TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



וישלח

לעילוי נשמת



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Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")

An Astonishing Midrash

עַל־כֵּ֗ן לֹא־יֹאכְלוּ֙ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל אֶת־גִּ֥יד הַנָּשֶׁ֖ה אֲשֶׁ֣ר עַל־כַּ֣ף הַיָּרֵ֑ךְ עַ֚ד הַיּ֣וֹם הַזֶּ֔ה

"***Therefore Bnei Yisrael will not eat אֶת־גִּיד הַנָּשֶׁה /the displaced sinew on the hip socket to this day***." (32:33)

G-d had contemplated that there would be 13 tribes, not 12 [see Bava Batra 122a], but angel made this impossible when he injured Yaakov. Thirteen is the gematria of the word "**אחד**/one," signifying the unity that would have existed among the tribes had there been 13 of them.

Because Yaakov could not father the 13th tribe, Yosef had to be divided into two tribes. So, too, there has always been division among the Jews, and such a division caused the destruction of the Temple.

Thus, the quoted verse alludes to the four fast days that commemorate the destruction of the Temple, as follows:

- The "gimmel" of "gid" alludes to Tzom Gedaliah. ("Gimmel," the third letter of the Aleph-Bet, stands for the third day of Tishrei.)
- The "yud" of "gid" alludes to Asarah B'Tevet. ("Yud," the tenth letter, stands for the tenth day of Tevet.)
- The gematria of "gid" is 17, representing the Fast of the 17th of Tamuz.

Where is Tisha B'Av alluded to?

Chazal teach that wherever the article "**אֶת**" appears in the Torah, it comes to include something that is not obvious from the verse itself. In this case, the word "**אֶת**" alludes to Tisha B'Av. Indeed, the word itself is the acronym of the words "Av-Tisha." (**Binat Nevonim**)

וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן בְּבֹאוֹ מִפַּדַּן אֲרָם וַיִּחַן אֶת־פְּנֵי הָעִיר
"Yaakov arrived whole at the city of Shechem . . . and he camped before the city." (33:18)

The Hebrew words **וַיִּחַן אֶת־פְּנֵי הָעִיר** also mean "***he beautified the face of the city***." The gemara Shabbat 33a offers three interpretations of how Yaakov beautified the city: (1) he introduced coinage; (2) he built bathhouses; or (3) he established public squares.

R' Yeshayah Horowitz z"l (**the "Shelah Hakadosh**"; 17th century) explains this as follows: On the statement in the above verse that "Yaakov arrived whole," Rashi comments, "Whole in body, whole financially, and whole in his Torah learning." Yaakov shared this "wholeness" with the people of Shechem he was whole financially, so he introduced coinage to improve their financial dealings; he was whole in body, so he built bathhouses to improve their health; and

he was whole in Torah, so he built public squares as places to spread the word of G-d. (**Shnei Luchot Haberit**)



וַיִּגְוַע יִצְחָק וַיָּמָת "And Yitzchak expired and died . . ." (35:29)

In the case of Avraham it says, **וַיִּגְוַע וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם** "***And die did Avraham***" (25:8) (i.e., the name Avraham is mentioned after the word "die").

R' Moshe Feinstein z"l explained that even after Avraham died, he was alive for his descendants, even for Yishmael, who had repented. Not so when Yitzchak died; in Esav's mind, he, and all he represented, was forgotten. (**Darash Moshe**)



וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי־בְנֵי־יַעֲקֹב שִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחֵי דִינָה אִישׁ חַרְבּוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ עַל־הָעִיר בֶּטַח "Two of Yaakov's sons, Shimon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and they came upon the city confidently . . ." (34:25)

Rashi comments that Shimon and Levi are called "Dinah's brothers" because they risked their lives for her. **R' Meir Zvi Bergman shlita** (a rosh yeshiva in Bnei Brak) explains:

It is natural for a person to risk his life to save himself, and a brother's nature is to feel the same way about his kin.

Rambam explains the obligation to give charity as arising from the fact that we are all G-d's children. This means that we are all brothers, and "*If one brother will not have mercy on another brother, who will have mercy on him?*"

This is the meaning of the obligation to "*Love your fellow as yourself*," adds R' Bergman. Train yourself to feel that we are all G-d's children, and it will come naturally to treat others like your brothers. (**Sha'arei Orah**, Vol. I)



From the Haftarah . . .



אִם־תַּגְבִּיהַ כַּנֶּשֶׁר וְאִם־בֵּין כּוֹכָבִים שִׂים קִנֶּךָ מִשָּׁם אוֹרִידְךָ נְאֻם־ה׳
"Though you ascend as high as an eagle and place your nest among the stars — from there I will bring you down! — the words of Hashem." (Ovadiah 1:4)

R' Yosef Chaim z"l, the Ben Ish Chai, (Baghdad; died 1909) writes: Esav's haughtiness, which is the subject of this verse, was fed by the gift of 550 animals that Yaakov sent him in our parashah. This number is precisely the gematria of נֶּשֶׁר (eagle); thus, Esav ascended as high as an eagle.

What is meant by Esav's placing his nest among the stars?

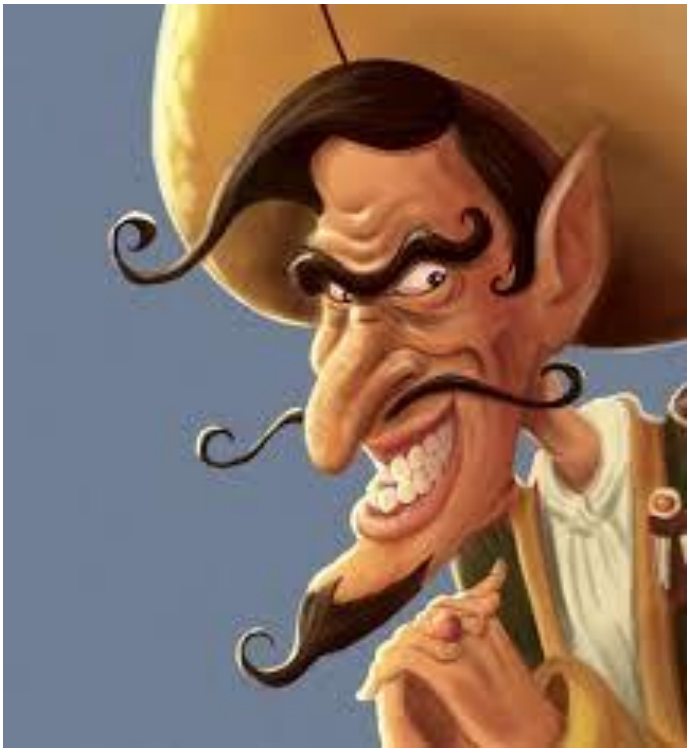
This refers to any merit he may possess as a result of being the son of Yitzchak and Rivka. (See Daniel 12:3, where tzaddikim are referred to as stars.) Do not be haughty! Hashem declares. "From there I will bring you down!"

Specifically because Esav lived among tzaddikim and did not learn from them he deserves to be punished. (**Birkat Chaim**)

"Imagine if you once received a personalised gift from the king of the world. How honoured and thankful would you be? – In truth, Hashem sends us gifts every moment of our lives – Many of which we are unaware of.

If only we focused on these gifts, we would be filled with gratitude and love for Hashem." ~ Rabbi Zamir Cohen.

הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו כִּי־יָרֵא אָנֹכִי אֹתוֹ פֶּן־יָבֹוא וְהִכַּנִי אֵם עַל־בָּנִים
"Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav, for I fear him lest he come and strike me down, mother and children." (32:12)



R' Shlomo Alkabetz z"l (1505-1584; author of the Friday night hymn Lecha Dodi, among other works) writes that Yaakov referred in this verse not (only) to Esav, but to Esav's descendant, Haman who planned **לְהַשְׁמִיד לַהֲרֹג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים מִנַּעַר וְעַד־זָקֵן טַף וְנָשִׁים**" ***to exterminate all Jews, young and old, children and women***" (Esther 3:13).

Thus, immediately after Yaakov's prayer (32:14), the Torah says, **וַיָּלֶן שָׁם בַּלַּיְלָה** "***He spent the night there***."

Note that the final letters of the (Hebrew) words in this phrase spell **המן** -"Haman."

Also, the word **בַּלַּיְלָה** -"***at night***" appears three times in our chapter, alluding to the three days and nights of the fast that Mordechai and Esther decreed. (**Manot Ha'levi to Esther 7:7**)

"There is no one extra in this world. There are no extra pieces, and there are no pieces missing. So, if you woke up this morning, and you are here, it is your job and your mission to figure out why!" ~ Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein Zt'l.

Tehilim

Siddur Avodat Yisrael records a custom to recite Psalm 140 on the Shabbat on which Parashat Vayishlach is read. In that chapter (verse 2), King David prays, **חַלְּצֵנִי ה' מֵאָדָם רָע מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי** "***Free me, Hashem, from the wicked man; from the man of violence preserve me***." In verse 5, he says, **שָׁמְרֵנִי ה' מִיְּדֵי רָשָׁע מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ לִדְחֹות פְּעָמָי** "***Guard me, Hashem, from the hands of the wicked one, from the man of Chamas / violence preserve me***."

Midrash Shocher Tov comments: "Who is 'the wicked man'? - Esav." The Midrash notes that this verse recalls Yaakov's prayer in our Parashah (32:12), **הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו** "***Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav***."

The word "Chamas" also can mean "theft." The Midrash explains that Esav is a "man of Chamas" because he stole hundreds of animals from Yaakov. How so?

R' Moshe Aharon Padua z"l (1805-1867; Karlin, Belarus) explains that by accepting the ransom that Yaakov gave involuntarily, Esav was effectively stealing. (See also verse 10 in this week's Haftarah.)

Why would David pray to be saved from Esav, who had died more than 600 years earlier?

R' Padua explains that he was referring to the "Exile of Edom," our Sages' name for the exile that began at the hands of Esav's descendants, the Romans, and which continues to our day. (**Be'ur Ha'RAM**)

"No nivdal (angel) and no neshamah in Gan Eden can reach the holiness of a Yid who guards his eyes when he walks outdoors." ~ The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l.

וַיֹּאמֶר שַׁלְּחֵנִי כִּי עָלָה הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁלֵּחֲךָ כִּי אִם־בֵּרַכְתָּנִי "***Then he [the angel] said, `Let me go, for dawn has broken.' He [Yaakov] said, `I will not let you go unless berachtani'.***" (32:27)



Most commentaries understand the word "berachtani" as being related to "berachah." Yaakov said to the angel who had wrestled with him, "***I will not let you go unless you bless me.***"

R' Yehuda He'chassid z"l (Germany; died 1217) offers a different interpretation. He writes that "berachtani" is related to "berech" / the upper legs near the "yaraich" / hip.

"*I will not let you go*," Yaakov said to the angel, "*until you cure my hip that you injured.*"

When we read that Yaakov was left limping, it means he was in pain. However, his dislocated hip had been repaired. (**Ta'amei Mesoret Hamikra**)

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ "***Yaakov was left alone . . .***" (32:25)

The Midrash Rabbah states that this verse equates Yaakov's "aloneness" with Hashem's "aloneness." About Yaakov it says, "Yaakov was left l'vado/alone," and about G-d it says, "Hashem l'vado/alone will be exalted on that day."

What is this midrash teaching?

R' Itamar Schwartz shlita (Yerushalayim) explains: G-d implanted the feeling of loneliness in man for a reason. Specifically, man feels

lonely so that he will search for G-d and make Him his "companion." G-d, too, is "lonely" in the sense that He is waiting for man to search for him.

R' Schwartz adds: Most people who feel lonely try to mitigate this feeling by surrounding themselves with friends. One who automatically reacts in this way, without thinking about the reason that loneliness was created, is missing the point, and overlooking a gift that G-d has given him. (B'lvavi Mishkan Evneh II p.99)

Letters from Our Sages

We read in our parashah that one of the steps that Yaakov Avinu took to prepare for meeting, and being saved from, Esav was to pray.



Below we present a letter from **R' Zvi Pesach Frank z"l** (1873-1960; Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim) relating to one aspect of prayer. The letter is printed in Shevivei Or, p. 177.

I have seen a breach in the wall surrounding the "vineyard of Israel," such that many people who are held by the general public to be wholesome and G-d-fearing regularly sit and engage in mundane conversations during the shliach tzibbur's repetition of shemoneh esrei. In so doing, they transgress the explicit ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (siman 124) that one should not engage in mundane conversations when the shliach tzibbur is repeating shemoneh esrei, and if one does, says the Shulchan Aruch, he is a sinner whose sin is too great to bear. It is appropriate to rebuke such a person. Also, one should teach his children to respond,

"Amen," for as soon as a young child says, "Amen," he earns a share in the World-to-Come.

[R' Frank continues:] In recent times, many, many people, including many bnei Torah, engage in mundane conversations during the repetition of shemoneh esrei, and one sin leads to another such that they neglect answering "Amen" and "Yehei shmei rabbah." The holy Zohar says that such people are among those whose punishment is very severe. See also [the halachic work] Pri Megadim, which quotes the [work] Eliyahu Rabbah, which cites the [14th century work] Kol Bo, which says, "Woe to those who speak during the prayers, for we have seen several synagogues destroyed for this sin." In the [work] Vavei Ha'amudim it says that people should be appointed to discourage such behavior and offenders should be shamed publicly.

But, now, the famed sage R' Ephraim Zalman Heilprin (shlita) [z"l (1871-1961; rabbi in Galicia; Denver, Colorado; and Yerushalayim)] has become inspired regarding this matter to found a society of wholesome and G-d-fearing people who will supervise during the prayers, will be careful themselves, and will warn those who are not accustomed to be careful regarding this great matter, such that [speaking] has become permitted in their eyes.

Every G-d-fearing person should give his aid to this mitzvah which is as lofty as the Heavens, may they be among those who bring merit to the public, and may we merit the full redemption in the near future. Such is the prayer of one who signs on behalf of the mitzvah- [Rabbi] Zvi Pesach Frank.

"The Vilna Gaon taught us, we shouldn't seek the tests. But when one is tested, and he passes the test, he should know that he has just elevated himself to a very high level." ~ R' Elimelech Biderman Shlita.

"Yesod Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah" - The Foundation and Root of Divine Service by R' Alexander Ziskind z"l (died 1794).



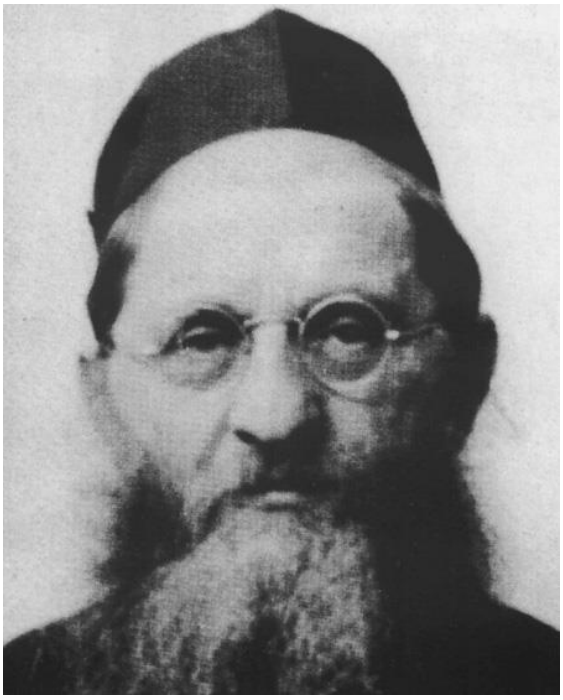
In the section entitled **Sha'ar Avodas Ha'lev**, the author has been encouraging us to look at every event as an opportunity to please our Creator. The author stated that a tool for accomplishing this is to fulfill the mitzvot of וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ - "***You shall love your fellow as yourself***," and בְּצֶדֶק תִּשְׁפֹּט עֲמִיתֶךָ -"***With righteousness you shall judge your fellow***."

In Sha'ar Avodas Ha'lev, chapter 8, the author explains why fulfilling these mitzvot furthers our goal of pleasing the Creator.

It is well known that when a person is sad, his sadness will be lessened somewhat if he sees that others share his pain. [Likewise, a person's joy is increased when he has someone to share it with.] Our Sages teach that, in some sense, the Shechinah is sad when we suffer.

It follows that if we perform the mitzvah "*You shall love your fellow as yourself*" [which the author defined in the previous chapter as sharing in the pain and joy of others, thus decreasing their suffering or increasing their joy], then we lessen Hashem's "pain" and give pleasure to Him as well.

R' Alexander Ziskind writes: Before one performs this mitzvah, he should say out loud, "I am hereby prepared and ready to perform the affirmative commandment of the Torah, which my Creator commanded me– You shall love your fellow as yourself." He adds: One should regularly recite this formula aloud [i.e., before performing other mitzvos].



In connection with our parashah's discussion of the relationship between Yaakov and Esav, the following teaching by **R' Reuven Grozovsky z"l** is relevant:

Even when one must hate a rasha, it should be because one actually loves him and feels a kinship with him; it should be because one feels immense pain at the fact that his brother is sullying his pure soul.

This is the meaning of the verse (Tehilim 139:22) **תַּכְלִית שִׂנְאָה שְׂנֵאתִים לְאֹיְבִים הָיוּ לִי** - "***With the utmost hatred, I have hated them; they have become enemies unto me***." The verse is asking a question: "*I have hated them only because I love them. Why, then, have they become enemies to me?*"

If one must pursue a rasha, it should be the way a homeowner pursues a mouse, not the way a cat pursues a mouse. (Cats are glad that mice exist, for they enjoy pursuing them. Homeowners wish mice did not exist.)

R' Moshe Cordevero wrote in Tomer Devorah (end of chapter 2), "***In one's heart, one must love even the wicked and must pray that they repent and become tzaddikim***." (**Ba'ayot Ha'zman** p.57-58)

R' Eliezer of Kamarner said, "When a righteous man's heart breaks into a thousand pieces, and he is afraid he will become depressed, he should search for his good qualities and praise himself. - At other times, when he fears he might become conceited, he should search for his mistakes and faults. ~ P'air Yitzchok.

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֵאָמֵר עוֹד שִׁמְךָ כִּי אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־שָׂרִיתָ עִם־אֱלֹקִים וְעִם־אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוּכָל ***"He said, 'No longer will it be said that your name is Yaakov, but Yisrael, for you have struggled with the Divine and with man and have overcome." (32:29)***



R' Shaul Yisraeli z"l (1909-1995; rabbi of Kfar Ha'roeh, Israel and a rosh yeshiva in Yeshivat Merkaz Harav) asks: Since Yaakov left the struggle with the angel with a dislocated thigh, in what sense can it be said that Yaakov overcame the angel?

He answers: Our Sages say that the angel with whom Yaakov fought was the guardian angel of Esav and is synonymous with the yezter hara and the satan.

The Gemara (Chullin 91a) also says that this angel first appeared to Yaakov in the guise of a Torah scholar. The struggle was not a physical one, but rather a spiritual one. Only when the angel could not weaken Yaakov spiritually did it resort to harming him physically.

Yaakov won the fight because his adversary did not succeed in representing Torah falsely and had to show his true colours as an enemy of religion. (**Siach Shaul**)

"Death is merely moving from one home to another. The wise man will spend his main efforts in trying to make his future home the more beautiful one." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַה־שְּׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב ***"He said to him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'Yaakov'." (32:28)***

R' Naftali Hertz Weisel z"l (1725-1805; German banker, and prolific author of works of Torah commentary, Hebrew grammar, and Mussar) writes: Surely the angel knew Yaakov's name!

Rather, this verse should be understood like the verse (Shemos 4:2), "*Hashem said to him, 'What is that in your hand?'* and he said, '*A staff*'." Obviously, Hashem knew that Moshe was holding a staff. Hashem meant, "*How do you perceive that thing in your hand?*" to which Moshe answered, "*I perceive it to be a staff.*" "*No!*" replied Hashem, "*it is a snake*!"

Here, likewise, the angel was asking, "*What spiritual powers do you perceive in yourself?*" to which our patriarch answered, "*The spiritual powers of Yaakov, a name that represents humility. "*

"*No!*" replied the angel, "*You have the much greater spiritual powers represented by the name 'Yisrael,'* – meaning, '*You have wrestled with the Divine and with man and have overcome!*'" (**Imrei Shefer**)

וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־אֶרֶץ מִפְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב אָחִיו ***"Esav ... went to a land because of Yaakov his brother." (36:6)*** Rashi writes (on verse 7): **וּמִפְּנֵי הַבּוּשָׁה** שֶׁמָּכַר בְּכוֹרָתוֹ - Esav travelled far away from Yaakov because he was embarrassed at having sold the birthright.

R' Yisrael Yaakov Lubchansky hy"d observes: Esav sold the birthright when he was fifteen years old. In our verse, he was at least 100 years old. Such is the effect of one foolish act; it may continue to embarrass a person almost a century later. (**Ikvei Yisrael**)

A similar thought: The patriarch Avram was 99 years old when his name was changed to Avraham. Yaakov was almost 98 when he received the name Yisrael (in our parashah). In contrast, Esav was

only fifteen when he was given the name Edom. Moreover, he was given that name because of one improper remark (25:30 – "*Pour into me now some of that very adom/red stuff*").

In short, one must work a lifetime to earn a good name, but one foolish act in one's youth can assure a person a bad name. (Heard from **R' Raphael Mendlowitz shlita**)

הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו "Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav." *(32:12)*

Why was it not sufficient for Yaakov to say, "Rescue me from my brother, from Esav"? What is added by "the hand of"? **R' Shmuel de Uzeda** (Tzefat; late 1500's) explains:

There are two ways that a person – here, Yaakov – can be saved from an enemy – here, Esav. One is that the enemy (Esav) will have a change of heart and will go home without attacking. The second is that the enemy (Esav) will come face-to-face with the victim (Yaakov) and will see that the victim is too strong to be defeated.

There is an advantage to the second type of salvation, for in the first case, the enemy can change his mind again and begin his attack anew. In the second case, on the other hand, there is a greater likelihood that the enemy will be too intimidated to ever return.

Therefore, Yaakov said, "I do not wish to be saved while Esav is still at a distance. I want to be saved from Esav's `hands.' Let him come face-to-face with me and then realize that it is not in his interest to attack." (**Derashot R' Shmuel de Uzeda**)

The past has gone; the future is yet to happen; the present disappears with the blink of an eye. So why worry? ~ Ibn Ezra.





Why do we wear a black hat more than any other type of hat? What's the big deal with a black hat?

The answer is that if all the **בני תורה** would wear yellow hats, then we should all wear yellow hats. Colour is not important. The main thing is to identify with the **בני תורה**, with the frummeh. A black hat is a tremendous **זכות**. - You know that a boy approaching **בר מצוה** gets a pair of **תפילין** that costs five, six, seven hundred dollars – even more than that – and he also gets a black hat. To me, the black hat is no less than the **תפילין**.

No less. The black hat shows that, "**ושים חלקינו עמהם**" – "I want my portion, my lot, in life to be together with the frummeh, together with the **צדיקים**. "It's so important!! "**ושים חלקינו עמהם**"." I want to be together with them!"

It's so important to demonstrate that you identify with the **בני תורה**, with the frummeh. And therefore, wearing a black hat is an extremely great achievement.

When a boy in our shul puts on a black hat, I give him a mazel tov as if he's putting on **תפילין**. That's how important it is. And therefore, you shouldn't waste that opportunity. Every time you put on your hat, you should think, you should say out loud, **ושים חלקינו עמהם**. Don't let your mother or your wife hear you, though. She might think

something happened to you. But say out loud, "Thank you Hashem for placing my lot with the frummeh."

And a wife or a mother or a sister is no less. Whenever she sees her husband, her son, or her brother wearing a black hat, she should say to herself, "Boruch Hashem, my lot is with the frummeh, the **צדיקים** of **כלל ישראל**. "Yes, wearing a black hat is a tremendous achievement.



The Rav mentioned the importance of speaking as little as possible in order to concentrate our energies on the business of life, which is shleimus, perfection. Making small talk with a friend for a few minutes, is that also forbidden?

It depends. If that friend needs your words and you wish to cheer him up, then it's a mitzvah. **המפייסו בדברים מתברך באחת עשרה** – If you comfort a poor person with kind words you'll be blessed with eleven brachos" (Bava Basra 9b). So, if you're trying to comfort a fellow Jew, that's what you have a mouth for, that's part of your shleimus.

Now suppose your friend doesn't need the words; but you need the words to cheer yourself up. That's already a weakness. In order to raise your spirits, you have to talk?!

Even that however, if it's necessary, it's also permissible. It's a weakness, but it's necessary so you can do it. So now we are learning that everything depends on what the results are going to be. If the result will be that you'll be able to be more prepared to function properly, then you're justified in certain things that are ordinarily to be avoided. Because generally it's better not to talk. **לעולם ירבה אדם בשתיקה**– A person should try to produce silence" (Rambam Hilchos Dei'os 2:4).

You hear that? To produce silence is an accomplishment! A man should talk as little as possible. But suppose that the other party needs your words, or, worse comes to worse, if you yourself need those words, so say a few words in order to restore your feelings, your equilibrium, and then you get back to the business of life.



How do I deal with a child who wants to go to places that the Rav doesn't approve of, like the circus or baseball games?

You give him substitutes. One that is a little more kosher than the other. So, let's say he wants to go to a circus. So, if there is no other way, then take him to a baseball game. If he wants to go to a baseball game, then take him to the park. If he wants to go to the park, then try to bring him to a farbrengen at a Rebbe instead.

Always try to find something a little better than the thing he wants. Of course, there will be times that you won't be able to give him anything that he wants. But in general, look for substitutes.

Many times, a dollar or a bigger bill will serve as a happy substitute. There are ways and means of making children happy with kosher toys and kosher pastimes. - Of course, it's not always easy and it will take some planning and ability, but that's the job of a parent.

"A person who truly trusts in Hashem is truly rich. But a person who is only reputed to trust in Hashem is like a person who is only reputed to be rich." ~ R' Yisrael Salanter zt"l.



The Rav has written many seforim in English. But hundreds of people are waiting for lashon kodesh. Why should we lose out?

And the answer is this. I don't take money from people to help me print my books. If you see a dedication in the book, that's going to the yeshivah, not me. I don't take any money. I don't do this for money. But I have to pay to print the books. How am I supposed to get my money back? I can't sell lashon kodesh books. Nobody will buy them from me. With English books, I get my money back. That's all. Very simple.

A man in Eretz Yisroel said he'll print my book in lashon kodesh. I let him print it and he's selling it himself. He printed one sefer in lashon kodesh by himself and he's selling it himself. All right; it didn't cost me any money and I make no money. Very good.

They printed one book in Russian. All right. And they printed another book in Spanish. All right. I'm satisfied. But I should print it in Spanish?! I couldn't sell it. I can't waste my money.

A person who worked on self-improvement came to the Baal Shem Tov and complained, "I have tried for quite some time to become a better person. But I am still very plain and simple." - "To be aware that you are plain and simple is an accomplishment in itself," replied the Baal Shem Tov. "Take pleasure in that." ~ Midrash Rivash Tov as quoted by R' Zelig Pliskin.

"Would've, could've, should've…" is heresy! What you are really saying is that it wasn't Hashem's will. ~ R' Yissocher Frand.

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger



The tragedy of our galus is that because we suffer at the hands of goyim, we become frightened and terrorized by them.

The verse וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ ***(Bereishis 32:8) says that Yaakov Avinu, as he was preparing for his dangerous encounter with Esav, - 'Was frightened… and it distressed him.'***

He was distressed over the fact that he was actually afraid of Esav! ~ Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov.

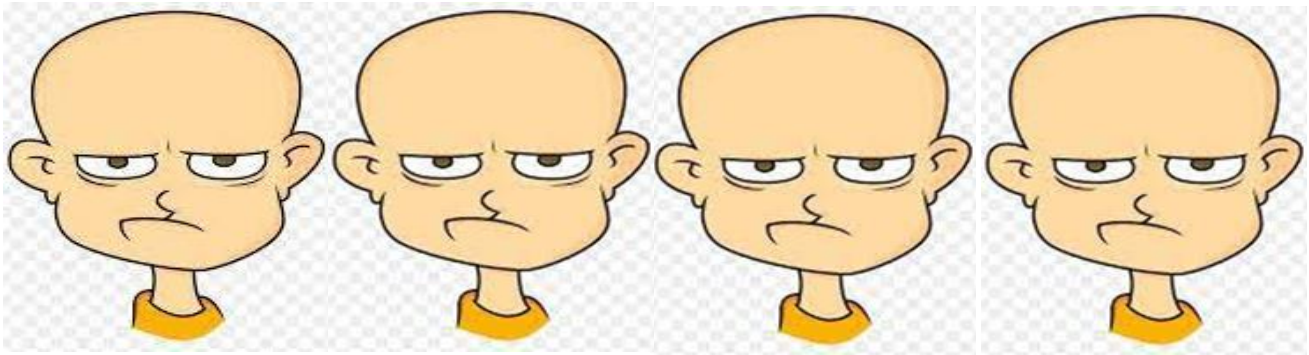
The Weekly Vort

● ויאמר אם יבוא עשו אל המחנה האחת והכהו... – ***And he said, 'If Eisav comes to one camp and destroys it...'*** (32:9). The word והכהו (and destroys it) is a palindrome – it reads the same backward and forward.

This signifies that whoever inflicts harm on Bnei Yisroel, will ultimately suffer harm himself. (Daas Chachomim) (Torah Treasures)

"Whatever you think Hashem has in His mind (so to speak), there's nothing as central, nothing as weighty, nothing as urgent in the mind of Hashem as what is happening to the Am Yisroel right now, in this little world." ~ R' Avigdor Miller zt"l.

Judging Favourably



The Klausenberger Rebbe shared a beautiful thought after surviving the concentration camps: '***There is one thing I miss about the Holocaust. When I went through the death march, we were all clean-shaven, and our hair was shaved off, too. We all marched side by side, and no one knew who was who. No one knew I was a Rebbe. We all just held our arms around each other and tried to keep warm and keep our fellows warm***.'

All too often, we make snap judgments based on appearance, status or clothing. We label people as being of a certain "kind" of Judaism. This judgment leads to separation instead of unity, which we desperately need today.

R' Yerucham Levovitz writes that the true greatness of a man can be measured in the degree to which he lives by the truth that all of his efforts are merely a tool by which the hidden Hand of Hashem directs his affairs and provides his sustenance. (Daas Chochmah U'Mussar, vol. 1)

"A person must realize that sometimes he will overcome the Yetzer Hara and sometimes the Yetzer Hara will overpower him - but as long as a person fights with all of his might Hashem will help him and eventually he will be victorious." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Towering Tehillim



Since the Jewish people the world over have been saying Tehillim daily for the situation in Eretz Yisrael, let us discuss the power of Tehillim. The Midrash states that Yaakov recited Tehillim in the house of Lavan.

The Divrei Yoel says that Yaakov already comprehended Sefer Tehillim with prophecy but it wasn't revealed until Dovid Hamelech. He prepared this power for the generations of Galus that through this the Jewish people will exist and be saved from their troubles.

An allusion to this idea is that the end letters of the words **ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים** '*these are the names of the Jews who were coming to Mitzrayim.*' - spell **תהלים** . This hints to that in all pain and troubles (**מצרים** means straits, referring to our troubles), one can recite Tehillim, thereby bringing about a salvation.

R' Yechiel Meir of Gustonon was called the Tehillim Rebbe because whenever people approached him with their problems he would prescribe a regimen of Tehillim. To some he would say, recite the entire Tehillim while to others he would suggest a section of Tehillim or a few chapters. Each person received their prescription which led to their salvation.

When asked about this, R' Yechiel Meir said that he's not a man who performs miracles. He would quote the **Kotzker Rebbe** that Tehillim is not in the order that Dovid Hamelech arranged it. If it would be,

then Tehillim would have the power of Techias Hameisim (resurrection of the dead). Because it is obviously not the time to give people such power, Dovid Hamelech rearranged the chapters of Tehillim. Despite this, all other salvations can be attained by reciting Tehillim.



וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר וַיִּרְא כִּי לֹא יָכֹל לוֹ. וַיִּגַּע בְּכַף־יְרֵכוֹ וַתֵּקַע כַּף־יֶרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב בְּהֵאָבְקוֹ עִמּוֹ (32:25-26)

The Riv'a (from the *Baalei HaTosfos*) teaches that Yaakov lost his protection because of his fear, which is why the malach was able to smite Yaakov.

Seforno explains that as long as Yaakov Avinu thought about Hashem, he was protected. The moment he lost focus, the *malach* could smite him on the thigh.

"Because of Yaakov's constant *deveikus* in Hashem through his thoughts and speech, the *malach* couldn't harm him. But when the *malach* told him about the nation's future sins - **הודיעו החטא העתיד במדריכי עמו**, this upset Yaakov and his *deveikus* ceased, and [that's when the angel hit him and] his thigh got dislodged."

The Zutchke Rebbe *zt'l* offered another explanation of how Yaakov was wounded, even after Hashem promised to protect him.

He explains that the Sar of Esav didn't harm Yaakov. He couldn't because Hashem was protecting Yaakov. Instead, *Yaakov hurt himself*. - Wrestling necessitates strenuous, unusual body movements. As Yaakov battled with the angel, his thigh dislodged because of those maneuvers.

The Zutchka Rebbe explains the *pasuk* as follows: **וירא כי לא יכול לו** "The *malach* saw that he couldn't harm Yaakov" because Hashem was protecting him. **ויגע בכף ירכו** , "*So he touched Yaakov's thigh*."

This means that he held onto Yaakov. That he could do. He didn't have permission to harm Yaakov but could grab Yaakov. If Yaakov had realized that angel couldn't do more than that, he wouldn't have been afraid and wouldn't have reacted. However, Yaakov was afraid and struggled and wrestled with the angel, and **ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבקו עמו** - "Yaakov's thigh dislodged, due to his own actions and movements in the struggle.



וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ '***Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him***.' (32:8)

Chazal (Midrash Rabbah 75:13) expound on Yaakov Avinu's prayer to Hashem, a prayer that was generated by fear of Eisav.

Chazal say, **וְרָאָה אֶת עֵשָׂו שֶׁהוּא בָּא מֵרָחוֹק** - "***When Yaakov saw Eisav coming from afar***," he immediately began praying more passionately, until Hashem assured him that all would be well. He would protect Yaakov.

Apparently, the closer Eisav came to Yaakov our Patriarch became more fearful, until he actually saw him from afar, at which point he went all out in terms of the intensity of his prayer.

Yaakov's fear of confrontation begs elucidation. It is not as if Yaakov lacked the physical ability to challenge Eisav. Yaakov fought with a Heavenly angel and emerged triumphant. Why was he afraid of Eisav? Furthermore, it seems that he became especially fearful

when he saw Eisav from afar. What was it about the מֵרָחוֹק, "*from afar*," that inspired Yaakov with such fright?

The Maggid, zl, m'Dubno, offers an explanation, employing his signature parable to add pragmatism to the answer:

A community off the beaten path did not have a physician to respond to the ailments which its members were experiencing. The only medical professional in the area was the personal physician of the community's ruler.

One day, the ruler decided to take a journey. His private physician – who was always on call – went with him. Shortly after the ruler left for his trip, a plague broke out in the community, and, with no physician, the situation appeared hopeless.

The ruler, however, had a close friend, a wealthy businessman with whom he had grown up. Whenever the ruler's friend became ill, he would call for the ruler's private physician to provide medical care for him.

Concerned for the welfare of the community, the "friend" became "ill" and called for the ruler's physician to come post haste. The doctor came, and, after a thorough examination, determined that he had nothing to be concerned about. The man was well.

The man then asked the doctor that since he was here "anyway," could he treat the members of the community who had been stricken with the plague. He did so and then returned to his vacation.

The members of the household (of the ruler's friend) were furious with their father. They knew that he was not ill. Why did he make this ruse in order to have the doctor come to town during his vacation?

He explained that while he was not ill, the other members of the community were dangerously ill and suffering. He knew that the doctor would not come for them, so he made him come for him, with

the hope of convincing him to treat the other members of the community.

This, explains the Maggid, was Yaakov's intention when he saw Eisav "*from afar.*" מֵרָחוֹק does not apply to geographical distance, but rather, to a time – in the distant future, when Eisav would utilize his machinations to attack his descendants.

Yaakov prayed, "*Hashem, I am not frightened for myself. I fear for my descendants who will fall prey to Eisav.*" We know that our battle with the forces of Eisav/evil have not always been confrontational. At times, they were as achi, "my brother," when his descendants embraced us as brothers.

How many Jews assimilated and drank from the baptismal font courtesy of Eisav's minions? How many of our people suffered at the cruel hands of Eisav's/Amalek's descendants throughout history? - We have only to look back to World War II to recognize what Yaakov feared.

Horav Michoel Weismandel, zl, writes (Min Ha'Meitzer) concerning the Holocaust, "***Anyone who was sane should have gone out of his mind (from what occurred to our people), and one who did not lose his mind was not sane to begin with***!"

This is what Yaakov Avinu feared, this is why he prayed to Hashem to protect us. He did not fear for himself; he feared for us!

"The Arizal told me that attaining ruach hakodesh is dependent on how much kavanah one has when one says brachos [over food]. When the brachos are said with kavanah, it destroys the kelipos (impurities) and makes the food pure to receive holiness. He warned me about this a lot!" ~ R' Chaim Vital zt"l.

וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו יֶשׁ־לִי רָב ... וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב... וְכֹל יֶשׁ־לִי־כֹל *'And Eisav said, "I have much, And Yaakov said, I have everything.'* (33:9,11)




The Chafetz Chaim, zl, states that the varied comments concerning their individual material bounty that Yaakov Avinu and Eisav ha'rasha expressed define their individual outlook on olam hazeh, this world.

Eisav contended that he had much; a term that implied he could use more. With such an attitude, he would always seek more. One who has one hundred is dissatisfied. He now wants two hundred. He never has enough. On the other hand, Yaakov declared that he had everything. Material assets had little worth to Yaakov. He got by on what he had and what he had was all that he needed.

Indeed, a Jew may say, "I want." No end exists to what a person might seek. He may not, however, say, "I need," because this implies that Hashem has not provided him with his needs.

A man had two sons. He owned a large, expensive diamond which he entrusted to one of his sons for safekeeping. He did not divulge this to anyone.

Shortly thereafter, the father's soul went to its eternal rest. That son was an upright and honest man. This was demonstrated by the utmost care that he showed for the diamond. Since no one other than his father was aware of the whereabouts of this diamond, the son went to his brother and shared this piece of information with him. He said, "Since the diamond now actually belongs to both of us, let us sell it and split its value."

When the brother heard about the diamond, he had other thoughts regarding its disposal. This brother was unscrupulous and was not interested in sharing what otherwise would not originally have been his.

He purchased a worthless glass counterfeit diamond which, to the untrained eye, appeared no different than the real thing. He then suggested to his brother that, since he, too, had received a diamond from his father, it would be much easier for them to place each diamond in a box and draw lots as to who would get which diamond. The upright brother agreed. It sounded like a plan.

The brother whose actions were less than noble purchased two boxes of similar size and appearance. He then placed a hidden mark on the box containing his fake diamond, so that he would recognize it. He suggested that they obtain two witnesses to monitor the proceedings, so that no one would ever claim that he was cheated.

The upright brother asked why witnesses would be necessary; after all, they were loving brothers who were splitting up their father's inheritance, which was comprised of two diamonds of equal value and appearance. The other brother insisted that there be witnesses. He went out to search for two such men.

Meanwhile, out of boredom, the other brother took the diamonds out of their respective boxes. He stared at the shine of the diamonds. When he was done, he returned the diamonds to their boxes, not realizing that he had unknowingly mixed the two boxes. Hence, the real diamond was now in the box that had a black mark on it, and the counterfeit diamond was in the box that had been the repository of the expensive diamond.

We all know the outcome of the story. The brother who had marveled at the stones had unknowingly placed the expensive stone in the box reserved for the fake. The swindler picked the wrong box, and, thus, to his chagrin, ended up with a worthless piece of glass. -

"Had I been an upright person like my brother, this would not have happened," he lamented.

In the prayer, which precedes the daily Shacharis, morning service, **וְתַצִּילֵנוּ מִקִּנְאַת אִישׁ מֵרֵעֵהוּ וְלֹא יַעֲלֶה קִנְאַת אָדָם עַל לִבֵּנוּ וְלֹא קִנְאָתֵנוּ עַל אֲחֵרִים, אַדְרַבָּה, תֵּן בְּלִבֵּנוּ שֶׁנִּרְאֶה כָּל אֶחָד מַעֲלַת חֲבֵרֵינוּ וְלֹא חֶסְרוֹנָם, וְשֶׁנְּדַבֵּר כָּל אֶחָד אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ בַּדֶּרֶךְ הַיָּשָׁר וְהָרָצוּי לְפָנֶיךָ, וְאַל יַעֲלֶה שׂוּם שִׂנְאָה מֵאֶחָד עַל חֲבֵרוֹ חָלִילָה** "*And spare us from the jealousy that one might have for his fellow; and never should envy enter our hearts… and place in our hearts the positive observation of our friend's positive character traits; and we should all follow the righteous and just path; and not harbour any resentment toward our fellow.*"

Horav Elimelech, zl, m'Lizhenk posits, beautiful and meaningful words – if we would only listen. It is all encapsulated in the inspiring immortal words of the Tanna (Ben Zoma) in the Mishnah (Shabbos 32a) (Pirkei Avos 4:1), **אֵיזֶהוּ עָשִׁיר, הַשָּׂמֵחַ בְּחֶלְקוֹ** "***Who is rich? he who is happy with his lot***."

Regardless of the "portion" that one receives, he should accept it as Hashem's gift. When one recognizes the Source of his gift, he should realize that it was not a subjective or arbitrary gift from a mortal, but a profound gift from Hashem Who knows what He is giving, to whom and why.

Furthermore, **שָׂמֵחַ** is happiness that emanates from the heart, as opposed to **ששון**, which is joy that is articulated and expressed publicly/externally. - Joy from the heart is cognitive joy. One thinks it through, understands its depth, and realizes its meaning and purpose.

Contemporary life is unfortunately replete with yearning, striving and unrest. We never seem to have enough. If this would be the case concerning spiritual matters, it would be a good thing. Sadly, we seem to be satisfied with whatever status quo we achieve in the realm of spirituality and "chomp at the bit" when it involves physical/material matters.

Life is filled with challenges. Our grandparents and parents had their set of challenges; we have our challenges, which are endemic to our lifestyle and era. They had hardships; we, too, have hardships. While their sense of adversity was different than ours, one thing remains the same: the ability to cope with adversity.

Our coping skills, however, are greatly diminished when they are hampered by a negative state of mind. In other words, our attitude determines whether we will triumph over the challenge, or if it will be the converse, with the challenge getting the better of us.

A person who has a positive outlook on life understands that true joy emanates from appreciating all that he has, even if it is not as much as he wants.

There is a well-known anecdotal story about a poor man who lived in a tiny house with his mother, wife and six children. The noise was superseded only by the crowded atmosphere. It was impossible for the man to think, because it was difficult to find a quiet place in the house where he could possibly be alone long enough to think.

He went to his rav to seek advice on how to relieve his anxiety. The rav listened to his tale of "woe," and surprisingly suggested that he purchase and bring home several animals: a chicken, a rooster, a duck and a goose.

After "they" were settled, the rav told him to go back and purchase an old goat and a cow. The man was surprised with his rav's advice, but as was common many years ago, he listened to his rav and, despite the added difficulty that it presented, purchased and brought home the shopping list of animals.

After about a week of the added cramping and noise, the man returned to his rav and complained even more. He begged for help.

The rav suggested that he purchase a dog and bring it home. The man now had a menagerie of animals, with the stench and varied noises that accompanied it. He was about to go out of his mind. What

did the rav seek to achieve with his advice? It was impossible to go home. He was more comfortable sleeping in the street.

The man returned to the rav and pleaded with him for help in resolving his now even worse situation. The rav said to remove one animal each day until he had none left and then return to him.

A week passed, and, understandably, the challenges presented by his extra "guests" became a thing of the past. So, too, was the man's negative attitude.

"Rebbe! Thank you so much for your advice. I finally had a decent night's sleep. Life is sweet. With just my family in the house, we have so much room. It is a pleasure!"

Madison Avenue teaches us to want, to seek more and more. Advertisements clamour to tell us that life could be so much more meaningful if we would only have what they are selling. We fall prey to their wiles, not realizing that the greatest joy is derived when one is content with his life. Their goal is to make us feel miserable, when, in fact, we should be happy with what Hashem has provided for us.

Sadly, we do not realize our good fortune until it is taken from us. Then, a black piece of dry bread becomes a lavish banquet, and a trip to the park becomes a vacation.

A psychologist once counselled: "***A person must always be light-hearted and happy. Even when circumstances are clouded by sadness, one must fight to smile. Somewhere among all the sad thoughts, he must have some recollection of better days which may curve his lips into a smile, and, in turn, brighten his spirit; and a bright spirit cannot be defeated by sadness***."

In conclusion, we all have wonderful aspects of our lives that either elude us or we ignore them. Quite often, the most positive attributes are right under our nose. The reason that we do not

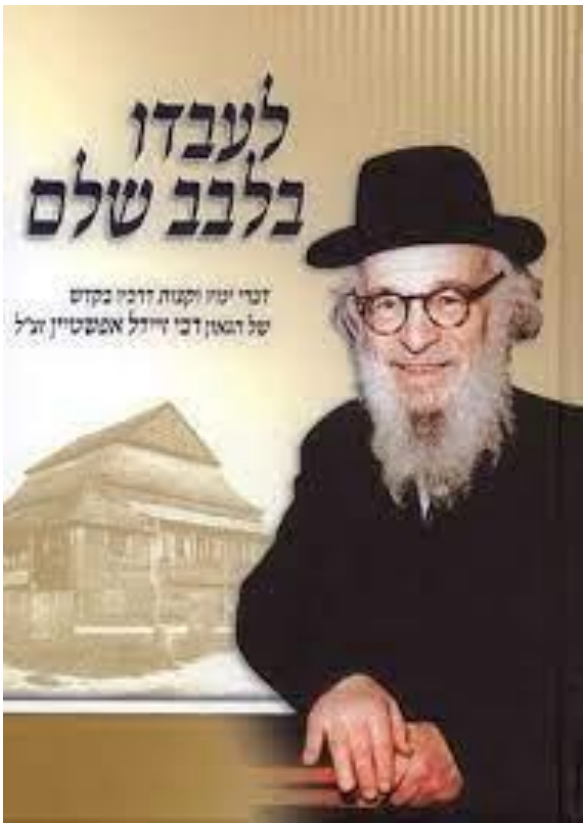
notice them is that we are too busy either complaining or looking with envy at our neighbour to realize that we are very fortunate.

A man decided to sell his home, and he consulted a real estate broker. After visiting the house, the agent wrote an elaborate description of the house – no fabrications – only the truth in a positive light. He then gave it to his client for approval.

"Is that my house?" the client asked. "If it is, I have changed my mind about selling. It is just the house that I have always wanted, and I never realized that I had it all the time!"

As I said, right under our nose!

עִם־לָבָן גַּ֫רְתִּי '***With Lavan, I lived***.' (32:5)



Rashi interprets the phrase, **עִם־לָבָן גַּ֫רְתִּי**, "***With Lavan, I lived***," as a profound message to Eisav. The word **גַּ֫רְתִּי** has the same letters (hence, the same gematria, numerical value) as taryag, 613 (mitzvos). Yaakov intimated to Eisav, "I do not fear your influence on me. I lived for years with the wicked Lavan; yet I did not learn from his evil ways. I still was able to observe all taryag mitzvos.

Yaakov seems to be making two statements: A) I observed the entire Torah, B) I did not learn from Lavan's evil ways.

Is this not obvious? If one observes the entire Torah, clearly he is not a student of Lavan. The disciples of Lavan do not observe the

Torah, and those who adhere to the Torah are not influenced by Lavan!

Horav Zaidel Epstein, zl, derives from here that it is possible for one to be fully Torah observant, yet remain a talmid, student, of Lavan. The two are not necessarily inconsistent with one another.

Obviously, this must be explained since a Torah observant Jew cannot possibly be an adherent of Lavan's values and principles – or can he?

The Mashgiach explains this based upon a well-known principle expounded by **Ramban** in his commentary to Parashas Kedoshim (Vayikra 19:2), in which he explains the concept of קְדֹשִׁים תִּהְיֻו, "***You shall be holy***."

What is the meaning of holiness? How is our concept of holiness different from that understood by general world society?

Ramban contends that holiness is not limited to the observance of any specific category of mitzvos or to the fulfillment of any particular set of activities or deeds; rather, it is an exhortation that one's approach to life and living be governed by moderation, especially in those areas of human endeavor which are permissible.

The Ramban's phrase assailing such behavior has been immortalized: נָבָל בִּרְשׁוּת הַתּוֹרָה - "***A degenerate with the permission of the Torah***." - Such a person executes the technical demands of a mitzvah, including the minutiae, yet surrenders himself to self-indulgence, gluttony, and licentious behavior. Although not committing a specific prohibition, his behavior is not Torah-oriented.

A Jew must go beyond his practical obedience; he must be קַדֵּשׁ עַצְמְךָ בַּמּוּתָּר לָךְ, "***Sanctify himself/yourself in what is permissible***," (Yevamos 20a) thus achieving the level of kedushah, holiness.

Lavan lived for olam hazeh, this world, with its materialistic and physical pleasures. He clung to them passionately. Yaakov Avinu could

have been influenced by his behavior, to the extent that he could "placate" total mitzvah performance while achieving those worldly pleasures that were not distinctly incongruous with Torah dictate.

We derive a powerful lesson to incorporate into our lives: One should not assume that by studying Torah and observing mitzvos -- even studying diligently and observing every aspect of the mitzvos – he is home free. - He must accompany his spiritual devotion with an abrogation of olam hazeh, dedicating himself to a life in which physical pleasure -- unless dedicated for a lofty, spiritual purpose -- is not his life's focus, nor is materialism his guiding light.

Torah and mitzvos mean spirituality. Materialism and physicality are present to help, not to lead.

וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי־יַעֲקֹב אֶת־שְׁכֶם וְאֶת־חֲמוֹר אָבִיו בְּמִרְמָה '***Yaakov's sons answered Shechem and his father Chamor cleverly***.' (34:13)



מִרְמָה is usually translated as "treachery/deceit." In this instance, Rashi translates it as **בְּחָכְמָה**, with wisdom, or cleverness.

This interpretation begs elucidation, since how much wisdom does it take to overpower a community of men on the third day following surgery, when they are in intense pain? One could hardly call this cleverness.

The Netziv, zl, explains that "cleverness" in this case serves as a disclaimer, to declare that at no time did the brothers intend to accept this base people into their family. Shechem and his cohorts were not becoming Jews. - The use of the word **מִרְמָה** reminds us not to ever make such a mistake.

In a drashah, speech, on Shabbos Vayishalch, **Horav Yehonasan Eibeshutz, zl**, said that Bnei Yaakov were powerful enough to wipe out the city of Shechem. The people of Shechem deserved the punishment, and Bnei Yaakov could and would do it. The problem was: "What will the neighbors say?"

The gentile nations that bordered on Shechem would certainly take umbrage with the fact that an entire people were killed out by Jews. They would take revenge.

In order to circumvent such a reaction, the brothers suggested that the people of Shechem be circumcised, a ritual which leads to conversion. Word would spread that the Shechemites were now converted Jews. If this would be the case, the gentiles would not intervene. "If Jews kill Jews, it is none of our concern."

That was a clever move on the part of Bnei Yaakov. They played on the age-old hatred that Eisav harbours for Yaakov – and it worked.



וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַה־שְּׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב. וַיִּשְׁאַל יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּידָה־נָּא שְׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶּה תִּשְׁאַל לִשְׁמִי 'He said to him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Yaakov"… Then Yaakov inquired, and he said, "Divulge, if you please, your name." And he said, "Why then do you inquire of my name?' (32:28,30)

Eisav's angel asked Yaakov Avinu for his name. It is not as if he did not know his name. He simply wanted to know the source of Yaakov's strength, his power. Our Patriarch replied, "*Yaakov. My power is in the heel. I enter the fray from the side, unnoticed. This is how I succeed.*" - *The angel said, "From now on, your name will be Yisrael, a name which implies strength. You will no longer have to come from the eikav, heel/side. You will come with strength.*"

Our Patriarch seemed content with this new designation. He now said to the angel, "*Since we are discussing 'names,' and you inquired as to the source of my strength, let me ask you the same question: 'From*

where do you derive your power? What is your name?' How do you succeed in ensnaring people, seducing the unsuspecting, and using your guile to entrap those who do not know better? How do you convince people to see darkness and call it light; to see evil and call it good; to see and taste bitter and call it sweet?'"

The angel replied, "Why, then, do you inquire of my name? This is the source of my strength: no questions!"

The unsuspecting do not question. They live life in the fast lane, without pausing to think, to ask if perhaps what they are doing is wrong, dangerous, spiritually foolish.

When one does not bother to ask, then he cannot be told that it is wrong. Some are too busy to question; others are either afraid that the reply will be negative, or they do not care about the reply. They are having too much fun. - Why stop to ask questions?

This is how the venerable Maggid, **Horav Shabsi Yudelvevitz, zl**, explains their dialogue. If we would just pause for a moment to digest these words, to permit them to enter our minds and permeate our hearts.

The yetzer hora, evil inclination (represented by Eisav's angel), understands that if a person stops to think, to ask, he will receive a negative reply – and he will refrain from doing the wrong thing. Thus, the yetzer hora sees to it that there is no time to ask, no breaks: "Live your life; go about your merry way; eat, sleep, enjoy, waste every minute of your day, but absolutely do not pause to think."

When one thinks, he questions – and the answers are not acceptable.

Question: What is my purpose in life? Why was I created?

If we would even stop long to answer this question cogently, we would put the yetzer hora out of business. This is what Eisav's angel replied to Yaakov, "Why now do you have to ask? Do not ruin all the fun."

וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר 'And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.' (32:25)



Chazal (quoted by Rashi) say that the "man" who wrestled with Yaakov Avinu was no ordinary human; rather, he was the archangel of Eisav, who had been dispatched by Hashem to pave the way for the ultimate salvation of Yaakov and his descendants.

We derive a portent for the future from their fight. Just as Yaakov was injured during the course of the struggle, but, nonetheless, he prevailed and went on to even greater achievements; so, too, will our People suffer losses in the future, but will emerge stronger, better, spiritually healthier – in preparation for our ultimate geulah, redemption.



Later on (Bereishis 37:15), Yosef HaTzaddik, upon searching for his brothers, encountered an אִישׁ -"man," who Rashi identified as Gavriel, Hashem's ministering Angel. The question that the commentators immediately ask is, "What is the criteria for defining אִישׁ?" Why is Yosef's אִישׁ Gavriel, while Yaakov's אִישׁ is identified as Eisav's Angel?

The answer as explained by **Horav Yechezkel, zl, m'Kuzmir**, is that Yaakov transformed himself into a bridge for helping others. He

would take what he received in one place and give it/use to (help) others.

When he asked the אִישׁ to stay and help him, the אִישׁ replied that he was late for singing shirah to Hashem. His time had come; his purpose in Creation had arrived. He could not be late. Only Eisav's angel would employ his personal agenda as an excuse for not helping a Jew in need.

When a Jew is suffering, when he is in dire need of assistance – one must come to his aid. Personal spiritual ascendance is not an excuse. It indicates a degree of selfishness, a deficiency in his spiritual integrity.

Yosef, on the other hand, was lost in the field. The אִישׁ took pity on him and asked him how he could help. Such an אִישׁ represents the highest form of chesed. He is someone who does not wait to be asked to help – but sees a need and immediately "rolls up his sleeves" and jumps in to help. Thus, he is identified as Gavriel.

Rav Yechezkel once sent a shliach to solicit funds from a certain wealthy man. When the shliach arrived at the home of the would-be benefactor, the man ignored him. Apparently, the man was in the middle of baking matzos for Pesach. He was just too busy to listen to anyone. - "Take a number and come back" was probably his reply.

The shliach returned to the Rebbe empty-handed and depressed. He was no shmatte. He was on a mission for his Rebbe. He expected a little common courtesy.

When he related his experience to the Rebbe, the Rebbe remained silent. On Shavuos, however, when the wealthy man came to Kuzmir to spend Yom Tov with the Rebbe, the Rebbe shared the above dvar Torah with him.

I was thinking about this Torah thought today when a harmless, but bothersome, well-meaning, but annoying, person wanted me to drop

everything to listen to him relate the latest antics of his granddaughter.

At first, I was tempted to avoid him, but then I realized that he had only one granddaughter after waiting some time for his only son to get married. Most of his counterparts have been blessed with many grandchildren. He has one – and his life revolves around her. Who was I to deprive him of his joy and nachas?

We think that our time, our mitzvah observance, our good deeds, take precedence over anything our friend or neighbor has to discuss with us. If it is important to him – it should be important to us (or at least we should act interested).

I have a dear friend who has a puppy (I am scared of all animals.) Every conversation starts or ends with news about his puppy. This is important to him. Who am I to argue? It is not all about me.

Eisav's angel indicated that his singing shirah took precedence over Yaakov's plea for help. The Malach Gavriel did not wait for Yosef to come over and ask for help. He reached out to him.

We have before us two paradigms of behavior, two standards of service – two Angels: One represents Eisav; one represents Hashem. Do we really have a choice whom to follow?

"View every struggle in life as an opportunity to become even greater than before." ~ R' Elimelech Biderman Shlita.

"When you could have given a smaller donation and other people would have considered that amount sufficient, your giving a larger sum shows that it comes from sincere generosity." ~ R' Simcha Zissel Ziv zt"l.

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ 'Yaakov was left alone.' (32:25)



Rashi cites Chazal (Chullin 91a) who posit שָׁכַח פַּכִּים קְטַנִּים וְחָזַר עֲלֵיהֶם - that Yaakov Avinu had forgotten some pachim ketanim, small earthenware pitchers, and he returned for them.

Clearly, these pitchers had inconsequential value. Yet, to Yaakov, they were valuable enough to return for them, even if it meant exposing himself to danger. From this, Chazal derive that to the righteous (not only Yaakov), that their money is dearer to them than their bodies.

Our Sages explain that since the righteous are meticulous in avoiding any form of dishonesty, their money represents integrity at its apex. Thus, it is dear to them. Wealth earned through honesty is unique; to the tzaddik, there is no other wealth. Thus, its spiritual value is significant.

Yaakov's pitchers were vehicles of sanctity, which is a difficult concept to grasp, especially in context of today's materialistic society.

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, notes that the tzaddikim whom he had met had no use for money. **The Chazon Ish**, for example, would take every penny given to him and immediately give it away to those in need. **The Satmar Rav** acted similarly. Those gedolim, Torah leaders, who appear to live more conspicuously are "victims" of chassidim and talmidim who provide for them in accordance with their personal perspective. The gedolim have no use for the material opulence that often surrounds them.

I remember visiting **Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zl**, and pointing out to my grandson how the pulse of our nation beat from such spartan quarters. We were simultaneously taken aback and impressed by the austerity. From his white plastic chair to his simple card table and bed, his "office" was the paradigm of ingenuousness.

With this in mind, why do Chazal state that the material possessions of the righteous are of greater value than their bodies, when, in fact, their material assets mean nothing to them?

Rav Karlinstein explains (in the name of the **Arizal**) that when one asks the average person about a material possession, he might say, "Where did you get this hat (or any other object)? The response will likely be "the hat store, etc"; "I received it as a gift."

Concerning the tzaddik, the feeling is that he has received everything in his possession from Hashem as a gift. "Where did you get this pen?" "Baruch Hashem, I received it from Hashem." By what means did he receive this gift from Hashem? He earned some money, and he purchased it at Walmart. That is the vehicle, the medium by which Hashem gave him the pen, but, as far as he is concerned, the pen was given to him by the Almighty.

When a tzaddik eats, he feels that Hashem has provided this food for him. Everything that the tzaddik has in his possession is a gift from Hashem; thus, it is dear to him due to its Source.

Yaakov valued the small pitchers not because of their intrinsic value, but because of what they represented: a gift from Hashem. Imagine receiving a gift from a great leader. It would be precious. One would never take his eyes off it, protecting it to the best of his ability.

Chazal say that tzaddikim appreciate their material assets because they never steal. Their money represents the height of integrity.

The Maggid explains that money which comes into the possession of a person through inappropriate/questionable means – or worse, blatant theft – is not money from Hashem. The Almighty does not

gift a person money that is stolen. This is money that the individual appropriated on his own.

The tzaddik is careful to take only such money that he is certain has Hashem's blessing.

בָּרֵךְ עָלֵינוּ ה' אֱלֹקינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת לְטוֹבָה. '***Bless us Hashem, our G-d, this year***.'

A year is 365 days long. We say this prayer thrice daily all year. What about the end of the year? Is the prayer still as meaningful?

Once, prior to Minchah on Erev Rosh Hashanah, the very last tefillah, prayer, of the year, the holy **Horav Sholom, zl, m'Belz**, was surrounded by his chassidim, as they prepared to conclude the past year. He said, "We are now about to recite the last Minchah of the year. Yet, we ask Hashem to bless 'this year.' What does this mean? In mere minutes this year will conclude. How can we ask Hashem for a blessed year?

Obviously, since we believe that יְשׁוּעַת ה' כְּהֶרֶף עַיִן, '***Hashem's salvation can come like the blink of an eyelash***,' even at the very last moment of the year, Hashem can grant His blessing, so that the entire past year will have been a year of abundant blessing!"

We might add that when a person prays, he must believe in what he is praying. When we ask Hashem for a good year (or anything, for that matter), we must acutely believe that everything could immediately change. This is how a Jew should pray.

"Miracles happen to us all the time – We just need to get into the habit of recognizing them." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו *'Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav.'* (32:12)

Yaakov Avinu had but one brother. Why, then, does he ask Hashem to spare him from his brother, from Eisav? His brother **was** Eisav.

The Zohar HaKadosh teaches that when one prays, he must be specific in his prayer, articulating exactly about what and for whom he is praying.

In some instances, one refers to a close friend as brother. Indeed, Avraham Avinu referred to Lot, his nephew, as brother, **אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנָחְנוּ**; "***We are brothers***." (13:8)

Yaakov could also be referring to an Eisav who was not his brother. Thus, he said, "My brother, Eisav, to clarify exactly whom he meant. Nevertheless, he could have simply said, **מִיַּד אָחִי עֵשָׂו**. Why does he reiterate, **מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו**?

The Bais HaLevi distinguishes between: the enemy named Eisav, the brother, who harbours a vicious hatred towards Yaakov; and the **אָחִי**, brother, who employs brotherly love to ensnare the unsuspecting Yaakov and causes his downfall through assimilation and, eventually, apostasy. One represents physical annihilation; the other symbolizes spiritual extinction.

While both forms of destruction are devastating, when physical annihilation occurs, we, at least, die as Jews, connected with the Almighty. In contrast, when spiritual extinction occurs, we lose everything, our destiny and, eventually, our lives.

Not all assimilation stories have a bad ending. The following vignette not only has a good ending, but it also demonstrates Divine Providence and encourages us never to give up. We always have hope. We are all part of a Divine Plan:

When they came to Auschwitz, entire families were separated one from another. Women were lined up on one side and "prepared" for

their martyrdom. As the Jewish women were lined up to be searched, their clothing removed, two Polish women stood on the other side of the fence, hoping to catch anything of value the Nazis would throw away. These Polish women were poor farm people who used the adversity visited upon the Jews as an opportunity for their benefit.

Two women waited patiently by the fence. They were in dire need of warm clothes. The Jews would not need their warm clothing anymore. Suddenly, they saw a Jewish woman who had an aristocratic bearing. She wore a fur hat and a heavy coat. She was holding onto the coat for dear life. The way she seemed to be doting on it, it must be a very expensive coat.

The Nazi came over to her and demanded that she remove her hat and coat, throw them both over the fence and continue walking in the line (which was proceeding to the gas chamber).

The woman refused to give up her coat. The two Polish women grabbed her and tore off her coat. The woman gave a shriek that was so loud it must have pierced the heavens. It was to no avail. The women were gone and, with them, the coat.

The woman was taken to the gas chamber where she gave up her life to sanctify Hashem's Name. The two women came home with their prize. They searched the pockets of the heavy coat and discovered jewellery. Yet, they sensed that the coat was still heavy. Finally, they decided to slice open the coat's lining in the hope that they would find more jewellery. How shocked they were to discover a beautiful, sleeping infant girl. They were overwhelmed with the child's beauty.

One woman said to the other, "Listen, you have no children. You take the baby, and I will take most of the jewellery. This will be a reasonable trade." They made the split, with the woman who took the infant keeping only a small amount of jewellery. There was one small chain which she placed upon the baby's neck.

Years went by. The little girl was as brilliant as she was physically attractive. She possessed a sterling character as well as refined qualities and social graces. She majored in science and pursued a doctorate in medicine, graduating at the top of her class. Her Polish surrogate mother had excelled in raising her to be not only a successful physician, but also a complete mentch.



