yaakov intended to take his family and leave without a send-off, he would have had him watched day and night.

**Sforno** (31:20) says that Yaakov fooled Lavan. He did not give Lavan any indication that he knew that Lavan had accepted the slander about him. Yaakov was afraid that had Lavan realized that Yaakov wanted to leave then, Lavan, with the aid of the people of his town, would have taken Yaakov's family away from him. Yaakov verbalized this fear later, when Lavan had met up with him. In fact, when Lavan heard that Yaakov had fled, **Radak** says that he formed a posse of relatives to chase after Yaakov (31:23). Hashem came to Lavan in a dream, telling him not to harm Yaakov (31:24). Clearly Lavan's intention was to cause harm to Yaakov.

*"Why did you flee in secrecy and mislead me and not tell me? I would have sent you off with festive music, with songs and drums and harps (Bereishis 31:27)."*

When Lavan approached Yaakov he said, "Why did you flee in secrecy and mislead me and not tell me? I would have sent you off with festive music, with songs and drums and harps (31:27)."

**Midrash Rabbah** (64:8) says that Lavan attempted to persuade Yaakov to return by speaking very nicely. Lavan told Yaakov that he wanted to give him a proper sendoff, with singing and music. Lavan said that he would have liked to kiss his children and grandchildren goodbye, before they left (see **Radak** 31:28). When Lavan saw that his approach was not working, he hardened his tone (see **Maharzu**). He told Yaakov that Yaakov had acted foolishly. Lavan said that he had the ability to harm Yaakov. The only reason that he did not do so was because Hashem told him not to (31:28, 29).

Lavan was a very smart man. He was shrewd, deceptive, and dishonest. He was a con artist. Why did he try persuading Yaakov to return with him? Obviously, he thought that he had a good chance of succeeding in convincing Yaakov to return with him.

Otherwise, he would not have bothered trying. In fact, Hashem came to Lavan in a dream saying, “Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad (31:24).” **Sforno** explains, “good” that Hashem warned Lavan not to try to lure Yaakov into returning with offers of benefits. Since Hashem had to warn Lavan about this, obviously Hashem knew that Lavan had the ability to fool Yaakov and convince him to return. Lavan’s promises and enticements actually had a good chance of influencing Yaakov to change his mind and return with Lavan.

This doesn’t make sense! How could Yaakov have possibly been swayed by Lavan? Yaakov knew firsthand that Lavan was a liar, a cheater, a swindler, and a deceiver. **Rashi** (29:18) says that when Yaakov was about to marry Rochel, he gave her signs to identify herself because he knew that Lavan was a cheater. Sure enough, Lavan deceptively switched Rochel with Leah. Lavan changed the deal for Yaakov’s wages at least 100 times! Yaakov even verbalized that he fled from Lavan because he was afraid that Lavan would have otherwise taken away his wives and children. How could Yaakov possibly have agreed to return, putting his life and his families lives at the whim of such a crook?!

This teaches us a very powerful lesson in *kochos hanefesh*, the human psyche. A person, even a great person, can be led to believe and rely on promises

and enticements even against his better judgement. One will often believe in a falsehood, because that is what he truly wishes would happen. He may do so, even though the person telling this to him is a proven liar. He will believe it because he wants to believe it.

There are people with whom we are associated with whom may not be good influences on us. Yet, we remain associated with them because we believe in their promises. We blind ourselves to reality and believe in them time and time again, solely because we want to believe.

We, also, are apt to succumb numerous times every day to our worst enemy, the *yetzer hara*, our evil inclination. The *yetzer hara* is a proven liar and con artist who constantly entices us to do things which will cause us harm. Yet, we still listen to his promises and enticements. We lose out in our spiritual growth and even in our true happiness because we listen to the *yetzer hara* even though our brain tells us not to listen. The *yetzer hara* makes us think that following his advice will be good for us or make us happy. He promises us things that we want to hear. Since we want them to be true, we fool ourselves into believing that the promises are true. However, his promises are empty promises. We are only deceiving ourselves, time and time again.

**Don’t believe the empty promises of others if time and again they break their promises.**

**The *yetzer hara* constantly tries to get us to sin by alluring us with falsehoods that time and again are not realized, and instead, leave us unfulfilled.**

(Base on a dvar torah by Rabbi Alter Henach Leibowitz zt”l)

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