



Supplication Success

As Yaakov Avinu approaches the end of his life, he speaks to his son Yosef Hatzadik with words of instruction and blessing. Additionally, Yaakov Avinu gifts him with the city of Shechem, “*Va’ani natati lecha Shchem achad al achecha asher lak-achti miyad ha’Emori becharbi u’bekashti* — And I have given you [Shechem] one portion over your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.” (*Bereisheet* 48:22) Why was it necessary to tell Yosef Hatzadik how he acquired this city?

Rav Nosson Wachtfogel *zt”l* sees a profound lesson being conveyed in this dialogue. Yaakov Avinu was imparting an important element of his legacy to his children, telling his son that he was only able to wrest the city from the clutches of the Emori through a tremendous amount of effort and exertion - i.e., if one truly

wants something he must work hard to acquire it. Rav Wachtfogel then adds an important caveat based on the teachings of Rav Yerucham Levovitz of Mir *zt”l*. Even if a person is very successful and has accomplished much, and even if he has reached the level of a great tzadik, if he does not **continuously work** on improving his character and strengthening his beliefs, he will not only stagnate, but he will lose what he has already acquired. Life has often been described as “walking up the down escalator”; if one does not apply himself consistently and deliberately to grow and develop, he will be drawn downwards. This is Yaakov Avinu’s key message to ensure his children’s success.

However, coupled with this idea is the insight offered by the Targum toward the end of the verse, as he translates, “*becharbi u’bekashti* — with my sword and with my bow,” as “*betzeloti u’veva’uti* — with my prayer and with my supplication.” Rabbi Avraham Yaffan *zt”l* understands that the Targum is not deviating from the plain meaning of the text. Although one must exercise the necessary efforts to achieve his goals, one must not forget that although we are required to extend the necessary *hishtadlut*, we must realize that our success in life is entirely dependent on the will of Hashem. We must always appeal to Hashem for His guiding hand to ensure that we thrive and excel. Yaakov Avinu lived this very reality, thus, the terms “prayer and supplication” are inherent in his plain words, “sword and bow.”

Rav Chaim Friedlander *zt”l* in *Siftei Chaim* notes that we find this duality, the dynamic between *hishtadlut* and tefillah, in a continuous

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theme running through the life of Rochel Imeinu. Rochel Imeinu offered her maidservant Bilha as a wife to Yaakov Avinu, so that she could raise surrogate children, she acquired the *duda'im*, the mandrake flowers known for their fertility benefits, from her sister as well, understanding that she was expected to employ a measure of *hishtadlut* to ameliorate her situation of barrenness.

This is the *mesorah* that Yosef Hatzadik received both from his mother, as well as from his father that we can harness for our own lives. As we engage in seeking medical, financial or educational advice in any area, we must remember that as much as *hishtadlut* is the required course of action for all of us living in the physical dimensions of this world, we must recognize that it is only through tefillah, and the beneficent Will of Hashem that we can achieve success in whatever we do. ■

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