ב"ה
Torah TidbiTs
ISSUE 1686
NOVEMBER 28TH 2026
י"ח כסלו תשפ"ז

וישלח
VAYISHLACH


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וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר
בראשית ל"ב:כ"ה

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT VAYISHLACH ZMANIM:
CANDLES **3:59 PM** • HAVDALA **5:15 PM** • RABBEINU TAM **5:52 PM**

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IMPORTANT REMINDERS

The first light of Chanukah is Friday night December 4th. Chanukah Sameach!



COVER PAGE

Submitted by **Phillip Shalom Alexander**

I'm sending you a photo shot by my eldest grandson, Lt. R', who captured the winter sunrise while deployed with his armored unit in Gaza last winter. Wishing you all Besorot Tovot and Shabbat Shalom!

CANDLE LIGHTING
AND HAVDALA TIMES



	VAYISHLACH		VAYEISHEV	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	3:59	5:15	3:59	5:15
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:18	5:18	4:17	5:18
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:18	5:16	4:17	5:16
Gush Etzion	4:16	5:15	4:15	5:15
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:15	5:16	4:15	5:15
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:16	5:15	4:15	5:15
Netanya	4:15	5:15	4:15	5:15
Be'er Sheva	4:18	5:17	4:17	5:17
Rehovot	4:16	5:16	4:16	5:16
Petach Tikva	3:59	5:16	3:59	5:16
Ginot Shomron	4:15	5:15	4:14	5:15
Haifa / Zichron	4:04	5:14	4:03	5:14
Gush Shiloh	4:14	5:14	4:13	5:14
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:16	5:16	4:15	5:16
Givat Zeev	4:19	5:15	4:19	5:15
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:16	5:16	4:15	5:16
Ashkelon	4:18	5:18	4:17	5:18
Yad Binyamin	4:17	5:16	4:16	5:16
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:06	5:12	4:05	5:12
Golan	4:11	5:12	4:11	5:12
Nahariya/Maalot	4:02	5:13	4:01	5:13
Afula	4:13	5:13	4:12	5:13

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Vayishlach - 5:52 PM • Vayeishev - 5:52 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalyim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat, Nahariya, Maalot and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Erchin 11

OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM
Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Nov. 25 - Dec. 5 | 15 - 25 Kislev

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:22-5:29
Sunrise	6:16-6:24
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:51-8:57
Magen Avraham	8:12-8:18
Sof Zman Tefila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	9:42-9:47
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:25-11:29
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	11:55-11:59
Plag Mincha	3:31
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:40-4:39

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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel | aberman@ouisrael.org

As I have written about previously, my family made *aliyah* when I was nine years old. We arrived in Kedumim on a Thursday, and my parents insisted that before our first Shabbat in Israel began, we would have already visited three places. We went to Yerushalayim to visit the Kotel, and from there we drove to *Kever Rachel*, and then to *Maarat HaMachpela*.

That day really helped shape who I am today. My parents had taken us from America, from New York, where we had the Empire State Building, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Statue of Liberty, and wanted to impress upon us that now that we were in Israel, this is a place where the landmarks could not be more different. That we were now home, where our history is ingrained in the Land itself, where everywhere we step, we are stepping somewhere that belongs to our great-grandfathers and our great-grandmothers.

It was when we got to *Kever Rachel* that I saw the Torah come to life. In Parshat Vayishlach, we read about Rachel Imeinu passing away and being buried "on the road to Efrat" (Bereshit 35:19). Standing there, I could see that she truly is buried right there on the side of the road. Within our first few weeks in Israel, we also visited *Kever Binyamin*, which is not far from Kedumim, near Kfar Saba. Binyamin is also born in this week's *parsha*, at the very same time that Rachel Imeinu passes away. To read the *parsha* and then stand at Binyamin's *kever* and at Rachel Imeinu's *kever* is an experience I find difficult to express in words. But this is the reality of living in Israel. You are face to face with you and your people's history at every moment.

Binyamin is the last of the twelve *shevatim* to be born, the twelve tribes that make up the Jewish people. Although we don't know where every tribe has gone, more and more Jews are finding their way back to Israel every day. The different tribes teach us the importance of the fact that each one of us has our own unique face, our own unique story, our own unique name, and our own unique personality, and when we put it all together, that is what makes up *Klal Yisrael*.

A number of years ago, I had a meeting with Stuart Hershkowitz, President of OU Israel. He told me, "Avi, people do not know enough about what OU Israel does. The average person hears about the OU and says, it's about kosher and food. You're doing an amazing job of getting the word out with your column in Torah Tidbits, but we need to do more. People want to donate

ישראל
The OU Israel family
wishes Mazal Tov to
Rabbi Eli & Rebbetzin Zemira
Ozarowski and family
on the marriage of
their daughter
Temima to Shachar Shaya

to things they understand, to things they feel are important to support. If we don't tell people enough about what we're doing, how can they support our initiatives?"



He was 100% right. *Baruch Hashem*, the proceeds of OU *kashrut* go toward covering most of the overhead of our organization. But ultimately, if we don't raise the money for the programs themselves, to build, support, and expand them, then we can't keep them going. So we created a page in Torah Tidbits called "OU - Beyond Kashrut." We called it that because we understand that *kashrut* is a big part of what we do, but there is so much happening beyond the OU's *kashrut*. I go to communities and meet with groups that are really surprised when they hear about the incredible activities we are doing, whether with the English-speaking community in Israel or with teens at risk. Our incredible OU Israel staff work hard every single week putting the page together, and they have been doing so for about four years, each week highlighting a different thing OU Israel is doing.

And yet, last week's "OU - Beyond Kashrut" was the final one. That is not because we have stopped doing endless activities beyond *kashrut*. It is because of what I wrote above about the tapestry of the Jewish people, where each person has a different face, a different personality, and a different job. After four years of "OU - Beyond Kashrut," we realized that we want to talk about the faces, the people, and the names that are actually running these incredible activities. The "OU - Beyond Kashrut" page was an opportunity to talk about the program, but we want to show more, talk more deeply, and focus on the unique people leading these programs.

A page about the program doesn't allow us to really show the tremendous amount of hard work put in by the OU Israel team every single week, every single day, every single hour, around the clock, to make sure these incredible activities happen. And so I felt that the right thing to do is to show you how incredible these people are and to tell you a little about them: where they were born, what year they made *aliyah*, which program they work in, what excites them most, what gets them up in the morning, and a whole list of other questions.

Today, OU Israel has close to 500 employees across all of our different programs, and I want you to get to know them,

Mazal Tov!
to Sherry Luber and Family
on the engagement of their daughter and sister
Adina to Yechezkel

because one of the biggest blessings in my life is working with the most incredible people in the world. We want to share with all of our readers a greater sense of how incredible these people are, people who wake up in the morning with a purpose greater than themselves and go to sleep at night knowing that they have accomplished a tremendous amount for the Jewish people. Maybe they live down the block from you. Maybe they are the son or daughter of a friend of yours. Maybe they go to the gym with you. Maybe you go to the same *shiur*. Maybe you go to the same restaurant (OU-certified, of course). Whatever it is, the more we get to know these different people, the greater the chance that you will understand how great they are, so that I am not the only one who knows. And I know that I don't thank them enough for all they do, so I hope that having their pictures, their names, and their stories in a new column in Torah Tidbits will be a small expression of our gratitude for them.

The same way that *Klal Yisrael* comes from the twelve tribes, so does the OU Israel team, each one in their unique way, with their unique name, their unique family, and their unique passions, whether they work with Israeli teens at risk or with the *olim* community. Each one is inspiring, each one is uplifting, and each one is doing their own part to make up the beautiful tapestry of *Klal Yisrael*. I look forward to hearing your feedback about our different staff members, and please make sure to tell them as well how much you appreciate the great work they are doing.

My email appears at the end of this column for you to be able to contact me. As I mentioned, one of our goals is that you should know not only the people, but also the great activities they run. As we come toward the end of the fiscal year, I hope you too will consider making your donation to OU Israel, because *im ein kemach, ein Torah*, if there is no flour, there is no Torah (Pirkei Avot 3:17). We truly need your support in order to continue our activities and to take them to the next level. I thank you in advance, and I hope you enjoy getting to know my staff. I love them, and I am sure you will as well.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

As Chanuka approaches, we want to help our over 200 poor and needy families so that they too can have a joyful, light-filled holiday.



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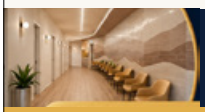

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Hilchot Shabbat Q&A

with Rabbi Eli Ozarowski



QUESTION: Is it permitted to have a non-Jewish household worker, such as a cleaner or aide, do household chores in the home on Shabbat?

ANSWER: Activities that are permitted for a Jew to perform on Shabbat may generally be performed by a non-Jewish worker as well. However, the worker may not perform activities that are prohibited on Shabbat on behalf of the Jewish household.

EXPLANATION: It is forbidden to ask a non-Jew to perform activities that are prohibited on Shabbat, even when those activities are forbidden only rabbinically (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 276:1; 307:4). This prohibition applies even when the activity is being performed for the benefit of the Jewish household. However, activities that are permitted on Shabbat, such as cleaning up after a meal in a manner permitted on Shabbat (e.g., washing dishes to be used later on Shabbat in a permitted manner), may be performed by the worker as well.

Regarding payment, a non-Jew may be paid for work performed on Shabbat when the payment is included as part of a larger arrangement covering both Shabbat and weekday work, such as a weekly or monthly salary (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 306:4).

There is also a concern when a non-Jew performs prohibited activities openly in the Jewish household, even if doing so is solely for their own personal benefit, since it may appear that they are performing the activity on behalf of the Jewish household (Mishnah Berurah 276:11). For example, a non-Jewish worker should preferably not cook food on the family's stove or perform other visibly prohibited activities in the presence of Jewish household members.

If the worker is assisting a weak elderly person or someone who is ill, there may be additional leniencies that permit the worker to perform certain activities on their behalf, including some activities that would be prohibited for a Jew to perform on Shabbat (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 307:5, 328:17). The applicable leniencies depend on the person's condition and the specific activity involved, so the details should be discussed with a halachic authority.

Rabbi Eli Ozarowski serves as editor of the Tzurba M'Rabanan English halacha series, as well as the editor of the written material for the Semichas Chaver halacha program. He is also the author of the OU's Torat Imecha Halacha Series for women and a translator for the Steinsaltz Mishna series. Rabbi Ozarowski received semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and holds an M.A. from the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. He lives in Mitzpeh Yericho with his wife, Zemira, who serves as Director of the Women's Division at OU Israel, together with their nine children. Rabbi Ozarowski gives many shiurim in the community and is also frequently consulted on halachic matters.

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RABBI SHMUEL SILBER
Executive Vice President, Orthodox Union

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Taking the Reigns

Jacob became very frightened and was distressed, so he divided the people who were with him and the flocks and the cattle and the camels into two camps. And he said, "If Esau comes to one camp and strikes it down, the remaining camp will escape." (Bereishis 32:8-9)

Yaakov prepares for the overwhelming reunion. Will Esav want war or peace? Has Esav forgiven his brother, or does he still harbor animosity? These are the questions swirling around Yaakov's head. Rashi explains that Yaakov prepared for this encounter in various ways. He prayed to God for help, split the camp in anticipation for war, and sent gifts to appease Esav. Although Rashi mentions prayer first, Yaakov, in fact, prepares for war first and only afterwards prays. Rav Zalman Sorotzkin (1881-1966) in his work titled *Oznayim LaTorah* asks a simple question, *"Why didn't Yaakov pray first? Isn't prayer the most instinctive, reflexive response to danger and difficulty? Why does he first split the camp and then only later turn to spiritual options?"*


Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin zt"l

Rav Sorotzkin answers that Teffilah, prayer, requires a certain level of *"yishuv ha'daas,"* inner quietude and concentration. When Yaakov hears that Esav is coming to meet him with 400 men, he is consumed with worry and fright for his children and wives. He knows he can't best Esav on the battlefield and realizes that at this point flight is no longer an option. *Teffilah*, true dialogical connection with Hashem requires concentration and some measure of inner peace. Yaakov doesn't have it and so he doesn't pray. It is only after he takes other steps and feels a bit more "prepared" for this encounter that he could reach out and converse with Hashem.

Perhaps, the Torah is teaching us an additional lesson as well. When we

OU ישראל

The OU Israel family sends heartfelt condolences to

Yael Tamari
Director OU Israel Free Spirit: Birthright Israel

and to

Aryeh Frankel
Founder and CEO of Israel Destination

and families

on the passing of their Father

BARRY FRANKEL z"l

Shiva at Pitum HaKetoret 56/1 Efrat

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

encounter a challenge, perhaps the step before (or at least concurrent with) prayer is action. When we encounter difficult or tumultuous circumstances, we must ask ourselves, what can I do to help myself? How can I own this situation to make it better? All too often, we rely on others to solve our problems and fix that which is broken. If you want something done in life, roll up your sleeves and get it done yourself. To an extent, we must take this approach with Hashem. Of course, the Ribbono Shel Olam is always here to help us. But what He wants more than anything is for us to own our circumstances and engage in dynamic activity to help ourselves and better our world. He doesn't only want us to pray; He wants us to act. Hashem gives us the incredible opportunity to partner with Him to advance ourselves and our world. The reality is we can't accomplish anything without God's assistance and providence. But we must take the first step. We can't ask Hashem to act if we are unwilling to act ourselves.

Perhaps, this was the dynamic unfolding with Yaakov Avinu. Yaakov realized he needed to prepare in these three ways. He understood that teffilah was an absolute necessity. Yet, Yaakov understood that there is decisive action he could take to help himself, take ownership over his circumstances, and act. And so, he splits the camps in preparation for war, sends a beautiful gift to Esav and then says, "Hashem, I have done everything I can, I need your help. Where my reach ends, is where Yours begins. *Hatzileyni Na,* save me and my family from these difficult circumstances."

We all encounter challenges, difficulties, and moments of uncertainty. In those moments, it is tempting to wait for someone else to solve our problems or to place the responsibility in the hands of Hashem. Yaakov Avinu teaches us that Hashem is always with us and always ready to help, we must be willing to help ourselves. We must take ownership of our circumstances, When life becomes overwhelming, we must have the courage to split the camp by doing what is in our hands and then placing what is beyond our reach in the hands of Hashem. ■

Rabbi Shmuel Silber has served the Orthodox Union (OU) as its Executive Vice President since November 2026. As the executive vice president, Rabbi Silber is responsible for representing the OU's vision on both Torah and public policy, and providing hashkafic and halachic guidance within the organization and beyond. Prior to joining the OU, Rabbi Silber served for 23 years as the rabbi of Suburban Orthodox Congregation Toras Chaim, building it into one of Baltimore's most vibrant and dynamic kehillahs. Rabbi Silber is also the founder and dean of the Institute for Jewish Continuity (IJC), which provides contemporary Torah learning with Chassidic influences for adults at all levels. As the Founding Rabbi of the Berger Towers community in Katamonim, Jerusalem, Rabbi Silber oversees the community's rabbinic leadership and hashkafic direction. Rabbi Silber received semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University and holds a master's degree in secondary Jewish education from the Azrieli Graduate School.

May the learning in this issue of Torah Tidbits be לעילוי נשמת

הרבנית שולמית דולגין ע"ה
Rebbitzin Shirley G. Dolgin a"h

Beloved mother, grandmother & great-grandmother
on her 20th Yahrzeit, 18 Kislev

The Dolgin, Glasser, Weinstock and Slomiansky families

יהי זכרה ברוך

O! U SHOULD KNOW...

Sara Berelowitz

Director of HR | 27 Years at OU Israel



"I take each OU Israel employee through his/her work life journey. I am here to support employees, listen to their needs and give them tools to succeed. My goal is that each and every employee is part of the organizations success in helping to shape Klal Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael."

WHAT'S A PLACE IN ISRAEL THAT HOLDS A SPECIAL PLACE IN YOUR HEART, AND WHY?

The way walking down the steps to the Kotel. It brings me back to the first day in my gap year when I saw the Kotel for the very first time.

WHERE ARE YOU ORIGINALLY FROM?

Brooklyn NY, I made Aliyah in 1980

WHEN YOU'RE NOT WORKING, WHAT WOULD WE MOST LIKELY FIND YOU DOING?

