



# GROWTH

## At The SHABBAT TABLE

### PARSHAT VAYETZE

#### Essentials

Some husbands express their love with flowers, others with jewelry or chocolate. Regardless of the gift, this week's Parsha offers a meaningful lesson to reflect on.

Leah's first three children are named Reuven, Shimon, and Levi. The Torah narrates that these names were given based off Leah's personal feelings of being less loved than her sister, Rachel, and as an expression of acknowledgement to G-d. Reuven was named so because "G-d has seen (ראה) my plight," said Leah. When her second son was born, she declared, "Hashem heard (שמע) that I was unloved," and named him Shimon. When Levi came along, Leah's reaction was "My husband will now accompany (ילוו) me, for I have borne him three sons."

These remarks from Leah bring out a powerful truth behind human psychology. More than any tangible gift, everyone ultimately wants these three elements. They want to be seen, they want to be heard, and they want companionship. This holds true between spouses, but really to everyone, in any form of a relationship. People need to be recognized, noticed, and appreciated. People desire company, not just in difficult times, but even in happy ones. Although giving emotional support doesn't cost anything, it is worth so much more.

Perhaps, we can suggest that it is only after these three crucial fundamentals that "Yehudah" – the truest form of appreciation (אודה) – can follow. Indeed, it is only in a real relationship that contains these basics in which bona fide gratitude emerges.

*So, instead of – or perhaps in addition to – swiping your credit card, make sure to provide your loved ones not just with what they want, but with what they need.*

(Based on an idea shared by R' Shlomo Farhi)

*"The most precious thing you can offer Hashem is your heart."*  
(R' Moshe Feinstein)

#### Genuine Kindness

R' Yaakov Mizrahi once shared a remarkable thought. Imagine the following scenario: someone hands his little son a dollar and instructs him to place it in the *tzedaka* box. The child, walking a few feet and depositing the dollar into the box, runs back to his father and asks, "Daddy, I just gave a dollar to *tzedaka*; can I have a prize?"

Consider the following two possible reactions that the father might have:

- *Umm... no.*
- *Wow!! You gave tzedaka! You're so great; what an unbelievable mitzvah you did! I'm going to take you to the toy store, and then for ice cream!*

What seems more reasonable? Most people would probably pick the first option instantly. Why should the kid earn a prize? Nothing was his! The father was the one who gave him the dollar, who took him to shul, who gave him the clothing he's wearing, and gave everything that the child needed to simply put the dollar in the *tzedaka* box! No credit here is given to the child since the father pretty much did everything! Why should he give him a prize for encouraging and giving him everything he needed to do almost nothing?? That isn't worthy of receiving a reward.

What's incredible is that if we think about it, the concept of G-d giving us reward for the mitzvot that we do is beyond comprehension. Hashem created a world (that He didn't have to), He created us (which He didn't have to), He gave us everything and continually gives us everything that we have (even though He doesn't need to), and everything we own belongs to Him; all He tells us is, "With what I give you, do this mitzvah." The natural response on our part would be, "Of course, Abba! Whatever you say – for sure!" And that would be it – end of story. But instead, Hashem looks at what we do and amazingly gifts us with tremendous rewards. For instance, a person can affix *mezuzot* to his home, and Hashem responds with a *WOW!!* Our Sages teach that the *mitzvah* of *mezuzah* carries tremendous rewards and "*segulot*" with it, such as longevity, protection, and wealth. "You put up *mezuzot* in your home?" Hashem says, "Wow! That's amazing! I'm going to shower you with blessings!" If you put things in perspective, this is simply unbelievable. *My house is Yours, the money with which I bought the mezuzah is Yours, and my koach and ability to perform the mitzvah is from You... what in the world did I do to deserve such reward??*

One of the ways we reference Hashem is "*haRachaman*" – the Merciful One. When we take a moment to just appreciate the infinite kindness that our Father bestows upon us – that He creates a world, gives us everything we need to do the mitzvot, and then rewards us for doing almost nothing – we come to understand what the meaning of true *chesed* really is...

#### Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Rahamim Ben Shifra Nina Bat Fenya Frida Bat Yaffa Miriam Bat Bakol Chana Bat Malka  
Yosef Haim Ben Elana Avigayil Bat Tehillah Menachem Ben Miriam Ariella Bat Hila Yitzhak Ben Naama  
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Dedicated in loving memory of Arkadiy Avraham ben Mazal