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maskil Le'David

Immersing Oneself in Torah Removes Worry and Fear

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

Rivka instructed Yaakov to leave Be'er Sheva and flee to Charan, as she was concerned for his fate based on his brother Esav's plans to kill him. However, Yaakov himself was not afraid of Esav, and he left town with confidence. This is why the verse does not say "Yaakov fled from Be'er Sheva," rather "Yaakov *departed* from Be'er Sheva" (ibid. 28:10). How was Yaakov able to remain calm and assured? He knew that as long as the voice of Yaakov can be heard studying Torah, the hands of Esav have no power, since the merit of Torah will always protect Yaakov and save him from harm. This is what enabled Yaakov to leave without fear.

We can ask the following question: Why did Yaakov stop off for fourteen years to study Torah in Yeshivat Shem V'Ever? Why did he not go straight to the home of his mother's brother, Lavan? The answer is that Yaakov wished to prove to Esav that he is not afraid of him. Yaakov specially remained in Eretz Yisrael for another fourteen years studying Torah with tranquility, since one who possesses the power of Torah is protected from the hands of Esav.

Through this conduct Yaakov wished to instill in his descendants the message that as long as the Jewish people hold on to the holy Torah, there is no room for fear and no reason to flee from the enemies that surround them, for Torah is the most sophisticated and effective weapon against the enemy. When the voice of Yaakov rings out from the *batei kneset* and *batei midrash*, the hands of Esav have no power.

Yaakov specifically chose to learn in Yeshivat Shem V'Ever for fourteen years, because the number fourteen (יד) hints to the hands (יד) of Esav which have no power as long as Yaakov is studying Torah.

Another difficulty is why Yaakov told the emissaries to tell Esav (ibid. 32:5), "I have sojourned with Lavan." Chazal expound on these words that Yaakov was implying, "Though I have sojourned (גרתי) with

Lavan, I have observed the six-hundred and thirteen (תר"ג) mitzvot and did not learn from his evil ways." Why was this message of interest to Esav?

In addition, it seems that Yaakov was contradicting himself. On the one hand, he informs Esav that he has not become an important prince or achieved status (implied by the wording of the verse, "I sojourned [גרתי] with Lavan," — I remained a stranger [from גר = alien]). On the other hand, he arouses his jealousy and sends a message that he is wealthy and has acquired much oxen and donkeys, flocks of sheep and goats, and servants and maidservants. Since a rich person is generally a respected individual, why did Yaakov tell this to Esav?

The answer is that throughout the time he was away from home, Yaakov wished to impart the message that since he possesses the power of Torah and mitzvot, he has no reason to be afraid at all. Just as when he left his father's home, he did not flee in a panic but remained in the study halls of Shem V'Ever for fourteen years and only then did he continue on to Lavan's house, so too now on his way home he is arriving openly and not secretly, out of fear. And he is even sending messengers to announce his arrival, since the power of Torah is as much part of him now on his return, as when he left.

Yaakov tells Esav: You were aware all these years that I was in Lavan's house in Charan. You were certainly capable of turning up and harming me. Who prevented you from doing this? The power of the *taryag* mitzvot I observed even while in Lavan's home, stood in my stead.

Yaakov also added that Esav should not imagine that, *chalila*, devoting oneself entirely to Torah study and expending all one's energy in Torah alone, precludes having a respectable income. Even though Yaakov merited studying Torah, he had nevertheless amassed many possessions. This is a powerful foundation which is important for every Ben Torah to understand. Unfortunately, today the difficulties and concerns that people face regarding their *parnassah* are widespread. There are some people who mistakenly think that if they take off a bit of time from Torah study and invest that time in some type of business venture, their financial situation will improve. Yaakov Avinu teaches us that this is not the correct path. On the contrary, to the degree a person invests himself in Torah study, to that extent will he merit being blessed.

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13 Kislev 5785

14 December 2024

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Vayishlach



Hilula

13 Kislev
Rabbi David Shalosh

14 Kislev
Rabbi Matityah Garji

15 Kislev
Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi

16 Kislev
Rabbi Shaul Yedidya Taub,
Admor of Modzitz

17 Kislev
Rabbi Yosef Yozel Horowitz

18 Kislev
Rabbi Baruch of Mezibozh

19 Kislev
Rabbi Dov Ber,
Maggid of Mezritch





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Esav's Son Is Called "Achi"

"Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav" (Bereishit 32:12).