Her surrogate mother became ill and passed away before she had the opportunity to share the details of her birth with her. The other woman felt it incumbent upon her to clear the air. It troubled her that this wonderful young woman was living a lie. She was not a Polish Christian, and it was about time that she should be made aware of her true heritage.

"You are not Polish," she began. Obviously, the young woman was shocked. "What do you mean?" she asked. "Your mother was not your real mother. Your biological mother was murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz. You are Jewish."

The young woman demanded proof that this new revelation was true. "Here is a bracelet with strange lettering that we took from your mother's coat. It is yours." Hearing all of this was truly a shock, and it demanded some time to digest. She decided to take time off from her work to fly to New York where she had heard there was a large aggregate of observant Jews. Perhaps, over time, she might clear her head and get to the bottom of her true identity.

She went to Brooklyn where she met a group of Chassidic Jews. She questioned them concerning the inscription on her bracelet. They looked it over and read the words, Shema Yisrael. "Perhaps you

should make an appointment with our Rebbe, our leader," they suggested. "He will advise you what to do."

The woman met with the Rebbe who listened intently to her story: "Your story is compelling. No doubt you are one of us. I encourage you to seek out your heritage. Go to the Holy Land and take a position as a doctor. Until now, you have treated gentile children. Now you will treat Jewish children. Hashem will guide you and you will achieve success." - She followed the Rebbe's advice and made Aliyah to Eretz Yisrael, where she quickly worked her way up in the field of medicine.

Before long, her fame as a compassionate and caring physician, who was an equally brilliant diagnostician, spread. She met a wonderful observant man, and they married and raised a family.

Like the Rebbe had predicted, the pieces were falling into place. Nonetheless, in the back of her mind, she was still troubled about the bracelet that had the words Shema Yisrael engraved on it. She felt that it had some significance.

She prayed to Hashem, Who listened to her prayers. One day she and her husband were taking a stroll in Yerushalayim, when they suddenly heard an explosion coming from the Sbarro restaurant up the block. This was the infamous terror attack on August 9, 2001, which took the lives of fifteen civilians and injured 130.

As a doctor, she immediately ran to the scene of the bombing. When she arrived, she heard an elderly man moaning, "My granddaughter, my granddaughter!" She went over to him and questioned him. Apparently, he had been wheeling his infant granddaughter in her carriage, and they had been separated during the bombing. The doctor accompanied him in the ambulance.

When they arrived at the hospital, she told him that she would search among the children for his granddaughter. After searching from room to room, she found the child.

How shocked she was to discover that the little girl wore a bracelet (Shema Yisrael) identical to hers! She returned to the child's grandfather and conveyed to him the good news that his granddaughter was alive and well. She had sustained only minor injuries. She then asked him about the bracelet.

He explained that, years ago, he had made two such bracelets: one he gave to his infant daughter; the other he gave to his granddaughter. Well, anyone reading this knows the rest of the story. When she told the man that she, too, had such a bracelet, and she related her life story, it was apparent that after all these years, she had found her father.

Father and daughter had been reunited after a separation of a lifetime. Her father had survived the war, remarried and raised a family. He had always wondered what had happened to his infant daughter. Now he knew.



וַיְצַו גַּם אֶת־הַשֵּׁנִי גַּם אֶת־הַשְּׁלִישִׁי גַּם אֶת־כָּל־הַהֹלְכִים אַחֲרֵי הָעֲדָרִים לֵאמֹר כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה תְּדַבְּרוּן אֶל־עֵשָׂו בְּמֹצַאֲכֶם אֹתוֹ *'He similarly instructed the second, also the third, as well as all who followed the droves saying, "In this manner shall you speak to Eisav when you find him."'* (32:20)

The text seems to imply that Yaakov Avinu instructed each group separately. Why did he go to all this trouble, reiterating the same thing to each of the groups? He could easily have called them all together and given one speech.

Horav Eliezer Sorotzkin, zl, offers a practical insight: The whole idea of sending gifts, which clearly smacks of chanufah, sycophanting, is something that Yaakov was compelled to do under duress. Otherwise, such behavior is certainly below the dignity of such an eminent person.

While it may be common fare in today's society, it is something that one does only when pushed up against the wall in his dealings with

the likes of an Eisav. Otherwise, chanufah is shameful, false, and inappropriate. Thus, to act publicly in such a manner is to be considered a chillul Hashem, a desecration of Hashem's Name. - If one "must," he must, but do not call attention to it.

While this may appear to the reader as a sort of double standard, it is not. We live in a world in which the often-used standard for negotiations is the medium of "gifting."

If we seek a favour from a person (other than one who is Torah-oriented), we often have to do something in return. This "something in return" might be labeled a bribe or flattery, but it is, sadly, the way the secular world functions.

At times, we, as Jews, must resort to the same form of negotiation, but we do not have to call attention to it or be proud of it.

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ '***Yaakov was left alone***.' (32:25)

Rashi cites Chazal (Chullin 91a) who posit **שָׁכַח פַּכִּים קְטַנִּים וְחָזַר עֲלֵיהֶם** - that Yaakov Avinu had forgotten some pachim ketanim, small earthenware pitchers, and he returned for them.



The Patriarch's actions beg elucidation. - Our commentators, each in his own manner, explain why Yaakov returned for a few small jars whose monetary value was probably negligible.

Chazal explain that the righteous place a premium on their material possessions because they represent items acquired under the strictest conditions of integrity. Anything that might even smell of

a tinge of impropriety will not pass through their hands. Thus, Yaakov returned for these jars because they represented the highest ideals of veracity.

Horav Chaim Vital, zl, quotes his saintly Rebbe, **the Arizal**, who explains this further: Tzaddikim understand that whatever material possessions they have are gifted to them by Hashem. (We all talk the talk, claiming that "everything comes from Hashem," but do we really believe it?) They understand that if Hashem does not "feel" that they need it, they would not have it. Thus, each and every article, regardless of its value, physical condition, or age is Heaven-sent. What right does one have to maintain a lackadaisical attitude towards it? - This is why Yaakov returned in the middle of the night to collect his pachim ketanim.

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, gives deeper meaning to the words of the Arizal with an analogy: There was a man who lived in abject poverty. Yet, despite all the hardship, his greatest desire was to observe mitzvos fully. He commented that, due to his economically challenged status, he was unable to even begin the day properly.

Upon arising in the morning, a Jew should wash his hands to remove any impure spirit attached to him. Due to his extreme poverty, he could not even fulfill this most simple mitzvah since he had no cup!

One night, he dreamt that Hashem had heard his plea and had blessed him with a cup and bowl, so that he could now wash negel vasser. When he woke up that morning, he was excited to see the realization of his dream. There, next to his bed was a cup and bowl. His excitement was palpable. He could now wash in the morning!

Over the years, the poor man's fortune changed, and he no longer was a poor man. He purchased furniture and various materialistic articles which most of us take for granted.

At one point, his dingy abode did not suffice for the many things he had purchased. His wife suggested that they purchase a new and

larger condo, as befits someone of his newly acquired status. He agreed and, after making the necessary arrangements, he decided to move.

He called a moving company to move his material belongings to his new state-of-the-art condo. When the movers completed the job, they presented their bill and asked to be paid. The man said that he must first make certain that everything had been transferred from his old apartment. - After going through everything, he declared that something was missing. The workers disagreed, claiming that they had removed everything from the apartment.

"That is not true," he said. "Something is missing." He returned with the movers to his apartment and began to search. Finally, after hours, he located his "cup and bowl."

"This is what concerned you?" they asked. "It is nothing more than an old cup and bowl. Who would care about something such as this?"

"You do not understand," the man explained. "This cup is very dear to me, since I received it as a gift from G-d."

This analogy illustrates for us the attitude of the righteous towards everything they own. It is a gift from G-d. True, it has been purchased with money (or credit card), but it is enabled by Hashem, thereby rendering it invaluable.

The Mashgiach adds: "This is only when one appropriates the article through pure means, acting with integrity to the full letter of the law. Otherwise, if he commits any form of thievery, obtaining his material possessions in a less than truthful manner, it is really not his. Thus, it is not considered a gift from Hashem.

Do we really want something that does not meet Hashem's criteria for ownership?

וְרָוַח תָּשִׂימוּ בֵּין עֵדֶר וּבֵין עֵדֶר ***'And leave a space between drove and drove.'*** (32:17)



The Midrash Rabbah quotes a poignant request made by Yaakov Avinu of Hashem: "Yaakov said to HaKodesh Baruch Hu, 'Ribbono Shel Olam! If adversity/troubles/pain will come upon my children, please do not send them one following (immediately) after another; but rather, leave a space between them!' This is to be implied from the word רָוַח, 'space' between the flocks of sheep."

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Zt'l, wonders what is the meaning of "space" between troubles? How does space make a difference?

The Maggid quotes an explanation which he heard from the **Steipler Gaon, zl**, given during a group lecture while in the Novardok Yeshivah in Biyalastok, Poland.

In the Talmud Berachos 5b, Chazal relate that when Rabbi Elazar became ill, Rabbi Yochanan came to visit him. When he entered the house, he noticed that it was very dark. Rabbi Yochanan uncovered his arm, and the house immediately became illuminated.

He then noticed that Rabbi Elazar was crying. "Why are you crying?" he asked. "If it is because you feel that you did not sufficiently learn Torah, it should not be of concern to you. We have learned that it is not how much one learns, but rather, his intention and devotion to Heaven, that it be l'shem Shomayim, for Heaven's sake, that counts. - If it is because of your extreme poverty: not everyone merits two tables (i.e. distinction in Torah and material wealth). - If it is

because you did not merit to have children: I have here with me a bone from my tenth son to have passed away.

The bottom line is: Do you appreciate yissurim, troubles?"

Rabbi Elazar replied, "Neither them, nor the reward they incur."

When Rabbi Yochanan heard this, he stretched out his hand to Rabbi Elazar and the sage immediately became cured.

The question is obvious: If Rabbi Yochanan possessed this incredible power, why did he wait to pose all these questions to him? Why did he not heal him on the spot?

The Steipler explained that, had Rabbi Yochanan asked him outright, "Do you want to be healed?" the immediate response would have been one of dejection, "Leave me be; I want to die!"

Why would he have responded so negatively?

Because this is exactly how he felt. He had not learned enough Torah; he had no money, no children, and now he was gravely ill on top of all of that! Yes, his immediate response would have been, "Leave me alone, I just want to die!" He no longer had any strength left to continue his painful suffering. Therefore, Rabbi Yochanan took apart the various adversities which, throughout his life, had taken their toll on him. Each one was disassembled and ameliorated.

Individually, none was a catastrophic burden with which he could not deal. What was left? His illness! That, he could cure! - This is how the brilliant Rabbi Yochanan was able to bring Rabbi Elazar back to manifest a positive outlook on life.

This is the meaning of רֶוַח, space. Everyone suffers through some form of adversity. Some experience much more than others. Yet, it does not destroy them. This is because they catch their breath in between each one. There is a space during which one can straighten out his life, pull himself together – and then go on to the next one. He breaks up his tzaros, troubles, into distinct adversities dealing

with each one on an individual basis. This allows him time to reflect when transitioning from one situation to another.

Perhaps we might suggest another interpretation of allowing for **וְרֶוַח תָּשִׂימוּ בֵּין עֵדֶר וּבֵין עֵדֶר**. Revach means space. It also means benefit, profit, surplus. If we follow along the lines of Chazal that we are addressing issues of adversity, **רֶוַח** can be interpreted as the benefit or lesson one derives from the adversity. Thus, he triumphs over the troubles, rather than letting them envelop him.

This idea came to me when I read a simple, but poignant, quote: "*Grief is the price we pay for love*." One who loves someone grieves over his loss. One who cares about something mourns his separation from it. One who does not care, who does not love, does not grieve or mourn. Every "negative" emotion is a response to a positive feeling within us. One who undergoes an adverse situation can either: gain from it, thus triumphing over it, or it can destroy him.

I recently read a book about people who had undergone various challenging situations. They coped and grew from their experiences. At times, the ending was a happy one, but sometimes not: the patient did not survive. Yet, the people who were involved in the experience emerged stronger, emotionally healthier, nobler, wiser and more caring individuals. Despite the grief that overtook them following the bad endings, they benefitted so much from their ordeal that the tragedy itself was redefined.

Whether revach means space or it is interpreted as benefit, the message remains the same: Do not allow adversity to triumph over you. Delve into every situation. Allow yourself to think, to expand your horizons, to recognize that every situation carries a lesson, a message, an opportunity for betterment.

"Grief is the price one pays for love" is a powerful statement, which teaches us that it is not all bad. One who does not love will never have to grieve. Think about that.

I close with a powerful exposition attributed to the **Chiddushei HaRim**: Avraham Avinu was tested through the Akeidas Yitzchak, Binding of Yitzchak, whereby Hashem commanded him to sacrifice his only son, whom he loved. It involved a lengthy process of traveling three days to Har HaMoriah.

Why could Hashem not have tested Avraham with a quick, sudden command: "Put a knife to your son's throat." Why did he have to go through the whole process?

The Rebbe explains that a person's senses can desert him under such duress. A moment so sudden, so traumatic, can have a deleterious effect on his consciousness. Avraham and, – by extension, each person who is tested by Hashem – undergoes a test for how well-prepared he is for the challenge. Every human being can study, contemplate, mull over the issues of life and fill his internal repositories of faith, compassion, trust in Hashem and Jewish perspective, to the point that his instincts are well-honed and properly moulded. Therefore, when the time of challenge – that awful moment we pray never happens – does come, he is prepared to deal with the adversity that confronts him.

We live a life of hope – hope that "bad things" will never happen, but we must leave ourselves רֶוַח - space, - take every opportunity to pack our bags with faith, so that if it "does happen," we are prepared.

These are the words of Shulchan Aruch, ולא יתבייש מפני בני אדם המלעיגים עליו בעבודת השם יתברך - "Don't feel embarrassed before people who mock you in Hashem's service."

Be kind. Everyone you meet has a challenge you know nothing about. ~ The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation.

**וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַנָּשִׁים וְאֶת־הַיְלָדִים וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אֵלֶּה לָךְ וַיֹּאמֶר הַיְלָדִים אֲשֶׁר־חָנַן אֱלֹקִים אֶת־עַבְדֶּךָ *'He raised his eyes and saw the women and children, and he asked, "Who are these to you?" he answered, "The children whom G-d has graciously given your servant."'* (33:5)

Eisav took one look at the women and children and asked Yaakov Avinu, "Who are these to you?" Yaakov replied that the children were graciously bestowed to him by the Almighty.

We assume that, upon seeing the group of women and children, Eisav questioned Yaakov concerning both the women and children. Yaakov, however, only replied concerning the children. He seems to have ignored the wives.

The Malbim explains that Yaakov was conveying to Eisav an important aspect of his outlook on life, which was altogether different than that of Eisav.

To Eisav, a wife was a goal within itself. He had no other purpose in establishing the relationship. It was all for the purpose of self-gratification. Yaakov, however, married for the purpose of procreation, which, without a wife, was impossible. Marriage served as the cornerstone for a family.

A family is of primary significance in Jewish life. Family represents future. Life is all about future. Without a future, we have no present.

Eisav asked about the women and children. Yaakov responded concerning the children because the women's significance was intrinsic to the children. They were all one family unit. Eisav could not comprehend the idea of a family, because everything he did was to satisfy the here and now. Family represents future. Eisav lives for the present.

Perhaps, Yaakov was suggesting another perspective on marriage to Eisav. Eisav inquired concerning the women and children who were accompanying Yaakov, as if they were two separate entities, sort of

Yaakov's "possessions." The Patriarch replied only concerning the children – not the women. He was intimating to Eisav that the women who Eisav viewed as assets were his wives, the mothers of his children, and, hence, had status equal to his own. They were a couple, and the children were "theirs."

In Eisav's perverted world, the woman/mother had no individual status. Rather than being the husband's companion for life, she was his chattel; she belonged to him. This is why Eisav asked about the women in the same manner as he asked about the children.

Yaakov's reply was very telling. The children were "theirs." In the "triangle" of Yaakov's family, he and his wives were along the same "line," with their children serving as the focal point. Not so Eisav, who viewed himself as the focal point, and his wives and children to be mere possessions. They were just not on the same page.



וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ '***Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him***.' (32:8)

Rashi explains the dual fears that Yaakov Avinu experienced. He was frightened that he would be killed, and וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ אִם יַהֲרֹג הוּא אֶת אֲחֵרִים he was distressed that, in the course of the battle, he might kill others.

Notably, Yaakov had greater fear concerning the harm he might inflict on others than the harm by which he might be victimized. Apparently, our Patriarch never heard of "collateral damage," a term which has regrettably been popularized in contemporary society.

People's lives have no value, they are secondary to a higher cause. Some make it; some do not. That is collateral damage. We cannot have it all. Someone will suffer. The Jewish nation has a contrasting perspective which values every human life, thus maintaining a very dim view of the sorry excuse of collateral damage.

Let us return to Rashi's original statement. Yaakov feared killing אֲחֵרִים. Who are the others? Why use this word? Why not simply say that Yaakov feared killing Eisav's men?

In the **Sefer Peninim Yekarim**, we find a homiletic explanation quoted from the **Imrei Noam** and attributed to **Horav Shmuel, zl, m'Ostrovtze, a disciple of the Koznitzer Maggid**: When Moshe Rabbeinu was about to kill the Egyptian who was hurting the Jew, the Torah says, **וַיִּפֶן כֹּה וָכֹה וַיַּרְא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַּחוֹל**, "***He saw there was no man…" "and he slew the Egyptian***" (Shemos 2:12).

Rashi comments that Moshe was not concerned with who might find out. If a Jew is being struck by an Egyptian, one neither asks questions, nor is he concerned that he might get into trouble for helping a Jew. We do what is right.

Rashi explains that Moshe saw prophetically that no future convert would descend from the Egyptian assailant. We see Moshe was not taking chances. If there was a possibility of a Jew descending from this Egyptian, Moshe would have desisted and not intervened by inflicting mortal harm on the Egyptian.

Yaakov Avinu had a similar concern. In the Talmud Gitten 56a, we learn that Nero Caesar converted to Judaism. He was the progenitor of the distinguished Tanna Rabbi Meir. Nero was a descendant of Eisav. Thus, Rabbi Meir actually descended from Eisav.

The Talmud Horayos 13b states that Rabbi Meir also went by the name Acheirim. He was a student of Elisha ben Avuyah, the Tanna turned apostate, who was later referred to as Acher, the "other one."

After Acher left the fold, Rabbi Meir continued his relationship with him, feeling that he could distinguish between that which was halachically correct and that which was not. The sages did not agree

with his choice of teacher; therefore, they referred to Rabbi Meir as Acheirim, "Others."

Whenever we find a halachic decision being rendered by Acheirim, it is a reference to Rabbi Meir. With this idea in mind, we understand Yaakov's fear if he were to succeed in killing Eisav. If Eisav died, so did the potential for Acheirim. Without Eisav, there would have been no Rabbi Meir. This was one piece of collateral damage that the Patriarch could not ignore.

וַתָּמָת דְּבֹרָה מֵינֶקֶת רִבְקָה וַתִּקָּבֵר מִתַּחַת לְבֵית־קֵל תַּחַת הָאַלּוֹן וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אַלּוֹן בָּכוּת '***Devorah, the wet-nurse of Rivkah, died, and she was buried below Bais Kel, below the plateau; and he named it Allon Bachus***.' (35:8)

Apparently, the passing of Rivkah Imeinu's nursemaid must have been of critical significance to the Jewish people. Otherwise, it would not have been prominently mentioned in the Torah. In fact, it is recorded immediately after we are notified of Yaakov Avinu's establishing a Mizbayach, Altar, in Bais Kel.

While it is true that the elderly nursemaid died and was buried there, does her passing warrant such prominent coverage? Furthermore, the place was named Allon Bachus, due to the excessive weeping that took place there. Who was Devorah that she was granted such honour? What role did she play in Rivkah's life?

Rashi explains that it was not only Devorah who died, but also Rivkah who died. Indeed, the death of Devorah is an allusion to Rivkah's passing, which took place at the same time. Thus, the excessive weeping, with the word **בָּכוּת**, weeping, in the plural, alludes to the double weeping – for Rivkah and Devorah.

Rivkah's passing is concealed by the Torah for reasons mentioned by the commentators, connected to her being the mother of the wicked

Eisav. The world population was not ready to appreciate the life of the woman who gave them the evil Eisav.

We have still not resolved the issue of why Devorah, a woman who reached an advanced age, commanded such outpouring of mourning.

Horav Moshe Tzvi Nahariyah, zl, takes us back to our first encounter with Devorah, which occurred at the time of Rivkah's betrothal to Yitzchak. As the young bride was about to leave home, her family decided to send along her nursemaid.

The glaring question is: If Rivkah was mature enough to make a decision concerning marriage, why did she require the services of her nursemaid? If she was that young – perhaps she should not be getting married. Furthermore, why does the Torah find it necessary to share this tidbit of information concerning Devorah?

T**argum Yonasan ben Uziel writes** that Devorah was much more than a nursemaid. She was **פִּידְגוּגְתָּא דְּרִבְקָה**, her mentor, her spiritual advisor, who guided her on the path of observance. As such, it is understandably crucial that Rivkah's descendants be made aware of the pivotal role she played in her life. Rivkah became the illustrious Matriarch as a result of Devorah's tutelage. We owe her a great debt of gratitude.

Rashi & Ramban debate why Devorah was with Yaakov at this point. She was no longer a young woman who could travel freely. Rashi contends that Rivkah sent her to inform Yaakov that it was finally safe to return home. The aged nurse unfortunately died on the way home.

Ramban maintains that it is highly unlikely that Rivkah would dispatch an elderly woman to fetch her son. He suggests that, following Rivkah's marriage, the nursemaid took leave and returned to Padan Aram. When Yaakov left Lavan's home, he took Devorah with him out of respect for his mother. He planned to support her in her old age.

Rav Nahariyah suggests that there is more to Devorah's accompanying Yaakov. After all is said and done, she was old and frail, clearly not a candidate for wilderness travel. Yaakov wanted Devorah due to what would be her compelling influence on his sons. Any woman who could survive in Lavan's evil environment and emerge a paragon of virtue, fully committed to Hashem, must have been a very special woman. She deserved to leave. How did she survive? How did she remain steadfast in her beliefs? There were no schools, no opportunity for education. How did she do it?

The Rosh Yeshivah explains that she was probably one of the "souls made in Charan" (Bereishis 12:5) by Avraham and Sarah. The influence and inspiration she received from the first Patriarch family remained with her for her entire life.

Out of a sense of hakoras hatov to Avraham and Sarah, she decided to remain with Yaakov's family and help with the "kids." Her influence was far-reaching, warranting her special mention in the Torah.

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֵאָמֵר עוֹד שִׁמְךָ כִּי אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־שָׂרִיתָ עִם־אֱלֹקִים וְעִם־אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוּכָל "***No longer will it be said that your name is Yaakov, but Yisrael, for you have striven with the Divine and with man and have overcome.***" (32:29)

The names "Yaakov" and "Yisrael" allude to two distinct periods in the spiritual condition of our People. **Horav Meir Shapiro, z.l.**, presents an historical perspective based upon these two names.

The name Yisrael, symbolizing strength and sovereignty, was evident in the period of "hode," glory, in the life of our nation: when Torah and mitzvah went side by side; when their study and observance were part and parcel of every Jew's "weltanschauung;" when faith in the Almighty beat in everyone's heart.

A period of "shiflus," lowliness, unfortunately was also manifest in our nation: when we descended to the nadir of depravity; when many

of our people, regrettably, turned their backs on their faith and ultimately on their Father in Heaven, when we attempted to acculturate and assimilate, striving to act like the nations around us.

The name Yaakov was applicable during this latter period.

Chazal have taught us, "**ישראל אף על פי שחטא ישראל הוא** - ***Even though a Jew has sinned, he is still considered to be a Jew***." - Regardless of how low we have descended, how far we have declined, we remain Hashem's nation; we are still considered Jews.

The nations of the world are still by far more spiritually and morally deficient than we. During such a period, our People are not worthy of the name Yisrael, but we are still Jews; we are "Yaakov." The name Yaakov is taken from "his hand was grasping onto the akeiv, heel, of Eisav." Only as a result of the spiritual and moral dysfunction of Eisav's descendants, are we still considered to be the sons of Yaakov.

In other words, it is not our own attributes, which have earned us this name. Rather, we are called Yaakov as a consequence of our relative superiority over Eisav.

David Ha'melech says in Sefer Tehillim, 66:7, **מֹשֵׁל בִּגְבוּרָתוֹ עוֹלָם עֵינָיו בַּגּוֹיִם תִּצְפֶּינָה** "***He rules in His might forever, His eyes oversee the nations***." - When Hashem is about to judge Klal Yisrael with middas ha'din, strict attribute of justice, He looks at the nations, at their abominable lifestyle, at their reprehensible activities and immoral behavior. He sees the vast distinction between their way of life and ours. - Even after he has fallen prey to sin, the Jew is still on a much higher moral / spiritual plane than the members of the other nations.

This is the profound meaning of the Kohen Gadol's prayer on Yom Kippur, "*A year in which Your people, the family of Yisrael, is not dependent upon one another, or upon another people*." He implored Hashem that Klal Yisrael never be in the condition to be compared to the nations of the world. It should never happen that our only line

of defence, our only justification for being sustained, is our relative good in comparison to the nations of the world.

We ask Hashem for a year in which our own maasim tovim, good deeds, and positive behavior are our greatest advocates. Our splendor and majesty should justify our continued relationship with Hashem.

When Yaakov Avinu triumphed over Eisav's guardian angel, he was blessed with the name "Yisrael." The majesty and splendor of Klal Yisrael should always be on a level to deserve the name that signifies strength and sovereignty. We should be worthy of Hashem's beneficence based upon our own merit – the merit of Yisrael.

וַיִּשְׁאַל יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּידָה־נָּא שְׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶּה תִּשְׁאַל לִשְׁמִי "***Then Yaakov inquired, and he said, "Divulge, if you please, your name." And he said, "Why then do you inquire of my name?***" (32:30)



Rashi explains that an angel exists only to perform Hashem's will, and his "name" reflects his mission. By asking the angel for his name, Yaakov Avinu sought to determine the nature of his mission. The angel replied that he had no established name, since the names of angels change in accordance with their mission.

Horav Leib Chasman, z.l., posits that when the angel responded, "Why then do you inquire of my name?" it was a rhetorical question, constituting his response to Yaakov's query. - A person's name indicates his essence and true nature.

Adam HaRishon gave names to all of the animals. He understood their intrinsic natures and "personalities," and he named them accordingly. He perceived their positive attributes that defined their essence, and he gave them names which corresponded to those characteristics.

When we deal with evil, when we address the nature of kinaah, taavah, v'kavod – envy, lust and honor – traits that catalyze one's untimely spiritual and, oftentimes, physical demise, there is no essence, there is no internal nature. Evil has no foundation, no stability, no permanent basis. It is fleeting, as Shlomo Ha'melech refers to the folly of life as "הֲבֶל הֲבָלִים," - "***futility of futilities***." He understood that the pleasures and allures of this world are passing and of no lasting value.

When we examine the true nature of kavod, honor, we realize that it is all imaginary, truly "futility of futilities." Why would we care about its "name," if it has no essence?

Eisav's guardian angel, alias Satan, also known as the yetzer hara, is aware of the truth. He represents futility; he symbolizes illusion and delusion. He is nothing. He answers Yaakov, "Why would you ask my name?" - A non-entity is not deserving of a name.

The main way to gain wisdom is to remain silent and listen to the Torah thoughts of the wise. When you speak, you are not learning anything new. But when you listen to teachers, you increase your knowledge.

There is greater benefit to be derived through your ears than through your mouth. Therefore, we have two eyes to read the written Torah and two ears to hear the Oral Torah, but only one mouth with which to speak. ~ Vilna Gaon.

וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ וַיַּחַץ אֶת־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ "***Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him, so he divided the people with him***." (32:8)

Should Yaakov Avinu have been scared? Should the person with whom Hashem spoke and promised that He would be with him and guard him wherever he went be afraid? Should the individual who was greeted by guardian angels be distressed?

There is a reason why even the great saint Yaakov should fear – "***he divided the people with him***." There was a rift among his people. This gave Yaakov reason to fear. If there was no peace among his people, they would become easy prey for Eisav. As long as a unified front prevailed, as long as harmony reigned in the Jewish camp, Yaakov feared neither Yishmael nor Eisav.

Horav Mordechai HaKohen notes that when Lot was taken captive by the four kings, Yaakov's aged grandfather, Avraham Avinu, did not think twice about gathering together his "small army" to pursue Lot's captors. He was not afraid, and he triumphed, rescuing Lot.

Yet, Yaakov was afraid of his brother. The grandfather had no army; yet, he had no fear. The grandson, however, was terribly distressed. Yaakov was – in reality – no different than his grandfather. He was courageous, strong, and willing to fight. He also would have taken on the four kings in order to save Lot.

There was a fundamental difference between the two battles, however. Yaakov had no problem battling enemies from without, strangers who were dedicated to destroying him and his family.

But this time, Yaakov was up against a formidable enemy: the enemy from within, his own flesh and blood, his brother. He prayed to Hashem, "הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו." - There is no more bitter battle than a war between brothers.

כִּי יִפְגָּשְׁךָ עֵשָׂו אָחִי וּשְׁאֵלְךָ לֵאמֹר לְמִי־אַתָּה וְאָנָה תֵלֵךְ וּלְמִי אֵלֶּה לְפָנֶיךָ *'When my brother Eisav meets you and asks you, saying, "Whose are you, where are you going, and whose are these that are before you?"'* (32:18)

Upon coming to this pasuk, the **Chidushei HaRim, z.l.**, would turn to his chassidim and say, "Note how these three questions have a strong similarity to the three queries which Chazal teach us are the fundamental questions a Jew must ask of himself.

הִסְתַּכֵּל בִּשְׁלשָׁה דְּבָרִים וְאִי אַתָּה בָּא לִידֵי עֲבֵרָה. דַּע מֵאַיִן בָּאתָ, וּלְאָן אַתָּה הוֹלֵךְ, וְלִפְנֵי מִי אַתָּה עָתִיד לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבּוֹן – *'Know these things, and you will not come into the grip of sin: know from where you came; where you are going; and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning.'* (Pirkei Avos 3:1).

Chazal give us the three keys to our spiritual survival. Are they different than the questions Eisav asked?"

"We derive an important lesson from here," says the Chidushei HaRim.

"Even today, Eisav can ask these fundamental questions with one purpose in mind: to bring us to depression, to belittle us, to lower our self- esteem and self-confidence.

Yes, Eisav asks the same questions that Chazal instruct us to ask of ourselves. There are, however, two disparate goals in these questions – and that is the "**who**" difference. One must be acutely aware of who is asking these questions."

The Chazon Ish (Emunah u'Bitachon 2:7) writes, "Ruach hakodesh rests upon a person who has bitachon. He attains a spirit of courage that assures him that Hashem will surely help him."

וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ '***And Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him***.' (32:8)

Simply, Yaakov Avinu was concerned about the potential for Eisav to harm him and his family. Rashi explains that Yaakov was afraid that he would be killed. He was also distressed that he would be victorious in the ensuing battle and kill others in the process.

The Ralbag comments that since distress is a stronger form of fear than fright, the prospect of killing another human being was more upsetting than the risk that he himself might be killed. - This demonstrates the remarkable virtue of Yaakov Avinu.

In the Talmud Berachos 4A, Chazal explain that Yaakov's fear emanated from a concern that "**שֶׁמָּא יִגְרוֹם הַחֵטְא**," perhaps he had sinned and consequently had forfeited Hashem's protection.

What sin could he have committed?

Targum Yonasan explains that Yaakov felt he was lax in the mitzvah of Kibud Av v'Eim, since he had been separated from his parents during his sojourn with Lavan. During this time Eisav was living at home and observing this mitzvah in the appropriate manner. Yet, Yaakov did not neglect the mitzvah. He just was unable to perform it since he was not at home. Could he have forfeited Hashem's protection for this reason?

The common translation of the word "cheit" is sin. **Horav Mordechai Gifter, Zt'l**, cites Rashi in the Navi Melachim 1, 1:21 in which he defines the word cheit as a deficiency, a shortcoming or an imperfection.

This sheds light on the concept of sin. Sin is an imperfection on the neshamah, soul, a blemish that causes a defect in the purity of the soul. Therefore, if one has not committed a sin, but has neglected to perform a specific mitzvah which someone else performed in his place, he is considered to be blemished in respect to the other

person. - While we may not consider this to be a sin, the Heavenly perspective views this as a deficiency.

Yaakov certainly had not committed any sins. He was concerned, however, that Eisav had performed Kibud Av v'Eim while he had not. He was deficient in comparison to Eisav.

We do not know the value of each individual mitzvah. The Heavenly Tribunal has a different manner for evaluating the significance of each mitzvah. Yaakov was concerned about his deficiency in this single mitzvah which Eisav had performed to a greater degree than he had. In his eyes this was a cheit, a blemish in his spiritual character.

Horav Gifter cites the **Ramban** who says that in order to merit eternal life in Olam Habah, one must perform at least one mitzvah properly with total devotion, l'shem mitzvah, for the sake of the mitzvah, with no manifest personal motives or vested interests. He must perform this mitzvah with love for the Almighty and a desire to do His will.

Hashem has, therefore, granted us a multitude of mitzvos. While he intends for us to observe all of them, we should at least observe one correctly. - It behooves us to approach mitzvah observance with the utmost care. We cannot determine which mitzvah will gain us entrance into Olam Habah.

"When a person is faithful to his every utterance and righteously lives up to his word, he merits that Hashem will "do all that he expressed verbally." Thus, every person has the ability to fulfill the words of Chazal: צדיק גוזר והקב"ה מקיים – the righteous person decrees, and the Holy One fulfils it." ~ R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zt"l.

עִם־לָבָן גַּ֣רְתִּי וָאֵחַ֖ר עַד־עָתָּ֑ה ***'I sojourned with Lavan and have lingered until now.'*** (32:5)

The numerical equivalent of גַּ֣רְתִּי is 613, or תַּרְי״ג, which is the number of mitzvos the Jew is commanded to observe. Thus, the Midrash interprets Yaakov's words to mean, "***Although I have sojourned with Lavan, I have observed the 613 mitzvos, and I have not learned from his evil ways***."

Yaakov was affirming his righteousness, despite his exposure to Eisav's evil environment. We can derive an important lesson from this pasuk.

Yaakov Avinu stated emphatically that he had observed all 613 mitzvos. Yet, he also asserts that he had not been influenced by Lavan's evil ways. Is it not understood that if he had observed all the mitzvos, he could not have fallen under Lavan's evil influence?

We see from here that one can be observant and still fall prey to harmful environmental influences.

Yaakov exemplified religious observance. He was so committed to serving Hashem that Lavan's antagonistic ways had no influence over him.

Horav Ovadia Yosef, Zt'l, cites a parable from the **Ben Ish Chai** to render a novel interpretation of this Midrash: Once, the yetzer tov, good inclination, and the yetzer hora, evil inclination, met. The yetzer hora said to the yetzer tov, "Why should we always be at odds with one another? Let us lay down our arms and make peace. I will give you the list of my 'clients,' and you will give me the list of yours."

The yetzer tov had a great tzaddik under his influence. He was a great scholar who devoted most of his day to pouring through Torah and its commentaries. According to the deal, the yetzer tov was to give over all his clients, and this sublime Jew was to be included.

As usual, our tzaddik sat at night and studied until the wee hours of the morning. According to the agreement, the yetzer hora could now attempt to sway this person over to his side.

He convinced the tzaddik to take a break and go outside to get some fresh air. Once he went outside, he started walking. He ended up in the seedier part of town in front of a tavern. Out of curiosity, he entered the tavern and found a group of men sitting around a table playing cards. In front of these men were drinks and pastries, but, due to their total focus on the game, they ignored the "refreshments."

The tzaddik stayed awhile, observing the players in the game before finally leaving for home. When the tzaddik returned home, he immediately sat himself down on the floor and began to cry hysterically. The sounds of his weeping were so loud and intense that they woke up his family.

His wife came running to him. "What is wrong? Why are you crying so?"

He told her, "Until tonight I thought I was 'gold'; I thought I was observant to the extreme. Now I see I am no more than 'copper.' My commitment is not as intense as it should be."

He continued to relate to her his sojourn into the city and what he had seen at the tavern. "Do you know that those men never looked up from their cards? They ignored their food; that's how engrossed they were in their game. - I cannot say that! When I study Torah, my mind 'wanders,' and I get hungry. I am not studying diligently enough! From now on, I will apply myself better to the Torah!"

When the yetzer tov met the yetzer hora the next day, the yetzer hora asked to rescind their agreement. "Not only was I unsuccessful in swaying the tzaddik away from Torah study. In fact, he became even more committed to it!"

We now understand Yaakov's statement: "I observed taryag mitzvos, but "regrettably" I did not learn from Lavan's ways. I did not apply myself to Torah as Lavan applies himself to his evil practices." - He was determined to the point of self-sacrifice to carry out his diabolical schemes.

If there is anything we can learn from the "Lavans," of this world, it is their dedication to evil.

וְיַעֲקֹב נָסַע סֻכֹּתָה וַיִּבֶן לוֹ בָּיִת וּלְמִקְנֵהוּ עָשָׂה סֻכֹּת עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שֵׁם־הַמָּקוֹם סֻכּוֹת
"***And he (Yaakov) built himself a house and for his livestock he made shelter; he therefore called the name of the place Succos***." (33:17)



One would think that when Yaakov assigned a name to a place, he would use a reason more meaningful than the fact that it had served as a shelter for livestock.

The Ohr Ha'Chaim suggests that this was probably the first time anyone had cared for animals to the point that shelter was provided for them. This public display of compassion for animals was viewed as sufficient reason for naming the place Succos. Hence, people would take note and themselves show concern for animals.

Horav Simcha Zissel Broide, Zt'l, takes a novel approach towards understanding Yaakov's reasoning. The pasuk states that Yaakov first built a house. **Targum Yonasan** claims that this house served as a Bais Ha'Midrash, House of Torah Study.

Horav Broide posits that Yaakov remained in his ohel, tent, as usual. The succos were temporary dwellings erected to provide shelter for

the livestock. The house was the only edifice that had some sort of permanence to it. Why? What purpose did this house serve that made it so unique?

It was the place for Torah study. It was Yaakov's fortress - the only place that Eisav could not touch. It was the one place that accorded Yaakov security against his eternal foe.

Our question now becomes more compelling. If Yaakov built a Bais Ha'Midrash for Torah study, should he not name the city after this bastion of Torah? It would seem more appropriate than a livestock pen!

From this anomaly, Horav Broide infers a remarkable lesson. Yaakov teaches us that while he was traveling to Eretz Yisrael, to his permanent home, nothing along the way had any stability. His home was a tent; the pens for his livestock were flimsy succos. Everything along the way was temporary. There is one edifice, however, which maintained its permanence wherever it was, the Bais Ha'Midrash.

Regardless of the terrain, in spite of the duration of time spent there, the House of Study, the fortress of Judaism, must be built with stability and firmness.

The concept of impermanence, the thought of transience, is the antithesis of Torah. Provisional structures are for an individual's material belongings, while his spiritual needs must be satisfied in a solid and secure structure.

Yaakov named this place Succos in order to proclaim that this was not his permanent home. He was just stopping along the way to his country and future home. Nevertheless, even here amidst his temporary dwelling, he erected a House of Torah Study that was firmly rooted to serve the spiritual needs of his small community. After all, this was Yaakov's yeshivah!

עַל־כֵּן לֹא־יֹאכְלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־גִּיד הַנָּשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר עַל־כַּף הַיָּרֵךְ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי נָגַע בְּכַף־יֶרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב בְּגִיד הַנָּשֶׁה "***Therefore the Bnei Yisrael do not eat of the sinew of the thigh muscle... unto this day because he (Eisav's angel) struck the hollow of Yaakov's thigh in the sinew of the thigh muscle***." (32:33)

As Yaakov wrestled with Eisav's angel, he was injured on that fateful night. As a constant reminder of that "conflict," we are forbidden from eating the sciatic nerve of an animal. In the Talmud Chullin 99b, Chazal comment that giddin, nerves, have no taste. It is, therefore, perplexing that the Torah would prohibit the consumption of a food which has no taste.

The Torah ostensibly seeks to provide us with the opportunity for performing mitzvos. Consequently, even if a mitzvah is reasonably simple to perform, it still presents a valuable opportunity for spiritual advancement.

Horav Avigdor Nebentzal, Zt'l, offers a profound insight into the "workings" of the yetzer hara, evil inclination. His concept sheds light on the prohibition of gid ha'nasheh.

The accepted opinion is that the yetzer hora seeks to eliminate our opportunity to attain Olam Haba, while simultaneously exposing us to the blandishment of Olam Hazeh. This is not true. The yetzer hara allows us to have nothing! The yetzer hora gives us neither Olam Haba nor Olam Hazeh! This is inferred from the prohibition of the gid ha'nasheh.

The yetzer hara had a single opportunity to inflict injury upon Yaakov. Where did he strike him? Which part of his body did he weaken? He struck the gid ha'nasheh which has no taste. There is no Olam Haba and no Olam Hazeh!

The yetzer hara is nothing more than a sham that cannot produce anything of eternal value. True, quite a number or forbidden foods might be considered tasty, but herein are the yetzer hara's true

colours exposed; his essence is revealed. His real goal is to give nothing to Yaakov. He seeks to destroy Yaakov and leave him with nothing.

Those who think that by acceding to the demands of their yetzer hara they are exchanging the eternal for the temporal are wrong, for in the end they will have neither Olam Haba nor Olam Hazeh.



עַל־כֵּ֗ן לֹא־יֹאכְל֤וּ בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ אֶת־גִּ֣יד הַנָּשֶׁ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֖ר עַל־כַּ֣ף הַיָּרֵ֑ךְ עַ֚ד הַיּ֣וֹם הַזֶּ֔ה כִּ֣י נָגַ֔ע בְּכַף־יֶ֥רֶךְ יַעֲקֹ֖ב בְּגִ֥יד הַנָּשֶֽׁה "***Therefore the Bnei Yisrael do not eat of the sinew of the thigh muscle... unto this day because he (Eisav's angel) struck the hollow of Yaakov's thigh in the sinew of the thigh muscle***." (32:33)

We may question the manner in which we commemorate Yaakov Avinu's miraculous triumph over Eisav's angel. One would think that such an extraordinary achievement would be remembered through a positive act, rather than a negative one.

Horav Moshe Feinstein, z.l., infers a valuable lesson from the manner of eternalizing Yaakov's monumental success over adversity. The abstention from eating the gid ha'nasheh addresses the fact that throughout history we are confronted by difficult situations which require Hashem's interventions which is always there. Nonetheless, we would rather not be tested with such ordeals.

In our daily tefillah, we implore Hashem "Do not bring us to any ordeal."

The gid ha'nasheh prohibition serves as a "reminder" that we fear nisayon, ordeal. Great reward is in store for those who undergo nisyonos, who confront and withstand pain and suffering -- nevertheless, we still entreat Hashem to please not test us.

It is not that we do not seek reward, rather we simply fear that particular venue for its attainment.

We may suggest another reason for this "negative" approach to commemoration. There are those who believe that inaction -- or passivity -- is a negative response. They feel that by not "doing anything" we demonstrate weakness and cowardice. -This is not true.

We are taught here that at times not doing something may be considered a positive response. On certain occasions, the most significant response is to do nothing. Battling the yetzer hara, directly taking him "head on" is not an effective technique. Avoiding a confrontation with the yetzer hara is a negative act which essentially produces a positive response.



עִם־לָבָן גַּ֫רְתִּי וָאֵחַר עַד־עָתָּה. וַיְהִי־לִי שׁוֹר וַחֲמוֹר '***I have sojourned with Lavan and stayed until now. And I have oxen and donkeys***.' (32:5,6)

Rashi explains that Yaakov was telling Eisav, "Despite my stay with Lavan, I have still been able to observe the taryag, 613, mitzvos, and I did not learn his evil deeds."

Horav Yitzchak Z. Soloveitchik z.t.l. once met the Rav of Hamburg. During the conversation, the Rav explained how Yaakov was able to live in the presence of the evil Lavan and remain pure. Yaakov himself gave the reason for his success, when he said, "I have (an) ox and donkey."

As far as Yaakov was concerned, Lavan was equal to an ox or donkey. To Yaakov there was no distinction between the wicked Lavan and the average animal. With this perspective in mind, it is no wonder that Lavan's influence did not harm Yaakov.

Horav Soloveitchik responded that, although this interpretation is not consistent with the text of the pasuk, its message is definitely true. Only when we attribute importance to wicked people, when we dignify them or their activities, do we fall prey to their baneful

influence. When we truly respond to them as an ox or donkey, then we can say, "I did not learn from his evil deeds."

The Chofetz Chaim offers another interpretation for Yaakov's not "learning from Lavan's deeds." - Yaakov maintained that his mitzvah observance was not "equal" to Lavan's evil deeds. Lavan applied more fervour and devotion to the practice of evil than Yaakov did to positive mitzvah performance. -"I did not learn from Lavan that my mitzvah performance was lacking, for my devotion to do good was not as great as Lavan's devotion to evil.

Indeed, **Rav Yisrael Salanter z.t.l**. would say that we do not loathe the wicked as much as they hate the righteous, because we are not as righteous as they are wicked!



וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶל־יַעֲקֹב קוּם עֲלֵה בֵית־קל וְשֶׁב־שָׁם וַעֲשֵׂה־שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לָאֵל הַנִּרְאָה אֵלֶיךָ בְּבָרְחֲךָ מִפְּנֵי עֵשָׂו אָחִיךָ "***And Hashem said to Yaakov, arise, go up to Bais Kail and dwell there and make an altar to the G-d that appeared to you when you fled Eisav your brother***." (35:1)

Horav Avigdor Miller, Zt'l, states that this "dwelling" was not intended to be a permanent residence. Hashem only wanted Yaakov to stop and take an accounting of what had happened until the present. The purpose of this "dwelling" was to avail Yaakov the opportunity for contemplation, so that he could reflect upon all the wonders which Hashem had created for him.

Considering this information was not sufficient. It was incumbent upon him to allocate a specific time to meditate and appreciate all the good which Hashem had done for him. Every experience was part of a chain of events specifically preordained for Yaakov's ultimate benefit.

Yaakov built the altar, and he expressly related Hashem's kindness and beneficence. Only after the entire history was narrated, was Yaakov prepared to leave. Indeed, every aspect of his history was

significant since each detail constituted a link in the chain of kindness.

Similarly, Moshe recounted all of Klal Yisrael's travels and experiences, so that they would be enabled to read about their journeys and to be reminded of Hashem's benevolence to them.

For us each to look back at our own personal history is to discern the hand of Hashem remarkably guiding every facet of our lives. In so doing, we recognize His every kindness. It is not only right, but it is our obligation!



וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ "***And Yaakov was greatly afraid and was distressed***." (32:8)

Upon hearing the grim news that Eisav was approaching, Yaakov was gripped with a terrifying fear. He immediately began preparing for this confrontation. He prepared for battle, prayed arduously to Hashem, and did teshuvah, repentance.

Fear can either be a remarkable asset or a debilitating hindrance. **Horav A.H. Lebowitz, Zt'l**, cites the Midrash which describes another fear experienced by Yaakov's descendants, centuries later at the time of the miracle of Purim.

When Haman's decree to annihilate every Jew in the Persian Empire, was issued, the Jews searched for a similar precedent in history. The initial response of the past would guide them to an avenue for the present.

When they looked back at Yaakov's confrontation with Eisav, they became overcome with fear. They deduced the following: Hashem assured Yaakov not to be concerned with Eisav. Yaakov, nonetheless, still feared Eisav.

The Jews of Persia, who had received no such assurance of Divine intervention were convinced that their death was imminent. This lack

of confidence produced feelings of sorrow and despair. The Jewish people completely relinquished hope for salvation. They felt justified in their sentiments, for, after all, Yaakov was still gripped with fear despite Hashem's pledge to him. They were only emulating their grandfather!

Horav Lebowitz explains that, although outwardly these two anxiety provoking situations appear to be the same, they essentially represent two very distinct fears. The outcomes were contrasting as well. One fear was constructive in nature, while the other was destructive. By conceding to their overwhelming fear, the Jews of Persia became so depressed that they dragged themselves deeper into despondency. This emotional process rendered them incapable of helping themselves. Indeed, they lost their will to fight for life!

Conversely, Yaakov's fear was restorative. The fear which gripped Yaakov transformed him into a spiritual fighter. The fear strengthened his resolve to pray and to do teshuvah. He intensified his bitachon, trust and faith, in Hashem. This enabled him to confront the gezeira, decree, with peace of mind, comfort and security. Yaakov's fear was laudatory, for it spurred positive action.

The fear which enveloped the Jews of Persia was demoralizing. It is imperative that when we are gripped by fear, we examine the focus of this fear. Does it overwhelm us or edify us? Do we implement it as a tool for our improvement or do we fall captive to it?

This concept is summarized in one question: Whom do we fear? Do we fear Hashem Himself or the punishment which He employs? Yaakov feared Hashem's displeasure, so he did teshuva. The Jews of Persia feared His punishment, so they disintegrated.

If we internalize the appropriate fear of Hashem, we will no longer fear others. We will become a much happier, and more productive people.

וַיְהִי־לִי שׁוֹר וַחֲמוֹר "***And I have acquired oxen and donkeys***." (32:6)

"Oxen, this refers to Yosef; donkeys, this refers to Yisacher (**Midrash Rabba**). Yaakov sent a message to Eisav informing him of his vast wealth, in order to impress him, so that he may thereby gain favor in his eyes.

This Midrash comments that Yaakov's reference to his ox and donkey is a metaphor for Yosef and Yisacher. This seems puzzling!

Yaakov's intention is to impress Eisav with his strength and power. Why then does he set forth the two sons who represent the spiritual dimension of the twelve tribes?

Yosef who is famous for being the great tzadik and Yisacher who represents the epitome of Torah study, should not be the ones who should impress Eisav, the great warrior. He should be impressed by seeing those sons who are physically strong and outwardly impressive.

This Midrash teaches us that when one wishes to impress the wicked by being pretentious and acting like them, speaking their language, dressing in their fashion, feigning agreement with their misguided philosophies, he is fooling only himself. The most corrupt individual will not be impressed by an imposter. On the contrary, these actions will only alienate him.

Yaakov is showing how one speaks to a wicked person. He says to Eisav, "My lifestyle is very different than yours. It is guided by the Torah, its values and heritage. I have raised my children to follow in the paths of their ancestors whose every moment was spent serving Hashem and fulfilling His mitzvos. I therefore hope that by being honest and straightforward with you, I will find favour in your eyes."

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הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו "*Rescue me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav.*" (32:12)



After many years of staying with Lavan, Yaakov was finally preparing to return home. He heard that Esav was coming to "greet" him together with an army of 400 men. Yaakov was concerned. He davened to Hashem. "Rescue me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav."

The commentaries are bothered by the apparent redundancy in Yaakov's prayer to Hashem. Yaakov only had one brother. It was obvious that he was asking Hashem to save him from Esav. Why did he feel it necessary to add, please save me from my brother, <u>from Esav</u>?

Rashi answers that Yaakov was asking Hashem to save him from the hands of his brother who was not acting as a brother should. Rather, he was acting wickedly.

The **Beis HaLevi** gives another answer. He says that after hearing that Esav was on his way to meet him, Yaakov understood that Esav had one of two intentions. Either Esav wanted to fight against Yaakov, intending to kill him. Or Esav wanted to make peace and live together in harmony. Yaakov feared <u>both</u> possibilities! Obviously, Yaakov did not want Esav to kill him. However, he was also afraid that Esav would show him brotherly love and befriend him.

In fact, Yaakov's first prayer was to be saved from "my brother". Only then did he ask Hashem to be saved from "Esav".

The **Bais HaLevi** explains that Yaakov was even MORE afraid of the danger of living in harmony with the evil Esav, than the danger of being killed by Esav!! Had Esav attempted to kill Yaakov, that would have been a physical assault. Living in peace with Esav would constitute a spiritual assault. Yaakov was very concerned, lest he be influenced by Esav's evil deeds, even to a small extent.

As the parsha unfolds, we see that Hashem accepted both aspects of Yaakov's tefillah. Esav had intended to kill Yaakov. Hashem caused Esav to change his mind, thus saving Yaakov's life. After Yaakov had appeased Esav with a large gift, Esav wanted to spend time with Yaakov and travel together with him. Hashem also saved Yaakov from being with Esav for even 1 full day; Esav accepted Yaakov's refusal to go with him.

Yaakov's experience with Esav portends to the experiences of the Jewish People at the hands of Esav's descendants, the Roman Empire and the Western World.

First, they try to destroy us by intense persecution, symbolizing the "evil Esav". They make harsh decrees, attempt to forcibly convert, torture, and kill us. Hashem does not permit them to annihilate us.

When Esav's descendants realize that this method does not work, they try a different approach. They behave like "my brother Esav", showering us with friendship and brotherhood. They express a desire to live in peace and harmony with us, promoting close associations with us. Although their faces show friendship, their hearts still harbour hate. Their goal remains the same. They want to weaken our attachment to Torah.

Yaakov feared this second approach, more so. Since it is disguised as friendship, it is less likely to be met with resistance. Therefore, it is more dangerous to us.

Currently, we are experiencing the face of "my brother", Esav. There are numerous, "friendly" attacks on us, looking to distance us from the Torah. Even if we remain steadfast and loyal to the Torah, we are still in danger. There are so many subtle influences that can have an impact on a Torah Jew, without our even realizing it. There are influences of advertisements and commercials, the media, as well as proximity to co-workers with different values and goals in life. We are influenced as to what to read, how to dress, where to go on vacations, and how to spend our leisure time.

We are influenced by our environment. Sometimes the influence is so subtle that we gradually change without realizing. May Hashem always help us realize that we are different, with higher goals and values. May Hashem save us from the "evil Esav". May Hashem also insulate us from the face of "my brother Esav", who constantly tries to distance us from Hashem and from the Torah.

Parshah Pearls (Adapted from the P'ninei Torah)

Ya'akov Was No Batlan

עִם־לָבָן גַּ֫רְתִּי וָאֵחַר עַד־עָתָּה. וַיְהִי־לִי שׁוֹר וַחֲמוֹר צֹאן ' , ***"I sojourned with Lavan ... and I delayed until now ... And I have oxen, donkeys, sheep*** ... "(32:5,6). 'Don't for one moment think', Ya'akov was warning Eisav, 'that I am innocent and incapable of looking after myself'. See how I stayed with Lavan the swindler, and how I survived all these years. And what's more, look at the wealth that I amassed, oxen, donkeys, sheep ... '.

Ya'akov was sending Eisav a clear signal not to start up with him, since he was not dealing with the 'Batlan' that he probably envisaged Ya'akov to be, but with a man who knew how to guard his life and look after his best interests (***S'fas ha'Yeri'ah***).

In similar vein, the **K'sav Sofer** explains the continuation of the Pasuk - וְאֶשְׁלְחָה לְהַגִּיד לַאדֹנִי לִמְצֹא־חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ "... ***and I sent to inform my master, to find favour in his eyes***".

Now how would the information concerning Ya'akov's assets achieve such positive results?

The answer is that people of the world tend to judge others by their commercial successes, looking down on poor Talmidei-Chachamim, whom they consider too lazy to work and earn good money. That's why Yaakov informed him that he was no Batlan, but a man of the world whom even Eisav could look up to.

Melting Eisav's Heart

וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים עַד־גִּשְׁתּוֹ עַד־אָחִיו ***"And he (Ya'akov) prostrated himself to the ground seven times, until he reached his brother"*** (33:3).

Rebbi Yitzchak mi'Verka learned from here that if someone wants to be spared from his enemies (and even turn them into friends), he should bring them close and show them love, because as the Pasuk in Mishlei writes (describing the reaction of one person to another) כַּמַּיִם הַפָּנִים לַפָּנִים כֵּן לֵב־הָאָדָם לָאָדָם "***like the reflection of one's face in water". 'Smile at him and he will smile back'***.

Because when Eisav saw Ya'akov bowing down to him time and time again, his heart melted and feelings of brotherliness welled inside him.

In the same vein, the final words in the Pasuk עַד־גִּשְׁתּוֹ עַד־אָחִיו "***until he reached his brother***" can also be explained to mean 'until he got through to him' (Beis Ya'akov)

Eisav Respects Strong-arm Tactics

וַיֹּ֣אמֶר מִי לְךָ֗ כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה הַזֶּה֮ אֲשֶׁ֣ר פָּגָ֣שְׁתִּי֒ וַיֹּ֣אמֶר לִמְצֹא־חֵ֗ן בְּעֵינֵי֙ אֲדֹנִ֔י ***"And he (Eisav) said, 'Whose camp is it that I came across? And he (Ya'akov) said 'it is to find favour in your eyes'*** " (33:8).

Regarding Eisav's query, Rashi cites a Medrash which describes how angels disguised as Ya'akov's friends beat up Eisav and his men, ignoring all his pleas, until he declared that he was Ya'akov's brother.

Then what did Ya'akov mean when he replied that it was to find favour in his eyes?

The P'ninei Torah explains that with people of the caliber of Eisav, it is not the truth and righteousness that impress, but the power of the sword. The strongest man wins, and that is the man whom they respect.

Eisav queried Ya'akov's strong friends, expressing surprise at their strong-arm tactics, since he had always believed that Ya'akov lived by the power of the mouth.

That is why Ya'akov replied that it was to win his favour, something which he could only do by demonstrating that he was stronger than him.

He Who Has Plenty Can Always Do with More

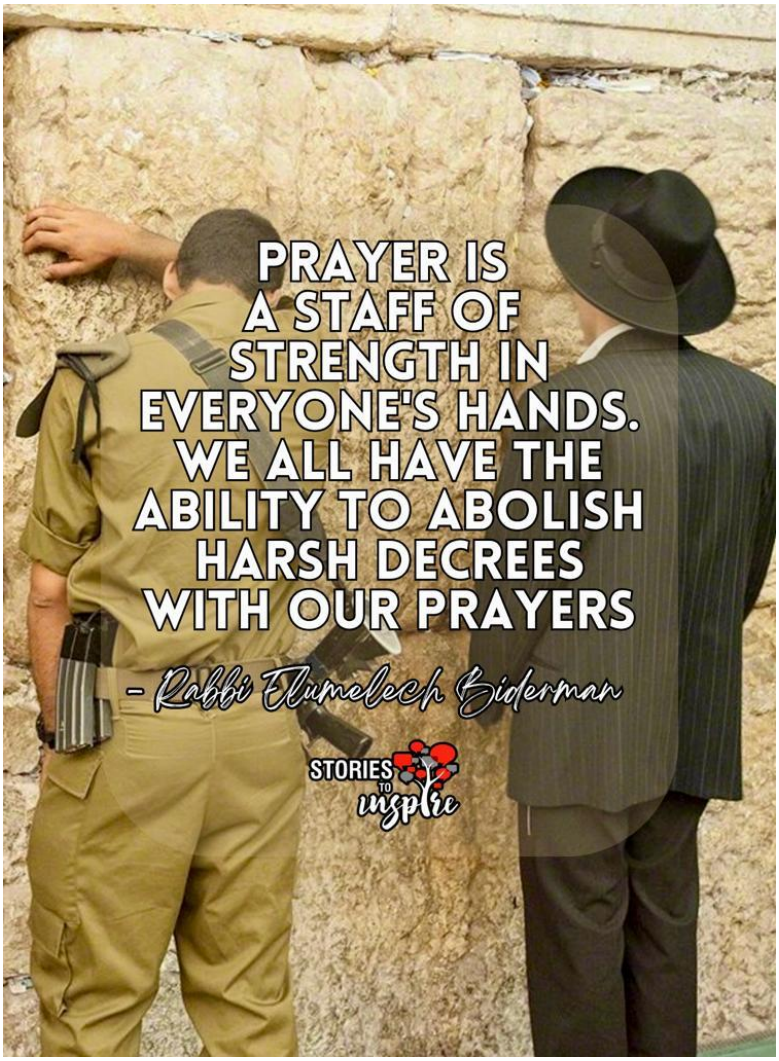
וַיֹּ֣אמֶר עֵשָׂ֔ו יֶשׁ־לִ֥י רָ֖ב אָחִ֑י ***"I have plenty, my brother*** ...!" (33:9).

Ya'akov, on the other hand, said (in Pasuk 11) וְיֶשׁ־לִי־כֹ֔ל "***I have everything***!"

The K'li Yakar explains how, as Chazal have taught, someone who has a hundred dollars, wants two hundred, and when he attains two hundred, he wants four. In other words, the more a person has, the more he wants. A Tzadik on the other hand is satisfied with

whatever he has, because he always believes that he has everything (that he needs).

And that epitomizes the two brothers – Eisav, who had "**plenty**", and Ya'akov, who had "**everything**".



A person should reflect on the fact that when he has some physical problem, he is willing to spend the time and effort to see a doctor. Since he does this for his body, which is a garment for his soul, all the more so, when he has a spiritual deficiency that relates to his soul, which is his true essence, he should consult someone who can help him.

If a person does not feel that he has a problem when he has a spiritual deficiency, then his illness, unfortunately, is even greater. ~ R' Simcha Zissel Ziv zt"l.

My bracha to you is that you shouldn't worry, because Hashem doesn't give to those who worry. He gives to those who ask. ~ R' Bunim of Peshischa zt"l.

Parsha Points to Ponder by Oizer Alport

עִם־לָבָן גַּרְתִּי

Rashi writes **עִם לָבָן גַּרְתִּי וְתַרְיַ"ג מִצְוֹת שָׁמַרְתִּי וְלֹא לָמַדְתִּי מִמַּעֲשָׂיו הָרָעִים** (32:5) that Yaakov sent a message to Eisav telling him that although he had dwelled with the wicked Lavan for twenty years, he remained steadfast in his faith and kept all 613 commandments.

Why did the evil Eisav care about his brother's religious observance, and how was this information intended to pacify him?

Rav Moshe Shternbuch explains that Yaakov was trying to persuade his brother to return to a religious lifestyle. One of Eisav's objections to following the path of Avrohom and Yitzchok was his belief that doing mitzvos comes at the expense of material success. Yaakov sought to refute his brother's mistaken philosophy through his own personal example, emphasizing that while remaining committed to doing mitzvos, he still managed to accrue tremendous wealth.

Piety and poverty need not go together, and even though our primary focus should always be on our spiritual pursuits, the Torah does not promote deprivation like other religions.

Rabbi Dan Lifshitz adds that we sometimes fall prey to Eisav's false dichotomy, that success in ruchniyus (spirituality) and gashmiyus (physicality) are mutually exclusive. If we ever find ourselves thinking that observing mitzvos is holding us back, we should remember Yaakov's message to his brother, which also applies to his descendants.

"If the person listening to lashon hara explicitly agrees to what was said, he is considered to have both heard and spoken lashon hara and his transgression is twofold." ~ Chafetz Chaim.

Parsha Points to Ponder by Oizer Alport

וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בִּהְיוֹתָם כֹּאֲבִים וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי־בְנֵי־יַעֲקֹב שִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחֵי דִינָה אִישׁ חַרְבּוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ עַל־הָעִיר בֶּטַח וַיַּהַרְגוּ כָּל־זָכָר

Shimon and Levi waited to attack the city of Shechem until the third day after its male inhabitants had circumcised themselves, at which point they confidently approached and killed all the men in the town (34:25). - On what basis were Shimon and Levi so sure that their plan would succeed?

Rashi explains that their confidence was based on their knowledge that the men of Shechem were weak from their circumcisions and unable to fully defend themselves.

The Kli Yakar suggests that until this point, Shimon and Levi were afraid that even if they came up with a shrewd scheme to attack, the surrounding towns would hear that the Jews were attacking their neighbors and come to their aid.

Now that three days had passed, word had spread that the men of Shechem had voluntarily circumcised themselves. Knowing this, Shimon and Levi recognized that the nearby towns would now view the people of Shechem as too similar to Jews and would no longer come to their rescue, enabling them to attack with confidence that they would succeed.

"In order for a person to maintain proper middos, he must put himself in another's place. When someone does something that you consider wrong or improper, think about how many rationalizations you would have been forced to come up with to justify yourself had you done that very act. Then, use these same rationalizations to give the other person the benefit of the doubt." ~ R' Moshe Leib Sassover zt"l

Short And Sweet Story of The Week by R'Yoni Schwartz

With the outbreak of World War I, all the students of **Rav Elazar Shach's** yeshiva in Poland were going back home and he wanted to do the same. However, his mother told him to remain in Yeshiva.

From that day on, Rav Shach said that he did not leave the yeshiva and never again saw his mother. The poverty he endured was extraordinary. Every night he would sleep in the empty women's section and if he was lucky, he'd find twigs outside to use as a pillow. His small shoes crunched up his feet until he had to cut holes in them and was walking around in Poland's freezing temperatures with torn shoes that did not cover his toes.

