

VaYetse

And He Went Out

G-d Has Always Got It Covered

Torah:

Gen. 28:10-32:2

(1) 28:22: ***"This rock which I have raised up as a monument shall be the house of G-d and I will give you the tithe of all that you shall give me."*** It is never a gamble to serve the L-rd, but it does take faith and action. We tithe from the increase which He gives us – He never wants to sap our vital strength or deprive us of our means of making a living – He wants us to step out in faith and obedience and to return to Him a portion of our increase as a sign that we serve the invisible King of all our visible goods. **Are you prepared to always seek the L-rd for His help and blessing and then turn over a tithe of the acquired blessing to Him?**

(2) 30:39: ***"The sheep went into heat near to the branches and they gave birth to lambs which were stripped speckled or spotted."*** I am not a shepherd and the passage describes the actions of Jacob so that it almost looks like a magic trick, but a careful reading allows you to see otherwise. He was a master shepherd and even after he separated the flock into the white and the non-white groups, he did not change their genetic code – he practised a form of natural selection and stimulated the rams when a speckled ewe came to drink (or stimulated a speckled ram when a vigorous white ewe came to drink), and took the spotted, stripped and speckled kids as his continued salary – while he left the weaker ones for Laban. He made sure that the stronger ones coupled with the speckled ones – he was aiming for strength not colour and though he began at a disadvantage, he turned it to his advantage by intelligent selective breeding. He was a shrewd shepherd/businessman, not a cheater. **Are you prepared to use your talents wisely, so that even when you begin at a disadvantage, with His help, you will end up at an advantage without cheating?**

(3) 31:53: ***"That the G-d of Abraham of Nachor and of their father (Terach) would be a judge between us and Jacob swore by the One whom Isaac feared."*** Here we see four generations of Yahveh based spirituality (Terach, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) called upon. We need to be linked to the past in the present so that we can be prepared for the future. **Are you linking your life right now with what G-d has said and done in the past, so that your future can flourish because it has strong roots and is heading in the right direction (Jer. 6:16)?**

(4) 32:1: ***"Jacob continued on his journey and angels of the L-rd met him."*** This is the second of the three recorded angelic encounters which Jacob has. We are given very little detail about whether anything was said or done, but before he left and as he returned and once he was back, G-d had his back in every situation of his life. Do you know that you also have this kind of support potential, when you walk with Him in both faithful obedience and sincere repentance? The one helps you to find the right path and to stay on track, the helps you to escape from the detours and to get back to where you belong. **How is your angelic support doing – are you surrounded by it or still being pursued by it?**

Haftarah:

Hos. 11:7-14:9

5) 12:11: ***"I spoke to the prophets, I multiplied visions and by the prophets I used parables (to warn of destruction)"***. He always speaks, through His word, through circumstances and through many kinds of prophets – the donkey kind and the human kind. **Are you listening to what He is saying or are you spiritually deaf?**

(6) 13:9: ***"That which cause your ruin, Israel, was that you were against Me, against the One who could have rescued you."*** Circumstances never cause spiritual destitution, refusing to be rescued does. **Whose side are you on, that which destroys or the side of the One who rescues? It's up to you.**

Brit Chadashah: Jn. 1:19-51

(7) 1:51:” ***And He said to him: truly, truly you shall see the sky open up and the angels of G-d going up and descending on the Son of Man***”. The New Testament does not take the purposes of G-d in a new direction, but continues the revelation of His salvation purposes through Israel to the all the nations of the earth. Our angelic support system is His angelic system which supports us as we walk in His purposes. **G-d will always have your back, but His help only moves in one direction – which direction are you moving in?**

Ps. 3 Jewish Hero: Our Angelic support system

I desire also that the women would be clothed in a descent manner, with modesty and propriety and not decked out with braided hair and gold and pearls and sumptuous clothing; but that they are decked out with good works as it is fitting for women who make a profession of faith to serve G-d. Let the wife listen to instruction silently, with an entire submission. I do not permit a wife to teach or to take authority over her husband, but she must remain in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve next. Adam was not seduced, but his wife was seduced and became guilty of transgression. She shall none the less be saved in becoming a mother, if she perseveres with modesty in faith, in love and in holiness.” (I Tim. 2:9-15)

I don't know if you have noticed it, but I am preaching my way through the epistles of Paul until Chanukah, so that we would learn the principles which will strengthen us and help us to build and to maintain good spiritual momentum in our lives, both as individuals and as a shul.

