



# REBBETZIN SHIRA

## SMILES

Faculty, OU Israel Center

# Strategic Stones

We find a curious theme throughout our *parashah*, the appearance of *avanim*, stones. In his flight from his brother Eisav, Yakov Avinu places stones around his head before going to sleep and then makes this stone into a *matzeivah* the next morning (*Bereisheet 28:11,18*). When Yakov arrives in the vicinity of *Charan*, he sees a group of shepherds gathered around a well waiting for help to remove the huge stone that rests upon the well. Yaakov Avinu lifts the stone with ease as Rachel Imeini approaches (*Bereisheet 29:2-10*). Finally, at the end of the *parashah*, we encounter Yaakov Avinu yet again, as he tells his family to collect stones and make a mound as a witness between him and Lavan (*Bereisheet 31:46-48*). What is the symbolism implicit in these stones?

The *Abarbanel* sees a strong interconnection between the stone Yakov used to build a *matzeivah* and the stone that he found

on the well. When consecrating the altar, Yakov Avinu davens for Hashem to escort him throughout his journey and return him safely to his father's house. Yaakov Avinu is afraid of the evil influences that he will inevitably find in the home of Lavan and wants to feel Hashem's protection as he goes into exile. His first experience upon arriving in *Charan* involves a well with a stone upon it. Yaakov Avinu sees this stone on the well as an echo of the stone he erected and takes it as a sign that Hashem is indeed with him, and he has nothing to fear.

Rav Breslover in *Lemachar Aatir*, views the three encounters with stones as a three-step process in Yaakov Avinu's journey as he begins to build his home. Placing the stones around his head before going to sleep reflects Yakov's vision for his family; the hope that the stones would all come together, that they would live together in peace and harmony. When he gets to *Charan*, he removes the stone from the well. The *Kli Yakar* understands this stone as a symbol of infertility; it



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must be removed so Yakov Avinu can build his family. This includes Yakov Avinu's *tefilot* removing all obstacles to merit the 12 tribes. Lastly, the stones of the *brit* with Lavan reflect the protection that Yaakov Avinu erected around his family, guarding them from outside influences.

Chazal teach that the word *even*, is a contraction of two words, *av* and *ben*, father and son. Each new generation is another 'stone' in building the world. We see this concept reflected in the custom to place a stone upon a grave, signifying continuity of life.

Thus, we see here the model to create a successful Jewish home. One must have a vision, daven for success to implement that vision, and create the necessary boundaries to protect and fortify what he builds. Only then can one be assured of a lasting structure with strong values that will endure. ■

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