For over a year and a half he did not get a haircut until his hair became dreadlocked, so thick that for the barber to finally cut it, his hair had to be softened by being soaked in gasoline. He did not even have a towel to use to clean himself and barely had food.

Rav Shach said that if he could put all his *tzaros* into a book it would be thicker than all of his authored books combined, yet, he is so happy, all his life he was *b'simcha* (joyful). He explained that he survived the bitterness he endured from the sweetness of the Torah. He fought many battles in life, yet it was these challenges, he said, that turned him into the person he became.

In this week's parsha Yaakov Avinu fights his own battles, some external, with his brother, some spiritual, wrestling an angel alone, and some psychological, dealing with the deaths of his wife and father. Yet, he keeps fighting. To be a Jew means to keep fighting, to challenge the injustices of the world, to combat loneliness with Ahavas Yisroel, to fight poverty by giving tzedakah, and to wrestle with our own inner demons. We do this not because we will always win, but because we are soldiers in Hashem's army. Struggling does not mean we are failures - it means that we are fighters.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Our Sages famously say that a Torah Scholar should have an eighth of an eighth of arrogance. This is to indicate that it should be a very minute amount, and while some say one should have none at all, the explanation is that one must recognize his own worth in terms of his Torah scholarship and wisdom. This will enable him to stand up for what is right.

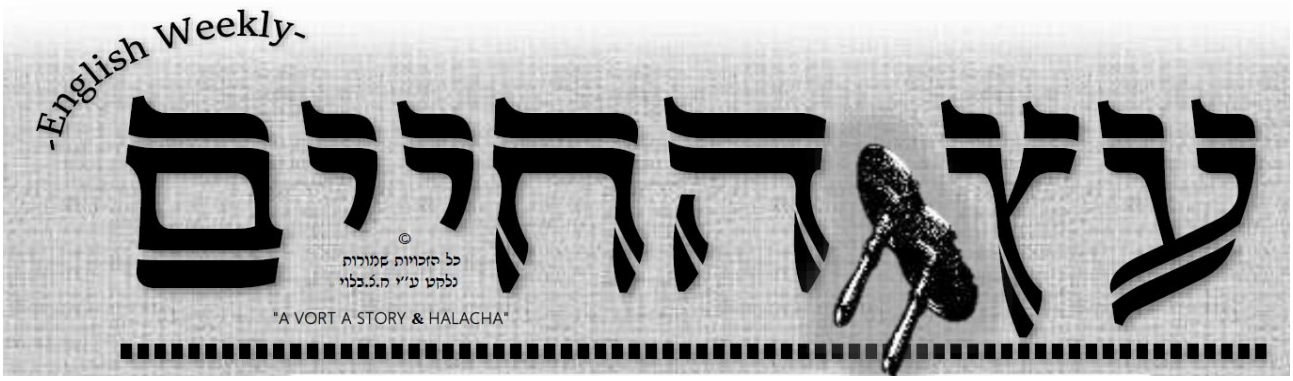
The Vilna Gaon comments that the eighth verse of the eighth Parsha (Vayishlach 32:11) is the one of, קָטֹנְתִּי מִכֹּל הַחֲסָדִים " ***I have become small from all the kindness and truth that Hashem did for me.***"

Here, Yaakov expresses his worry that in all his successes, he has depleted his reserve of merit. However, if one recognizes that all he has comes from Hashem, and it is only through Hashem's mercy that he achieves any success in either physical or spiritual matters, then this is not arrogance, but humility.

This is the 1/8 of an 1/8 our Sages want us to have: the realization that we have nothing to be prideful of because Hashem is the continual source of all the good that we have in our lives.

Of course, if we recognize that and appreciate it, THAT is something to be proud of!

"At least once every day, try to feel the joy of being alive. Appreciate the gift of life. All who have already died can no longer elevate themselves, but you are still alive and can continue to grow spiritually." ~ Chinuch V'edum Hahergeshim



Rav Shteinman זצוק"ל once remarked, "Since the day I became obligated in Mitzvos, there was only one time I forgot to have kavanah when saying Birkas Avos!"

Years before, Rav Shteinman was one of a group of students who wanted to work on strengthening their kavanah in **תפילה** . Together, they made a resolution. Each time they didn't have proper **כונה** , they would have to give a small coin to **צדקה** .

By imposing a fine on themselves, they would learn to pay more attention while davening. Each member of the group had a special box in which to keep these **צדקה** coins.

Time passed and one by one the coins added up. Only one box remained empty the entire time. Day after day, three **תפילות** a day were recited without a loss in **כונה** . It was the box belonging to Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman **זצ"ל**. The box had not a single coin in it!

Harav Shloima Levenstein שליט"א brings the following incredible story that was told over by **Harav Eliyahu Brunner שליט"א** as follows: "One of the times that I took **Rebbetzin Kanievsky** to visit her father **Hagaon Rav Elyashiv זצוק"ל** , Rav Avrohom Elyashiv told me, "On this floor tile the Rebbetzin stood in her single years and every single night without fail she would recite the entire Tehillim, cover to cover!"

When we drove back to **בני ברק**, I gathered the courage and I asked the Rebbetzin, "What caused the Rebbetzin to recite the entire

Tehillim, every night, without fail?" At first she tried to refuse to answer, but in the end she agreed to tell me.

"In my father's house there was no money. My mother ע"ה did not desire anything. Her only desire and goal was that my father's learning should be able to be without any disturbances. This was her life's work. I was the oldest daughter, and at that stage I already understood how to manage parnassah, so I found a job and went to work in order to help support my family. However, naturally the atmosphere of the workplace practically had no Torah atmosphere, therefore, I decided to wake up very early every morning to stand and say the entire Tehillim in order that I should merit that the coming day should pass by with complete goodness and joy, and with faithfulness to Hashem, in the way I was מחונך in my father's home. And that I should not ח"ו be influenced by any negative surroundings that I may face in the working world."

Parsha Potpourri by R' Ozer Alport

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר (32:25)

Rashi writes that after ferrying his family across a stream, Yaakov returned to the other side for some small earthenware pitchers that he had forgotten. The Gemora in Chullin (91a) derives from here that the possessions of the righteous are more precious to them than even their own bodies.

As we are accustomed to viewing righteous tzaddikim as completely divorced from all mundane physical matters, how are we to understand why their property is so important to them?

The Torah L'Daas (Vol. 9) sheds light on this perplexing issue by recounting an amazing story: There was once a gathering of leading Rabbis in the house of **Rav Chaim Volozhiner**. In honor of the esteemed guests, his Rebbetzin set the table with her finest dishes and most valuable china. During the meeting, one of the Rabbis stood

up to excuse himself, but accidentally pulled part of the tablecloth with him, sending everything that had been on the table loudly crashing to the floor.

While everybody else was anxiously checking how much damage had been done, Rav Chaim confidently declared, "There's no need to worry, because nothing has broken."

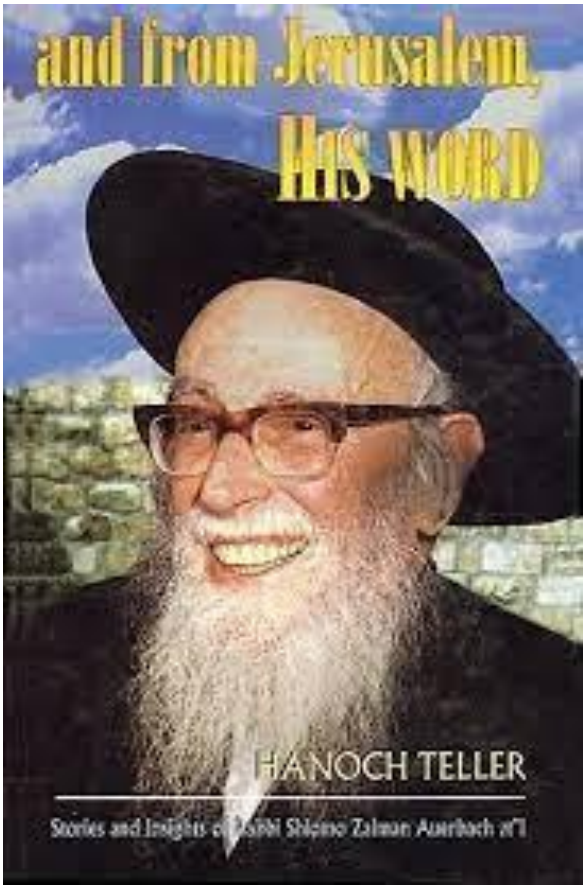


The assembled Rabbis were astounded to hear Rav Chaim seemingly in denial, as he had witnessed the noisy spill together with them. Yet when they checked the dishes, they found them exactly as he had announced: completely intact and undamaged. They were astonished and requested an explanation for this miraculous episode.

Rav Chaim explained that he was careful to check and ensure that every rouble he received was 100% "kosher gelt," money that was free of the smallest question of deceit or theft. It was with such money that he had purchased this china, and he knew that it must therefore be indestructible.

In light of this story, it is now quite understandable why Yaakov and other tzaddikim would be so protective of their hard-earned possessions.

Rabbi Avrohom Asher Makovsky - Even if Undeserving



A woman who had been childless for years once came to **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l** for a blessing. Rav Shlomo Zalman was known to be an "Av Harachaman," a father of compassion to all, in credit to the immense care and compassion he showed toward others.

The woman's hope was that her words would fall on listening ears and elicit a blessing that would in turn yield Heavenly compassion. But shortly after the woman entered inside and began expressing why she was there, Rav Shlomo Zalman picked up on something. She had complaints. "How could Hashem not have given me children! How could He do such a thing!"

Taking this in, Rav Shlomo Zalman responded pointedly. "I don't know if I'm able to give you a beracha because it seems as if there is a misunderstanding here. You're alive and breathing and are well. That alone—that Hashem gave you health—is more than He owes you. Hashem doesn't owe you anything."

The woman couldn't believe her ears. She was dumbfounded at Rav Shlomo Zalman's response, especially knowing how compassionate he always was.

As the woman remained sitting still, Rav Shlomo Zalman went on. "Hashem doesn't owe you anything… my blessings, what are they worth? But I'll tell you something that you can do to merit to have children. We know that the way Hashem does everything is measure for measure. The way a person acts in his life is how Hashem acts

towards him. Therefore, if you start doing steady chesed to somebody that you owe nothing to, that will elicit that Hashem will respond in kind to you—middah k'negged middah— and give you children, even though He owes you nothing."

One of Rav Shlomo Zalman's nephews personally attested that this woman immediately went on to become a volunteer at the Hadassah Hospital and visit the patients on a steady basis. Within a year, she had a child.

Rav Elimelech Biderman shlita relayed this story, adding that he knows many first-hand stories of people who needed a yeshua (personal salvation) and accepted upon themselves to begin doing chesed to others that they owe nothing to. And indeed, in doing so, they merited a yeshua.

The Baal Shel Tov explained the words, "Hashem tzil'cha—Hashem is your shadow" to mean that just as a shadow reflects a person, so too does Hashem reflect back to us the same way we act in our life.

When we express our kindness and extend our help to someone who doesn't deserve it, we are creating the vessel for Hashem to in turn respond to us the same—by helping us, even though we don't deserve it.

Grab on to this important advice, and with G-d's help, may Hashem grant you the yeshua you are looking for in your life.

One who enjoys what he has, regardless of whether he has a lot or a little, will be as if he constantly attends parties. He will always be in a good mood.

Conversely, a person who keeps focusing on what others have and what he is missing suffers constantly. ~ Metzudas Dovid on Mishle 15:15.



Shabbos With the Maharil

In every situation that we encounter, we must remember that Hashem is at our side, taking care of us and looking out for our best interest. With this perception, we will find comfort in every situation that we encounter.

In the time when the **Maharil Diskin, *zt"l***, was the Rav of Brisk, there was an unfortunate bout of *chillul Shabbos* proliferating in the city. The residents of the city went out one Shabbos night to hold a large *hafganah*, protest. However, since their *hafganah* had not been approved by the authorities, the police quickly dissipated the crowd, arrested the leader, and brought him to the precinct.

The leader of the *hafganah* was led to a dark, enclosed room, and he sat there on Shabbos with no wine, challah, or any part of his regular Shabbos meal. Not only that, but his thoughts were soured by his worrying what charges and punishments he would face in court...

But his sorrow didn't last too long. After about two hours, the door to his cell opened, and the Rav of the city, the Maharil Diskin himself, was being led to sit in prison along with him. From that point, the man's sadness disappeared. To him, it was worth staying in the dark without challah and wine to be able to spend one Shabbos in the presence of the Maharil Diskin.

When one is faced with what seems a very black darkness, once one realizes that Hashem is with him, as it says in *Tehillim* that Hashem is with one during his *tzarah*, then one is comforted with the greatest light. Hashem's appearance brings light and joy.

Hashem's Compassion

A relative of **R' Yitzchak Eizek Sher** had fallen and broke her foot, and she was very disturbed about it. She was the mother of a bustling family, and now she was tied up in bed. This put her in a real down, and so R' Eisek felt that he must pay a visit to her, so he went and did *bikur cholim*. - R' Eisek asked her if she had memories from when she gave birth to her children, and she replied that she did.

"Are they pleasant memories?" R' Eizek asked her.

"Yes, they are," she responded.

"But I don't understand, didn't you undergo a lot of pain? Why do you have good memories of it?!"

"Following the pain, I got to hold my dear, precious child. Therefore, the entire process gives me good memories."

"That's the same here," continued R' Eizek. "Just know that this will bring you good things. Unlike childbirth, though, in which you see the fruit of your pain immediately after, when one's going through a tough situation, though they don't necessarily see it, they know that it's there. The fact that you don't see it as clearly as you see when you have a child isn't a reason for you to not be happy. You too have to know that this is for your very best and be happy that it is so."

This is a very important lesson. Although at times we don't see the good results, we must know that they're there but just concealed. All that Hashem does is for our very best interest, and even if it's not known, we must remember the truth. (*Aleinu Lishabei'ach*)

Imagine you could open your eyes to see only the good in every person, the positive in every circumstance, and the opportunity in every challenge. ~ The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l.

"Let's Not Be *Apikorsim*!"

R' Zalman Brazil was known to be a very happy individual. In every situation, he was seen happy and joyous.

One story that illustrates this happened when he was visiting his son-in-law's house in his old age. He had a hard time walking then, so they ordered a taxi to bring him back home.

The taxi pulled up to the door but didn't see him, so he figured that R' Zalman must be waiting by the other entrance on the opposite side of the building, so he zipped around the corner to meet him.

In the meantime, R' Zalman hadn't seen the taxi, and thus assumed that he was still going to come to the front. With his fragile body and walker, he slowly made his way to the front. Not seeing him there, he assumed the driver had gone to the side entrance, and he started to make his way over to there. However, when the taxi driver didn't see R' Zalman by the side, he assumed that he must have not come down yet, so he decided that he would wait at the original stop.

This happened several times — R' Zalman painstakingly going to where the taxi had moved to, all in good spirit despite his physical struggle. While he was doing all this, he turned to his accompanying grandchild and said, "Let's not be *apikorsim*. We must remember that this is the will of Hashem, and not think that this is a coincidence." With that, he started dancing and saying, "This is the will of Hashem, and we must rejoice over this." (Conveyed by his grandson, R' Moshe Landau)

"When the Shabbos table is set and ready by noon on Friday, it's a segulah for shalom bayis." ~ R' Hershel of Ziditchov zt"l.



וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו אל עשו
אחיו ארצה שעיר שדה אדם (לב-ד)

דרגה יתירה EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

Parshas Vayishlach is the *parsha* that teaches us how to handle ourselves when we have to deal with gentiles. The **Maharal** writes that one should say the words of *Parshas Vayishlach* when meeting with a *goy*. It is a *shemira*.

Whenever **Rabbeinu HaKadosh** would meet the Roman Caesar, he would say this *parsha*. One time he was in the midst of meeting with the Caesar and realized that he did not say the *parsha*. He asked if he may be excused and hurried home to properly say the *parsha*, when a group of bandits attacked him. He attributed this incident to the fact that he did not say *Parshas Vayishlach* before he left.

The **Ramban** writes that this *parsha* was written to teach us that *Hashem* saved Yaakov from a hand that was stronger than his. Additionally, we learn that whatever happened to our father Yaakov with Esav, will happen to us and it is incumbent upon us to follow our father Yaakov who prepared himself in three ways. They are *Tefillah*, prayer, *Doron*, giving gifts and *Milchamah*, war tactics. These three activities are actually the three necessary steps for a person to become complete.

These are the things we must do to achieve *shleimus*, perfection in ourselves, so that we can fulfill our true mission which is to be a light unto the nations. It is not always what one does, but rather who one is that has the greatest influence on others. *Tefillah* is one of the greatest ways to achieve perfection *bein adam l'Makom*, between man and *Hashem*. It bonds one to his Creator and achieves the goal

of *kirvas Hashem*. Giving gifts is a great way to achieve perfection *bein adam l'chavero*, between man and his fellow man. Gifts can be a smile, a kind word, a gesture that brings a person to a lofty level in his dealings with others. Going out of one's way to give to another creates a bond and helps one become unselfish and a truly giving person.

Milchama is the best way to achieve perfection between man and himself! It is the war against one's desires and the ability to fight and overcome the temptation to sin that truly makes a person great. Let us use these tactics and shine our light for all to see.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים



The **Nefesh HaChaim** *(shaar 3:12)* states that by establishing and concentrating in one's heart the principle of the supremacy of *Hashem*, that there is nothing in the world with any intrinsic significance except *Hashem* and His power, one can unshackle himself from any potential threat of danger. The power and strength of this protection is in correlation to the strength of one's ability to focus on this thought.

An *avreich* who lives in a new neighborhood in the *Ramat Beit Shemesh* area told the following story: "There are many Arabs working near my home on the still uncompleted buildings around me. There are many thefts each week, so residents are careful to not leave anything outside. But since

there's no elevator in my building, the residents of the top floors have no choice but to leave their strollers downstairs.

"One day, one of my neighbors from the sixth floor knocked on my door and asked to make an urgent phone call. He said he left his stroller at the entrance to the building and ten minutes later, he realized that he left his bag in the stroller. He had withdrawn money from the bank that day and inside the bag were his cell phone, cash, credit card, and important documents.

He ran downstairs but not only was his bag missing, the stroller was missing as well. He didn't know what to do. "He used my phone to call his cell phone in the hope that someone would answer but it just rang and rang. He persisted and kept calling it over and over.

Ten minutes later, a man who identified himself as a police officer called my phone and said: 'Did you lose a stroller?' Shortly later, the police officer appeared at his home with the stroller and bag in hand.

"The police officer explained: 'I was driving near the exit to the city and I saw a group of Arab workers, including one hauling an expensive stroller. I stopped the Arab and asked him: 'Where's the stroller from?' He responded: 'I found it in the garbage.' Of course, I suspected that he wasn't telling the truth but I didn't have any proof that he stole it so I couldn't search him.

Suddenly, the phone inside the bag he was holding began ringing to a song that only a Jew would play: *'Reb Yeshaya ben Reb Moshe, po'alt far Klal Yisroel.'* The police officer immediately understood that an Arab worker wouldn't have set his ringtone to *'Reb Yeshaya ben Reb Moshe'* so he had his proof.

He ordered the Arab to hand over the stroller and bag and immediately called back the last number on the phone!"



Working on our Middos

A man once came to see the **Bobover Rebbe, Rav Ben Tzion Halberstam, zt"l**, and he explained how his son, who was then learning in the Bobover Yeshivah, was very good with his hands, and that it was a waste for him not to utilize his skills and talents. He wanted to take his son out of the Yeshivah and teach him a trade.

The Rebbe was disturbed by this plan, especially because this Bochur was also very bright, and he was definitely not wasting his time in Yeshivah.

The Rebbe asked the father, "Can you tell me the difference between gold and iron? The father didn't understand what the Rebbe meant, so the Rebbe said, "Gold is a material that lasts a very long time, and it will not corrode over time. Iron, on the other hand, will begin to decay and turn to rust if it is left alone. Therefore, when someone is described as having a sharp mind, he is said to have a 'head of iron' and if it is not challenged and utilized, it will soon turn to decay. However, when someone is naturally skillful and handy, he is said to have 'hands of gold', because that trait will remain with him for a long time, and he will have plenty of opportunity to develop it later.

It is the same with your son. If he does not take advantage of his intellect now, it will eventually wither away, but his physical skills will not suffer by waiting a little while!"

whY I Matter
בשבילי נברא העולם (סנהדרין לז)
Edited by Yedidye Hirtenfeld

וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל־עֵשָׂו אָחִיו 'And Yaakov sent angels before him to Esov his brother.' (32:4)

Rashi says מַלְאָכִים מַמָּשׁ - Literally, angels. The Midrash says There were 600,000 angels dancing before Yaakov as he came back to Eretz Yisroel. It was from these angels that Yaakov sent to Esov.

One must wonder why Esov wasn't impressed with the angels that Yaakov sent. And why would Esov attempt to fight the angels with a mere four hundred people? And if we answer that they appeared before Esov as people, then why did Yaakov bother to send angels?

Esov grew up in Yitzchak's house. He knew what a Tzadik was. That's why he sought the Brachos from Yitzchak. He knew to be impressed with a Tzadik and respect one. He recognized Yaakov's greatness by the fact that Yaakov sent angels. But Esov was overcome with the desire to take revenge against Yaakov. Even though he saw that Yaakov had 600,000 angels, Esov could not control his desire.

We see from here that the desire for revenge outweighs any logical argument. Esov had to take revenge against Yaakov. (**Taam Vodaas**)

עִם־לָבָן גַּרְתִּי Yaakov sent a message to his brother Esov: '*I have lived by Lavan.*' (32:5)

Rashi adds גַּרְתִּי בְּגִימַטְרִיָּא תרי"ג, כְּלוֹמַר, עִם לָבָן גַּרְתִּי וְתַרְיַ"ג מִצְוֹת שָׁמַרְתִּי וְלֹא לָמַדְתִּי מִמַּעֲשָׂיו הָרָעִים - that the word גַּרְתִּי is the numerical value of six hundred and thirteen, I lived by Lavan and yet kept the 613 Mitzvos and did not learn from his evil ways.

Why did Yaakov send a message to Esov that he didn't learn from Lavan's evil ways? Why would Esov care if Yaakov fulfilled the Mitzvos or not?

Yaakov was afraid that Esov would agree to forget the past and become friends. Live near each other, let their children be friends, share their lives with each other.

Yaakov sent the message to Esov - we can be friends and everything that goes with it – but remember, I fulfilled all the Mitzvos. I will agree to any peace treaty you wish as long as it doesn't compromise Torah and Mitzvos. (**Rabbi Moshe Feinstein**)



וַיָּלֶן שָׁם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיִּקַּח מִן־הַבָּא בְיָדוֹ מִנְחָה לְעֵשָׂו אָחִיו - '***He spent the night there, then he took from that which had come in his hand, a tribute to Esav his brother***.' (32:14)

Yaakov was about to meet the brother he had run away from 20 years earlier and he was afraid for his life and the safety of his family. Although he had G-d's assurances, he made an effort to protect his family. - He decided to do this with a gift.

The Alshich comments that the most effective gift is one that someone has earned himself through his own hard work, which Yaakov did.

There are two lessons here. One is that we should always try to appease our enemies by 'killing them with kindness'. When we have a choice, then appeasement is better than rivalry and strife. Furthermore, when we give a gift either to our enemies or our friends we need to put effort into it. We need to consider our gifts carefully, put thought into them, give the fruits of our own efforts and make sure that we give them in a considerate fashion.

Giving something we worked hard for or even made ourselves is bound to be more appreciated than something picked up at the last minute.

A friend of mine has a misanthropic neighbour. She directs her misanthropy primarily to religious Jews and looks for every

opportunity to confirm their deserving of her antipathy. - What does my friend do? She goes out of her way to be extra nice to her, killing her with kindness whenever she sees her. - It does thwart her efforts to hate, which is very frustrating for a misanthrope.

If we can't actually love our neighbours, maybe we can at least dislike them kindly. (**Partners in kindness**)



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***.' (32:25)

Who was this man? Rashi says he was the ministering angel of Esov. Chazal say that he is like Amalak.

In each and every generation there is a physical Amalak fighting Benai Yisroel as well as a spiritual Amalak tempting Benai Yisroel. So where was this Amalak during the times of Avraham and Yitzchak? How come we don't find any reference to him before this?

Chazal tell us that sometimes Hashem will look away at the sins of idol worship, illicit relations and murder but Hashem will not look away at the sin of not learning Torah. - Why?

When two nations go to battle anything can happen. Even if one day it seems one nation is winning, the other nation can rebound and win the next day. The tide of battle can always turn - with one exception. If one nation destroys the armour, tanks, planes and ammunition of the enemy, then the war is over. The second nation has no chance to recover.

The armour and ammunition of Benai Yisroel is Torah. No matter what BenaiYisroel does wrong, Torah gives the ability to rebound. But if Benai Yisroel abandon Torah, there is no chance. Therefore Hashem will not look away at the sin of not learning Torah.

Avraham was the symbol of kindness - the Angel of Esov didn't bother fighting. Yitzchak was the symbol of service to Hashem - the Angel of Esov didn't bother fighting. Yaakov was the symbol of Torah - the Angel of Esov attacked where it matters. (**Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman**)



קָטֹנְתִּי מִכֹּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל־הָאֱמֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־עַבְדֶּךָ כִּי בְמַקְלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הָיִיתִי לִשְׁנֵי מַחֲנוֹת "***I have been diminished by all the kindnesses*** . . ." (32:11)

Our Sages teach that Yosef was taken away from his father Yaakov for 22 years (beginning in next week's Parashah) to punish Yaakov for the 22 years that he was away and did not honour his own parents.

R' Meir Hakohen Popperos z"l (1624-1662; Poland and Eretz Yisrael; arranger of the writings of the **Arizal**'s students and a prolific author in his own right) writes: True, Yaakov was honouring his parents when he listened to them and went away. However, our Sages say that Esav excelled at honouring his parents, and he was actively honouring his parents for all the years that Yaakov was away. - Thus, said Yaakov, "I have been diminished by all the kindnesses [that Esav performed in my absence]."

Alternatively, Yaakov meant the following: My parents sent me away to find a wife, which took me seven years. I stayed away another seven years to marry a second wife, and another six years after that to amass large herds of sheep and goats. As such, I cannot really argue that my absence–even the first seven years–was to honour my parents.

Rather, "I have been diminished by all the kindnesses [that Hashem has performed for me–giving me a second wife and many animals.]." (**Tal Orot**)



וַיָּרָץ עֵשָׂו לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיְחַבְּקֵהוּ וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צַוָּארָיו וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ 'And Esav ran toward him, and he embraced him and fell upon his neck and kissed him.' (33:4)



The Midrash says Esav did not come to kiss Yaakov, but rather to bite Yaakov. But the Pasuk says to kiss him?

A kiss from a person like Esov, is in reality a bite to Yaakov. Yaakov doesn't need friends like that. - Friendship and love from Esov, causes pain and hardship to Yaakov. (**Chidushei Hori"m of Gur**)

יַעֲבָר־נָא אֲדֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ וַאֲנִי אֶתְנַהֲלָה לְאִטִּי 'Let my master go ahead of his servant; I will make my way at my slow pace.' (33:14)

The midrash says: Esav asked Yaakov, "Are you not afraid of the powerful and frightful individuals that you will meet along your way?"

Yaakov answered, "I will go along gently and softly."

Rav Henach Lebowitz (son of Rav David Lebowitz) says that this midrash teaches us the Jewish way in exile, where the gentiles have the upper hand. We do not challenge our enemies; we go about our business quietly and in an unobtrusive way, and then we need not be afraid. (**Chiddushei Halev**)

"Do not consider any mitzvah small, because what is small to you is great to Him." ~ Chovos Halevovos.

(Shaar Cheshbon Hanefesh 5).

אֲדֹנִי יֹדֵעַ כִּי־הַיְלָדִים רַכִּים *'My lord knows that the children are tender.'* (33:13)

Why did Yakov make a point of mentioning the children in response to Esau's invitation to join him?

Because being in Esau's proximity was much more of a threat to his impressionable children than it was to himself.

Unpleasant as it might have been for him, maintaining his children's spiritual purity was his number one priority. **(Rabbi Yehoshua Rokeach of Belz)**



Rav Chaim Kanievsky: Living a Life of Halachah by Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Shteinman - Practices Related to Eating

The following is an excerpt from this stunning and unusual book.

1. Rav Chaim was careful to eat breakfast after davening at sunrise. He would eat fruit or pastries, but was not specifically stringent to eat bread. [See *Shulchan Aruch* 155:2 and *Mishnah Berurah* 11. Rav Chaim said that his leniency is based on the *Eishel Avraham* (Butchatch), *siman* 155.]

2. When he recited *Hamotzi*, Rav Chaim held the bread with all ten fingers, even if it was not a complete loaf. [See *Shulchan Aruch* 167:3-4 and *Mishnah Berurah*.]

3. Rav Chaim would cut the bread from the side, so that he was cutting both the top and bottom simultaneously. He then dipped the

slice of bread in salt three times. [See *Shulchan Aruch* 167:1 and 5 with *Mishnah Berurah.]*

4. Rav Chaim was careful not to eat pastries during a meal, so as not to enter into uncertainties regarding what is considered *pas haba'ah b'kisnin* (which would require a *berachah* even during the course of a meal). [See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 168:7-8 and *Mishnah Berurah* for a discussion of *pas haba'ah b'kisnin*.]

5. Between eating fish and meat, Rav Chaim was careful to rinse his hands with a little bit of water and rinsed his mouth by eating and drinking. Rav Chaim was thus fulfilling the opinion of the *Shulchan Aruch* that requires handwashing, as well as the other opinions that require both eating and drinking. [See *Shulchan Aruch* 173:2, *Mishnah Berurah 4, and Shaar HaTziyun 2. See Orchos Rabbeinu Vol. 1, Shabbos, pp. 218-219.]*

Rav Chaim did not insist that all members of his household wash their hands (permitting them to rely on the other opinions that eating and drinking are sufficient).

For many years, a small, closed bottle of water was kept next to Rav Chaim's seat at the Shabbos table, and after eating the fish he would pour a small quantity of water on his hands and rub them together; he did not instruct anyone else to do so.

This practice of Rav Chaim's allows us a glimpse into his constant immersion in Torah. Many times, water was brought to Rav Chaim before the meat was served, and he asked, "Why are you bringing me water?"

When told that he had eaten fish, Rav Chaim apologized, and explained that he did not remember eating fish!

Similarly, there have been meals at which fish was not served, and Rav Chaim asked for water to wash his hands before eating meat, since he assumed that he had eaten fish!

Rav Chaim's mind was so consumed with his learning that mundane matters such as food did not leave any impression.

Rav Chaim would also often ask his Rebbetzin what *berachah acharonah* he should make, because he did not remember what food he had eaten.



Despite his complete disconnect from material matters, Rav Chaim always made sure to praise the food that his Rebbetzin had prepared for him. He would also specifically ask to be served dishes that she had cooked, in order to show his appreciation for her efforts.

6. Rav Chaim was careful not to place *sefarim* on the table during meals. He either held the *sefer* in his hands or placed it on a separate cloth.

Rav Chaim was concerned that small insects that sometimes can infest books will fall onto the table and inadvertently be ingested.

"A storekeeper will sell to you on credit, to be paid for at a later date. Why not do the same with spiritual goods? Do a few good deeds, or say a few Psalms or words of Torah, and let them be put aside and ready when you need them. You will then be able to make use of this merit, and not be like one who must ask the storekeeper for credit." ~ R' Nachman of Breslov zt"l.



On Rav Yitzchok Hutner zt"l's 43rd Yahrtzeit – 10 Thoughts and Sayings by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

The 20th of Kisslev is the 43rd Yartzeit of one of the most remarkable Roshei Yeshiva in America. Rav Yitzchok Hutner zt"l (1904-1980) was a talmid of the Alter of Slabodka, who emphasized Gadlus HaAdam – in dealing with all people.

Rav Hutner became the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Chaim Berlin and helped mold and shape thousands of talmidim and talmidim of talmidim. Later in life, Rav Hutner established Yeshiva Pachad Yitzchok in Yerushalayim. On one of his trips to Eretz Yisroel, Rav Hutner's plane was seized by terrorists. He and his daughter Rebbitzen David were on the flight. The terrorists were Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine terrorists, and the hijacking was part of the Dawson's Field.

What follows are 10 of his thoughts and sayings.

1. Struggle is not the opposite of growth, it is part of growth.
2. It is a grave error that when we discuss the greatness of gedolim, we deal only with the end product. We discuss their complete perfection, omitting all mention of the inner battles which they overcame yet raged within them. The impression one gets is that they were created in full perfection. [PY Igros V'ksavim #128]
3. Shlomo HaMelech said, (Mishlei 24:16), "The tzaddik will fall seven times and will rise." The simple person thinks he meant, "Even though a tzaddik falls seven times, he will still rise." A

smart person, however, knows that he meant, "Because a tzaddik fell seven times, that is why he ultimately rose." [ibid]

4. Loving Hashem, and loving people are one and the same. One cannot have love of Hashem without loving people. And one cannot truly love people without also loving Hashem.
5. There is a very special type of Ahavah that is unique that we must have for all geirim.
6. When calling in a high school bochur from a very chashuva mishpacha who started becoming involved in girls, Rav Hutner did not call him out directly on it. Instead, he questioned the young man on the Mesechta he was learning, Bava Metziah. He then on last year's Mesechta, Bava Kamma. He then said, "I see that you are holding very well, k'nayna horah on seder Nezikin! Why, then, pray tell, are you being oisek in seder Nashim?" The bochur got the message right away and immersed himself in learning, stopping other extra-curricular activities. [Heard by YH from the bochur].
7. Once in a discussion with Reb Pinchas Pele, Reb Pinchas said, for Eretz Yisroel – the hanhaggah should be like this, but for the golus, here in Brooklyn, the hanhaggah should be like that.. Rav Hutner responded, "No Reb Pinchas, when there is yet a structure on the makom beis habechirah – there is no greater reminder of the galus than that. The hanhagah should be the same as here in Brooklyn."
8. I would prefer to produce a hundred baal Habatim than a hundred rabbonim — as rabbanim without people to follow them and implement their vision, will be lost, but good baal habatim will always make sure to have a good rav.
9. For some Talmidim he told them not to attend college – even if their parents wished them to do so. For other Talmidim he told them bedavkah to attend college. When questioned what

criterion he used to determine who he told what, he responded, "I look at them in the future and ask if they will ever possibly have charata that they did not attend college. If they possibly will have charatah – then they can chalilah become sonei hadas – and I tell them that they should go." [Heard from a talmid]

10. After setting up a bochur on a shidduch, the bachur did not wish to date a second time and was humming and hawing as to the reason. Rav Hutner was very intuitive and figured it out saying, "I see.. She did not have enough sheker and she also was lacking in Hevel.." [Heard from a talmid].



Rav Trop and a Thief

A Jew had acquired a reputation as a thief, and was ostracized by society. When he came to Radin, he encountered **Rav Naftali Tzvi Trop**, the famed Rosh Yeshiva of the **Chofetz Chaim's** Yeshiva.

Although Rav Trop knew about this Jew's past, he greeted him warmly, invited him to eat by his table, and even offered him a bed to sleep for the night in his home.

That evening, the Jews of Radin began murmuring with each other, wondering why Rav Trop was exerting himself for this unsavoury character. And that same evening, someone worked up the courage to ask Rav Trop directly why he was treating this thief with such warmth.

Rav Trop answered simply: "It does say in the Torah that a thief pays back double the value of what he stole, and if he cannot pay it back, he is sold as a slave. But where is it written that I am exempt from fulfilling the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim? Isn't he a Jew?

Didn't Avraham Avinu fulfill the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim even with Arabs who worshipped the dust of their feet?

Now, it's true that it's risky to bring a suspected thief into my house, but I can watch over him carefully the whole time he is in my home. However, I have no excuse to exempt myself from the mitzvah."

The next day, the people in Radin heard that Rav Trop had done exactly what he had said. He had stayed awake the entire night to guard the thief while he slept in his home!



On the 17th of Kislev, Morderchai Sayagg woke up early, he was a reservist in the army, and he had to get back to his platoon. He also had to meet another soldier who was travelling with him. Additionally, he had promised to take his daughter to the bus stop at the entrance of Yerushalyim.

Morderchai lives one flight up from his parents. He met his daughter and started heading down the stairs. As he passed his parents flat, he vacillated for a moment. Maybe it would be the correct thing to go and say goodbye to them on the way down, and wish them a good morning, and his daughter could wish her grandmother a good

morning. But on the other hand, he was in a big rush, and the other soldier was probably waiting for him.

For a moment, he deliberated, 'yes', 'no', 'maybe'. And then he decided, "you know what, it will only take another few minutes, and if I'm a few minutes late, it's not going to be the end of the world."

He gently knocked on the door, let themselves in, and gave his mother a gentle kiss on her cheek. His daughter gave her grandmother a good morning hug. And then the two of them quickly hurried on their way.

They all got into his car, and soon after they arrived at the entrance to the city. At the same second that they arrived there, there were two Palestinian (Hamas) terrorists that had begun shooting everybody, and had plans to carry out an even bigger terrorist attack.

Morderchai and his reservist friend managed to jump out of the car to neutralize and eliminate the terrorists. They saved a much bigger catastrophe from occurring. Sadly, four people lost their lives '*Al Kiddush Hashem*.'

That extra minute or two that he spent carrying out the mitzvah of *Kibbud Av v' Em*, meant that they were there at exactly the right moment to intervene, and save the lives of numerous people.

The mitzvah of כַּבֵּד אֶת אָבִיךָ וְאֶת אִמֶּךָ gives you longevity of days. But in this case, it wasn't just his own life – it also saved the lives of so many others.

When we take the time to do a mitzvah, even for a few minutes – We never know what the impact can be.

Kindness doesn't cost a thing, yet it's the richest gift you can give.



The Oznayim La'Torah explains that each tefilah that the Avos established was very deliberate.

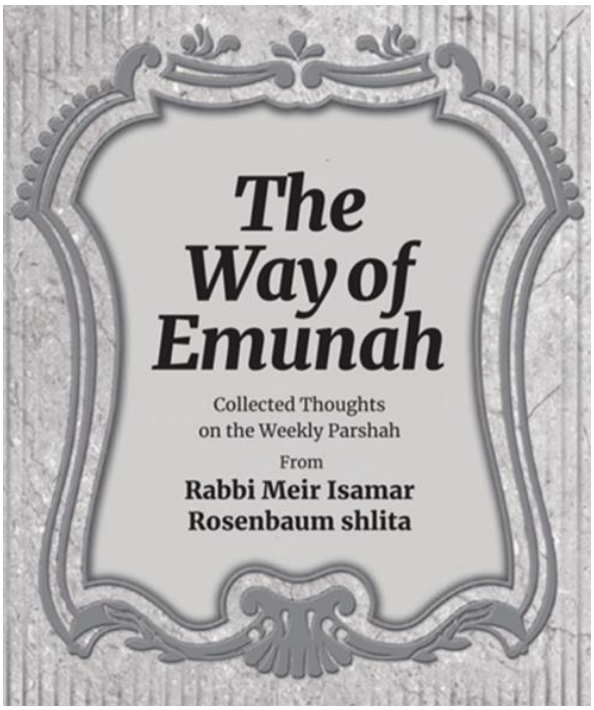
Avraham, was a well-respected person. Although he endured ten nisyanos, he succeeded and for the most part, the world honored him and championed his success. "**כְּצֵאת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בִּגְבֻרָתוֹ**" - like the strong shining sun in the morning, Avraham shone and so shacharis was the tefilah he established.

Yitzchok saw the onset of golus which is like the setting of the sun and the beginning of darkness and so mincha, was his tefilah.

Yaakov's life was full of darkness, and indeed, this is how he summed up his life when he appeared before Pharoah. He suffered from Eisav, he suffered in the house of Lavan. Then Dinah, and then Yosef, and so it was most logical for him to establish maariv, teaching his children the lesson that even in the darkest moments, we need to connect to our Creator through tefillah.

Certainly, when we are desperate, we can be motivated to daven. But sometimes things are just dark, and we are not motivated. We lack clarity and everything appears dismal, but still, we should daven. This is the lesson of maariv.

HaRav Ovadiah Yosef zt"l once told me, "Do you know why a Jewish woman is referred to as a 'bas yisrael'? 'Bas' in Hebrew refers to the pupil of the eye, as in bas ayin. A Jewish woman is the apple of Hashem's eye. There is nothing more precious to Him than His beloved daughters." ~ Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi.



עִם־לָבָן גַּרְתִּי וָאֵחַר עַד־עָתָּה *'I have sojourned with Lavan, and I have tarried until now.'*

Guarding One's Thoughts is Akin to Keeping All 613 Mitzvos

Rashi states: גַּרְתִּי בְּגִימַטְרִיָּא תרי"ג, כְּלוֹמַר, עִם לָבָן גַּרְתִּי וְתַרְיַ"ג מִצְוֹת שָׁמַרְתִּי וְלֹא לָמַדְתִּי מִמַּעֲשָׂיו הָרָעִים "'Garti' has a numerical value of 613. He was saying: I lived with Lavan and kept the 613 mitzvos. I did not learn from his evil ways."

Sefer Tzemach Dovid asks how Yaakov could possibly have kept all 613 mitzvos. Some mitzvos can only be observed in Eretz Yisroel. Others can only be done by specific people. How could Yaakov have kept all 613 in Lavan's house?

He answers by quoting his father, the **Bnei Yissochor zy"a**, who related that the **Baal Shem Tov zy"a** once was in the house of a non-Jew, and there was an idol in the house. After he left the house, he told his students that he was very happy because he had just fulfilled the entire Torah at once. - He explained that it is forbidden to think thoughts of Torah in the presence of avodah zarah (Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chaim 58:20). Therefore, by guarding his thoughts and making sure not to think about Torah, it was considered as if he kept the entire Torah.

So too, the house of Lavan was full of idols. This meant that whenever Yaakov entered the house, he was not permitted to think thoughts of Torah. He had to be very careful with his thoughts in order to make sure he only thought about other things. By doing this, it was considered as if he kept the entire Torah.

Rasha, I Do Not Fear You!

Sefer Maaseh Hatzadikim quotes Sefer Bracha Shlomo (page 11), which relates that **Rav Shlomo Leib of Tutchin zy"a** was known to have no fear of any man or any force besides Hashem.

In the year 5675 (1915), during World War 1, the region of Galicia was captured by the Russian army, who were tremendously antisemitic and persecuted the Jews. Still and all, Rav Shlomo Leib felt no fear.

One day, a Cossack soldier came to his house and handed him a written order for every member of his family to perform government service of fixing and cleaning the roads. Rav Shlomo Leib was unafraid and said that he would not permit his family to do this work.

This greatly angered the Cossack. He unsheathed his sword and ran towards him. As he approached, Rav Shlomo Leib proclaimed, "Rasha, I only serve the living G-d!" The Cossack suddenly became confused and he ran away as fast as he could.

A short time later, the Russian army was ordered to leave the city. Someone asked the Rebbe, "Why did you place yourself in danger by disobeying the Cossack? And why did you go so far as to insult and enrage him? Don't you know that they are murderers?"

He answered, "The Torah states: 'וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ'. (And Yaakov was very afraid, and he was distressed.)

The Seforim Hakedoshim explain that he first was afraid of Esav, and he then was distressed because he was scared of a human being. He was upset with himself for fearing any entity besides Hashem because someone who fears Hashem should not fear anyone else!"

קָטֹנְתִּי מִכֹּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל־הָאֱמֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־עַבְדֶּךָ *'I have grown small from all of the kindnesses and all of the truth that You did with Your servant.'* (32:11)

Humility Comes From Good Deeds:

My grandfather, **the Kretchnifer Rebbe zy"a** (Gilyon Kol Emunah) says that we see the great humility of Yaakov Avinu from this verse.

My ancestor, **Rav Mordchele of Nadovrna zy"a**, said that one merits humility through the performance of good deeds. Yaakov thus said that he became small "from all the kindness". Through acts of kindness, he merited humility. He therefore was worried that he may have used up his zechusim when he received this reward, and that he would have no more siyata d'shmaya.

The truth is, however, that the more humility one attains, the closer he gets to Hashem. And the closer one is to Hashem, the more siyata d'shmaya one has. A haughty person, on the other hand, is like a balloon. He is full of hot air, and when he is insulted even in a very small way, it is like he is pricked by a tiny needle that causes all the air to leak out of him.

Prayers Accepted in the Merit of Tzedakah:

The Chida zt"l (Sefer Bris Olam, Siman 226) explains this pasuk by quoting the Medrash (Socher Tov 65) that says that anyone who performs acts of chesed will have his prayers accepted.

When Yaakov said that he had grown small, it can be seen as a reference to tzedakah. (He had grown smaller by giving away his possessions to tzedakah.) He was thus saying that because he gave tzedakah, he was worthy of davening to Hashem and having his prayers heard.

One Who Does Chesed is Considered to be Learning Torah:

It is related that **Rav Chaim of Volozhin zy"a** once approached a Jew who was in the middle of learning and asked for his help with an act of tzedakah and chesed that needed to be done.

The man answered that he couldn't help right now because he was learning Torah, and the Mishnah says (Peah 1:1): **וְתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֶגֶד כֻּלָּם** "***Learning Torah is equal to all other mitzvos***."

Rav Chaim told him that if a Jew is unable to close his Gemara to do chesed, it is considered as if his Gemara is closed, and he is not learning. But if someone closes his Gemara to do chesed, it is considered as if his Gemara was open, and he was learning the entire time.

In addition to the traditional prayers that we daven each day, it is vital that we speak to Hashem in our own words. "This is because the negative forces are well aware of such paths (the prayers in our siddur).

It is very much like a well-known public road. Since bandits and murderers are aware of this road, they can lurk alongside it, waiting for the unwary. But if one blazes a new trail, or travels one that is not yet known, then no unfriendly elements can lurk on the way.

Similarly, when a person expresses his own thoughts to God, he is taking a new path and composing a new prayer. Therefore, he is not nearly as likely to encounter negative forces. ~ R' Nachman of Breslov zt"l

From our Sages

וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ וַיַּחַץ אֶת־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ – ***'Then Yaakov was greatly afraid and distressed, and he divided the people who were with him.'*** (32:8)

What caused Yaakov to be distressed? - The fact that the people who were with him were "divided."

Yaakov recognized that when the Jewish people are united, the forces of Esau can do them no harm. It's only when there are internal divisions and strife that Jews should worry. (**Maayanot HaNetzach**)

הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו ***'Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau.'*** (32:12)

The repetition of the word "hand" indicates that Yaakov was afraid of two separate dangers: the "hand of Esau," Esau's brute physical power, and "the hand of my brother," Esau's brotherly love.

Esau's sword posed a threat to Yaakov's physical well-being, but socializing with him would be an even greater threat to his soul. (**Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveitchik**)

One of the ways to fight against the yetzer hara is to be involved in many good deeds. The Rebbe of Kotzk zt'l told his chassidim that their sins don't bother him as much as that they had time for sins. - A person should be so busy with good deeds, that there is no time for aveiros. A person that's busy learning Torah, davening, giving tzedakah, doing chessed, doesn't have time to sin. ~ R' Elimelech Biderman Shlita.

R' Moshe Cordovero zt"l (the Ramak) was given a special segulah directly from Eliyahu Hanavi, that when one wants to get rid of impure thoughts, he should say the following verse several times until they are gone:

אֵשׁ תָּמִיד תּוּקַד עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכְבֶּה

An eternal fire shall remain burning on the altar; it may not be extinguished. (Leviticus 6:6)

The idea is that each one of us is a miniature Beis Hamikdash, a dwelling place for Hashem's Shechinah, within which a flame burns eternally and therefore foreign fires such as impure thoughts must be kept out.



וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל־עֵשָׂו אָחִיו אַרְצָה שֵׂעִיר שְׂדֵה אֱדוֹם "***And Yaakov Sent Angels As Messengers To Esav His Brother, To The Land Of Seir, To The Field Of Edom.***" (32:4)

Rav Alter Elyokim Shraga Feivish Shapiro The *Torei Zahav* asks (Vayishlach, pasuk 12): **הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו** - How can it be that a person like Yaakov Avinu, who used real angels as his messengers, was frightened of a *rasha* like Esav?

He answers, based on the **Zohar**, that Esav was surely circumcised, like all the members of Avrohom Avinu's household. When Yaakov said, "I fear him" (**כִּי־יָרֵא אָנֹכִי אֹתוֹ**), he was referring to Esav's

circumcision. [The word אֹתֹו ("him") is related to the word *os*, referring to a *bris*, the sign of the covenant].

Yaakov was frightened that the wicked Esav possessed such a powerful sign of *kedusha*. Nevertheless, although Esav did have a bris, the *Torei Zahav* explains that he had blemished and ruined it through his many transgressions, so Yaakov had nothing to fear.



Rav Dov Ber Maggid of Mezritch, Maggid Devorov l'Yaakov, Der Groisse Maggid *(Kislev 19, 5533 / 1772 - 251st Yahrzeit)*

Rav Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezritch, was born in Lukatch to Rav Avrohom. He was descended from Rav Hai Gaon and Rav Yochonon HaSandlar, a descendant of Dovid HaMelech. Rav Dov Ber learned with the *Pnei Yehoshua* in Lemberg early in his life.

In 1752, he became the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* closest *talmid*. Among his students were the Rebbe Reb Shmuel Shmelke HaLevi Horowitz and his brother, Rav Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz, the *Baal Haflo'a*, the Rebbe Reb Zusha and his brother, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk, Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, Rav Nachum of Chernobyl, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi. His son was Rav Avrohom HaMalach (1740–1776).

The classic anthologies of his teachings are *Likutei Amarim*, *Torah Ohr*, and *Ohr Ho'Emes*.

Sacrifice To Save The Crown Prince

The holy Mezritcher Maggid was very ill. As his talmidim prayed for his well-being, they sent a *pidyon nefesh* to **Rav Pinchas Koretzer**, along with a request for his help to daven for the Maggid's health. Despite his best efforts, Rav Pinchas saw that it was to no avail; something was blocking his requests.

In order to get to discover the source of this interference, he decided to come and visit the Maggid himself. When he arrived, he met **Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi**, the *mechaber* of the *Sefer*

HaTanya and founder of Chabad Chassidus, outside in the antechamber. "The Maggid is resting now, he is asleep," explained the *Ba'al HaTanya* to Rav Pinchas.

After they spoke, Rav Pinchas proceeded on to the Bais Medrash. There to his horror he discovered various writings, teachings of Chassidus and the Maggid's discourses lying haphazardly on the ground like discarded debris. He lifted up the holy writings with reverence and kissed them.

In anger and haste, he made his way back to confront the *Ba'al HaTanya,* holding the incriminating sheaf of papers aloft as evidence.

"Aha! Now the matter is clear to me! I have been doing my best, davening and pleading, attempting to intercede on behalf of the Maggid. Something was holding me back and blocking my *tefillos.* Now I understand the root of the matter and the cause of the Maggid's illness! There are harsh judgments because you have let the spread of the deepest teachings of the inner Torah spread outward and this was holding back my prayers!"

The *Ba'al HaTanya* understood Rav Pinchas' angry accusations and so he responded to him with the following famed *moshol:*

In a faraway land there lived an aged king. One day in his later years he finally had a son. The child was beloved to him and he worried and fretted over his every need and want. He worried over his health and began to suspect that perhaps one day he might need some medicine that would need to be prepared with ingredients from a distant land that were unavailable in his kingdom. He therefore ordered all the apothecaries and those learned in herbal lore to gather together various potions, medicinal herbs and salves from the world over and to safeguard them so that just in case one day there would be need of them, they would be ready at hand.

Among the various remedies there was one precious potion that was extremely rare, used to cure fainting sickness.

Then one day the crown prince fainted and despite the physicians' best efforts they could not care for him. All their attempts failed. The prince's mouth was shut, clamped tight like a vice and nothing would pass his lips.

The king commanded that they hurry and fetch the precious rare potion. But despite their best efforts they could not pry his jaw open. They worried and fretted over the rare potion; what would happen if it spilled?

The king yelled at them, "Why are you worried about the previous potion?! My only concern and effort was for my son! Pour the whole draught into his mouth. Even if just a small drop penetrates his lips – perhaps it will save his life!"

They heeded the king's royal decree and proceeded to pour out the entire potion. Indeed, most of the precious draught spilled onto the floor foaming and hissing, but a few small drops did manage to penetrate the prince's clenched lips. His spirit was revived and he was healed!

The precious prince is the Jewish people, Hashem's beloved child. For their sakes and the sake of their souls, Hashem gave us His most holy precious Torah to revive their body and soul. Despite the fact that it is so holy and precious and we do worry that perhaps it will spill on the floor and end up in undesirable places, if just a drop will penetrate and do its job, this will atone for the entire waste.

The *Ba'al HaTanya* concluded his parable and Rav Pinchas replied, "You have revived me and given me life. All the harsh judgments have been sweetened and now surely the holy Maggid will be healed and his strength will return!"

And so it was. (As found in a handwritten manuscript by **Rav Yisrael Chortkover**, published in Kerem Bais Yisrael p. 7 and cited by Likkutei Imrei Pinchas Shaar Sippurim 73)

Another version of this tradition:

Rav Pinchas Koretzer was once in Mezritch and during his visit he discovered holy writings blowing in the wind among the debris and garbage, and this matter greatly pained him.

The Alter Rebbe, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi (mechaber of the Tanya and founder of Chabad Chassidus) was present, and knowing Rav Pinchas' angry disposition and his opposition to the spread of Toras HaChassidus in a revealed manner, he tried his best to calm and assuage his holy spirit and told him the following *moshol:*

There was once a mighty king who had an only son. He desired that his son rise in all manner of wisdom and train himself to gain strength and might. He sent his son off to the farthest reaches of the kingdom and beyond. He sent the prince to foreign lands over mountains and seas, to tropical islands and exotic distant lands. There, the prince would study and gather various species of plants and herbs and learn to hunt animals, birds and all manner of rare things. He would travel and visit the most distant and dangerous locales.

One day word reached the king that his one and only precious son was in mortal danger; he had become ill and was at death's door on some far-off island. The doctors had given up hope and declared his illness terminal. Despite their best efforts they could find no cure for his strange malady.

The king spared no time and effort. He ordered his men to send out runners and to announce far and wide that whoever was learned in the art of healing and could find a cure for the crown prince should come before the king immediately.

All the greatest doctors and famed physicians, all the wisest healers and apothecaries gathered in the royal court, but despite their efforts none of them could come up with a cure to save the life of the dying prince.

Then one day a man arrived who told the king that he knew of a special cure that could surely heal the crown prince and deliver him from death's door. However, he warned, this cure could only work by using the correct ingredient, to be found in a very rare and precious gemstone. If that gemstone could be procured and pulverized into a fine powdered dust, and that mixed with good fine wine, and if the prince would drink this potion – he would be healed!

The king immediately issued an executive order that the greatest gemologists and geological experts be found to begin searching for this precious stone among the king's treasure hoards. Using the various descriptions and elements that this man gave, they were to find and locate the gemstone to save the life of the dying crown prince.

The wise men gathered all the precious stones and jewels and examined them one by one, and to their great joy they did indeed discover one gemstone with the correct properties and characteristics as described to heal the prince.

There was just one problem: the only such jewel was the crown jewel itself, the very gem that graced the diadem upon the king's own crown!

At first they were overjoyed at the discovery, but once they realized that in order to create this remedy they must remove the king's crown, unseat the stone, crush and pulverize it into powder and dust, they were greatly saddened and dismayed. They had no choice but to tell the king what they had discovered.

When the king heard that they had indeed found the gemstone, he was overjoyed. Now he could heal his one and only precious beloved son! - "Quickly remove the gemstone from the crown and pulverize it to create the potion to give my son!"

At that moment an evil report reached the king – the prince's condition had worsened and his sickness and fever caused his mouth

to be shut tight; his lips were so parched that they had stuck together and could not be pried apart! - Alas! How would he now drink the precious healing potion?

The gemologists and apothecaries hesitated. They had removed the crown jewel from its setting, but why should they now pulverize it in light of this dire development? Surely the king would now not command them to destroy his own crown jewel.

When the king saw their hesitation he amazed them and bellowed, "Hurry and rest not, crush the gem as fast as you can! Prepare the potion and pour it into my son's mouth now! It is worth destroying my precious crown jewels and pouring them down my son's parched lips, even if they spill and are lost! So long as just one drop might by some miracle penetrate his lips and enter his mouth and save my one and only beloved son, maybe, just maybe, he will be healed!"

The ministers were amazed and said, "Your Majesty, when your son's mouth was limp and his lips were parted, his mouth was open and he could receive food and drink, then it was worth it to lose your crown jewels to heal him, but now his lips are sealed – how was it worth destroying your crown that graced you on the throne for this?!"

The king looked at his ministers with contempt and roared, "If my son should perish, what good is my crown?! If he lives and survives, this will be my crowning achievement – that my one and only son fulfilled his father's command and endangered himself to go and study to fulfill my royal will. He endangered his life to do my bidding until he reached this state of sickness. Now he will be healed by me and my crown!"

When **Rav Pinchas Koretzer** heard this *moshol* he was relieved and his spirit revived. It is a well-known tradition that the Mezritcher Maggid thanked the Alter Rebbe for this and felt he owed him a favour. (Hatamim p.802 and cited by Likkutei Imrei Pinchas Shaar Sippurim 74)

How The Maggid Saved A Boy

There was once a Jewish mother who came to the great Maggid on Erev Shabbos, bitterly crying over her son who had decided to forsake his people and his faith and to convert to Christianity. "He was always such a good student, so smart and learned," she sobbed. Too smart for his own good it seems.

At that point the priests, having decided to ensure their young charge had no chance to have a change of heart, had already taken the necessary precautions to keep the lad away from anyone such as meddling relatives who might try to rescue him from their clutches.

In order to further their nefarious goals, they simply locked him up in one of their church complexes, and held him captive until his actual conversion ceremony, which they were planning for the very next Sunday.

The Maggid gathered his *talmidim* and sent the grieving mother home to rest and await the happy reunion with her son. When the *talmidim* arrived, the Maggid surprised them by beginning to expound before them a *derosha* (discourse) explaining the *pasuk, nefesh ki sechta* – "if a soul shall sin". The talmidim wondered as to the reason for this sudden *derush,* but no explanation was forthcoming from their Rebbe. In fact, the Tzaddik reconvened their gathering four times that Erev Shabbos, each time offering new insights on the same pasuk. - Finally, on Shabbos itself, the Maggid offered yet another derush on this pasuk before his talmidim, again and again, a total of three more times.

When the Maggid concluded his seventh *derosha,* his *Divrei Torah* were followed by a strong gust of wind. The wind grew to hurricane- and tornado-like proportions, strong enough to break mountains and smash rocks and boulders. Following the aftermath of the wind came the young lad, who, until just recently, had been a prisoner under lock and key awaiting conversion.

The confused lad began his story to explain how he had escaped: "For some reason, all of a sudden I was seized with doubts about my resolve to leave Yiddishkeit. My conscience began to bother me until my doubts grew and my decision to convert out of the Jewish faith was shaken to its very core!

I came to my senses and decided to remain a Jew, but how to escape? The priests had locked me up to ensure against just such a possibility. I tried the door but it was locked. I tried to pick the lock with no success. I attempted to break the door down, but it was too solid, and so I simply resigned myself to sit and wait until morning; when they opened my door I planned to run away and escape. However, my thoughts constantly tortured me – what had I done? What had I been thinking? How could I ever have wanted to convert and desert my faith?

These thoughts gave me no respite and I began to despise myself and my life. I tried desperately to break down the door but it was simply impossible, and I wept and sobbed in misery at my predicament and at my wretched life.

"I made up my mind to end it all and so I climbed up onto the window ledge and squeezed myself out between the iron bars – and jumped. As I fell, a strong gust of wind blew and miraculously saved me and brought me here."

When the young boy concluded his tale, the talmidim understood just how far-seeing and far-reaching their Rebbe was, and how, with his Torah, the Maggid had saved this boy. (Eser Oros 1:9)

In a time of increasing darkness, we must respond with an increasing of light. ~ The Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Rav Menachem Nuchem Twerski Tolner Rebbe *(Kislev 19, 5676 / 1915 - 108th Yahrzeit)*



Son of Rav Mordechai of Tolna, and the grandson of Rav Dovid of Tolna, scions of the Czernobyl dynasty. He later became the son-in-law of Rav Moshe of Tshitshlenik of the Savraner dynasty.

He was his grandfather's primary successor, since his father passed away during his grandfather's lifetime and he was crowned *Rebbe* at his *Bar Mitzvah*.

He moved from Tolna to Tultshin. He was beloved by the Jewish world, including the *Misnagdim*. His *Divrei Torah* and *toldos* were printed in *Matmonei Menachem Nuchem*.

His sons were: Rav Dovid Mordechai of Tolna-New York, Rav Yochonon of Sabin, Rav Yitzchok, Rav Moshe Tzvi of Tolna-Philadelphia, Rav Meshulem Zisha of Tolna-Boston, Rav Avrohom and Rav Aharon.

Pidyon Shevuyim

Rav Menachem Nuchem of Chernobyl was a master at the mitzvah of *Pidyon Shevuyim*, redeeming captives. He would journey from town to town to collect money to redeem Jews who had by some misfortune, found their way into the deep and dank dungeons of the Poritz, the local landowner.

Once, while he was in Zhitomir, the local gentiles found a way to slander the Rebbe and have him thrown into jail. While incarcerated,

he was visited by one of the local rabbis who came to cheer him up and uplift his spirit by offering him words of *chizuk* and inspiration.

"Rav Nuchem!" the Rabbi said. "We know that Avraham Avinu excelled at *Hachnossas Orchim,* the mitzvah of receiving and welcoming guests. This is precisely why Hashem told him, "*Lech Lecha,* exile yourself from your land," in order for Avraham Avinu himself to become a traveler. This way, he could learn and experience firsthand what a guest requires from his host. By traveling, he would become familiar with the needs of a traveler and would subsequently be able to fulfill the mitzvah of *Hachnossas Orchim* to the fullest."

"Rav Nuchem!" the Rabbi concluded. "Hashem knows that you excel in the mitzvah of *Pidyon Shevuyim.* However, Hashem wanted you to succeed even more. Therefore, He orchestrated for you to be jailed so you could learn, through personal experience, what a prisoner feels like and how know great of a mitzvah you do!"

His Torah

It is said that when one of the Rebbe's *talmidim* collected his teachings and wrote them down, he then showed them to the *tzaddik*. The volume was as large a tractate of Talmud, and the Rebbe reviewed them all. He then only allowed to be printed those *divrei Torah* which he had no recollection of having said, because those, he explained, were true Torah, where the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) had spoken through his mouth. (*Otzar Yisrael* 4)

His Tzedaka

The *Meor Einayim* was very poor and there was often no money to pay his large debts and no food to feed his hungry household. The gabbai was therefore pleased and relieved to see that a visitor had handed the Rebbe a princely sum of three hundred rubles. After another few visitors had asked for the *tzaddik's* berachos, the

gabbai took the opportunity to request that the Rebbe give him money to pay off some outstanding debts and loans.

The Rebbe opened the drawer of his rickety old desk and handed the *gabbai* some small copper and silver coins. The *gabbai,* who had been expecting three hundrend rubles, couldn't hold himself back.

"Rebbe!" he cried out, in consternation and despair. "Where are the three hundred rubles?"

The Rebbe explained, "Just before, a poor Jew came in complaining he had no money to pay a *melamed* to learn Torah with his children; he was behind on his rent to the *Poritz* and had no dowry to marry off his daughter who was languishing away at home. When I asked him how much he needed, he said three hundred rubles, so I gave him the money."

"But Rebbe,"asked the gabbai incredulously, "how can the Rebbe give such a large sum to one Jew?"

"You know," said the *tzaddik*, "for a fleeting moment the same thought crossed my mind too. It said, 'Why give the sum to one man, when you could divide and distribute it among many families?' I realized any such thoughts surely came from You Know Who – the Other Side – The *yetzer hara*. Since that was my first thought I made sure to give him the entire sum." (*Otzar Yisrael* 9)

Mamme Rochel

It was Rosh HaShana and the holy Tzaddik, the **Minchas Elozor of Munkacz**, approached the lectern to begin the *derosha* before *Tekias Shofar*. Among his holy words he retold the tale:

The holy Tzaddik, the *Meor Einayim,* was libeled by the *Misnagdim* and the government threw him into jail. He languished in prison for two weeks. Then, as he sat in his cell, our Matriarch, Mamme Rochel, came to him and promised him that he would go free – and so he did. Then the Munkasczer Rav turned heavenward and spread his arms

out to *Shomayim,* crying out with bitter tears of longing, "Mamme, Mamme – Mother!!! Rav Nachum Czernobyler sat just two weeks in prison and you freed him! Mother, what about us?! For two thousand bitter years we are exiled and imprisoned – why don't you free us?

