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## maskil Le'David

### Battling Light against Dark until Mashiach's Arrival

**"A man wrestled with him until the break of dawn"**  
(Bereishit 32:25).

Yaakov Avinu's struggle with Eisav's angel did not terminate then and there; the battle of the Chashmonaim against the Greeks at the time of the Chanukah miracle was a direct continuation. The essence of this battle is "light against darkness." As Chazal say, the verse, "With darkness upon the surface of the deep" (Bereishit 1:2), refers to the Greeks who wished to darken the eyes of Am Yisrael and weaken the light of Torah with their culture. This continued until the Chashmonaim came and fought a valiant battle against them, returning the crown to its former glory and allowing the light of the holy Torah to shine once again.

This is a battle that continues in full force throughout the generations and will linger until the arrival of Mashiach, as the verse says, "A man wrestled with him until the break of dawn." In every single generation the Greek culture continues to spread spiritual darkness among Am Yisrael, causing great destruction. However, in different time periods this cursed culture changes its guise and disseminates its spiritual poison in different forms.

Our generation today experiences this venom in the form of technological progression. The internet and the various non-kosher cellphones destroy every remnant of good. At the press of an innocent button, man can bring upon himself a dreadful spiritual Holocaust and lead his soul down to the grave. Indeed, to our great sorrow, "She has felled many victims; the number of her slain is huge" (Mishlei 7:26), and man is obligated to wrestle with this darkness, to guard himself closely from it and rather illuminate his soul with the light of life, the light of the holy Torah.

The Ran writes: "Some say that the reason why Chanukah (חנוכה) is called so is because they rested on the twenty fifth (חנו כ"ה)." On contemplation, it seems that our Sages z"l preferred to mark the day of camping and resting from the battle, as opposed to the actual battle and its victory. This is something that requires clarification.

Perhaps to the contrary, only now that the Chashmonaim rested from their enemies did the primary and most significant battle begin. Although the Jews had conquered and destroyed the Greeks, the great tragedy that the Greeks

had wrought on the Jewish people was still present in a most tangible way. Many of them had assimilated and forsaken the path of the holy Torah; while the physical battle had come to an end, the spiritual battle was far from over. The battle of light against darkness which prevailed inside the souls of the Jewish people had only just begun, and it was now necessary to fight against the Greek culture that had implanted deep roots among them.

This is the reason why the Chashmonaim did not celebrate their victory immediately after the battle: they knew much hard work still awaited them; a more difficult, spiritual battle. Therefore, they immediately began to search for pure oil with which to kindle the Menorah. The Menorah symbolizes the light of our holy Torah through which they wished to rekindle the souls of Am Yisrael, bringing them closer to our Father in Heaven and thereby returning the crown of Klal Yisrael to its original glory. And indeed they found a jug of pure oil with the seal of the Kohen Gadol intact, and through lighting the Menorah with this pure oil they merited restoring the light of Torah to Am Yisrael.

The word "Chanukah" is derived from the expression "chinuch" – Torah education. The world at large thinks education is something applicable to young children; as long as they are tender in years one educates them and accustoms them to follow the correct path. But once they mature and grow older they no longer require education; seemingly they are following this path on their own at this point because they have become accustomed to it, in line with the verse (Mishlei 22:6), "Train the youth according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not swerve from it." However, a Jew must always define himself as "being educated" – an education in progress.

One may live life along the path of Torah and feel accustomed to this way of life, yet one still needs to educate himself, increasing his level in Torah and mitzvot. The same applies when he grows old, he is still required to educate himself; there is no limit to the lofty levels one can attain. However much a person elevates and sanctifies himself, he can never reach perfection. On the contrary, the more he rises spiritually and comes closer to Hashem, the more he will reveal how deficient he is, how far from perfection he is.

The Chanukah lights teach us the correct approach to education. On the first day we kindle one light, on the second day we add another light, and so every day we add another light and go from strength to strength with more light and more Torah. One must be careful not to soar to the heights of spirituality like an eagle in one quick leap, for just as he rose quickly, so can he fall quickly, G-d forbid. Rather, he should proceed with slow and sure steps.

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16 Kislev 5786  
6 December 2025

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Yayishlach



## Hilula

16 Kislev  
Rabbi Shaul Yedidya Taub,  
Admor of Modzitz

17 Kislev  
Rabbi Yaakov Lofess

18 Kislev  
Rabbi Yosef Yehuda  
Chakim, the Chacham  
Bashi of Izmir

19 Kislev  
Rabbi Dov Ber,  
Maggid of Mezritch

20 Kislev  
Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank

21 Kislev  
Rabbi Rafael Bardugo

22 Kislev  
Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi,  
author of *Ma'asei Hashem*





## FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu  
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik  
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

### The Goal of the Meeting – a Message for Future Generations

Yaakov Avinu sent messengers to his brother Eisav and prepared for the meeting with him using three strategies: tribute, prayer and battle.

