

And he became frightened and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of G-d.” (28:17)

In his second interpretation of this *pasuk*, *Rashi* cites the *Talmud* in *Chullin 91*, which relates that Yaakov traveled to Charan to find a wife, according to his parents' request. After a long journey, he reached Charan. When he arrived, he realized that he had passed by *Har Ha'Moriah* without having stopped to pray there. He was shocked at his oversight. How could he have passed the place where his father and grandfather used to say their *tefillos* and not take advantage of the opportunity to do the same?

He immediately turned around and began the journey all the way back to *Har Ha'Moriah*. As reward for his good intention, Hashem performed a miracle and *Har Ha'Moriah* came traveling towards him. We wonder why Hashem performed the miracle only after Yaakov had reached Charan and realized his error? What prevented Hashem from performing this at the more convenient time--when Yaakov was traveling towards *Har Ha'Moriah*?

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, cites *Yalkut Lekach Tov* on *Parashas Toldos* which applies an anecdote to explain how Yaakov could have bought the birthright from Eisav for only a bowl of lentils. Certainly the *bechorah* is valued at much more than a bowl of soup! The story is related that a Jew, who was in dire need of a large sum of money with which to arrange his daughter's marriage, went to his *Rebbe* for a blessing that he somehow obtain the necessary funds. The *Rebbe* blessed him and said, “Invest in the first business deal that you encounter.” The *chasid* left for home with a happy heart, secure in the feeling that Hashem would answer his prayers.

Along the way he stopped at an inn, where he met a group of businessmen. These were a group of highly successful power brokers who viewed the *chasid* with disdain. One of them, seeing an opportunity to have some fun, asked the *chasid* if he was interested in a business opportunity. Remembering the *Rebbe's* advice, the *chasid* quickly responded in the affirmative. The businessman said he was willing to sell his portion in *Olam Habah*, the World-to-Come, for one ruble. The *chasid* quickly took out the money and paid for the fellow's “share” in *Olam Habah*.

When the businessman returned home and related to his wife that he had sold his *Olam Habah* to a foolish passerby for one ruble, she became hysterical. “How could you do such a foolish thing?” she screamed at him. “Quickly, buy back your *Olam Habah*--regardless of the price!” I will not live one more minute with a man who would sell his *Olam Habah*.”

With no other recourse, the fellow went back in search of the *chasid* to demand that the sale be nullified. He found him and began negotiating for his *Olam Habah*. He was shocked that the *chasid* would not budge. He refused to “return” the *Olam Habah*, regardless of the price. The only option left for the businessman was to go to the *Rebbe* of the *chasid* and beg him to talk some sense into his disciple. The *Rebbe* listened to both sides of the story and said, “In truth, my

disciple is justified in not returning your *Olam Habah*. He bought it fairly. I think I can convince him to relinquish his title to your *Olam Habah*, however, if you pay him a specific amount of money." "How much?" asked the businessman. "I will pay any amount, just get me back my *Olam Habah*!" The *Rebbe* said, "My disciple needs a specific amount of money for his daughter's wedding. If you supply the necessary funds, I will see to it that your *Olam Habah* is returned to you." The businessman agreed to the sale, and everything was settled amicably; he received his *Olam Habah* in return for providing the necessary funds for the *chasid's* daughter's wedding.

As the businessman was leaving, he turned to the *Rebbe* and asked, "While I followed the *Rebbe's* instructions and furnished the funds that were asked of me, I still have a question. Yesterday this man paid one ruble for my *Olam Habah*. Today this same 'merchandise' is valued at thousands of rubles. Is that right?" The *Rebbe* countered, "Yes, my friend. The price is set according to the value of the merchandise. Yesterday, you were willing to 'give' it away for a mere ruble. This indicated that it had very little value to you. Today, when you realize that your marriage and your happiness are dependent upon this same merchandise, the price increases. Now it is worth much, much more to you!"

The same idea applies to the birthright. Originally, Eisav scoffed at the *bechorah*. It was worthless. A bowl of soup had more value than it. When Eisav later realized the blessings that the *bechorah* entailed, he screamed bitterly over his loss. At that moment, the value of the birthright increased commensurate with Eisav's appreciation of his forfeiture.

Let us return to our original question. When Yaakov passed by *Har Ha'Moriah* without pausing to pray, he demonstrated a lack of appreciation for the sanctity of the place. Thus, he decreased its "value." If the place did not have sufficient meaning for Yaakov, then it was not worth performing a miracle there. Afterwards, when Yaakov realized what he had missed, when he reflected upon the lost opportunity to pray at the holiest site, the prestige of *Har Ha'Moriah* increased. If the site was now so valuable that Yaakov was prepared to return to it, then Hashem would perform a miracle. The mountain would move towards him. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and so is its value.