Let us out!" he cried. The awakening was so great that the Chassidim said the very walls of the Bais Medrash shed tears. (Siach Zekeinim)

Meor Eynaim - The Light Of The Eyes

Rav Moshe Weinberger Mara DeAsra of Aish Kodesh, Woodmere, NY, heard this story from from the *ba'al ha'maase* himself.

There was once a talmid chacham who was not a chassid. Unfortunately, as he grew older his eyesight deteriorated and he was slowly becoming blind, *rachmana litzlan.* His family urged him to visit **Rav Yoel of Satmar Zatzal**, well known for his blessings and their wondrous ability to miraculously aid and heal others. However he refused stating that he was no chassid and would not go to a chassidishe rebbe for a b'racha.

Eventually as his eyesight grew worse and he could no longer study or learn Torah his family convinced him to visit Rav Yoel'ish not because of his fame or stature as a wonderworking rebbe but as his fame as a talmid chacham, for the Gemara tells us to request the blessings and prayers of a *talmid chacham* for the sick.

Rav Yoel, told him that he should study the chassidishe *sefer Meor Eynaim* (which means the light of the eyes) and that that would aid his failing eyesight, a righteous tzaddik decrees and Hashem fulfils.

The more and more he studied the more he regained his eyesight until Baruch Hashem he was able to see normally once again!

Rav Chaim Meir Hagar - Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz once told his chassidim on the Czernobler's Yarzeit, that the *sefer Meor Eynaim, SeMacht Lichtig Der Oigen* – It enlightens the eyes!

Rav Yitzchok Hutner Rosh Yeshiva of Chaim Berlin, Pachad Yitzchok *(Kislev 20, 5741 / 1980 - 43rd Yahrzeit)*



Rav Yitzchok Hutner was Rosh Yeshiva of *Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin*, and *mechaber* of *Pachad Yitzchok*. His uncle, Rav Benzion Ostrover, had been a *talmid* of Rav Mendel of Kotzk, and was instrumental in providing his young nephew with a direct link to the world of *Chassidus*.

At the age of fifteen, he went to Slobodka and was directed by the *Alter*, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel. In 1925, he entered the new Slabodka branch in Chevron, where he also met and learned from Rav Avrohom Yitzchok Kook. He remained until 1929, after which he returned to his parents in Warsaw. He became a personal tutor for Rav Moshe Solevetchik's son, Aharon.

In 1932, he published his *Toras HaNozir*, a commentary on the *Rambam's Hilchos Nozir*. In 1933, he married Masha Lipshitz and moved to *Eretz* Yisrael. Despite his great attachment to the Land, they left for America one year later, not to return for thirty years.

He built *Yeshiva Chaim Berlin* to his specifications with his famous blend of Torah philosophies. One of his *talmidim* was Rav Yitzchok Shurin, grandson of Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky. Among his colleagues at Slobodka were Rav Yitzchok *HaLevi* Ruderman, Rav Reuven Grozovsky, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, and Rav Aharon Kotler.

In 1949 he began publishing his discourses on morals and ethics which he subtitled *Divrei Torah B'inyonei Hilchos Dei'os V'Chovos HaLevovos*. As a young man he wrote *Toras HaNozir* on the *Rambam's*

Hilchos Nezirus. He wrote a profound commentary (*Kovetz He'oros*) on Rabbeinu Hillel on the *Safra*. His discourses on *Yomim Tovim* and *Shabbos* (*Pachad Yitzchok*) are collected in seven volumes.

Rav Hutner's View of Biographies

Rav Elimelech Biderman cites a letter written by Rav Yitzchok Hutner as an example of true *chizuk* that inspires us when we are down, that uplifts and strengthens us:

Often, when we study the biographies of *Gedolim* and tales of *Tzaddikim*, we imagine that they simply sprang up and appeared as accomplished *Tzaddikim* with no blemishes, imperfections or struggles. We do not realize that the opposite is true – that we are adopting a false notion by skipping over the entire portion of their lives that contains the tales of growth, stumbling, struggle and sheer failure.

The difference between them and us, teaches the *Pachad Yitzchok* (Vol.1 *Igros* 128) is not that we struggle and fail, and they did not. On the contrary, the difference is that they grew and achieved and got up and continued – even after failures and struggles. They were strengthened by adversity – but we give up.

In fact, it is not the struggles and failures that separate and contrast us – those very struggles and failures are where we find the greatest common denominator. It is in the struggles and failures where we are most similar to and most resemble the *Gedolim* and *Tzaddikim*!

We all praise and wonder at the ***Chofetz Chaim's*** mastery of his tongue and purity of his speech – but who knows the battles he waged, the failures and struggles that that *Tzaddik* went through before he reached his lofty level and overcame his *Yetzer Hora*? And this is just one example from among thousands! The result of such mistaken assumptions is that when bright, healthy, strong-willed individuals find themselves faced with failures, difficulties,

obstacles and struggles, they imagine that they –and only they – are the losers and failures, that only such lowly, despicable people such as they struggle with the kinds of desires and passions that they deal with.

Truthfully, we can tell them, "We sympathize and empathize with your pain and suffering, but you must know that that pain and suffering is what ultimately builds and shapes you and engenders growth and greatness."

This is the path leading to *gadlus*. Some people think that Shlomo *HaMelech*'s message, in declaring that a *Tzaddik* falls seven times and gets up (*Mishlei* 24:16), is that he rises again despite his failures. This is a mistake.

What the wisest of men was saying was that *through* his failures he rises again! The seven falls of the *Tzaddik* are themselves what create his meteoric rise to great heights!

So do not imagine the *Godol* and *Tzaddik* with a pure *Yetzer;* rather remember that he too has a *Yetzer Hora* that he overcame. This is what you have in common with the *Gedolim* and *Tzaddikim* – and this is what you can also do to strive to reach greatness yourself.

Twenty years after his petiroh, HaRav Hutner's Torah is as eagerly sought as ever. The volumes of his *Pachad Yitzchok* are treasured by those who possess and pore over them, their message casting brilliant illumination onto the fundamental obligations of the Jewish soul and the seasons of the Jewish year.

HaRav Hutner was one of the handful of individuals who were destined by *Hashgochoh* to rebuild, or more correctly, to bring new life to, Torah and Yiddishkeit in the postwar world. He raised a generation of rabbonim and mechanchim, whose work in Eretz Yisroel and the United States bears the distinctive stamp of his thought

and approach. His uniqueness lay not in his role as a public leader but in the depth, the richness and the brilliance of his personality.

He defies classification. It is even hard to discuss him within our usual terms of reference. Ideally, his own thought and expressions should be employed for the task.

His chassidishe roots and background, and the formative years that he subsequently spent in the great yeshivos of Slobodke and Chevron, would make any analysis of his greatness a daunting and precarious task. The crucial factor to bear in mind when appraising him is his originality. Whether he was delivering one of his famous ma'amorim, discoursing on Jewish history, counselling talmidim, or formulating an approach to one of the issues facing the *klal,* the depth of his penetration, the breadth of his scope and perspective and the beautiful way in which he expressed himself, always resulted in new insights and new content and brought a new light to bear upon the subject at hand.

A godol beYisroel he was, in every sense of the phrase - - a giant in Torah knowledge, in character and in spirit, and a leader of his people -- yet he essentially remained a private person. In his case we are more keenly aware than usual of what is probably true of all men of his stature. Though they may live in the public eye, that part of them which remains hidden far exceeds that which is revealed and is open to our observation. We quickly realize that any picture that we may try to build up, using as our materials the shafts of light that flashed from his soul in the form of his deeds, speech or writings, is woefully inadequate and falls far short of the mark.

A related idea, which HaRav Hutner himself expressed at the end of a hesped he delivered for **HaRav Aharon Kotler *zt'l***, is as follows: "There have been gedolim whose stature as individuals was fully in proportion to the dimensions of their mission to their generation. There have been gedolim of towering stature, whose mission to their generation nevertheless did not reflect their personal greatness. On

the other hand, there have been gedolim whose mission to their generation was in excess of their personal stature."

HaRav Hutner placed HaRav Kotler in the first category and he himself belongs there too. Yet Reb Aharon's work was more in the public eye and the gadlus which he showed was of a type that the public could readily appreciate. While HaRav Hutner was likewise called upon to utilize all of his great gifts and qualities in serving the tzibbur, the nature of what he revealed was such that there was clearly much more that was concealed.

While the true dimension of his spiritual vision and the full iridescence of his soul is hidden from us, we have to share what we can with those who have not yet encountered his thought or experienced the emotions inspired by his ideas -- by his exposition of the soul of Yiddishkeit in past, present and future, the throbbing pulse of Knesses Yisroel and in its eternal yearning for its Creator.

When the **Alter of Slobodke *zt'l***, passed away, HaRav Hutner was standing next to **HaRav Yechezkel Sarna *zt'l***, who commented to him, "Two kinds of builders participate in the erection of every spiritual edifice. One kind are creators *(yotzrim)*, the other kind are storers *(otzrim)*. The creators have now departed from us and we must assume the mantle of storers."

In his role as a storer, HaRav Hutner rose ever higher, ultimately attaining the role of creator, as the originator of his own spiritual edifice that will continue to quench the thirst of many in the years to come.

His Bond with Eretz Yisroel

He experienced special spiritual elevation during the years that he spent in Eretz Yisroel

as a bochur when he learned in Yeshivas Chevron. In a letter from 5689 (1929), he wrote, "More than three years have passed since I ascended to Eretz Yisroel . . . I have dwelt a lot in the tent of Torah

and many waves of Torah light have suffused me and illuminated me during this time. Out of inner emotional constancy, I am bonded with a life of elevation in Torah, in every area of this all- encompassing ideal."



At times, when he was preparing to leave Eretz Yisroel for *chutz lo'oretz*, he found the parting very difficult: "Many, many of the fundamental ideas of Torah thought and of understanding Judaism have become clear to me and have become well-grounded within me thanks to its influence on me there. No approach, no teacher and no educator, could have penetrated to as deeply within my soul as has Eretz Yisroel, the true place for a life of Torah. A covenant has been established between the Land and the Torah."

Even after he returned to the United States in order to disseminate Torah and to set Torah upon a firm footing there, the bonds of love for Eretz Yisroel remained strong.

He once gave instructions that hakofos should be held in his yeshiva following the meal on the night of Shemini Atzeres as a sign of identity with the inhabitants of Eretz Yisroel who were celebrating Simchas Torah and holding their hakofos that night.

11 Elul - Black September – 1970



On this day in 1970, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) blew up three aircraft in front of the international press at Dawson's Field in Northern Jordan at the height of what became known as Black September.

As the giant airplane sat alone on that giant stretch of Jordanian sand known as Dawson Field and renamed Revolution Airport by the PFLP — really no more than parched mud flats hardened under the desert sun — the terrorists began collecting passports and interrogating passengers, especially those they identified as Jews.

Among the passengers on the TWA plane were the venerated *rosh yeshivah* Rav Yitzchak Hutner of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin and his wife *zichronam l'vrachah*, and *yblch"t* his only daughter Rebbetzin Bruria David of the BJJ seminary and her husband, Rav Yonasan David *shlita*, *rosh yeshivah* of Pachad Yitzchak in Jerusalem. Two of Rav Hutner's young students, Yaakov Drillman and Meir Fund, were also on the flight. So were the Sephardic *gedolim* Chacham Rav Yosef and his brother Rav Avraham Harari-Raful of Brooklyn.

And a few rows back were two young kids traveling all alone, ten-year-old Yosef Trachtman and eight-year-old Tzipporah Moran, facing down a bunch of terrorists — the nightmare of every parent who sends their children on a plane by themselves.

As soon as passengers realized the plane was being hijacked, Rav Hutner's two *talmidim* moved from their own seats to sit next to the two unaccompanied children.

Eight-year-old Tzipporah was carrying documents from both the US and Israel. Yaakov Drillman was a young *bochur* at the time, but he knew that signs of Israeli citizenship would put the girl in danger, and so he took her Israeli documents, ripped them into tiny shreds, and swallowed them.

Among the documents that the hijackers discovered were precious handwritten manuscripts of seforim that Rav Yitzchak Hutner had painstakingly compiled over years. The terrorists confiscated the manuscripts, claiming they contained secret plans for espionage.

Years of efforts to retrieve those manuscripts proved fruitless — they were probably incinerated when the planes were blown up. The terrorists also discovered in his possession documents relating to the purchase of two apartments in north Jerusalem, one for him and one for his daughter. The terrorists were enraged by his plans to buy apartments in territory that had been "stolen" from them. "It's ours! It's ours!" they shouted repeatedly.

It's possible that this was why the terrorists decided to subject Rav Hutner to "special treatment" and removed him from the plane one day before the other Jewish passengers were taken off the aircraft, on Thursday night of that week, the evening of the tenth of Elul.

As Rav Hutner was brought down from the plane, he assumed they were planning to kill him, and he shouted "*Shema Yisrael!*" on the

steps. Rav Hutner was kept separate from the rest of the group and was only reunited with them after their second week in captivity.

For a week the hostages slept in their seats. They were hot (with no air conditioning, the cabin was well over a hundred degrees) and grimy and the bathrooms emitted an unbearable stench.

They subsisted on pitot, olives, and a minuscule water supply. The Palestinian guards circulated among them with their guns drawn, some of them with daggers. They threatened the hostages that if, after they were freed, they released information about how they were treated, their captors would hunt them down to the end of the world and exact revenge.

Meanwhile, Rav Hutner was still being held alone in an isolated location. The low-level terrorists attempted to cut off his beard but were stopped by their commanders. In the US, there was talk about raising money to ransom Rav Hutner, but Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky ruled against the move.

Although there is a halachic basis (*Tosafos*, Gittin58a) for paying an exorbitant sum to save a great Torah leader, Rav Yaakov ruled that this applies only during peacetime — and Israel's ongoing struggle with terrorism constitutes war.

Suddenly, a gigantic explosion rocked the airport and rounds of gunfire were heard. Only later did it transpire that the passengers had been removed to safety before their airliner had been destroyed.

The Torah world was in an uproar when it learned that HaRav Hutner and his family, who had been returning to the United States after a visit to Eretz Yisroel, were among the passengers being held hostage. Massive public prayer gatherings were held, and intercessors worked frantically to end the ordeal.

The Steipler *zt'l* and HaRav Shach *zt'l* met with the Prime Minister and members of the government to inform them of HaRav Hutner's standing in the Torah world.

Frightening rumors emanated from the Zarka Desert where the captives were being held and Torah Jewry was bewildered.

In the darkness of captivity, amid the explosions and the firing, HaRav Hutner was engaged in some soul searching of his own. "My spirit throbs with Chazal's words, `Rabbon Shimon ben Gamliel and Rabbi Yishmoel were on their way to their execution. - Rabbon Shimon said to Rabbi Yishmoel, "*My teacher, my heart has left me because I do not know what I am being killed for*."' "

Throughout days and nights, HaRav Hutner wrestled with the same question: was he lacking any basic knowledge as to why his life seemed about to end?

Knesset member Rabbi Menachem Porush *z"l* chartered a private plane to meet the Hutners in Nicosia. At the time, Rabbi Porush reported that during his three weeks of captivity, Rav Hutner lost twenty kilograms (44 pounds). Rav Hutner's son-in-law and his two students, Yaakov Drillman and Meir Fund, also appeared emaciated. Rebbetzin David had to be supported as she disembarked from the plane.

Rav Hutner's tallis and tefillin, jacket and hat, and even his shirt had been confiscated sometime during the ordeal. Menachem Porush gave the Rosh Yeshivah his own shirt and *tallis katan*.

On Monday evening the group was flown to Europe, and from there to America. By Wednesday evening, the first night of Rosh HaShanah, they were all home, barely able to believe the horror, and the salvation, they had gone through over the past month.

In the *ma'amorim* which he delivered during the *aseres yemei teshuvoh* that followed, he elaborated on his silent thoughts. This experience clarified for him a subject that had occupied him

greatly: the heritage of Yishmoel's descendants as opposed to that of Eisov's.

While the prisoners were being held, Arab delegations would visit them daily to survey the spoils of their triumph. Most of the visitors were uncouth Arabs. However, on one of the visits, one of the delegations' leaders, a man with a princely visage, passed by HaRav Hutner. He noticed HaRav Hutner, bowed to him politely and engaged him in conversation.

When he left, HaRav Hutner remarked, "His face . . . Yishmoel's nobility. You will find none like it among Eisov's descendants. About Yishmoel the Torah makes no mention of *alufim.*"

Following negotiations, the hostages were released on the twenty-fifth of Elul and they returned to the United States.

On Rosh Hashonoh, before *tekias shofar,* HaRav Hutner delivered a ma'amar so that the aftershock of suffering he had undergone should not cause any loss of Torah study among his followers. He also acknowledged his debt of gratitude to Klal Yisroel, who had prayed and interceded on his behalf and who had participated with him in all that he had endured. - It was only Klal Yisroel's merits and their prayers that had brought about his release.

The hijacking episode had a sad aftermath. HaRav Hutner's manuscripts, among which had been the volume of *Pachad Yitzchok* on Shavuos, arranged and ready for printing, remained behind in the hands of the hijackers. Every possible pressure was brought to bear but all the efforts were in vain.

HaRav Hutner's talmidim toiled and labored together with those who had listened to his talks for many years and they arranged a new volume on Shavuos. Part of the new volume's introduction reads, "The posuk's words about those redeemed from captivity who return home, `They will come weeping, and I will bring them in supplication . . . ' have found their fulfillment in us. Only joy that comes after

suffering can evoke tears of happiness. Salvation from the midst of the trouble is what brings forth the tears of joy. `I will bring them in supplication' -- although the supplications belong to the call from the straits, the soul remains under the impression of those supplications and the publication of the sefer will serve as a symbol for all types of suffering, which are the lot of the righteous, whose `beginnings are fraught with suffering but whose ends are tranquility.' "

Rav Yochonon Perlow Karlin-Stoliner Rebbe *(Kislev 21, 5716 / 1955 - 68th Yahrzeit)*

Rav Yochonon was born in the month of *Av* 5660/1900 to Rav Yisrael Perlow, the *Yanuka* of Stolin. He was named after his grandfather, Rav Yochonon of Rachmastrivka. After his father was *niftar*, he was crowned *Rebbe* in Lutsk although just a newly married yungerman. He gathered around himself many Karlin Stoliner Chassidim from Volhyn.

When the Germans invaded Lutsk during WWII he fled to the woods together with his wife and two daughters. There he fled deep into Russia with the partisans. He lost his wife and daughter in Russia on the same bitter day and he himself had to bury them. - Along with his hardships and travails he remained weak and sickly for the rest of his life.

When the war ended, he arrived in Germany through Serbia and did not reveal his identity to anyone, living a life of want, privation and hunger. Somehow someone recognized him and the Chassidim did their utmost to make efforts to bring him to Eretz Yisrael to become *Rebbe* for all the Karlin-Stoliner Chassidim whose numbers in Yerushalayim were significant. In *Iyar* of 5706 he arrived in Eretz Yisrael and established himself in Chaifa.

Under his guidance and leadership, Karlin-Stolin was reinvigorated; new *botei medrash* opened and *mosdos* – institutions – opened and grew.

In 5708 he left for the USA and lived with his brother Rav Yaakov. While in New York he published the *Bais Aharon VeYisrael Siddur* with the customs of *davening* in the *nusach* of Karlin-Stolin, along with important correspondence and letters from the *Rebbes* of the dynasty.

In 5714 he moved back to Eretz Yisrael and began building *Yeshivas Karlin* in Yerushalayim. He returned to the USA to help fund the project and complete the building, hoping to return, but he was *niftar* shortly after he arrived in the US. He was brought back to Eretz Yisrael and laid to rest in Teverya on 18 *Adar* 5717.

His *petira* created a split in Karlin. Some of the Chassidim crowned the Pinsker as the next leader. However, most of the *Chassidim* crowned Rav Boruch Yaakov HaLevi Shochet, the son of Rav Yochonon's daughter, as the next Karlin-Stoliner *Rebbe*.

After Rav Yochonon's *petira*, the Chassidim reprinted the *Bais Aharon*, by the second Rav Aharon of Karlin, in his name and memory.

Sage Advice Saves Lives

In the year *tov-shin-ches,* Rav Yochonon of Karlin-Stolin was in Teverya for Yom Kippur. A certain *bochur,* not a Stoliner Chassid, arrived from Kiryat Ata to spend the holy day with the Rebbe. To his astonishment, after Shacharis, the Rebbe Rav Yochonon approached him and ordered the *bochur* to go and make Kiddush and eat!

Needless to say, the bochur did not do so on Yom Kippur! However, a short while later, again the Stoliner Rebbe, Rav Yochonon, came by and seeing as how his previous words had fallen on deaf ears, raised his voice and said, "Didn't I tell you to go make *Kiddush* and eat?!"

The *bochur* was frightened and taken quite aback at this outburst, and dared not disobey the Rebbe's clear command.

The next day the *bochur* took to bed ill. He was so sick that he was rushed for emergency medical attention. When the doctors in the hospital concluded their examination, one of them asked the sick *bochur*, "I know that yesterday was Yom Kippur. Tell me the truth – did you fast yesterday?"

When the *bochur* admitted that he had in fact eaten as per the Rebbe's orders, the doctor seemed surprised and relieved. "What good fortune! You are one lucky young man! It's a good thing you ate when you did. In fact, had you fasted you probably wouldn't be alive today!" (Me'orei Aish, chapter 8 - page 515)

The Spelling of The Decree

Once, during a certain Rosh HaShana that the Rebbe, Rav Yochonon of Stolin, spent in Yerushalayim, a yungerman fainted in his home and no one was able to revive him. His family rushed to the Rebbe and begged him to rouse heavenly mercy on his behalf.

The Rebbe ordered them to drip several drops of wine into his mouth, and this they did. To the amazement of all present, as soon as several drops of wine entered the unconscious man's mouth he immediately woke up. By the next day he had completely recovered and he himself arrived in the Bais Medrash for davening.

Afterward, the Rebbe was overheard remarking, "I simply switched the letters of his heavenly decree from spelling negef, which means "struck down", to *gefen* which means "fruit of the vine" – and I succeeded in saving his life through the wine. (Me'orei Aish)

Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank Chief Rav of Yerushalayim, Har Tzvi *(Kislev 21, 5722 / 1961 - 62nd Yahrzeit)*



Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Rav of Yerushalayim, was born in Lithuania, and became a student of Rav Eliezer Gordon and Rav Shmuel Salant. His main work is a set of responsa known as *Har Tzvi*. He also authored *Mikro'ei Kodesh*. He was the father-in-law of Rav Menachem Ben-Tzion Sacks, the *Menachem Tzion*.

A Call For Teshuva

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (born 5633/1873), chief Rav of Yerushalayim and *mechaber* of *Har Tzvi*, used to tell a story from his childhood that made a deep impression on him all his life:

"When I was a child in Kovna and it was the beginning of *Chodesh Elul*, I followed all the adults into the *Bais Medrash* to hear the *derosha* of **Rav Yisrael Salanter *zt"l***. The *Bais Medrash* was packed and, finding nowhere else to sit, I sat myself down on the steps leading to the *Aron Kodesh*.

In the middle of Rav Yisrael Salanter's *derosha* he called out, '***Yidden! Mir gefinen zich itzter in Chodesh Elul – macht teshuva! – Fellows Jews! We find ourselves in the midst of the month of Elul – do teshuva***!'

As he said these words, he fainted and fell at the foot of the *bima*! I saw him lying there, pale as a ghost; he looked like he had died. The sight of such a thing has left its mark on me all my life!" (Kodesh Elul Chapter 3, cited from Bais Va'ad II p. 33)

Rav Sholom Mordechai Schwadron Maggid of Yerushalayim *(Kislev 22, 5758 / 1997 - 26th Yahrzeit)*



Rav Sholom Mordechai Schwadron, Yerushalmi *Maggid*, was the brother-in-law of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. He was named for his grandfather, the *Maharsham*, the leading *posek* in Galicia before World War I.

He lost his father at the age of seven, and for a time lived in an orphanage. After his *bar mitzva* he studied in the Lomza *Yeshiva* in Petach Tikva, and later in the Chevron *Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim under Rav Yehuda Leib Chasman.

After his marriage, he continued his studies in *Kollel Ohel Torah*. The *kollel*'s members included Rav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv and Rav Shmuel Wosner. In addition to his renown as a *Maggid*, he published approximately twenty-five of his grandfather's works, as well as *Lev Eliyohu* (of Rav Elya Lopian), and the writings of Rav Chasman, *Ohr Yahal*.

I Got Back My Bitochon

Rav Sholom Shwadron used to tell the following story: The *Mashgiach*, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, was known always to walk around with a serious expression on his face that reflected his awe and reverence – *Yiras HaRomemus* – that permeated his very being and all his 248 limbs and 365 sinews.

Once, one of his *talmidim* was extremely surprised to walk in and find the *Mashgiach* smiling broadly – a rare sight indeed. The *talmid*

queried the *Mashgiach* as to the source of his smile and Rav Chatzkel responded:

"When I used to be the *Mashgiach* in the *Mir Yeshiva* I almost never received my monthly salary on time (because of the *Yeshiva's* dire financial means or lack thereof). I trusted instead in Hashem and had *bitochon* that He alone would see to my *parnossa* from other sources. When I took up the position as *Mashgiach* in *Ponovezh* I began to receive my monthly salary on time and unfortunately I lost this level of *bitochon* in Hashem that I had regarding my *parnossa*.

But now – *Chasdei Hashem* – it is some eight months that I haven't been paid (due to the *Yeshiva's* staggering debts) and I now have my *bitochon* back in Hashem that He will send me my *parnossa* in another way, and this is why I am so happy and overjoyed! (*Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel*, p. 54–55)

Rav Elimelech Lowy Tosher Rebbe *(Kislev 23, 5703 / 1942 - 81st Yahrzeit)*



Rav Elimelech was the son of Rav Meshulem Feish Levi of Tosh and the son-in-law of Rav Yitzchok Isaac Weiss, *Av Bais Din* of Solyeve and *Rosh Av Bais Din* of Munkacsz. He was born toward the end of his father's life and named after Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk because his father often traveled especially to Lizhensk to the *tziun* and *davened* there to merit a son. His father nicknamed him the Rebbe Reb Melech even during his childhood years.

When his brother-in-law Rav Yehosef Rottenberg moved from Tosh to Kosoni, he was appointed Rav and

Rebbe of Tosh. He traveled to his own mentor and *Rebbe*, Rav Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Bluzhov, even during his own tenure as *Rebbe*.

Just like his father before him, stories of his many supernatural powers, blessings and miracles abounded among the *Chassidim*.

His practices included continuous immersion in the *mikveh*, and drawn-out dancing with the *Chassidim*. His *avodas hakodesh* during *Purim* was especially renowned and *Chassidim* would relate how many wonders and miracles he performed.

In the *sefer Purim Hameshulosh BeTosh* by Rav Yosef Friedlander of Yerushalayim, he tells of three such days of *Purim* miracles.

His son Rav Chaim Shlomo served as Chuster *Rebbe* in America, his grandson Rav Meshulem Feish, son of Rav Mordechai *hy"d*, who perished in the Holocaust, served as Tosher *Rebbe* in Canada. - He was *niftar* in Tosh.

Shabbos

Tzaddikim used to say about Rav Chaim of Czernowitz, *mechaber* of *Be'er Mayim Chaim* and *Siddur Shel Shabbos* that on Shabbos "***er iz gevein mit a kup hecher*** – he was a head taller!" His appearance changed so drastically on Shabbos that he appeared to be a different person completely. (*Maamar Mordechai Slonim* 2)

Always On the Table

The *Tosher rebbe* once related: Rav Mottel Neshchizer used to keep a copy of the *Rambam's Yad haChazaka* on his table at all times. When his son, Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz was questioned as to why his father had this custom, he explained: My father had a vision in which the *Rambam* appeared before him with a complaint: "Why do you not study my *sefer*?"

"I apologize," answered my father, "but with people coming to me day and night with their problems, I just don't have the time; I am simply unable to help them and also find time to study your sefer."

The *Rambam* then returned, "At least keep a copy of my *sefer* on your table," I promise that if you keep a copy before you on your table at all times, whenever you need to help a Jew and achieve some *yeshua* for someone, just open my *sefer* and take a look inside. I assure you that you will find some cure and manner of healing."

That is the reason for this custom, he concluded. (L'Yesharim Tehilla, see also Avodas Avoda Sichos Shemos)

A Pillar of Yiras Shomayim

The *Tosher Rebbe* used to say that the *Rambam* was the pillar of *yiras shomayim.* He mentions that a well-known and accepted *segula* for *yiras shomayim* is to study the seforim of the *Rambam.*

The rebbe said in the name of Rav Pinchas of Koretz that even just having the *Rambam's seforim* in the house is a *segula* for *Yiras Shomayim.* This is because, as we said, the *Rambam* was the pillar of fear and awe of Heaven and he authored his *seforim* with the intention of helping us achieve *yiras shomayim.*

The *Tosher Rebbe* told how when the *Rambam* passed away in Egypt, they brought him to Eretz Yisrael to be buried in Tiveria. When they brought the *aron* (coffin), a band of highwaymen attacked the *levaya* (funeral procession). There were some thirty armed brigands and they wanted to steal the aron, which they probably thought contained treasure. But when they tried to make off with it, they were unable to move it at all!

When this *nes* happened, they saw it was the hand of Hashem. They were so spooked that they all ran away!

The Derech Eretz of A Clock

The *Tosher Rebbe* once told over that Rav Yechezkel of Shinova had the custom to relate the following story regarding the *Ateres Tzvi* of Zidatchov.: When the *Ateres Tzvi* recited Torah on Shabbos during *shalosh seudos* (the third Shabbos meal) and the clock would

begin to chime, the *Ateres Tzvi* would silence the clock by yelling at it, "***Sha! Derech eretz!*** (Silence! Do you have no manners?)"; whereupon the clock would freeze mid-chime and only resume working after the *shalosh seudos* Torah ended. - This occurred quite often. - Once the Torah recitation was indeed concluded, the clock resumed chiming and ticking where it left off, making up whatever it had missed during the break!

The *Shinover Rav* then concluded the tale with the following remarks: "See how even an inanimate object such as a clock demonstrated *derech eretz* (manners) with respect to the words of the *tzaddik!*" (*Avodas Avoda Sichos Kodesh* I p. 290)

Mesirus Nefesh: A Lesson in Avodas Hashem

The *Tosher Rebbe* related how once after the the holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* had already passed away, he had revealed himself in a vision to his son, Rav Tzvi. Rav Tzvi asked his departed father, the *Ba'al Shem*, "Please teach me how to serve Hashem properly."

The holy *Ba'al Shem Tov* depicted for his son a tall mountain with a steep cliff; at the edge of the cliff, peering down, one could see a raging, roaring, deep body of water.

"My son," said the *Ba'al Shem*, "you should imagine that you are always standing at the top of this mountain at the edge of the cliff and then cast yourself from the mountain and plunge yourself deep into the river's waters down below! - That is how you must serve Hashem; always be prepared to be *moser nefesh* – be ready to give yourself and to sacrifice for Hashem in order to sanctify His Name!" (*Avodas Avoda Sichos Kodesh* I p. 87)

"There are no problems in life, only challenges." ~ R' Moshe Menora zt"l.

Segulas Against Fear

וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד *'And Yaakov was very afraid.'* (32:8).





The *Segulos Yisrael* cites the *Chida* in *Avodas HaKodesh*: *Kaf Achas Siman Yud*, that whoever has fears should recite the pasuk *Tehillim* 20:10, **ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְיוֹם־קָרְאֵנוּ**, (***O L-rd, save [us]; may the King answer us on the day we call.***) three times and then recite *Tehillim* Chapter 53 nine times.

When he reaches the sixth pasuk where it says שָׁם פָּחֲדוּ פָחַד, he should strike the verse twice in the *Tehillim*, say *Tehillim* 41:4 - **ה' יִסְעָדֶנּוּ עַל־עֶרֶשׂ דְּוָי כָּל־מִשְׁכָּבוֹ הָפַכְתָּ בְחָלְיוֹ**, (*The L-rd will support him on his sickbed; when You have transformed his entire restfulness in his illness.*) Read the entire *Vi'hi Noam* backward and forward and say *Refo'einu Hashem venerofei, hoshi'einu venivoshei'a ki sehiloseinu Atah.*

Yisrael LeSeguloso also has the following *segulos* against fear: *Likkutei Moharan* says that *tzedoka* helps against fear. One should also be meticulous regarding reciting *berochos* over food, drinks and fragrances and to study Torah during a meal at the table. He also writes that the attribute of humility is a *segula* against fear, as well as the memory of Avrohom Ovinu.

Another *segula* is to depict and imagine the Divine Name *Elokim* as well as candlelight.

The *Zer Zohov* on *Eitz Chaim* writes that a *segula* against fear is to carry bread and garlic in your left hand.

Wrestling with the Sar Shel Eisav – Rabbi Daniel Glatstein

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***.' 32:25



Rav Yosef Nechemia Kornitzer zt"l [1880-1933 Rav of Krakow 1925-1933] asks, "What happened to Yaakov Avinu?..... NOTHING. When the pasuk says that he passed Penuel, it doesn't mention that Yaakov was limping until later. **וַיִּזְרַח־לוֹ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָבַר אֶת־פְּנוּאֵל וְהוּא צֹלֵעַ עַל־יְרֵכוֹ** – '***And the sun rose for him when he passed Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh***.'

Rav Yosef asks, Yaakov is wrestling all night, nothing happens to him. Then the sun shines, and then all of a sudden he is limping? - What's going on here?

He answers that Eisav comes with two weapons :-

1. He tries to attack us and kill us physically. -This is something that we are always able to stand up to. We will always be able to resist and overcome this type of attack.

2. Eisav has the strategy of friendship. He says, "Let's be one, let's unite. He shows us fraternity. He shows us acceptance. – That is a much more dangerous strategy, that causes much suffering against the Jewish People.

Persecution we will always overcome, but assimilation is the dagger that will destroy us.

Yaakov Avinu wrestles the whole night, and what happens to Yaakov – NOTHING. But as soon as the sun shines, and Eisav smiles at us, וְהוּא צֹלֵעַ עַל־יְרֵכוֹ – that's going to cause us to limp.

In Europe, they killed 6 million Yidden HYD. However, assimilation in America alone accounts for more Jewish souls lost than in the Holocaust.

An Unbelievable Miracle – Rabbi Shlomo Landau

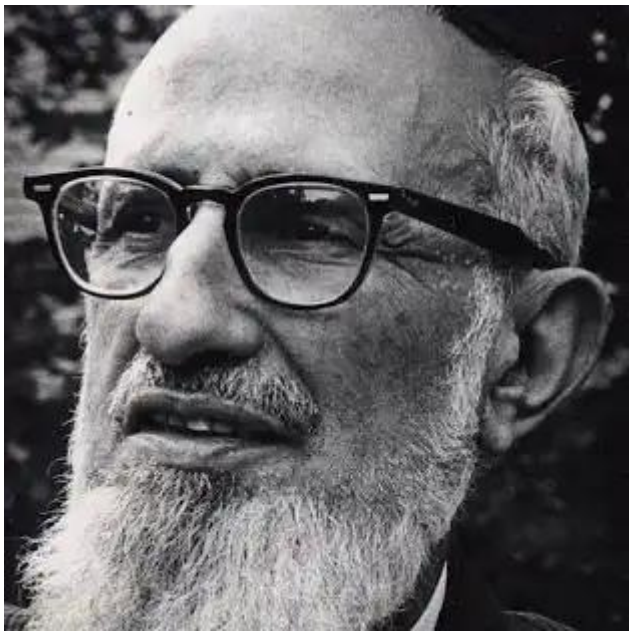


On Oct 7th, Dvir Fisher aged 23 was in Asia when he heard what had transpired in Eretz Yisrael. He travelled for 6 days to get back home to re-join his brothers in the IDF. He was sent to Gaza, where he experienced brutul fighting, and sadly, Dvir took a bullet to the neck.

The local medics stabilized him, and he was air-lifted to the hospital where he was sedated. Eventually, they determined that he was fine, and he didn't even require any surgery! Dvir himself demonstrates that the bullet entered the left side of his neck, went through his neck, and exited out through the right side without hitting anything vital. This is an incredible miracle baring in mind how many critical veins, blood vessels, tubes, spinal cord etc pass through the neck, and Dvir came out relatively unharmed.

What perhaps is even more remarkable is the fact that his armoured vest was completely ripped apart by the bullet – but he was relatively unscathed.

Rabbi Pesach Krohn - Project Mesorah – Bee Grateful



Many, many years ago when I was a teenager, my father took me to hear a shiur by **Reb Yosef Ber Soloveitchik**. I will never forget what he said. **וַתָּמָת דְּבֹרָה מֵינֶקֶת רִבְקָה וַתִּקָּבֵר מִתַּחַת לְבֵית־אֵל תַּחַת הָאַלּוֹן וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אַלּוֹן בָּכוּת** – '***And Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Beth el, beneath the plain; so he named it Allon Bachuth***.' (15:8)

The very next pasuk says - **וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶל־יַעֲקֹב עוֹד בְּבֹאוֹ מִפַּדַּן אֲרָם וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתוֹ** – '*And Hashem appeared again to Yaakov when he came from Padan aram, and He blessed him*.'

What's the connection between these two pesukim? What happened that Hashem saw fit to bless Yaakov again?

Yaakov Avinu had hakaros hatov. He gave he a hesped, he cried over her death. He knew that this woman called Devorah, was the one who had helped make Rivka who she was. As a matter of fact, the name Devorah translates as 'bee'. A worker bee flies over certain flowers, disregarding the ones without nectar, but settles on the ones with nectar and withdraws the goodness from the selected ones. Similarly, she was able to draw out from that house of reshaim (Lavan & Besuel) the nectar (Rifka) and nurture her and make her so special. – She was like the bee **מֵינֶקֶת רִבְקָה** ,that sustained Rifka.

When Devorah got older, Yaakov said, "we're leaving Lavan, come with us, and we will take care of you." And when she died, he gave her a hesped, hence the name of the place **אַלּוֹן בָּכוּת** – 'the plain of crying'. This is the lesson of hakaros hatov.

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From our Sages

וַיָּרָץ עֵשָׂו לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיְחַבְּקֵהוּ וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צַוָּארָיו וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ – 'Esau ran toward him and embraced him, and he fell on his neck and kissed him.' (33:4)

In the Torah, the word וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ ("and he kissed him") is dotted on top, implying that this was an exception to the rule. Said Rabbi Yannai: This is to tell us that he did not intend to kiss him, but to bite him. But Jacob's throat turned to marble and broke the evil one's teeth. ~ (**Midrash Rabbah**)

A chassid of **Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch** (1860–1920) opened a plant for the manufacture of galoshes. Soon his every waking hour and thought was completely occupied in his new and flourishing business.

Said the rebbe to him: "I've seen people put their feet into galoshes, but a head in galoshes . . . ?"

שִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחֵי דִינָה – 'Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers.' (34:25)

Was she then the sister of these two only, and not the sister of all Jacob's sons? But she is called by their name because they risked their lives for her sake. ~ (**Mechilta**)

"A man should always be careful to treat his wife with honour and respect for it is only for the wife's sake that a man's house is blessed." ~ Shulchan Aruch Harav, 32.



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

● **How could Ya'akov use angels to run an errand to Eisav?**

וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל־עֵשָׂו אָחִיו אַרְצָה שֵׂעִיר שְׂדֵה אֱדוֹם (32,4) "***And Ya'akov sent angels before him to Eisav his brother, to the land of Seir, the field of Edom.***"

The phrase "before him" seems superfluous, but it could be that the meaning is the following:

We have written many times that a messenger must always be subordinate to those who he is serving - both to the sender and to the one being sent to. This idea is also brought in the Midrash later on in the parsha concerning the posuk "let me go, for the dawn is breaking". If so, since the angels were certainly superior to Eisav, how could Ya'akov send them as messengers to him?

The answer is that if the message had been for Eisav's benefit then certainly the messengers were required to have been inferior to Eisav, since they are being sent for his sake and thus they would be serving him. But Ya'akov was in fact sending the message for his own benefit, and so since Ya'akov was greater than the angels - Chazal teach that tzaddikim are greater than the ministering angels - it was fitting that they should serve him.

This is what the posuk means: "And Ya'akov sent angels". And why was he able to send angels? Because they were being sent "before him", for his benefit. Therefore, even though they were being sent "to Eisav, his brother", nevertheless he sent angels, because it was fitting for Ya'akov to be served by them.

● **Why did Ya'akov not send greetings to Eisav until now?**

וַיְצַו אֹתָם֮ לֵאמֹר֒ כֹּ֣ה תֹאמְר֗וּן לַאדֹנִ֙י לְעֵשָׂ֔ו כֹּ֚ה אָמַ֣ר עַבְדְּךָ֔ יַעֲקֹ֖ב עִם־לָבָ֣ן גַּ֑רְתִּי וָאֵחַ֖ר עַד־עָֽתָּה. וַיְהִי־לִ֤י שׁוֹר֙ וַחֲמֹ֣ור צֹ֔אן וְעֶ֥בֶד וְשִׁפְחָ֖ה וָאֶשְׁלְחָ֣ה לְהַגִּ֑יד לַאדֹנִ֖י לִמְצֹא־חֵ֥ן בְּעֵינֶֽיךָ׃ (32:5,6) "***And he commanded them, saying: Thus you shall say to my lord, to Eisav – Thus said your servant Ya'akov: With Lavan I have sojourned and I delayed until now. And I have acquired oxen and donkeys, flocks and manservants and maidservants; and I am sending to tell to my lord, to find favor in your eyes.***"

Another way to explain these posukim is that Ya'akov was worried that Eisav might ask why Ya'akov had not sent friendly words of greeting until now. But the answer is that when good things happen to a person then it is normal for him to tell his friends and relatives, and to write to those who are far away. But if he is suffering he will not write to them, because why should he cause them distress?

This was his message to Eisav: Do not wonder why I did not send you words of greeting before, because until now "with Lavan I have sojourned", and I was not in a position of power and importance – on the contrary, I was a stranger and very lowly, and I suffered greatly at the hands of Lavan. Therefore, "I delayed until now" and did not write to you to distress you with my suffering. But now "I have acquired oxen and donkeys" – I have become wealthy, and Hashem has begun to help me, and so I am immediately "sending to tell my lord" my good tidings, "to find favor in your eyes".

"When you feel that you don't have a reason to smile - smile - and Hashem will give you a reason to smile." ~ Rabbi Daniel Levi.

The key to time management is to see the value of every moment ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

● **Who drew near to whom?**

וְהוּא עָבַר לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים עַד־גִּשְׁתּוֹ עַד־אָחִיו (33,3) "***And he passed in front of them and prostrated himself to the ground seven times until he drew near to his brother***."

The posuk says that "he drew near to his brother", but it cannot mean that Ya'akov drew near to Eisav because the next posuk says "and Eisav ran towards him and embraced him", which implies that Eisav was the one who drew near to Ya'akov, not the other way round.

Therefore it seems to me that it is referring to Eisav who until now hated Ya'akov and distanced himself from him, but the prostrations of Ya'akov and his subservience towards him changed Eisav's disposition towards Ya'akov from one of hatred to one of love, and compelled Eisav to draw near to Ya'akov and bring him close.

This is what the posuk is saying: Ya'akov "prostrated himself to the ground seven times" to Eisav "until he drew near to his brother" - until Eisav drew near to his brother and "ran towards him and embraced him".

● **Since Eisav apparently asked about both the women and the children, why did Ya'akov reply only about the children?**

וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַנָּשִׁים וְאֶת־הַיְלָדִים וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אֵלֶּה לָךְ וַיֹּאמֶר הַיְלָדִּים אֲשֶׁר־חָנַן אֱלֹקִים אֶת־עַבְדֶּךָ (33,5) "***And he (Eisav) raised his eyes and saw the women and the children, and he said; Who are these to you? And he (Ya'akov) said: The children that G-d has graced your servant with***."

Behold, it says that Eisav "saw the women and the children" and so when he asked "Who are these to you" he was asking about both the women and the children. So why did Ya'akov answer him only about the children, but did not respond to Eisav's query about the women?

But it seems to me that Eisav was saying to Ya'akov that it is not the way of a righteous person to have many women, because having a large carnal appetite is a disgraceful character trait for a person such as Ya'akov. This way of living is more suited to someone like Eisav who pursued carnal pleasures, but for Ya'akov it was more fitting that he should have only one wife and no more.

But in truth Ya'akov's intention was not for his personal pleasure, but only to be fruitful and multiply and establish the twelve tribes, because it is taught in the Midrash that the twelve tribes had to come from these four women specifically.

This is what the posuk is saying: Eisav asked "Who are these to you?", to a person like you - for a person such as yourself it is not fitting to have many women! In response Ya'akov said "the children that G-d has graced your servant with" are what compelled me to have many women, so that I could father all these children which can only come from these four women.

● **Why did Ya'akov name the place after the structures that he built for his animals?**

וְיַעֲקֹב֙ נָסַ֣ע סֻכֹּ֔תָה וַיִּבֶן לֹ֖ו בָּ֑יִת וּלְמִקְנֵ֗הוּ עָשָׂ֛ה סֻכֹּ֥ת עַל־כֵּ֖ן קָרָ֣א שֵׁם־הַמָּקֹ֑ום סֻכֹּֽות (33,17) "***And Ya'akov travelled to Succos, and he built for himself a house and for his livestock he made shelters (succos). Therefore he called the name of the place Succos***."

Since Ya'akov built for himself a house and shelters for his livestock, why did he name the place specifically after the structures which he built for his livestock and not after the structure which he built for himself?

It seems to me that this is a proof to the teaching of the Midrash in parshas Chukas on the posuk "to die there, we and our livestock" (Bamidbar 20:4), that tzaddikim care more about their animals than

their own bodies. That is, they take great care that their animals should not suffer in any way.

This is what we see here. Until now Ya'akov had been on the move and had not arrived at a settlement, and so had not been able to build any permanent structures, but now that they had come to a place where they could settle for a while he built a house for himself and shelters for his livestock. But "he called the name of the place Succos" because the comfort of his livestock was more important to him than his own personal comfort.



◣ Future Protection - Apter Rav

וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל־עֵשָׂו אָחִיו - "***Yaakov sent messengers [angels] ahead of him to Eisav his brother***…" (32:4)

Yaakov Avinu constantly strove to minimize the future troubles that would befall his descendants. Dispatching the angels with gifts to his brother Eisav has indeed helped the Jews throughout the generations. - Whenever oppressors come to harm the Jews, those very same angels that Yaakov sent to Eisav reawaken and work to appease the evil ones.

Thus, Yaakov sent angels ahead of him into the future, on a mission to protect and alleviate the plight for all future generations of Jews.

◣ Distressed By Fear - Reb Avraham Chaim Of Zlotchov

וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֶר לוֹ - "***Yaakov was greatly frightened, and he was distressed…***" (32:8) - Yaakov was afraid of Eisav. His distress, however, was due not to his fear of his brother, but to the thought that he should have dared fear anyone else but G-d.

For this reason, he prayed: "Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav, for I fear him. If I can still find it in my heart to be afraid of Eisav, I know that I must still be far from perfect, and therefore I must pray to You to deliver me."

◣ So Many Options - Yismach Moshe

וַיִּקַּח מִן־הַבָּא בְיָדוֹ מִנְחָה לְעֵשָׂו אָחִיו - "***And he [Yaakov] took of that which came to his hand a tribute for Eisav, his brother.***" (32:14)

Yaakov did not know what to select or give because everything had a spark of the Divine in it. Therefore, he took whatever was at hand with the assumption that it would be proper.

◣ The War For Torah - Chofetz Chaim

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר - "***Yaakov was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.***" (32:25)

Avraham Avinu represented the middah of chessed - kindness. Yitzchak represented avodah -service, and Yaakov represented Torah. The Angel of Eisav could abide chessed and avodah, but he could not tolerate Torah study for it is the foundation upon which the existence of Bnei Yisrael rests. - Thus, from all the Avos, he fought with Yaakov, for he - and the yetzer hara as well - constantly declare war against the Torah and those who study it.

◣ Keep Getting Up - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים - "*He prostrated himself to the earth seven times*..." (33:3)

The Midrash Rabbah teaches: Why did Yaakov Avinu bow seven times? - On account of the verse, "A tzaddik falls seven times and gets back up."

This midrash is teaching us that even if a person falls time after time, to the point where he "bowed to Eisav" seven times, he still has the power to get up, strengthen himself and restart as if his falls never were.

◣ Wholesome Tradition - Bnei Yissaschar

וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם - "*Yaakov came in peace (lit. whole) to the city of Shechem*..." (33:18)

The Hebrew letters in the word shalem, used here for "in peace" (lit., "whole"), form the initials of the Hebrew words Shem (name), Lashon (language) and Malbush (dress).

This is to teach us that despite his long association with Lavan and his friendship - in the end - with Eisav, Yaakov remained "whole," clinging to his traditional Hebrew name, language, and dress. - A Jews "wholeness" or "integrity" is measured by the extent to which they refuse to part with these three identifying Jewish characteristics.

"You never know how Hashem will turn your situation around. One season David was a shepherd, and the next he was a king. Your time is coming." ~ Meaningful Minute.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

Rabbi Yissochor Frand Shlita, recently related the following story during one of his *Shmuzzen*.

"I would like to share an incident I heard involving **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l**. It has been a long time since the passing of a Rabbinic personage that had made such a great impression on Klal Yisrael as that of the passing of the late spiritual head of the Mir Yeshiva in Yerusholayim (Nov 2011). The number of *Hespedim* that were offered in Yeshivas and Jewish Communities all over the world for Rav Nosson Tzvi was unprecedented. That is because he was a person who had an incredible impact on *Klal Yisroel*. The reaction to the loss that people felt, and still feel, of his *pertirah* was mind-boggling.

One of his Talmidim gave a hesped for him in a certain yeshiva. In relating the incredible acts of kindness that Rav Nosson Tzvi engaged in, he told over the following story:

'There was a student of the Mir – a man who was already married and had a family – who passed away at a relatively young age, leaving over a widow and orphans. He invited them to treat him (Rav Nosson Tzvi) like they would treat a father. This was a family that lived in America, but Rav Nosson Tzvi told the boys that they should write to him – not only their Torah thoughts, but they should correspond with him and keep him abreast of all their personal affairs and activities. When the boys got older, they came to *Eretz Yisroel* and Rav Nosson Tzvi found each one an appropriate Yeshiva. Over the years, he developed a strong relationship with these orphans and tried to act as long-distance father to them.

This is what this former student of the Mir told over in his eulogy for the Mir Rosh Yeshiva. After he spoke, a young man from the audience came over to him and told him him "The story you related is correct. I can verify the facts. However, that is not the entire

story. The rest of the story is that the man who passed away had four sons and he also had a daughter – a little girl at the time of her father's demise. She was the youngest member of the family. She felt left out. She was not going to write a *shtickle Torah* to Rav Nosson Tzvi. What can a young little girl discuss with a great Rosh Yeshiva? She felt neglected.



Rav Nosson Tzvi heard about this, and he sent her a letter. But he did not merely send her a generic letter. He had someone draw a heart and, in the heart, he wrote her a note.

The person told the person who was eulogising the Mir Rosh Yeshiva: "How do I know this story? It is because that little girl is now my wife." - This heart shaped message from Rav Nosson Tzvi gave that young girl such inspiration and such a positive feeling that it rejuvenated her spirit.'

- Good Shabbos

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l taught that before putting on tefillin, we must first embrace Ahavas Yisrael, as loving others is the path to loving Hashem.

Rebbe Itzekel of Pshevorsk zt'l, while wrapping the tefillin straps seven times, would reflect on the Mishna ***הוי דן את כל האדם לקב זכות*** ***reminding us that unity and love for others bind us to Hashem.***

Fittingly, the gematria of this Mishna equals ***שמע ישראל ה' אלוקינו ה' אחד*** ***highlighting the link between loving others and recognizing Hashem's oneness.***

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Red Traffic Lights



We know that the colour red represents Din. We see this with Esav, who was red. In fact, he was a **שופך דמים**, a murderer, another aspect of Din. What is the name of his nation? **אדום**, which means red.

R' Moshe Shapiro pointed out that throughout the world the colour red means "stop" and red is *midas ha'din*, which expresses brakes and limits. This explains why signs that tell us to stop are red, including the red light on a traffic light and the stop sign.

A comical story is told of the **Satmar Rebbe** who was traveling in a car when the red traffic lights were something new. Upon his driver stopping at the red light, the Satmar Rebbe inquired why he did so since he wasn't aware of such a thing. After the driver explained it to him, the Satmar Rebbe said this explains **ויאמר אליו אדום לא תעבר בי פן בחרב אצא לקראתך** - when it is a red light, don't pass because it may be precarious. [Bamidbar 20:18.]

R' Shlomke Zvhiller once approached a sinful Jew and said, "I am jealous of you because each time you stumbled spiritually, you thought to yourself, 'Maybe I shouldn't do this.' You may have ultimately succumbed, but those times that you delayed in stumbling registered in Heaven!

The Weekly Vort

Nothing Is Forgotten In Heaven

R' Meir Simcha, the Ohr Somayach, was unable to attend the funeral of **R' Yitzchak Elchanan Spector, the Kovner Rav**, but he asked some students who had been there to tell him everything about it. When the students recounted in detail what the *maspidim* had said, R' Meir Simcha declared, "I am sure that the famous maggid R' Shlomo Zugger* did not speak." The students were surprised – R' Shlomo indeed did not speak even though he was about to speak.

The Ohr Somayach smiled, "I knew that Hashem would arrange that he not eulogize R' Yitzchak Elchanan. I'm just curious to know how it came about."

The students related that due to the crush of the huge crowd inside the shul, all would go outside so everyone could hear the *hesped* of the famous maggid R' Shlomo. A makeshift platform was assembled by piling one table upon another for the maggid to climb on. He would then be in full view of everyone, and his powerful voice would be heard by all. The maggid climbed onto the improvised platform and people began pressing in close to hear better. Before he could utter a sound, the crush of the crowd caused the platform to totter. The tables came crashing down and the maggid went tumbling down into the crowd. He was bruised and hurt in the fall, both physically and emotionally, and was in no condition to deliver a *hesped*.

The students turned to the Ohr Somayach, waiting to hear how he knew that R' Shlomo had not spoken. - He explained: "**Hashem does not forget anything**. More than twenty years ago this same maggid was involved in a *din Torah*. The Rav who issued the *psak* was none other than R' Yitzchak Elchanan. He had ruled against the maggid who was incensed. He related the events of the *din Torah* to me, and

then in a fury added, 'When he [R' Yitzchak Elchanan] passes away, I won't eulogize him.'

As you see, he didn't, because **man may forget what he utters, but Hashem does not**." (The Maggid Speaks)

וַיָּקָם בַּלַּיְלָה הוּא וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שְׁתֵּי נָשָׁיו וְאֶת־שְׁתֵּי שִׁפְחֹתָיו וְאֶת־אַחַד עָשָׂר יְלָדָיו וַיַּעֲבֹר אֵת מַעֲבַר יַבֹּק – '*He got up in the middle of that night and took his two wives, his two handmaids, and his eleven children, and he crossed the ford of the Yabbok.*' (32:23).

Rashi cites a Midrash that asks: "Where was Yakov's daughter Dina?" - The Midrash answers that Yakov had placed Dina in a chest and locked her in, lest Eisav cast his eyes upon her.

The Vilna Gaon asks how the Midrash knows that Dina was the missing child – there were eleven others who could have been the missing one?

The Vilna Gaon answers by quoting Chazal: "The Bais Hamikdash was built in the territory of Shevet Binyamin because Binyamin did not bow to Eisav. He was not yet born when Yakov met Eisav upon his return from Lavan." - From this we can derive that all the other eleven sons bowed to Eisav. Had the missing twelfth child been one of the sons, the Bais Hamikdash would then have been built in his territory as well. - Therefore, Dina must have been the absent child. (A Gut Vort)

"Bitachon is the awareness and trust that Hashem knows what is truly best for you. While challenges may seem difficult in the moment, they often reveal themselves as blessings in hindsight. Understanding that everything hashem does is for your ultimate benefit is at the heart of bitachon." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

וַיַּצֵּב יַעֲקֹב מַצֵּבָה עַל־קִבְרָתָהּ הִוא מַצֶּבֶת קִבְרַת־רָחֵל עַד־הַיּוֹם - *"Yaakov set up a monument…"* (35:20)



In this week's Parsha we are told that Yaakov set up a monument over the grave of our mother Rachel so that future generations of Klal Yisroel would know where to come and pour out their hearts in prayer. Indeed, we are taught that it is for this reason that Rachel was buried on the roadside – so that on the way to exile, her children would be able to beseech her to pray on their behalf.

In Kol Dodi, **Rav Dovid Feinstien zt"l** shares an amazing insight: The Gematria of **קול** - *voice*, representing the voice of prayer, is 136. While the Gematria of **מצבה** - *monument*, is 137, which is one more than the word **קול**, the *voice* of prayer. This additional "one" Rav Dovid explains, alludes to Rachel, who adds her voice to those who pray at her monument, asking Hashem to answer their prayers!

"A person who trusts in Hashem walks in the world with joy and tranquillity." ~ Midrash Tanchuma.

How to Beat the Evil Inclination

In this week's Parsha **וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר** (32:25) we are told that Jews are forbidden to eat the *Gid HaNashe* (Sciatic Nerve). - Why?

I heard from **Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita**, that the **Chizkuni** writes that this is so because Yaakov's children left him alone. They should have accompanied and sought to protect their father. They are blamed for the injury that Yaakov incurred. They should have accompanied and sought to protect their father.

They are blamed for the injury that Yaakov incurred on his way back. When we leave people alone, we leave them vulnerable and susceptible to harm and danger. Everyone needs companionship and care. Everyone needs to be looked after and cared for. We should all try to think about ways we can be there for others and make sure that no one feels lonely or helpless.

In addition, the **Maayana Shel Torah** points out an incredible idea. He says that it was only because Yaakov was alone that the *Sar shel Eisav* (Evil Inclination of Eisav), was able to attack him. When a person is in the company of others and surrounded by positive influences, the Yetzer Hara cannot easily grab hold of him. However, when a person is alone, despair can more easily set in, and the person can become easy prey for the Yetzer Hara to destroy him.

There are so many people who are lonely and need someone in their life. So many people need that warm smile or hug. They are waiting for someone to care. They are waiting for someone to think about them. You can be that one to make a difference! Be there for them. Be the one to help someone who feels lonely or helpless. Make them feel great. You can give that person a chiyus! You can change their life!

I would like to share with you a story that I saw in sefer Lilmod Ulelamed: One night, the **Chazon Ish** was on his way home returning

from a late wedding. As he was on his way, he saw a young boy walking apprehensively in the street. The boy looked frightened and nervous. Right away, the Chazon Ish realized that the reason the young boy was nervous was because he was afraid to walk home by himself so late at night. Right away, the Chazon Ish walked over to the boy and accompanied him all the way to his home – even though it was quite a distance away from his own home. The Chazon Ish made sure that the boy felt comfortable.

Even though he was the Gadol Hador (Greatest Rabbi of the generation), the Chazon Ish didn't feel that it was beneath his dignity to help this boy! By the Chazon Ish, every single moment of his was precious but he still took the time to help the boy and escorted him home.

This story demonstrates the great importance of helping others. Let's all strive to always be in a good and positive setting together with caring people as a surefire way to keep the Yetzer Hara far away! Let's all help and care for others. Let's all think of ways to be there for others and make sure that no one feels lonely or helpless.

There was once a man who came to Rav Avraham Pam zt"l and told him that sadly, his father was sick in the hospital, and he was all alone. He was very lonely and every day for him was a constant struggle. The man wanted to know if Rav Pam could perhaps visit his father. Rav Pam lovingly replied, "It will be my pleasure to go but I'm a Kohen and I can't visit hospitals. "However, which hospital is he in and what's his room number?" The man told him the name of the hospital and room number wondering why Rav Pam wanted to know if he couldn't go anyway.

The very next day, Rav Pam asked the man to arrange that at precisely 2 pm his father should be at the window of his room so that he could look outside. The man was a little confused but didn't ask any questions. Later that day, the sick man was wheeled to the

window, and he was shocked. Down, many stories below, he saw Rav Pam waving to him, smiling from ear to ear. The man felt so great that his condition took a turn for the better!

Rav Pam had every excuse not to visit the sick man. Instead, he made every effort to make sure that the man wouldn't feel lonely. What a story! It's so important to be there for each other and make sure no one feels alone. We have to think of ways to make others feel loved and cared for. We must be there for others and let them know that we care about them. We've got this!

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

In The Shadow of An Askan

This Shabbos marks the Yahrzeit of ***Mr Leizer Dovid Brunner z"l*** *with whom I had the privilege to work closely for some of the time that he was engaged in his tremendous work of Chesed and Askonos. The following is an article I penned in time for his Shloshim in 2013.*

I begin with reflections from my younger years.

I wonder how many of you have experienced being <u>inside</u> a large Shul on a night of Chanukah when it was full to capacity with Baalei Batim and boys, who had come to participate in the Hadlokas Haneros before Maariv.

We were privileged to experience this each year at the Machzikei Hadass Shul in Manchester for over 40 years. Before these hundreds of youngsters went home, they were given a gift by Mr Brunner. This annual practice may have started in the 1970's as a stock clearance exercise, but continued well after the sale of Mr Brunner's toy business. Each year he would distribute hundreds of yoyo's, rubic cubes, or other small toys. Furthermore, in the years that I was responsible for locking the Shul, I would notice that all the cartons, packing etc was tidied away by the Brunner family.

As children, we lived around the corner from the Brunners, and they would pass our house on their way to Shul. We could hear the thumping of their feet as they walked in step down the road, with the boys struggling to keep up with their father's brisk pace. My father o"h would remark "it's time for Shul, the Brunner army is marching". It seemed strange that we had time to get ready and go off to Shul and still arrive in time for davening. It was only many years later that we realised that Mr Brunner would leave his house early in order to have time to make short visits to people, on the way, to enquire about their welfare, a practise, he would continue in later years, with visiting the Beenstock Home before going to Shul.

In my younger years, I used to work for Mr Brunner in his toy warehouse. Many a time, Mr Brunner would leave at a moment's notice on hearing of someone not being well, or worse. The staff would always continue to work in the same manner, no matter what, with even the wages always being paid on time.

I remember Mr Brunner as one of the Gabbaim in Shul for many years (there were only 4 Shuls in Manchester in those days). My recollections are that he was fair and showed no favouritism, and that that was the reason he was re-elected again and again. He was later elected Parnes of the Kehilla, a position he held for most of the rest of his life. That transition seemed like the calm waters at sea after a very stormy night. We were young at the time, and did not understand inter-Kehilla politics etc, but we could all sense that a change had taken place.

These were some of the things that made me admire and respect Mr Brunner.

More recently I was privileged to join the Chevra Kadisha, as well as work for the Kehilla, where I got to witness, at close hand, this tremendous Askan at work, and my admiration and respect only intensified. Initially, I worked on the side, being available whenever called upon. But in time, he came to call on my assistance more and

more and I always felt that I had his trust. He also would answer his phone day or night, no matter what.

Many a time he would call me to meet him at a hospital or a home, and on arrival I would find that he had already been in attendance for some time, and many a time would be at the patient's side at 'Yezias Neshomo'. I became aware that Mr Brunner was visiting the sick so often that being present at this crucial time became a common occurrence. In fact, I recall when my mother o"h had been hospitalised for a week, he had come to visit her and apologised for not coming earlier, but he been to the hospital 40 times this past week to keep an eye on a patient upstairs who had no family or other visitors. When we went upstairs to that patient, the nurses related to us that the "Rabbi" was constantly coming in.

I saw how he would, patiently, wait around after a pertiroh, until a doctor's note was issued and other formalities were sorted. Invariably the medical staff would not give priority to completing the necessary paperwork. On one occasion the ward doctor was making himself scarce and eventually, after Mr Brunner 'making himself known to the staff' the doctor handed over the death certificate in a closed envelope. Mr Brunner immediately tore open the envelope. The Doctor got very angry, but became embarrassed when Mr Brunner explained that many a time the Registrar rejects the doctor's note because the cause of death is not clear, whereupon the case has to be referred to the coroner, which would, inevitably, delay the Levayo.

A new note was issued by the Doctor and the Levayo proceeded on time. However, Mr Brunner ensured that the Doctor and all members of staff were all personally thanked for their cooperation, something he was always particular about.

One day, after attending a case from early morning, we arrived in shul at a late hour to Daven. Mr Brunner could understand that there could be others whose circumstances necessitated their late

attendance, but what he couldn't fathom was some people's casual attitude to Davening, and their failure to start their day in a meaningful manner.

It made no difference who the Choleh or Niftor was, he treated them all with the same dignity and respect, and concerned himself with every aspect necessary. For example, it is well known that when a Rov from the other Kehilla retired, it was Mr Brunner who, daily, would care for him, and even take him out for walks. From what I saw of him in action, he was particular about the feelings of Almonos, especially at these trying times.