Spending time with my family.

WHAT IS AN "ONLY IN ISRAEL" MOMENT YOULL NEVER FORGET?

When a bus was stuck in traffic for hours because of a demonstration, a young woman got off the bus and bought pizza for everyone and of course would not accept money.

WHAT TRADITION OR SPECIAL OCCASION DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO EVERY YEAR?

Yom HaAtzmaut!✡

IS THERE A FOOD OR DISH THAT INSTANTLY REMINDS YOU OF HOME?

Stuffed cabbage - it was a tradition in my Grandparents' Sukkah.

WHAT'S SOMETHING ABOUT YOU THAT MOST PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO LEARN?

I learn the Daf Yomi and I am looking forward to finishing my first cycle.

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ALIYA BY ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

Yaakov returns to the Land of Israel. He is fearful of a confrontation with Esav. He prepares by dividing his entourage. A man fights him through the night, changing his name to Israel from Yaakov at dawn. Yaakov sends gifts to Esav to appease him. Esav runs, hugs Yaakov, kisses him and cries. Yaakov spurns Esav's request that they settle together. Dinah is raped by Shechem in Shechem. Shimon and Levi kill the men of the city. Yaakov arrives at Beit El, the place of his ladder dream and builds an altar. Rachel dies giving birth to Binyamin. Reuven lies with Bilha. Yaakov is reunited with Yitzchak. Esav's lineage is outlined.

1ST ALIYA (32:4-13)

Yaakov sends messengers to Esav: Tell Esav that his servant Yaakov has been with Lavan. We have much flock. Word comes back that Esav is approaching with 400 men. Yaakov is afraid; splits his entourage, so at least half will survive. And he prays: While I am undeserving, You promised that my progeny would be numerous.

Yaakov is worried about a confrontation with Esav. So, he sends messengers ahead to Esav to test the waters.

He is nervous for good reason. Esav wanted to kill Yaakov after he stole his blessing. Rivka told Yaakov to flee for his life and that she would send word when the coast was clear, when Esav's anger abated. He never heard from her. Is the coast clear? Or is Esav still so upset that he will come after me to kill me?

Yaakov sends messengers. And gets the word that Esav is preparing for a confrontation.

Yaakov is worried for good reason. The coast is not clear. He prepares for the confrontation. He splits his entourage so at least half will survive. And he prays.

But his concern is a bit surprising. If he was waiting to hear from his mother that the coast was clear but never got word from her, why then is he returning to the Land of Israel and the inevitable confrontation with Esav?

Well, because he was told by G-d that He will be with him and that it is time to return to the Land. No word from his mother, but he has Divine assurance. That should set his mind at ease.

Yaakov's fear, in spite of Divine assurance, is surprising. Why is he worried? In facing Esav's possible murderous intent, isn't Divine assurance enough? Do you need to split the camp, to pray, to take necessary steps for confrontation? Trust

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in G-d.

Yaakov's actions are a lesson. Divine assurance is wonderful. But not sufficient. I am still doing whatever I can to deal with this possible violent event. Split the camp. Prayer. Gifts.

Man does not live by Divine assurances alone. We need strategy, preparation, negotiation. And an army.

Perhaps Divine assurances only work when we do all we can. May He Waits for us to do all we can. Isn't that what Yaakov is teaching us.

Yaakov prepares for war.



2ND ALIYA (32:14-30)

Yaakov prepares gifts of his livestock for Esav with the message: from your servant Yaakov. A man fights Yaakov overnight, wounding his thigh. At dawn the man tells him his name is Yisrael, for he fought G-d and man and prevailed.

Yaakov attempts to appease Esav with gifts. Why does he think livestock gifts with a gift card attached, "from your servant Yaakov" will cool Esav's murderous intent?

Perhaps Yaakov is sending a message: the blessing I stole from you was a dud. Never happened. So, no reason to be angry.

What was that bracha? "G-d will give you of the fat of the Land, much grain and wine. And you will rule: your brother will bow to you." I received a 3-part bracha: agricultural success, political power and dominance over your brother. Let's see what happened with that bracha.

Well, none of it happened! No agricultural success; all I have are animals. No Land. Certainly, no fat of the Land.

And power? I have been a migrant worker with Lavan.

And who is bowing to whom? "From your servant Yaakov".

3 strikes – no fat of the Land. No power. And you are the master, not me. So, no need to fuss over a bracha that was a blank.



3RD ALIYA (32:31-33:5)

Yaakov wakes with a limp, hence the prohibition of eating the sciatic nerve. He sees Esav. Divides his family. Esav runs to him, hugs, kisses and cries.

The struggle with the man ends with a limp. This struggle is immortalized by the prohibition of the sciatic nerve.

This is the only mitzvah from the epoch of the Avot besides brit mila. Any story immortalized by a mitzvah demands attention.

Why would we immortalize Yaakov's fight over night with a man, or maybe angel, that resulted in two things: a change of his name to Yisrael and a limp?

The lesson is perhaps a sober one. The name Israel, the people Israel, will live a confronted life, a life of opposition, of struggle. Oh, we will emerge, persevere, survive the night. But with a limp.

Divine promises are not of Gan Eden; our history is not of sunny days. The promises are broad, undefined, open ended. Like "I will be with you". "You will inherit the Land". Wonderful assurances. But broad. What do they mean? We will persist. Fine.

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But how? Unscathed? No. Limping.

4TH ALIYA (33:6-20)

Esav is urged to accept Yaakov's gifts. Esav offers that they live in brotherhood. Yaakov demurs, sending Esav ahead, hinting he will catch up. He turns instead toward the Land of Israel. He dwells in Sukkot and then in Shechem. He builds an altar and calls in the name of G-d.

Esav's overtures for reconciliation are tepidly welcome by Yaakov. He is undoubtedly relieved with Esav's embrace. But he totally deflects Esav's desire to dwell together. As if to say: I am happy to not be killed by you. But we are on different paths. You go your way, I'll go mine.

A clear and definitive separation is what was advocated by Sarah with Yitzchak and Yishmael and now by Rivka with Yaakov and Esav. And they were right. They determined Jewish history.

Both Yishmael and Esav will be great nations. But our destiny is different.

5TH ALIYA (34:1-35:11)

Dina is raped by Shechem in Shechem. The brothers claim they will only ally with people who are circumcised. While the men are recovering Shimon and Levi kill them all. Yaakov is upset. But they counter; "can they make our sister a harlot?" G-d tells Yaakov to go to Beit El and make the promised altar. He does. G-d appears to him and tells him his name is Yisrael not Yaakov. And that nations and Kings will come from him.

The story of the rape of Dina is the first story of the next generation. And the brother's rhetorical comment will be a clarion for the rest of the book. "Do you expect us to allow them to make our sister be a harlot?" meaning, and we, her brothers stand idly by? No. Brothers stand up for siblings.

What an ironic statement. We must stand up for Dina. And then we sell our brother Yosef. That is rather selective standing up.

Yaakov's reaction to the slaughter of Shechem is also instructive. He criticizes the violence for it will impede good relations with the people of the Land.

Yaakov's life contrasts dramatically from that of Avraham and Yitzchak. His life is one confrontation after another. With Esav. Then with Lavan. Then with Esav again. Now with the people of Shechem.

He dealt with the confrontations with guile. Not violence. He bought the birthright. He co-opted the bracha intended for Esav. He dealt with Lavan on his terms, orchestrating his own great wealth. He successfully avoided a violent confrontation with Esav.

He is not happy with this violence in Shechem. But the brothers get the last word. They stood up for their sister.

Yaakov serves as a paradigm of Jewish history. Our history will face confrontations. Many and varied. We will need to be wily, will need to be of guile to endure, to survive. There is no illusion that a



covenant with G-d ensures an unconfronted life.

But, Yaakov, while favoring crafty, resourceful solutions, is left speechless when confronted by the brothers. Sometimes words do not suffice and taking up arms is the way to protect our sister. Yaakov has no adequate response.



6TH ALIYA (35:12-36:19)

G-d affirms the promise of the Land to Yaakov. Yaakov builds altars, traveling south. Rachel dies while giving birth to Binyamin. Reuven lies with Bilha. Yaakov goes to Chevron, to Yitzchak. Yitzchak dies at age 180, buried by Esav and Yaakov.

Rachel dies in childbirth. She is buried where she died, on the road. Not in Chevron. Yaakov, many years later, in Egypt, confesses to Yosef that he buried Rachel quickly, not in the place of the other patriarchs and matriarchs, in Ma'arat Hamachpela. Yaakov's life, besides being one of persistent confrontation, is one of personal tragedy. Another paradigm of Jewish history; our history will be one of confrontation and of tragedy.



7TH ALIYA (36:20-43)

Esav's descendants are enumerated: nations and kings.

As with Yishmael, Esav's family is listed in great detail, a total of 44 verses. Perhaps to establish its prominence. Yishmael and Esav are great nations. Great kings and nations.

And to establish a contrast.

Esav's greatness is of this worldly nature. Great kings, great nations. Jewish greatness will lie in its covenant, its relationship to the Creator and in its spirit. ■

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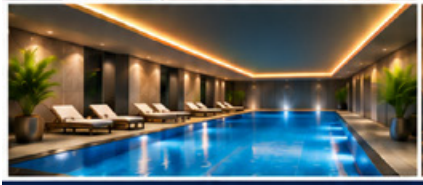





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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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"Nameless"

There is something special about meeting up with an old friend that one hasn't seen in years. I recently had just such a special experience, when I spent a weekend in a community where a friend I hadn't seen in ten years resides.

Of course, we spent much of the time catching up with each other's lives. He showed me a book he had just written, the product of many years of research on his part. He gave me the book as a gift, and I opened it to find that it was dedicated to a rabbi who had passed away some years ago, who had made *aliyah* to Israel together with the famed *alter*, or old man, of Slobodka, Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, in the mid-1920s.

I asked him what his connection was to the old rabbi. He told me that this rabbi was one of those anonymous scholars who can be found only in Jerusalem. He was someone with no official position, who lived in poverty, but who would gladly teach any young yeshiva student who would ask for time with him. He was almost nameless, and, in the world's eyes, was insignificant, although my friend attributes all of his considerable Talmudic erudition to him. In gratitude, he dedicated his book to this sad soul, who now has a "name."

Reflecting upon this, I soon realized that I too had similar experiences, and that many people have influenced me who are, in a sense, nameless. I recall, for example, the rabbi, diminutive in stature but superlative in pedagogical skill, who was retained by my parents to teach me Talmud during summer vacations. I studied with him intensely in my early teens and then forgot about him until relatively recently, when I came to realize how much of my modest skill in Talmud I owe to him.

In this week's Torah portion, *Vayishlach*, we encounter just such a person. She unobtrusively walked onto the stage of the drama of the biblical patriarchs and matriarchs in the portion we read three weeks ago, *Chayei Sarah*. There we read (*Genesis* 24:59) "... And they sent away Rebecca, their sister, and her nursemaid, and Abraham's servant..." We learn of this nursemaid's existence, but we are not told her name. Indeed, we do not hear of her at all again.

That is, not until this week's Torah

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portion. This Shabbat, we will read (*Genesis* 35:8), "And Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; and the name of it was called the Oak of Weeping." We learned that her name was Deborah and that Jacob and his family sorely grieved and mourned for her.

It is left to our imagination, and to the *midrash* and commentaries, to speculate about her activities and relationships during the many years from the time she escorted her mistress to the land of Canaan until her sad demise so many years later.

Our rabbis tell us that she was sent by Rebecca to bring Jacob from his long exile in the land of Haran back to the land of Canaan. After all, when Rebecca encouraged Jacob to flee, she promised him that when it was safe, she would "send for you and fetch you." (*Genesis* 27:45). It was Deborah whom she sent to retrieve Jacob, to bring Jacob back.

Deborah then spent much time, probably many years, with Jacob and Rachel and Leah and their growing family. As is evident from the fact that her death occasioned such profound grief that it is memorialized in this week's Torah portion, she must have been much loved. I always imagine that she served as the grandmother figure for all the sons and the daughter of Jacob who grew up without the advantage of a nearby *bubby*.

For me, as for the old friend with whom I was briefly reconnected this past weekend, Deborah is an archetype of the nameless soul who makes a powerful impact upon us, and who is forgotten for a very long time until we finally remember him and "name" him. Rebecca's nursemaid had no name when we first learned of her existence. Only when she passes on, do we finally learn, under the Oak of Weeping, that her name was Deborah.

The name of my summertime teacher from so long ago? We called him "Rabbi Abramchik," and although I remember him fondly, and he clearly was a major influence in my life, I never knew his first name until he passed away several years ago. It was only then that I learned from his obituary that his first name was Yakov.

Perhaps it is of Deborah and of Rabbi Abramchik that the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said in the Name of the Almighty:

"I will give them, in My House
And within My walls,
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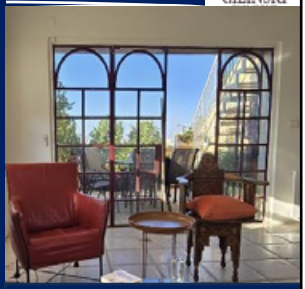



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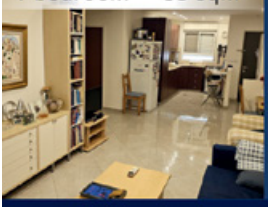

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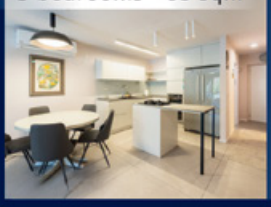

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Jacob Wrestling

The story of Jacob's wrestling match with an unnamed adversary, alone at night, is surely one of the most enigmatic in the entire Torah. With whom was Jacob wrestling? The text itself calls him "a man". According to the prophet Hosea, it was an angel. For the Sages, it was the guardian angel of Esau. Jacob himself had no doubt. It was God. He called the place of the encounter Peniel, "because I have seen God face-to-face, and yet my life has been spared" (Gen. 32:30) The adversary himself implies as much when he gives Jacob the name Israel, "for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

The passage resists easy interpretation, yet it holds the key to understanding Jewish identity. It is not we, the readers, who give it this significance but the Torah itself. For it was then, as dawn was about to break, that Jacob acquired the name that his descendants would bear throughout eternity. The people of the covenant are not the children of Abraham or Isaac but "the children of Israel." It was only with the division of the kingdom and the Assyrian conquest of the north, that those who remained were called generically Yehudah (the southern kingdom), and thus *Yehudim* or, in English, Jews.

Names in the Torah – especially a new name given by God – are not mere labels but signals of character or calling. The moment at which Jacob became Israel contains the clue to who we are. To be sure, our ancestors were later called on to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" but we never lost that earlier appellation. We are the people who struggled with God and with man and yet survived. What does this mean?

One way into the text (to be sure, only one of many) is to ask: what happened next? By reasoning backward, from effect to cause, we may gain an insight into what transpired that night.

The events of the next day are a little short of astonishing. We have been prepared for a tense encounter. Hearing that Esau was coming to meet him with a force of four hundred men, Jacob was "acutely afraid and distressed" (Gen. 32:7). He made elaborate preparations. As the Sages said, he adopted three tactics: diplomacy (he sent lavish gifts

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of herds and flocks), prayer ("Rescue me, I pray, from my brother's hand, from the hand of Esav. I am afraid…") and readiness for war (dividing his household into two camps so that one at least would survive).

Yet when Esau finally appears, all the fears turn out to be unfounded. He "ran" to meet Jacob, threw his arms around his neck, kissed him and wept. There is no anger, animosity or threat of revenge in Esau's behaviour (to be sure, there are midrashic traditions that suggest otherwise, but we are concerned here with the plain sense of the narrative). That is not to say that Jacob's fears were irrational. They were not. After all, Esau had vowed revenge twenty-two years before.[1] Esau, however, is an impulsive man who lives in the mood of the moment. He has none of Cassius' "lean and hungry look" or Iago's cold calculation. He is quick to anger, quick to forget. The anticlimax when the brothers meet reminds us of Roosevelt's famous words that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

Second, and far more consequential, is Jacob's behaviour when the brothers meet. It is little short of extraordinary. First, he bows down to the ground seven times, prostrating himself before Esau. Each of his family members does likewise: "Then the maidservants and their children came forward and bowed down. Leah and her children came forward and bowed down. And last, Joseph and Rachel approached and bowed down" (Gen. 33:6-7). The threefold repetition is significant.