This double description, "... from the hand of my brother (*achi*), from the hand of Esav," appears redundant since it is clear to all that Esav was Yaakov's brother.

There are several explanations offered. The Rokeach quotes the Midrash that when Yaakov fled to Charan because of Esav, a son was born to Esav whom he named Achi. He gave him this name so he shouldn't forget what Yaakov had done to him.

When this child grew up, his father Esav commanded him that if he ever comes across his uncle Yaakov, he should kill him. Therefore, Yaakov prayed, save me from the hand of "Achi," the son of Esav, and also from Esav himself.

Constantly Thank and Feel that Everything is Good

"And You had said, 'I will surely do good with you'" (Bereishit 32:13).

Rabbi Yechezkel of Kuzhmir explains the wording of this verse in the following fashion:

If a person is full of appreciation to Hashem, feels Hashem is constantly showering him with abundant goodness, and always looks at the positive in his situation, then Hashem says in return, I will show you what is really considered good. He then bestows great goodness on the person.

This idea is hinted in the words of the above verse, "*v'eta amarta heiteiv*." This implies that if you say that Hashem does only good with you, then — "*aitiv imach*," "I will do good with you" in a double measure. But if G-d forbid, a person says that his situation is bad, then Hashem, as if, says to him, I will show you what true bad is, until you realize your original circumstances were not that terrible.

The Comparison to the Sand of the Sea Which Never Diminishes

"And You had said, 'I will surely do good with you and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea which is too numerous to count'" (Bereishit 32:13).

We find that the angel blessed Avraham Avinu in a similar fashion: **"That I shall surely bless you and greatly increase your offspring like the stars of the heavens and like the sand on the seashore" (Bereishit 22:17).**

Why are Bnei Yisrael compared to the sand?

The holy Ohr Hachaim, *zy"a*, explains the idea behind this comparison: It was a blessing given to Bnei Yisrael that if their possessions or money diminish, the lack will replace itself on its own, by means of a special holiness present in their possessions.

Just as when you dig into the sand on the sea shore or remove part of it, it caves in and fills up on its own, so too if the Jewish people's possessions decrease, they will be replaced with abundant good from Heaven and no lack will be noticeable.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

He Should Occupy Himself with Torah Study

Once, on an overseas flight, I was beset by foreign thoughts. No matter how hard I tried, I could not rid my mind of them. I began wondering how this trip was different from countless others that I should be plagued by such negative thoughts.

Suddenly, I remembered Chazal's advice in such a situation (*Eliyahu Zuta, Ish Shalom, Parashah 16*): "Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: Whoever involves himself in words of Torah removes negative thoughts from his mind. He is spared thoughts of sin, of sword, of subjection to the government, of nonsense, of the *yetzer hara*, of immorality, of wicked women, of idolatry, of subservience to others, of inanities, as it says (*Devarim 28:47-48*), 'Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant. So you will serve your enemies whom Hashem will send against you, in hunger and in thirst, in nakedness and without anything.'"

Meaning, whoever is overcome by foreign thoughts should occupy himself with words of Torah, since they have the power to chase away unwanted thoughts. I immediately put this advice into action, and the negative thoughts finally left me. After a while, I stood up. I finally discovered the cause of my problems. The man who was sitting directly behind me was behaving most inappropriately.

I immediately decided to change my seat, as our Sages exhort us in Avot (1:7), "Distance yourself from a bad neighbor." I did not want his negative behavior to rub off on me any longer.

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Specifically because Yaakov observed all the *taryag* mitzvot, did he merit all this wealth. This is the message Yaakov wished to teach Esav the *rasha* who represents the *yetzer hara*. Applying oneself to Torah study with diligence is what brings a person blessings.

It sometimes happens that when a person merits becoming wealthy, his outlook changes and he now epitomizes, "Yeshurun became fat and kicked." He forgets Hashem and kicks at everything holy. Yaakov is giving over the message that *chalila* his wealth will not cause him to change his approach and discard the yoke of Heaven. On the contrary, through his wealth he will find even more favor in the eyes of the Creator, for he will use his assets to increase his mitzvot and good deeds.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Financial Advice

“So he divided the people with him, and the flocks, cattle, and camels, into two camps” (Bereishit 32:7).

Yaakov Avinu, a^h, prepares himself for a meeting with Esav with a three-pronged strategy: gifts, prayer and battle.

In preparation for the battle that awaits him, he divides his wives, children, livestock and all his possessions, into two camps. In this way, if Esav smites one camp, then the remaining camp will survive.

