

# ויצא

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## YISSACHAR AND LEVI

As Leah was waiting for Yaakov after she bought the rights to him from Rachel (with Reuven's fragrant mandrakes), the *Targum Yonasan* comments:

ושמעתי לאה קל נהיקיה דהמרא וידעת דהא יעקב אתא

She heard the braying of his donkey, and she knew that Yaakov arrived (*Bereishis* 30:16).

It's interesting to note that *Targum Yonasan* links the identification of Yaakov to his donkey (also see Maharasha, *Nedarim* 20:); immediately after his union with Leah, Yissachar is born, whom Yaakov identifies as "*Chamor garem*" — "a large boned donkey" (*Bereishis* 49:14). The *Gemara* explains Yissachar's donkey characterization, (and implicitly Yaakov's characterization) as a requisite for achieving greatness in Torah:

ולא משכת צורבא מרבנן דמורי אלא דאתי משבט לוי או משבט יששכר

All Torah authorities (in *Klal Yisrael*) are descended only from *Sheivet Levi* or Yissachar (*Yoma* 26•).

The *Zohar* (*Bereishis* 49:14) asks why success in Torah is associated with a metaphor of the lowly donkey; why is it not characterized by a more glamorous beast such as a horse, lion or leopard? The *Zohar* explains that in order to achieve success in steady Torah growth, we must emulate the donkey: a beast of burden who never rebels against its master, has no airs about itself, and does not require a prepared resting place. Success in Torah is only accomplished via profound subservience to Hashem, resulting in a character free of haughtiness, one whose self-image is completely melded with Hashem's. Such a person understands that *Olom Hazeih* is not really home; it is only a preparation for *Olom Haba*.

Both Levi and Yissachar are regarded as the primary Torah teachers of *Klal Yisrael*. Levi achieved this distinction at birth. (See page 122). The Rambam describes Levi as:

הבדל לעבד את ה' ולשרתו

Separated for the service of Hashem (*Hilchos Shemitah Veyoveil* 13:12).

Although Levi was created holy in utero (Rashi, *Bereishis* 29:34), the *Targum Yonasan* (*Bereishis* 32:25) cites that Levi's holy designation was reemphasized at Yaakov's encounter with Eisav's angel. The angel demanded of Yaakov,

You declared that you would designate one-tenth of all your possessions to Hashem; you have twelve sons... yet none were designated unto Hashem!

Yaakov immediately separated the four first-born of the four mothers. Of the remaining eight sons, Yaakov proceeded to count ten beginning with Shimon, culminating in Levi as the tenth

(i.e.: Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissachar, Zevulun, Naftali, Asher, Binyamin and again Shimon, etc., and the ten count culminating in Levi). Hence, the angel Michael proclaimed: “*Ribono Shel Olam* — this one (Levi) is your share.” Levi, of course, had to exercise his *bechirah* to actualize the endowment bestowed on him, but it was indeed a gift. Yissachar, on the other hand, had to develop his innate personality and character traits to evolve into a great Torah-teacher. It was only through his own efforts that he achieved greatness.

From Yissachar we learn that *ameilos betorah* — diligence in Torah — is an all consuming, tireless job; it requires constant diligence and character development. The Torah promises much reward to one who observes:

אם בחוקתי תלכו

In my statutes you should walk (*Vayikra* 26:3).

Rashi observes that the *pasuk* declares:

ואת מצותי תשמרו

My commandments you should keep (*ibid.*),

and what is meant by “In my statutes you should walk” is *ameilus betorah*. The Maharal (*Gur Aryeh, Vayikra* 26:3) expands on this concept by explaining that the expression of “*teileichu*” — “you shall walk” — connotes constant uninterrupted motion. Similarly, excelling in Torah to the highest degree demands constant attention, diligence and striving. The passive studying of Torah is certainly a “*mitzvah*,” but what Hashem demands is a much more intense form of growing in Torah. This concentrated effort to grow in Torah, is what made Yissachar an equal to the gifted Levi. It is Yissachar’s unrelenting plodding that Yaakov *Avinu* refers to with the characterization of ‘donkey.’

The *Zohar (Bereishis* 30:14) associates Yissachar’s birth with Reuven’s fragrant mandrakes; Yissachar’s growth in Torah symbolizes the sweet fragrance Hashem desires from us all. The reward “for walking in Hashem’s statutes” is also symbolized in Yissachar’s name. The name Yissachar is comprised of the words “*Yeish s’char*” — “There is a reward.” One who strives in Torah is certain to gain *Olom Habah*.

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