No less striking is Jacob's use of language. Five times he calls Esau *adoni*, "my lord"

1. "The days of mourning for my father are approaching," he said to himself, "and then I will kill my brother Jacob" (Gen. 27:41).



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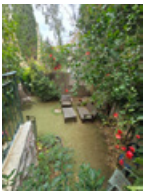



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(in the previous chapter, he tells his servants three times to use the same word to Esau). Twice he calls himself Esau's *eved*, "servant," (and four times in the previous chapter tells his servants to do likewise). As with his physical gesture of sevenfold prostration, so with his sevenfold use of the words *adon* and *eved*, this is the choreography of self-abasement.

How are we to connect this with the wrestling match of the previous night? Surely Jacob had won a victory over his adversary. At the very least he had refused to let him go until he blessed him. The new name implied that henceforth Jacob should have no doubts about his ability to survive any conflict. A man who has "wrestled with God and with men and has overcome" is not one who needs to bow down to anyone or call him "my lord." We would have expected Jacob to show a new-found confidence rather than a wholly surprising servility.

Nor is this all. When Esau at first refuses the gifts (with the words, "I have plenty [*yesh li rav*]; let what is yours remain yours"), Jacob replies in the following extraordinary words:

"No, please, if I have found favour in your eyes, accept this gift [*minchah*] from me, for seeing your face is like seeing the face of God, as you have shown me such favour. Please accept my present [*birkhati*, literally "my blessing"] that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me, and I have everything [*yesh li khol*]." (Gen. 33:10-11)

Why has the "gift" become a "blessing"? In what conceivable way is seeing the face of Esau like "seeing the face of God"? And what exactly does Jacob mean by altering Esau's words, "I have plenty," into his own "I have everything"?

There are other resonances in the passage. The most significant has to do with the word *panim*, "face." Jacob's words to Esau, "to see your face is like seeing the face of God," clearly echo his remark after the wrestling match, "He named the place Peniel, saying, 'for I have seen God face-to-face and yet my life has been spared.'" Altogether, chapters 32 and 33 (the preparations for the meeting, the night-time struggle, and the meeting itself) echo time and again with variants on the word *panim*. This is missed in translation, because *panim* has many forms in Hebrew not evident in English. To take one example, verse 32:20 is often translated as follows:

[Jacob said to his servants], "You shall say… 'Your servant Jacob is coming behind us,' for he thought, 'I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me.'" (Gen. 32:20)

There is nothing here to suggest that, in fact, the word *panim* appears four times in this verse alone. Literally, the second half of the verse should be translated: "for he thought, 'I will wipe [the anger from] his face with the gift that goes ahead of my face; afterward, when I see his face, perhaps he will lift up my face.'" There is a drama here and it has to do with faces: the face of Esau, of Jacob, and of God himself. What is going on?

The clue lies in Jacob's use of the word "blessing". This takes us back twenty-two years to another fateful moment (Bereishit chapter 27) in which Jacob, dressed in Esau's clothes, takes his brother's blessing (whether by accident or design, the term *b-r-ch*, "bless" or "blessing" occurs exactly twenty-two times in that chapter). Let us

remind ourselves of what the blessing was:

May God endow you with the dew of heaven, the cream of the land, much grain and wine. May nations serve you; may nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. A curse on those who curse you; on those who bless you, blessing. (Gen. 27:28-30)

The plain sense of these words is clear. They mean wealth and power. This is the blessing Jacob took, dressed in Esau's clothes, taking Esau's place. That is the first fact.

The second, whose importance cannot be overstated, is that there was a later blessing. Esau had married two Hittite women. This was a source of grief to both Isaac and Rebecca. Rebecca takes this as an opportunity to send Jacob away to her brother Laban, where he will be safe from Esau's desire for revenge. Before Jacob leaves, Isaac blesses him in these words:

May God Almighty bless you, make you fertile, and multiply you so that you become a community of peoples. May He grant Abraham's blessing to you and your descendants, that you may possess the land where you live as a stranger, the land which God gave to Abraham. (Gen. 28:3-4)

This is a completely different blessing: for children and a land, the two key things God had repeatedly promised Abraham. These are the "covenantal blessings". They dominate the book of Bereishit, and have nothing to do with wealth or power. God promised Abraham that he would have children who would continue the covenant, and a land in which to do so. God never promises Abraham "the dew of heaven and the richness of the earth," nor does He

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use the language of power, "Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you." Before sending him away from home, Isaac gives Jacob the Abrahamic blessings, saying to him in so many words: it will be you who will continue the covenant into the future.

The third significant fact is that, at the time of the blessings, Isaac was blind. Jacob's impersonation of Esau was possible only because Isaac could not see. Bereishit 27 is almost an essay on the senses. Deprived of one (sight), Isaac uses the other four. He *tastes* the food, *touches* Jacob's hands (which Rebecca has covered with goatskins to make them feel rough) and *smells* his clothes ("Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field the Lord has blessed"). He also *hears* his voice ("The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau"). Eventually, after considerable doubt, Isaac trusts the evidence of taste, touch and smell over that of sound, and gives Jacob Esau's blessing. He does so only because he cannot see Jacob's face. These three facts are enough to allow us to decipher the mystery of the meeting between Jacob and Esau twenty-two years later.

The patriarchs were more than just founders of a new faith. They were also role-models. Their lives are significant not only for what they tell us about the past but also for what they tell us about the present – for their challenges are ours.

Abraham was the man who had the strength of conviction to stand apart from the culture of his time – to be different, to refuse to worship the idols of the age, to listen instead to the inner voice of the one God, even when it meant setting out on a long and risk-laden journey. What carried him through was love (*chessed*) – love of God and, yes, the love of humanity that shines through all his deeds and words.

Isaac was the man who knew the reality of sacrifice. He lived, he survived, but not without seeing the knife lifted against him. He knew to the core of his being that to be a child of the covenant is neither easy nor safe. What carried him through was courage (*gevurah*) – and for whatever reason, the historical record is clear: to remain Jewish takes courage.

In connection with Jacob, though, the prophet Micah speaks of truth ("You will give truth to Jacob"). He does not mean truth in a cognitive sense ('What are the facts? What is ultimately real?'). He means it in an existential sense ('Who am I? To which story do I belong and what part am I called on to play?'). The search for cognitive truth – scientific, metaphysical, artistic – is not specific to the Abrahamic covenant. It is the heritage of all humankind. There is no such thing as Jewish science or economics or psychology. What is, is; and it is given to homo sapiens as such to discover it (Rashi translates the phrase "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" to mean "with the capacity to understand and discern"). The truth with which Jacob spent much of his life wrestling was quite different. It was a truth about identity. Central to it are the words face (in which mirror do I look to see who I am?), name (by which term do I know myself?) and blessing (to what destiny am I called?).

One thing stands out about the first phase in Jacob's life. He longs to be Esau – more specifically, he desires to occupy Esau's place. He struggles with him in the womb. He is born holding on to Esau's heel (this is

what gives him the name Jacob, "heel-grasper"). He buys Esau's birthright. He dresses in Esau's clothes. He takes Esau's blessing. When Isaac cannot see and asks him who he is, he replies, "I am Esau, your firstborn."

Why? The answer seems clear. Esau is everything Jacob is not. He is the firstborn. He emerges from the womb covered in red hair (Esau means "fully made"). He is strong, full of energy, a skilled hunter, "a man of the fields." More importantly, he has his father's love. Esau is *homo naturalis*, a man of nature. He knows that *homo homini lupus est*, "man is wolf to man." He has the strength and skill to fight and win in the Darwinian struggle to survive and the Hobbesian war of "all against all." These are his natural battlegrounds and he relishes the contest.

Esau is the archetypal hero of a hundred myths and legends of the ancient world (and of action movies today). He is not without dignity, nor does he lack human feelings. His love for his father Isaac is genuine and touching. The Midrash, for sound educational reasons, turned Esau into a bad man. The Torah itself is altogether more subtle and profound. Esau is not a bad man; he is a natural man, celebrating the Homeric virtues and the Nietzschean will to power.

It is not surprising that Jacob's first desire was to be like him. That is the face he first saw in the mirror of his imagination, the face he presented to the blind Isaac when he came to take the blessing. But the face was not the face of Jacob, any more than were the hands.

Nor was the blessing he took the one that was destined for him. The true blessing was the one he received later when Isaac knew he was blessing Jacob, not thinking him to be Esau.

Jacob's blessing had nothing to do with wealth or power. It had to do with children and a land – children he would instruct in the ways of the covenant and a land in which his descendants would strive to construct a covenantal society based on justice and compassion, law and love. To receive that blessing Jacob did not have to dress in Esau's clothes. Instead, he had to be himself, not a man of nature but a person whose ears were attuned to a voice beyond nature, the call of the Author of all to be true to that which cannot be bought by wealth or controlled by power, namely, the human spirit as the breath of God and human dignity as the image of God.

It should now be clear exactly what Jacob was doing when he met Esau twenty-two years later. He was giving back the blessing he had taken all those years before. The herds and flocks he sent to Esau represented wealth ("the dew of heaven and the richness of the earth"). The sevenfold bowing and calling himself "your servant" and Esau "my lord" represented power ("Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you.") Jacob no longer wanted or needed these things ("I have everything" – meaning, "I no longer need either wealth or power to be complete"). He is explicit. He says, "Please take [not just] my "gift" [but also my] "blessing". He now knows the blessing he took from Esau was never meant for him, and he is returning it.

It is equally clear what was transacted in the wrestling match the previous night. It was Jacob's inner battle with existential truth. Who was he? The man who longed to be Esau? Or the man called to a different destiny, "the road less travelled," the

Abrahamic covenant? "I will not let you go until you bless me," he says to his adversary. The unnamed stranger responds in a way that defies expectation. He does not give Jacob a conventional blessing (e.g. you will be rich, or strong, or safe). Nor does he promise Jacob a life free of conflict. The name Jacob signified struggle; the name Israel also signified struggle. But the terms of the conflict have been reversed.

It is as if the man said to him, "In the past, you struggled to be Esau. In the future you will struggle not to be Esau but to be yourself. In the past you held on to Esau's heel. In the future you will hold on to God. You will not let go of Him; He will not let go of You. Now let go of Esau so that you can be free to hold on to God."

The next day, Jacob did so. He let go of Esau by giving him back his blessing. And though Jacob had now renounced both wealth and power, and though he still limped from the encounter the night before, the passage ends with the words, *Vayavo Yaakov shalem*, "And Jacob emerged complete." That is the stunning truth at which Jacob finally arrived, and to which the name Israel is testimony. To be complete we do not need Esau's blessings of wealth and power. Ours is another face, an alternative destiny, a different blessing. The face we bear is the image we see reflected in the face of God when we wrestle with Him and refuse to let go.

Not by accident was this episode the birth of our identity (our "name") as Israel. At almost every significant juncture in our history we have wrestled with civilisations who worshipped the gods of nature: wealth ("the dew of heaven and the richness of the earth") or power ("may nations serve you and peoples bow down to you"). Israel never knew the wealth of ancient Greece or Rome, Renaissance Italy or aristocratic France. It never knew the power of great empires, their invincible armies and weapons of destruction. When it longed for these things (as in the days of Solomon) it lost its way.

Israel's strength never lay in itself but in that which was other and greater than itself: the power that transcends all earthly powers, and the wealth that is not physical but spiritual, a matter of mind and heart. Jews have often wished to be someone else, the 'Esaus' of the age. Too often, they knew what it was, in Shakespeare's words, to…

…look upon myself, and curse my fate/ Wishing me like to one more rich in hope/ Featured like him, like him with friends possessed/Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope/With what I most enjoy contented least. (Sonnet 29)

That is a feeling we must ultimately reject. The Torah does not ask us to think badly of Esau. To the contrary, it commands us: "Do not hate an Edomite [i.e., a descendant of Esau], for he is your brother." It did, however, ask us to wrestle, as did Jacob, alone, at night, in the depths of our soul, and discover the face, the name and the blessing that is ours. Before Jacob could be at peace with Esau, he had to learn that he was not Esau but Israel – he who wrestles with God and never lets go. ■

Rabbi Sacks zt"l was the Former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. These weekly teachings are part of his 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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The Warfare Blueprint: What the Torah Really Says About Civilian Casualties

Since October 7th, accusations of "disproportionate response," "collective punishment," and genocide have dominated international criticism of Israel. What does the Torah teach about a nation's moral responsibilities at war?

As Rabbi Berel Wein observed, *"We are not orphans."* Our Torah tradition addresses national defense, the responsibilities of warfare, and the profound value of human life.

Parshat Vayishlach serves as the Torah's foundational "war manual." Yaakov's confrontation with Eisav and Shimon and Levi's raid on Shechem offer five lessons about international conflict, self-defense, and collateral damage.

1. INDIVIDUAL CRIME VS. NATIONAL DEFENSE

Judaism places supreme value on human life. The Rambam rules that murdering anyone, Jew or non-Jew, violates the severe biblical prohibition of *Lo Tirtzach*. Yet, the Torah distinguishes individual disputes from national warfare:

- **Individual conflict:** In peacetime, disputes belong in court; extrajudicial killing is murder.
- **National defense (*Milchemet Mitzvah*):** When an enemy attacks or threatens the nation, the Rambam (*Hilchot Melachim* 5:1) identifies rescuing Israel from an invading enemy, *Ezrat Yisrael mi-yad tzar*, as an obligatory war to save lives.

The Maharal (*Gur Aryeh*) distinguishes between disputes involving individuals, which must be resolved in court, and attacks between nations, which are acts of war. In the abduction of Dinah, Yaakov's family was regarded as a nation. The attack therefore permitted a military response against Shechem collectively, rather than judicial action against the individual offender alone.

2. SHECHEM AND STATE-LEVEL CONFLICT

After Dinah's abduction and rape, Shimon and Levi killed Shechem's entire male population. Yaakov feared retaliation from neighboring tribes; they answered: *"Should our sister be treated like a harlot?"*

The **Or HaChaim HaKadosh** adds that their decisive response established deterrence. Inaction would have signaled weakness and invited further attacks. The Torah records the result: *"A terror from G-d fell upon the surrounding cities, and they did not pursue the sons of Yaakov"* (Bereishit 35:5).

3. COMPLICITY AND "CIVILIAN" IMMUNITY

Is there an obligation to endanger soldiers to spare non-combatants in an enemy population?

The Gemara in *Masechet Sofrim* states: *"Tov she-be-goyim le-mita"* ("During war, even the best of the enemy may be targeted"). Tosafot (*Avodah Zarah* 26b) explains that this applies during wartime when "civilians" actively assist the enemy's war effort.

Tosafot proves this from the Exodus: When Pharaoh pursued the Jews who left Egypt, where did he get horses if all livestock died in the plague of *Dever*? The Torah notes that "G-d-fearing" Egyptians brought their animals inside. Yet, during the pursuit, those *"Tov she-be-goyim"*, the very same "G-d-fearing civilians" donated their horses to Pharaoh's army! Because their property was weaponized against Israel, they lost their innocent status.

Misplaced mercy in war is explicitly condemned by Chazal: *"He who becomes compassionate to the cruel will ultimately become cruel to the compassionate"*. Endangering IDF soldiers to protect an enemy population harboring and aiding terrorists is morally perverse under Torah law.

4. SPIRITUAL SENSITIVITY

Why did Yaakov fear killing others, "*Vayetzer lo*" and why was David barred from building the Beis HaMikdash because he had "spilled much blood"?

If warfare is justified, why did Yaakov fear killing others, later condemn Shimon and Levi, and why was David barred from building the Beis HaMikdash?

Even justified killing can affect a person's character. Yaakov's fear reflected concern for its impact on his soul. His later rebuke of Shimon and Levi linked their violence in Shechem to their treatment of Yosef: the concern was not merely whether force was necessary, but what exercising it could do to them.

Similarly, the Radak explains that David was not punished for the blood he shed, because his intention was to defeat the wicked and protect Israel. Nevertheless, his involvement in bloodshed made him unsuited to build the Beis HaMikdash, a place of peace, atonement, and prayer. Just as iron, used to make weapons, was excluded from constructing the altar, the sanctuary of peace required a builder whose hands had not shed so much blood.