The *sefer Eved Hamelech* points out an important foundation. The Torah uses this incident to teach us a strategy for life: A person should not invest all his money in one place. From who do we learn this? From Yaakov Avinu as it says, “So he divided the people with him.”

This guidance also appears in Chazal (*Baba Metzia* 42a): “A person should always divide his money into three: a third in property, a third in business, and a third he should keep in his possession.”

Yaakov’s approach imparts a practical lesson on how to protect one’s possessions. If a person divides his belongings, with each part being guarded in a different way and different place, then if he loses one half, or it disappears or is stolen, he will still be left with the remaining half.

In connection to this idea, Harav Munk, in his *sefer Darkei Noam*, quotes a wonderful story brought in Chazal about the shrewdness and wisdom exhibited by one who was exploited, in order to retrieve his money:

A certain merchant travelled to a distant place and took with him a considerable amount of money. He debated what to do with the money. On the one hand, he was afraid to walk around with such a large sum, but on the other hand, he was afraid to give it over for safekeeping to someone with whom he was barely acquainted.

In the end he decided to dig a pit in the ground and hide his money there. But what he didn’t realize was that a pair of envious eyes was watching his every move from the house next door.

As soon as he left, the neighbor discreetly dug up the money.

Sometime later, the merchant returned to the place where he had hidden the money, yet to his dismay the money was no longer there!

He looked all around and noticed a hole in the wall of the neighboring house, from which one could observe the entire area, including this part of the ground where he had hidden his money. He hurried over to the house and poured out his “predicament” to the owner:

“Dear friend, I recently came to live in this area and am still not familiar with the local people. I possess two wallets, one contains five hundred *zehuvim*, and the second one contains one thousand *zehuvim*. I hid the first wallet in a secret place, and now I am debating what to do with the other wallet. Is it worth hiding it in the same place as the first wallet, or is it better that I give it over to one of the locals for safekeeping?”

“The best thing to do,” advised the neighbor, who was already picturing one thousand *zehuvim* falling into his hands, “is to hide it in the same place as the first wallet.”

As soon as the merchant left his house, the neighbor realized that his advice would not serve him at all. In just another moment, the merchant will uncover the hole and discover that all his money has disappeared! Then he will certainly not hide his second wallet in the same place!

He came up with a grand idea.

He took the wallet which was still full of money, and quickly replaced it in its original hiding place. The merchant, who was waiting for this to happen, approached the pit, took the wallet that had been returned and hurried home.



FROM THE TREASURY

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

The Tzaddik Protects Himself and Remains “Alone”

“Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn” (Bereishit 32:25).

The fact that the guardian angel of Esav fought specifically against Yaakov, and not against Avraham or Yitzchak, is most puzzling.

The explanation is because Avraham was an *ish chessed*, he performed many acts of kindness, while Yitzchak was considered “The pillar of prayer.” The *yetzer hara* is prepared to come to terms with these qualities, out of a lack of choice. But when he saw Yaakov toiling and exerting himself in the holy Torah, and that in the future this will afford him the merit of ruling over the lower worlds just as Hashem alone rules over the Upper Worlds, Esav wasn’t prepared to agree to this under any circumstances. This is why he came to fight against Yaakov with all his might.

In order to merit the high level of Torah that Yaakov achieved, a person is obligated to partake of worldly pleasures as little as possible. As the Gemara says (*Sanhedrin* 111a): “Torah is not found in one who studies it through pampering, but in one who studies with discomfort and exertion.” This was the attribute of Yaakov Avinu.

This idea is hinted to with the words of the verse, “And Yaakov was left alone.” This implies that Yaakov relinquished all worldly matters and despised all physical pleasures. He distanced himself from them in an extreme manner and instead chose to occupy himself with Torah study, remaining “alone,” without any attachment to anything else. The foremost attribute of Am Yisrael is when they distance themselves from the nations of the world and do not follow their corrupt culture and evil conduct. As the verse tells us (*Bamidbar* 23:9) “Behold! It is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations.” This is the way that Yaakov behaved throughout his life. Even when he was growing up in his parents’ home together with his wicked brother Esav, he tried very hard not to be associated with him. Instead he secluded himself in his tent and occupied himself solely with Torah study. And on the way to Charan, too, he stopped off in the *beit midrash* of Shem V’Ever, secluded himself from his surroundings, and absorbed himself in Torah study with diligence and exertion.