Why was it necessary for Yaakov to meet his brother Eisav and put himself in danger? Why did he not ignore him and continue on his way without meeting him at all?

The answer is, it was important to Yaakov Avinu that his household witness this historical meeting with their own eyes, and that the following message be passed on for all future generations: Anyone who engages and toils in Torah has no need to be afraid of Eisav the *rasha!* As *Chazal* say, as long as the voice of Yaakov can be heard in the *batei kneset* and *batei midrash* we are promised that the hands of Eisav will have no power over us. Therefore, Yaakov specifically wished to meet Eisav so that his offspring would see that he is not afraid of him.

This is the implication of Yaakov's words to Eisav (*Bereishit* 32:5) "I have sojourned (גָּרָתִי) with Lavan," on which Rashi expounds, "Though I have sojourned with Lavan, I have observed the 613 Divine Commandments (the numerical value of גָּרָתִי equals 613) and have not learned from his evil ways." This being the case, Yaakov was not afraid of Eisav at all for he possessed the power of Torah, and if it came to war Yaakov would certainly emerge victorious in the merit of the Torah, just as he was victorious over the angel of Eisav.

This teaches us a lesson. If one wishes to defeat the *yetzer hara*, one has a holy obligation to distance oneself from the pleasures of This World and sacrifice oneself for the sake of the holy Torah, just like Yaakov Avinu about whom it says, "וַיִּוְתַר יַעֲקֹב לְבָדּוֹ" – Yaakov was left alone. He relinquished (וַיִּוְתַר) all that This World has to offer and surrendered all his personal wishes. He remained alone, not joining and becoming friendly with the other nations and not allowing himself to be ensnared by their immoral conduct and beliefs.

Instead, he sat and toiled with the holy Torah inside his tent.

*cont. from p. 1 >>>*

If each day he adds another stage, then his spiritual growth is ensured. On the other hand he must not feel satisfied with his position, saying that he has achieved enough. Rather, he must constantly add to his level and experience spiritual progression every single day, just as we keep adding to the number of lights.

*Lehavdil*, the Greeks, who wished to make Am Yisrael abandon the Torah, also did so with a step-by-step approach, with moderation rather than swiftness and rashness. They did not command them to leave the *batei midrash* at once and forsake Torah, for they knew that Am Yisrael will resist and then their evil plans would not succeed. Therefore they approached the Jews cunningly: first they built sport fields and theatre houses for them next to the *beit midrash*, enticing them with the conviction that working out and strengthening themselves will "benefit their service of G-d." In this way, with convincing words, they slowly drew them over to their damaging culture. Each day they added slightly more impurity, until the Jewish people became deeply enmeshed in their evil ways and forgot Hashem and His Torah.

This same strategy must be used for holiness. Just as they added impurity to impurity day by day, in contrast we too must keep adding – purity to purity. Every single day we should enhance the holiness of our soul and improve our *avodat Hashem*; we must never feel satisfied with what we have achieved. We should go from strength to strength in establishing regular study times for Torah and fortify our unadulterated fear of G-d!



## PARSHAH PEARLS

### Inspiring Reflections

#### The Hatred Still Existed

**"Then Yaakov sent angels ahead of him to Eisav his brother to the land of Seir, the field of Edom" (*Bereishit* 32:4).**

The question is, why did Yaakov send messengers to Eisav to appease him for stealing the blessings and the birthright? Thirty-four years had passed since then, fourteen years in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever and another twenty years in Lavan's house. It could very well be that Eisav had forgotten about all these events; why wake up the bear from its hibernation?

The *sefer Padah Nafshi* explains that Yaakov had a sign that Eisav still held a grudge against him. Eisav possessed two lands, both of which he named with a hint to Yaakov's stratagem: "Seir" (which can be translated as hairy) was named for Yaakov taking the blessings since he approached Yitzchak with hairy hands, and Edom was called so because of the birthright, in exchange for which Yaakov gave Eisav to eat "some of that very red (אָדָם) stuff."

The verse itself reconciles this question: The reason why "Yaakov sent angels ahead of him to Eisav his brother" was because he lived in "the land of Seir, the field of Edom" – which indicated that Eisav still hated Yaakov.

#### Worldly Pleasures Are Passing Futilities

**"He put in his servants' charge each drove separately and said to his servants, 'Pass on ahead of me and leave a space between drove and drove" (*Bereishit* 32:17).**

Rashi writes: He instructed his servants to keep a distance between the various droves so that the greedy Eisav would see animals coming toward him across the horizon. This would make the gift seem even larger and more impressive.