5. THREE PATHS TO VICTORY

Yaakov prepared on three fronts:

1. **Military readiness (*L'milchama*):** Dividing his camp and preparing for battle.
2. **Diplomacy (*L'doron*):** Sending gifts and pursuing strategic negotiation.
3. **Prayer (*L'tefillah*):** Crying sincerely to Hashem.

Military strength and diplomacy are essential, but prayer must anchor them. In David's military, every thousand frontline soldiers were accompanied by a thousand scholars praying on their behalf.

OUR TAKEAWAY

The Torah teaches us to love peace. When evil threatens to destroy us, morality also demands clarity and strength. We must stand proudly behind our soldiers, demand that our leaders prioritize Jewish lives without shame, and storm Heaven with our prayers! ■

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Gid HaNasheh: When There Is No Pleasure, Why Is It Still Prohibited?

The Torah commands us:

עַל־כֵּן לֹא־יֹאכְלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־גִּיד הַנָּשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר עַל־כַּף יַרֵךְ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, כִּי נָגַע בְּכַף־יֶרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב בְּגִיד הַנָּשֶׁה.

Therefore Bnei Yisrael do not eat the *gid hanasheh*, which is on the hip joint, to this day, because he touched Yaakov's hip joint on the *gid hanasheh*.[1]

The obvious purpose of this mitzvah is to remember Yaakov Avinu's struggle with the angel of Eisav. Rav Nebenzahl[2] points out a fascinating question. The Gemara in Chullin[3] reaches the conclusion that the *gid hanasheh* is essentially inedible. Its taste is compared to wood. (כעץ בעלמא).


Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl

In fact, the halachic principle is that the *gid hanasheh* does not impart taste in the normal way. The **Shulchan Aruch** therefore rules: - **אין בגידין בנותן טעם מדאורייתא** The sinews do not impart taste according to Torah law.[4]

Based on the above, Rav Nebenzahl asks a simple but powerful question: Why did the Torah have to prohibit eating the *gid hanasheh* if nobody really wants to eat it in the first place? If it tastes like wood and provides no meaningful pleasure, what is accomplished by prohibiting it from being eaten?

Rav Nebenzahl offers two answers.

1. HASHEM GIVES PROVIDES US MITZVOT EVEN FOR ACTS WE WOULD PERFORM ANYWAY

The first answer is based on the famous Mishnah at the end of **Masechet Makkot**:

1. Bereshit 32:33
2. Rav Avigdor Neventazl, on the Parsha
3. Chullin 92b
4. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 65:9

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Rabbi Chanania ben Akashya says: The Holy One, Blessed is He, desired to grant merit to Israel; therefore He gave them an abundance of Torah and mitzvot.[5]

What does it mean that Hashem wanted to give us merit? One explanation is that Hashem transforms even ordinary human behavior into an opportunity for mitzvah. There are things we would refrain from doing anyway, but Hashem says: I will make your restraint into a mitzvah. For example, the Torah prohibits eating blood. Most people have no desire to drink blood in the first place, yet Hashem gives us reward for refraining from it. Similarly, on Erev Yom Kippur, there is a mitzvah to eat. We are probably going to eat anyway, but that act which would naturally be done is transformed into a mitzvah.

This may be the message of the *gid hanasheh* as well. Even though it is not something we ordinarily want to eat, it is transformed into a mitzva. Even though we would ordinarily would refrain from eating the *gid hanasheh*, the Torah nevertheless commands us not to eat it. Hashem is giving us another opportunity fo***r zechut***, another opportunity to earn reward through something that otherwise would have gone unnoticed.

Rav Nebenzahl then offers a second much deeper explanation.

2. THE *GID HANASHEH* AND THE ILLUSION OF PLEASURE

We usually think about the the angel of Eisav, as representing the *Yetzer Hara*. Chazal associate this force with the Satan and, ultimately, with the *Malach HaMavet*.

We tend to understand the Yetzer Hara's message as follows: "Enjoy yourself. Follow your desires. Live for the pleasures of this world and worry about Olam HaBa later." The Yetzer Hara convinces us that following our physical desires will give us happiness in this world, even though ultimately it may cost us in the world to come.

Rav Nebenzahl suggests that the *gid*

5. Mishna Makkot 3:16



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hanasheh teaches us something very different. The *gid hanasheh* is the product of the encounter with the angel of Eisav, and yet it has no real taste and no real pleasure. It is, as Chazal put it, **כעץ בעלמא** - like a piece of wood. Perhaps the Torah is teaching us: The Yetzer Hara does not merely take away our Olam HaBa. It can take away our Olam HaZeh as well.

We imagine that if we give in to every desire, pursue every pleasure, and live according to whatever feels good at the moment, we will enjoy life more. But often the opposite is true. A person who allows *kinah, taavah, and kavod* - jealousy, uncontrolled desire, and the pursuit of honor, to dominate his life may believe that he is enjoying Olam HaZeh. In reality, those very pursuits can destroy his ability to enjoy life. As Chazal teach: **הַקִּנְאָה וְהַתַּאֲוָה וְהַכָּבוֹד מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם.** Jealousy, desire, and the pursuit of honor remove a person from the world.[6]

We often understand "remove a person from this world" as referring to the next world. But perhaps there is another way to interpret this phrase. They can remove a person from this world as well. A person consumed by jealousy cannot appreciate what he has. A person controlled by desire is never satisfied with what he possesses. A person obsessed with honor is constantly measuring himself against others. He may have everything and still be miserable.

THE REAL MESSAGE OF THE *GID HANASHEH*

That is the deeper message of the *gid hanasheh.* The Torah is warning us not be fooled by the Yetzer Hara into thinking that every pleasure is truly pleasurable. There are things that appear attractive but ultimately leave us empty. The *gid hanasheh* is the ultimate symbol of this. It looks like food, but it provides no nourishment or pleasure. That can be true of many of the things the Yetzer Hara places before us.

The greatest Olam HaZeh is not necessarily the world in which we satisfy the greatest number of desires. It is the world in which we learn to desire the right things. When a person lives life according to the precepts of the Torah, he discovers that Torah and mitzvot do not merely prepare us for Olam HaBa, they teach us how to live in Olam HaZeh. They give us the ability to appreciate what we have, to control our desires, to rise above jealousy, to stop measuring ourselves by the opinions of others and ultimately to experience a deeper and more enduring form of happiness.

The *gid hanasheh* reminds us that not everything that the Yetzer Hara calls "pleasure" is true pleasure. Sometimes what appears to be the good life is really nothing more than "etz be'alma" - a piece of wood, with no taste or purpose. The greatest gift Hashem can provide to us is the wisdom to recognize the difference. ■

6. Pirke Avot 4:21



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Angelic Awareness

*"Vayishlach Yaakov **malachim** lefanav el Eisav achiv artzah Se'ir sedeh Edom*—Yaakov sent **angels** ahead of him to his brother Eisav, to the land of Se'ir, the field of Edom." *(Bereisheet* 32:4*)*

Many commentators grapple with defining the word *malachim*—angels. Radak, as well as others, follow the interpretation of Onkelos —these were human emissaries that Yaakov sent with gifts to appease Eisav. Rav Sorotzkin *zt"l,* in *Oznayim La'Torah* contends that not one of Yaakov's servants wanted to approach Eisav since they saw the mission as too dangerous, hence, Rashi teaches that Yaakov employed actual divine angels for the task.

Rabbeinu Bachya combines both approaches; Yaakov Avinu sent his men to appease Eisav, and he also sent angels to protect them from danger or harm. Here, Yaakov Avinu models the need to exercise reasonable precaution before embarking on a serious undertaking, not simply to rely on the maxim, *"shluchei mitzvah ein-an nizokin*—Those on the path to perform a mitzvah are not [susceptible to] harm [throughout the process of performing the mitzvah]." *(Pesachim* 8a*)*

Rav Sorotzkin notes that we see the greatness of Yaakov Avinu that he had command of heavenly beings. Further, in *Machshevet Mussar,* Rav Shach comments that a tzaddik's ability to utilize the service of angels for his own needs is based on a fundamental principle, *"b'shvili nivra haolam"*— the entire cosmos, including the spiritual and well as the physical world, was created to serve man. The Gemara relates, "Ben Zoma once saw a multitude of people while standing on a stair on the Temple Mount. [He immediately] recited: Blessed…Who knows all secrets and Blessed…Who created all these to serve me." *(Brachot* 58a*)* This was not an expression of haughtiness, rather a statement of truth — we are all here to serve and help each other. Moreover, even angels are created to serve people; we are taught that two



angels escort a person to his home every on Friday night as we sing *"sholom aleichem malachei hashareit*—Peace upon you, o' ministering angles."

Rav Elya Lopian *zt"l* in *Lev Eliyahu* explains that the angels sent by Yaakov Avinu were created from the mitzvot that he performed. *(Avot* 4:*11)* We first meet these angels in Yaakov Avinu's dream when he saw them ascending and descending a ladder. Likewise, one who stands firm in his convictions and values and refrains from sin, also creates special protective angels. The angels that we create with our mitzvot and good deeds ascend upwards and descend in times of need to envelop us with a spiritual energy and protect us from harm. Yaakov Avinu sent angels "*lefanav,* before him," this refers to his "mitzvah angels" that preceded him to protect him.

Although we may not be on the level to see these angels or direct them, we can be cognizant of their presence. We can heighten our awareness that our *avodat* Hashem creates spiritual energy that not only protects us but bolsters us to continue doing good deeds. We can use our power of imagination to see the many angels, even thousands! that we have created on any given day to feel a surge of exaltedness and be empowered to increase our closeness to Hashem. ■



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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

7:00 pm	**Women's Division** Dorot Choir	**Hadassah Jacob**	1 Diskin St., Rechavia
8:30 pm	Semichat Chaver Program	**Rav Elyada Goldwicht**	Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod St. (The Bais)
7:30 - 9:30 pm	Safrut: Men's Megila Course	**Rabbi Phil Schajer**	Hesder Yeshiva Meir Harel: • Emek Bet Shean 53, **Modiin**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

9:15 am	**Women's Division** Torah Tapesteries	**Shira Smiles**	Beit Knesset Hanassi, Ussishkin 24
9:20 am	Who Sold Yosef?	**Rabbi James Kennard**	**Community Beit Midrash Program** Kehilat Nitzanim, 3 Asher St., Bakaa
10:10 am	Rambam: Letters and Introductions	**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz**	
11:25 am	P'shat in the Parsha	**Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**	
12:20 PM	Unlocking the Messages of Chazal	**Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**	

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1 (CONTINUED)

10:00 am - 2:00 pm	Weekly Kollel Boker	Instructors include: **Rabbi David Fine, Rabbi Ian Shaffer, Rabbi Aschi Dick, & Rabbi Avi Herzog**	**The Bais Men's Programs in Modiin** Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel, Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin
1:00 pm - 1:45 pm	Modiin Lunch and Learn	**Rabbi Aschi Dick**	Masamerica Offices, 28 Dam HaMacabbiim St, 3rd Floor
7:30 - 9:30 pm	Safrut: Men's Megila Course	**Rabbi Max Roberts**	Bet HaKneset Ohel Ari Rechov Ravutsky 98, **Ra'anana**

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

9:15 am	Rav Soloveitchik on the Parsha	**Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler**	**Community Beit Midrash Program** Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia
10:20 am	Contemporary Issues in Halacha and Hashkafa	**Rabbi Anthony Manning**	
11:25 am	Building Character and Midot: Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot	**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**	
12:30 pm	The Turbulent Nineteenth Century of European Jewish History	**Dr. Deborah Polster**	

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

9:15 am	Parshat HaShavua	**Rabbi Ari Kahn**	**Community Beit Midrash Program** Bet Knesset Shai Agnon, 11 Leib Yaffe St., Arnona
10:30 am	Modern Masters	**Rabbi Sam Shor**	
11:25 am	Trailblazing the Text of Tanach	**Rabbi Neil Winkler**	
8:00 pm	Halachic Controversies (The Bais)	**Rabbi Aschi Dick**	Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod St.

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Rosh Chodesh Tevet

Women's Seminar in Yerushalayim

CULTIVATING EMUNAH



10:00 AM
ALIZA BACK
Yerushalayim Coordinator, OU Israel Women's Division
Words of Introduction



10:15 AM
RABBI YITZCHAK BREITOWITZ
Tevet and the Three Days of Darkness



11:30 AM
MICHAL WEINSTEIN
Finding Light: A Story of Loss, Faith, & an Impossible Miracle



12:15 PM
DINA SCHOONMAKER
Igniting Our Emunah and Bitachon



9:15 AM- HALLEL WITH AVIGAIL SCHEINFELD

Thursday, December 10
9:15 am - 1:00 pm

Beit Knesset Hanasi
Ussishkin 24

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Register at: ouisrael.org/events/tevet2026

NextGen:

Yerushalayim

PRE-CHANUKAH EVENT

Monday, Nov 30
8:00 PM

Beit Yehudit
Emek Refaim 12

Exploring the Roots of Chanuka in the Beauty of Rachel and Leah
Rabbi Michael Friedman, LPC

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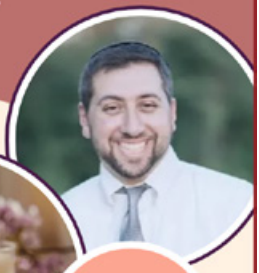

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When Words are Not Enough: Yechezkel and the Art of Prophecy



LEAH FEINBERG

From Yechezkel to Ezra: The Paradigm Shift of Galut Bavel



PEARL BOROW

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9:15 AM - 12:30 PM

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Ussishkin 24

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Register: ouisrael.org/events/Yechezkel2026

Pre-Chanukah
Leil Iyun
Monday, November 30, 2026

7:00 p.m. Rabbi Joel Kenigsberg
Introductory Remarks

Rabbi Sam Shor
Illumination and Inspiration:
Unlocking the Power of Chanuka

7:45 p.m. Rabbi Leo Dee
Lighting Up the Darkness

Rabbi Kenigsberg



Rabbi Shor



Rabbi Dee



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בית מדרש תורני לאומי

ROSH CHODESH TEVET
Women's Seminar in Beit Shemesh

Tevet: Spreading the Light



BASYA TEITELBAUM
Welcome and Words of Introduction



LEAH SILVER
The Glimmerings: At the Intersection of Chanukah and Asara B'Tevet



RIVKA YUDIN
A Light that Lasts



RABBI JOHNNY SOLOMON
Tevet and the Spiritual Labor of Illumination



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REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES' SHIUR
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RABBI ARI KAHN'S SHIUR
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NextGen:
PRE-CHANUKAH EVENT

Sunday, November 29
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Nachal Maor 6

Rabbi Michael Friedman, LPC
Exploring the Roots of Chanukah
in the Beauty of Rachel and Leah



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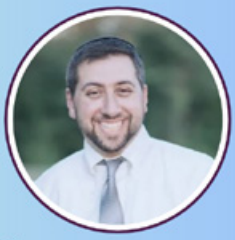

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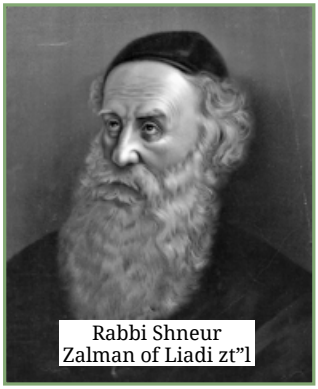
Yud Tes Kislev: Just a Drop

Rebbe Pinchas of Koretz was both a disciple and friend of the Baal Shem Tov, and was one of those most concerned with ensuring that the holy legacy of the founder of the Chasidic movement be preserved in its purity. Reb Pinchas believed that the lofty teachings of Chasidus and secrets of the Torah ought to be safeguarded, and he opposed any mainstream *Hafatza* or widespread publication. Others, including the Alter Rebbe, Reb Shneur Zalman, felt differently.



Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi zt"l

One day, while the two tzadikim were together in Mezeritch, they found notes of Chasidic teachings in the garbage. Reb Pinchas pointed at the disrespect shown to the Torah as proof that they shouldn't be so free in spreading the teachings of their beloved Rebbe to those who don't fully understand or appreciate it.