There were times when he would express, in confidence, the difficult dilemmas he was facing, and after careful thought would come to a decision, which could not be publicly explained because it would cause further distress to the family concerned. Being privy to some of these instances, gave me insight to the tremendous burden he carried but also to his strength of character and sense of purpose with which he conducted himself. He may have received much verbal abuse for his stand, but always accepted the flak, and would go out of his way to show that he didn't take it personally.

At Kehilla meetings, there were occasions when the financial viability of a particular project being discussed was questionable, but the facility or employment was deemed necessary for the Toivas Haklal. Not only would he partly or wholly underwrite the sum involved, but would sometimes pay out from his own resources.

Caring for the elderly was always a major concern for him, so, naturally, when the idea of 'Beenstock Home' was first muted this became his pet project. He didn't shirk from the daunting task of having to raise over one million pounds, at a time when most people were not yet acquainted with the concept of a Heimisher care home for the elderly. He was ecstatic when he came home one day with the first major donation towards the Home which, firmly, changed the dream into a reality. Despite his advanced age, his constant

concern was for the welfare of each resident even to the extent of overseeing that each one had broken their fast on Moitze Yom Kippur before going home and eating himself.

One could see that Mr Brunner used some of his personal earlier experiences as a springboard for the dedication to his life of Chessed and Askonus. The world around him might have changed, but he remained steadfast to his Mesoiroh. His time in Nitra Yeshiva inspired him to insist on Kovod Beis Hamedrash, stopping many people from talking during Davening or leaving their personal belongings around in Shul. His period of isolation, whilst suffering from scarlet fever shortly before the second world war taught him how lonely a patient can become. This experience gave him the resolve to ensure others would not suffer the way he did. This was the impetus for his constant visits to the sick. Seeing how those who smoked, not only suffered themselves, but left grieving widows and orphans behind, made him speak up whenever he saw someone in possession of cigarettes. A story is told of a Meshulach, who on returning from a collecting trip around Europe, was feeling unwell, so went to see his doctor. After examining him, the doctor wanted to know how many cigarettes he smoked a day. The patient answered "None, I stopped about a month ago. On my travels I came across this man in Manchester who gave me such a Musser Drosho that I didn't dare put another cigarette in my mouth." The Doctor said to the patient, "He probably saved your life."

His Eishel Chayil o"h stood by his side throughout his long life. She waited patiently many nights for him to come home from yet another case, whilst also waiting on him for his requirements. She, no doubt, carries a tremendous 'weight' in the Zechus of Mr Brunner's many accomplishments.

Mr Brunner was certainly a family man, in every sense of the word. But as well as his commitments at home he always had time for others. Each day of his life was used to the full. In the **אלו דברים**

שאדם אוכל פרותיהם וכו׳ that we say each morning there is a list of meritorious acts for which one will be rewarded for both in this world and the next. We rarely find a person who has fulfilled the entire list with such dedication and sincerity.

יהי זכרו ברוך Good Shabbos



First Impression?

What are the first words one should teach their child to say?

The gemara says that the first words one should teach a child who is starting to speak are words of Torah - the Gemora says to teach him the words - **תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב**.

When Yaakov set up the flocks to his brother Eisav, he arranged that space should be placed **בין עדר ובין עדר** - between each flock. What was the purpose of these spaces?

Rashi explains that Yaakov did this that in order that it should *LOOK* as if there were a lot of animals. Why so? Rashi says in order to satiate the eyes of that rasha and trick him into thinking he is receiving such a large gift. The big question is that in a matter of time Eisav will see from up close what size the gift really was. If so, what purpose was there in fooling him when he sees the flock coming from afar?

מו״ר הג״ר שרגא גרוסברד זצוק״ל answers with this tremendous yesod. Rav Shraga writes that Yaakov knew the secret of "The first impression". Yaakov knew that the koach of the first impression is

so strong that even if Eisav would make a rational cheshbon later on as to the real size of the gift – the power of the feeling of the first impression will overpower even the reality that he will find out later. And that, explains Rav Shraga, is why Chazal forbade a Dayan to listen to the claims of one litigant not in the presence of the other litigant. The reason is because Chazal understood that once the Dayan hears the complaint and thinks of a way to help the fellow, it is extremely difficult to uproot that first impression. Even if realistically the other part may be correct.

We learn from this how important it is to make sure the first impressions we have, and that our children have, are as clean as possible. "You only have one chance to make a first impression!"

That is why when a child turns three years old, we have him lick the honey off the letters of the Aleph Beis. We want his first impression with the heiligeh oisiyos of the Torah to be sweet. We want that impression to "stick" with him for the rest of his life!

Moireinu Vrabainu Rav Kalmen said that his rebbe for Aleph beis was Rav Wolfsen **זצוק"ל**. Rav Kalmen said that Rav Wolfsen would not just call it an aleph, he called it a 'heiligeh aleph'. Thus, ingraining in the boys at that tender age that the letters of the Torah are Heilig!



R' Moshe Sternbuch *shlita* (Taam Vodaas) would say:

עִם לָבָן 32:5 **עִם־לָבָן גַּרְתִּי גַּרְתִּי וְתַרְיַ"ג מִצְוֹת שָׁמַרְתִּי וְלֹא לָמַדְתִּי מִמַּעֲשָׂיו הָרָעִים** - Rashi

What does **Rashi's** explanation have to do with Yaakov's plan to appease Esav? Why should Yaakov keeping *mitzvos* by Lavan be a reason for Esav not to hate him?

What Yaakov meant is that what matters to me in life are *mitzvos*. Whatever wealth I have is important to me only because it enables me to do *mitzvos*, nothing more. - I have no interest in amassing fortunes or living a life of luxuries. Therefore, you have no reason to be jealous of me."



The Boundaries of Miracles by Michael Winner

Well… what an exciting week. We started the week with a country called Syria and Hezbollah preparing to reinforce and redeploy. Now, we no longer have a country called Syria and Hezbollah has had its legs cut out from underneath it.

I couldn't help but think about something I read a year ago about Rav Moshe Sternbuch, head of the Eida HaChareidis in Yerushaliyim. Before the attack on Simchas Torah, Rav Sternbuch would speak about the dangerous times that we are living in and his fear for the new year. He would say these things, even at times of simcha, clearly worried and feeling that something is happening.

Shortly after the attack, somebody came to him for a bracha, because he was getting married in a few months' time. Rav Sternbuch replied that there could be a revolution by then. When asked what he meant by that cryptic response, he said, "A revolution could be a good thing or not a good thing, or first one and then the other." - Well, we just had a revolution. And the world is treating it as a good thing, which means, we should be wary about "or first one and then the other."

"Esav ran to meet him and embraced him. He flung himself on his neck, and kissed him, and they wept" (Bereishis 33: 4).

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 78: 9) writes that when Eisav "flung himself" on Yaakov's neck, he went to bite him, but Hashem turned Yaakov's neck as hard as stone, breaking Eisav's teeth. And why does the pasuk say "and **they** wept"? - To teach us that Eisav cried in pain from biting down on this hardened neck, and Yaakov cried in pain from having his neck turning hard as rock.

On this, Rav Shimshon Pincus asks, "If Hashem made a miracle to turn Yaakov's neck into stone, why couldn't He simply have ALSO spared Yaakov that pain?" After all, if you're making a miracle already, why not simply add on a little and make it better for Yaakov?

He answers that from this Midrash we see that while miracles go beyond nature, Hashem still limits them, so only that which needs to be changed, is changed; that that which does not, does not.

Perhaps we can also learn from this a little extra point. Many times, especially over this past year, we have seen miracle after miracle. Yet, those miracles also came with pain and suffering. It's not a matter of "every miracle comes with a price," but as Rav Pincus says, each miracle we experience is limited to "do its job" and no more. Being, "anything more," which could have also been done via a miracle and wasn't, is there for a reason. On top of that, if "anything more" is not done, there is more room for people to ignore the miracle part and chalk it up to a simple "fluke of nature."

It's important to see that we are surrounded by miracles, especially in times like this. At the same time, the miracles are constrained in a way, that 1) we can miss them if we're not looking, and 2) because we also need the "non-miracles" in our lives. - May we continue to be able to witness and recognize these miracles instead of crediting governments and individuals for these "natural occurrences."

Have a wonderful and relaxing Shabbos!

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky ZT"L (1891-1986) was known for his encyclopaedic knowledge of Torah. He was also known for his extraordinary honesty and integrity.

Once, when asked a complex question in Halacha (Jewish law), he responded that he needed to review the relevant Halachic sources before answering the question. The questioner was surprised and said, "But Rabbi, you have been teaching these laws for over 50 years! Surely you know the answer, a review of the sources is not necessary."

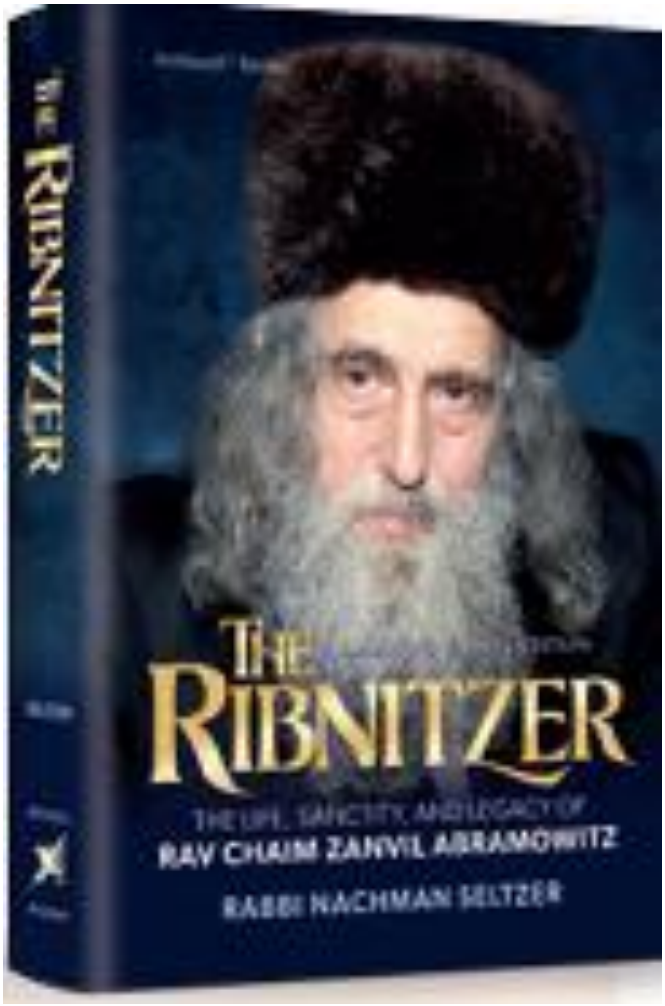
Rav Yaakov replied, "Yes, but as the Rav of the town, I am being paid to give an answer. Therefore, I must review the sources again to ensure I am giving you the most accurate response possible. Otherwise, I would be taking payment in my position as Rav without providing my congregation with the full value they deserve."

Even though the questioner was right about Rav Yaakov knowing the answer to the question without a review of the sources, since Rav Yaakov was getting paid, he felt he needed to do the very best he could to answer the question, which included a double-check of the sources even though he knew he was right. Anything less, Rav Yaakov felt, would be short-changing the ones who paid his salary.

"The yetzer hara will try to take everything from you, but don't let him take your smile." ~ Rabbi Moshe Pinto.

"Turn to Hashem for all your needs. He is always available, and He is always listening." ~ Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810).

The Crazy Man by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer



While the Rebbe spent his younger years learning for many hours every day, as the years passed, he stepped into the role that had been set aside for him by Hashem — acting more and more as the spiritual guide and leader of the Yidden around him.

In addition to everything else that he did for his fellow Yidden, the Ribnitzer made the rounds of various towns and villages for the express purpose of performing shechitah, ritual slaughtering of animals and fowl, and providing local Jews with kosher meat.

In addition to everything else that he did for his fellow Yidden, the Ribnitzer made the rounds of various towns and villages for the express purpose of performing shechitah, ritual slaughtering of animals and fowl, and providing local Jews with kosher meat.

One petitioner found out that the Rebbe had a feather-removing business. He asked a few questions and learned that the Rebbe defeathered the chickens that he slaughtered for the ridiculously minimal charge of ten kopeks. The man was taken aback and asked the Rebbe why he didn't raise his price. Doing a time-consuming job such as defeathering a chicken for ten kopeks was basically doing it for free. "You don't understand," the Rebbe explained. "The only reason the Yidden even bring me the chickens to shecht in the first place is because they know that I will take care of the feathers. That's the reason I offer the service in the first place — so that

they will bring me the chickens to shecht, and I will be able to ensure that they eat kosher chicken."

Shechitah was expressly forbidden in the Soviet Union, and in the years after the war and for decades to come, the KGB did their best to catch any The Rebbe managed to slaughter animals for years without being caught, but there came a day when the KGB caught him red-handed. The soldiers who arrested him joyfully pointed out what lay ahead for the Rebbe who paid them no heed.

As they traveled down the road toward the local jail, the Rebbe caught sight of a river, and, turning to his captors, he made a request. "Could we stop for a few minutes?"

The soldiers were utterly taken aback to see that their prisoner had the nerve to talk to them, let alone make requests. "Why do you want to stop?"

"I see a river and I would like to immerse in it." The soldiers couldn't get over the Jew's request. In truth, it was hard to comprehend anyone sticking their toe into the frigid waters, let alone his entire body. Just thinking about the idea of their prisoner doing such an outlandish thing sent the soldiers into spasms of laughter. "You know what?" they said, when their laughter had subsided. "If you want to go swimming in the river, we won't stand in your way."

So, saying, they stopped the car and let him out on the riverbank. They watched as the Rebbe made his way down the bank and over to the river, which was completely frozen over, with no visible point of entry. Every breath that the soldiers took froze in the air as soon as it was out of their mouths. Yet to their amazement, the Zhid wasn't fazed. The Rebbe began pounding away at the ice with a branch that he found, trying to crack a hole big enough for him to slide into, while the soldiers watched, openmouthed. None of them had ever seen anything like this before, and they knew they would

never forget the incredible sight of a Jew hacking away at the ice so that he could take a dip in the river.

Suddenly, one soldier turned to the other and said, "This man is no cattle slaughterer. He's out of his mind!" Turning to the Rebbe, who was making inroads with the ice, they yelled, "Crazy man!"

They promptly returned to their vehicle and drove away, leaving the Rebbe in peace to immerse in the icy river to his heart's content. Then he left the river behind and returned to the town where he had been before his arrest, picked up his knife, and continued with his holy work. Yidden needed kosher meat, and there was no time to waste.

Facing Your Foes

There is a perplexing Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 132:2) recorded in the middle of this week's Parsha – **ויאבק איש עמו יש אומרים מיכאל היה** '*And a man wrestled with Yaakov. There are those who say it was Michael.*'

Although many understandably identify the angelic warrior as Esav's archangel (Bereishis Rabba 77:3), why would Michael - our nation's peaceful archangel (Daniel 10:21 and Yoma 77a) - battle Yaakov?

The Chizkuni (Bereishis 32:25) beautifully explains that Yaakov Avinu did not want to face his physically ferocious and spiritually dangerous brother Esav and was attempting to run away from him. Therefore, our archangel Michael wrestled with Yaakov and dislocated his thigh, thereby hindering Yaakov's ability to travel and ensuring he directly encountered his brother.

Once Yaakov was forced to face his fears, he was able to witness the Almighty's intimate protection from the dangers of Esav.

Although it may be very difficult to invest our full trust in our Creator when facing painful uncertainty, we must endeavour to

harness the inner strength and courage to move beyond our comfort zone. - When we focus our energy and devotion to accomplishing our Divinely assigned mission, there is no limit to our capabilities



Moshe and Miriam Adler lived in the town of Vac, about ten miles north of Budapest. Moshe was the village shoemaker, Miriam tailored beautiful dresses, and they worked together to make a heartwarming goodbye party for any member of the community who was moving away. However, their longstanding custom was put to the test when one of the local butchers - Yitzchak Adler - chose to leave the city rather than follow the new rules of the Rabbonim requiring a mashgiach to oversee the kashrus standards.

When Miriam heard the news of Yitzchak Adler's imminent departure, she resolved to create a party for him as well, though Moshe didn't share the same warmth. "Absolutely not. He caused his own failure. If Yitzchak Adler had his way, there would be no consistent standard of kashrus." Miriam pleaded, "But he's not a bad person. He's still the same butcher we used for 20 years, and if we don't have a party then he'll be disgraced."

They decided to ask the community Rav - Rabbi Zigfried - what to do. He supported Miriam's decision to have a respectful farewell and even spoke at the event himself. "Yitzchak Adler fears the Almighty, comes from 3 generations of butchers, is a fine butcher himself, and set the standard for piety in Vac. Our entire city owes him our deepest and most sincere thanks."

That melted the ice as the community came together with their former butcher to share warm memories with one another until sending him off respectfully to Ellis Island in 1938.

In the coming years, the Jewish communities in Hungary came under heavy pressure from WWII. Moshe and Miriam decided it was time to try emigrating to America and sent letters to every Adler in the

New York City phonebook which they received from a neighbor. Miriam encouraged her doubting husband, "One of them has to be related to us, or at least sympathetic to a namesake. I'm sure someone will help."

The letters to America were their only hope out of Europe, but only two letters returned with sympathy along with $7.00 in total. Later in February 1944, a relatively larger package arrived. Moshe ripped open the box only to discover a music box... hiding money, certificates of passage for the family, and a letter:

"I pray you find the secret of the box before it's too late as this was the safest method. I've enclosed everything you need to leave for New York. There, I will try to do for you all that you did for me. Your friend and butcher - Yitzchak Adler."

Project Mesorah – Rabbi Avrohom Krohn



As I'm sure all of you are aware, my father Rabbi Paysach Krohn suffered a stroke this week. Boruch Hashem he is recuperating and receiving good care. Please continue to daven for Paysach Yosef ben Hinda - **בתוך שאר חולי ישראל.**

The pasuk says **אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר יֻלַּד־לוֹ בְּפַדַּן אֲרָם** – ***'These are Yaacov's sons who were born to him in Padan Aram.'*** (35:26)

The meforshim ask that not all his children were born in Padan Aram – Binyomin wasn't, he was actually born in Eretz Yisrael?

The Chizkuni (one of the Rishonim on the Torah) says that it's true that Binyamin was not actually born in Padan Aram, but he was born

with the power of the tefillah that his mother Rochel davened. [When Yosef was born, she davened - **וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר יֹסֵף ה' לִי בֵּן אַחֵר** - "***May Hashem grant me yet another son***!" (30:24)

And since the baby (Binyamin was born with the strength of the tefillah that took place in Padan Aram, it's considered as though he was born in Padan Aram!

This teaches us the power of tefillah! We should always take advantage of this power.





Our Great Enemy

No Porterhouse Steaks For The Jews

In our *parsha* we are told of an ancient tradition of the Am Yisroel: **על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את גיד הנשה** - "Therefore the children of Yisroel don't eat the sinew in the leg of the animal" (32:33). You know, there's a sinew in the thigh, it runs down from the thigh into the leg, and our nation from the earliest times doesn't eat it.

In Europe, in small towns where meat was very expensive and nothing was put to waste, the Jews ate the hindquarters. They had what they called a *treiberer*, a person who was an expert in excising the

forbidden parts. Only that today it doesn't pay for us; there's a big gentile meat industry, a big market where we can sell it to the public, so every kosher slaughterhouse sells the hindquarters to the gentiles. Kosher porterhouse steaks you won't find. That's only for gentiles. These round steaks, the porterhouse steaks, they go to the gentile market. And that's because it costs a lot of money to hire a person who will be a *minakeir*, and *treiber*, so we just sell the hindquarters – we Jews have to be satisfied with just the front part; the part that's less expensive to prepare it for eating.

The Big Man With Hands Of Steel



Now all this comes from a source, from an ancient incident, the wondrous encounter of Yaakov and the angel. When Yaakov Avinu set out with his family from the house of Lavan to return to Eretz Yisroel, so we're told in the Torah that he crossed the River Yabok. And then he remembered that he had left behind certain things, so he went back to retrieve them. Standing alone on the other side – it was already night – he saw a big man approaching him in the darkness. And in the darkness that stranger attacked him and began to grapple with him. **ויאבק איש עמו**, and Yaakov was left alone wrestling with this stranger.

Now this man took hold of Yaakov with hands of steel and he was wrenching his muscles apart. Yaakov himself was no weakling. If you recall, he was the one who was able to roll off the stone from the well that needed all the shepherds together to move it. You

remember that story? It was told to us so that we should know something about Yaakov's muscles. Rashi says that: **להודיעך שכחו גדול** – "To let us know how strong he was."

When Yaakov was grappling with that stranger he was able to uphold his end of the battle. But Yaakov was amazed that this man could endure so much. And the man not only endured – Yaakov was having a terrible time, he was hurting. And it didn't last for only half an hour. Hour after hour passed; and it went on all night long! **עד עלות השחר**. A terribly long and tortuous night. Even standing on your feet all night long is something. But standing with an opponent, and you're in anguish for your life? There are no words to describe the agony.

Waterboarding Does The Trick

Now we know that a man can take punishment only up to a certain limit; once that limit is breached, he yields. It's a principle; the human body can suffer, but only up to a point. It doesn't mean that you can't give your life for an ideal. People do give their lives for an ideal and they can even take torture. But if the torture is unlimited then it's extremely improbable that a man will persevere.

There were even great men who said, "If they would torture me slowly for a long time, I wouldn't be able to withstand the ordeal." We know that Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah allowed themselves to be thrown into a burning fire in order not to worship an idol! But the *gemara* (Kesubos 33b) tells us that they were able to do that because it was a *momentary* sacrifice. To jump into the fire and have it over with, yes. But had they been whipped *without let-up*; constant whipping, one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, it's torturous and they would have yielded because there's a limit!

The Luxury of Death

Now, what Yaakov went through that night was much worse than that. He wasn't just being whipped, he was being torn apart. Now Yaakov could have said, "I give up." Of course, it would have been

more luxurious to just lean back and get killed. And the man would have strangled him and Yaakov would have had the peace of death. And the torture would be over with. In cases of excruciating torture, death is a pleasure. Victims sometimes give money, they offer money for a speedy death. To them it's a gift if they would be able to die.

But Yaakov didn't falter for a moment. And make no mistake about it, it was *gehenim*. But he struggled and struggled and then struggled even more. And the *malach* couldn't do a thing to him. He couldn't dislocate Yaakov's arm. He couldn't even give Yaakov a stiff neck. The *malach* surely had great powers, and yet he couldn't do a thing. Because Yaakov strengthened himself and when the *malach* grabbed hold of him to twist his neck he found that it wouldn't twist. He tried but it was a very hard neck. He just couldn't do anything to him. He wrestled all night and the *malach* couldn't do a thing. And then in the morning the *malach* gave up. The *malach* said "It's enough; let me go, I give up," and Yaakov emerged as the champion.

But the Torah makes a point of letting us know that before Yaakov emerged victorious there was one small bump in the road to victory. The *malach* found a weak spot. The *malach* was feeling him, grasping him, trying to locate that weak spot, and there he gave a wrench. Once he found that spot, he took hold of Yaakov with his steel claws and he gave a strong wrench, and when Yaakov walked away from that encounter in the morning he was limping; a sinew was wrenched loose. **על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את גיד הנשה**, that's why from then on the Jewish people wouldn't eat the *gid hanashe*. That's what the Torah tells us.

So he gave a wrench, who cares?! He gave him a wrench in his thigh?! Why mention that? And not only that, but to make it such an important event that our forefathers began immediately to commemorate it by not eating the *gid hanasheh*. What's the big

tumult already? Was it such a significant event when he wrenched his thigh loose that we have to commemorate it by not eating it?

Rav Miller's Wrestling Skills

I'll tell you another question. Really the whole story is one big puzzle. Did you ever wrestle? I did. When I was a boy I used to wrestle; I wrestled a lot and I considered myself a good wrestler. I wrestled in a lot of matches. But how long did a match last already? Either I got on top of him and with a half-Nelson; I spread-eagled him so he couldn't move, or he got on top of me with a hook and it was all over. But it would never last all night. So what was going on over here?

And the answer is that this wrestling match between Yaakov and the malach was no ordinary struggle. You know why it is that when I wrestled it never lasted too long? Because although we were always matched up to our opponents, at the end of the day it was a random event. Sometimes my friend was stronger than me, more agile. And sometimes I had the better move and was able to put him down. Whatever it was, it was random.

He Could Have Made Mince Meat Out of Yaakov

But this story of Yaakov and the angel was something different altogether. This was no random opponent. It was a *malach* sent by Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Now you know that anyone who starts up with an angel won't last too long. You'd have a better chance walking through Bed-Stuy at three in the morning with wads of cash in your hand! What human being is able to wrestle with an angel? You could be Yaakov Avinu, you could be Shimshon Hagibor, it won't help. A *malach* could squash you in no time. He could have made "mince meat" out of Yaakov in a few seconds!

And yet in this case, the bout lasted all night. Of course, the *malach* had the power to crush him immediately, but Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave him instructions, "Always push him to his limit. Ramp up the pressure, struggle with him and push him to his breaking point.

But *never* test him beyond his abilities." So Yaakov was never tested with more than he could endure – that was an order to the *malach* from "on high."

Hashem Is The *Malach's* Coach

So we understand that this was an especial event, it was an ordeal, it was a test of being pushed to the limit. This was no ordinary wrestling match. It was a match that was being manipulated by Hakodosh Boruch Hu at every moment. Every move that Yaakov made, so Hashem commanded the *malach* to respond, to maintain the equilibrium. And upon the command of Hashem the *malach* would go on the attack, bitter attacks that Yaakov had to fend off with all of his strength. And this measured tit for tat, this see-saw of a wrestling match went on all night. It was brutal. And for Yaakov it was excruciating, because he was fighting a being that knew all of his weaknesses and all of his strengths, a being that could supernaturally push Yaakov to the extremes of his endurance without making it impossible.

The *malach* was squeezing every muscle he could in Yaakov's body. And it hurt; I cannot even describe to you how much it hurt. It was torture! But when Yaakov felt the *malach's* fingers closing around his arm, he summoned his willpower and he tightened those muscles to resist the pressure. Yaakov was subject to a great ordeal that required him to summon all of his strength, all of his power.

And so instead of yielding to the desire for respite from pain, instead of giving up – no he didn't. Because Yaakov's battle with the *malach* was the personification of the battle that every Jew would fight against the *yetzer harah* all his life, Yaakov knew that there was no giving up. And so he fought back all night. And whenever he felt those claws ripping him and beginning to close in on his muscles, so Yaakov strengthened himself. He made himself tense to resist. And all night he was able to withstand the pressure of the *malach*.

It Was A Costly Fight

And so that wrenched sinew was a demonstration of a little bit of weakness in the battle. And it's such an important lesson that the Bnei Yisroel always commemorated that, not to eat the sinew **על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את גיד הנשה** – therefore his children never ate it. They ate everything else from the animal, because everything else resisted. But not the *gid hanashe*. Because it's a sign of weakness, of letting up. And that one place of weakness they refused to eat so that we would remember in all the generations that we can't afford to yield. We can't afford to be weak.

It costs us a lot of money, by the way, because it raises the price of kosher meat, it's more expensive because of that. But it's worth it to remind us that it doesn't pay for us to relax even a little bit in the battle. To relax and falter is *even more "expensive."*

Now just before the day came, Yaakov was already at his end and he no longer had an ounce of energy left. And despite all of his determination he would have dropped dead anyhow. Just at that moment the daylight began to come over the horizon and this being let go of him. Yaakov had passed the test, and he passed it gloriously. That's when he gained the name Yisroel, "the one who conquers."

Stand Strong

Now this whole incident was a prophecy. It was a *nevuah* that foretold the great struggle of every Jew against the *yetzer harah* that would use any means against him. And it would seem to you impossible to hold out any longer. And this prophecy tells us that you should never yield. Because just when things will seem the worst, that's when the day will break.

Because that's the purpose of every Jew in this world, to fight valiantly against the *yetzer harah* attacking from all sides. And the victory of Yaakov that night symbolizes the potential that each one of us has to stand strong against the *yetzer harah* till the end of

time. **מעשה אבות סימן לבנים** – What Yaakov did that night, is what we're doing in this world until we take our last breath, until the light of the World to Come breaks and the sun of *Olam Habah* rises!

Rabbi Bean!



And you should also learn this from a bean! You're hearing a *chiddush* now, that a *bean* can be your rebbi. In *Mesichta Beitzah* (25b) it tells us that there is a certain bean, the turmos, that teaches us a lesson. It says there that the turmos bean is bitter, it's inedible. So what do they do to prepare it? They boil it in water, and then they spill out the water because now the water is bitter. And then they boil it again. And again. Seven times they change the water to get rid of the bitterness. After seven times being boiled, the bitter *turmos* becomes a delicacy. And it's used for desert. So you see that no matter how bitter it was at the beginning, if you don't give up, if you keep on trying it becomes something that's delicious.

So one day, Hakodosh Boruch Hu will say to you, "Why didn't you change your ways?" So you'll tell Him, "Oh Ribono Shel Olam, don't punish me; I tried." And He'll say, "Oh no! You didn't try *enough*! Did you try as much as the turmos bean tried?" Once, and again and again and again. And it seems like it'll never become sweet! And then at the end, at the seventh time it becomes **קינוח סעודה**, a delicacy. And so, don't give up. You have no right to give up. And you'll be held accountable and punished by this humble bean that could have been "your teacher" but you refused to learn from it.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar



Open 24/7

One Thursday night, Shimshon Panet* and Yirmi Green* traveled from their homes in Ashdod to the Kosel. Returning home after two a.m., they passed a local shul and noticed that the light was still on.

"Let me see what's going on there," Shimshon told Yirmi. "If someone's learning in there, great. But if not, I'll walk in and turn off the light. The Torah teaches us to be watchful and considerate of Klal Yisrael's money.

Peering through the large window, they saw that the beis medrash was empty save for two people-a yeshivah ketanah boy who was shteiging and putting in a late night of learning as he prepared for his upcoming entrance exams to yeshivah gedolah, and a man named Moshe, with whom Shimshon was acquainted from the neighborhood. To his surprise, he saw that Moshe was crying.

Asking his friend to wait several minutes, Shimshon entered the shul, approached the weeping man and placed a hand on his shoulder.

Reb Moshe," he said in a soothing voice, "why are you crying?"

"Moshe glanced up at him with surprised eyes. "I'm crying about the galus," he replied with a sniffle.

To Shimshon, Reb Moshe did not give the impression that he was mourning the Shechinah. With a warm pat on the shoulder, he invited Reb Moshe to join him on a brief walk outside.

Reb Moshe acceded, and Shimshon immediately knew that he was right. If the man had really been mourning the galus, he wouldn't have agreed to interrupt this sacred hour and join him outside.

Sharing his thoughts delicately with the man, Shimshon again asked Reb Moshe if he wished to share his troubles.

Moshe's shoulders drooped even lower than they'd been before and he wiped a tear from his eye. "I returned home from kollel tonight, and my wife burst into tears. She told me that the kids had gone to bed hungry and dirty because we have nothing in the fridge, and not even soap or shampoo in the bathroom!

"She's never spoken like that before, but her voice dripped disgust when she said, 'You can't even bring home a bottle of shampoo?' And with that. she spun around and locked herself in the bedroom. I could hear her crying through the door, and I begged her to open up, but she refused.

"The atmosphere was so dark and muddy that I couldn't stay at home. So I came here and cried to Hashem to save me. I don't want to leave kollel. I don't want to stop learning. But we can't go on like this anymore. I begged Hashem to save me, to save our family. And I can't go home to my wife without a bottle of shampoo!"

"No problem. I can give you shampoo from my house," Shimshon replied. Moshe's eyes gleamed gratefully, and Shimshon told him to wait while he sprinted home to get the promised shampoo bottle. As he exited the shul, he felt a worm of regret niggle at him. Why did I say something so stupid? What will a half bottle, or even a whole bottle, help? It certainly won't solve Moshe's financial problems, let alone his shalom bayis issues!

He'd nearly forgotten that Yirmi was still waiting for him outside, but as soon as he laid eyes on him, he thought of a better solution.

"Yirmi, do you have any money on you? Cash, credit, something you could spare?"

"I have a few hundred," Yirmi replied.

"Good. I do, too. Are you in a rush to get home?"

Yirmi glanced at his watch and shrugged. It was close to two thirty, but no one was waiting up for him. Shimshon quickly briefed Yirmi on his conversation with Shapiro, and his friend's eyes clouded over in pity.

"I was thinking that we should look around for a twenty-four-hour store and stock up on some basic provisions for the family," Shimshon said. To his delight, Yirmi happily agreed.

They drove quickly through the familiar city streets but couldn't find a store open at that hour. Just as they were on the verge of admitting defeat, Yirmi spied a minimarket with a colorful flashing neon sign proclaiming, "Open 24/7."

Twenty-four seven. Not twenty-four six. Yirmi eagerly pushed ahead, but Shimshon's heart sank. The store was open on Shabbos. Never in his life had he patronized any store or establishment that was open on Shabbos, but on the other hand, how could he disappoint Reb Moshe, who was counting on him?

Shimshon pointed out the problem, and Yirmi grimaced. He also did his utmost to avoid shopping in stores that were open on Shabbos, but what other option did they have now?

Reluctantly, they took a cart and chose a variety of household staples, adding in several treats for the children. When the cart was nearly full, they paid for their purchases and quickly packed them again before returning to the car.

Catching sight of the orange shopping bags, Shimshon's stomach did a somersault. In bold black letters, the bag proclaimed that the store was open on Shabbos.

Embarrassed to give Reb Moshe food and staples that came from a store that so obviously desecrated Shabbos, Shimshon suggested that they place all the provisions in the car and throw out the bags. "How will we give him the stuff?" Yirmi asked, confused.

"I don't know. We'll work it out somehow," Shimshon replied, although he himself had no idea.

As they loaded the groceries into the car and dumped the bags, a man approached them from behind and asked them what we were doing.

Innocently, they replied that since the bags had the words "Open on Shabbos" printed on them, they were concerned that it would be a chilhul Hashem if it became known that Chareidi people were patronizing this store.

"So why are you patronizing us?" the man asked.

Realizing that they were speaking to the owner of the 24/7 shop, Shimshon and Yirmi blanched, but replied truthfully. " "It was our only option."

They quickly explained what had motivated them to go searching for a twenty-four-hour supermarket at that hour.

Instead of the different reactions they imagined-which ranged from fury to sarcasm to antagonism-they were astounded when the man began shedding copious tears.

"Is everything all right?" Yirmi asked, wondering what could have possibly affected the man so deeply.

"Everything is fine, but I'll explain," he began. "You see, I'm not a religious man, but an organization paired me with a chavruta here in Ashdod. We've been learning together once a week for several years. He taught me to put on tefillin, and now I do this every day, and I try to keep Shabbat when I can. I don't come to work on Shabbat, but my workers do. It's a learning process, but I do what I can.

"Recently, my chavruta moved to a different part of the country, and now I've been without a chavruta for over six months. I haven't even been giving charity during that time, because I always gave my

ma'aser to my chavruta. I know I'm in a spiritual slump now. So I asked G-d, talking to Him like He's my Father, to please help me.

'G-d, if You really want to help me,' I said, 'then please send me a sign.'

"A week passed, and nothing happened, nothing changed. I prayed again and said, 'G-d, if You really love me and want me, then please send me a sign!' And now, the two of you just showed up like angels! Since we're open on Shabbat, most religious folks don't come here, but all of the sudden, here you are at three in the morning!"

His story was certainly surprising, but what he did next was simply astounding. "Please find out this man's bank account number. I would like to give him my ma'aser. Also, would you be willing to be my chauruta?"

Shimshon acquiesced immediately. That very week, when they sat down together to learn, they began with hilchos Shabbos, which Shimshon explained was particularly apt after their discussion on that Thursday night. Baruch Hashem, the learning penetrated, and within a short time, the owner resolved to close his store on Shabbos.

Today, whenever Shimshon and Yirmi drive past that minimarket, they smile when they see the flashing neon light proclaiming, "Open 24/6"! - (Rav Shlomo Levenstein)

"A simple act of kindness and charity is more precious to Hashem than offering all the sacrifices in the Holy Temple." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (1804-1886)

'The most important thing in life is to recognize the hand of Hashem in everything that happens to us.' ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller



This week's Parsha tells us that when Yaakov was about to remake his acquaintance with Eisav after being away for 20 years, he sent messengers ahead of him to survey the situation and determine how Eisav was feeling toward him.

When these messengers returned, they reported that Eisav still bore feelings of animosity toward Yaakov and was rapidly closing in on Yaakov's position with 400 soldiers at his side. The verse then goes on to say that Yaakov was terrified of the potential harm that Eisav could inflict on him and his family.

The Gemorah in Berachos (4) records its puzzlement at Yaakov's reaction. Hadn't Hashem promised Yaakov that He would make him into a great nation, and would always be there to protect him? Why then would Yaakov possess such fear that Eisav was approaching? Shouldn't he have trusted in Hashem's explicit promise? - The Gemorah answers that Yaakov was worried that perhaps he had sinned and lost his guarantee for protection.

The Ibn Ezra on the Parsha asks; if Yaakov had sinned, wouldn't he know about it or wouldn't it have been recorded in the Torah?

He explains that Yaakov was not worried that he had performed an obtuse coarse sin, but rather he was concerned that perhaps he had transgressed a minor infraction, for example he may have had one bad thought, even that may have only been accidental, and based on this, would lose his stature.

The Ibn Ezra explains that the greater a person is, the higher the standard is that he is held to. In Yaakov's case, where his very image is engraved under Hashem's Holy throne, there was no doubt that he

would be held to an extremely strict grading scale. Yaakov was therefore scared that he may not have been careful on some minutia, ergo he was worried that Eisav would be able to harm him.

We find later by Moshe Rabenu a proof to this. Moshe was commanded to circumcise his son but delayed slightly in order to arrange the lodgings for his family. This small mistake almost cost him his life. - The Midrash says that a snake came and swallowed him up all the way until his neck. When his wife Tziporah realized what was going on, she quickly took a knife and circumcised their son, at which point the snake spit Moshe out and he was spared. But we see from this incident, concludes the Ibn Ezra, how seriously great people are judged on such seemingly small matters.

The parsha continues by recording how when Yaakov hears from Hashem that his merits have not been diminished, he held up his staff and exclaimed, "Hashem – I am not worthy of all the kindness you have done for me". Rashi explains that Yaakov meant to say that he was worried that perhaps his merits had been used up and he would not be allowed to re-enter Israel.

We see from Yaakov's reaction, that not only must a righteous person be concerned that he will be punished for even a minor offense, but he must even be concerned that if his life is too good, perhaps this would diminish his merit as well, and his relationship with Hashem will be affected in a negative way.

We need to be constantly aware of our actions, even the most minute ones, in order to monitor them for any inappropriate behavior. Even the most trivial infraction might have a devastating effect on our total spiritual success.

May Hashem help us to successfully scrutinize all of our actions and to ensure that they are refined!



Succoth: What Kind Of A Name Is That For A Nice Jewish City?

The pasuk says, "Then Yaakov journeyed to Succoth and built himself a house and for his livestock he made huts; therefore he called the name of the place Succoth" [33:17]

There is something glaringly difficult about this pasuk. Yaakov calls the name of the city Succoth (huts) for all eternity because he made huts for his livestock there. This is not the way things work in the Torah. Names always have great significance. What is the significance of the name Succoth?

We have mentioned in previous years that the **Chida** writes (a similar idea is expressed by the **Ohr HaChaim haKodosh**) that up until this point in time no one cared about their animals. Animals were left outside in the cold, in the heat, in whatever the climate would bring. Yaakov Avinu was aware of the concept of animal pain (tzar baalei chayim) and did not want his animals to suffer. He was the first human being to create covered huts for his animals and he eternalized the city by the name "Succoth" to take note of that revolutionary action.

[Of course mankind has carried this idea ad absurdum and from the first person to build huts for his cattle we now have "Save the whales" and "Save the elephants" and save some little bug in Oregon! Such is the way of society.]

I would like to offer a different approach to the question of why Yaakov called the city Succoth. The question is strengthened by a comment of the Tur [Orach Chaim 417]: The Tur writes that each of the 3 Pilgrimage Festivals was enacted to correspond to one of

the 3 Patriarchs. Pessach corresponds with Avraham, who told Sara to knead dough and make Matzo [Bereishis 18:6] (the reason being that it was Pesach when the Angels arrived). Shavuos corresponds with Yitzchak, for the Shofar blown on Mt. Sinai represents the Shofar of the ram sacrificed in place of Yitzchak. Succoth corresponds with Yaakov, as it says, "He made Succoth for his livestock."

Here again, we are left to wonder: How can the huts Yaakov made for his cattle equate with the Matzo Avrohom made for his guests and the Shofar of the ram of Yitzchak in terms of religious symbolism and significance? The former two are seminal events in Jewish history. There is obviously something very profound in the expression "and for his livestock he made huts", but what is it?

Rav Simcha Zissel makes an observation based on a unique reading of the above-cited pasuk by the **Targum Yonasan ben Uziel**. The Targum does not translate the words "vayiven lo bayis" as commonly translated "And built himself a house". Rather, the Targum translates those words to mean "and he built himself a house of study (Beis Medrash)". Although Yaakov himself lived in a tent and his cattle lived in huts, he saw to it that a Yeshiva was constructed in the locale as the one and only permanent structure.

Why then was the city called "Succoth" instead of "Yeshiva"? The reason is that Yaakov wanted to convey an important point: Everything in this world is temporary. We are living in temporary dwellings, and our cattle are living in temporary dwellings. If everything is so temporary and in 18 months you will be leaving Succoth to the Land of Israel, why not just pitch a tent for your Yeshiva as well? The answer is that regardless of how temporary everything else in life is, there is one thing we need to establish firmly and make permanent – even if it is only for a year or two. What is that? It is the Yeshiva.

Yaakov Avinu wanted to convey that everything lacks permanence. They were living in tents, the animals were living in huts, and they were living out of suitcases, almost on the run. Yaakov wanted to record that idea for all of history and thereby named the place "Succoth" to memorialize the concept of the temporary dwelling.

Within all this transience however, one thing was lasting: Vayiven lo Bayis. He built a permanent House of Torah study. If there is going to be any kind of future existence to one's family and one's community, no matter how transient everything else is, a Yeshiva must be built as a permanent and distinguished institution. Only by first accomplishing this can one hope to eventually move on to Eretz Yisrael and have success raising his family in the ways of Hashem.

Rashi's Double Interpretation: A Mixed Message or Two Sides of the Same Coin?

At the beginning of Parshas Vayishlach, the *pasuk* records Yaakov's charge to his messengers: "Thus shall you say, to my lord, to Eisav, 'So said your servant Yaakov: I have sojourned with Lavan and have lingered until now…'" [Bereshis 32:5]. Yaakov is preparing for his fateful meeting with his brother, and he knows that Eisav harbors ill will towards him, so he sends *Malachim* to prepare Eisav for their upcoming encounter.

Rashi brings two interpretations of the phrase "*Im Lavan Garti*" (I have resided with Lavan). The first interpretation focuses on the relationship between the word *garti* and the word *ger*. Yaakov sends the message to his brother: "I have not become an officer or an important personage; I have remained a stranger. You have no reason to hate me for the fact that our father blessed me that I should be a lord over my brother, for this blessing never materialized." This is a message of submission. Eisav, you have nothing to be jealous about. I, your brother, have remained a nothing in life.

Then Rashi brings a second interpretation: *Garti* equals in *Gematria*, the value of Taryag (613), hinting at the fact that "I lived (*Garti*) with Lavan and I kept the 613 (*Taryag*) *mitzvos,* and did not learn from his wicked behavior." According to this interpretation, Yaakov is not being submissive. On the contrary, he maintains, "I remained a *Tzadik* for twenty years without succumbing to Lavan's bad influence in the slightest way."

The Kli Yakar asks that these are two contradictory messages: One claims "I am nothing, I am like a *ger*." The other claims "I am a *Tzadik*. I kept all 613 commandments!" It is rare that Rashi brings two interpretations that are diametrically opposed—that send out contradictory messages. Which is it?

The Kli Yakar has his own answer to this question, but I saw an interesting twist, a totally different take on things, from **Rav Leib Gurvicz**, the Rosh Yeshiva in Gateshead. His interpretation is that these are not mixed messages. In fact, they are the same message. When Yaakov says, "I kept the 613 commandments and did not learn from Lavan's evil ways" what he is telling Eisav is that "I kept the *mitzvos*, but they were very lacking because I did not learn from his evil ways." – While living with Lavan, I saw what passion is and what devotion and *mesiras nefesh* mean. The way Lavan went about his activities, there was no stopping him. He brought to his evil intentions such a dedication and enthusiasm, that my performance of*mitzvos* paled in comparison to Lavan's passion and *hislahavus*!

That is what Yaakov is telling Eisav: True, I kept the 613 mitzvos but I did not learn from Lavan's passion and enthusiasm in his approach to his evil ways, to apply that enthusiasm to my *mitzvos*. Thus, Rashi's two comments are not diametrically opposed messages. They are in fact the same message.

A Tale Of Two Philosophies

In this week's parsha we read about the reunion of Eisav and Yaakov after many years of separation. Eisav, responded to the generous gifts that Yaakov sent to him, by saying "I have much. My brother, keep what is yours." [Bereishis 33:9] Yaakov, on the other hand, answered Eisav, "Please take the gift I have given you, for G-d has been gracious with me and I have everything." [33:11]

The Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933) said that this short dialogue sums up the different approaches to the world of Eisav and Yaakov. A person who says "I have much" will be an unhappy person. There is so much out there in the world to acquire, and no one person will ever acquire it all. Our sages say "Every person passes from this world without achieving even half of his desires" [Medrash Rabbah Koheles]. Therefore, someone who is focused on what he does not have will never be happy.

The only person who will be happy in life is the one who says that "I have everything that there is to need." Physically, he realizes that he does not have everything in the world. But the key is knowing that he has all that he needs to have. If he believes he has all he needs to have, he truly has everything.

Guarding Against Esav the 'Biter' as well as Against Esav the 'Kisser'

This week's parsha teaches us how Yaakov has to deal with Esav in order to survive in Galus [exile].

We read the story of Yaakov, who, with great trepidation, was meeting Esav for the first time after all these years. Yaakov offers a prayer to G-d: **הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי, מִיַּד עֵשָׂו** - "Please save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav…" [Bereishis 32:12].

Yaakov's prayer contains an apparent redundancy — "the hand of my brother, the hand of Esav." Shouldn't Yaakov have said, "save me from the hand of my brother, Esav?" However, the pasuk seems to indicate a prayer to be saved from two different people — from his brother and from Esav.



Rav Shlomo Breur gives a very nice insight into this 'redundancy.' Rav Breur says that there are in fact two individuals about whom Yaakov is worried. Yaakov is worried about Esav — the rough sibling who is out to kill him. But Yaakov is also worried about being saved from the hand of his 'brother.'

Esav can have two faces. He can be the Esav who will kill you, have pogroms against you, try to throw you out of his country and have Inquisitions against you. We certainly have to be saved from this Esav.

However, there is another disguise that Esav uses, and that is the loving brother. This is not the Esav that kills you, it is the Esav that loves you. But the Esav that loves you is sometimes as dangerous as the Esav that will kill you. If we have lost hundreds and thousands and even millions of Jews to the Esav that kills us — we our losing hundreds of thousands of Jews to the Esav who loves us, the Esav that wants to marry us, marry our sons and daughters, and who offers us "salvation through love." This is Yaakov's prayer. Save me from Esav *and* save me from my brother.

The Pardes Yosef comments on a later pasuk [33:4], where the Torah says that Esav kissed Yaakov (וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ). The word וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ has dots on top it. Rashi explains that Esav really wanted to bite Yaakov,

but the Medrash says that Yaakov's neck turned to stone and Esav wasn't able to bite him, so instead Esav kissed him.

The Pardes Yosef quotes a Yalkut that Esav said, "I won't kill Yaakov with bows and arrows, but with my mouth and my teeth…" In other words, I will kiss him to death. That is to say, Esav tries two approaches. First he tries biting; but if biting doesn't work, then the other approach is kissing. A Jew can be literally kissed to death.

This is what Chaza"l are telling us — we need to be on guard against both the Esav who wants to shoot arrows and against the Esav who wants to stretch out his hand.

The Shifted Tzeire Shows Who Really Has G-d's Name Within Their Own

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer point out that only two nations have G-d's Name within their national identity: YisraEL and YishmaEL. Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer then expounds the pasuk from Bilaam's "Blessing" [Bamidbar 24:23] which literally means "Woe is the one, who will live in the name of G-d" as referring to the nation of Yishmael that acts as if they were messengers of G-d. He can do dastardly things, but he thinks that he has the sanction of the Almighty Himself.

The name Yishmael appears 48 times in all of Tanach. This time [Bereishis 36:3] is the last time that it appears in Chumash. The next two times (in Melachim and Yirmiyah) are actually referring to a different person, a Yishmael ben Nesanya. The only other time it is mentioned is in Divrei haYamim, when the genealogy of Avraham is given and it mentions that Avraham had a son named Yishmael.

Grammatically, the sound of a Hebrew letter (the 'os') actually comes from the vowels underneath it. The suffix El in the name YisraEL and YishmaEL gets its essence from the tzeire vowel (..) underneath the silent letter Aleph. However, throughout Tanach, the tzeire in

the name YishmaeEl is not under the Aleph. It is under the preceding letter Ayin.

Yishmael may have the letters of EL in his name, but it is not the essence of EL (with the proper vowels). It is only a remote allusion to G-d's Name, not the essence of His Name. YishmaEL claims to have G-d's Name within his national identity. He acts as if it is there, but it is not really there.

I heard from Rav Chaim Kahan that this could be alluded to by the pasuk [Yeshaya 8:10] "Let them plan (against us), it will become nullified; let them speak a matter (against us), it will not come to pass; for with us is G-d (ki imanu [k]El). We are the only nation that have G-d's name – [k]El – within our national identity.



The Jug May Be Only Half Full, But It Will Never Be Empty

After Yaakov crossed the river Yabok with his entire family, he re-crossed the river and returned to the other side by himself. There, he wrestled with "a man" until morning. Tosfos teaches that he went back for small jugs that he left behind (al tikra levado ela l'kado). What was in those jugs?

The Sefer Sifsei Kohen writes that in Parshas Vayeitzei, the Medrash Rabbah says that when Yaakov took "from the rocks of the place and placed them around his head," he took a small jug of oil and anointed those rocks with the oil from the jug. Miraculously, the Medrash says, the jug did not empty. It was still full of oil.

Yaakov recognized that this was a very special jug – it was a sign of great blessing. It was this little jug that accompanied him all the

years in Charan and it is this little jug that he returned for when he noticed that he left it behind when crossing the Yabok Brook.

It was this very jug which would in future years be used to anoint the keylim of the Mishkan and also the Kohen Gadol and the Kings. It was this very jug that Eliyahu instructed the woman to use to fill her pitchers when she had no food for her children [Melachim I Chapter 17]. Yaakov prophetically saw all the miracles and historic events that were to be associated with this jug and that is what prompted him to go back across the brook to retrieve it.

The author of Sefer Sifsei Kohen suggests that "without a doubt" it was this same miraculous jug which was found by the Chashmonaim in the Chanuka miracle, involving the one-day supply of oil which lasted for 8 days.

Sending A Delegate From the Previous Generation

This week's parsha records the death of Rivka's nursemaid, Devorah: "*Devorah, the wet nurse of Rebecca died and she was buried below Beth-El, below the Allon, and he named it, Allon-bachuth*" [Bereishis 35:8]. Rashi wonders what Rivka's nanny was doing in Yaakov's household, such that Yaakov should wind up burying her. The Medrash states that Devorah was 133 years old at the time of her death. Rashi states that Rivka had sent her old nursemaid to Yaakov in fulfillment of her promise to him that she would send word to him when it was time to come home from Padan Aram [Bereishis 27:45]. Devorah died on the journey back home after having carried out this mission.

Rashi's words are very difficult to comprehend. Why would Rivka choose this elderly woman to journey on this long trip to carry out such a mission? Could she not find a more appropriate messenger to send word to her son that it was time to come home?

Rav Dov Weinberger makes a beautiful comment on this Rashi. Yaakov was most reluctant to leave the house of Yitzchak and Rivka. Rikva insisted that he must leave. But Yaakov protested: "What will be with my spirituality? How can I leave this holy household and survive in the house of Lavan the crook?" Rivka promised "I will take you back and I will restore to you what you lost spiritually in the years you were away."

To accomplish such a mission, one cannot send a young kid. On such a mission, one must send a "great grandmother." To restore the idea of what the House of Yitzchak was like in Yaakov's mind, it was necessary to send someone from the older generation. The person who grew up in yesteryear presents an untarnished image. They come from the "old home." Unlike the "younger generation," they represent "the way it is supposed to be."

Many times we will meet a person, not from our generation and not even from the generation of our parents, but someone from two generations ago. It is sometimes worthwh ile just to observe how an old Jew acts. He witnessed what things were like "when times were spiritually correct."

Those old enough to remember Rav Ruderman saw a connection to the glory of what European Jewry was in its prime. He corresponded with the Ohr Sameach. He saw the Chofetz Chaim. He sat on Reb Chaim Soloveitchik's lap. He took walks with Reb Chaim Ozer. His reactions were Torah reactions. He knew instinctively what Yiddishkeit [Judaism] was all about.

When Rivka wanted to spiritually retrieve Yaakov from the house of Lavan, she had no choice but to send a delegate who represented the previous generation.

The Chofetz Chaim lived to be a very old man. He died when he was 93 years old. At the end of his life, he wanted to travel to Eretz Yisrael and spend the last days of his life in the Holy Land. He

wanted to study the laws of Kodshim and the Temple Sacrifice there. As a Kohen, he hoped he would merit to witness the coming of Moshiach and to pa rticipate in the Divine Service in the rebuilt Beis HaMikdash.

He felt that he was an old frail man and could not contribute much more to European Jewry and therefore wanted to "retire" to the Holy Land. He took counsel with Rav Chaim Ozer, the (much younger) leader of European Jewry at the time. Rav Chaim Ozer advised him not to leave Europe. He told him "Even if you cannot be in the Yeshiva any more and you cannot give Torah lectures any more and even if you cannot write any more because of your age — still, if you remain, people will be able to see what a Jew is supposed to look like."

This can be compared to children sitting at their parents' table. Many times they misbehave. But when their grandpa (Opa/Zeida/Saba) is sitting at the table, the behavior is different. When a member of the previous generation is there, a bit of awe and respect is present as well.

This was Rav Chaim Ozer's message to the Chofez Chaim, and this explains Rivka's choice of messenger to retrieve her son Yaakov back from Padan Aram.

Yaakov Sent Malachim — Literally

The parsha begins - "And Yaakov sent 'Malachim' ahead of him to Eisav his brother to the land of Seir, the field of Edom." [32:4].

The simple interpretation of the word 'Malachim' in this pasuk is messengers. In a well-known comment, however, Rashi states that 'Malachim' is to be taken literally to mean 'Angels'. Because of his righteousness, Yaakov was frequented by Angels, so rather than send just any old messengers, he sent the 'Angels' who were in his camp.

In his sefer Darash Moshe, **Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l**, asks a very interesting question: Why would Yaakov have used Angels for this mission when he could have accomplished the same thing with human beings? All things being equal, a person should shy away from using miracles – just as the Almighty, as it were, shies away from making miracles. Miracles are only brought forth under the most special of circumstances when miraculous events are necessary. There is a concept that when G-d performs a miracle for a person, "his merits are diminished". In other words, the fact that the Almighty had to change nature on his account, so to speak, will cost the person.

Therefore, it appears strange that Yaakov felt the need to employ literal 'Malachim' on this mission to deliver a message to his brother Eisav.

Rav Moshe explains that certain people have reached the epitome of completeness (tachlis ha'shleimus). Such people are constantly aware of the 'miracle' of nature. There are many things that happen constantly, and we take them for granted so we do not view them as miraculous. But a spiritually sensitive person is aware that there is such a thing as the nes of teva [miracle of nature].

Yaakov Avinu was on such a level. He realized that everything in nature was also miraculous. For Yaakov, sending two human beings to meet Eisav or sending two Angels to meet Eisav was the same thing. The missions would be equally miraculous. That which the Almighty is hesitant to make miracles on a daily basis and that about which He subtracts from a person's merits is for people who are amazed at miracles but are not amazed at nature. A person such as Yaakov, who viewed all of life as a miracle, would not have his merits diminished by invoking a "miracle miracle," which for him was no different than a "natural miracle".

Rabbi Frand - Doing Something is Better Than Nothing



Yaakov was afraid as his family prepared for their encounter with Eisav. The pesukim say that Bilhah and Zilpah came with their children first, then Leah and her children came and bowed down, and finally Yosef and Rochel came and bowed down. Rashi points out the following anomaly. Regarding the handmaidens, it says first the mothers and then the children came and bowed down; regarding Leah, it also says first Leah and then her children came and bowed down. However, by Rochel, it mentions that Yosef came first and then Rochel came and bowed down!

Rashi explains that Yosef purposely broke protocol and stepped in front of his mother for a specific reason. He argued "My mother is beautiful. Perhaps the wicked Eisav will put his eye on her with less than noble intentions. I will therefore stand in front of her to block his view of her." Rashi says that from this incident, Yosef merited having the blessing "***Aleh Ayin***" [of grace to the eye]. [49:22]

At this point, according to the Seder HaDoros, Yosef was either six years old or four years old. Even granted the fact that he was "Yosef haTzadik" and was no doubt extremely precocious and maybe smart enough to figure out the potential danger to his mother, he still was not nearly tall enough to "block Eisav's view". How could Yosef have expected to "block Eisav's view" of his mother by standing in front of her? At best, Yosef came up to his mother's hip, and more likely, he stood closer to her knees at this point in his life.

On top of that, for how long was Yosef going to be able to stand in front of his mother? A couple of minutes at most! Eisav would ask him to move aside, and he would still wind up looking at Rochel. So,

again, what is Yosef trying to accomplish here? His efforts seem to be a 'blessing in vain.'

If truth be told, Rashi in Parshas Vayechi [ibid.] brings a Medrash that in fact a miracle occurred where Yosef did succeed in blocking Eisav's vision of his mother. The **Midrash** says that when Hashem saw Yosef's dedication and concern for Rochel, he miraculously became tall enough to cover her, similar to the hand of Pharaoh's daughter that miraculously extended to reach Moshe's basket in the river (Rashi Shemos 2:5). However, still, was Yosef really expecting this miracle to occur when he stepped in front of his mother? What was he thinking? He could not have expected such a miraculous growth spurt exactly at that moment!

I heard a beautiful approach to this question from the **Tolner Rebbe [Reb Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg] of Yerushalayim, shlit"a.** He says that the key to understanding the matter lies in a single word and with this one-word Yosef is teaching us a golden rule in life. Rashi 33:7 writes **אמר אמי יפת תואר, שמא יתלה בה עיניו אותו רשע, אעמוד כנגדה ואעכבנו מלהסתכל בה, מכאן זכה יוסף לברכת (מט כב) עלי עין**:



that Yosef said "I will stand in front of her and I will prevent him (Ah'Ekven'u) from gazing upon her." Granted, my accomplishments may be minimal – it will be only for a minute or two, it may only be a partial blocking – but it is already worth it. "A half of a loaf is better than no loaf." Even for that small amount of accomplishment, it was worth making the effort.

Yosef HaTzadik is teaching us an approach in life – be a minimalist! Many try for perfection. We feel that anything short of perfection is not worth it. Yosef is saying "Not true. Accomplish whatever you

can accomplish, even if it does not solve the problem, even if it is not a foolproof plan." Doing something is better than doing nothing!

The Tolner Rebbe told over a story, which encapsulates this thought: His first two children were daughters, and his third child was a son. He wanted to name his son after his father-in-law, but the problem was that his father-in-law's name was Yaakov Yitzchak. Given that his own name was Yitzchak Menachem, he obviously could not name his son Yaakov Yitzchak. The natural thing to do in such a situation is only to name the son Yaakov. However, his father-in-law held (in his lifetime) that if you do not name a child entirely after a deceased person, you are not naming after the person at all!

The Tolner Rebbe was facing a dilemma here. So what did he do? He sent a shaliach [messenger] to the **Lev Simcha (the Gerer Rebbe)** to ask him this shaylah. The messenger came back with the following exact (Yiddish) quote from the Gerer Rebbe: *"Gornisht iz a Greserer Gornisht!"* In other words, your father-in-law might be correct that to name a child after him using half his name is "Gornisht" [like nothing]. However, not naming at all after your father-in-law is an even bigger "Gornisht!" [Certainly, like nothing]. Therefore – do what you can do and at least use the name Yaakov!

This in fact was the attitude of Yosef HaTzadik. You can only do what you can do, but you must do that even if it does not fully solve the problem or even come close to fully solving the problem. It is a minimalist approach, but the approach makes sense!

The Tzror HaMor cites a Midrash that says when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Yosef, he told her he refused to succumb to her enticements. She responded, *"You may be unwilling to do it today, but tomorrow you are going to do it."* He told her "You know what, you might be right." But nevertheless "He ran outside" because he was determined "At least I will save myself from sinning today!" "For one more day, I will remain a Tzadik. Even if tomorrow, I might succumb to her enticements, let me accomplish what I can today."

Sometimes, a person needs to take what he can – even if that falls short of what is ultimately the preferred accomplishment. Half a loaf is better than no loaf at all. As it turns out, Yosef fled, she slandered him, he was thrown into prison – and he never sinned.



We are soon approaching the holiday of Chanukah. With the approach outlined above, we can gain new insight into the Chanukah story.

The Maccabees came into the Courtyard of the Bais Hamikdash and found total chaos. It was defiled and desecrated. The situation was terrible. What did they find? They found a small jug of undefiled olive oil with the seal of the Kohen Gadol. There was only enough oil to burn a single night (and according to one textual reading of the Midrash, there was not even enough oil to burn for one night).

What does a person do in such a situation? The default reaction is to do nothing! What is the point of resuming the Bais Hamikdash ritual under such circumstances? Does it make sense to light the Menorah for one night and then leave it unlit for another week or so until they put things back into order and the Bais Hamikdash service properly resumed on a permanent basis? Conventional wisdom would be to "do it right" – get new olives, press the olives, manufacture more olive oil, etc., etc. What were they thinking?

The answer is that they knew the approach of Yosef HaTzadik. They were minimalists. One night of lighting the Menorah is also something. One night is not "nothing." "Nothing at all" is a bigger "nothing" than the "nothing of one night."

The lesson of life –take whatever we can, to do whatever we can and hope that the Ribono shel Olam will make up the difference.

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עם לבן גרתי - *With Lavan, I lived.* (32:5)

Rashi interprets the phrase, Im Lavan garti, "With Lavan, I lived," as a profound message to Eisav. The word garti has the same letters (hence, the same gematria, numerical value) as taryag, 613 (mitzvos). Yaakov intimated to Eisav, "*I do not fear your influence on me. I lived for years with the wicked Lavan; yet, I did not learn from his evil ways. I still was able to observe all taryag mitzvos*". Yaakov seems to be making two statements:

A) I observed the entire Torah

B) I did not learn from Lavan's evil ways.

Is this not obvious? If one observes the entire Torah, clearly he is not a student of Lavan. The disciples of Lavan do not observe the Torah, and those who adhere to the Torah are not influenced by Lavan!



Horav Zaidel Epstein, zl, derives from here that it is possible for one to be fully Torah observant, yet remain a talmid, student, of Lavan. The two are not necessarily inconsistent with one another. A Torah observant Jew cannot possibly be an adherent of Lavan's values and principles – or can he? The Mashgiach explains:

Lavan lived for olam hazeh, this world, with its materialistic and physical pleasures. He clung to them passionately. Yaakov Avinu could have been influenced by his behavior, to the extent that he could "placate" total mitzvah performance while achieving those worldly pleasures that were not distinctly incongruous with Torah dictate. We derive a powerful

lesson to incorporate into our lives: One should not assume that by studying Torah and observing mitzvos -- even studying diligently and observing every aspect of the mitzvos – he is home free. He must accompany his spiritual devotion with an abrogation of olam hazeh, dedicating himself to a life in which physical pleasure -- unless dedicated for a lofty, spiritual purpose -- is not his life's focus, nor is materialism his guiding light. Torah and mitzvos mean spirituality. Materialism and physicality are present to help, not to lead.

Tefilah, Gifts, And War



Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky *from Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l*

As Yaakov and his family begin their journey back from Lavan's home, Yaakov senses that his brother Eisav, would be coming for revenge. Yaakov prepared himself in three ways: tefilah, gifts, and war. ***He davens to Hashem, and says,*** ***קָטֹנְתִּי מִכֹּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל־הָאֱמֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־עַבְדֶּךָ – I have become small from all of the kindness that You have done for your servant.***" (Breishis 32:11) .

