

דרכים בפרשה חיי שרה

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ויאמר בוא ברוך ה' למה תעמד בחוץ ואנכי פניתי הבית ומקום לגמלים

Lavan says to Eliezer: *"Come, you who are blessed of Hashem. Why are you standing outside? I have emptied the house and made room for the camels."*

The Ramban reads these pesukim as presenting Lavan in a fairly straightforward and respectable light. Rashi, however, follows the Midrash and sees his actions as driven by greed.

The meforshim discuss what it means that Lavan *"emptied the house."* On the surface, it sounds like he simply made space for Eliezer. But Rashi brings the Midrash (Rabbah 60:7) that Lavan removed all the avodah zarah from the home before allowing Eliezer to enter.

From here the meforshim derive a foundational yesod: **even someone as low as Lavan understood that you cannot bring kedusha into a place still filled with tumah.** We try to climb to the next level in avodas Hashem but often fall short. Why? Because we're still holding on to the very things that keep us down. Kedusha cannot settle where tumah remains. And the danger is subtle — a person might feel that as long as the majority of his life is "clean," the remaining pockets of tumah are insignificant. Yet the meforshim point out that even a *trace* can block tremendous shefa.

Along the lines of Rashi's understanding—that Lavan's motivation was greed—the Alter of Nevardok highlights another mussar lesson. *Look how strong Lavan's desire for money was.* For even the possibility of earning a few coins, he threw out his idols. If so, we must ask ourselves: **Are we guilty of the same thing?** Are our bank accounts dictating our choices, or is the Torah our bottom line? It is easy to justify small compromises as "just this once," but those small cracks reveal where our real loyalties lie.

This message resurfaces in Megillas Rus. The pasuk says: *"והנה בעז בא מבית לחם ויאמר לקוצרים ה' עמכם ויאמרו לו יברכה ה'."*

Boaz arrives from Beis Lechem and greets the harvesters with "Hashem imachem," and they respond, "Yevarech'cha Hashem."

The Malbim notes that *"והנה"* always signals a chiddush. The Gemara (Berachos 63a) teaches that on that very day,

Boaz and his Beis Din enacted that when greeting another Yid, one should use Hashem's Name. Why was this needed? Because society was corrupt. They surely davened daily, and perhaps even immersed in the mikvah beforehand, but there was **no carryover of kedusha from the beis haknesses into the workplace.** Their business lives ran without the Ribono Shel Olam. The Sanhedrin therefore instituted a way to bring Hashem into day-to-day life. **Until now, people joked, "Business is business and Moses is Moses,"** as if avodas Hashem had no relevance in the mundane world. Boaz was demonstrating the opposite: Hashem belongs even in the fields, in the marketplace, and in all our daily affairs. When he greeted the workers with "Hashem imachem," he was declaring that Hashem must be present even *here*. Until then this would have been considered taking Hashem's Name in vain, but now it became a vehicle for spreading awareness of Hashem into business and ordinary conversation. Our greeting "Shalom Aleichem," using one of Hashem's Names, is rooted in this very idea.

A few years ago, at the daf yomi siyum of Seder Nashim and the first half of Shas, Rav Boruch Lichtenstein shlita was honored at our Toronto celebration with opening Seder Nezikin. He shared a beautiful insight.

Rashi at the beginning of Parshas Mishpatim comments on the word *"ואלה,"* teaching that the mishpatim are connected to the Aseres Hadibros: *Just as those were from Sinai, so too these are from Sinai.* The meforshim ask why we would think otherwise. They explain: No one doubts that Zeraim, Moed, Nashim, Kodshim, and Taharos come from Hashem. But when it comes to monetary laws, one might say, "The non-Jewish courts have laws too—we can follow theirs." Rashi therefore emphasizes: **hilchos mamonos are also from Sinai, and the Torah's perspective on money guides how we conduct ourselves in business and everyday financial dealings — showing that business, too, is a form of ruchniyus.**

The Rav then shared a story of a man who wanted to act in a way that was clearly not ehrlich. When Rav Lichtenstein suggested he ask his Rav, the man replied, "Luz mich oif fun di Bava Kamah un Bava Metzia—ich redt du business." Leave me alone with Bava Kama and Bava Metzia—I'm talking business. Rav Lichtenstein concluded: **"Bava Kama and Bava Metzia is our business. And if we conduct ourselves according to the Torah, the Aibishter will send us more and more!"**

מרדכי אפפּעל, Good Shabbos