The Alter Rebbe continued to disagree:

"Once there was a great king who had an only son who fell gravely ill. All the great medical experts had given up hope for a cure. A call went out throughout the land, which was answered by a sage who knew of a miraculous remedy for the sick prince: a rare, hard-to-find gemstone containing the elements necessary to heal him. If found, the gem was to be ground into a fine powder, mixed with wine and administered to the prince to drink.

The King knew that only one of these jewels existed in all of the kingdom, and it was affixed as the centerpiece of the royal crown. Removing this gem would mean dismantling the crown, and degrading the symbol of his majesty. While some of those closest to the king were crestfallen that the royal crown would be dismantled, the king was overjoyed, and instructed that they begin to prepare the healing potion. Good news! Salvation, it seemed, was on the way.

At that moment, messengers entered and shared a heartbreaking update: the prince's condition had worsened drastically, so much so that he couldn't swallow. This development seemed to make the sacrifice of the royal gem a moot point; if the prince was in such a state, at least the royal crown ought to be preserved. Nonetheless, the king insisted that they continue preparing the potion: 'Of what value is my crown if my beloved son does not live? Grind up the gemstone and mix the potion right away! Do everything in your power that even a single drop enter his mouth, so that he be healed and live!'"

This upcoming week marks the 19th (Yud Tes) of Kislev, the celebration of the release of the Alter Rebbe, the author of *Sefer HaTanya*, from prison. More than simply a day that remembers the personal liberation of the Alter Rebbe, Yud Tes Kislev marks a turning point in Jewish history, ushering in a revolutionary revelation of the "inner soul" of Torah.

The publication of *Sefer haTanya* made many of the previously inaccessible, abstract concepts of Kabbalah and philosophy comprehensible and practically applicable, marking a new era in the spread of Chassidus. In many ways, Yud Tes Kislev is considered the "Rosh Hashanah" of Chassidus, a sort of 'birthday' for this movement of spiritual awakening and growth.

For a generation with such yearning for depth and meaning, so desperately in need of healing, the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov and his holy students are restorative. The study of *P'nimiyus haTorah* directs us toward attunement with our inner world. In the Alter Rebbe's parable, the Torah is the "crown" of G-d. The most precious jewel, the crown's centerpiece, is the *Sod,* the mystical secrets of the Torah. To "grind" this into a powder means to make the Sod accessible to every Jew through the teachings of Chassidus. These teachings are a potion that can revive and enliven us, even if just one drop, one small taste of this elixir of life, enters the mind and heart.

Faced with a world that is sometimes superficial and crass — even gravely ill — the Baal HaTanya did everything in his power to give us this rare medicine that would allow us to awaken and live. The cure is effective when we recognize that beneath the surface of experience, everything is sustained, filled and surrounded by the Divine: *Ein Od Milvado*, there is nothing other than Him.

Our sedra recounts the epic showdown between Yaakov Avinu and Eisav, as the conflicting worldview of the paradigmatic brothers boils to the forefront. While Eisav is concerned with accomplishments, acquisitions and 'the bottom line', Yaakov values the process, procedure and a life lived *baderech:*

יַעֲבָר־נָא אֲדֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ וַאֲנִי אֶתְנַהֲלָה לְאִטִּי לְרֶגֶל הַמְּלָאכָה אֲשֶׁר־לְפָנַי וּלְרֶגֶל הַיְלָדִים עַד אֲשֶׁר־אָבֹא אֶל־אֲדֹנִי שֵׂעִירָה:

Now, let my master go ahead before his servant, and I will move [at] my own slow pace, according to the pace of the work that is before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my master, to Seir."(33:14)

Rashi translates the word "לאט, slow pace," as" נחת. The very word used for the pride and joy parents hope to enjoy from their children denotes gentleness and patience: לְאַט שָׁלִי, לְשׁוֹן נַחַת, הַהוֹלְכִים לְאַט, my own slow pace, [like] "that flow gently, לְאַט" (Yeshayahu 8:6), "Deal gently (לְאַט) with the lad for my sake" (Shmuel Bet, 18:5).

Every one of us is moving along a path, evolving, developing stage by stage.

In our efforts to learn and live with the teachings and pathways of *P'nimiyus*



HaTorah, may we be blessed to move at our own pace toward 'the work that is before us... according to the pace of the children', and may Hashem (and we!) enjoy *nachas* from all of our efforts... for even one small step, one little drop of the sweetness of truth can revive and revitalize us!

Excerpt from newly released **Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah**, (Mosaica Press) ■

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the "Baderech" series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

RABBI SAM SHOR
Director, Torah Initiatives, OU Israel

Parshat Vayishlach finds *Yaakov Avinu* as he is about to re-encounter his twin brother Eisav, and he is quite worried about that meeting. Before he goes to sleep that evening, he utters a tefilla, using language that should seem familiar to each of us.

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וֵאלֹקֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק ה' הָאֹמֵר אֵלַי שׁוּב לְאַרְצְךָ וּלְמוֹלַדְתְּךָ וְאֵיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ

Then Yaakov said, "G-d of my father Abraham and G-d of my father Yitzchak, Hashem, who said to me, 'Return to your native land and I will deal bountifully with you.'

Yaakov Avinu, at this moment of great personal crisis, employs very similar language as we, his descendants, do when we *daven* to this very day, invoking the merit of his father A*vraham* and grandfather *Yitzchak* before him(we of course add *Yaakov's* name as well).

Subsequently the *Torah* tells us:

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר

And Yaakov was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.

Seemingly, Yaakov has uttered his tefila, entered into a deep contemplative state and internal struggle. He emerges from this dream -like experience, and he has received a new name-*Yisrael,* he has been injured and impaired in his leg, and this experience has an impact for his descendants for all eternity.

Yaakov* himself is physically changed, his identity is transformed, and there is an implication for all subsequent generations to refrain from eating from the *gid hanasheh.

Yaakov wakes from this deep meditative experience, and the impact is not only upon himself but reverberates for future generations.

How might this entire episode teach us about the goals of *tefila* and its impact and implication in each of our lives? **What is the experience of *tefila* really meant to be for each of us?**

Rabbi Avraham Schorr, *shlita,* shared the following story and insight:

A person might often question what impact do my tefilot have? I daven each day and it does not seem to change my station in life, the things I pray for do not seem to be coming to fruition, so why do we continue to daven three times each day?

I heard a powerful story. There was a family who was sitting shiva for a family member who had passed away after a long and difficult illness.The family and entire community offered so many heartfelt tefilot in the hope that the individual would recover, but ultimately, sadly he passed away.

A few weeks later, the family received a

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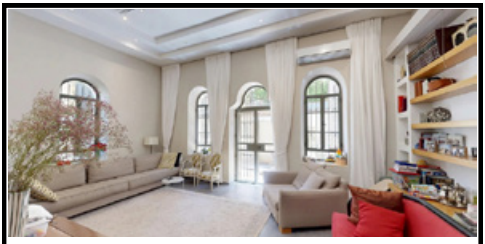
note of consolation from another family in the community whose young son was also facing a grim diagnosis. The family wrote that they had been told their son's prognosis was quite severe, but then he suddenly received miraculous news that he was completely cured of his illness. The family soon realized that their son had the identical full Hebrew name, including the mother's name, as the other family whose loved one had passed away. The second family offered that they hoped it might be a source of comfort, that perhaps the many tefilot uttered indeed had an impact and were a source of healing-sadly not for their dearly missed loved one, but for the second family's young son. Each tefila that a Jew offers does indeed have a lasting impact, sometimes beyond our own situation and circumstances. Every truly heartfelt tefila has a great purpose and implication, even if we personally do not immediately benefit from that tefila. A Jew must believe that every expression of faith, ultimately brings forth great results, even if we personally do not intuit that outcome.

Rav Kook zt'l *(as cited in the Sefer Mishnat HaRav, edited by Rav Moshe Zvi Nerya zt'l)* explained the transformative capacity inherent within the experience of *tefila.*

The difference between one who davens and one who does not daven is not simply that one individual sets aside time each day for tefila while the other one does not; rather, there is an existential difference. The worldview of these two individuals are completely different; those moments spent each day in tefila leave a lasting imprint on the entire day...

Yehi Ratzon, may each of us gain strength and the clarity to grasp the great gift of transformation and growth that is inherent within each and every *tefila.* ■



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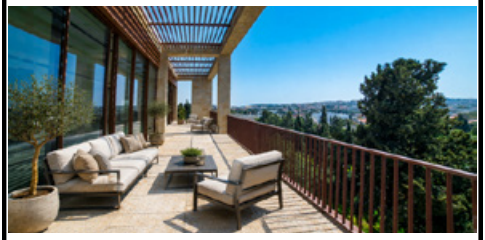

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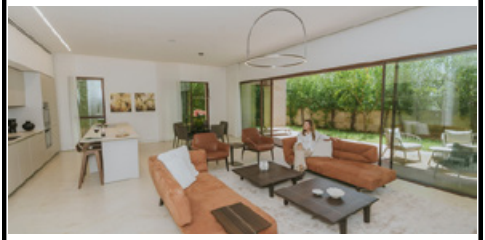

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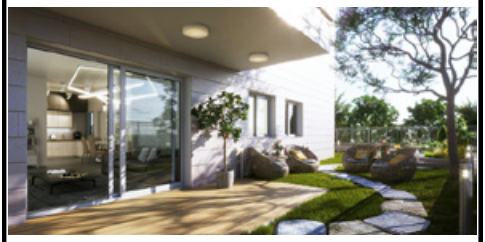

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HIDING DINAH

וַיָּקָם בַּלַּיְלָה הוּא וַיִּקַּח אֶת שְׁתֵּי נָשָׁיו וְאֶת שְׁתֵּי שִׁפְחֹתָיו וְאֶת אַחַד עָשָׂר יְלָדָיו...
(ל"ב:כ"ג)

That same night he arose, and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children....

רש"י: "וְאֶת אַחַד עָשָׂר יְלָדָיו" - וְדִינָה הֵיכָן הָיְתָה? נְתָנָהּ בְּתֵבָה וְנָעַל בְּפָנֶיהָ, שֶׁלֹּא יִתֵּן בָּהּ עֵשָׂו עֵינָיו, וּלְכָךְ נֶעֱנַשׁ יַעֲקֹב שֶׁמְּנָעָהּ מֵאָחִיו, שֶׁמָּא תַּחֲזִירֶנּוּ לַמּוּטָב, וְנָפְלָה בְּיַד שְׁכֶם (בראשית רבה):

"And his eleven children." – But where was Dinah? He placed her in a chest and locked her in so that Esav should not set his fancy upon her (desire to marry her). On this account Yaakov was punished – because he had kept her away from his brother when she might have led him back to the right path; she therefore fell into the power of Shechem.

When Yaakov meets Esav, how many children does he have? The Torah says eleven – *achad asar yeladav*. But in reality, he has twelve. Binyamin hasn't yet been born, but Dinah is already there. So why does the Torah describe him as having only eleven?

Rashi gives the well-known answer: Yaakov hid Dinah. He placed her in a box, out of sight, because he didn't want Esav to see her. Dinah was evidently striking, as the later episode with Shechem suggests, and Yaakov feared that Esav – who is already drawn after money, gifts, and whatever else he desires – would fix his attention on her as well. And Esav is not just impulsive; he is powerful. Yaakov is entering a dangerous encounter, and he chooses to remove the possibility entirely by keeping Dinah hidden.

This is a familiar Rashi, often taught from childhood. If there are things that trigger desire, then exposure matters. Repeated exposure can intensify desire, while limiting exposure helps restrain it. Yaakov understands that if Esav never sees Dinah, the desire never begins.

This translates into our own lives. We are not meeting Esav with four hundred men, but we deal with our own forms of *ta'avah*. Guarding what we look at, limiting exposure, is part of how people protect themselves.

Yet Rashi adds a surprising criticism of Yaakov: *u'lechach ne'enash Yaakov* – Yaakov is



punished for this. Later, Dinah becomes entangled in the episode with Shechem. And Rashi explains: *she'manah me'achiv, shema tachzirenu l'mutav* – Yaakov held her back from Esav, but perhaps she could have influenced him, perhaps she could have brought him back. And because that possibility was closed off, Dinah ends up falling into the hands of Shechem.

Yaakov's instinct to protect her was correct on one level, but incomplete on another.

Rashi leaves us with a difficult tension. People have to protect themselves. There are environments, people, and situations that can pull us in directions we don't want to go. Exposure is not neutral; it shapes you. That is the lesson of hiding Dinah.

Yet there are moments when people have the ability to influence others. They may be strong enough to influence others without surrendering their own commitments. Sometimes, avoiding that contact means missing an opportunity.

Should a person place himself in a setting that is less aligned with his values because he hopes to have an impact? Should he enter environments that are religiously or ideologically challenging in order to influence others?

The answer depends very much on where a person stands. If your identity is still forming, if your commitments are still taking shape, then placing yourself into a setting that challenges them can be risky. At that stage, you are more likely to be influenced than to influence. But as a person becomes more stable, more grounded, more confident in who he is, the calculation can change. Engaging with others can then become an opportunity.

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Rashi is forcing us to hold both approaches. Dinah was in need of protection, but we need to recognize what might be lost when we only protect rather than try to influence. There are times when the right move is to withdraw, to limit exposure, to guard yourself carefully. And there are times when a person has to step forward, to engage, to try to affect others.

The *avodah* is to recognize where you are, to be honest about your own strength, and to act accordingly.

400 WHO LEFT

וַיָּשָׁב בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עֵשָׂו לְדַרְכּוֹ שֵׂעִירָה: (ל"ג:ט"ז)
So, Esav started back that day on his way to Seir.

רש"י: "וַיָּשָׁב בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עֵשָׂו לְדַרְכּוֹ" - עֵשָׂו לְבַדּוֹ, וְד' מֵאוֹת אִישׁ שֶׁהָלְכוּ עִמּוֹ נִשְׁמְטוּ מֵאֶצְלוֹ אֶחָד אֶחָד, וְהֵיכָן פָּרַע לָהֶם הַקָּבָ"ה? בִּימֵי דָוִד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר כִּי אִם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ נַעַר אֲשֶׁר רָכְבוּ עַל הַגְּמַלִּים (שמואל א ל) (בראשית רבה):
"Esav started back that day on his way." – Esav alone returned, but the four hundred men who had accompanied him slipped away from him, one by one. When did the Holy One, blessed be He, reward them for this? In the days of David, as it is said (Shmuel Alef 30:17, in reference to an attack which

he made upon the Amalekites, descendants of Esav): "[and there escaped not a man of them] save four hundred young men who rode upon camels."

After the encounter winds down, the Torah says: *vayashav bayom hahu Esav l'darko Se'irah*. Esav returns home. The description is surprisingly understated, considering the tension of their earlier encounter. Rashi, however, notices a discrepancy.

At the beginning of the parshah, Esav arrives with force – *arba me'os ish imo* – four hundred men, a sizable force prepared for confrontation. And now, when he leaves, the Torah describes him in the singular. What happened to all those men? Where did they go?

Rashi says they didn't disappear all at once. *Nishmetu mei'etzlo echad echad*. One by one, they slipped away. By the time Esav has begun his return, the camp has thinned out, until he is effectively alone.

The Midrash explains that this wasn't random. His men saw something in the encounter between their leader and his brother. They saw the *Shechinah* surrounding Yaakov. They understood, at least in some basic way, who Yaakov was and what this meeting represented. Their departure reflected a change in their attitude toward Yaakov.

Rashi then asks how they were rewarded. The reward came hundreds of years later, in the time of Dovid HaMelech, when Amalek attacks Tziklag and captures the city, taking the women, including Dovid's wives. Dovid pursues them, defeats them, and recovers what was taken. But the *pasuk* notes that four hundred Amalekim escape – *daled me'os ish asher rachvu al hagemalim*.

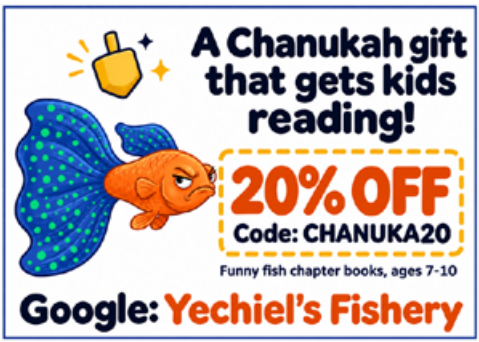
Those four hundred who got away, says Rashi, are connected to the four hundred who left Esav.