One issue that weakens our ability to work as a dynamic community of gifted leaders and empowered followers is the issues of gender and leadership – it is also one of the reasons many people in our modern world do not take Bible believing people seriously. We seem to want to relegate women to a position of silent subservience, where they are denied an active part in the leadership of too many evangelical communities – this is also one of the major reasons why Islam is so twisted – along with the Catholic Church and all other churches which consider gender the defining pre-requisite of leadership.

I have heard it said that when you separate the sexes from each other, you remove the balancing perspective we were designed to exercise mutually and you allow the flaws and extremes to take over and they plot and struggle against each other, instead of combining forces to activate our varied giftings to accomplish our singular purpose.

I want to point out four things from this passage and leave it with you for further consideration, so you can bring comments, insights and questions to our weekly Yeshiva – or, you could email me comments or even call me up and have a chat – I may bark, but I don't bite and I value all of your input as we wrestle with the Scriptures until we have a firm grip on what it teaches.

First of all, ladies are encouraged not to focus on the exterior as their most important feature, even though there is nothing wrong with feminine beauty and many of the ladies in the Bible have been described as very beautiful.

Our best clothing and our best make up will always be our good works and our modesty – which does not mean covering our ladies to their ankles and making them wear the messianic equivalent of a burka. A heavily veiled woman can seduce with her mystery as effectively as a naked woman dancing around a pole. Paul is speaking out against the sensuality of the ancient Middle East where women would dress and act with one purpose in mind – seduction leading to fornication.

Anyone, male or female who dresses or acts seductively to promote sensuality which leads to fornication cannot claim innocence when the reaction to their wardrobe excites the lust they were modelling. Women are not the most guilty of this tendency, they are generally just better at it and if a woman cannot have the attention and affection she deserves, she will too often go for what she can get and this abuse of sexuality has no place in our midst. We need to be bonded by love, not by lust.

The second feature of this passage deals with the silence of women when they are receiving instruction. They are not told they cannot give instruction, just that they cannot interrupt it. In I Corinthians 14:34, 35, Paul puts this admonition in the context which Timothy and his readers would have done as they read Paul's words in I Timothy.

Apparently women were interrupting the preaching to ask their husbands what was being said. They were either seated separately from their husbands and yelling across to ask the meaning of what was being taught, or they were interrupting what was being taught by asking their husbands while the message was being delivered.

Now there is nothing wrong with a discussion where you ask questions when you do not understand, but when a sermon or a teaching is given, Paul is saying in both cases that they should not interrupt – at least until a time for questions and answers was given. He says that it is not seemingly or proper for a woman to speak out in church and interrupt the sermon – I would say that the same applies to anyone who would interrupt a teaching instead of waiting for an appropriate time to ask questions.

Dwelling in silence during service only meant that ladies were not to interrupt when it was inappropriate to do so – no more, no less.

This second thing from the passage has to do with the relationship between a husband and a wife and it is still in the context of a teaching setting. She is not to teach or take authority over her husband – which is the sin of Eve. If you examine the passage in Genesis three where the serpent is dialoguing with the woman, her man is right beside her, silent and submissive and when she disobeyed and wrongly took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he meekly partook with her.

It is interesting that later on in the Genesis account he blames her for what he did and she correctly blames the devil and both are cursed. Her curse is twofold – increased pain in child birth and male sexual dominance – which understood correctly, is that women will always desire men more than men desire women. This does not speak about libido, but that women will always want men more than men want women, or said another way, men will always sex and women will always men (when asked about sex, men will frequently respond I did it because I loved it and women will say that she did it because she loved him).

There is so much more which could be said on this topic, but I want to go back to the passage and its discussion of how sin came into the world – Eve was seduced, not Adam and then Eve seduced Adam.