At Lavan’s house too, Yaakov wished to remain “alone” so as not to learn from Lavan’s evil ways or be influenced by his corrupt manner. Yaakov was therefore careful not to become friendly with Lavan.

Measure for measure, in the future too Yaakov Avinu will be the one who rules, on his own, over the lower worlds, just as Hashem is the only Ruler of the Upper Worlds.

a NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



Acting Above the Letter of the Law

“Yaakov arrived intact” (*Bereishit* 33:18).

Rashi: “Intact physically... intact financially... intact in his learning — having forgotten nothing in Lavan’s house.”

Achieving perfection in life is dependent on following the mode of behavior outlined below:

The Gemara (*Baba Metzia* 30b) explains: “That they should do — this refers to behaving above the letter of the law.”

The Gaon Rabbi Reuven Elbaz, *shlita*, explains that the obligation to behave above the call of duty is not only an *enhancement* of a mitzva, but a mitzva in itself. Therefore, it is not correct to say, “If the matter is not a strict law, I am exempt.”

The world cannot exist if every person only does what he is obligated to do, and there are many areas in life where a person is required to go above the call of duty. It is often advisable to forgo, even if this is not required behavior according to the strict law. Hashem desires that we should be prepared to forgo and judge other people favorably.

A person cannot live for himself alone. He must always calculate his steps according to those in his environment, starting with his family and friends, and then including even wider circles. He must always take others into consideration.

This is the way in which Hashem wishes the world to function. The *Michtav M’Eliyahu* writes: “Hashem wished to give a person merits, so He created man in a way that he is surrounded with opportunities to practice kindness day and night; with his wife, his children, and with all those with whom he comes into contact, as David Hamelech tells us (*Tehillim* 23:6) ‘May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life.’”

From the moment a baby is born, he receives and also learns to give, and as the years go by, his circle of contacts grows, until he reaches the stage for which he was created: marrying a wife and establishing a home.

When he is blessed with children, he has additional opportunities to do good. All this is to give a person merits from his giving, for family life is one long chapter of giving!

The Wife Does More than what She Is Required

I merited hearing *shiurim* from Moreinu v’Rabbeinu Rabbi Ben Zion Abba Shaul, *zt”l*. When we learned *masechet Ketubot* and came to the words of the Mishna (59:2): “And these are the acts a woman does for her husband: she grinds, bakes, launders and cooks,” the Gaon Rabbi Ben Zion said:

“Apparently, what is a woman obligated to do? Take a potato, put it in a pot with a bit of salt and water, and put the pot on the flame...

“Ah, you wish to add some spices? Put it in yourself, she is not obligated to do this. And if she does flavor the dish, this is already considered as behavior above the call of duty. And if she chops onions and adds turmeric or cinnamon, this is way above the letter of the law... She is not obligated to do this!

“But in fact, a righteous wife certainly doesn’t serve her husband plain boiled potatoes, but she invests time in food preparation and adjusts the taste so it should be pleasing for her husband.

“If so, is it not fitting that the husband too should do things he is not obligated to do and shouldn’t say, ‘I will only do what I am obligated to do according to the law’? For if he contemplates, he will realize that she also

does things for him that she is not obligated to do at all.

“She works hard to prepare tasty food, frying onions to add a richer flavor to the dish. She doesn’t just throw a whole onion into the soup, she expends effort and does more than her obligation, and for this you must repay her accordingly. In which way? By doing things for her that also go beyond your basic obligations.”

This outlook must constantly remain before our eyes. We must make a point of noticing all the effort a wife puts into everything, instead of always noticing where she falls short.

Preparing the Fish — to Please His Wife

We find many examples of Gedolei Yisrael who behaved in this manner.

I heard from several trustworthy people that they personally witnessed the Gaon Rabbi Ben Zion going into the kitchen on Erev Shabbat, putting on an apron, descaling the fish, cutting it up, and cooking it.

He didn’t do this because he wanted to enjoy tasty fish. His sole intention was to bring pleasure to his wife and add to her joy, so she could welcome the Shabbat happy and calm, and that both of them together should enjoy a pleasant Shabbat. To achieve an atmosphere of peace, one must be prepared to bestow and give. This is the reason why Rabbi Ben Zion would prepare the fish for Shabbat.

A person who lives as a giver lives in a different world. He enjoys a life which is “A taste of the World to Come.” (*Mishkani Acharecha*)



“Contemplate and see that Hashem is good”

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