This raises an obvious problem. These are not the same people; the original four hundred are long gone by then. There is a gap of centuries. So it cannot be that this is straightforward *schar*, reward passed down in a simple, linear way. Perhaps the Midrash is tracing a historical pattern rather than describing a conventional reward.

Their departure demonstrated that even Esav's followers could reconsider their loyalties. They recognized what was happening and chose to withdraw. This moment establishes that being aligned with Esav is not an absolute, unbreakable identity for every individual within that world.

So, when we reach the story in Shmuel, and David fights Amalek, the presence of four hundred who escape is a continuation of that possibility. It reflects that not every individual within Amalek is fixed into that role in a way that erases all distinction.

On the one hand, Amalek as a force must be confronted. There is evil that has to be fought and, at times, eradicated. But on the other hand, the Torah is careful not to put every individual into that category without



exception.

Esav and Amalek represent enduring opposition to Yaakov and his descendants. But within that, there are individuals who are not locked in, who can still respond to what they see, and who can still step away.

THE MISSING REUNION

וַתָּמָת דְּבֹרָה מֵינֶקֶת רִבְקָה וַתִּקָּבֵר מִתַּחַת לְבֵית אֵל תַּחַת הָאַלּוֹן וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אַלּוֹן בָּכוּת: (ל"ה:ח)

Devorah, Rivkah's nurse, died, and was buried under the oak below Beis El; so, it was named Alon Bachus.

רש"י: "וַתָּמָת דְּבֹרָה" - מָה עִנְיָן דְּבוֹרָה בְּבֵית יַעֲקֹב? אֶלָּא לְפִי שֶׁאָמְרָה רִבְקָה לְיַעֲקֹב וְשָׁלַחְתִּי וּלְקַחְתִּיךָ מִשָּׁם, שָׁלְחָה דְּבוֹרָה אֶצְלוֹ לְפַדַּן אֲרָם לָצֵאת מִשָּׁם, וּמֵתָה בַּדֶּרֶךְ; מִדִּבְרֵי רַבִּי מֹשֶׁה הַדַּרְשָׁן לְמַדְתִּיהָ:

"Devorah died." – How did Devorah come to be in Yaakov's house? But the explanation is: Because Rivkah had promised Yaakov (Bereishis 27:45): "then I will send and fetch you from there." She sent Devorah to him to Padan Aram to tell him to leave that place, and she died on the journey. I learned this from a comment of R. Moshe HaDarshan.

As Yaakov returns to Beis El, the Torah suddenly tells us: "*Vatamas Devorah meinekes Rivkah, vatikaveir mitachas l'Beis El tachas ha'alon, vayikra shemo Alon Bachus*." We are told that Rivkah's nurse, Devorah, has died. We have never met her before, and we are not told where she came from. She is buried under a tree, and the place is named for crying.

Devorah's sudden appearance raises several questions. Why is she traveling with Yaakov, and why does the Torah record her death?

Rashi fills in the gap. "*Ma inyan Devorah b'Beis Yaakov?*" What is Devorah doing in Yaakov's household? Rashi explains that Rivkah had promised Yaakov years earlier, when she sent him away, that she would call him back when it was safe. She would let him know when his brother Esav's anger had subsided. Now, decades later, she sends Devorah to bring him home. She travels toward Padan Aram, and somewhere along the way, she dies.

Even within Rashi, the details are not clear. Did Devorah reach Yaakov and help trigger his return, then travel back with him and die along the way? Or did she arrive after he had already left, and then try to catch up with him? The phrase *meisah baderech* leaves it uncertain. Where along the way?

The Devorah interlude points to a gap that has developed between Yaakov and his parents. Twenty years have passed. Over time, their separation has become more permanent. If Rivkah promised to call him back, she should be the one who comes to retrieve him. Instead, she sends someone else.

One could argue that Rivkah is too old to



travel. But that only sharpens the question. A nurse is not from a different generation. If Devorah can make the journey, why can't Rivkah? Rivkah does not meet Yaakov again – and the one she had sent to retrieve him does not complete the mission.

Rashi also explains that Yaakov learns of Rivkah's death at this point. *Nisbaser sham be'evel sheini, shehu gam le'imo shemeisa*. At that same moment, Yaakov is informed that Rivkah has also died. The mourning for Devorah merges with the mourning for his mother. That is why the place is called Alon Bachus, a double crying.

Rivkah's death is hidden in the text; her name is not mentioned at that point. Yaakov is mourning Devorah, burying Devorah, delivering a *hesped* for Devorah. Only then does he learn that his mother has also died. The Torah records Devorah's death openly while leaving Rivkah's death almost entirely unspoken.

This inversion reflects the distance that has formed between parent and child. Yaakov has been away for years, and now even his return does not fully restore that relationship. He does not get a chance to reconnect with his mother. He does not even experience her death directly.

Part of this is not his fault. He was forced to flee. He spent years in Lavan's house. But there is also a subtle critique. When Yaakov reenters Eretz Yisrael, there are two places he should go. First to Beis El, where he had his original nighttime encounter and pledged to return, then to Chevron, where his parents are waiting.

Instead, he settles in Shechem. He buys land. He builds. He becomes established. His parents are still alive, but he does not go to them for a long time. Esav has already moved on to Se'ir. No one appears to obstruct Yaakov's travel plans; the path home seems open. Yet he delays. He builds his own life. And by the time he returns, it is too late.

Textually, Yitzchak also disappears quickly. Even if, chronologically, he lives longer, the Torah does not dwell on any renewed relationship between father and son.

Sadly, both of Yaakov's parents are lost to him before there is any reunion. The Torah softens this by not stating it directly. It tells us about Devorah, his mother's agent and an important figure in his distant past. It only lets us discover Rivkah's death somewhere along the way. It presents Yitzchak's passing without focusing on the lost years.

But the underlying story is still there. A son returns after decades away, and the relationships he left behind are no longer intact. Some of that distance was unavoidable; some of it may reflect the choices he makes upon returning.

It is a quiet and painful thread running through the parshah: the cost of those years in exile, not only in what Yaakov endured, but in what he no longer has when he finally comes home. ■





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HAFTORAH INSIGHTS
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Whose Example Do We Follow

The Haftorah opens with חֲזוֹן עֹבַדְיָה, "the vision of Ovadiah," and immediately tells us that the prophecy concerns Edom, the descendants of Esav. Why was Ovadiah chosen to deliver this particular prophecy?

In the Gemara (Sanhedrin 39b), Rabbi Yitzchak answers this question by drawing a comparison between Ovadiah and Esav. Ovadiah lived among two resha'im, Achav and Izevel, וְלֹא לָמַד מִמַּעֲשֵׂיהֶם, and did not learn from their ways. Esav grew up among two tzaddikim, Yitzchak and Rivka, וְלֹא לָמַד מִמַּעֲשֵׂיהֶם, and did not learn from their ways. The Gemara uses exactly the same words for both men. In one line, they're a compliment. In the other, they're an indictment.

A few lines earlier, the Gemara tells us whom Ovadiah *did* learn from. When Izevel was killing the nevi'im of Hashem, Ovadiah hid a hundred nevi'im and brought them bread and water. The Gemara pauses over a detail. Why did he hide them in two groups of fifty? Rabbi Elazar says that Ovadiah learned from Yaakov. When Yaakov heard that Esav was approaching, he divided his camp in two, reasoning that if one camp was attacked, the other might escape. Ovadiah took that same idea and used it to protect the nevi'im. (*Melachim I* 18:4, *Bereishis* 32:8–9, *Sanhedrin* 39b)

The two teachings sit just a few lines apart. First, Chazal tell us that Ovadiah learned from Yaakov. Then they tell us that he did not learn from Achav and Izevel. Achav and Izevel were the people Ovadiah saw in the palace. Yet when he had to decide how to protect the nevi'im, it was Yaakov's example that guided him.

There's a quiet irony in that. Yaakov divided his camp because Esav was coming. Generations later, the person chosen to speak to Esav's descendants was the man who had paid attention to what Yaakov did that day. ■

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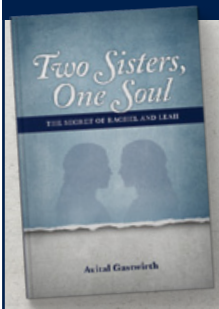

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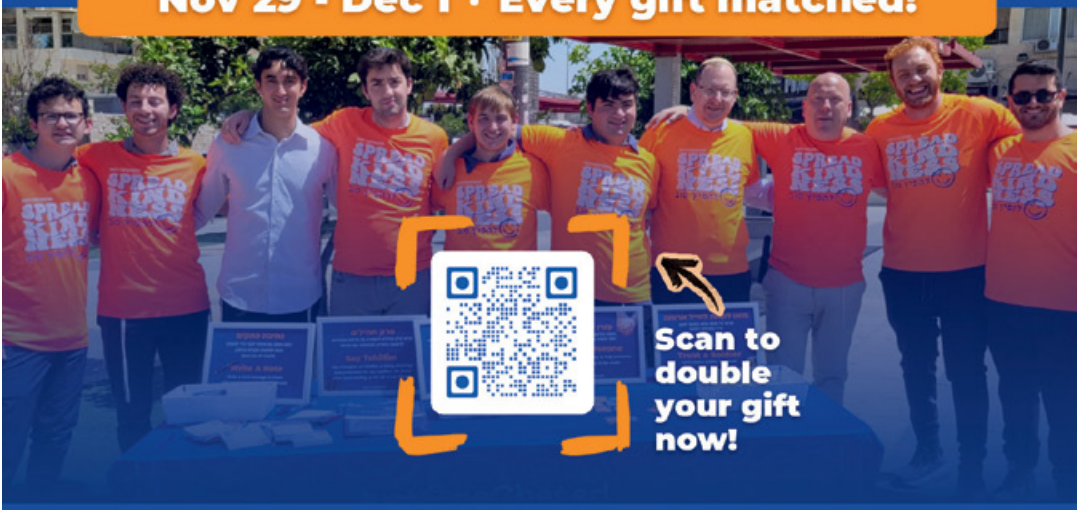

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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHEIDER
PIRKEI AVOT SERIES
Editor, Torah Tidbits

The Power of Silence: From Inner Reflection to Action

Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot (1:17)

Shimon his son says: "All my life I was raised among the Sages, and I found nothing better for the self (body) than silence..." (Pirkei Avot 1:17)

Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop, in his commentary on Pirkei Avot, suggests that this teaching highlights the value of moments or periods of silence in becoming more attuned to our soul and inner world. The Mishnah specifically states that "silence is good for the body." The body, too, needs serenity and calm to access the soul's inner depths, engage in introspection, and "listen to the whispers of one's soul." (Mei Marom, vol. 2, p. 100)

Rav Charlop is surely echoing a theme found throughout the thought and writings of his Rebbe, Rav Kook. Consider this beautiful passage:

"Silence is an essential demand that comes from the depths of the soul. This demand comes about as a result of higher reflections that are behind the world of speech. Such higher reflections are a permanent matter inside of us. When a Baal HaMachshava HaDomemet/a master of silent thoughts immerses oneself in one's higher silence, many worlds are created and built; exalted songs rise up in their highest holiness; a higher strength is elevated in its holy perfection beyond all spiritual realms."(Shemoneh Kevatzim 1:868, Orot Hakodesh 3, p. 274, translated in The Spiritual Wisdom of Rav Kook, Schwartz, p. 57)

A FAST OF WORDS

The Chafetz Chaim writes that when one wishes to accept a fast upon oneself, it is preferable to undertake a *Ta'anit Dibbur* (a fast of speech) rather than a conventional fast from food and drink (Shulchan Aruch, Chapter 571, Mishnah Berurah, #2).

A *Ta'anit Dibbur* is intended to limit one's speech and, in doing so, prevent transgressions such as lashon harah and other forms of inappropriate speech. Perhaps, however, the experience of silence offers something deeper: it helps a person reconnect with the soul, become more contemplative, and cultivate greater self-awareness.

YAAKOV'S NIGHT PRAYER: TOUCHING RUACH HAKODESH

Yaakov's encounter with God took place late at night. Having fled his home, he experienced a remarkable



revelation of angels ascending and descending a ladder to heaven.

Rav Kook teaches that nighttime is a period of quiet and solitude. This environment removes external physical distractions, making human consciousness especially receptive to extraordinary spiritual elevations, including Ruach HaKodesh and levels approaching prophecy. (*Ein Ayah, Berachot,* vol. 1, p. 109)

THE SILENT AMIDAH

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, a remarkable scholar and writer, offers a unique way of understanding the Amidah prayer: we can think of it as a form of meditation. We repeat the same words again and again, much like a mantra. It is striking that Jewish prayer so often incorporates voice and song, yet the Amidah is recited silently.


Rabb Aryeh Kaplan zt"l

Rabbi Kaplan explains:

"People often complain that saying the same prayer over and over is tedious and uninspiring. For anyone familiar with mantra meditation, the opposite is true. All types of mantra meditation involve repetition. In mantra meditation, the device repeated is a word or phrase, and it can be repeated over and over for weeks, months, or even years on end." (Jewish Meditation, Kaplan, p. 45)

RAV KOOK REINTERPRETS THE MISHNAH

In his commentary on Pirkei Avot, Rav Kook offers his own distinctive reading of the Mishnah above. Through a creative interpretation of the phrase "lo matzati leguf tov me'shtika," he understands the teaching to suggest that silence, by itself, does not benefit the body.

In other words, silent meditation, thoughts of teshuva, and intentions to do good ultimately miss their mark if they remain confined to contemplation. *Dibur* (speech) and *ma'aseh* (action) are essential to transforming oneself and the world around us.

INTERNAL YET ACTIVE PRAYER

The Talmud (Berachot 31a) describes the proper way to recite the Amidah: it should be said silently, while one's lips are still moving. Rav Kook offers a beautiful interpretation of the balance between silence and action.

The goal of prayer is to strengthen one's inner spiritual life and draw closer to God. This is the silent dimension of prayer, which focuses on the internal aspects of one's religious experience. However, Rav Kook cautions against the misconception that the internal dimension is all that matters. The physical act of moving one's lips reminds us that words and actions are also necessary to attain *shleimut* (wholeness). (Ein Ayah, Berachot, perek 5, siman 20)

REFRAINING FROM SPEAKING OVER A CUP OF BLESSING

The Talmud teaches that once a person is holding the *kos shel bracha* (cup of blessing) used for Birkat Hamazon, one should refrain



from speaking (Berachot 51a).

Rav Kook suggests that this silence reminds us that speech should always be used in ways that are enriching and sacred. Too often, we use our words in lowly and unbecoming ways.

Rav Kook cites a teaching from the Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachot 1:2), in which Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai declares that had he been present at Har Sinai, he would have requested two mouths, so that one could be reserved exclusively for Torah. He recognized the inherent indignity of using speech for physical and mundane matters. The ultimate aspiration is for our words to be devoted to the most elevated and noble purposes. (*Ein Ayah, Berachot*, vol. 2, 51a, piska #55)

SLOWLY STANDING TALL

Rav Kook beautifully explores two dimensions of religious growth, drawing a parallel to the way we bow during the recitation of the Amidah.

The Talmud (Berachot 12a) relates that Rav Sheshet, when bowing, would bend like a stick; when straightening up, he would rise like a snake. The bowing was quick, like the snapping of a stick, while the act of straightening was slower and more deliberate.

Rav Kook connects these two movements to distinct dimensions of personal growth. Bowing represents the need to break negative character traits and overcome improper behavior. Such qualities and actions must be addressed decisively and without hesitation, like the snap of a stick.

By contrast, the journey toward a more elevated and saintly life is gradual. It cannot generally be rushed. This kind of growth demands time, patience, and perseverance. (Ein Ayah, Berachot 1, piska #166, pp. 65–66)

RAV KOOK: CALLS FOR ALIYAH

Rav Kook himself personified this ideal: the combination of profound thought and inner introspection with an absolute commitment to translating contemplation into words and action.