Hagaon Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein *zy"ta* points out something fascinating:

Let us note what satisfied the eyes of that *rasha!* Nothingness! Air, space! And so it is with all the temptations of This World. It only seems as if they have substance, while really they are empty!

In this vein we can explain why we place our hand over our eyes when reciting the Shema. We must understand that the only thing which is genuine is faith in Hashem. Whatever else you see with your eyes is a temporary reality and does not contain real substance. It is simply air, space that serves to mislead man.



## WORDS OF THE SAGES

### You must be a Jew!

Harav Shlomo Zalman Friedman *shlit"á*, the Av Beit Din of Santov, relates the story of a *ba'al teshuva* who described the chain of events that caused him to come closer to a Torah way of life:

"I was brought up as an absolute gentile, knowing nothing else. My first work stint was in a non-Jewish restaurant. One day the owner approached me and told me that he was going on vacation for a few days. He handed me the keys of the restaurant with the following instructions: every night after the last of the customers had left, I was to clean the entire place and dispose of any leftover food.

"The first evening I noticed that there was a lot of leftover food and thought to myself, 'Why should people not enjoy this food?' Not having the heart to throw it all in the garbage, I decided to pack it up and distribute it to needy people.

"On that street, right opposite the restaurant, there was a non-Jewish old age home. So that evening, I took all the food, went over to the home and began dispensing the food to the elderly gentiles. Of course they were all delighted to be treated with tasty food from the upscale restaurant.

"However, there was one gentleman who would not agree to accept any food from me. The first day I thought this was by chance, but when the same story repeated itself over the next few days I asked him why he didn't want to partake of the food. All the others were enjoying the food; there was no reason to feel uncomfortable! There was so much food left; what pity for it to end up in the garbage!

"The gentile told me something that shook me up completely: 'I don't want to benefit from you, because you are a Jew.' When I heard his words I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I retorted, 'Are you normal? I – a Jew? Who better than me knows that I was born to gentile parents who raised me all these years. I am a complete gentile!! Why are you talking nonsense?' But the gentile insisted: 'Heed my words! These kinds of thoughts, feeling bad for food that goes to waste, distributing it to others and not disposing of it in the garbage, is something that only a Jew is capable of. It would not come into question for a gentile! That is why I don't want to take anything from you.'

The *ba'al teshuva* continued: "On hearing these words I immediately called my father and asked him about my origins. Maybe in fact I was a Jew? But my father just said that I should stop making him crazy and disturbing him with irrational ideas. A few days later, I decided to once again 'bother' my father, and this time forcefully ask him to tell me the truth about my origins. My father began stammering which made me pressure him even more, until eventually my father broke down and admitted that indeed, "You are a Jew because your mother is Jewish, and if your mother is Jewish, you are considered a genuine Jew."

"I was completely astounded! It was now clear to me where these thoughts of 'unbiased love,' of feeling compassion for others, stemmed from. For indeed the elderly gentile defined it well; only a Jew is capable of feeling compassion towards others for no obvious reason or benefit. This was the beginning of my return to my roots and after some time I merited doing complete *teshuva*. *Baruch Hashem* today I am a kosher Jew who is particular to observe all the mitzvot."

This story imparts a wonderful lesson. Even a gentile understands that the main essence of a Jew is his love for others; unjustified love with no calculations!



## WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto, shlita**

### Dreams of Improvement

Sometimes a Jew receives Heavenly signals in the form of dreams, and the purpose is to strengthen one's *avodat Hashem*. He must listen to the messages and reinforce his Torah and mitzvah observance.

A woman once told me that she dreamt that all her teeth had fallen out.

Since this type of dream portends bad tidings (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 288:5) for which one is required to fast in atonement, the woman asked what she should do. I instructed her to study the laws of *taharat hamishpachah* and improve her observance of them. She did as I told her, but the story does not end there.

The dream repeated itself; once again the woman dreamt that all her teeth fell out. She returned to me, agitated to the core. "What should I do now?" she wondered. I tried giving her various pieces of advice but nothing helped. Her dream kept returning, as frightening as ever.

Finally, I told her the matter lay in her hands. She had to do some serious introspection and find the area which demanded improvement. This would surely cause her frightening dreams to cease.

That was what happened. After some time, the woman returned to tell me, "Honored Rav, my awful dream is a thing of the past. The Rav advised me to improve and I followed his instructions; I am no longer disturbed by my frightful dream."

"And in what area did you choose to improve?" I asked, curiously.

"I undertook to improve my love for Torah. Likewise, I encouraged my husband to set fixed times for Torah study. Every evening, I joyfully send him off to learn."