Rashi explains that Yaakov Avinu was worried that his merit had diminished from all of the kindness that Hashem did for him during

his years in the house of Lavan. Perhaps, Yaakov thought, his sins will prevent Hashem from protecting him from Eisav. He was nervous about his upcoming encounter with Eisav, and thus he prayed for Hashem's salvation. This is truly puzzling. First, in last week's parsha, Hashem came to Yaakov in a dream and guaranteed him that he will return home safely. So why is he worried now? Secondly, who exactly was Yaakov afraid of? None other than Eisav, a murderer who belittled the sanctity of the bechorah and its responsibilities? How would Eisav prevail? Why would Yaakov be afraid of Eisav?

My grandfather **Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l** would explain based upon a thought of the Sfas Emes. Yaakov Avinu was a true "makir tov" one who recognized the good that Hashem did for him, and he never forgot it. He took nothing for granted, and every favor that Hashem did for him was never overlooked by him.

Indeed, it is true that Hashem promised him that he will be safe. Yes, it is true that he was a bigger tzaddik than Eisav and he need not worry. But Yaakov Avinu did not sit and wait for Hashem to pay up his promise. He did not expect any favors to be done for him, even when he had a guarantee. He appreciated Hashem goodness so much, that he extended himself again and davened. He felt that nothing was coming to him and he lived with complete subservience and humility, he thus pleaded with Hashem, yet another time, for a salvation from Eisav.

It states (*Tehillim* 30:6), כי רגע באפו חיים ברצונו

The Beis Aharon of Stolin *zt'l* explained, someone who focuses only **כי רגע** - ***on this moment*** - he doesn't worry about the future and he doesn't mope about the past, **חיים ברצונו**, he lives a good life *b'ruchniyus* and *b'gashmiyus*.

Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin - Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו יֶשׁ־לִי רָב אָחִי... וְכִי יֶשׁ־לִי־כֹל "Esav said, 'I have plenty'…And Ya'akob said, 'I have everything'" *(33:9-11)*

When Esav saw the lavish gift given to him by his brother, Ya'akob, he tried to demur and say he has plenty, he doesn't need this gift. However, Ya'akob insisted and in his statement back to Esav, he said, ***"I have everything."***

This slight contrast in their attitude towards materialism says much about their different values and priorities. Esav, who favours this world and all of its alluring possessions, says he has plenty. He may have a tremendous amount, but he still says it's only plenty, not all. There's always room for more! Ya'akob, whose goal in life is to become closer to Hashem, using his worldly possessions to achieve spiritual accomplishments, says, "I have it all! Everything I have is enough for me. I am not missing anything!"





There is a fellow who was buying a new car, and after weeks of shopping and planning, finally got the one he was looking for. The right colour, the right interior, and all of the right accessories, as much as he could afford. His happiness lasted one day, because the next day, his neighbour bought the higher priced model with all the new gadgets, and parked it right next door. The first one who bought the car that he could afford all of a sudden lost his excitement because he didn't have it all!

Are we similar to Esav, who could always use more and are not happy with what we have because something can always be added, or are we like Ya'akob, that whatever we have is everything?

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt- Seven Heads, Seven Dead



The Gemara Kidushin 29b tells of a story of a dangerous demon that was in the Beis Midrash of Abaye. R' Acha Bar Yaakov was in town and no one invited him thereby forcing him to sleep in this Beis Midrash. The demon appeared to him as a seven-headed snake. With each of his seven bows, a head fell off. We are left to wonder how he knew to bow seven times to kill the seven-headed snake?

Yitzchak gave eight Brachos. The number 26 represents Bracha since this is the numerical value of Hashem's name י- ה- ו- ה If we multiply 26 by 8 (Brachos) our result is 208. This is the numerical value of יצחק, alluding to the eight Brachos he gave. Yaakov received seven of those Brachos and Esav received one. If we multiply 26 by 7 (Brachos) we arrive at 182, the same sum as יעקב , as this is how many Brachos he received.

Corresponding to Yaakov's seven levels of Kedusha, Esav had seven levels of impurity (טומאה). This is in accordance with ואלכה לנגדך, I will go alongside you—what Yaakov possessed in Kedusha, Esav had in impurity. With each time Yaakov bowed, one level of impurity was removed from Esav. How many times did Yaakov bow to Esav? Seven.

The sum of the word **טמא** is 50. Multiplying 7 by 50, we come to 350. Esav received one Bracha from his father. Therefore, 350 and 26 gives us a total of 376—the same Gematria as **עשו**. The Pasuk tells us Yaakov bowed seven times **עד אחיו**, until he reached his brother.

Another interpretation is that through these bowings, Esav was now like a brother to him, since with Yaakov bowing seven times, the seven levels of impurity of Esav were removed. This now left Esav with that one Bracha. It comes as no surprise that the Gematria of **אחיו** is 26 (symbolizing the one Bracha that remained). In light of this we can understand why in the next Pasuk Esav ran toward Yaakov and hugged and kissed him, since all that remained in Esav was love because his impurity was removed. Now we can appreciate the words **שבע יפול צדיק וקם**. Yaakov bowed seven times to Esav **שבע יפול צדיק** and then overcame him (**וקם**)!

R' Acha Bar Yaakov learned from Yaakov how to kill the seven-headed demon. He is hinted to here in **יש לי רב אחי** as this is a reference to **ר' אחא**. Is it any coincidence that his name was **ר' אחא בר <u>יעקב</u>**, as he learned this from Yaakov.

Not for naught



The Gemara informs us that Yaakov forgot **פכים קטנים**; small earthenware jugs and went back for them. This is because if Hashem put it in the world, then there is obviously a purpose for it. This is in accordance with **כל מה שברא הקב"ה בעולמו לא ברא דבר אחד לבטלה** *Hashem didn't create anything for naught*. In this light we can grasp **יש לי כל**. People say Jews are cheap but in essence we are just sensitive to every little object. It has been hypothesized that this trait originates

from Yaakov who went back for the **פכים קטנים**, as he knew how to utilize every small item.

Indeed, **יעקב** is rooted in the word **עקב** heel, the lowest part of the body which represents small details, the seemingly insignificant. We need to combat our society where everything seems disposable thereby devalued. We should give more importance to all that Hashem endowed us with. **בל תשחית** doesn't just apply to food.

Not too long ago people valued their possessions more. **The Alter of Kelm** owned a garment that he wore for 20 years since he maintained it very well. In a similar vein, when **R' Shach** was young he possessed only one shirt and wore it all week. On Friday he would wash it for the honour of Shabbos.

Sometimes people may feel they have no purpose in the world, wonder why they were created or someone else can do their task but Hashem doesn't create anything He doesn't need. Let us all value everything we possess and fulfil our task on this world.

Haste or Waste

It seems the art of thinking has been lost for many. **The Divrei Bina** explains **סוף מעשה במחשבה תחלה** that we should think before our actions. How many times have we seen people including ourselves get into trouble because of acting too quickly or not thinking before talking and as it says **אל תצא לרב מהר...** ; do not be quick to enter into strife unless you have thought through how it may end. In this sense **the Baal Shem Tov** interpreted **ואבדתם מהרה -** to abolish the rushing about, as we need to have a settled mind.

We shouldn't rush into decisions. "Haste makes waste." It is because of this that Moshe knew the idea of the Meraglim was bad as Rashi says it was **בערבוביא** - disorderly. We see the repercussions of acting hastily from Reuven who was **פחז כמים**; water-like impetuosity. In

light of this we can grasp **משפט צדק ילין בה** if we want to give a righteous judgement, or any decision, then sleep on it (**ילין בה**), as we shouldn't act impulsively.



The Alter of Kelm once remarked that if we want to know if an idea of ours is correct, we should ask ourselves if it came from thinking about it deeply or out of impulse. When **R' Chaim Volozhin** approached his Rebbe, the Gra, about opening a yeshiva, the Gra declined him. However, a little while later he asked his Rebbe again to which he gave his okay. The Gra explained the first time he was afraid it was coming from acting too quickly. We need to let ideas sit in our mind first.



The Toldos Yaakov Yosef teaches that the difference between Yaakov and Esav was that Yaakov would think whereas Esav wouldn't. **יעקב** is rooted in **עקב** ; heel- which is at the end of the body- implying that Yaakov was always thinking about the end result. Would this act result in honouring Hashem and the like, he would ask himself. **עשו** means to do, implying that he would act impulsively. He gave in to temptations, without thinking whether he will gain or lose. Due to his impulsive nature, he sold the Bechorah for a bowl of soup. Esav said **הלעיטני נא מן האדם האדם הזה**; pour into me some of that red stuff, as temptations were Esav's guides, not his mind. The Bechorah entailed benefits that even Esav should want such as receiving a greater inheritance, the right to receive Yitzchak's Brachos and so on.

Spiritual Ascent



The ladder in the dream of Yaakov teaches us how to climb the spiritual ladder of growth. A ladder is composed of rungs in order to ascend step by step. Likewise, in spirituality we need to go step by step. If one goes up a ladder too quickly, not only does he not make it to the next step, but he also falls from where he is. The same applies to spirituality. In fact, **סלם** ; ladder, has an identical Gematria to **סיני** (130), alluding to that the ladder in the dream signifies a spiritual ladder- **סיני** Greatness comes through taking one step at a time (in general). It has been said, "The journey of 1,000 miles begins with the first step." When we spell out the letter **א** we get **1,000 , אלף**. The numerical value of **א** is 1. Adding up every one, we eventually arrive at 1,000. This is just as penny by penny a fortune is amassed and brick by brick a house is built.

The ascent of greatness must be taken step by step. A Gadol once remarked that people today want to finish Shas overnight and get a full night's sleep too.

The name **סמא- ל** (Satan), is related to the word **סומא** ; blind. This is because he blinds a person to spirituality. Using this quality for the positive, we can attain humility. That is to say, to be blind to our positive attributes in that we don't take credit for it. For this reason, **ענוה** ; humility has the same equivalent as **סמא- ל** (131).

If we humble ourselves to Hashem, then instead of being blinded by the Satan, we transform it into a **סלם** ; a ladder of growth. A hint to this is found in **סמא- ל** as if we rearrange its letters, we get **א סלם**. If we put Hashem symbolized by the letter **א** in the beginning then we get to the **סלם**.

In essence this is the purpose of the Satan- to make a person great. This is comparable to a trainer that encourages one to lift weights, as it is to make him stronger.

When Yaakov overcame the Malach of Esav, the Satan, he asked if he could go to heaven to sing Shira. **The Koznitzer Magid** explains that the word **מלאך** comes from **מלאכה** since every Malach has his task to complete.

שירה ; song are notes that are harmonized together. Each note by itself is in essence nothing. When it is all put together then it becomes **שירה** . The Malach of Esav only fits in creation when we overcome him since this is what his purpose is- to make us greater. Consequently, when Yaakov overcomes the Malach, the Malach asks to sing **שירה** . For this reason, after he overpowers the Malach, it states **ויבא יעקב שלם** *Yaakov came complete*, because now he is complete since he overcame the Malach. Indeed, if we add the sum of **יעקב** (182) with **שטן** (359), our result is **ישראל** (541)- his new name. Once Yaakov defeated the Satan he reached greater perfection.

With what can we defeat the Satan and become greater? Through Torah as Chazal say **בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין** *I have created the evil inclination and I have created Torah as its antidote.* We see this by the Malach of Esav- the Satan, Yetzer Hara- as he hit Yaakov- who represents Torah. Through Torah, we overcome him.

An allusion to this is found in **סלם** as the letter that breaks up the **ס** and **ם**- who is the Satan (**ס-ם**)- is **ל** (**סלם**). **ל** signifies Torah learning as if we spell it out we get **למד** . That is to say, **לימוד התורה** . Through **לימוד התורה** we can use the Yetzer Hara (the Satan) as a ladder (**סלם**) to elevate ourselves in our service of Hashem.

Fear of Attack



The Torah relates that upon hearing that Eisav was coming toward him with 400 men, Yaakov became very frightened and it distressed him (Gen. 32:7). Rashi explains that the double expression regarding Yaakov's fear teaches that he was afraid both that he may be killed and that he may kill others should Eisav attack him. It is natural to understand why Yaakov would be afraid of being killed. However, as the law is (Sanhedrin 72a) that one may kill a pursuer in self-defence, why was he afraid of killing others?

The Maharil Diskin answers by citing Rashi, who writes (Gen. 27:45) that Rivkah prophetically declared that her two sons - Yaakov and Eisav - would both die on the same day. As a result, Yaakov was afraid that if he was attacked, he may end up killing Eisav, which would lead to his immediate death. Based on this explanation, the Maharil Diskin resolves another difficulty. Yaakov split his family and possessions into two camps and expressed confidence that even if Eisav would destroy one camp, the remaining one would surely survive (Gen. 32:8). If Yaakov feared that Eisav may in-deed prevail over his first camp, why was he so sure that the second camp wouldn't also succumb?

The Maharil Diskin explains that Yaakov placed a distance of one day's travel between the two camps and positioned himself at the front of the first camp. As a result, he was certain that even if he was killed, Eisav would also die on that day before having an opportunity to reach the second camp, thereby guaranteeing its survival.

35:16 ותלד רחל ותקש בלדתה



In relating the difficulties involved in Binyomin's birth, the Torah records that Rochel gave birth and subsequently had difficulties with the delivery. This chronology of events isn't what we would normally expect. In a regular delivery, first a woman has labour pains, and then the child comes out, but when Rochel gave birth to Binyomin, the order was reversed. Why did her pains begin only after she had already given birth?



The Chida cites the teaching of the Mishnah (Shabbos 2:6) that women die during childbirth for being lax in one of three areas: the separation of challah, the laws of family purity, and lighting Shabbos candles. When Rochel's delivery of Binyomin was abnormally difficult, she was scared that she may die. Additionally, she was also afraid that people who heard that she died in labour would assume that it was because she had sinned in one of these three areas and was not as righteous as she claimed to be.

In reality, **the Chida** explains that the Mishnah is specifically referring to those who die during the time of danger (Shabbos 32a), which is limited to the actual childbirth, and not to a person such as Rochel who has post-delivery complications. However, the Torah notes that even after the baby emerged, Rochel's pain only continued

to intensify (**ויהי בהקשותה בלדתה**), and with it, her fears about its implications.

At this point, Rochel's midwife attempted to comfort her by explaining the aforementioned distinction: **אל תיראי כי גם זה לך בן** – don't be afraid of what people will say about you, because your son has already been born, in which case even if you die, it will no longer be due to the sins mentioned in the Mishnah. Rochel was not persuaded by this logic and still decided to call her child **בן אוני** (son of my affliction), as she worried that a woman who dies from post-labour complications is also included in those referred to by the Mishnah. Yaakov, however, knew the truth about Rochel's righteousness and named the child **בן ימין** – the son of the right, which is always the stronger side – as an allusion to her pious ways.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

"Devorah, the nurse of Rivkah, died, and she was buried below Bais El, below the plateau, and he named it Alon Bochus." "And Rochel died, and was buried on the road to Efros, which is Bais Lechem. Yaakov set up a monument over her grave; it is the monument of Rochel's grave until today."

The Torah tells us that Devorah died, and the place where she died was called Alon Bochus, "Bochus", from the Shoresh of crying. Rashi says that the Loshon of "Alon Bochus" means that there were two weepings: one for Devorah, mentioned in the Posuk, and one for Rivkah. We see that there was crying when Rivkah and Devorah died. By Rochel, the Torah does not say that she was eulogized by anyone, nor does it say that her husband, children, or anyone else for that matter, cried over her passing. Was there in fact no weeping over the death of Rochel Imeinu? If there was, why doesn't the Torah mention it? The following Divrei Torah will expound on this topic, and perhaps support the P'shat offered in the closing paragraph.

דברה 35:8 - רוקח is written without a **ו** - while Devorah the prophetess is written with a **ו**.This teaches us that this Devorah did not have prophecy.

מדרש אגדה - 35:8 ותמת דברה– "Devorah was Rivkah's mother.

ויקרא שמו אלון בכות 35:8 – דרש משה Why was this place called **בכות** from a Loshon of crying because Devorah died there? Devorah was 150 years old when she died. Naturally, people do not cry as much when the deceased lived to an old age – although they should. That is why the place was called Alon Bochus.

ותמת דברה מינקת רבקה– רמב"ן Rivkah had no respect paid to her upon her death, for Yaakov was not there and Eisav hated her, and would not go to her funeral. Her husband Yitzchok's eyes had dimmed, and he never left his home. Therefore the Torah did not want to mention her death and burial, for it would then have to mention that the children of Cheis buried her, which was not an honour for her.

מינקת רבקה 35:8 – רבינו אפרים. The words **מנקת רבקה** the nurse of Rivkah, is the same Gematria as, "**אף רבקה מתה בו ביום**" – "Rivkah also died on that day."

ויצב יעקב מצבה - Rabbah Bereishis - **אשד הנחלדים**. The true remembrance of a deceased is his Divrei Torah. A woman does not have that responsibility, and therefore Rochel's name would not be passed on to future generations because of her Torah. Therefore Yaakov built a Matzeivah for her.

שפתי כהן על התורה 35:20 **ויצב יעקב מצבה על קברתה**

There were many prophetesses who died and it does not say about them that a Matzeivah, was built for them. The Torah tells us that Sarah Imeinu died, Miriam died….they were buried with no mention of a Matzeivah. Yaakov Avinu built a Matzeivah for Rochel so that when her children would be exiled from Yerushalayim, Klal Yisroel would spread out around her grave to lighten their exile. Therefore,

Yaakov did not bury her in a cave so that she would see the pain of Klal Yisroel and have mercy upon them. She should always gaze at them with eyes of mercy.





ותמת רחל, ותקבר בדרך אפרתה– קול רם 35:19. Why doesn't the Torah mention crying for Rochel? Rochel was the Akeres Habayis, and all knew her greatness. Obviously, they all cried, and there is no need for the Torah to mention it. The Torah mentions where she was buried so all should know where to go to Daven.

Big Returns, by Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky

Anticipating conflict is quite strenuous. Yaakov had heard that his brother Esav was advancing toward him and his twelve children, accompanied by four hundred armed men. He had no idea of Esav's intentions. Was he still raging over the loss of Isaac's blessings or did thirty years of separation calm his wrath?

Yaakov had to act fast. He split his camp into two groups and instructed his children both, how to do battle and how to escape. He sent a large contingent of men laden with myriad gifts to greet the advancing army. He hoped that the large offering will indicate submission to his older brother and thus appease him. And of course, he prayed.

In the middle of the night before the encounter, he made his move. In Genesis 32:23-24, the Torah tells us, "and Yaakov got up that night and took his wives, his children, and all of his possessions and crossed the stream at Yabok."

It would seem from this verse that Yaakov was together with his entire family and all their possessions. Yet the next verse tells us that Yaakov remained alone. The Torah places him back on the other side of the river, alone. As he stands alone the Torah relates that an angel fought with him till dawn. The question is obvious. If Yaakov crossed with his entire family, how did he end up on the other side of the stream, alone?

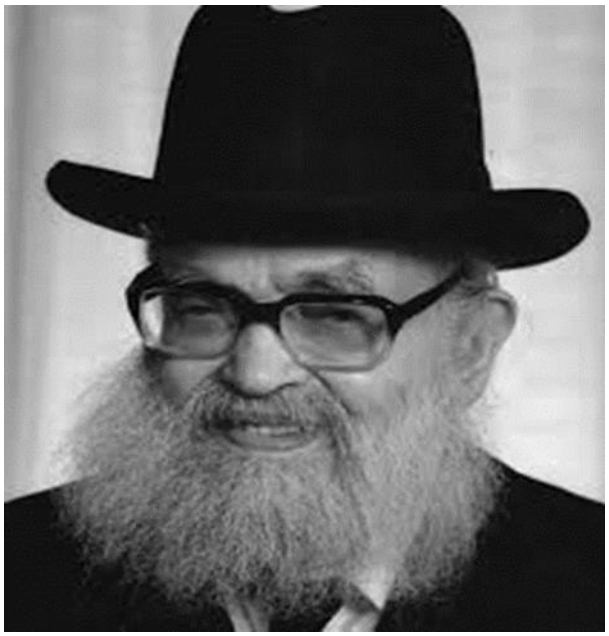


The Talmud in Chulin 91a is also bothered by this question. The Talmud explains that Yaakov returned to his original camping grounds. He obviously had forgotten some Pachim K'tanim, insignificant small earthenware, bric-a-brac, and thus returned alone, to retrieve them. The Talmudic reasoning is thus. If the verse tells us that Jacob crossed with all of his possessions, then it tells us he was alone, whatever he had returned for must have been insignificant and not worthy enough to be considered as possessions.

I am bothered. Why did Yaakov go to retrieve insignificant tchotchkes on the night when he was preparing for the most difficult encounter of his life? Obviously, there is an eternal lesson to be gained. What is it?

In the summer of 1954, my grandmother, Itta Ettil Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, left Beth Israel Hospital, for the last time, after

a prolonged stay. Her condition had deteriorated, and the doctors felt that there was nothing left for them to do. My grandfather, Reb Yaakov zt"l, *went together with family members to pick her up from the hospital. My grandmother was wheeled to the waiting automobile and made as comfortable as possible. Suddenly, Reb Yaakov seemed to realize that he had forgotten something very important. He whispered something to his wife, and when she nodded her approval, he asked if it was possible for the driver to wait a few minutes. He had to go back into the hospital.*



The family members were a bit surprised. Although there was another patient in the room, and items may have been confused, they remembered removing every one of my grandmother's personal belongings from the room. Accompanied by his curious son, Reb Yaakov proceeded to the elevator and pushed the button to the floor on which his wife had stayed.

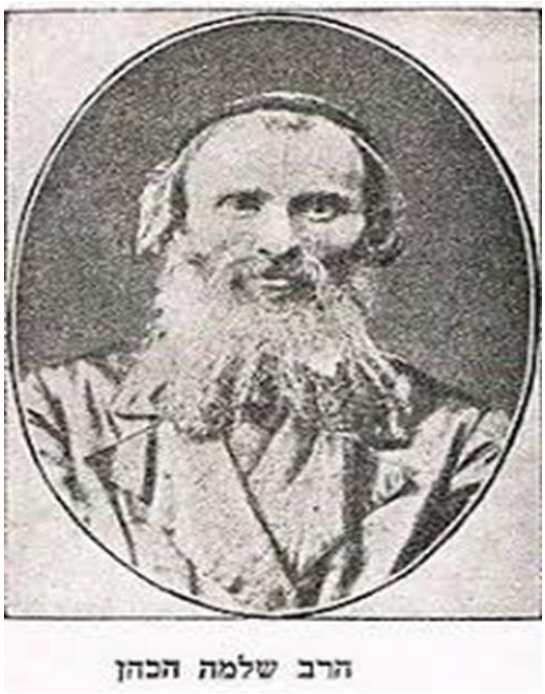
"Pa," his son protested , "we have everything." The elevator stopped at the correct floor. Reb Yaakov proceeded into his wife's former room and turned to her ailing roommate. "In our rush to leave the hospital, I forgot to tell you good-bye and wish you well. May G-d send you a speedy recovery." With that, Reb Yaakov walked out of the room, nodded at the stunned nurses, whom he already had thanked on his first exit, and left toward the waiting car.

Yaakov went back for something that in our estimation, may have been insignificant. But he knew otherwise. A small jug may have had a sentimental value to one of his wives. An old blanket may have meant something to one of the children. Yaakov our forefather taught us that everything in life has value. It is easy to say, "I

crossed the river," "I packed the suitcase," or "I left the building, and I'm not going back." Yaakov's lesson tells us that even at a risk, the little things in life are just as important as the big ones. Some acts are glorified, others are seemingly petty. We can never judge which investments yield great returns, and which returns are great investments!

Sciatic Nerve

Because the angel wounded Yaakov in his thigh, Jews may not eat the sciatic nerve (32:33). Will this prohibition always be in effect?


הרב שלמה הכהן

Rabbi Shlomo HaKohen of Vilna writes that in the Messianic era the consumption of the sciatic nerve will be permitted. He explains that there are 365 sinews in the human body, each of which is associated with one of the days of the solar calendar. The Zohar teaches that the sciatic nerve corresponds to Tisha B'Av. By dislodging it, Eisav's angel gave strength to his descendants to destroy the Holy Temple twice on that day.

In the times of Moshiach, this damage will be reversed as the Temple will be permanently rebuilt, and the sciatic nerve will become permitted. The Torah alludes to this concept in stating that as a result of the angel's wounding Yaakov in that place, the Jewish people don't eat it until the pre-sent day, implying that there will come a time after the present day when it will be eaten. However, the S'dei Chemed (Klalim Gimmel 36) disagrees and brings several proofs that it will be forbidden even in the Messianic era.

Who Didn't Bow?

Just prior to his encounter with his brother, Eisav, Yaakov crossed a river together with his two wives, two maidservants, and 11 children (Gen. 32:23). As Yaakov had 12 children at this point, Rashi explains that Yaakov hid his daughter, Dina, in a box so that the wicked Eisav couldn't lay his eyes on her. Although one of Yaakov's children was unaccounted for, how did Rashi know that it was Dina and not one of his sons, such as his beloved Yosef?



The Vilna Gaon (Kol Eliyahu) answers that our Sages teach (see Targum Sheini Esther 3:3) that the tribe of Benjamin merited having the Holy Temple built in their portion of the land of Israel because Benjamin was the only one of the brothers who didn't bow down to Eisav, as he hadn't been born at the time of the encounter. If, however, any of the other sons was in the box instead of Dina, this reason would be insufficient as there would then be a second tribe which would have the same claim to the Temple. As a result, Rashi knew that the "missing" child could only be Dina.

We should never underestimate the power of tefillah. Everything can be achieved through prayer: From our most trivial needs to the greatest, loftiest goals, including the arrival of Mashiach! – Living Emunah

Hama'ayan: All on Shabbat, by R' Shlomo Katz

הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו כִּי־יָרֵא אָנֹכִי אֹתוֹ פֶּן־יָבוֹא וְהִכַּנִי אֵם עַל־בָּנִים ***"Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav, for I fear him lest he come and strike me down, mother and children."*** *(32:12)*



R' Shlomo Alkabetz z"l (1505-1584; author of the Friday night hymn Lecha Dodi, among other works) writes that Yaakov referred in this verse not (only) to Esav, but to Esav's descendant, Haman who planned "to exterminate all Jews, young and old, children and women" (Esther 3:13). Thus, immediately after Yaakov's prayer (32:14), the Torah says, **וַיָּלֶן שָׁם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא** *"He spent the night there."* Note that the final letters of the (Hebrew) words in this phrase spell "Haman." Also, the word "night" appears three times in our chapter, alluding to the three days and nights of the fast that Mordechai and Esther decreed. (Manot Ha'levi Esther 7:7)

Rabbi Oizer Alport -Parsha Potpourri

קטנתי מכל החסדים 32:11

Hashem promised to protect Yaakov and return him safely to the land of Canaan. Nevertheless, as he prepared to face his brother Eisav who was approaching him with an army of 400 men, Yaakov became very frightened. Why wasn't he confident that Hashem would protect and save him in fulfilment of His promise? Rashi explains that Yaakov feared that perhaps the miracles Hashem

performed for after the promise him had depleted his supply of merits.

It is curious to note that after hearing somebody make a blessing, most of the time we answer simply, "Amen." However, after hearing a person say Birkas HaGomel we respond – **אמן מי שגמלך כל טוב הוא יגמלך כל טוב סלה** , ***who has bestowed upon you all good should continue to bestow upon you all good.*** What is unique about this blessing, and why do we respond to it in such a lengthy and atypical manner?

The Shalmei Nedorim beautifully explains that Birkas HaGomel is recited after a person has been saved from illness or other potential danger. While we are happy that the person making the blessing survived, we are also afraid that it may have come at the expense of whatever merits he had accumulated until now. Therefore, a simple "Amen" won't suffice, and we must add a special supplication requesting that the good should continue and not be depleted through this miracle.

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

וישבו המלאכים אל יעקב לאמר באנו אל אחיך אל עשו וגם הלך לקראתך וארבע מאות איש עמו 32:6



In an attempt to find favour in Eisav's eyes, Yaakov sent messengers to tell him that he sought peace and reconciliation. However, the messengers returned and informed Yaakov that Eisav still harboured ill will toward him and was approaching

with 400 men, which made Yaakov extremely frightened. As there are no coincidences in the Torah, why did Eisav specifically assemble this number of soldiers, and why was it so terrifying to Yaakov?

The Ichud B'Chidud offers three brilliant explanations of the mathematical significance of the size of Eisav's army.

Parshas Vayeitzei ends (32:3) with Yaakov in in a place that he called **מחנים** . Rashi explains that this name signifies that there were two encampments present. The Yerushalmi (Eiruvin 12b) teaches that the term **מחנה** connotes a minimum of 10 people, in which case **מחנים** refers to 20 people in Yaakov's travelling party.



The Maharil Diskin identifies them as Yaakov, his four wives, his 11 sons, Dina, Binyomin who was in Rochel's womb, Rivka's nursemaid (see Bereishis 35:8), and Yosef counted double since he represented Ephraim and Menashe.

One of the blessings in Parshas Bechukosai (Vayikra 26:8) is that five Jews will be able to pursue 100 of their enemies, while 100 Jews will chase 10,000. Rashi points out that the ratios seem inconsistent, for after stating that one Jew will run after 20 adversaries, the Torah then indicates that he can chase after 100. Rashi writes that this teaches us that large numbers of Torah-observant Jews are more powerful and effective than smaller groups.

However, the **Vilna Gaon** maintains that the proportions are identical, as he explains that when the Torah says that 100 will pursue 10,000, it refers to 100 groups of five Jews who were previously mentioned. This army of 500 will be able to run after 10,000 foes, in which case each will still only chase 20. Eisav



understood this concept, so when he heard that Yaakov was in **מחנים** with 20 people, each of whom could pursue 20 opponents, he gathered 400 soldiers to accompany him, which brought his total to 401 and ensured that he could not be thwarted by Yaakov, who recognized his brother's rationale and became deeply afraid.

This insight helps us more deeply appreciate Yaakov's motive for splitting his family in half (Bereishis 32:8). Aware that Eisav's army of 401 could overpower him, Yaakov divided his party of 20 into two equal camps of 10.

This ensured that even if Eisav similarly separated his men into two forces of 201 and 200, the first group would still be able to defeat one of Yaakov's camps, but since the others would only number 200, they would succumb to Yaakov's second band of 10 who were capable of running after 200. This explains why Yaakov was so confident (32:9) that even if one of his camps was smitten by Eisav, the other would surely survive.

Alternatively, the **Sifsei Chochomim** answers Rashi's question about the fluctuating ratios by explaining that the case of five Jews chasing 100 enemies refers to Jews who are weak, while the case of 100 pursuing 10,000 applies to those who are strong. Thus, a weak Jew is able to run after 20 foes, while a strong one can chase 100.

Applying this dichotomy to Yaakov, everybody who was with him was considered weak – either women or children – with the exception of Yaakov himself, who had already removed a heavy stone that was covering a well (29:10) and wrestled with an angel throughout the night and prevailed (32:25-29).

Thus, the mighty Yaakov was able to pursue 100 adversaries, while his other 15 companions – his four wives and 11 sons – could each run after 20, which adds up to a total of 400. This helps us appreciate why the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 78:15) says that all 400 of Eisav's men were cancelled out and disappeared, leaving Eisav all alone.

Lastly, the **Ostrovtzer Rebbe** cites the opinion of Reish Lakish (Yalkut Shimoni 130) that just as Eisav presided over 400 men, so too each of the 400 soldiers also headed a battalion of 400, for a total of 160,000, in addition to Eisav. Surprisingly, Yaakov responded to this intimidating news only by beseeching Hashem to save him from Eisav (Bereishis 32:12). Why wasn't he also worried about the 160,000 troops coming with him?

Dovid writes in Tehillim (91:7) that 10,000 people may fall on a person's right side, and they will not be able to harm him. Yaakov knew that he, his four wives, and his 11 sons totalled 16 and could take care of all 160,000 of Eisav's men. Accordingly, he was not frightened of them, so he only asked Hashem to rescue him from Eisav, who was left unaccounted for.

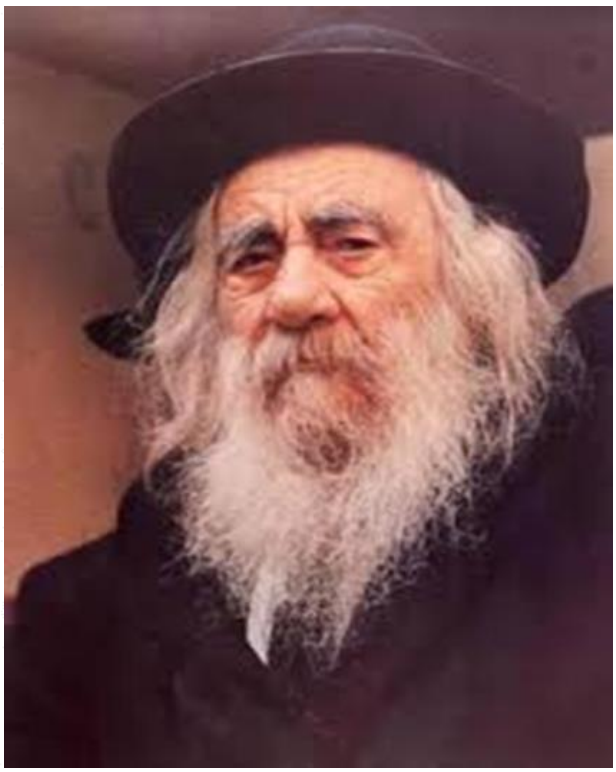
Torah U'Tefilah

Rav Yaakov Galinsky, zt"l, once taught about how powerful an act of Chessed can be, and that one can never really know how far reaching one small act of kindness can go. He illustrated this with a story.

During the time of the Russian Revolution, Czar Nicholas was the most hated man in Russia and a group of revolutionaries decided to overthrow him. The leader of this group quickly became the most wanted man in the country, and he became a hunted man to be apprehended. One day some soldiers spotted him riding on a horse, and they chased after him into a small town. He quickly jumped off

his horse and ran to the first house he could find, which happened to be a Jewish home. The Jew answered the door but refused to hide him, for he was afraid that they would both get caught. The man quickly ran to the next house, and another Jew answered the door. He begged the Jew to let him in and hide him, and he promised that for his help, he would somehow, some day, repay him for saving his life. The Jew allowed him to enter his home and helped him hide. He told the fugitive to change his clothing, and then he handed him a Tallis. He told him to put it on, and he showed him how to make the motions of Davening.





When the Czar's army came knocking on the doors, they eventually came to this Jew's house. When they entered, the Jew told them, "We are just a couple of Jews praying". The soldiers saw the two of them wrapped in their Taleisim, thought nothing of it, and left. The fugitive thanked the Jew with all his heart and reiterated his promise. Years later, the revolutionaries were able to overthrow the Czar, and this fugitive became a man of great power. One day this Jew received an invitation to the capital. When he arrived, he was greeted by the very man he had saved. He thanked him again for saving his life, gave him money and riches, and said that if there was

anything he ever needed, he would do all he can to help him. Years later, in 1921, eighteen Yeshivah Bochrim from the Novardok Yeshivah tried to cross the border illegally. They were caught and faced a severe prison term.

The boys went to **Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, zt"l**, for advice. Rav Chaim Ozer told them this story and advised them to go see this Jew and ask for his help. The man was happy to try. He went to the Capital, and asked his friend, the President, to please intervene.

All the Bochrim were released and saved, and one of those eighteen boys was **Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, zt"l, the Steipler Gaon**! Rav Galinsky showed how one act of Chessed had tremendous ramifications years later!

Rabbi Yisroel Baumgarten's Prophetic & Amazing Legacy



Rabbi Yisroel Baumgarten was a wealthy Jew from *Yerushalayim*. He did everything in his power and control to raise a family in the ways of Hashem and our Holy Torah, but unfortunately his children did not follow the correct path. He tried to encourage them, motivate them and reward them, but nothing worked or helped. They all moved to America to get away from their father and his path of *Avodat Hashem*. This caused Rabbi Yisroel Baumgarten great heartache and frustration.

As Rabbi Yisroel Baumgarten was aging, his children tried to convince him to put his money into accounts that would shield him from hefty taxes, but he had his own plans and was not interested

in discussing these plans with his children. His children figured they would have to wait till after he passed away and then they would find out where he kept his money.

But that is not what happened. After Rabbi Yisroel Baumgarten passed away, his children were shocked after seeing the will, that he left very little money for them. And furthermore, their father left no hint where all his money was stashed away. They hired lawyers to investigate, but the funds could not be traced, and all the efforts were in vain. Rabbi Yisroel Baumgarten left instructions in his will that his apartment was not to be sold. This too was beyond his children's comprehension, but they did as was instructed and the apartment remained empty. Years passed and the children went on in their lives. Though none of the children were religious, one grandson slowly became interested in the Torah way of life. He eventually travelled to *Eretz Yisrael* on a Birthright trip. When in the Holy Land, he became convinced that he should become an observant Jew. Furthermore, he decided he wanted to go in the same path as his religious and pious grandfather.

Instead of returning back to America, he decided to stay in *Eretz Yisrael* and enroll in a Yeshiva where he could pursue his dream. As time passed the grandson became more and more engrossed in his Torah learning. He absorbed all that he was taught and developed an insatiable desire for learning *Gemara*. One *zeman* he was learning *Masechet Nedarim Perek HaShutfin*.

One Shabbat he ate by his *Rebbe's* home and on his way back to his dorm, he passed by an apartment. He looked at the door and to his amazement it said his grandfather's name on the door. After Shabbat, he called his father at home in America and told him about what he discovered. Since the apartment was not being used, his father told him that he could stay there whenever he wanted.

The next Shabbat instead of walking all the way back from his *Rebbe's* home to his dorm in the night, he decided to sleep in his

grandfather's apartment. After the Shabbat meal when he arrived at the apartment, he sat down at the dining room table to review his *Gemara*. He pulled out a *Gemara Nedarim* from his grandfather's bookcase and opened it to the *Sugya* that he was learning, which discusses the question of a father who wants to give his property to his child only on condition that his child will be a *Talmid Hacham*.The grandson looked at the side of this page of the *Gemara* and was amazed to find that his grandfather had written notes in the *Gemara*. When he looked more carefully, he was astonished and totally blown away that there was a note written to him:

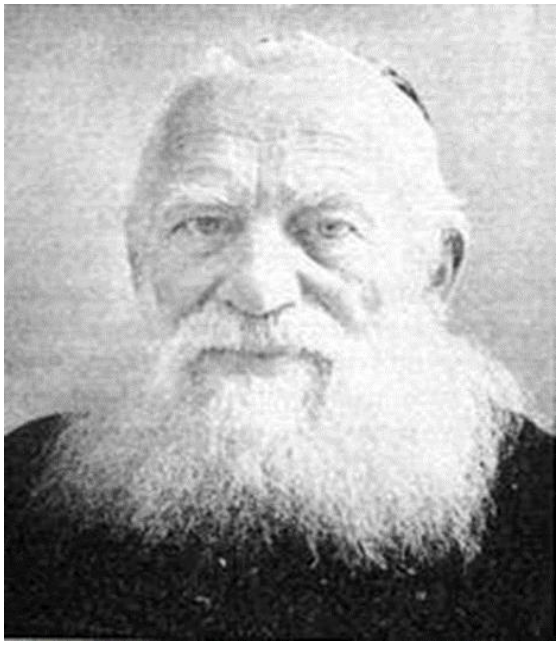
"To my dear grandchild, "If you are reading these lines, then you have been privileged to return to the fold and you are now learning Hashem's Greatest Gift to His people - Our Holy Torah.

"As such, I have a surprise for you. I am giving you my entire fortune. I want you to be able to learn Torah without any worry."Written in the *Gemara* was the location of the safe-deposit box that contained all Rabbi Yisroel Baumgarten's assets, along with the security code to open the box. The grandson could hardly believe what he was reading. He ran back to his *Rebbe's* home and explained all that just transpired and then asked a most unusual question: Was he permitted to keep the money? The question was brought before a renowned *Posek*, who after listening to the entire story, determined that the grandson could indeed keep his grandfather's fortune.

Fast forward many decades, this grandson continues to learn Torah undisturbed. He has been blessed with a beautiful family of children and grandchildren who are all following in the footsteps of their Patriarch Rabbi Yisroel Baumgarten.

Tefillah is the key, but Emunah unlocks the door.

The Ponevezher Rav Learns a Lesson - Rav Frand



The Ponevezher Rav (Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman 1888-1969) was once on a trip to New York. He was riding the subway when he found himself in a car with a bunch of hoodlums that he feared might have their eye on him with the intent of attacking him. Besides being an outstanding Talmudic genius and besides being one of the greatest fundraisers in the history of Yeshivos, it is clear from many stories told about him that the Ponevezh Rav was very fast on his feet as well.



The Ponevezher Rav was alone on a subway car with hoodlums eyeing him. He was in fact carrying a lot of money on him. What is he going to do? (Today we cannot imagine someone like the Ponevezher Rav travelling around New York City in the subway, but this story took place well over fifty years ago!) The Ponevezher Rav took out a slip of paper from his pocket that had an address written on it. He went over to these hoodlums and said to them "Can you help me find which stop I get off at for this address?" The hoodlums wink to themselves and say, "We'll take you there. Get off at the next stop with us and we'll take you to that address." The train pulled into the next stop, the doors

open, the hoodlums walk out. The Ponnevezer Rav walks slowly behind them. He exits from the car, but as the doors are about to close, he steps back in and the train pulls away with the gang of hoodlums left behind at the station.

The Ponevezher Rav, in telling over the story, explained: "Where did I come up with this idea? I got it from Parshas Vayishlach!" How? Eisav said to Yaakov, "Come with me to Seir." Yaakov agreed. He said, "Yes. I will go with you, but I need to walk at my own pace…" Eisav heads off to Seir and Yaakov is still headed there to this very day. The Ponevezher Rav said, "I learned from this incident in Chumash that in a time of danger, it is best to let the person think you are going with him and then you wave good-bye."

Migdol Ohr – J Gewirtz



On May 29, 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary became the first man to climb Mount Everest. It wasn't easy, and in his book, High Adventure, we learn that Hillary had to grow into this success. In 1952, he attempted to climb Mount Everest but failed. A few weeks later a group in England asked him to address its members. Hillary walked on stage to a thunderous applause. The audience recognized an attempt at greatness, but Edmund Hillary only saw his failure. At one point, he walked to the edge of the speaker's platform. He made a fist and pointed at a picture of the mountain. He then said in a loud voice, "Mount Everest, you beat me the first time, but I'll beat you the next time because you've grown all you are going to grow… but I'm still growing!"

This battle represents the battle we fight with our Evil Inclinations. At times, we will get the upper hand, and at other times he will have it. Sometimes we will succeed, and sometimes we will fail. However, we must not rest on the laurels of our victories nor give up when we are defeated. This is a match that will continue so long as HaShem gives us life. Even if today we are brought low, tomorrow, or even later today, we can get up again, dust ourselves off, and put the Yetzer Hara in his place. This is the lesson of Yaakov's battle with the angel of Eisav. Don't be content to live in this world without seeking spirituality like Eisav, and never feel you've been dragged down and beaten. We are Yisrael, who grapple with angels and men, and are capable. Let's keep fighting the good fight.

עַל־כֵּ֗ן לֹא־יֹאכְל֤וּ בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ אֶת־גִּ֣יד הַנָּשֶׁ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֖ר עַל־כַּ֣ף הַיָּרֵ֑ךְ עַ֚ד הַיּ֣וֹם הַזֶּ֔ה

"Therefore Bnei Yisrael shall not eat Et Gid Ha'nasheh / the displaced sinew on the hip-socket to this day, because he struck Yaakov's hip-socket on the displaced sinew." *(32:33)*



R' Shmuel Yaakov Borenstein z"l (1946-2017; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kiryat Melech in Bnei Brak, Israel) writes: The Zohar teaches that each of the 365 Mitzvot Lo Ta'aseh / Negative Command-ments in the Torah parallels one of the 365 days of the year, with the Mitzvah of Gid Ha'nasheh paralleling Tishah B'Av [until here from the Zohar]. Notably, observes R' Borenstein, the Gematria of the words in our verse "Et Gid Ha'nasheh" / "the displaced sinew" equals the Gematria of "Tishah Av."

R' Borenstein continues: The word "Gid" also alludes to the other fast days that commemorate the oppression of the Jewish People:

1.The letter "Gimel" of the word "Gid" alludes to Tzom Gedaliah, which falls on the third (Gimmel) of Tishrei.

2.The letter "Yud" alludes to Asarah B'Tevet, which falls on the tenth (Yud) of Tevet.

3.The letters "Yud" and "Gimel" together allude to Ta'anit Esther, which falls on the thirteenth (Yud-Gimmel) of Adar.

4.The entire word "Gid" (Gimel-Yud-Dalet) alludes to Shivah Asar B'Tammuz, which falls on the 17th (Gimmel+Yud+Dalet) of Tammuz.

What is the significance of these allusions? R' Borenstein explains: When the angel of Esav struck Yaakov's thigh, it was not merely a physical attack on Yaakov. Like all the significant events in the lives of the Patriarchs, it portended later events in Jewish history. The "little victory" that the angel won by causing Yaakov's lameness portends all the pogroms that would later befall the Jewish People.

The Angel Touched Him

בראשית לב,כו: וַיִּגַּע בְּכַף־יְרֵכוֹ וַתֵּקַע כַּף־יֶרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב בְּהֵאָבְקוֹ עִמּוֹ

The Baal haTurim points out that the angel wanted to see if Yaacov was also an angel. Thus, he touched his leg joints because angels do not have (knee) joints.

The Yerushalmi (Berachos 1,1) derives from the verse of the Divine Chariot "their legs were a straight leg" (Ezkiel 1,7) that angels do not have joints in their legs. The Baal haTurim's comment also explains why the verse states **ויגע** -he touched- and not **ויך** and he struck.

Parsha Points to Ponder

Rashi writes (32:5) that Yaakov sent a message to his brother Eisav stating that although he had dwelled with the wicked Lavan for twenty years, he had remained steadfast in his faith and had continued to keep all 613 of the commandments. How is this to be understood, as it is physically impossible for any person to observe all of the mitzvos? (Ayeles HaShachar, Taam V'Daas)



Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman rejects the explanation that Yaakov meant that he had studied the laws of all 613 mitzvos, as Rashi writes that he said that he had observed them. Instead, he suggests that because Yaakov's intention was to fulfill every mitzvah when he would have the opportunity to do so, it was considered as if he kept them all.



Rav Moshe Shternbuch notes that Yaakov didn't say that he fulfilled all of the mitzvos, but rather that he was **שומר** all of them. Rashi writes (37:11) that this term can be used when a person guards something in the sense that they are waiting and anxiously looking forward to its fulfillment. In this case, Yaakov was guarding the mitzvos through his desire for the opportunity to perform all of them. Rav Shternbuch adds that at present, we lack the Bais HaMikdash and all of the mitzvos which can only be

performed there, but if we yearn for the time when we will have the merit to observe them, it will be considered as if we have already done so.



Etz Chaim - Who is greater Malachim or Man?

When Yaakob Abinu heard that Esav his brother was coming to fight with him he sent malachim to him to make peace. How was it possible that Yaakob had power over malachim? We know from Yehoshua that when a Malach appeared to him he trembled and humbled himself in front of him. Even Daniel paled at the sight of a Malach. The Gemara in Sanhedrin (93) states that ssadikim are greater than Malacheh Hasharet.

The Hafets Hayim asks, "How is that possible, they are fire and we are flesh and blood?" The Hafets Hayim explains this by a mashal. In the king's palace there are soldiers who protect him and go to war when needed. At their head is a general who directs the army and is dressed in a uniform special for an officer in the king's palace. Medals gleaming, buttons of expensive shining stones, he is decorated with all symbols of victories and honour. His shoes shine and he wears full military attire. When any act of violence or war occurs, he spearheads an attack to quell the attackers.

One time a serious war broke out and the general had to go out to battle. On the front lines there he was directing the battle forging through the enemy lines, in the muck and swamps moving forward pushing the enemy to retreat. Rain and dirt made it difficult to continue. One day the king sent a messenger to the general to please report the situation back to the king. A transport arrived and brought him to the king's palace. Passing through the gates, the guards saluted the general as he passed, each one with a beautiful clean uniform and here the general was embarrassed with his soiled uniform. The king appeared in his glittering royalty, but the general

now in full embarrassment lowered his head in shame at his appearance. Fearing the anger of the king, he shivered not knowing what was in store for him. Behold the king was smiling, radiance gleaming at his loyal general. Especially when he heard of the advancement of his army and the enemy's retreat he hugged the general and rewarded him generously.

The Hafets Hayim says the nimshal is: malachim are in the king's palace daily in front of the Shechina, their radiance and glory is unequalled. But the ssadikim are constantly at war with their Yetser Hara, being tested by countless adversaries. As the Mesilat Yesharim says, we encounter a war daily surrounding us and the one who constantly fights and overcomes these battles, he is the one who will be honoured in this world and be zocheh to see the radiance of the Shechina. Malachim are only able to be the outside guards in the Shamayim and can never reach the heights of any ssadik. The



ssadikim have power over the malachim through their misvot and teffilot. One of the talmidim of the Hafets Hayim relates that once he followed his Rebbi when he went into his special room to meditate. He was standing outside listening to the Hafets Hayim speaking. He heard the names of certain malachim and the Hafets Hayim was instructing them what they should do for Klal Yisrael. This story illustrates how a ssadik so close to our generation was able to have control over the angels. Let us all appreciate the greatness that lies within our Jewish souls.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



After years of research, the **Rebbe of Radzin zy"a** believed he found the blue techeiles dye, which could be used for tzitzis. To verify his claim, the Rebbe of Radzin travelled to Rome. He wanted to see the color of techeiles in the kohen gadol's clothing, which is stored in the Vatican. Getting into the Vatican wasn't a simple matter. After much effort, the Vatican finally allowed him to visit the Vatican's basement, to see the cohen gadol's clothing, if he would first play and win two chess games against professional chess champions. The Rebbe thought of a plan which would enable him to win both games. He said that he wants to play both games simultaneously. Two games were set up in two adjacent rooms. He told the first opponent that he wants to play black. White goes first, so his opponent took a white pawn and made the first move. The rebbe didn't respond to this move. He went into the next room, this time playing white, and copied the move of his first opponent. He watched carefully to see how the second opponent will respond. When the second opponent moved his pawn, he returned to the first room, to copy that move. Now he watched



to see how the first opponent will react, and he repeated what he saw in the next room.

In this manner, he won both chess games. We learn from this story determination. The Rebbe travelled all the way to Rome to verify his techeiles and wasn't daunted by the obstacles put in his way. This is how one should battle the yetzer hara. When one battles with the yetzer hara, he needs wisdom to succeed. He should develop wise strategies to overcome him and win.

Stories of Gedolim

It was a cold, blustery day, with the snow piled high on the streets and sidewalks. Few ventured outside on days such as those and the students at Yeshiva Torah Vodaath wondered if they would have their regular shiur. Four brave students entered the beis medrash on that snowy day, curious as to what would transpire.



True, their Rebbe, **R' Shlomo Heiman zt"l** was known to give intense and fiery drashos but would he give it on this very snowy day, to just four lone students? R' Heiman walked into the beis medrash and proceeded to deliver his shiur. Surprisingly, he gave the shiur as if standing before a packed beis medrash with all his usual fire and zeal! His students, all four of them, were taken aback as they were not expecting for their rebbe to put so much energy and effort into a shiur for so few boys. Respectfully, the boys approached R' Heiman and asked him why he had done what he had. His answer taught them a valuable lesson. "It

is not just to you that I gave the shiur," R' Heiman responded, "but for all your future children and students who you will teach in the future. I therefore delivered with my usual efforts for many will indeed be affected". R' Heiman taught them an amazing lesson that day, not only on the gemara, but of their incredible responsibility to perpetuate their teaching to future generations.

Rebbe Ahron of Belz and The Irreligious Soldier



An elderly person asked **Rebbe Ahron of Belz zt'l** whether he was permitted to daven Shemonah Esrei while sitting down. Rebbe Ahron replied, "According to halachah, you may sit. However, my father **(Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zt'l**) would say, "A person shouldn't give in." Don't turn yourself into an invalid, into someone who needs to find shortcuts. One should always be prepared to overcome all challenges."

An elderly Yid used to pass by the Belzer cheder in Tel Aviv, in his wheelchair almost every day to speak with the children. He wasn't religious but was brought up in a religious home. The children spoke to him about emunah, and encouraged him to keep Shabbos and mitzvos. He said, "Don't speak to me about emunah, because I believe in Hashem more than you do," and he told them his story:

"When I was young, I wanted to join the army. My father brought me to Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zt'l [in Poland.] "The Rebbe

told me, 'You want to join the army? O.K. I will not try to stop you. But I demand from you one thing: You must always keep Shabbos.'

"There were crutches in the Rebbe's room. The Rebbe pointed to them and said, 'Just a few moments ago, an invalid came in wearing those crutches. I told him to leave my room without them. He doesn't need them anymore. But if you won't keep Shabbos, those crutches are waiting for you.' "I was afraid, and therefore I always kept Shabbos. I wasn't religious but I kept Shabbos. Eventually, I came to Eretz Yisrael and I was a general in the Six Day War. "When the war ended I was invited to tour and see the new borders. The tour was long, and would be on Shabbos too. In the euphoria of the moment I didn't think much about it and joined the tour. I was riding on a tank. I didn't allow myself to think about Shabbos.

"On Friday night, the moment Shabbos began, the door of the tank suddenly opened and I fell out. Since then I'm on crutches. So don't speak to me about emunah. I experienced the truth of emunah." The children asked him, "So if you believe, why don't you keep all of the mitzvos? Why only Shabbos?" The man pointed to his heart and said, "the treifa heart!" His impure heart didn't permit him to act as he knew he should. This man certainly had his challenges, and we can't judge him. But we must realize that that isn't any valid excuse. Challenges were given to us for us to overcome them.

Life is blessings. They are opportunities for growth, and they bring the greatest pleasure to Hashem. *(Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Eli Bidernman.)*

A lack of Emunah is like a passenger on an airplane who doesn't believe that there is a pilot in the cockpit. – R'Lezer Brody.

Rabbi Y Richtman - The Whole Torah

Rashi writes as follows: "I lived with Yaakov" - The word **גרתי** has the numerical value of 613. That is to say: I (Yaakov) lived with the wicked Lavan, but I kept the 613 commandments, and I did not learn from his evil deeds."

R' Yissachar Frand shlit'a points out that Yaakov seems to be repeating himself. Of course, if he kept all the mitzvos in the house of Lavan, then he obviously he did not learn from the evil ways of Lavan. That would have been a violation of the Torah!



He quotes his Rebbi, **R' Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman zt"l** who explains that Yaakov is teaching us a great principle. One can keep all Taryag mitzvos in the Torah, and still live a Lavan lifestyle! One can do mitzvos - but not follow the ways of the Torah. It is possible to eat kosher - but think treif! To dress modestly - but live excessively! One can make a wedding where all the guests are dressed with tznius - but the lavish and immodest display of excessive Gashmius is exposed. One can daven in a shul where the mechitza is high - but the volume of the discussion during davening and krias haTorah is even higher!

We must be extremely grateful for the explosion of Yiddishkeit and Torah study in our circles, but we must also look deeper into our lifestyles. Is our Torah observance achieving the goal of coming closer to Hashem, or not? Are we keeping all the laws but exposing our flaws as we strive towards raising the bar in our materialism rather than raising ourselves up in true avodas Hashem? Yaakov Avinu is telling us that he kept the entire Torah - but he also did not learn and copy the evil ways of Lavan, a man whose goal in life was to

climb the ladder of material success and fulfil all his base desires. We, too, must look at ourselves and make sure that our lives are not a contradiction! We must be observant - but we must be deeply religious too! (*Torah Tavlin*)

Rav Schach's Story of Encouragement to the Orphan



An orphan was brought to **Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach zt'l** (1899-2001) for encouragement. Rav Shach told him, "When I was a child, I was also an orphan. When I was engaged to be married the kallah's family didn't give me a dowry. I had no parents to demand a dowry, so I was engaged without any financial promises and without financial support. "After the vort I returned to my yeshiva in Lithuania, where I learned. My friends told me that I made a mistake. "You are a talmid chacham. You should have asked for a house and more. We recommend that you break the shidduch…"

Rav Shach replied, "This is what Hashem arranged, so it is certainly for the best." His friends didn't agree. Rav Shach said that when the Nazis came close to Lithuania, he and his wife escaped before the mass murder. He said, "The people who owned homes didn't want to abandon the city because they feared that the Nazis would take away their homes and wealth. They stayed on and the Nazis destroyed everything. In retrospect, I was saved because I didn't have a home.

"Similarly, you should know," Rav Shach told the orphan, "no matter what happens, everything is for the best…"

The Yeshiva Boy Who Wouldn't Come to Minyan



There was once a young man in the Torah Vodaas Yeshiva who was not coming to Minyan. The faculty tried all kinds of threats to force him to come to Minyan, but it was not helping. They finally went to the Rosh Yeshivah, **Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky** and asked him whether they could expel the boy from the dormitory.

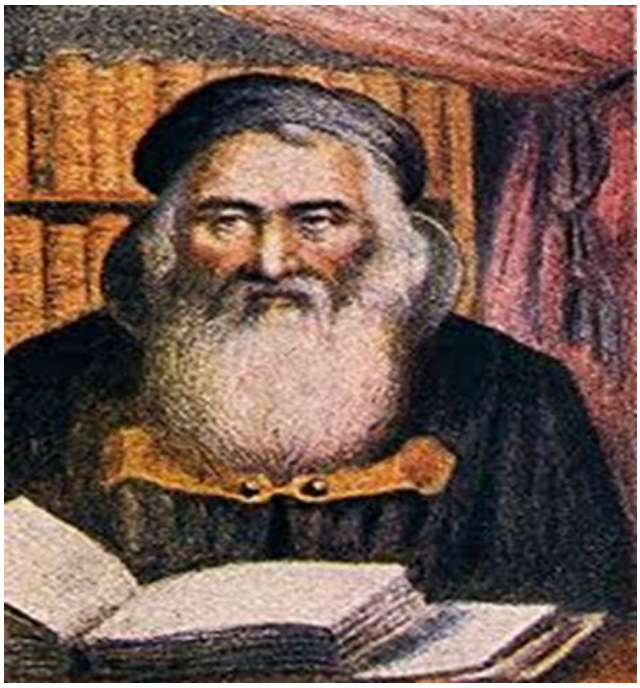
Rav Yaakov gave them permission, so they told the boy that he was barred from the dorm until he started to come to Minyan. The faculty Rabbis also told him that Rav Kamenetsky wanted to see him before he left. The boy figured, "Now I am really in trouble." When he appeared before Rav Kamentesky, the Rosh Yeshiva asked "I hear that you have been thrown out of the dormitory…where are you going to sleep?" The boy told him that he did not have any other arrangements. Rav Yaakov told him, "I want you to sleep in my house." -The boy asked the Rosh Yeshiva to explain why on the one hand, he was throwing him out of the dormitory, but on the other hand, he was inviting him to stay with him.

Rav Kamenetsky explained to the young man: "Your grandfather used to give money to the Kovno Kollel where I learned in Europe. Since I was a beneficiary of your grandfather's support to that Kollel, I owe you a favor and am glad I have the chance to pay it back in this fashion. True, I cannot let you sleep in the dormitory because you refuse to come to Minyan, but you can sleep in my house, out of appreciation for what your grandfather did for me."

Parsha Pages - Eight Mems

לב:טו עִזִּים מָאתַיִם וּתְיָשִׁים עֶשְׂרִים רְחֵלִים מָאתַיִם וְאֵילִים עֶשְׂרִים

Every word in this Pasuk, the **Baal haTurim** observes, ends with a



'Mem', as do all the words in the Pasuk in Pinchas (29:33 [the Korban Musaf of Succos]) "u'Minchosom ve'niskeihem, la'porim ve'la'kevosim … ". 'Altogether, there are eight Memin', he adds, and correspondingly, eight kings ruled in Edom before King Shaul ascended the throne of Yisrael (as the Torah records in the final paragraph of this Parshah). Alternatively, he concludes, the 'Memin' hint to the fact that all the animals listed here were blemished (ba'alei mumin). He did this in order to prevent Eisav from bringing them as Korbanos. (Finding favour in Eisav's eyes is one thing. Showering him with merits is another).

36:10 **אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי־עֵשָׂו אֱלִיפַז בֶּן־עָדָה אֵשֶׁת עֵשָׂו רְעוּאֵל בֶּן־בָּשְׂמַת אֵשֶׁת עֵשָׂו**

The rabbi of South Bend, Indiana, once travelled to the local hospital to comfort a family which had just suffered the loss of a close relative, and at the same time to ensure a halachic burial for the deceased. One of the bereaved, however, objected to the rabbi's intervention. The man was insistent. "No rabbi is going to tell me about Jewish law. I saw the holiest of all rabbis suffer the greatest humiliation at the hands of the Nazis." With great emotion, the man continued. "*In our village, we were all rounded up and forced to spit at and slap the face of the rabbi. After that everyone was shot. I am the sole survivor of that town. Even the holy Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok does not have a living relative to tell his tale. What good*

did observing Jewish law do for him, I ask you?" Retaining his composure, the rabbi informed the embittered man that he was wrong on two counts. "First of all," the rabbi said, "the Rav you are referring to was named Moshe Yaakov. And second, I should know, because I am his grandson and I was named after him!" The man literally slid under his chair. Needless to say, a proper funeral was arranged.

The Torah discusses the genealogy of Esav - his numerous wives, children and grandchildren. Yaakov, too, is mentioned, as are his children, but not nearly the same amount of elaboration is attributed to him. Rashi explains that it is to show the rampant immorality amongst the descendants of Esav. The gentiles don't care of who or what was - only what is in the present. This is in stark contrast to the Yichus that is so important amongst the Jewish people.

וַתָּמָת רָחֵל וַתִּקָּבֵר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה הִוא בֵּית לָחֶם *Thus Rachel died, and was buried on the road to Efrat, which is Bethlehem (35:19)*



Why didn't Jacob bury Rachel in the Cave of Machpela where Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sara, and Isaac and Rebecca were buried? Instead he buried her at the crossroads of Bethlehem in accordance with a Divine Command. When Rachel's children would, in the future, be exiled by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylonia, they would pass Rachel's tomb. She would entreat Gd for mercy for her children, and G-d would listen to her prayer.

Parsha Potpourri Compiled by Ozer Alport

32:15 עזים מאתים ותישים עשרים רחלים מאתים ואילים עשרים



Prior to his fateful encounter with his irate brother Eisav, Yaakov made multiple efforts to appease him. Among the avenues that he pursued was sending a number of animals to Eisav as gifts. The Torah records that Yaakov sent 200 female goats and 20 male goats; 200 ewes and 20 rams; 30 nursing camels with their young; 40 female cows and 10 bulls; and 20 female donkeys and 10 male donkeys. As there are no coincidences in the Torah, Yaakov must have had a calculated reason for the number of each type of animal that he sent.

Rav Nachshon Gaon, the ninth-century leader of the yeshiva in Sura, provides a brilliant explanation for the number of goats that Yaakov sent to Eisav, which totaled 220. He points out that the proper factors of 220 (numbers less than 220 which evenly divide into it) are 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 20, 22, 44, 55, and 110. When they are summed, they add up to 284. Similarly, the proper factors of 284 are 1, 2, 4, 71, 142, which add up to 220. In other words, the numbers 220 and 284 are unique in that the sum of the proper factors of each number adds up to the other number, and they are the smallest set of numbers with this unique characteristic.

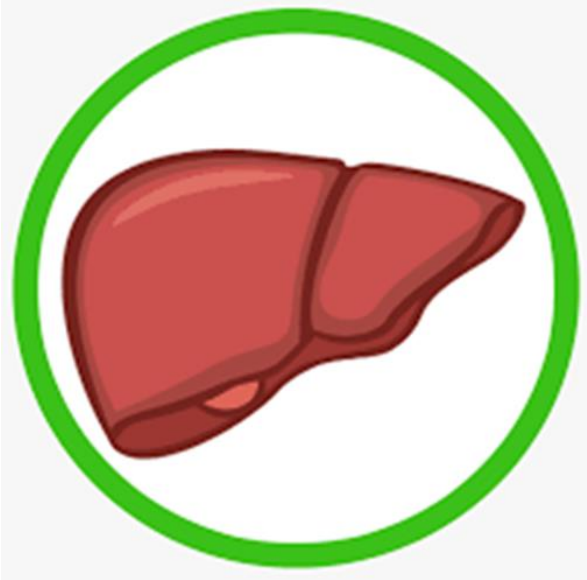
A pair of numbers with this unusual property is referred to by mathematicians as amicable numbers, or as Rav Nachshon Gaon calls them, **מנין נאהב** - beloved numbers. He explains that there was an

ancient custom that when a person wanted to curry favour with a prominent individual, he would give him a gift of items numbering one of a pair of amicable numbers, and keep the corresponding number for himself.

Rav Nachshon Gaon suggests that this is what Yaakov did in order to placate Eisav: He sent him 220 goats, while keeping 284 for himself. It is clear from the text that Yaakov sent to Eisav 200 female goats and 20 male goats, for a total of 220 goats, but where is it alluded to that he kept 284 for himself?