In the realm of *dibur* (speech), Rav Kook repeatedly called upon the Jewish people, through his letters and public addresses, to return home to Zion. One remarkable public proclamation was entitled "The Great Call." [Presented here in abridged form.]

THE GREAT CALL

"To the Land of Israel, Gentlemen, To the Land of Israel! Let us utter this appeal in one voice, in a great and never-ending cry.

"Come to the Land of Israel, dear brothers, come to the Land of Israel. Save your souls, the soul of your generation, the soul of the entire nation; save her from desolation and destruction, save her from decay and degradation, save her from defilement and all evil — from all of the suffering and oppression that threatens to come upon her in all the lands of the world without exception or distinction....

"Escape with your lives and come to Israel; G-d's voice beckons us; His hand is outstretched to us; His spirit within our hearts unites us, encourages us and obliges us all to cry in a great, powerful and awesome voice: Brothers! Children of Israel, beloved and



dear brethren, come to the Land of Israel, do not tarry with arrangements and official matters; rescue yourselves, gather, come to the Land of Israel…

"From the time we were exiled from our Land, the Torah has accompanied Israel into exile, wandering from Babylon to France, Spain, Germany, Eastern and Central Europe, Poland, Russia, and elsewhere. And now, how happy we would be if we were able to say that she has returned to her first place, to the Land of Israel, together with the people of Israel, which continues to multiply in the Holy Land.

"And now, who is so blind that he does not see the L-rd's hand guiding us in this, and does not feel obligated to work along with G-d? A heavenly voice in the future will cry aloud on top of the mountains and say, 'Whoever has wrought with G-d, let him come and receive his reward (Vayikra Rabbah 27:2). Who can exempt himself from doing his part in bringing additional blessing and swifter salvation; from awakening many hearts to return to the Holy Land, to the L-rd's legacy, that they may become a part of it, to settle it with enterprises and buildings, to purchase property, to plant and sow, to do everything necessary for the foundation of life of a stable and organized settlement…." ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, **"Torah United"** on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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Faculty, OU Israel Center

Ovadyah's Living Prophecy

In 1933, some months before the passing of the great Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, the 'Chafetz Chayim', he was visited by his students who shared with him the worries they had over the increasing anti-Semitism spreading through many of European countries. Their fears were certainly understandable, as the accursed new Chancellor of Germany had risen and, with that, so had the power of Nazism. What, after all, would be the fate of the Jewish communities throughout Europe? What about the yeshivas, the shuls, the culture of generations, the asked.

The eminent sage did not suggest any solution to his questioners. He did not reassure them with promises denying that anything would happen. Not at all. Instead, he simply quoted a pasuk from Sefer Ovadyah, a verse that we read in this week's haftarah:

"וּבְהַר צִיּוֹן תִּהְיֶה פְלֵיטָה וְהָיָה קֹדֶשׁ וְיָרְשׁוּ בֵּית יַעֲקֹב אֶת מוֹרָשֵׁיהֶם"

But a remnant will survive on Har Zion, and it will be holy. It will be then that Bet Ya'akov will dispossess those who had previously dispossessed them.

It is true. The Chafetz Chayim did NOT relieve his students of their fear. He did not guarantee their survival, or promise some divine miracle to save them…he only shared a simple quotation.


The Chafetz Chaim zt"l

But today, we understand that **he was sharing a nevu'ah for them, prophesying a truth** that they could never have believed in 1933!!!

Our parasha of VaYishlach begins with the return of Ya'akov from the house of Lavan who, on his way, meets up with Eisav. And, although the Torah Reading also includes Ya'akov's struggle with the angel, the Hashem's of Ya'akov, that includes the addition of "Yisra'el" to his name, and the attack on Shechem…despite these important events, the haftarah focuses **only** the relationship of Ya'akov and Eisav. And, to understand why, we should learn who this 'one-chaptered' navi really was.

The Gemara **[Sanhedrin 39b]** sees the Ovadya of Trei Asar to be the same Ovadya who served as the household minister to King Achav **[M'lachim A; 18: 2]** in the ninth century BCE. Later commentators, however, date Ovadya as a navi who prophesied during the same time of Yirmiyahu, (**6th century BCE**). This opinion is based upon our haftarah in which Ovadya strongly condemns and denounces Edom

-specifically-as the neighbor of Israel who stood as her enemy during the time of Churban Bayit [**See Tehillim 137; 7**].

And yet, the theme of the longtime hatred of Eisav's descendants that I would focus upon this week. Rather, I turn to the final p'sukim of the haftarah (and of the nevu'ah of Ovadya), that, I feel, are especially fitting for our generation. The prophet's closing message is one of comfort and promise, yet for many generations, it could not have the profound impact on our people that Ovadya had hoped to achieve. But our generation must be able to do so, for we have experienced the fruition of the navi's promised comfort:

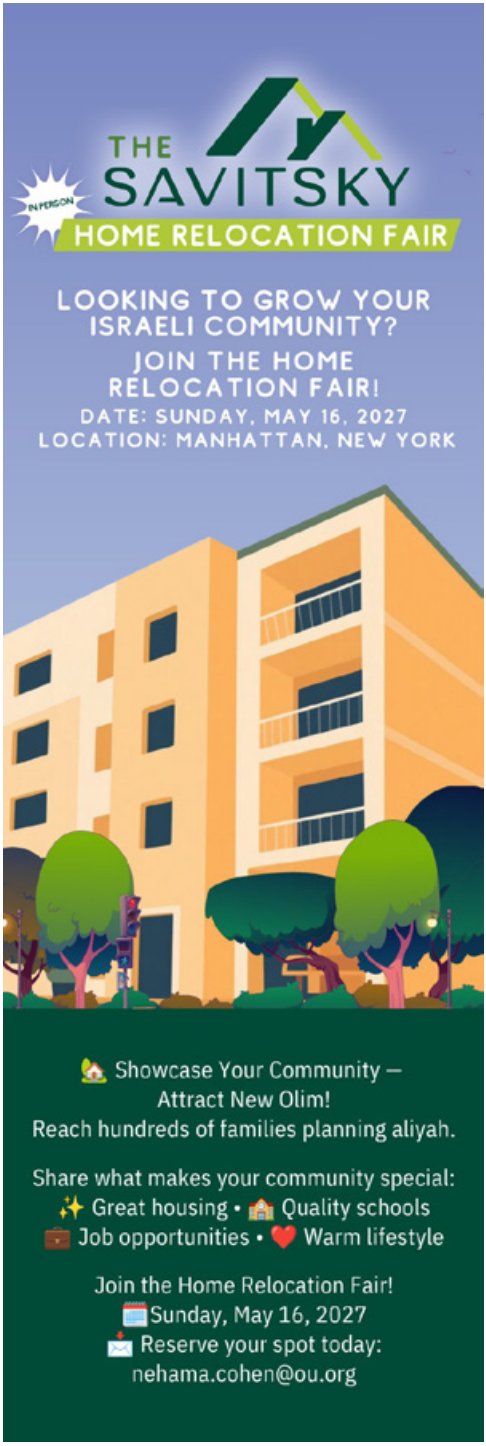
"And they** [Bet Ya'akov] **in the South will possess Har Eisav and…the land of the Philistines; they will possess the field of Efrayim and of Shomron, and Binyamin will possess Gil'ad. And the exiled from Sefarad will occupy the cities of the Negev…"

I imagine that, for 2,500 years, very few could even have thought that such a prophecy would really happen. Even the students of the Chafetz Chayim could envision such a reality that could save Yahadut/*Yiddishkeit*.

But the saintly Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (Chafetz Chayim) knew well that "***a remnant will survive on Har Zion";*** he had the confidence, the *bitachon*, that it was the time for the nevu'ah of Ovadya to come to fruition.

And we, who have witnessed the miracles, should certainly share in the *bitachon* of the great Rabbi. ■

רפואה שלמה
Peleg Shabtai ben Chaviva Leah





MRS. MICHAL HOROWITZ

Torah Educator | Presenter for OU Women's Initiative
Author of "Abled - Living With A Disability, A Torah View"

Facing Our Realities

Many events in the life of Yaakov and his family continue to unfold in Parshas Vayishlach. The parsha relates to us many of the occurrences that take place, including:

After twenty years in Charan, Yaakov Avinu returns to Eretz Yisrael with his wives, children, and flocks. The first hurdle he must overcome is the meeting with his brother Eisav, from whom he fled so long ago. He prepares for the meeting in three ways - with gifts, with prayer, and for war. On the night before the confrontation, he is left alone and wrestles until dawn with a mysterious adversary, emerging wounded in his thigh and with a new name, Yisrael. The meeting itself ends in peace, and Yaakov settles in Shechem, where we learn of the taking of Dina and the vengeance of Shimon and Levi. From there Yaakov is called up to Beis El, where he builds an altar and Hashem renews His promise. On the road to Efrat his beloved wife, Rachel, dies giving birth to Binyamin and is buried by the roadside in Kever Rachel. The parsha closes with the death of Yitzchak and the generations of Eisav, as Yaakov's family finally takes root in the land.



Rabbi Zev Leff

There is much to learn, many insights to consider and an infinite number of lessons to be learned from this parsha - and from every word of Torah!

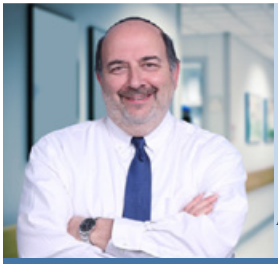
However, as space is limited, we must choose one lesson weekly to study, contemplate, and hopefully apply to our own lives.

Let us focus on the *pasukim* that tell us of the battle - an all-night long wrestling match - between Yaakov and his arch-enemy, *sar shel Eisav*, with dust from their feet reaching the *kisei ha'Kavod*.

The pasuk tells us that: וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר, *and Yaakov was left all alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn* (Bereishis 32:25).

Rashi, quoting the Medrash, notes that this man was the '*saro shel Eisav - the heavenly power (guardian angel, so to speak) of Eisav*.' When the angel sees that Yaakov will not concede defeat, and that he cannot overcome Yaakov, the angel injures Yaakov in the socket of the thighbone. When the

Arthur Samuels, DPM



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angel asks Yaakov to free him, for it is his turn to sing shira before Hashem (32:26-27 with Rashi), Yaakov replies that he will not send him off until he (the angel) blesses him (Yaakov). The angel blesses him by changing his name to Yisrael, and the confrontation leaves Yaakov injured and limping, but far from defeated.

As we quoted above, it is well known that the mysterious *Ish* was the *sar shel Eisav*. However, the Rashbam offers a different - and fascinating - explanation of the *Ish*.

ויאבק - מלאך עמו, שלא יוכל לברוח ויראה קיום דברו של הקב"ה שלא יזיקהו עשו, *And he wrestled - an angel wrestled with him so that he could not flee, and so that he would see the fulfillment of Hashem's word, that Eisav would not harm him* (Rashbam to 32:25).

Rabbi Zev Leff *shlita* explains that the *Ish* was Yaakov's *own angel*, whom Hashem had sent, specifically to keep Yaakov in place so that *he could not run away*.

From here, Rabbi Leff proposes, we learn that one cannot run away from his problems. At some point, Yaakov was going to have to face Eisav, and the confrontation was going to happen. If it wasn't "today," it would be "tomorrow." And if not tomorrow, then next year or the year after that. Running away from Eisav would solve nothing, and so, Hashem sent Yaakov's own angel to prevent him from fleeing!

The lesson for us is clear, even though at times, it may be very difficult. We all face situations in life that require us to confront events, places, or people that make us uncomfortable, are painful for us, are frightening, or seem "too big" to face. While all of our feelings may be valid and true - based on that which faces us - running away from what we must eventually confront will neither help us, nor solve our problems for us.

With trust in Hashem, and in our own capabilities (not always an easy task, though a necessary one), along with the correct tools to navigate life, we learn from Yaakov that running away is not a solution.

Fascinatingly, the Rashbam further notes that Yaakov was struck and left limping because despite the fact that Hashem had promised him protection, *he tried to flee nevertheless*. The Rashbam notes this is a pattern we see in Tanach: anyone who goes against Hashem's will, or refuses to go where Hashem sends him, is punished. He brings examples from Moshe who is stricken at his place of lodging after he tries to avoid leadership (Shemos 4), Yonah who is swallowed by the fish after running away from his mission, and Bilam, who was left lame after going against Hashem's will (Bamidbar 22:22-25). (Rashbam to 32:29)

Hashem will always do His part, yet the nature of *olam ha'zeh* is that we must do ours.

In building our own selves, in our relationships with others, and in our connection to Torah, mitzvos and HKB"H, we must rise to the occasions of life, seek guidance when we are unsure of the proper path to take, pray for success in our endeavors, and be courageous to face our situations



and "problems" in life.

Yaakov *Avinu* limped into the morning, yet he forged ahead, and walked toward Eisav anyway. The meeting ended in peace, not because the fear was gone, but because - with Hashem on his side - he faced it.

We each have something we are walking around, and toward. A hard conversation. A relationship that needs repair. A truth about ourselves we would rather not face. Yaakov's fight teaches us that Hashem does not send an angel to carry us away from it. He sends one to keep us there, so we can face it, come through it, and emerge even stronger.

Yaakov went from the dependency of his Yaakov essence (holding on to his enemy's heel), to becoming his Yisrael essence - one who struggled, strove, and overcame.

The challenges we face in life are often difficult, and while our instinct may be to "flee," by facing our realities, like Yaakov, we pray that we merit to find the blessing that awaits us on the other side.

■ **בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום**

Michal Horowitz is a Torah educator who lectures nationally throughout the United States, as well as internationally. Thousands of her shiur recordings are available online. She is a regular presenter for the OU Women's Initiative and the author of Abled: Living With a Disability, a Torah View (Mosaica Press). Michal lives in Woodmere, NY, with her family.

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SHOSHANA JUDELMAN
Chassidus Teacher and Holocaust Educator

Ayeka?

On 19 Kislev, 1798, the Alter Rebbe was freed from Tsarist prison. About 200 years later, his teachings changed my life.

His opponents had accused him of fomenting rebellion against the Tsar, who had him arrested and brought to Petersburg. The Rebbe was held and questioned for 53 days.



The Tanya

One day, a government minister questioned the Rebbe. He asked why Hashem had said "Ayeka?" ("Where are you?") to Adam after he and Chava ate from the Tree of Knowledge. Didn't Hashem know where Adam was?

The Alter Rebbe offered Rashi's explanation: that it was a conversation-starter. But the minister, familiar with Rashi, pressed him for something deeper.

So, the Rebbe explained. Hashem wasn't speaking only to Adam. "Ayeka?" is a call to each one of us, every day and in every generation. It is Hashem asking: "You have been here for ___ years. Where are you on your journey? How much of your mission have you tried to fulfill? And, perhaps most importantly, where are you headed?"

As far back as I can remember, I have been introspective, for better or for worse. As a teenager, I used to sit on my dresser, gaze out the window, and contemplate the meaning of my life. Back then, however, I wasn't very connected to Torah and didn't think to look there for answers. Instead, I searched within myself for ways to grow and become a better person.

But I was hard on myself. Those moments of reflection often ended the same way: I would find plenty to criticize, berate myself for what I hadn't done or who I hadn't yet become, and resolve to try harder. I wanted so much to grow, but I didn't know how to do it without making myself feel that I wasn't enough.

The Alter Rebbe's explanation of "Ayeka" holds a key I wish I could have understood as that lonely, downhearted teenager. What if the question wasn't meant to make me feel how far I had fallen short? What if it was an invitation, a reminder that my life has purpose, that Hashem sees the person I can become, and that He wants to help me get there?

The question itself is an expression of connection. Hashem isn't simply waiting at the finish line, measuring how long it takes us to arrive. He is with us throughout the journey, giving us the strength to find our way, encouraging us to keep going, and believing in the potential He placed within us.

Hashem's "Ayeka" is not a judgment. He isn't asking us to measure ourselves against anyone else or hold ourselves to unmanageable standards. We don't have to have

it all figured out. We just have to be willing to keep moving.

At the same time, "Ayeka" invites deep soul-searching. It asks us to pause periodically and consider: Is this habit building my strength or paralyzing me? Is it moving me closer to where I want to be or pulling me further away? And perhaps most importantly: Do I even know where I want to go? These questions aren't meant to leave us feeling inadequate. They are meant to help us become more intentional about the lives we are building.