What does that mean? I would contend that it has to do with the strengths and weaknesses of each gender. Women are generally more cautious and need to be persuaded where men jump in with both feet. If the serpent had seduced Adam first and he had turned to Eve, what would have happened? She might have said: "Where did you get that and who were you talking to? I am not going to eat that until you answer my questions. G-d I want a new man, this one is messing around already!"

When Eve, the greater influence, was seduced she turned to her husband and he meekly said, yes dear and ate. She, who was destined to be the mother of all the living, became the instrument through which death came and this is the transgression she was guilty of. Instead of being used to bring life into the world, she also used to bring death into the world.

How is she to break free of the guilt of this transgression – of the sin which brought death into the world? Simple, she who brought death into the world, with the complicity of her man, can bring life into the world, also with the complicity of her man. This does not mean that every woman remains guilty of being the source of death until she becomes a mother. Paul is speaking in general terms and just so that he is not misunderstood, he finishes his admonition with a fourfold addendum. Let's look at it and I will move to my fourth point and to my conclusion.

He says she will be saved from the transgression- the blame, the guilt – of being the source of death, by becoming the source of life, and just so that we do not think that motherhood is the only path to salvation for women – and just so we would understand that he is not talking about women being saved for eternal salvation by becoming mothers, he adds four qualifiers to the equation: modesty, faith, love and holiness.

These four link up the initial part of his discussion, where he wants women not to use their sexual charms as a weapon or as a means to attract male attention (like we need any encouragement). To modesty he adds faith, so that unlike Eve, we would believe G-d's word and not seek to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a means of accessing salvation – we are to believe His Word, because this is the kind of faith which saves.

He moves on to love, which is not the antithesis of sex, but the is the true foundation upon which a marriage is built – sex is the secondary bond which can exist without love, but when it does it becomes destructive and turns sex into a selfish means of self gratification, rather than an act of love and procreation. Love, not sensuality will bond a man and woman together – when you are on the right path, everything will eventually turn out right – when you leave the right path everything will eventually crash and burn. Paul wants us to be in relationships which will succeed and not crash – oops have I just described most marriages in our secular world where the divorce rate is higher than the marriage rate – love fixes the problem, the lack of it is the problem.

Lastly, he speaks of holiness, which, again does not refer to a particular dress code, but to the direction and motivation of a life – one that seeks for the holy G-d and seeks to be holy and separate, in order to build a permanent link with a holy G-d. Holiness is the stubborn, persistent pursuit of the things of G-d, both spiritually and morally and without it, we grow weak and eventually lose our grip of G-d and His Word, which leads me to my last point and to my conclusion.

Women are nowhere in the Scriptures forbidden to teach in public. Women are nowhere forbidden to teach men. Here they are told not to interrupt a public teaching to ask questions and they are also told not to dominate over their husbands, either by doing for them what they should be doing for themselves (which is what taking authority means) or by trying to get them to learn what they should be motivated to learn on their own (it's called hounding and nagging them to do what they should know already that they should do). Women should love and respect and cherish the men who should also do the same. When one is not doing their job, the other should not do it for them. To draw anything else from this passage is simply not possible.

Gender is a gift and no gift of the Spirit is geared to it or excluded from it. There have always been prophetesses and ladies have always also functioned as elders (wise women). When you look at Proverbs 31, you are looking at a woman who functions like the CEO of a major corporation, not one who cringes in the shadows and is unable to make major decisions without her man.

Gender refers to how we arrange information and how we view the world, and has nothing to do with our leadership ability or giftedness. Why have more men been leaders and inventors and artists than women? Simple, women have always opted for the more important job – raising leaders, inventors and artists. When given the opportunity, ladies can function intellectually and artistically on par with any man. When leadership issues become gender issues, what was intended to a gender based set of checks and balances, becomes a contest for domination where both genders lose, oops have I just described how Islamic society flounders because it spends more time trying to hold its women under instead of allowing their giftedness to heal and enrich.

Eve's legacy in leadership is either the destructiveness of gender bias where the team is pulled apart by the difference between our basic approach to viewing the world or the creativity of gender harmony allows both approaches to viewing the world to give us the balance and the strength to prevent the enemy from splitting us apart and turning us against each other and misusing this same difference by focusing on misplaced sensuality instead of on the strengths and weaknesses we each possess for the betterment of the other.

Let's pray.