When Yaakov gave instructions to his servants regarding the presentation of the gifts to Eisav, he told them (32:21) **אכפרה פניו במנחה ההולכת לפני** - I will appease him (Eisav) with the gifts that precede me. Rav Nachshon Gaon explains that the word **אכפרה** can be divided into two words - **אך פרה**. The word **אך** is understood by Chazal to connote limiting or reducing (see Yerushalmi Berachos 67b). In this case, the numerical value of the word **פרה** is 285, so diminishing it by 1 yields 284, which is the number of goats that Yaakov kept for himself as part of his attempt to pacify Eisav.

נפלאות הבורא - Hashems Amazing World – The Liver



The liver is generally classified with the digestive system, but it accomplishes a wide range of tasks. Aside from your skin, this is the largest gland in your body, and one of the most astonishing structures in your body! The liver literally performs thousands of different functions! It is amazing how such a small organ can do so many things. Here are a few of its major activities: (1) It is a collection and

filtration plant, carefully removing a variety of substances from the blood. (2) Working with waste products and nutrients brought to it in the blood stream, it manufactures literally hundreds upon hundreds of different chemical substances. Among these are bile, glycogen (stored sugar), and blood clotting aids and preventatives. (3) It is a warehouse that stores iron, vitamins, copper, amino acids, fats, and glycogen. (4) It is a heating plant, producing more heat than anything else in the body except the muscles. (5) It is a waste disposal plant. Like the kidneys, it filters all your blood, removes certain waste products, and sends them off for excretion. Aside from your blood cells, the liver and kidneys are the major detoxification points in your body. THANK HASHEM FOR YOUR LIVER!! (*R' Eliyahu Tobal)*

Rabbi Eytan Feiner -Our Fingers and the Four Exiles



The Ben Ish Chai writes that the four fingers of the hand correspond to the four *malchiyos* that the Jewish people have been subjected to – Egypt, Babylon, Persia/Greece and Rome. The thumb, however, which stands alone from the other four fingers is the finger which alludes to the Jews, reminiscent of the *Pasuk* describing us, "A nation which dwells in solitude" (*Bamidbar* 23:9). What exactly is the meaning behind this allusion?

All the other nations of the world have a special sar, angel, which serves as their intermediary between themselves and Hashem. The Jewish nation, in contrast, shares a direct connection and communication with Hashem. The other nations are thus alluded to with the other four fingers which have three joints, a top, middle

and bottom. In essence, there is an intervening space in the middle, like the intermediary which they must rely on and relate to before reaching Hashem. In contrast, the thumb has no such middle joint. The two joints are directly one above the other. This represents the Jewish people who do not need to rely on any other external force to connect to Hashem.

This is in fact why, explains **Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch**, the thumb is called the godal, a word short for agudal and similarly cognate to the word agudah, which signifies a unified and joined group. It is the thumb which faces all the other fingers and has the advantageous manoeuvrability to wrap itself around all the other fingers and join them together.

The thumb has the capability of rising above all the other fingers or sinking below. When the Jewish nation, as represented by the thumb, is following the will and ways of Hashem, it rises above the other nations, as per the verse in *Parshas Ki Savo*, **והיה אם שמוע תשמע בקול ד' אלקיך...ונתנך ד' אלקיך עליון על כל גויי הארץ** – ***And it will be if you listen to the voice of Hashem… Hashem will place you above all the nations of the world"*** (*Devarim* 28:1).

In this vein, the word **עליון** (lit. above) is not coincidentally a contraction of the words **על יון** – over Yavan (Greece). When we live according to the will of G-d, we hold the capability of rising above Yavan and subjugating them. What, though, does this really mean?

As the **Maharal, Vilna Gaon and Rav Tzadok** write, the way to discover the true, underlying meaning of a word or phrase is by looking to its first appearance in the Torah. And what is the first indication of the word Elyon in the Torah? In *Parshas Lech Lecha* (14:18), Malki-Tzedek, king of Jerusalem, is depicted as the "Kohen Le-l Elyon." Malki-Tzedek, who was in fact Shem (son of Noach), was the first Kohen Gadol (*Nedarim* 32b). And it was his descendants, the house of the Chashmonaim (Maccabees), who were Kohanim and were **עליון – על יון**.

The Maharal further observes that Yavan, whose *gematria* is 66, was able to contaminate the oil which was in the Heichal, or Sanctuary, (*gematria* 65) of the Beis Hamikdash. Yavan had just a slight upper-hand advantage over the Heichal and was thus able to exercise their dominion over it. However, a Kohen, whose *gematria* is 75 and ten more than that of Heichal, functions as the one who connects the Heichal to a higher dimension of *kedusha*. Yavan can thus only penetrate into the Heichal; but the Kohen can enter even further, into the Kodesh Hakodashim, the Holy of Holies. Yavan can as well contaminate all the jars of oil, except the one which has the seal of the Kohen.

Along these lines, the **Rabbeinu Bachye** (*Parshas Tzav*, 8:23) cites the *Chachmei HaTeva* who explain that man's five fingers correspond to his five senses. Hashem provided man with five fingers and each finger knows to instinctively serve one of the five senses. Thus, for instance, when one wishes to remove food from their mouth, it is the thumb which is typically used to do so. As well, have you ever wondered why babies specifically suck their thumbs? Why not their pinkies?

It is because the thumb corresponds to the mouth and sense of taste. Why as well do we clean out our nose with the *etzbah*, the second finger? It is because the second finger relates to the *chush ha'reyach*, sense of smell. The *amah*, third finger (*Kesubos* 5a), is the longest and thus used to reach far parts of the body to alleviate an itch or pain. It corresponds to the sense of touch. The fourth finger, known as the *kemitzah*, relates to the sense of sight, for with it one cleans out his eyes. Although, some may use the second or third finger to accomplish this job, that is not problematic, as Rashi (*Kesubos* 5a) tells us that the Kohen used to be begin the kemitzah, the process of cupping the flour of a *korban* in his hands, beginning with the second finger. And lastly, the pinky relates to the *chush* of *shmiah*, hearing. It is the pinky, the smallest of fingers, which is used to clean out the wax from one's ears.

As such, the correlation between the four *malchiyos* and the four fingers fits perfectly with the correspondence between the five fingers and five senses. The five fingers in order respectively relate to the Jewish people (thumb), Egypt (index finger), Babylon (middle finger), Persia/Greece (fourth finger) and Rome (pinky). As per the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 2:4), the Greeks' objective was to "**החשיכה עיניהם של ישראל בגזרותיהן**," to darken the "eyes" of the Jewish people with harsh decrees. Yavan, corresponding to the fourth finger, which relates to the sense of sight, strove to dim the eyes of Jews. However, the Jews, once again as the thumb, hold the capability of rising above – **על יון** – and reinstating the light and glory of the Beis Hamikdash and Jewish nation.

A Short Message From Rabbi Mordechai Twerski



One of the most important things we can do when reciting Modeh Ani in the morning is focusing on one simple thought. As the Torah tells us, after Hashem initially created Adam and Chava as one unified entity, He split them into two. In essence then, a husband and wife are two halves of the same neshama. When we therefore wake up in the morning, we ought to look over at our spouse and only then recite the words, "Thank you for returning my neshama." It is only together with our spouse's neshama that we are complete. With this attitude, much of the marital conflict which occurs will be diminished. For after all, we cannot be in conflict with two halves of the same self.

Once when Rav Arieh Levine's wife had sharp pains in her ankle, he took her to the doctor, who said "Now , what seems to be the problem?" . He answered, "**Our** Ankle hurts!"



Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld- *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ 32:25 . ***And Jacob was left alone***, Rashi says:**ויותר יעקב: *שכח פכים קטנים וחזר עליהם* He had forgotten small bottles and returned for them.** — *[from Gen. Rabbah 77:2, Chullin 91a]*

This is unbelievable. Why was Yaakov Avinu going back to get the small flasks? Chazal say that we see from here, that to Tzadikim, their money and possessions are dearer to them then their Guf (bodies). The reason that Yaakov Avinu placed himself in terrible danger, just by going back alone to retrieve the Pachim K'tanim, was because they were so dear to him.

The reason for this, explains **the Arizal** is that when it comes to the Tzadikim, they realise is that what they have is not just what they achieved for themselves, but it is what Hashem gave them. And therefore, there must be a reason and importance as to why they have it. Therefore, the Tzadikim will do whatever they can. not to lose what they have been given. With this understanding, we can appreciate that for everything that Hashem gives us, it has a purpose. The more we need something, the more we will appreciate it. Whatever we have is measured out by the Ribono Shel Olam for our personal benefit. Therefore we need to have Hakoros Hatov to Him and respect the item so much more.



Reb Yeruchum of Mir said a story of a philosopher who wanted to be satisfied with the least number of possessions as possible. He started to give up everything that he owned, his house, his car- everything. Eventually he was left only with a water pump, so that he could at least procure water from any place, so that he could survive. He was once waking along the road and he found that he could draw water from a well with the bucket provided, so he did not require his pump. He therefore realised that he didn't even need the pump any longer, so he discarded it as well. He was no longer able to drink water from any other well source.

From Yaakov Avinu and the Tzadikim we see that they thought differently. The idea from the Torah is not to have nothing or less, but is to appreciate every single thing that we have. Things, that have been given to us by Hashem for our benefit. Our purpose and Tachlis in this world is to appreciate what we have and enjoy them. ***Have a wonderful שבת.***

R' Mordechai Kamenetzky Shlit'a (Parsha Parables) would say: "The reason why Jews add the word, 'Yiddishe' when blessing someone with 'Nachas,' is because there was once another 'Nachas' in the Torah: 'The sons of Reuel: Nachas, Zerach, Shama and Miza. These were grandsons of Esav's wife, Busmas.' Thus, we see that there was a gentile named Nachas, or you might say, a 'Goyishe Nachas!' Since that Nachas did not bode well for the Children of Yaakov, thus we bless our fellow Jews with only 'Yiddishe Nachas!'"

Torah Tavlin



R' Shloime Rabinowitz zt"l (Tiferes Shlomo of Radomsk) would say: **וישלח יעקב מלאכים** - **The Zohar** tells us that for each mitzvah we do, an angel is created. The angel we need to fight against the evils of 'Esav' is the one created when we recite Krias Shema, as the posuk says **והיה בית יעקב אש ובית עשו לקש**. The word **קש** is an acronym for **קריאת שמע**. This is further alluded to by Rashi when he writes that Yaakov sent **מלאכים ממש** to Esav. The word **ממש** is **מַקבלת מַלכות שַמים**- one who accepts the yoke of Heaven, as we do in Krias Shema."

Concepts in Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman



When a man and woman get married, on top of all the joy and bliss, they each add their spouse to the **הרחמן** in Birchas Hamazon: **הרחמן הוא יברך אותי ואת אשתי** - ***"The Merciful One, bless me, and my spouse .... just as You blessed Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov in everything, by everything, with everything." בכל מכל כל***

Let us understand this beracha. Avraham Avinu went through ten nisyonos. Plus, he had to deal with Yishmael. Yitzchok had the Akeida, had no children for twenty years, finally having twins, one of

which was Esav. Yaakov had to deal with a crooked shver for 20 years and had severe issues with his brother. He gave birth to twelve sons, who also had issues with one another. His favourite son, Yosef, disappeared, seemingly without a trace.

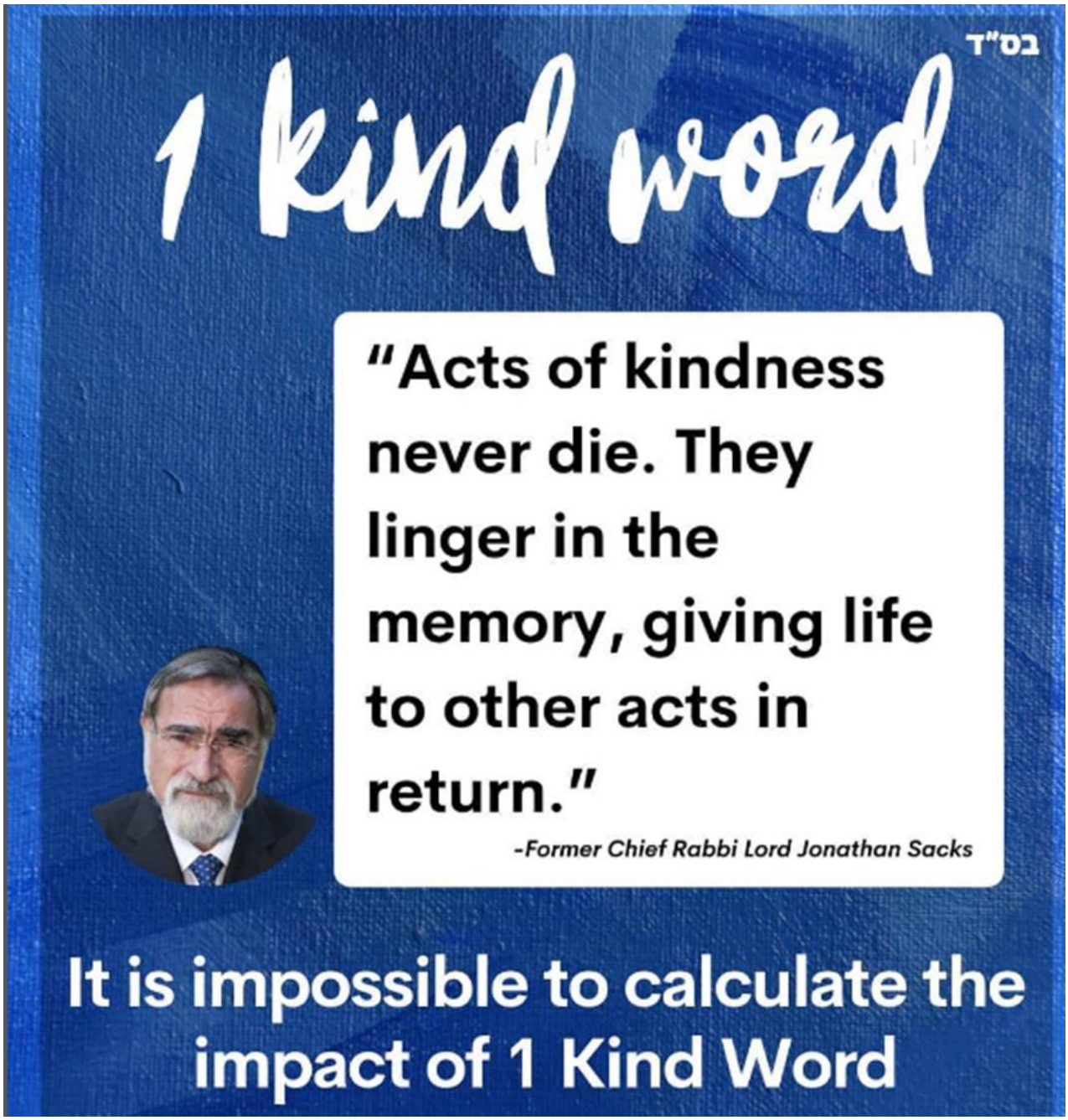
Let me ask you: Is there any part of these lives that one would want to wish upon his spouse? All this notwithstanding, Avraham Avinu looked at the years of his life as **בכל** - despite all the problems, he felt he had everything and nothing was missing from his life, even if life came along with many trials and tribulations. Yitzchok said, "I ate everything **מכל** and became satiated," in every way, despite all my difficulties.

In our parsha, Yaakov Avinu was thankful to Hashem, **כי חנני אלקים וכי יש לי כל** - ***thank You Hashem for showing me grace and giving me "everything."*** We, too, thank Hashem for blessing us **בכל מכל כל** - in everything, by everything, with everything. We can now understand the beracha that a husband and wife wish for each other. To have the perception that they have all that they need and be **שמח בחלקם**. That truly is a most beautiful wish.

We should be like the Avos. Having that constant feeling of **יש לי כל** - I have everything I need. No matter how hard life may become, we trust Hashem gives us all we need and the strength to handle it. We therefore conclude **כן יברך אותנו.. בברכה שלמה** May Hashem bless us with a perfect blessing **ונאמר אמן**.

"There is no better way of vexing an abuser than keeping silent." ~~ Tzemach Tzadik.

"The Torah is truth, and the purpose of knowing it is to live by it." ~~ Rambam.



Concepts in Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman

וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד 32:8 The Torah tells us that Yaakov Avinu was so afraid of meeting Esav that he prepared himself with three things: **לדורן לתפילה למלחמה** (gifts for Esav, tefillos to the Ribono shel Olam, and preparations for war). The question is, why was Yaakov Avinu so afraid? He just received a beracha from Hashem: **והנה אנכי עמך ושמרתיך בכל אשר תלך** - Hashem promised to be with Yaakov Avinu and protect him wherever he goes. Showing fear seems to indicate

that Yaakov questioned this beracha. Why would Yaakov Avinu have any questions at all?

The answer may be found in Targum Yonason who says that Yaakov was very afraid **מאד** of the 20 years that he didn't have the zechus of **כיבוד אב**. Do the maths: the word **מאד** is the same gematria as **כיבוד אב** - 45. Therefore, Yaakov Avinu was afraid of the **מאד** - of the **כיבוד אב** that he was lacking.

The Vilna Gaon ZT"L writes that the word **ונתנו** ("and they gave") written by the donations to the Mishkan, is a palindrome - a phrase, number, or other sequence of letters which reads the same backward or forward. Says the Gaon, this alludes to the **הבטחה** (guarantee) when a person gives Tzedaka, that whatever he gives will come back to him.

In Parshas Toldos, when both Yaakov and Esav brought food to their father, in order to receive the bechorah, the posuk says by Yaakov **ויבא אל אביו** whereas by Esav the posuk says **ויבא לאביו**. What is the difference?

Well, I thought that perhaps the phrase **ויבא לאביו** said by Esav is a palindrome as well, (also said by R'Chaim Kanievsky) signifying the important life lesson that whatever one "brings" or does for his parents in the area of **כיבוד אב** will come back to him in the form of great **שכר** (reward) - with interest!

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

Yaakov's name is changed to Yisroel. Yaakov himself changed from an individual, to a representative of the entire nation, since every member of Klal Yisroel is called by this name. A name signifies a person's very essence. The name "Yisroel" is derived from the root **שרר** which means to control or overcome. As much as we feel downtrodden and harassed by our enemies, we must realize that our strength lies in the knowledge that WE have the upper hand. WE are

the leaders of the world, a light unto the nations, and WE are the representatives of everything holy and divine in this world.



The name "Yisroel" also stands for: **יֵש שִׁשִּׁים רִבּוֹא אוֹתִיּוֹת לַתּוֹרָה** - "There are 600,000 letters in the Torah." Each letter represents another Yiddishe neshama. Each letter of a Sefer Torah is precious and must be perfectly intact, otherwise the Sefer Torah is posul. Likewise, every member of Klal Yisroel is precious and we must ensure that every Jew is properly respected. Our strength comes from our connection to Torah and to one another and this unity and love is the greatness of Yisroel. Additionally, the letters of **ישראל** contain the first letters of all the names of our Avos and Imahos. **י** for Yitzchok and Yaakov. **ש** for Sarah. **ר** for Rivkah and Rochel. **א** for Avraham and **ל** for Leah. The inborn strength of every Yid comes from our great fathers and mothers who passed down the powerful genes of emunah, mesirus nefesh and middos tovos to every member of Klal Yisroel. We live and benefit from our Zechus Avos and we must constantly look back at the actions of our illustrious ancestors and strive to emulate them. B'ezras Hashem, may we all live up to our great name - "Yisroel" - and come to realize the beautiful words of Divine origin: "How fortunate are you, Yisroel, through whom I am Glorified."

"Rather a slip of the foot than a slip of the tongue. "

אַךְ־בְּזֹאת נֵאָוֹת לָכֶם אֵם תִּהְיוּ כָּמֹנוּ לְהִמּוֹל לָכֶם כָּל־זָכָר 34:15



The Chazon Ish, R' Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz zt"l, was once honoured with Sandek at a bris in Bnei Brak. After the ceremony, many people swarmed to the shul to get a beracha, ask a shailah, or glimpse his holy countenance. The Chazon Ish received each person with a smile, carefully listening to their requests. His close family members were able to discern a slight difference in his mannerisms, and the fact that he was so pale worried them. When the last person had finished, the Chazon Ish slowly stood up and proceeded to the automobile that was to take him home. As the car began to move, the Chazon Ish asked to go to the hospital. "But drive slowly," he said, and the driver who was one of his students slowed down almost to a crawl. After they reached a turn in the road, the Chazon Ish said he could now go faster. The driver handed the Chazon Ish a pill that the doctor had prescribed and after he took it, he instructed his student to stop so he could get out and breathe some fresh air. The Chazon Ish felt better and told his student, ***"That was a strong heart attack!"***

Apparently, he had a heart attack on the way to the bris but didn't want to cause the baby's family anguish by not attending. "So, why did the Rav tell me to drive slowly when we got into the car?" asked the driver. The Chazon Ish responded. "Didn't you see the crowds of people behind the car? If you'd have gone fast, they would have gotten hit with the exhaust fumes right in their faces. How could I mistreat and dishonour another Jew like that?"



Why did the sons of Yaakov insist that the entire city of Shechem have a bris milah? Because only a Jew can feel the pain of others and have such sensitivity. Only a person that has entered into the covenant with Hashem can treat others with the correct amount of decency and respect. If the people of Shechem wish to engage with Yaakov's family, they will need to undergo this transformative process in their mindset.

R' Menachem Mendel Morgenstern zt"l (Kotzker Rebbe)



would say: **וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו** - Why does the posuk include the word **לפניו** (before him)? Where else would he send them? In truth, the real understanding of the word is **מלפניו** - 'From before him.'

Yaakov essentially sent the angels away because he wished to rely on Hashem's protection. He fully believed that Hashem Himself would defend him, without the use of angels as intermediaries. May Hashem protect Yaakov Avinu's children from harm always, in any manner that He sees fit."

כָּה אָמַר עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב עִם־לָבָן גַּרְתִּי וָאֵחַר עַד־עָתָּה 32:5



A father and son once entered the home of the **Baba Sali zt"l** in Netivot. The father kept Torah and mitzvos, and had a sincere fear of Hashem. The son, on the other hand, was casually dressed; his appearance spoke of shirking the yoke of Torah and its values. The father complained about his son who was desecrating the Shabbat publicly. His brazenness was clear to all; even in the home of the holy Baba Sali, he did not bother to cover his head. The Tzaddik looked at the young man and asked him, "Why do you not repent?"



The boy stared back defiantly and then left the house, mounted his motorcycle and was on his way. Within moments, the terrible noise of a crash was heard. A passing car had hit the young man causing him to fly off the motorcycle. People ran into the street to see what had happened and to help the victim. The Baba Sali maintained his composure, and told his assistant to go out to the street and bring the injured unconscious young man to him. He was placed on the couch as the Baba Sali had instructed. The Baba Sali looked into his face, lifted his stick, and tapped the son who opened his eyes. "Was that enough?" he asked.

The young man nodded. The Baba Sali then ordered him to stand up and handed him a kippah to cover his head.

The purpose of Yaakov's gifts and kind words to Esav was so that he might soften his stance and lose some of the hatred he was harbouring for his brother for so many years. Curiously, Yaakov told him, "I lived with Lavan and I kept all the mitzvos of the Torah. I never learned from his evil and wicked ways!" How would this have any effect on Esav? Because Yaakov knew that if he can reach inside and touch a positive nerve with his brother, perhaps he can bring him around to good. He told Esav, "Look, I could do it for so many years. If I can do it, then you can do it too!"



R' Yitzchok Zilberstein shlit'a tells an incident that occurred to one Yungerman learning in a Jerusalem kollel. The man's day started out like any other and he learned with a number of chavrusos (study partners) during the morning, afternoon and evening sedorim. When the last seder was over, the weary young man donned his hat and jacket and began to walk home.

Suddenly, a boy no more than eleven-years-old met him in the street and asked if he can join him in his house for a siyum. His older brother had just completed a masechta and it was quite a big simcha in the family. They were short just one man for a minyan and he asked if the kollel man could stop in for a few minutes. The Yungerman was quite tired and eager to get home to spend time with his wife and children, but the simple look of pleading on the boy's face was too much to resist. As much as he wanted to get home, he

could not disappoint this boy and his family who apparently were making a big deal about the siyum for one reason or another. He agreed to join them.

Well, the siyum took a bit longer than he would have liked, but he was happy to complete the minyan and the family was quite appreciative. Finally, the siyum was over and the man walked out again into the night sky to make his way home This time, he hurried with an extra bounce in his step and he was just about home, when he heard a voice call to him from an upstairs apartment.

"Excuse me, please. We need one more for a minyan so an avel (mourner) can say Kaddish. Do you mind, please, to come upstairs and join us for the minyan? It'll only take a few short minutes and you'll be on your way!"

The Yungerman stood still, unsure of what to do. He really, really wanted to get home! Why, his wife is probably worried about him - but his silent reverie was cut short as the pleading voice called out to him once again, "Please, it is really important. Please come upstairs and complete the minyan. I know it's late - but it will only be for a few minutes!" How could he say no? Twice in one night, he was called in to complete a minyan. Hashem was obviously sending him these zechusim (merits) although he had no idea why.

Good-naturedly, he trudged up the stairs and was the tenth man for the minyan in the Bais Avel (mourner's house). When Maariv was over and he paid his respects, he was once again on his way. This time he actually made it home. The moment he opened the door, his wife and children came running towards him, white faced and panic-stricken. His wife looked like she'd seen a ghost and she was so happy to see that he was alright. "What happened?" he asked with concern, and a torrent of words came flowing out. It seems that at precisely the time he would normally walk in the door from night seder, there was a loud, insistent banging on the door. When she opened the door, three burly men burst into the house and began asking for her

husband. These men were not from around these parts - in fact, they looked like tough-guy gangsters who were there to "rough up" the man of the house.

They insisted on searching for him throughout the apartment and when he was not to be found, they hustled his wife and children into the living room and forced them to sit there, terrified, while they all waited together. They claimed, the man of the house owed them money and needed to pay his debt, and as much as she tried to explain that her husband was a kollel man with very little money and did not even own the apartment, they continued to sit and terrorize the family. Finally, after waiting for over thirty minutes, they decided that they probably had the wrong house and stormed out in search of their next victim. "Had you come home on time," she exclaimed, "they would have beaten you up and asked questions later!" Obviously, Hashem made sure that he would not come home when he normally did - and he even picked up a few zechusim to boot!



A young man came to the Chofetz Chaim ZT"L requesting a blessing to be exempted from the draft in Czarist Russia. But the Chofetz Chaim refused the request and said cryptically: "Siz gut tzu kenen shison." ("It's good to know how to shoot"). The young man was aghast at this response and eventually was drafted into the army where he was forced to serve for a number of years. Thirty years later, during WWII, this young man escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto and was captured by Russian partisans in the forest who intended to shoot him. He told them that he could help them fight

the Germans but the partisans just laughed and said they were not interested in training some Jew how to shoot a gun. At that point, he told them that he was already trained from his army service and showed them that he knew how to use a rifle. With G-d's help he survived the war as an active member of the partisans, always remembering the prophetic words of the Chofetz Chaim, "Siz gut tzu kenen shison."



A Yid generally avoids violence but there comes a time when even a Jew has to stand up and fight. In the case of Yaakov Avinu, he was aware that his brother Esav was coming toward him with four hundred fighters, ready to do battle. So, he did what a Jew must do. He prepared himself in three ways: Tefillah (prayer), for a Jew's most potent weapon is his power of tefillah; Gifts. Historically, a well-placed "gift" or bribe often did the trick, and war. Yaakov divided his family into two camps in classic battle formation. Sometimes, a Jew is forced to fight to defend himself.

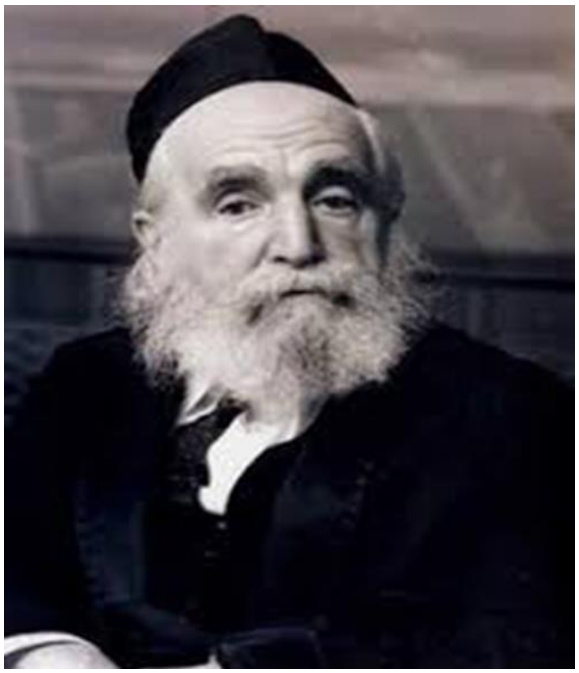
Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Yeruchem Levovitz, *zt"l*, would say, "A tailor takes his sewing basket, a carpenter takes his tool chest, and a shoemaker takes his special tools. What are the tools of trade for a Jew?

The answer is, a Jew takes his *Siddur* and his *Tefilah*. These are all the tools he needs!"

Concepts in Avodas Halev From R' Chaim Yosef Kofman

וַיִּצֵּב יַעֲקֹב מַצֵּבָה עַל־קִבְרָתָהּ הִוא מַצֶּבֶת קִבֶּרֶת־רָחֵל עַד־הַיּוֹם 35:20



The posuk tells us that after Rochel died, Yaakov Avinu erected a **מצבה** (monument) over her grave. In Parshas Shoftim, however, the Torah tells us: **ולא תקים לך מצבה אשר שנא ה' אלקיך** - ***"You shall not erect a monument, for Hashem your G-d hates it."*** How is it possible that Yaakov took stones to make a matzeiva when the posuk tells us not to?

Furthermore, we have a minhag to place small stones on top of a gravestone when we leave a cemetery. This, too, constitutes a form of erecting a monument, a **מצבה**. If so, why do we do it?



R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that a **מזבח** (altar) which is constructed of many stones symbolizes continuous building and growth. A **מצבה** on the other hand, which is erected from a single solitary stone cannot be enlarged or altered and cannot grow. Before Matan Torah, erecting a matzeiva was the best way to honour a niftar, however, after Matan Torah, every person has a commitment of learning Torah and doing mitzvos.

We are adding stones and building our own altar throughout our lives. When a person passes away, he becomes stagnant since there

seemingly is no further opportunity to grow. We place a matzeiva over the grave of a relative and inscribe it with a description of the niftar's life of Torah, mitzvos and good deeds, which are complete once he passes from this world into the next. If, however, the niftar leaves a legacy of Torah for his children and grandchildren to follow, then his departure from this world is not an end, but a new beginning of life in Gan Eden through the actions of his descendants. Thus, we place small stones on the matzeiva to symbolize that this is not a dead monument, this person is not gone forever. Rather, he is continuing to grow, like a mizbeach, a sacrificial altar, which is comprised of stone upon stone.

Although the niftar is physically gone, his neshama is still living. Life is an opportunity for growth, but so is death, since descendants will be able to continue to build upon the foundations that their fathers have erected.



A woman once came to the Kapischnitzer Rebbe, R' Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel zt"l.

She was on the verge of despair. Having survived the Holocaust, she came to the U.S. and raised a family. She valued her Jewish roots; however, she was not a deeply religious person and consequently, neither were her children. Now, though, her grown-up son had gone too far; he had met a non-Jewish girl, courted her for some time and just recently, they announced their engagement. She was horrified; her son was planning to marry out of the faith! She begged, she

cajoled, and she even took her son to speak with many important rabbis. It was no use. "Mama," he would say, "don't you want me to be happy? I have met the woman of my dreams. So what if she's not Jewish? It's not as if we keep the Jewish laws, anyway. Why is this so important to you?" His mother tried to explain, but she was at a loss.

Now, as she stood in front of the Kapischnitzer Rebbe, she broke down in a torrent of tears. The Rebbe looked at her with tenderness in his eyes. "Bring him to me," he said, "I want to tell him a story." Mother and son came to the Kapischnitzer Rebbe and while the mother waited outside in the anteroom, the Rebbe welcomed the intrigued young man into his private study.

"Much like your mother," began the Rebbe, in a voice full of warmth and affection, "I, too, suffered under the boot of the Nazis, although surely not as much as she did. I was able to leave Europe in 1938, before the war began. But in the short time that I lived in Vienna, I did get a personal taste of oppression, German style. "I recall one incident *which stands out in my mind till today.*



We were online, waiting for a selektion that would decide our fate. Jews were being sent to the right or to the left. For some it meant slave labour and work details; for others it meant a temporary respite before the next selektion. We were all terrified - but there was nothing to do about it. We all lined up." The Rebbe looked wistful for a moment. "Suddenly, we heard the sound of loud sobs coming from the back of the line. A man was crying hysterically. I walked over to him. 'Please

don't cry,' I said. 'We will all get through this together. We are all Jewish brothers, and we will share your burden.' But the man shook his head violently. 'No! Go away! Leave me!' I again tried to console him, and finally he told me his story.

'Rabbi, I was born and raised in a religious home. But I was a rebel, and in my youth, I fell in with the wrong crowd. There was an Austrian girl, non-Jewish, who I became friendly with. We were young and having fun and it wasn't long before we decided to get married. But how would that work? I was Jewish and she was Christian. Well, I saw no future as a Jew, so I did the unthinkable; I converted to Christianity. We got married and lived happily together for the past twenty years.'

Now, the young man sat up in his chair. This, no doubt, was the part he was meant to hear. The Rebbe continued: "The man in line continued sobbing softly. 'When the Nazis announced this selektion a few days ago, not only were all Jews ordered to report, but all non-Jews were warned of the consequences of hiding or not reporting a Jew. My wife got scared. She knew that I was once a Jew and in order to save herself from potentially being arrested, she went to the Gestapo and reported that I am Jewish. The Nazis came for me a short while ago and took me away from my wife and family and threw me into this square.'

"Suddenly, the man looked up and pointed across the street. 'You want to know why I'm so hysterical? Because right over there, across the street, my wife of over twenty years is standing and watching. In fact, she's chatting with a few people, smiling - she isn't upset at all! When I look at her standing there, my heart convulses in pain. I cannot control my emotions.'

The man let out a loud cry. 'Rabbi, this woman betrayed me not once but twice! First, she convinced me to give up my religion and turn my back on my Jewish heritage. Then, when it suited her, she decided that I was a Jew and should be taken away with all the rest of the

Jews! A double betrayal by one woman! That's why I cry so hysterically!'"

A sombre quiet enveloped the Kapischnitzer Rebbe's study. The meeting was over. There were no more words to say. Silently, the young man stood up and let himself out of the room. His mother jumped to her feet when she saw her son emerging from the Rebbe's study. She noticed the ashen look on his face.

"Mama," he said quietly, before she could say a word, "the wedding is off. You were right. How can I trust a gentile with something as important as the rest of my life?"



The Apter Rav, R' Avraham Yehoshua Heschel ZT"L (Ohev Yisroel) would say: **וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל־עֵשָׂו אָחִיו** - Yaakov sent messengers **לְפָנָיו** - ahead of him. Yaakov Avinu is the source of the Jewish people, and its symbol. All his life, he constantly strove to minimize the troubles that would befall his descendants. Indeed, the incident with Esav - the dispatch of angels and the gift Yaakov sent his brother - has helped the Jewish people throughout the generations. Whenever oppressors come to harm us, the very same angels Yaakov sent to Esav awaken, and seek to appease the oppressors (symbolized by Esav). This is why the posuk states that Yaakov sent the angels 'ahead of him' - they were given a mission for the future: to always protect the Jewish people!"

Rav Ozer Alport - Parsha Points to Ponder

Prior to his encounter with Eisav, Yaakov sent him a number of goats, sheep, camels, cows, and donkeys as gifts in an effort to appease him (32:15). What other type of animal did Yaakov send that is not mentioned in the Torah?

The Yalkut Reuveini writes that Yaakov also gave Eisav a **נשר** – an eagle. Some explain that since Eisav was a renowned hunter (25:27), the eagle was intended to assist him in his pursuit of prey, similar to hunting dogs that are used today.

However, **Rav Yehuda HeChassid** explains that **נשר** does not refer to a new species of animal that Yaakov gave him, but to the total number of animals he sent, for the Torah records (32:15) that Yaakov sent 200 female goats and 20 male goats, 200 ewes and 20 rams, 30 nursing camels, 40 female cows and 10 bulls, and 20 female donkeys and 10 male donkeys. This totals 550 animals, which is the numerical value of the word **נשר**.



The Ichud B'Chidud suggests that the word **נשר** comes from the word **נושרות** – outcasts, for the **Baal HaTurim** (Ibid.) points out that all eight words in the verse that records the gift of animals end with the letter **ם**, which teaches us that all the animals Yaakov sent to Eisav were **בעלי מומין** – blemished and disqualified from being offered as sacrifices.

R' Shmuel Aharon Yudelevitch ZT"L would say:

למה זה תשאל לשמי- Yaakov asked the angel what his name is.The angel refused to answer. Why? Because immediately prior to this conversation the angel told Yaakov that he has a new name in honour of his victory over the angel. If so, surely the angel had a new name to commemorate this event as well. Yaakov wanted to know what you call an angel that is defeated by a human. This shame, the angel did not want to reveal to him."

קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּרְכָתִי֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר הֻבָ֔את לָ֑ךְ כִּֽי־חַנַּ֨נִי֙ אֱלֹקִ֔ים וְכִ֥י יֶשׁ־לִי־כֹ֖ל 33:11





A rich and successful man wished to show his only son how less fortunate people lived. One day, he took the boy in his fancy sports car and they headed out to the countryside where he knew some folks who lived on a farm. They were welcomed into the farmhouse and spent a day and a night with a kind, but impoverished family. When they got back from their trip, the boy's mother asked her son, "Well, how was your trip?" The boy was in great spirits. "It was great!" he said. "Did you see how poor people lived?" she asked. The boy nodded his head and said, "Yes, and I learned a lot." She asked, "Really? And what did you learn?"

The son answered, "Well, I saw that we have a dog at home, and they have four dogs. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden; they have a creek that has no end. We have crystal lamps in the house; they have the stars. Our patio reaches to the front yard; they have the whole horizon!" When the little boy was finished, his parents were speechless. Turning to his father, the boy added, "***Thanks Dad, for showing me how poor we are!"***

All the riches that a person acquires by his own hand is never enough, because the nature of a person is to always want more, as it says, "One who loves money is never satisfied with money." (Koheles 5:9) However, when a person recognizes that everything in his life comes from Hashem, then Hashem puts the attribute of **הסתפקות** - *being satisfied*, into him and he is happy with his lot. Thus, Yaakov said, "*For Hashem has graced me*" - what I have is from Hashem and not my own accomplishments, "*And I have everything*" - I don't need any more in my life, for I am truly rich. (**כתב סופר**)

Yaakov Avinu teaches us how a Jew prepares himself for war. He first attempts to appease his enemy; then he employs sound battlefield strategies. But most important of all - he davens to Hashem. When a Jew realizes the awesome power that emanates from the sound of his lips in prayer, he would win the battle without even having to lift a weapon.



In 1948 the Jews of Tzefas (Safed) were outnumbered by Arabs eight to one. The city's

population then was about 1500 Jews and 12,000 Arabs, with another 40,000 Arabs settled in the surrounding area. As the War of Independence loomed, the Jews of Tzefas nevertheless refused to evacuate the city when the departing British advised them to do so. The British even offered to provide trucks for safe passage but the Jews did not leave. On April 16, the British evacuated Tzefas, and the small contingent of Jews faced off against the overwhelming presence of the Arab fighters. The Jewish residents were largely



elderly religious people and when the war broke out, there were only 221 Jews of fighting age, with an additional 136 who were brought in to augment their numbers. 10,700 Arab soldiers were deployed to meet them. It looked hopeless. Yet, the Jews stood their ground, even in the face of severe food shortages. On May 6, 1948, Arab forces positioned artillery on Mount Meron, and began to bombard the Jewish Quarter of Tzefas. Jewish intelligence sources learned that the Mufti of Jerusalem, then in Lebanon, meant to launch a final attack on May 11 and establish Safed as his temporary capital until he conquered Jerusalem. The Jewish fighters drew up their battle plans and on May 10, the Jews were set to launch an attack on three key Arab positions in the city: the Canaan and Jerusalem Street police stations and the Citadel. But suddenly and without warning, Tzefas' entire Arab population suddenly fled the city. The battle was over practically before it had begun! Analysis of the battle provided a startling discovery.

The Yiftach brigade employed a new weapon called the Davidka, a primitive mortar or cannon that was very inaccurate. Its designer, David Leibowitch, came up with the design in secret during the pre-independence period. As a home-made weapon, its effectiveness was more in the amount of noise it made, rather than on its ability to deliver a decisive blow. And its bark was definitely more than its bite. During the battle for the Citadel, the fighters set up the Davidka in front of the Ari Synagogue in the Jewish Quarter of the city and attempted to shell the Arab positions. Due to its ineffectiveness as a weapon, however, most historians are unsure about how much actual damage the Davidka caused. However, when the Arab fighters and residents of the city heard the Davidka fire, the noise that was produced was so terrifying that they thought it was a new secret weapon of the Jews. In fact, a Reuters report from Amman, Jordan, shortly thereafter reported: "The Jews have a new secret weapon."

A further remarkable occurrence happened that night when an unusual rain shower began to fall shortly after the cannon blast. How often does it rain in Israel in May? The Arabs became convinced that the Jews had acquired an atom bomb and the rain was radioactive fallout. So they fled the city entirely, Arab civilians and soldiers alike, in pure panic, in the midst of a battle in which they had the upper hand. As many as 10,000 Arabs fled town at this time. Among those who left was the family of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

By the morning of May 11, Tzefas was free. In recognition of the importance of the Davidka in the liberation of Tzefas, the Davidka monument was installed in Tzefas on the 29th April 1956, and in Jerusalem's Davidka Square. Every year there is a memorial ceremony in front of the Davidka cannon in Tzefas, when the city honours its dead, and a wreath is laid on the cannon itself.



Torah Gems

וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אִם־יָבֹ֣וא עֵשָׂ֣ו אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶ֣ה הָאַחַ֔ת וְהִכֶּ֖הוּ וְהָיָ֣ה הַמַּחֲנֶ֑ה הַנִּשְׁאָ֖ר לִפְלֵיטָֽה 32:9



The Medrash teaches: "*A man should not put all his money in one corner.*" In other words, one should not put his "eggs in one basket" and hope for success and deliverance. Rather, he should spread his wealth, just as Yaakov divided his family and possessions into two camps, reasoning, "If Esav comes to one camp and attacks it, the other camp may yet escape." In fact, the gemara Pesachim 87b takes this notion even further: "*The Holy One blessed be He, showed righteousness (mercy) unto Yisroel by scattering them among the nations.*" This was so that our enemies would be unable to annihilate us, for we are scattered all over the globe.

In 1933, the final year of the holy **Chofetz Chaim's** life, the elderly and weak sage summoned his former Talmid, **R' Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman ZT"L** to Radin, and spoke with him privately for many hours. That very same year, the Nazi party had risen to power in Germany, and the Chofetz Chaim foretold that the dark clouds of impending disaster for European Jewry, were hovering in the air. The future Rosh Yeshivah of Ponovezh asked his mentor, "What will be the destiny of European Jewry after the wicked one has made good on his intention of destroying the Jewish people?"

"Heaven forbid," answered the Chofetz Chaim, "for anyone to conceive the idea of annihilating the Jews, for it is written, 'If Esav attacks one camp, the other will be for a refuge.'" R' Kahaneman understood the implication, but nevertheless pressed the elderly

sage. "Where? Where will the place of refuge for the other camp be?"

The Chofetz Chaim answered that this is also written explicitly in the Navi Ovadiah 1:17: "*And on Mount Zion there will be a refuge and a sanctity.*" These prophetic words declared that the terrible destruction that would overrun Europe in the coming years would not reach the Holy Land. And indeed, as is well known, the Nazi forces advanced only as far as the border of Eretz Yisroel and did not penetrate within.

כִּי בְמַקְלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הָיִיתִי לִשְׁנֵי מַחֲנוֹת 32:11



World War I broke out on Tisha B'Av 5674 (1914) and lasted until the 7th of Kislev, 5769 (November 11, 1918). The "Great War" as it was known, pitted the armies of Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire (the Central Powers) against Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy and Japan (the Allied Powers). The Allies were joined after 1917 by the United States. The four years of the Great War

saw unprecedented levels of carnage and destruction, thanks to gruelling trench warfare and the introduction of modern weaponry such as machine guns, tanks and chemical weapons. By the time World War I ended in the defeat of the Central Powers in November 1918, more than nine million soldiers had been killed and twenty-one million more civilians wounded. During the Ten Days of Repentance of 5674, the advancing German army drew close to the Polish town of Radin, home of **R' Yisroel Meir Hakohen Kagan ZT"L, the Chofetz Chaim**, and confusion reigned.

No one wished to remain in the battle zone or anywhere near the war-front. The civilian population knew that their food and other vital supplies would be commandeered by one side or the other. No one could know in whose favour the fighting would go, and being at the mercy of an enemy army was an unpleasant prospect to say the least.

On the other hand, for hundreds of yeshivah students to suddenly take flight was itself fraught with danger. Non-military transportation was in turmoil and military forces were everywhere. Roads were clogged and passenger trains were almost non-existent. No one could know in which direction safety lay or where a Jewish community capable of harbouring a large group of bochurim might be found. Shortages of vital commodities such as food and clothing existed everywhere, and no community would be able to accommodate a sudden mass influx of Torah students.

The responsibility weighed heavily on the shoulders of the Roshei Yeshivah and the fate of hundreds of students rested in their hands. As the front drew nearer and the critical time drew close, a clear directive was imperative, yet no decision had been made.

Finally, a delegation of students went to the Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Tzvi Hirsch Levinson ZT"L**, the esteemed son-in-law of the Chofetz Chaim, to ask what they should do and where they should go, but he was at a loss as to how to answer them. He went to confer with his

father-in-law, the Chofetz Chaim. He explained the entire situation in great detail and the Chofetz Chaim listened intently. But he too said that he was unsure what the correct plan of action should be. The next morning R' Tzvi Hirsch decided that the time had come for him to cast a Goral HaGra (a technique of seemingly random page-turning in a Tanach done after proper spiritual preparation. The posuk that comes up gives the answer to a person's question) to determine the proper course of action.

Normally the commandment, **תמים תהיה** - "***You shall be complete with Hashem, your G-d"*** prohibits attempts to foretell the future, but in a situation where the correct course of action is totally unclear and so much is at stake, there was little other choice. The Goral was cast and it came out on the posuk, "For with my staff I crossed this Jordan and now I have become two camps." This seemed a clear indication that the yeshivah should split in two. Just then the Chofetz Chaim entered R' Tzvi Hirsch's home and announced that he had come to a decision as to what should be done. He had prayed with intense concentration and the following posuk from the Torah had come to him: "For with my staff I crossed this Jordan and now I have become two camps!"

The yeshivah must split into two groups and flee, intoned the Chofetz Chaim. Amazed, R' Tzvi Hirsch informed the Chofetz Chaim that he had just performed a Goral HaGra, and the result had been the exact same posuk from the Torah. The Chofetz Chaim was heartened when he heard this, and declared, "If so, then it is very good!" Nevertheless, since the stakes were so high and the situation was so dangerous, R' Tzvi Hirsch suggested that the Goral HaGra be performed again, by the Chofetz Chaim himself. But the Chofetz Chaim demurred telling them, "Ich vil nit matriach zayn der Eibershter tzvei mol." ("I don't want to trouble the Almighty a second time.")

35:20 **וַיֵּצֶב יַעֲקֹב מַצֵּבָה עַל־קִבְרָתָהּ הִוא מַצֶּבֶת קִבֶּרֶת־רָחֵל עַד־הַיּוֹם**



Churva Synagogue in ruins, 1948
- courtesy of the Turgeman Museum Archives

During Israel's War of Independence, the Old City and the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem, officially fell on May 27, 1948. Under Jordanian control, the Jewish Quarter was completely vandalized and virtually destroyed. The magnitude of the devastation brought about at the hands of the Jordanian soldiers in the Jewish Quarter, was only discovered at the conclusion of the Six Day War, when Israel regained control of the ancient city. All but one of the thirty-five shuls that graced the Old City for centuries were in shambles (the most famous of which was the Churva Synagogue of Rabbi Yehudah HaChassid and Yeshivah Porat Yosef).

Hundreds of Torah scrolls, were plundered and burned to ashes; thousands of holy books committed to the flames; shuls razed to the ground or converted into hollow shells of their glorious former selves, their interiors used as hen houses and stables filled with dung-heaps.

The state of the ancient Jewish graveyard on Har Hazeisim did not fare much better. It, too, was left in complete disarray. This cemetery, was ransacked, graves were desecrated; thousands of tombstones were smashed and used as building material, paving stones or for latrines in Arab Legion army camps.

A luxury hotel, the Intercontinental Hotel, was built at the top of the cemetery and graves were demolished to clear a path for the new establishment. Tens of thousands of tombstones were broken into pieces or used as flagstones, steps and building materials; large areas of the cemetery were levelled and converted into parking lots and a filling station; graves were ripped apart and skeletal remains were scattered in the wind.

Although the Arabs succeeded by and large to lay waste to the revered Jewish cemetery, one incident stood out that became legendary among the residents of Jerusalem. In their utter brazenness, the Jordanians built an asphalt road that cut directly through the pitiful remains of destroyed burial stones, to provide a shorter, more direct route up to the new grand hotel built incongruously at the top of the mountain. In order to do this, they contracted a tractor crew to begin flattening the earth. One tombstone after another was shattered by the tractor, and the wrecked stones were strewn in all directions.



The tractor continued on a straight path up the hill which led it on a direct course to the gravestone of the holy **Ohr HaChayim Hakadosh, Chacham Rabbeinu Chayim ben Attar ZT"L**. But as the tractor approached the grave of the holy Tzaddik, something went wrong. The tractor had come within inches of the grave when the engine suddenly spluttered and died. No amount of mechanical tinkering could get it to work again, and a new tractor was required to be brought in.

The following day, a second tractor arrived, and work was resumed. The second tractor began to approach the gravestone of the Ohr HaChayim. Suddenly, and without warning, it lunged forward at full speed, its driver unable to gain control over it. The man was screaming in terror; it looked as if the tractor was possessed, as if it had a mind of its own. It approached the stone and as its forked steel shovel nipped the side of the holy grave, the bulldozer flipped upside down, rolled over and plunged down into the Valley of Kidron, killing the driver instantly. Again, the Jordanians thought that this was due to a mechanical problem with the tractor, believing that the motor was at fault. They might have sensed that what they were doing was wrong and the grave they were attempting to destroy belonged to a holy man. But they were arrogant and self-assured, and their earlier failures made them want to destroy this tombstone at all costs.



To that end, one man picked up a large hammer to crack the stone with his own hand. However, as soon as he lifted the hammer in the air, it slipped from his hand and smashed him in his head, cracking his skull. This time the Jordanians were afraid. It was clear to them that something mysterious was going on, that this gravestone was not to be meddled with, and they immediately moved to another area to complete the road. Nobody ever dared touch the Ohr HaChayim's holy tombstone again, and it remains standing in its place till this very day.

Torah Gems

וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי־בְנֵי־יַעֲקֹב שִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחֵי דִינָהׇ אִישׁ חַרְבּוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ עַל־הָעִיר בֶּטַח וַיַּהַרְגוּ כָּל־זָכָר 34:25





Chazal **רשי נזיר כט:** calculate that the younger of the two brothers, Levi, was exactly thirteen years old at the time that they wreaked havoc on the city of Shechem. The fact that the Torah refers to him as **איש** - "man" is one of the sources that 13 is the age at which a Jewish male attains the age of manhood and **דעת** (intellectual maturity), rendering him a bar mitzvah, one who is bound by the mitzvos. On the face of it, this seems a rather inappropriate context in which to convey the law of bar mitzvah. Shimon and Levi's act seems the very antithesis of reason and **דעת.**

Indeed, Yaakov denounced their deed as irresponsible and of questionable legitimacy under Torah law. Yet this is the event that the Torah chooses to teach us the age of reason, responsibility and commitment to the fulfilment of the mitzvos! Shimon and Levi had no choice but to act, points out the **Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson ZT"L**. The kidnapping of Dina, that prompted their action did not allow them the luxury of rational contemplation of its consequences. The integrity of Bnei Yisroel was at stake, and the brothers needed to act without personal

consideration to the results of their violent deed. It all came down to instinct, a reaction that emanates from deep within - deeper than reason, deeper than self-consideration.

Indeed, in the end, Hashem condoned their deed and came to their aid. This is what the Torah wishes to convey when establishing the age of reason and the obligation of mitzvos. Our every mitzvah should be saturated with self-sacrifice and a depth of commitment that is motivated by the purest ideals and an instinct to act. Just as the brothers of Dina were just now coming into their own as responsible "men," so too, must every 13-year-old boy recognize that it his purity of intent and commitment that will truly transform him into a "man.

R' Leib Sarah's ZT"L

One of the greatest disciples of the holy **Baal Shem Tov** and his successor, the **Maggid of Mezeritch**, was a tzaddik by the name of **R' Leib Sarah's ZT"L**. His greatness in Torah and tzidkus was renowned. The story of how he came to be called R' Leib Sarah's is a story that must be told. Sarah was the daughter of a Jewish innkeeper.

Although she was an attractive girl, Sarah did not let her beauty overcome her. She remained a modest, G-d-fearing young girl, obedient to her father, a right hand to her mother. The son of a local landowner happened to see Sarah one day and immediately fell for her. "Father," the obnoxious youth said to his parent that evening, "I have seen a Jewish girl that I must have. If I cannot have her for a wife, I will surely die of heartbreak. You must get her for me." "Who is she?" the father asked in concern. "She is the daughter of your Jewish tavern keeper,". The Poritz, who could not bear to see his son so unhappy, summoned the tavern keeper the very next day, demanding his daughter as a bride for his spoiled son.

"I would rather not think of what will happen to you if you refuse," he warned menacingly. Painfully, he said, "I will bring you an answer in a week's time."

The Jew returned home with desperation in his heart. How could he break the news to his good, pious daughter? She, too, would rather die than marry a gentile, he was sure. The family got together to devise some way out of their predicament. It was Sarah who came up with a plan. "What about Reb Yosef the old melamed, father?" she asked.

Reb Yosef was an old widower whom the innkeeper had hired to teach his young sons. The man had been with the family for the past several years. "What about him?" the father asked in confusion. "Why can I not marry him?" she said. "We will then run away from here and hopefully the Poritz will be powerless to do anything. Besides, the young son will surely not be interested in me after I have married an old man!" The tavern keeper did not wish to see his young daughter married to a man older than himself. But he could see no better way out. In the end, the old man was called. He surely had no objections to marrying the young girl, even though he might be risking his life thereby.

The couple were married quickly and quietly. Then they left for a nearby village. Three days later, the landowner came for a reply. He was shocked to learn what Sarah had done just to escape marrying his son. He immediately decided that she must be crazy and did not wish to pursue the matter any further, especially after making his own inquiries and learning that the marriage had been her own initiative. It was difficult for him to believe, however, that a young, beautiful girl should prefer an old man to a young, wealthy and handsome nobleman. Sarah's husband, was no simple "old man."

In truth, he was a nistar - "A hidden tzaddik" - to whom it was revealed all along that his employer's young daughter was destined to be his wife. He had come to that particular village, seeking work

as a melamed, to bide his time. He had had his doubts about the matter and feared that her beauty might lead Sarah astray. But in the end, it had turned out for the best. Right after the wedding, the melamed took his young bride aside and informed her: "Since you had the moral strength to choose an old man instead of a young duke who would have given you a life of luxury and ease, you will be blessed and your name will be spread all over the country. I promise you that you will bear a child whose light will shine far and wide, who will commemorate your name all his days."

The child that was born to them in the following year, was named Aryeh. As he grew up, it was apparent that he was destined for greatness. Aryeh's father did not live long enough to enjoy his young treasure and it was Sarah who brought up the child. She was the one who educated him in good deeds, made sure that he studied Torah and eventually lived to have him bear her name, R' Leib Sarah's, the name by which he was called for all his days.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series [לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה]

וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אַצִּיגָה־נָּא עִמְּךָ מִן־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתִּי Thereupon Esau said, "Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." *33:15* . Esav says to Yaakov, "you don't want me to come with you, that's fine. I will go on ahead. But allow me to leave some of the people that are with me, here." They will assist you and help you.

There is a sefer called **שפתי כהן** written by **Rav Mordchai Cohen ZtL from Tzefas** which says a fascinating thing. Esav intended (with true intention) to help out Yaakov and give him assistance. Resulting from this goodwill, he had descendents who became **גירי צדק** . He says that the words **אַצִּיגָה־נָּא עִמְּךָ** are exactly the same Gematria as the words **אלו גרים** (290). Additionally, the word **אַצִּיגָה** is the same Gematria as **זה עובדיה** (109). Ovadiah was a Ger Tzedek descended

from Esav. Who had the Nevuah about the downfall of Esav. Esav was zoche to this, by offering assistance Yaakov Avinu.

The Tur al Hatorah writes that this is what Esav actually meant and intended, when he uttered these words. So as if to say that if ever in the future if any of my descendants come to your descendants and request to become **גירי צדק** - accept them! How did this transpire? What was his zechus?

Because Esav wanted to leave behind some people to help Yaakov. He had no interest in joining in with Golus and Shibud Mitzrayim and ultimately going into Eretz Yisroel. Yet he still requested that if any descendants want to join at a later stage- permit them to. This is partly due to the change in Esav, initiated by the curtesy that Yaakov showed to Esav when he came with 400 men (Davening, gifts) which made an impression on Esav, and his hatred abated.

This is sometimes all it takes- some small actions. If you can put into your heart love towards another person. Esav replied with just three words **אַצִּיגָה־נָּא עִמְּךָ** (*Let me leave with you)* A goodwill to leave behind evil. Hashem values every action that we do, the repercussions of which we don't realise the value of.

Ba'er Heitev

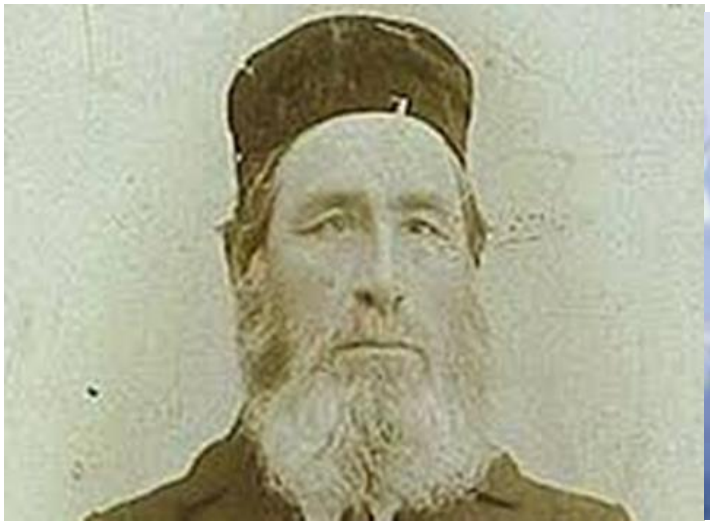


עִם לָבָן גַּרְתִּי : פרק ל"ב פ"ה

I have sojourned with Lovon (32:5)

עם לבן הרשע גרתי ותרי"ג מצות –פרש"י שמרתי ולא למדתי ממעשיו הרעים Yaakov Avienu exclaimed, I did keep the Taryag (613) Mitzvohs, but I did not learn from Lovon to do Mitzvohs with such great Hislahavus (enthusiasm), and undertaking, as Lovon did his bad deeds… • *Mahram Schapiro of Lublin ZY"A.*

R' Yisroel Salanter ZT"L would say:





"Just as a bird will soar ever higher only as long as it vigorously beats its wings but will begin to fall and descend to earth just as soon as it stops its vigorous activity, so too, is it with man. As long as he is actively engaged in a vigorous program of character refinement and self-improvement, he will soar to ever-higher spheres of spiritual attainment. When he discontinues his determined efforts, however, and slackens in his quest for self-improvement, he will begin to fall from his previously high plateau of spiritual attainment."



The Reichmann family were gearing up for a grand celebration of the Bar Mitzvah of young Eli (Edward) Reichmann. The city of Vienna was expecting quite a bash from the well-to-do Reichmann family, and a prominent hall in one of the grandest hotels in Vienna, was reserved for the big day. Residents of Vienna as well as many out-of-town guests were expected, and just two weeks before the Bar Mitzvah, preparations and travel arrangements were at a feverish pitch. In 1938, not very many families had their own private telephone line in their home, but

the Reichmann's were one of the fortunate ones. Due to their successful business operations and the many communal functions that they were involved in, they were in constant need and use of their telephone. Just a few days before the big simcha, the family received an urgent call.



They were informed that the Bar Mitzvah boy's paternal grandfather, **R' Dovid Reichmann**, living in a small village in Hungary, had sustained a serious stroke and obviously was unable to travel to Vienna. The family was stunned and dismayed. All their preparations and the great joy and celebration would be very much lacking if they were unable to share it with the patriarch of the family. They were at a loss as to what to do. Should they cancel the event so close before it was to take place? Or should they hold the Bar Mitzvah celebration in Vienna and after Shabbos, they would go to Hungary to take care of their grandfather?

Only days before the grand affair, Eli's father, Shmayahu, made a decision: They could not possibly celebrate a family simcha without his father present. Without another moment's hesitation, Mr. Reichmann called the hall and the caterer to cancel the event. He attempted to notify as many of his guests as possible that the event in Vienna was being called off. Then, he, his wife, the Bar Mitzvah boy and one of his brothers travelled to the little Hungarian village of Beled, where his father was convalescing comfortably, while the rest of the Reichmann children remained in Vienna with a nanny.

They arrived a few days early and instead of a huge catered event in a beautiful Vienna ballroom, Eli Reichmann celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in the small shtiebel in Beled where his grandfather

davened, and a modest feast was enjoyed in the grateful presence of his beloved grandfather. This all took place on March 12, 1938, the same day that the Nazis YM"S entered Austria unopposed and initiated pogroms in the streets of Vienna.



Sunday morning, **Shmayahu Reichmann** decided to check in on his family and business interests back home, and make sure everything was running smoothly in his absence. He managed to locate a telephone at a neighbour's home in Hungary and called his house back in Vienna. The gentile nanny answered the phone and relayed to Mr. Reichmann all the relevant information that he needed to know. Everything was okay, she said, nothing new. "Oh, by the way," the secretary hastened to add before Mr. Reichmann could hang up the phone, "You did have a few visitors last night." "Visitors?" he asked, thinking that perhaps some of the unnotified guests had mistakenly come to his house looking for the Baal Simcha. "Who were they?" he asked. She paused for a moment. "Mr. Reichmann, it was the Gestapo. A group of German agents, looking for you and your family," she said. "When they couldn't locate you, they left quite upset." The Gestapo had been to his house!

Mr. Reichmann found out that the Nazis had begun rounding up wealthy and prominent members of the Vienna Jewish community that Saturday night, and had they caught up with him, he too, would have been arrested. If not for the mitzvah of Kibbud Av, not wanting to celebrate a simcha without his father, who knows if the Reichmann family - and their many accomplishments on behalf of Klal Yisroel - would have ever escaped the Nazi inferno.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

The Chinuch says that *tefillah* teaches us several lessons in *emunah*. *"It trains us to know that Hashem is the Master, He is kind, He takes care of us, He always answers our tefillos; He is king, He has the power to do what He wants, and nothing can prevent Hashem from performing His will."*



Reb Shmuel Shapiro *zt'l* (from the Yerushalmi tzaddikim of the previous generation) would daven many hours each day, with an outpouring of the soul. Once, he heard someone give a long, fiery drashah about Hashem's greatness. After the drashah, Reb Shmuel said to the speaker, "Instead of speaking so much about Hashem, why not speak to Him."

About sixty years ago, in Bnei Brak, **Reb Yosef Dov Rosenstein's** daughter was ill with polio r'l. One night, her fever shot up very high, and Reb Yosef Dov decided to go to the **Chazon Ish** to get his brachah and tefillah. He said, "Even if the Chazon Ish is sleeping, I'll wake him up." There was no time to wait. When he arrived the Chazon Ish was saying **אשר יצר** with immense kavanah. The Chazon Ish's eyes were closed; he was facing the wall; it was almost like he was saying Shemonah Esrei. When he finished the brachah, Reb Yosef Dov answered amen loudly. "Yosel," the Chazon Ish said, startled. "Why are you here in the middle of the night?" Reb Yosef Dov told him about his daughter's illness. The Chazon Ish said, "Yosel, go home. Your daughter is fine." Reb Yosef Dov told him, "No, this is serious.

My daughter has polio…" The Chazon Ish said, "Yosel, don't speak foolishness.