When he was released on the 19th of Kislev, the Alter Rebbe was emboldened to share his teachings more broadly and deeply. This opened the way for the Tanya to find its way into countless hearts and transform lives across generations.

The energy of this day is one of redemption and possibility. It reminds us that we are never stuck where we are, that new pathways can open, and that there is always room to grow closer to the vision Hashem has for us.

May we all be blessed to find the places, people, teachings, and songs that inspire us to keep moving forward with hope and encouragement. May we recognize the unique potential Hashem has placed within us and feel His presence as we take the steps to bring it to life. And may we have the courage to hear Hashem's "Ayeka?" not as a demand, but as an invitation to discover where we can go from here. ■

Shoshana Judelman teaches regular shiurim in Chassidus for women across Israel and in Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya in Jerusalem. Her shiurim can be found on Spotify and SoundCloud (Shiurim with Shoshana Judelman). Shoshana is also a guide at Yad Vashem and leads journeys to Poland and other countries for JRoots.



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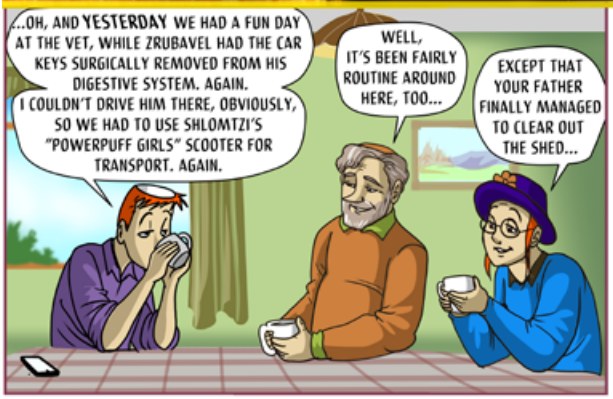



















YOU WERE BORN UPSIDE-DOWN, AND HAD TO BE YANKED OUT WITH A WINCH BY YOUR HEEL.
YOU WERE BORN SLIGHTLY PURPLE UNTIL WE MANAGED TO CALM YOU DOWN WITH SOME GILBERT AND SULLIVAN...
YOU WERE BORN WITH A RASH ON YOUR LITTLE BACKSIDE THAT CURIOUSLY RESEMBLED THE SHAPE OF GREENLAND...
I ACTUALLY THOUGHT IT LOOKED LIKE ONE OF MUM'S FISH SCHNITZELS...


ER... IS THIS GOING ANYWHERE? ONLY, I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF A CALL...
WE'RE JUST SAYING THAT AT THE TIME, YOU DIDN'T SEEM IN A POSITION TO DETERMINE WHAT IT WAS YOU WERE BORN FOR...
...NOR WERE YOU IN POSITION TO HICCUP UNTIL THE MIDWIFE HELD YOU THE RIGHT WAY UP AND GAVE YOU A GOOD SLAP ON YOUR LITTLE MAP OF GREENLAND...

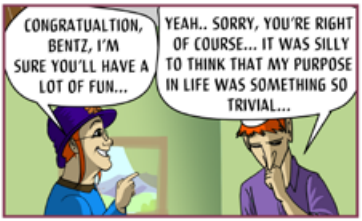

I... I GET IT...
OH, I WOULDN'T JUMP TO ANY CONCLUSIONS...
OK, SORRY, I TAKE IT BACK, I WASN'T BORN TO...
Y'KNOW WHEN YAAKOV AVINU WRESTLES THE ANGEL OF ESAV?
THE ANGEL PLEADS TO BE RELEASED BECAUSE HE HAS FINALLY BEEN CALLED TO SING BEFORE G-D...?


THINK ABOUT IT, THAT ANGEL HAD BEEN WAITING ALL IT'S... WELL... EXISTENCE TO BE CALLED TO SING, WHAT ARE THE CHANCES HE'D BE CALLED UP WHILE IN BATTLE WITH YAAKOV?
TALK ABOUT TIMING, EH?!
WELL, WE LEARNED THIS TOGETHER THIS WEEK:
THE AVODAT YISRAEL EXPLAINS THAT ANGELS ARE ABLE TO SING ONLY ONCE THEY'VE COMPLETED THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THEY WERE CREATED!


THE ANGEL OF ESAV - NAMELY, OUR ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL NEMESIS, THE YETZER HARA - WAS CREATED TO TRY US AND TEST US TO THE BEST OF ITS ABILITY...
ITS PURPOSE, THOUGH, IS NOT TO TORMENT US, BUT TO ENABLE US TO OVERCOME HIM!
SO WHEN YAAKOV OVERCAME HIM SO COMPLETELY, THE ANGEL HAD COMPLETED ITS PURPOSE! AND THEN HE COULD FINALLY SING!


Y'SEE, SON?
ER... YES... Y'DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WERE BORN TO BE UNTIL YOU'VE...?
...UNTIL YOU'VE WRESTLED WITH WHAT, FOR YOU, IS A MAJOR CHALLENGE AND OVERCOME IT!
BEING IN THAT PLAY WILL BE FUN, CERTAINLY, BUT IS THAT ALL G-D HAD IN MIND FOR YOU WHEN HE CREATED YOU?


WELL, MR. YERUSHALMI, THAT WAS A MOST UNEXPECTED REACTION. A RASH IN THE SHAPE OF GREENLAND, EH?
AARGH! IT WAS STILL ON LOUDSPEAKER!
WE DIDN'T GET ALL OF THAT, BUT THE BIT ABOUT BEING YANKED BY THE ANKLE UPSIDE-DOWN IS A MOST RON WEASLEY-ISH EXPERIENCE, SO YOU'LL DO GREAT! REHERSALS START MONDAY!


CONGRATUALTION, BENTZ, I'M SURE YOU'LL HAVE A LOT OF FUN...
YEAH.. SORRY, YOU'RE RIGHT OF COURSE... IT WAS SILLY TO THINK THAT MY PURPOSE IN LIFE WAS SOMETHING SO TRIVIAL...


HOW ABOUT YOU TWO? HAVE YOU DISCOVERED YOUR LIFE MISSION THROUGH OVERCOMING A REALLY SUMPTUOUS CHALLENGE THAT MADE YOU FEEL "YES! THIS IS WHAT I WAS MADE FOR"?
WELL! IT'S FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK, BECAUSE...


...DID I MENTION THAT I'D FINALLY CLEARED OUT THE SHED?
MY HERO!



RABBI KENNY POLLACK

Rebbe, Yeshivat Lev Hatorah
Managing Director, Camp Dror
& Strategic Integration of OU Israel Summer

Friends From Afar?

Parshat Vayishlach sets the stage for one of the most anticipated and terrifying family reunions in biblical history. For twenty years, Yakov has been living in exile, looking over his shoulder. Now, Yakov is finally returning home, but he receives word that Eisav is marching toward him with an army of four hundred men. Yakov goes into full crisis mode. He divides his camp to prepare for war, he sends waves of extravagant gifts to appease his brother, and he prays desperately. Everything points to an explosive, violent confrontation. But then, they finally see each other, and the tension simply vanishes. Seemingly out of nowhere, the narrative flips:

וַיָּרָץ עֵשָׂו לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיְחַבְּקֵהוּ, וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צַוָּארָו וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ; וַיִּבְכּוּ

"And Eisav ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept" (Bereishit 33:4).

It is a beautiful, cinematic moment. But if you look at this verse in a traditional Torah scroll, there is something highly unusual: there are distinct scribal dots placed over every single letter of the word *vayishakehu* (and he kissed him).



Chazal tell us that dots above a word signal an anomaly—a moment that defies normal reality and demands a deeper look. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (quoted by Rashi) explains that we need these dots because, logically, we shouldn't believe this kiss. The history is too dark, the betrayal too deep. Because of that intense baggage, we would naturally assume this embrace was fake or staged.

The dots are there to reassure us of the exact opposite. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches that in this specific, fleeting moment, the dots tell us that despite the bitter history, the kiss was 100 percent genuine. Normal reality was suspended, and for one second, they were just two brothers who missed each other.

But what happens next is the true secret of their relationship. Swept up in the emotion of the reunion, Eisav wants to keep the magic going. He says to Yakov:

נִסְעָה וְנֵלֵכָה וְאֵלְכָה לְנֶגְדֶּךָ

"Let us travel and move on, and I will go alongside you" (Bereishit 33:12).

Eisav essentially says, *"This is amazing! Let's move our camps together. Let's do life side-by-side from now on."* Yakov responds

with a polite but firm decline. He points out that his camp moves at a different pace. He tells Eisav to go on ahead, and says, *"Etnahalah l'iti"*—**"I will lead on slowly"** (Bereishit 33:14). The brothers permanently separate, living as good neighbors from afar.

Why did Yakov walk away? The Netziv, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, addresses this in his commentary, the *Ha'amek Davar*. He explains that while the brotherly love awakened during that embrace was completely genuine and reciprocal, Yakov knew their core natures and daily missions were fundamentally different. To force them to live in the same space would inevitably reignite their historical friction. Yakov realized a profound truth: you don't need to share the same physical space every day for a connection to be authentic. They needed to return to their own paths, but that distance doesn't erase the kiss. The "dotted" moment of pure love remains entirely real, even from afar.

There is a powerful lesson here about the magic of camp friendships that can be taken from a piece of this lesson. Sometimes, we pack our bags at the end of the summer and wonder: *Are these friendships real if we only see each other in the summer? If we go back to our different schools and different cities, was this just a camp bubble?*

Parshat Vayishlach answers with a resounding yes: the relationships formed in camp are absolutely real. Camp is the "dotted word" of our year. It is a sacred, elevated space where the normal barriers drop, the baggage falls away, and we connect soul-to-soul. When camp ends, just like Yakov, we all have to say *"Etnahalah l'iti"*—we have to go back to our own places, our own schools, and our own communities. We build a bit of distance over the winter. But that distance doesn't mean the friendship was an illusion. We don't need to be in the same bunk 365 days a year for the bond to be genuine. The dots prove that the connection is real, giving us the fuel to walk our separate paths until the next time we run to greet each other. ■

Rabbi Kenny Pollack is the Managing Director, Camp Dror & Strategic Integration of OU Israel Summer. If you want more information about Camp Dror, OU Israel's premier English speaking summer camp, check out our website: www.campdror.com



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SIMONA PITTERMAN
MADRICHA

ביטחון VS השתדלות, IT'S UP TO ה', OR IS IT?

A struggle that I have always wrestled with is how to balance השתדלות with ביטחון. I always wondered how much is too much. How do you know how much effort to put in and at what point do you just throw up your hands and leave it up to ה'?

יעקב shows us in this week's פרשה just how much השתדלות we have to put in. When preparing to meet up with עשו after years of running from him, יעקב is scared. He doesn't just sit in fear and say whatever happens happens. He takes action to ensure that everything goes smoothly. He made a three-pronged plan, as (רש"י בראשית ל"ט:ב) explains. "לדורון" - he sends generous gifts, representing diplomatic preparation."לתפילה" - he turns to ה' and davens as a form of spiritual resilience. "למלחמה" - then he works on practical defense by splitting his camp.

It's from יעקב that every Jewish leader since has learned how to approach similar situations, whether it be משה in the desert or kings before wars. יעקב shows us how important תפילה is and the power of combining prayer with action. The Talmud tells us "אין סומכים על הנס" (מסכת פסחים, דף ס"ד, עמוד ב'), you can't rely on a miracle. First, you plan, then you trust ה' that He will bring the best outcome.

The answers to all our questions can be found within תורה, and we have to look no further than this week's פרשה to get the answer to the age-old question of השתדלות vs ביטחון. It isn't really an either-or situation; יעקב shows us that you need both: we have to put in practical effort and do everything we can to ensure the outcome we want while trusting ה' with the outcome. יעקב אבינו taught us an incredible lesson, ה' helps those who help themselves: you do everything you can and ה' will take care of the rest.





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WHY ANCESTRY IS SO IMPORTANT

This week's parsha, a very big part of the last פרק talks about ancestry, like the sons of Elifaz, Teman, Omar, Tzefo, Gatam, Kenaz, and Korah, but why is that so important that they gave it almost an entire

perek in this week's parsha? The reason for this, according to the Zohar, is that this is a very important topic to cover, because from here branch out many enemies and many important figures that shaped the rest of the journey of Am Yisrael: like Amalek, who came from Elifaz, and Timna, who plays a huge role later in Am Yisrael's story, as they became the first people to attack them when they exited Egypt, and in many more scenarios, as they became one of, if not the, worst enemies of Am Yisrael.

Edom, or all the descendants of Esav, later stood between Am Yisrael and their entering Eretz Yisrael. Both play crucial roles further on in Am Yisrael's journey.

Because of this, the Torah devoted almost a whole perek to it, because this is extremely important for the future of Am Yisrael. Shabbat Shalom. ■

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לישיבת שבי חברון

דרוש/ה מנהל/ת קשרי תורמים

שבי חברון - עמותה מובילה בפיתוח וקידום פרויקטים חינוכיים והתיישבותיים ברחבי הארץ, מחפשת מנהל/ת קשרי תורמים בעל/ת מעוף, יכולות בינאישיות גבוהות ותשוקה לעשייה ציונית וחברתית.

התפקיד כולל

- סיוע למנהל המחלקה בטיפוח וחיזוק הקשר עם תורמי הארגון.
- ניהול ומעקב אחר מאגר התורמים (CRM) ותהליכי שימור הקשר.
- כתיבה והתכתבות שוטפת עם תורמים באנגלית.
- תמיכה בפעילות השוטפת של מחלקת גיוס המשאבים.

דרישות התפקיד

- יכולות תקשורת בינאישית מעולות ויכולת לבנות קשרים ארוכי טווח.
- אנגלית ברמת שפת אם בדיבור וניסוח בכתב ברמה גבוהה – **חובה**.
- עצמאות, יוזמה, סדר וארגון ויכולת ניהול זמן מצוינת.
- נכונות לעבודה בשעות גמישות מול תורמים באזורי זמן שונים.
- ניסיון בתחום גיוס המשאבים – יתרון משמעותי.

משרה מלאה

העבודה במשרדי העמותה בירושלים ובחברון

Yeshivat Shavei Hevron is seeking a

Donor Relations Manager

Shavei Hevron, a leading organization dedicated to developing and advancing educational and community-building initiatives across Israel is seeking a Donor Relations Manager with excellent interpersonal skills, initiative, and a strong passion for meaningful social and Zionist impact.

The Role

- Supporting the department manager in cultivating and strengthening relationships with donors.
- Managing and maintaining the organization's donor database (CRM) and donor stewardship processes.
- Communicating regularly with donors in English, including thank-you letters and email correspondence.
- Providing ongoing support to the fundraising department.

Requirements

- Excellent interpersonal and relationship-building skills.
- Native-level English and excellent written English for donor correspondence – **required**.
- Highly organized, proactive, independent, and strong time-management skills.
- Flexibility to work with donors across different time zones.
- Previous experience in fundraising or donor relations – a significant advantage.

Full-time position

The position is based at the organization's offices in Jerusalem and Hevron

קורות חיים ניתן לשלוח ל:

To apply, please send your CV to

dovi@shaveihevron.org

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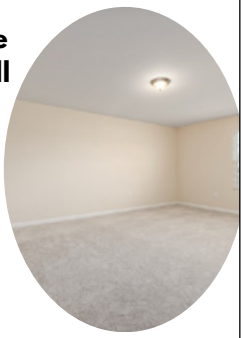

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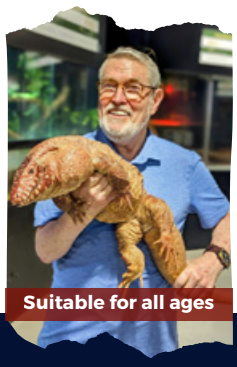
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The above should not be misconstrued as tax advice, legal advice, a recommendation, or an opinion regarding the advisability of participating in financial products of any kind or type, including but not limited to participation in donor-advised funds (DAF). The above is not meant to be a substitute for personal advice tailored to the client's needs, nor does it take the place of advice given by qualified professionals.