**Chazal teach (*Berachot* 5a): If a person is met with suffering, he should search his deeds, as the verse says (*Eichah* 3:40), "Let us search and examine our ways and return to Hashem." If a person searched but found nothing wrong, he should attribute his suffering to *bitul Torah*, as the verse says (*Tehillim* 94:12), "Praiseworthy is the man whom G-d disciplines, and whom You teach from Your Torah."**

# A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



## Understanding our Mission

The world around us which we participate in is full of challenges, tasks, duties, and missions. There is no person who is not involved in some matter, trying to implement this or that policy, or bearing a certain role. From the highest ranking person to the simplest, each feels that he has some mission to carry out, a task that he wishes to accomplish, a target towards which he strives throughout his life.

In the center of all mankind, where each person is engaged in his specific role, we as a nation also have our place, as the Chosen People of the King of Kings, the troop that belongs to Hashem. In worldly terms we are a relatively small congregation, but we have a clear, chosen calling, a joint goal. What is our role here in This World? What is the unique mission that we have been given? What is that exclusive calling that is incumbent on each one of us?

Knowing the answer to this question is essential and of critical significance. No one wants to spend 120 years in this world without knowing why he came here. No one wants to go through life without knowing what to focus on and how to carry out his mission.

Harav Asher Kovleski *shlit*"a, clarifies this concept with the example of a job-seeker who turns up for an interview. The most important thing for him to know is what the employer expects of him, what role he is expected to fulfill, only then can he perform his job appropriately. This knowledge also allows him to focus on fulfilling his tasks and carrying out his role in the best possible way, without getting confused and mistakenly getting involved in matters that are not his concern. Every worker or appointed associate strives to understand the exact definition of his role, for this knowledge is the basis for being able to carry out his task in the most competent matter.

We too, upon arriving in This World, aspire to understand our mission. We want to carry it out in the best possible way and strive to make it our focus. We wish to perform all our actions,

including all the details of routine life, in a way that leads to this goal. If so, the initial issue is to discover what in fact is expected of us, what is our mission and calling in This World?!

Every Jewish person has his own unique purpose; a special mission that Heaven designated for him alone. But, without a doubt, the main purpose of every Jew is to perform Hashem's Will and give joy and pleasure to our Father in Heaven through our deeds and conduct. It makes no difference if a Jew is elderly or young, rich or poor, one who works for his living or one who studies in the tents of Torah. This is the obvious purpose of every Jew, at every age and stage, in every place and time. To give *nachat* to our Creator!

When the essence of this role is clear, when the calling is resolute and the goal is focused, then every act we carry out serves this goal. This essence sanctifies and decorates our deeds with a spiritual halo. A Jew eats or sleeps or performs any other act that all creations do. If the goal is to actualize his mission, if his desire is to strive to attain his goal in life of giving pleasure to his Creator, then he transforms this routine act into a tool that leads to longed-for spiritual success. In this way he is elevated to a level that brings him closer to Hashem.

This is the insight that stands behind the stirring words that Yaakov Avinu uttered when returning from his stay with the deceitful Lavan, "I have sojourned with Lavan," and Chazal expound, "Though I have sojourned (גרתי) with Lavan, I have observed the 613 Divine Commandments (the numerical value of גרתי equals 613) and have not learned from his evil ways!" However, would it really enter the mind of Yaakov Avinu, the choice of the Avot, to do bad deeds? Could it be that the deceitful Lavan would succeed in influencing him and diverting him from his good and straight ways?

Rather, the intention of these words is a penetrating lesson which Yaakov wished to

point out to us: I sojourned with Lavan, my life proceeded alongside Lavan; we worked and cared for the sheep together. We performed the same deeds, carried out the same acts, yet despite this, while Lavan's goal was his personal pleasures, the thoughts behind my deeds were essentially different! They were acts that lead to my true calling, to my goal in life, to spiritual elevation!

### A Wise Investment

An eminent accountant once came to visit the Gaon Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman *zt*"l. He looked around at the old, dilapidated, house, at the extreme poverty, at the simple bed that served Rav Shteinman his entire life, and could not stop himself: "The Honorable Rav should move to a different apartment for a few days and I will organize deluxe renovations. I will turn this home into a beautiful abode, as fitting the status of a Torah leader!"

Harav Shteinman smiled. This was not the first time that people were astounded at the simplicity of his home. He asked the notable gentleman to take a seat and then asked him, "In the capacity of your work as a senior accountant, please tell me. If I am offered a deal that will yield ten percent profit, and a deal that will yield one hundred percent profit, which should I choose?"

He smiled and answered, "Nu, an easy question. Of course you should go for the deal that promises a profit of one hundred percent!"

"This is what I am doing," Harav Shteinman replied. "Investing in a house where I am spending my short life is an investment with low profit, too low to be worth the investment. I invest only in things that will generate one hundred percent profit; eternal life.

"Spiritual investment is one that insures one hundred percent profit, for eternity. I only go for choice investments!"



**"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"**

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