



WORDS TO THE WISE

Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

Vayetze 5783

Vayetze: Feeling Deeply Spiritual

There are many who struggle with spirituality. They don't feel very connected spiritually. Their religious experience becomes a search for deep spiritual moments, where they can connect and feel connected. There is a fascinating idea brought to light by R' Ovadiah Seforno (1475(?)-1541), referred to as simply *Seforno*, at the end of *Vayetze* which gives a new perspective on how to unearth less than obvious spiritual moments.

After two difficult decades in the house of *Lavan*, *Yaakov* leaves *Lavan* only to be pursued and threatened by him and his sons. Finally, *Lavan and Yaakov* broker a treaty and agree to part ways in peace without conflict. The verse (32:1) makes a point to mention that the morning after the treaty, before *Lavan* takes leave of his family, he kisses his daughters and his grandchildren, and blesses them.

The *Seforno* explains that the Torah includes this part of the story to teach us that the wholehearted blessing of a father to his children is significant and effective. The reason he gives is striking. He explains, a blessing that emanates from the heart of a *Tzelem Elokim* (man who was fashioned in the image of G-d) is not to be trivialized. Our sages teach us that *Lavan* was by no means a pious man. During the *Pesach Seder* we proclaim, "*Lavan Bikesh La'akor Es Hakol*". *Lavan* intended to uproot the Jewish nation in its infancy.

All this aside, the *Seforno* maintains he was a human being created in the image of G-d. Therefore, the sincere, deep, and emotional wish he expresses for the wellbeing of his family is a valuable and effective blessing.

A deep spiritual moment is not always obvious. The *Seforno* teaches us that when we feel deeply for others, we connect to our soul. This is because it is our soul, made in the image of G-d, that allows us to deeply feel for others. Therefore, when a parent deeply feels for his child, the parent experiences a genuine spiritual moment- a moment that in a sense connects him to G-d. Moments of deep feeling like this, should be recognized and cherished. When we appreciate these sorts of moments for what they are, we unearth an entirely new spiritual reality.