I said **רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות** and you answered amen. I'm certain your daughter is feeling better." Reb Yosef came home and saw that the fever went down.

We must know that even if we have sinned, *chalilah*, this doesn't mean we have lost our connection with Hashem. Our *neshamah* is always shining, albeit beneath the concealment of the sins.



A recent invention is the Shabbos lamp. This gadget enables people to turn on and off the light on Shabbos without performing a forbidden *melachah*. This is how the lamp works: The lightbulb of the Shabbos lamp is on the entire Shabbos. When one wants it to be dark, he covers the light with a plastic or wooden case. The lightbulb is still on, shining; only we don't see it.

This can be used as an analogy to the *neshamah* of a yid. Never think your *neshamah* is extinguished, and never think your *neshamah* isn't yearning for Hashem. Similarly, never think that Hashem isn't interested in your *neshamah*. A yid's *neshamah* always shines brightly and beautifully, but the *aveiros* cover it and conceal it's brilliance. When you do *teshuvah* and remove the *aveiros*, the *neshamah's* light, that was always there, will shine brightly.

Reb Yeruchem of Mir *zt'l* said to a student, "Please bring me the *mussar sefer* that is on the shelf." The student went to the shelf

that Reb Yeruchem was referring to and returned empty-handed. He said, "The only thing that's on that shelf is an orange." Reb Yeruchem said once again, "Bring that *mussar sefer*." The student brought the orange. Reb Yeruchem asked the student, "Is the orange dry or juicy?" "It's juicy." Reb Yeruchem removed the peel and showed it to the student. "Does this look juicy to you? It's a dry peel."



Then Reb Yeruchem showed him the white pith that covers over the orange. "This is also dry. But beneath it all, there's a juicy orange.

The same is with a yid. Sometimes he seems dry, and there are *kelipos* all around him. But seek deeper, and you will find a shining bright and vibrant *neshamah* beneath.

Keep Trying





The Torah writes (32:33), **על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל אשר על כף הירך עד היום את גיד הנשה הזה כי נגע בכף ירך יעקב בגיד הנשה**, ***"Therefore, Bnei Yisrael mustn't eat the gid hanasheh…until this day because the malach struck Yaakov on the gid hanasheh."***

This prohibition was given to us, so we will remember that the malach smote Yaakov in his battle. We wonder, wouldn't it be better to have a mitzvah to remind us that Yaakov *won* the battle

against the *malach*? Why do we remember specifically that Yaakov was wounded in this battle?

The *meforshim* answer that this mitzvah teaches us that we should expect to lose some battles against the *yetzer hara*. We shouldn't expect a one-hundred percent success rate. Even Yaakov Avinu was harmed when he battled with the *yetzer hara*. But when that occurs, we should continue fighting. We mustn't give up. And that is considered a success in the war against the *yetzer hara*.

Vechol Maaminim- "The Voice of Yaakov" - With the Mouth and the Heart הקול קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו (כז כב)

Harav Yehonasan Eibeshitz explains: Eisav drew all his strength from the fact that he was scrupulous about the mitzvah of honoring his father. But the Torah testifies that he only did this as lip service, as it says (ibid 25:28): "*And Yitzchak loved Eisav ki tzayid befiv*" – in his mouth but not in his heart.



It behoves us to learn from this that if we daven properly, with the right kavanah in our hearts, then our merits will overpower the merit of Eisav who honoured his father with his mouth but not with his heart. By doing so, we will be spared from his descendants who seek to annihilate us. But if we say our tefillah only as lip service, without kavanah of the heart, how will we be able to overpower the merit of Eisav if we are doing the same thing?! That is what this passuk alludes to: When "*the voice is the voice of Yaakov*" – *a 'voice' without kavanah, then "the hands are the*

hands of Eisav." But when the kavanah of the heart is added, then the hands of Eisav cannot control Am Yisrael. [*Ye'aros Dvash]*

The Or Pnei Moshe "The *sefer Tikunei Shabbos* states that saying chapter (*Tehillim*) 119/ **קי"ט** helps a lot to remove the *kelipos* [and the *yetzer hara*]. Perhaps this is hinted in the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 6:19), **את כל אויבך מפניך להדף**, [which refers to casting away one's enemies]. **להדף** is *gematriya* 119 [hinting to chapter **119 /קי"ט** in *Tehillim*]. Furthermore, **א"ת** is *roshei teivos* for **תמניא אפי** , eight phases [and chapter 119/ **קי"ט** of Tehillim is called **תמניא אפי**, because it has eight *pesukim* for each letter]. When one says this chapter often, it results with **להד"ף את כל אויבך** , that the enemies that are within us [the *kelipos* and the *yetzer hara*] are broken and removed." The Imrei Noam takes this one step further and says that reciting this chapter will also remove external *resha'im*. This refers to the *resha'im* of the world who oppress the Jewish nation.



The Imrei Noam says that Yaakov Avinu said this chapter to protect himself and his family from Eisav. The *pasuk* says **וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו**, because **לפניו** is *gematriya* 176, and there are 176 *pesukim* in chapter 119/ **קי"ט** of *Tehillim*. Furthermore, the chapter begins with **אשרי תמימי דרך**, and Yaakov is called a **תם** , as it states (*Bereishis* 25:27) **ויעקב אהלים איש תם יושב**. By the battle it states, **ויאבק איש עמו** and **ויאבק** is *gematriya* 119. These hint that Yaakov said this chapter to subjugate Eisav. For our present discussion, saying chapter **קי"ט** of *Tehillim* is beneficial to remove the *yetzer hara*, and to enable us to serve Hashem properly.

One Last Chance By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

David Haber runs a successful curtain and window treatment business in downtown Boston. At times, his phone lines, like his home, seem like a raucous whirlwind of activity, as David is not only a businessman. Aside from being a devoted husband and father to six children, he is involved with local community affairs and with many national and international tzedakah organizations. One night he had an appointment with a Mrs. Silver to show her swatches of fabric and to discuss window treatment options. David simply forgot about it as, in his frenetic schedule, he had neglected to enter it into his appointment book.

That night at 10 pm, an irate Mrs. Silver left a blistering message on his office answering machine. David called her, honestly explaining that he was simply overworked and forgot, asking for her forgiveness. But Mrs. Silver was not in a forgiving mood; she insisted that as a businessman he should have been more responsible, and that her time was just as valuable as his. David apologized and said, "Please, give me another appointment and this time, I promise I will be there on time." Mrs. Silver was not a religious Jew and David was concerned that his failure to show up at her home, aside from being poor business practice, was a chillul Hashem.

There was a long pause; David thought she had disconnected the line. Then she said reluctantly, "One Jew should always give another Jew a chance. You can come Monday morning at ten and I expect you to be on time." David gave her his assurance. David arrived at her home at 9:55 am. He rang the doorbell and waited. The door opened in a flash and a teenaged girl started screaming hysterically, "What are you doing here? I didn't call you. You don't belong here!" David was shocked. "I have an appointment with Mrs. Silver. Is this her home?"

The girl cried, "My mother just collapsed in the kitchen. We're waiting for an ambulance. I think she had a stroke!" David, who was

a mainstay of Hatzalah of Boston, cried, "I'm a medic," and ran to his car to retrieve his equipment.

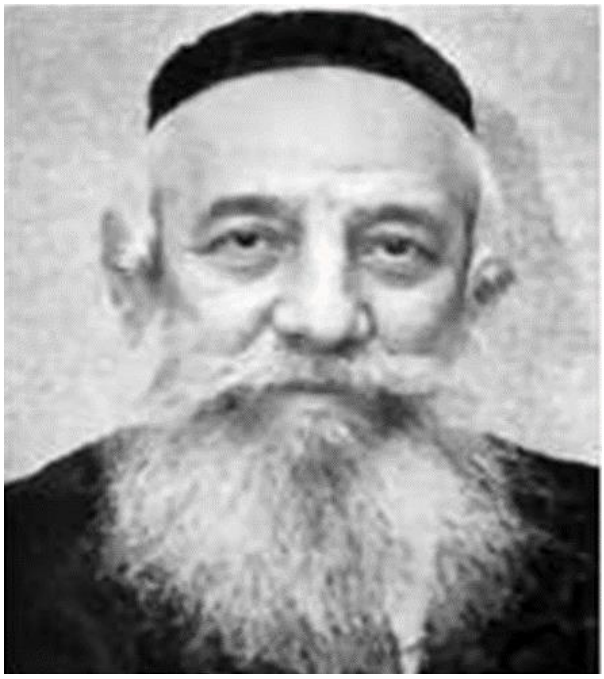


He saw at once that Mrs. Silver was barely breathing. Her neck muscles had become paralyzed and her tongue, which had fallen back, was not allowing her to breathe. David quickly opened up an air passage and got her to resume breathing. He saved her life! A few days later when David visited Mrs. Silver in the hospital she said to him, "I thought I was the one giving you one more chance, but I realize now, that it was you who gave me one more chance – at life." *(Echoes of the Maggid)*

Rav Shmuel Aharon Yudelevitch - The Malach Was Ashamed Of His Own Name

"Lama Zeh Tishal LShmi," (Vayishlach 32:30) Yaakov asked the Malach what his name is, but the Malach refused to answer. Why? Rav Shmuel Aharon Yudelevitch answers that immediately prior to this conversation the Malach told Yaakov that he has a new name in honour of his victory over the Malach. If so, surely the Malach had a new name to commemorate this event as well. Yaakov wanted to know what you call a Malach that is defeated by a human. This shame, the Malach did not want to reveal to him.

Eisav Arrived After the Brachos



While the Rebbe the **Mekor Baruch of Seretz Vizhnitz** was serving as Rav of the city of Seret, he would daven each Shabbos morning at a different shul in the city. One Shabbos, when he entered the shul he had selected that week, he saw that for some reason, they had begun to daven earlier than the original time, without informing him. When he arrived, they had already recited Birchos Hashachar. To the consternation of the mispallelim, the Rebbe left right away, intending to go daven at a different shul. The gabbaim were upset, and asked the Rebbe that once he had already walked all the way to them, to please remain and daven with them. But the Rebbe firmly declined, and as he left the shul he remarked with a smile, "I am not Eisav…"

When he saw the surprise on their faces, he explained succinctly: "Eisav came after the brachos…" And he went on his way. Another time, the Mekor Baruch came into a shul and saw that there was a sign noting the time for Birchos Hashachar, followed by the time for Hodu. This appeared to make it possible for anyone who missed brachos to know what time he could come to still make it for Hodu. The Rebbe was displeased with this, and remarked on a similar note: "One should arrive to tefillah betzibbur from Birchos Hashachar. That is what was customary in all the earlier generations. Only Eisav came after the brachos…"

A Short Message from Rabbi Mordechai Twerski

One of the most important things we can do when reciting Modeh Ani in the morning is focusing on one simple thought. As the Torah tells us, after Hashem initially created Adam and Chava as one unified entity, He split them into two.

In essence then, a husband and wife are two halves of the same neshama. When we therefore wake up in the morning, we ought to look over at our spouse and only then recite the words, "Thank you for returning my neshama." It is only together with our spouse's neshama that we are complete. With this attitude, much of the marital conflict which occurs will be diminished. For after all, we cannot be in conflict with two halves of the same self.

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

"וישלח יעקב מלאכים" *"And Yaakov sent messengers."* (32:4)

Rashi comments: "*Malachim mamash*" — "Actual angels." What right did Yaakov have to use Hashem's angels as his messengers?

In the final *pesukim* of the previous *parshah*, we learn of Yaakov meeting a contingency of angels: "And he (Yaakov) called the name of that place 'Machanaim'" (32:3). From the fact that the Torah speaks of the angels in plural ("Machanaim" being interpreted as "two camps"), it is deduced that there were two sets of angels. One group consisted of heavenly angels which Hashem created, and the other group consisted of angels who were created through the *mitzvot* and good deeds which Yaakov performed (see *Avot* 4:11).

Indeed, Yaakov had no right to use Hashem's angels, but he did have permission to use for his benefit the angels who were created through him. When Yaakov had to prepare for an encounter

with Eisav, he sent *his* angels. Rashi alludes to this by explaining that the angels he sent were **ממש**, an acronym for "**ממעשים שלו**" — "from his deeds." (**ר׳ מאיר מפרימישלאן זצ״ל**)

Vedibarta Bam

"כה תאמרון לאדני לעשו כה אמר עבדך יעקב עם לבן גרתי"
***"Thus shall you say to my lord, to Eisav: 'Thus said your servant Yaakov: I have sojourned with Lavan.'"* (32:5)**

Yaakov sent a message to Eisav that even though he dwelled with the wicked Lavan, he observed the 613 *mitzvot* (Rashi).

Why did Yaakov think that his observance of Torah and *mitzvot* would make an impression on Eisav?

Usually, when two sides are trying to reach an agreement it is necessary for each one to yield a little. Yaakov's message to Eisav was, "I am eager to negotiate with you and to make peace. If necessary, I will make concessions and grant some of your wishes. However, I want you to know that I lived with Lavan and frequently had to negotiate with him. I was always patient and let him have his way. One hundred times he changed his agreement with me regarding my salary (31:41), and I always gave in and never argued. But there was one place where I did not give up one inch: my observance of Torah and *mitzvot*.

"I am therefore informing you that I am easy to deal with, but if you are expecting me to compromise on Torah and *mitzvot*, then there can be no discussion between us."

"Benevolence is kindlier than charity." ~~ Talmud Yerushalmi, Peah

Vedibarta Bam- ותצא דינה בת לאה אשר ילדה ליעקב לראות בבנות הארץ ***And there went out Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she bore to Yaakov, to look upon the daughters of the land.*** 34:1

Why is Dinah referred to as *"bat Leah"* — "daughter of Leah"?

Having become pregnant for the seventh time, Leah was worried that this could cause embarrassment to her sister Rachel. She knew that Yaakov was destined to father twelve tribes. Since she already had six sons, and the two maids, Bilhah and Zilpah, each had two sons, if she were to have a seventh son, Rachel would seem less worthy than the maids. Therefore, she prayed that her sister be spared embarrassment.

At the time of her prayers, Rachel, too, was pregnant and was carrying a girl. In response to her prayers, Hashem miraculously transferred the girl in Rachel's womb to Leah, and the boy carried by Leah to Rachel (*Niddah* 31a, Maharsha). Thus, Rachel gave birth to Yosef, and Leah to Dinah. Consequently, the Torah emphasizes that Dinah was the daughter of Leah, because without her prayers, Leah would never have given birth to her.(**קדושת לוי**)

Vedibarta Bam

"וירץ עשו לקראתו ויחבקהו" ***"Eisav ran to meet Yaakov and embraced him."*** **(33:4)**

Rashi says that there is a *halachah* that Eisav hates Yaakov. What does Eisav's hatred of Yaakov have to do with *halachah?*

From the fact that a non-Jew hates a Jew, a new *halachah* was formulated. If two Jews are eating a meal, one eating meat, and the other dairy, they are not to share one table because they may exchange some of their food. However, a Jew and a non-Jew are permitted to share a table, even if one is eating meat and the other

is eating dairy. The reason is that the non-Jew hates the Jew and there will not be any exchange of food between them. (**עיטורי תורה**)

Vedibarta Bam

ויאמר אם יבוא עשו אל המחנה האחת והכהו והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה
***"And he said, 'If Eisav comes to the first camp and destroys it, then the other camp which is left shall escape.'"* (32:9)**



How was Yaakov sure that the other camp would survive?

Eisav planned to kill Yaakov for taking away the *berachot*. Rivkah was very worried and instructed Yaakov to run away, saying, "Why should I lose the two of you on one day?" (27:45) From the way she expressed herself, Yaakov deduced that he and Eisav would probably perish on the very same day. Thus, he divided his people into two camps and distanced them a day apart. His reasoning was that if Eisav would destroy the first camp with Yaakov in their midst, he would also perish on that day. Thus, the second camp would survive. (**נחל קדומים**)

Vedibarta Bam

"כה תאמרון לאדני לעשו כה אמר עבדך יעקב עם לבן גרתי"
***"Thus shall you say to my lord, to Eisav: 'Thus said your servant Yaakov: I have sojourned with Lavan.'"* (32:5)**

Rashi comments: "The letters of *'garti'* (**גרתי**) correspond numerically to 613, that is, 'with Lavan the wicked I sojourned (**גרתי**), but the 613 (**תרי"ג**) Commandments I observed, and I did not learn from his evil deeds.'"

Rashi's words, "I did not learn from his evil deeds," are seemingly redundant. If he observed 613 *mitzvot*, is it not obvious that Lavan had no influence over him?

Yaakov was not expressing satisfaction for not learning from Lavan's evil deeds. On the contrary, he was expressing his own dissatisfaction and frustration.

Yaakov sent a message to Eisav: "I lived in the home of Lavan for twenty years, during which I observed how enthusiastically he performed his sins. Though I fulfilled 613 *mitzvot*, I did not apply his level of excitement to my Torah and *mitzvot*." Yaakov humbly said: "If only I would have performed *mitzvot* with the excitement and vigour with which he performed his sins!"

The *Chiddushei HaRim* (first Rebbe of Ger) once said concerning missionaries: "If we were to work for the *emet* (spreading Torah and *Yiddishkeit*) with an *emet* (sincerity), like they work for the *sheker* (falsehood) with an *emet*, we would experience immense success."

(הרב מאיר ז"ל שאפירא מלובלין)

Vedibarta Bam

"באנו אל אחיך אל עשו וגם הלך לקראתך וארבע מאות איש עמו"
***"We came to your brother, to Eisav, and moreover, he is heading toward you with an army of 400 men."* (32:7)**



Why did Eisav take so many people with him?

Eisav always tried to seem very scrupulous in the *mitzvah* of honouring one's father. He knew very well that Yitzchak would be greatly disappointed with him and very angry if he would kill Yaakov.

Therefore, he took a large crowd of people so that he could have an excuse for Yitzchak. He would tell him that it was not he who killed Yaakov: "My friends were very upset because of what Yaakov did to me; as soon as they saw him, they went out of control, and I was unable to stop them from killing him." (**ר' יהונתן ז"ל אייבשיץ**)

Vedibarta Bam

"פן יבוא והכני אם על בנים" ***"Lest he come and strike me down, mother and children."* (32:12)**

Having four wives, Yaakov should have expressed his concern in the plural: "*imahot*" — "mothers?"

Many people predicted that since Lavan had two daughters, Leah and Rachel, and his sister Rivkah had two sons, Eisav and Yaakov, the older son Eisav would marry the older daughter Leah, and the younger — Yaakov — would marry Rachel. For many

years Leah cried her eyes out that this should not happen and Hashem accepted her plea (see Rashi 29:17).

Yaakov was afraid that Eisav might carry a special grudge against Leah for not wanting to marry him. Therefore, he worried that Eisav might come and smite "the mother" — Leah. (**באר מים חיים**)



Vedibarta Bam

"ויזרח לו השמש" *"And the sun rose up for him."* (32:32)

Hashem made the sun rise earlier in order to heal Yaakov's injury (Rashi). Why was this necessary?

Everyday before the sun or the moon begin to serve the world, they immerse in the fiery river of Dinur *(Yalkut Shimoni* Isaiah 66). The *Shelah* explains that it is because the non-Jewish world worships the sun and the moon, and through this immersion they are cleansed from any effect of the idol worship.

The sun is known to possess healing powers. However, Yaakov would have refused to benefit from it because it is worshipped as an idol, and according to *halachah*, it is forbidden to derive any pleasure from something used for idol worship. *(Yoreh Dei'ah* 142, 155).

Therefore, for the sake of Yaakov's healing, Hashem made the sun rise earlier. While the non-Jewish world was still asleep and had not yet worshiped the sun that day, Yaakov benefited from the sun's healing powers. (**פרדס יוסף-כרם חמד**)

Vedibarta Bam

"ויאמר עשו יש לי רב...ויאמר יעקב...קח נא את ברכתי...וכי יש לי כל"
***"And Eisav said, 'I have a lot,' and Yaakov said, 'Please accept my gift ... because I have everything.'"* (33:9-11)**

Why did Eisav say, "I have a lot" while Yaakov said, "I have everything"?

Yaakov was a righteous person and Eisav was wicked. The wicked are never fully satisfied. Therefore, Eisav said, "I have a lot." He was insinuating that though he did have much wealth, he was not content because he did not have it all.

The nature of a *tzaddik* is to be happy with whatever he has and not to desire more. Therefore, Yaakov said, "Whatever I have is what Hashem gave me, and to me it is everything — I do not need any more." (**כלי יקר**)

Vedibarta Bam

"ויבא יעקב שלם עיר שכם" ***"And Yaakov came complete (see Rashi) to the city of Shechem."* (33:18)**

What does "coming complete" mean?

The word "*shalom*" (**שלם**) is an acronym for "*sheim*" (**שם**) — name — "*lashon*" (**לשון**) — language — and "*malbush*" (**מלבוש**) — garment.

The Torah is attesting to the fact that though Yaakov was associated with Lavan for twenty years, it did not have any affect upon him. He did not modernize and adopt a new name. He did not stop speaking his native tongue, *Lashon HaKodesh*-Hebrew, nor did he change his style of clothing according to the popular trend of Lavan's society in the streets of Charan. (**בני יששכר**)

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

When **Rav Mordechai Gifter**, the Rosh Yeshivah of Telz, was a boy, he and his friends collected pictures of *Gedolim*— great Torah leaders. They would put the pictures in albums and trade them at school during recess. One day, Rav Gifter's mother saw his *Gedolim* album sitting on the table. She picked it up and slowly flipped through the pages, admiring the collection. Even as a young boy, Rav Gifter was very meticulous and his picture album was neat and organized. He had labelled each picture with the proper name and a few biographical details. In the middle of the album, however, his mother was surprised to find an empty page!



His mother looked closer, and saw that the empty space was also labelled. She read the inscription, and tears immediately sprung to her eyes. The note said, "Mordechai, if you learn well and toil in Torah, your picture will also eventually be included in this book. And if you will not work, you will not be added, but you will remain outside!"

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

How does one delight in Shabbos? The *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 118b) says that the way to delight in Shabbos is to have special foods and drinks to enjoy. Therefore, the *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*Orach Chaim* 250:2), that on Shabbos we should have more treats and delicacies to make sure we enjoy and have true *Oneg Shabbos*.

Besamei HaTorah … Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg

וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו אל עשו (לב:ד) ***And Yaakov sent angels before him to Eisav his brother.*** (32:4)

Rashi, quoting the *Medrash* in *Bereishis Rabbah*, writes that these were **מלאכים ממש**, real angels.

The *tzaddik* **Rebbe Meir'l of Primishlan** once told his *Chasidim*: It says in *Pirkei Avos* (4:11) **העושה מצוה אחת – קונה לו פרקליט אחד** ***whoever does one mitzvah acquires one advocate***. Yaakov *Avinu* sent his brother Eisav the actual angels that were created from the *mitzvos* that he had kept. We know this because the word **ממש** is an abbreviation of **מַלאכים מִמצוות שֶעשה** , ***angels from the mitzvos that he kept***.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

A bochur from Yerushalayim once visited Yeshivas K'far Chassidim, to determine if it was the right *yeshivah* for him to attend. After *davening Shacharis* with the *yeshivah*, he approached the *Mashgiach*, **Rav Eliyahu Lopian, *z"tl***, to introduce himself.

R' Eliyahu asked him where he was from and for how long he was planning to visit the *yeshivah*. The *bochur* answered that he was from Yerushalayim and he was planning to stay for only a few days, until the coming Thursday. On Friday morning after *Shacharis*, however, R' Eliyahu noticed that the young man was still there and called him over. The *bochur* reluctantly approached him, fearing that R' Eliyahu was upset that he had stayed in the *yeshivah* for longer then he had originally stated.

R' Eliyahu said, "When I spoke with you earlier in the week, didn't you say that you intended to travel home on Thursday?" The *bochur* answered, "I had originally planned on returning home on Thursday,

but I'm enjoying the atmosphere in the *yeshivah* so much that I decided to stay for Shabbos."

R' Eliyahu then revealed his intention behind the conversation. "If you had planned on returning home to Yerushalayim for Shabbos, you surely didn't bring Shabbos clothes with you. I will arrange for you to borrow some clothes for *Shabbos Kodesh*, and you are welcome to stay as long as you like!"

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



In this week's *parshah*, after Yaakov takes his family across the river (32:23-25), he returned to pick up the remaining items. *Rashi* explains that he returned for small jugs. Why would Yaakov return for such seemingly insignificant things?

Rav Aizik Sher explains that a *tzaddik* recognizes that everything he receives is only because Hashem wants him to utilize it.

Therefore, even small jugs are really a significant part of his life. It was worth it for Yaakov to return alone, just to be able to bring these jugs with him, because they too were from Hashem and meant for him to use and benefit from them.

"It is a wise man that admits the truth." ~~ Avot 5:7

Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg

עם לבן גרתי (לב:ה) ***I have sojourned with Lavan*** (32:5)

Rashi explains (in his alternative explanation): **גרתי** has the *gematria* of six hundred and thirteen, as if to say, "I sojourned with Lavan, the evil one, yet I kept the 613 *mitzvos* and did not learn from his evil actions." **The *Chasam Sofer*** asks: How can Yaakov *Avinu* claim that while he sojourned with Lavan he kept 613 *mitzvos*? At least one mitzvah he did not keep – the mitzvah of honouring one's parents?

He answers that on the words in *Parashas Vayeishev* (37:11) **ואביו שמר את הדבר** , ***and his father waited for the matter,*** *Rashi* explains that Yaakov was eagerly waiting for the fulfilment of Yosef's dream. That is to say – the word **שמר** refers to a person eagerly awaiting the fulfilment of something.

Yaakov *Avinu* says: "yet I kept the 613 *mitzvos*", not that he was able to actually keep all the *mitzvos*, however, he ***yearned*** to keep all the *mitzvos* and he eagerly awaited the time when he would be able to fulfil them!

This shows that if someone wants to perform a mitzvah, but due to circumstances beyond his control he is not able to fulfil it – the *posuk* considers it as if he has fulfilled it!

G'matriya

R. Yaakov Auerbach z"l give an interesting numeric twist on Yaakov's name-change-blessing. **The Zohar** says that Yaakov's fight was against the Satan. Yaakov = 10+70+100+2 = 182. Satan = 300+9+50 = 359. By defeating the Satan, Yaakov adds Satan's numeric value to his own and acquires a new name: Yisrael, which is 10+300+200+1+30= 541, that is 182 + 359 = 541.

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

The *Binah L'Ittim* writes that when one decides to do a mitzvah, that mere acceptance is a mitzvah itself and gets rewarded.

When the *Mishnah* in *Avos* says *'Mitzvah Goreres Mitzvah'*, it means that for each mitzvah, one gets rewarded twice for two different aspects of that mitzvah. There is *s'char* for doing the actual mitzvah, and there is *s'char* for deciding and accepting to do the mitzvah.

This is because doing *mitzvos* is carrying out the will of Hashem, and that alone is a mitzvah in itself!

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

In the early 1950's, a group of *Yeshivah Bochrim* went to visit the ***Tchebiner Rav*** in Yerushalayim, to talk with him in learning. The *Tchebiner Rav* discussed a *Sugya* with them, and then he posed a very difficult question on that topic to them. The *Bochrim* were stumped. They each tried to think of an answer, but no one wanted to offer a response to this *Gadol BaTorah* if they weren't sure they were correct.



Finally, a *Bachur* in the back of the room said he would like to try and answer the question. This *Bachur* was **Rav Moshe Sternbuch**, who today is known as one of the *Gedolei Torah* in *Eretz Yisroel*.

When the *Tchebiner Rav* heard his answer, the Rav shook his head and said, "This is not your

own answer." The *Bachurim* were a little surprised by this statement, and the *Tchebiner Rav* smiled. He said, "Your answer is so good and so extraordinary, that it is not possible that at your age, you could have thought of it on your own. This answer most likely comes from your mother— from her *Tefilos* and her tears in crying to Hashem that her son be a *Talmid Chocham*!"

L'Maaseh

Rebetzin Kanievsky often repeated this story:



When **Rav Meir Shapiro** was a young child, his mother hired a *Rebbe* to learn *Torah* with him. When she ran out of money to pay the *Rebbe*, she sold her jewellery so she would have enough funds.

One day there was a big snowstorm and the *Rebbe* didn't come to learn with Rav Meir, and Rav Meir's mother cried for a very long time that morning. The young Rav Meir tried to reassure his mother and said, "I'm sure the *Rebbe* will come tomorrow and we will make up what we missed learning today."

She replied to him, "Meir, it is so important that you learn regularly every single day. It is a great loss to miss a day of learning *Torah*, and that is why I'm so sad!"

Rav Meir Shapiro was greatly affected by his mother's reaction. He later went on to found the *Daf Yomi*, where people have a set amount to learn each day, and he credited his mother for this idea!

Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg

וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו לב:ד And Yaakov sent angels before him (32:4)

Rashi: מלאכים ממש – Literally, angels

The *Sefer "Doleh Umashkeh"* explains: Yaakov *Avinu* prepared himself for battle against Eisav. Usually in battle the opposing forces need to be somewhat equal, but in this case, Eisav was coming with four hundred men together with himself, and this totaled 401.

Yaakov, together with his four wives, eleven children, and five shepherds (one each for the ewes, goats, cows, donkeys, and camels) totaled 21. This means he was lacking 380 to oppose Eisav. Therefore, Yaakov literally sent angels, the *Gematria* of **ממש** is 380.

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS VAYISHLACH



The Shoemaker, the Driver, The Judge and the Stick By David Bibi

A shoemaker in Bnai Brak, one of those true Sadikim who remains hidden in plain sight. One afternoon walking through Tel Aviv, a driver ran through a red light, hit the shoemaker sending him to the hospital for a week.

Sometime later the driver was brought to court for trial. The shoemaker was asked to come and testify in front of the judge. "Is your name Avraham Cohen", the judge asked. "Yes", replied the shoemaker. "Do you live at such and such a place?" Yes "Were you in Tel Aviv on such and such a date?" Yes "Were you crossing the street at such and

such a time?" Yes "Did a car go through the light and hit you?" Yes "Did an ambulance come and take you to the hospital?" Yes "Did you spend the week in the hospital recovering?" Yes Pointing to the driver, the judge continues, "Is this the one responsible for you being in the hospital?"

No. It was Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

"What?" screams the judge. "Let's try this again." And the judge repeats all the questions again. And again the shoemaker ends the questioning with No.

The secular judge gets even angrier and threatens that unless the shoemaker responds truthfully and correctly, he will find him in contempt. He says he will repeat the questions and the shoemaker stops him explaining that he never lies and is always truthful.



And then the shoemaker turns to the judge and asks? "When someone throws a stick at a dog, what does the dog do? It chases the stick instead of the one who threw it. Your honour the driver you are pointing out is only the stick, but I cannot forget that it is the Creator of the World who throws the stick".

How often in our own lives do we blame the stick instead of realizing that it is Hashem tossing the stick and always for a reason? We get into the tunnel and the guy in front of us stalls. We're stuck. We get upset. We blame the driver in front. We blame our bad luck for leaving 2 minutes too late or for coming through the tunnel instead of driving over the bridge. But we are just getting angry at a stick. We are no better than the dog. We forget that it is G-d in the details and G-d is trying to tell us something.

The Story of Shvartze Volf (Black Wolf)

Many years ago, after the rabbi of Tchentzikov had been married for eighteen years without having been blessed with children, he travelled to the Kozhnitzer Maggid to obtain the tzadik's blessing.

When the Kozhnitzer Maggid listened to the man's request he uttered a sigh from deep within his being. "The gates of heaven are closed to your petition!" he cried.

"No, no! Please, you must help me!" the man wept desperately.

"I cannot help you," said the Kozhnitzer. "But I will send you to someone else who will be able to help. You must go to a certain person who is called 'Shvartze Volf - Black Wolf,' and he will be the one to help."



"Yes, I know him," the rabbi said, "He lives in my village, and a more coarse, miserable person you could never find."

At first the Kozhnitzer Maggid did not respond. The rabbi realized that if the Kozhnitzer Maggid was sending him to Shvartze Volf, he must have a good reason. The Kozhnitzer Maggid then quietly revealed, "Shvartze Volf is head of the 36 hidden saints whose merits sustain the world."

The rabbi sought out Shvartze Volf in the forest hut which was his home. Though cognizant of Shvartze Volf's true identity, the rabbi was still frightened to approach him. He devised a ruse by which to gain admittance to his hut. He would go into the forest just before Shabbat and when he found Shvartze Volf's house, would pretend that he had lost his way. He would beg to spend the holy Shabbat

there, and under the circumstances, Black Wolf could hardly refuse a fellow Jew that favour.

Friday afternoon he set out and as planned reached Shvartze Volf's hut. He knocked on the door and the man's wife answered. Her horrible appearance marked her as a true equal to her husband, for never had a more hideous and unpleasant woman been seen. Nevertheless, the rabbi begged her to allow him to stay over Shabbat.

"Very well," she finally relented. "But if my husband finds you here, he'll tear you apart with his bare hands. You can't stay in here, but go into the stable if you want," she croaked.

Soon Shvartze Volf arrived home and entered the stable, his eyes blazing with hatred. "How dare you come here! If you set foot outside of this stable, I'll rip you apart with my bare hands!"

The frightened Jew shivered in his boots as he beheld the terrible visage of Shvartze Volf.

Suddenly the thought came to the rabbi that a tzadik is so pure that he acts as a mirror, reflecting the image of the person who is looking upon him.

Thus, what he saw in the appearance of Shvartze Volf was nothing more or less than a picture of his own spiritual impurity. With that, he searched into his soul, and prayed from the deepest part of his being. He poured out his soul and in those few moments returned wholeheartedly to his Maker. He felt himself suffused with a warm, peaceful feeling.

He was shaken from his reverie by the unexpected sensation of a soft hand being laid on his shoulder. He looked up, not quite sure what he would see, a shiver of fear passing through him. There stood Shvartze Volf, but instead of his accustomed fierce exterior, he had a refined and peaceful visage.

The visitor was ushered into the hut, which no longer appeared rough and tumble-down, but warm and inviting. Shvartze Volf's wife entered with her children, and their appearance, too, was beautiful and serene.

Shvartze Volf turned to his guest and said in a quiet voice, "I know why you have come here. I know, I know. You and your wife will rejoice in the birth of a boy. But you must name him Schvartze Volf."

The rabbi wondered to himself, "How can I name my son after him? It is not our custom to name after the living," but he remained silent.

The following morning Shvartze Volf passed away.

After Shabbat, the rabbi of Tchentzikov returned home. In time, he revealed to his congregation the hidden identity of the hated Shvartze Volf.

True to his word, a baby boy was born and he was given the strange name "Shvartze Volf."

In the year 1945 Jews who had survived the horrors of the Holocaust began streaming into the Land of Israel. When the Belzer Rebbe held his first Melave Malka in the Holy Land many Chasidim came and introduced themselves to the Rebbe.

This story was one of those related at that first Melave Malka of the Belzer Rebbe. And at that memorable occasion one man stood before the assembled and said, "My name is Shvartze Volf ben Chana, and I am a descendant of that child who is spoken about in the story."

"Charity outweighs all other commandments." ~~ Talmud, Bava Basra

How to be a Good Rebbe/Shepherd

Rabbi Aryeh Levin was once standing outside his yeshiva while the children were on a 15-minute recess break. His son, Chaim, a teacher in the yeshiva, was standing and observing, when suddenly his father turned to him. "What do you see my son?" asked Rav Aryeh.

"Why," he answered, "children playing!"

"Tell me about them," said Reb Aryeh.



"Well," answered Reb Chaim, "Dovid is standing near the door of the school, with his hands in his pockets; he probably is no athlete. Moishie is playing wildly; he probably is undisciplined. Yankel is analyzing how the clouds are drifting. I guess he was not counted in the game. But all in all they are just a bunch of children playing."

Reb Aryeh turned to him and exclaimed, "No, my son. You don't know how to watch the children. "Dovid is near the door with his hands in his pockets because he has no sweater. His parents can't afford winter clothes for him. Moishie is wild because his Rebbe scolded him and he is frustrated. And Yankel is moping because his mother is ill, and he bears the responsibility to help with the entire household. In order to be a Rebbe you must know each boy's needs and make sure to give him the proper attention to fulfill those needs."

A true visionary and leader needs to take into account all the various skills and tendencies of his "flock." Recognizing and cultivating the diversity in his sons and future shepherds - the Twelve Tribes - was a job Yaakov Aivnu was well-equipped for, given his extensive care for even the lowly sheep. What a lesson for parents, teachers, and communal leaders to consider when making all sorts of decisions!

Ben Ish Chai - Why Didn't Eisav Marry Le'ah?

Upon Yaakov's return to Eretz Yisrael, when his encounter with Eisav became inevitable, Yaakov sent a message to Eisav saying, "Im Lavan Garti... Vayehi Li Shor Vachamor...;I lived with Lavan and I have accumulated a great deal of assets." (Vayishlach 32:5-6)

What message was Yaakov sending to Eisav with these two seemingly irrelevant details about his life which Eisav already knew?

The Ben Ish Chai answers with another question. Everyone knew that Lavan had two daughters, and they were supposed to marry Rivka's two sons. Why, after Yitzchok sent Yaakov to Lavan, did Eisav not also go to take Leah for his wife?

The Ben Ish Chai answers that after Yaakov stole the Brachos from Eisav, Eisav said, "Now I know why they call him Yaakov, because he tricked me twice."

From then on before dealing with anyone Eisav checked into his name. Lavan's name turned out to be a disaster. Lavan backwards is "Naval" or despicable. No one ever went into Lavan's house and came out safely. He was the Sitra Acher and everything he did came out backwards left to right. Furthermore, Naval is the name of the Malach responsible for poverty, something that Eisav wanted no part of and was terrified of.

Yaakov wanted to let Eisav know that his power was beyond the realm of nature. Not only did he come out of Lavan's house alive, but he also came out with a large family, and he even became very rich. He conquered a place that Eisav feared to tread... and he was prepared to face off against his brother, his nemesis, as well.

For many afflictions, silence is the best remedy. Megilah 18a

Maharal MiPrague, Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky - Why Rivka Took the Blame For Eisav

Rivka's death is not mentioned in the Torah. Rashi (Vayishlach 35:8) says that the Torah merely alludes to it by telling us about the death of her nurse Devora. The reason the Torah conceals the day of Rivka's death is so that people will not remember her negatively as being the mother of Eisav the wicked.

If so asks the Maharal MiPrague, why does the Torah shortly thereafter mention explicitly the death of Yitzchok? He answers that the gemara (Nidda 31a) says that each of the parents give certain aspect of the baby. The mother gives the blood and flesh. The mother's contributions, says the Maharal, are the more animalistic features of the person and are responsible for his desires to commit aveiros.

Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky offers another answer. He says that since Rivka was the daughter and the sister of Reshaim, whereas Yitzchok's father was a great tzaddik, surely people blamed it on the genes from her side of the family.

Eisav Has 24 Hours Until He Dies

"Yaakov said, "If Eisav comes to one camp and strikes it, then the remaining camp shall be for refuge." How did Yaakov know that if Eisav attacks one camp the other would escape? Maybe, both would fall prey to Eisav?

The Chanukas HaTorah answers, Rivkah said a prophesy in Parshas Toldos - "Lamah Eshkol Gam Shenaychem Yom Echod." Rivkah instructed Yaakov to run away from Eisav because, "Why should I be bereaved from both of you on the same day." She said a Nevuah that Eisav and Yaakov would die on the same day. Based on this prophecy, Yaakov placed a distance of 1 day between the 2 camps. He reasoned;

if Eisav will come to the first camp and kill me, he will surely die within a day. He therefore will never make it to the second camp. That is why he was confident that 1 camp would escape.

Maharal Tzintz - Why Killing Eisav Would Have Been a Disaster

Rashi says (Vayishlach 32:8) that the pasuk says twice that Yaakov was afraid (Vayira, Vayeitzer) of his meeting with Eisav because he was afraid of two things. He was afraid that Eisav may kill him, and he was afraid, that he may kill Eisav. Why was he afraid of killing Eisav in self-defence?



Rav Aryeh Leib Tzintz writes in Milo HaOmer that the whole reason Eisav hated Yaakov was because Yaakov bought the Bechor from him. Yaakov wanted the Bechor for its spiritual reason, namely he wanted to do the avodah in the Bais HaMikdash.

The halacha is that a Kohen who has killed someone, even by accident, may not raise his hands for Birchas Kohanim and may certainly not do any avoda in the Bais HaMikdash. Had Yaakov killed Eisav, his 34 years of running from Eisav would have been for naught because he would be disqualified from the avoda anyway, and the Bechor would have been rendered meaningless.

Rav Ruderman - 613 Mitzvos Doesn't Automatically Make You A Tzaddik



"I have lived with Lavan (Im Lavan Garti), and tarried until now" [Bereshis 32:5]. Rashi cites the famous Chazal that the word "Garti" (I lived) has the numerical value of 613 (Taryag), indicating "I lived with the wicked Lavan, but I observed the 613 Commandments - without learning from his evil ways."

Rav Ruderman noted the apparent redundancy in Yaakov's message to his brother, Eisav. If Yaakov had already sent the message "I observed the 613 Commandments," what is added by further stating "and I have not learned from the evil ways of Lavan?"

Rav Ruderman Zt"l, taught that the inference to be drawn is that one can observe the 613 commandments and, nevertheless, learn from the ways of a Lavan.

Even within the context of a fully observant life-style, a person can wind up looking like a Lavan. Even when an individual's actions are technically permissible, the person may still be acting like a Lavan. A person can live an indulgent life-style -- one that may not technically deviate from the letter of the Law, but one,which is totally foreign from the spirit of the Law.

Therefore, Yaakov clarified: "Not only have I observed the letter of the 613 commandments, I have also not learned from Lavan and have continued to observe the spirit of those laws."

Rav Sholom Schwadron - Only Tzaddikim Love Money



Yaakov went back across the river in the black of the night all by himself to retrieve a few cheap vessels. The Gemara says (Sotah 12a) that by Tzaddikim their money is more valuable to them than their bodies. Rav Sholom Schwadron says that people, like his neighbour the plumber, work crazy hours and ruin their health in the long run, just to make a few extra dollars. Is this not the finest example of someone who loves his money more than his body? How can Chazal tell us that this is a trait exclusive to tzaddikim? Besides, since when are tzaddikim so into money?

Rav Sholom answers that people do not like their money, they like their bodies. They will do many things to satisfy the demands that their desires place upon them. They care more about their stomach and their other senses than the money. If they cared more about the money, they wouldn't waste it on nonsense.

Tzaddikim, on the other hand, do not care much for physical pleasures. Their bodily desires are not important to them. They save the money they have for mitzva opportunities. They know that with a few coins they can buy themselves far more than a few minutes or even hours of indulgence. Money can buy them eternity. Tzaddikim truly love money!

Vilna Gaon - And How Much Exactly Is 1/64 of Gaava?

The Gemara says that a person is allowed to have "Shiminis ShebeShiminis of Gaavah" - 1/8 of an 1/8 (1/64) of arrogance. What is the meaning of this unusual terminology - "an eighth of an eighth"?

The Vilna Gaon explains, the Gemorrah means the 8th pasuk in the 8th parsha. Parshas VaYishlach is the 8th parsha and "Katonti Mikal HaChasadim" is the 8th pasuk. A person's level of haughtiness must be on the level that he is unworthy of anything. - "I have been diminished by all the kindness and all the truth you have done for me." Whatever Hashem does and will do for me is not coming to me. It is a gift from Hashem, "Katonti" - I am unworthy! Maharsha explains that a person who has more than 1/64th of Gaavah is considered a showoff. An allusion to this is that "Gas" - "Gimmel" Samach" - 63 - means haughty.

Bais HaLevi - Eisav, Can't Beat Him Don't Join Him

Yaakov davened to Hashem 'Hatzileini Na MiYad Achi MiYad Eisav"; Save me from my brother from Eisav. The Bais HaLevi asks why does it need to say Achi and Eisav? He answers that the Zohar says when you daven for something you should be as clear as possible in your descriptions. He then asks why does it need to say "MiYad"; from the hands of, twice? Let it just say MiYad Achi Eisav.

He answers that Yaakov felt trapped. The two logical outcomes of meeting Eisav were that Eisav would kill him or the other outcome which was no less frightful for Yaakov was that Eisav would forgive him, and they would live together like brothers. As far as Yaakov was concerned Eisav's closeness would cause religious erosion that was as dangerous for Klal Yisroel as physical destruction. He wanted to keep his children as far away from Eisav and his lifestyle as possible. That is why he davened that he should be saved from both

being murdered at the hands of "Eisav" as well as "Achi" the brotherly hand that Eisav may want to extend to him.

This says the Bais HaLevi was indicative of the future Galus Edom. During some periods we face destruction from cruel and murderous enemies. At other times we self-destruct from the brotherly closeness of our host nations. This freedom ends with assimilation of ideals and lowering our level of Avodas Hashem as well as unfortunately assimilation itself.



Netziv - Yaakov's War Strategy Seems Confusing

In preparing for the meeting with Eisav Yaakov took three measures. He davened to Hashem, he sent a peace offering to Eisav, and he prepared for war. How did he prepare for war? He divided the group into two so that if one is attacked at least the other one can escape. There are a number of things that are unclear about this. First we see that when they met Eisav they were all together. Second, it says Vayachatz twice. Once they day before they met and then again the day they met. Third, we see that they all crossed Ma'avar Yabok together on the night following the day that they were divided.

The Netziv answers that Yaakov divided up the group because he was expecting Eisav to attack on that very day. When he understood that Eisav wasn't going to attack that day and had his camp rest before the big meeting, Yaakov gathered both groups back together again and crossed the Yabok. After his bruising battle that night with Eisav's Malach where he came out victorious, he was no longer scared of Eisav to the degree he was the day before. The next morning before meeting Eisav it says again that he divided the children. The Netziv says this wasn't the division of yesterday. This was simply a division into groups as a minor precaution. They weren't separated and all groups stayed together. Why? Because

although Yaakov knew he was not facing annihilation, he was afraid of the damage that Eisav could cause him, just like the Malach left his mark by damaging Yaakov's Gid HaNasheh.

Rav Moshe Feinstein - A Nicer Way To Escape Eisav

"Vayira Yaakov Vayeitzer Lo", Yaakov was frightened and distressed (Vayishlach 32:8). Rashi says that Yaakov was frightened that Eisav would kill him and he was distressed that he may ultimately kill Eisav or anyone else. Rav Moshe Feinstein asks, why was Yaakov concerned about killing a Rasha? "BaAvod Reshaim Rina", we rejoice at the obliteration of the wicked. Moreover when someone tries to kill you, you must kill him first.

Rav Moshe says that there are many ways for Hashem to bring about a person's salvation. Hashem could have easily helped Yaakov avoid Eisav altogether and their paths needn't cross, or at the very least Eisav did not need to gear up for war. The fact that Hashem put him in a dangerous situation and needed a Nes to extricate him was distressing for Yaakov. This signaled to Yaakov that he did aveiros that were deserving of a punishment, but fortunately had enough Zechuyos to come out unscathed.

Rav Shlomo Volbe - "Rabbi" Eisav And His 400 Talmidim

The Torah tells us that Eisav was coming towards Yaakov with 400 men. **Rav Yechezkel Sarna** said that these 400 men were talmidim of Eisav. Eisav was not a Rashalike we imagine. He was a great Rebbe who spewed forth Torah and had many talmidim. Nevertheless, he was imperfect in a certain way and that was the Torah's complaint against him.

Rav Volbe (Shiurei Chumash) says that this approach is the Derech of Slabodka, which makes Gedolim out of all the Resha'im in the

torah. However, he says that he does not agree with this approach. He says Rav Elya Baruch Kamai of Mir used to say, "I can accept everything, but that Korach and Eisav were tzaddikim, I cannot accept".

Rav Volbe says what we can learn from here is that a person is made up of many layers. He can be compared to a box full of diamonds with a rotten apple inside. A person has many traits, both outwardly visible as well as below the surface. While Eisav was clearly a Rasha, it doesn't necessarily mean that he contained nothing good. True he was a rotten apple, but surely he had some diamonds that we cannot ignore.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky - Why Yaakov "Broke Down" In Succos

Yaakov cautiously returned to Eretz Yisrael, to go back to his parents, wary of Eisav. After the big showdown Yaakov went to Succos where he spent a year and a half, and then another half year in Bais Kel. The Gemara (Megila 17a) says that Yaakov was punished for those two years for not returning to his father. Why, after twenty years, did Yaakov wait another two years on the threshold of his home, before going to his father?

Rav Chaim Kanievsky in Taama Dikra answers that Yaakov told Eisav that he could not go with him to Sai'ir because the children and cattle walked slowly. Yaakov did, however, tell Eisav that he would make his way there slowly. Had Yaakov turned around and gone home, Eisav would have felt fooled by Yaakov yet again. Therefore, to avoid further confrontation, Yaakov stopped in Succos, pretending to break down. He stayed there for enough time that Eisav would give up on him, realizing that, in fact, the journey is too much for his entourage. Only then did Yaakov finally return home to Yitzchok.

Chasam Sofer - How Could Yaakov Deny Rochel's Dying Wish?

As Rochel was dying in childbirth, she called her newborn son, "Ben Oni; The son of my pain and mourning." Yaakov called him, "BinYamin; The son of my strength," from the word, Aven. Why would Rochel give such a depressing name, and how could Yaakov deny her dying wish?

The Chasam Sofer explains that Rochel's use of the word Ben "Oni" referred to the child of her strength. How? The reason Roshel died when they came to Eretz Yisrael is that Yaakov and all the Avos kept all the mitzvos while in Eretz Yisrael. Since he couldn't be married to two sisters, Rochel being the second sister he married, was doomed to death upon their return from Chutz La'Aretz.

This all happened to Rochel because of the strength and courage that she showed in helping her sister Leah marry Yaakov on what was to be her wedding night. Her death was another tragic consequence of this heroic and selfless act. Therefore, she called BinYamin the son of her strength.

Yaakov didn't change his name, he merely clarified it since Ben Oni can have the negative connotation of pain and mourning. He, therefore, called him BinYamin to let everyone know Rochel's true intentions upon her death.

R' Menachem Mendel Morgenstern ZT"L (Kotzker Rebbe) would say: "*I am who I am because of me. You are who you are because of you. But if I am who I am because of you and you are who you are because of me - then I am not me and you are not you!*"

Rav Itzele Volozhin - Yaakov Avinu, The More Things Change The More They Stay The Same

"Katonti MiKol HaChasadim" (Vayishlach 32:11). Yaakov tells Hashem that he is scared of Eisav despite Hashem's promise of safe return to Eretz Yisrael because he feels all his zechusim were already used up from all the Chesed Hashem already did with him. If so, why does Yaakov go on to ask Hashem for help and remind Hashem of the promise Hashem made to him?

Rav Itzele Volozhin explains Katonti a little differently. He says that Yaakov said to Hashem that even when Hashem made the promise to him in the first place, he was totally undeserving of the Chesed. Nevertheless, Hashem promised him that He will protect him anyway. "If so," says Yaakov, "even now that I am also undeserving and have already received from You more than my share, still please save me as things have not changed one bit since the original promise."



"The righteous ones
do not complain of the dark,
but increase the light.
They do not complain of evil,
but increase justice.
They do not complain of heresy,
but increase faith.
They do not complain of ignorance,
but increase wisdom."
- Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

Vilna Gaon - Dina Had To Be The Missing One

And Yaakov took his 2 wives, 2 maidservants and 11 children and crossed the River Yabok". Rashi notes that the pasuk only mentions Yaakov's 11 children. Where was Dina? He answers; Yaakov placed her in a box so Esav should not lay his eyes on her. The Vilna Gaon is bothered how Rashi knew that it was Dina who was missing. Maybe Dina was 1 of the 11, and one of the other Shivatim was missing?

The Gaon answers, the Gemara says that the Bais HaMikdash was built in the portion of Binyamin because he was the only Shevet who did not bow down to Esav. The pasuk tells us how all the Shivatim and their mothers passed before Esav and bowed. Binyamin, who was not born yet, did not bow down to him. If one of the Shivatim was in the box, then he too did not bow to Esav. There would then be 2 Shivatim who did not bow to Esav, and the Gemorrah would have to explain why the Bais HaMikdash was built in the portion of Binyamin and not in the portion of the Shevet who was in the box.

פכים קטנים



A number of years ago, there was a bachur learning in Telshe Yeshivah in Wickliffe, Ohio. This bachur was an excellent talmid and devoted himself to his studies. He was known as an incredible Masmid who used all of his time for Limud HaTorah. He also happened to be very talented in the art of calligraphy. His penmanship was flawless, and his handwriting was a vision to behold.

Due to his unique talent, he was occasionally asked by friends to help them out when they needed to have something written artistically. For example, if someone was creating an invitation to a simcha or event, they would inevitably call on him to write out the words before submitting it to the printer. At first, the bachur was happy to oblige people and he usually made himself available. But after some time, he became very torn; on the one hand he definitely wanted to help others and he appreciated the gratitude they showed him when he wrote something for them. On the other hand, he was also concerned that all these little "jobs" would take away precious time from his learning.

He approached the Rosh Hayeshivah, **R' Mordechai Gifter zt"l**, for guidance on this issue. The Rosh Hayeshivah smiled and opened up a chumash. He proceeded to read out loud the words of Rashi in Parshas Vayishlach which says that Yaakov went back to retrieve his "small jars." Rav Gifter asked, "Why would Yaakov risk his life for small jars? What it means is small talents that a person has. Even these 'small jars' must be retrieved and used in life."

"If Hashem has given you this talent," Rav Gifter told the masmid, "you have no permission to ignore it and leave it dormant. Indeed, each and every one of a person's 'Pachim Ketanim' must be developed and used to their utmost in his Avodas Hashem."

Essential Rabbi Nachman – A Taste of Olam Haboh

When a person knows that everything that happens to him is for his own good, this is a foretaste of the world to come. To be serene and patient regardless of what you encounter in life is the highest level of knowledge and understanding of Hashem. Have faith that everything is for your ultimate good.

Sparks Of Shabbos

Shabbos is a day of the spiritual realm. Yet we eat and enjoy delicious foods, because we can raise the physical and commute it into spiritual.

Rav Shimshon Pinkus explains that one of the reasons why we use lechem mishna - two challah's at every meal - is that one corresponds to Shabbos, and the other, to the rest of the week. In this we, way create a crossover between Shabbos and chol (weekdays). In doing so, we allow the physical to become spiritual.

He explains that it works the other way around as well, and although Chazal tell us that Torah study weakens a person, this is only initially. Eventually, however, the spiritual adds to his physical strength which is why we find great tzadikim like the **Vilna Gaon** who were overweight although they only ate very little. If we make proper use of Shabbos by dedicating it to Torah study and indulging in the physical in honour of Hashem and Shabbos, we can gain both physically and spiritually on a much greater level.

Parshah Pearls *(adapted from the Ba'al ha'Turim)*

Land-Smellers

אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי־שֵׂעִיר֙ הַחֹרִ֔י יֹשְׁבֵ֖י הָאָ֑רֶץ "These are the sons of Se'ir ha'Chori, the inhabitants of the land (yoshvei ho'Oretz)" 36:20.

Rashi cites Chazal, who explain that the Chori were experts in land assessment, which land was good for olives, and which was good for vines ... . And the commentaries explain that they would actually achieve this by smelling the earth. In fact, that is probably why they were called 'Chori' (which contains the word 'rei'ach' - smell [no matter that the letters are inverted]). Otherwise, they were known as Chivi (both words by the way, mean snake, which, as we know, is sort of an expert in earth flavours).

In any event, we can now better understand the Ba'al ha'Turim, who points out that יִשְׁבֵּי הָאָרֶץ has the same numerical value as 'Hoyu merichim ho'Oretz (they would smell the earth)'.



Harav Yitzchak Hutner 20 Kislev 5781

Harav Yitzchak ben Reb Chaim Yoel Hutner, zt"l, was born in Warsaw, Poland in 5666/1906. A child prodigy, he was taught by private tutors until age 15, when he was enrolled in the Slabodka Yeshiva, headed by **Harav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, *zt"l***, the Alter of Slabodka.

In 5695/1935, he moved to Brooklyn, New York, where he served as Rosh Yeshivas Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin. He was known for his masterful shiurim where he conveyed the lessons of the Maharal of Prague, and which were published in the series of sefarim Pachad Yitzchak.

In 5730/1970, on a return trip from Eretz Yisrael with his wife, daughter and son-in-law, their plane was hijacked by terrorists. They were held captive for nearly three weeks in Amman, Jordan.

In 1979, he moved to Eretz Yisrael. In Cheshvan 5741/1980 Rav Hutner was partially paralyzed by a stroke; he was *niftar* a few weeks later on 20 Kislev 5741/1980 at the age of 84. His *kever* is on Har Hazeisim in Chelkas Hanevi'im.

Zecher tzaddik livrachah.

L'Maaseh…

After receiving a terrible diagnosis from his son's doctor, a man rushed to **Rav Moshe Feinstein** to ask for a beracha. Not wanting to tell the Rosh Yeshiva about the terrible news, he simply asked for a beracha for his son. R' Moshe however realized that the father looked very disturbed and urged him to tell him why.

The father broke out in tears and related that the boy was ill, and the doctor said that there was very little to do about it. R' Moshe grabbed the man's hands and cried with him for several minutes, adding that 'how could it be that two Jews cry together and Hashem won't listen?'. To the surprise of the doctors, the minimal medical hishtadlus that was made cured the boy completely.

Bridge Building - The Mitzvah Of Our Times

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita



I well remember Moishe'la: he was from South America and learnt in the Yeshivah when I was a young bochur. Moishe'la was somewhat of an exotic figure, he came from a far-off place and spoke with a different accent. Moishe was considered a fully-fledged Chasidic young man, he had perfectly curled peyos and wore a long frock in the weekdays when such was not yet the norm. We all looked up at Moshe as a model of what a frum fellow could be, and wished we could get our peyos to curl just like his! It was therefore with huge dismay that we learnt one day that Moshe had packed his bags and disappeared. He just vanished with nothing and disappeared

into the cauldron that was the American melting pot of the early sixties. Sometime later we learned that Moshe's long peyos were shorn and thrown into the rubbish bin together with everything else that had marked his Jewishness. Moshe was the first rebel we ever experienced in our circle, and his abrupt exit from Torah life shocked everyone. Obviously, there were things going on in Moishe's heart that drove him to leave the yeshivah, the tragedy was that there was no one available who could read the signs.

In those bygone days, becoming dismayed with a Torah lifestyle was a rarity. The Torah community was still very small, and we knew everyone to a greater or smaller extent. If a youngster chose to leave, he had to make a total break, and that meant leaving everything behind and disappearing.

Today we are witnessing a different dynamic where young people can become disillusioned with things, and yet still carry on in the community without the need to leave all together. There are kids being *Mechalel Shabbos* whilst wearing the full uniform of the chareidi world, or sleeping in on Shabbos after drunkenly gallivanting about on Friday night. For a long time, many pretended all this wasn't happening. You averted your eyes when groups of youngsters would rumble past you on your way to shul. We all knew something wasn't right, yet figured if you didn't talk about it, the problem would someway just fade away. After all, teenagers go through rebellious moments, and just look around you, how many baalabatisha adults of today used to be real tearaways when they were kids?

This may all be true, and there is nothing new under the sun. There never were really the "good old days" and every generation has its unique challenges. Yes, our kids are facing a world of technology that can take them into the darkest cesspools with one click, but historically there have always been tests for the soul which were tailor-made for the generation of the time. The answers to today's

woes are very likely to be found in those of generations past, if we can only look at them without prejudice.

In every human there is a small child that wants to be loved. Each soul cries out for warmth, for a "nip on the cheek", for some understanding. Instead, we seem to be building increasingly high walls, closing off those who don't seem to fit, creating ever smaller spaces that are considered kosher. We check, double check, and check once more to make sure that those considered unworthy don't gain entry, but in truth we have created such confined areas that we often find ourselves suffocating. This is the beginning of the problem and the seed of its resolution. Every Yid deserves to be wanted, and every child must feel a sense of worth. Teenagers often rebel because no one seems to respect their individuality.

As we march closer to our final Redemption we are finding souls that have been crying out for affection and caring in ever more growing numbers. We have ways to reach out to them, more so than ever before. We can provide programs, spiritual tools that society overlooked till now. Ticking off boxes never really worked when it came to individual neshomos that are gifted with particularly complicated needs.

In this week's parsha -Vayishlach- we read "And Yaakov was left alone; and a man wrestled with him. . . " Rashi comments that Yaakov had forgotten small jars and returned to retrieve them. Why would Yaakov have returned for these "small jars"? **The Ba'al Shem Tov** taught that this reminds us that each of us must rescue a "small jar" - even one individual touched with a smile or given an understanding that they count is worthy of our wrestling with any obstacles that come our way. This need for connection is essential; its absence is what alienates our youth. Without it, they sense that we don't care.

Bridge building must become the mitzvah of our times, not only in schools, but in our shuls, our shops, in fact wherever we have the opportunity to exchange words of friendship. It is not only kids who

are at risk, we are all imperilled. We all need a sense of connection and without it we just become robots that live life without heart.

Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk

Esav was coming with 400 men, Yaakov davened to Hashem… These words, made famous by a children's song, don't convey all that was going on. Yaakov was going to meet his mortal enemy, his brother, who still wanted to kill him after all these years.



It wasn't the 400 men who scared Yaakov but the fact that someone could hate him so much that he was unable to move on with his own life. He feared the destructive force of a grudge and knew that it would not be quelled without intervention. Therefore, he prayed, he sent gifts, and he prepared for battle. What we can learn from this, though, is just how terrible and destructive it is when we don't forgive people. It prevents us from living our own lives, because we only see ourselves in relation to the object of our resentment, and it can lead us to do terrible things seeking assuagement of this fire of hatred.

Most people are not like Yaakov. They won't try to make peace, especially when we are the ones who were wrong. They won't send us gifts or act humbly towards us. In fact, they may fan the flames. It's up to us to see how bad it is to hold onto hurt and hard feelings, and work to free ourselves of them. But of course, davening can help for us too.

Short Vort – Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

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.* 32:25

Rashi, quoting the gemora, explains **שכח פכים קטנים וחזר עליהם** - that Yaakov crossed the river alone to retrieve some small jars that he had left there, when he was met by the angel of Esav who fought with him until daybreak.

However, the **Rashbam** argues with Rashi and takes a very novel approach to this episode:



He explains that Yaakov's intention in crossing the river was not to fetch small jars - he was trying to run away from Esav! He knew that Esav was most probably coming to kill him, and therefore did the most sensible thing. He was trying to run away in order to sneak into Eretz Yisroel without any confrontation.

The Rashbam goes on to explain that the angel who met him was not the angel of Esav as Rashi says. Rather, it was Yaakov's own angel who was trying to prevent him from escaping from Esav!

Rav Zev Leff learns from this Rashbam that although we are never permitted to go looking for problems, if we happen to be faced with one, we are not permitted to turn and run without meeting the challenge facing us. And even though running away may be the correct solution, such a decision cannot be taken until we have thought through all the consequences.

We are in this world to grow, and this is mainly achieved through successfully climbing the hurdles that are placed in our way. They may be difficult to overcome, but they are a gift to help us to become better people.

So, in the words of **Rav Yitzchak Berkovits** when discussing such struggles - **"enjoy the challenge!"**



Chizuk – Inspiration

Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv ZT"L of Kelm ("Rav Ziv") once passed a musician who played a wrong note. Rav Ziv was a student of **Rav Yisroel Salanter ZT"L** and was known as an Ish Emes – a person with an outstanding sensitivity to the truth. Rav Ziv was also the Rebbe of the **Alter of Slabodka**.

Rav Ziv informed the musician of the wrong note because he believed that even one incorrect note in an entire melody that has been played correctly is still not a true rendition of the melody and therefore a deficit in truth.

Another time, he explained that overreacting while one is in pain is also something that could be lacking in truth. Namely, if we scream more loudly than the pain warrants – that too is not speaking truth in one's heart.

"Modesty is the noblest of all ornaments." ~~ Eleazar Rokeach

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר "***And a man wrestled with him until dawn.***" (32:25)



At an assembly aimed at encouraging Torah study, **the Chofetz Chaim** asked the following question: "Why is it that the ministering angel of Esav wrestled specifically with Yaakov Avinu? Why did he not fight against Avraham or Yitzchak?

"The answer," said the Chofetz Chaim, "is that Avraham Avinu represented the middah of ***chesed, kindness***; Yitzchak Avinu represented ***avodah, Divine service***; and Yaakov Avinu represented **Torah**.

Esav's ministering angel could tolerate the outstanding quality of chesed, he could bear with avodah, but he could not tolerate Torah study.

For Torah," concluded the Chofetz Chaim, "is the very foundation upon which the existence of the Jewish nation rests. This is why the yetzer hara constantly declares war against the Torah and those who study it.

We must band together to fight this fierce war against him and defeat him!"

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם *"Yaakov arrived intact at the city of Shechem "* (33:18)

Despite the fact, said **R' Tzvi Elimelech Shapira**, that Yaakov Avinu spent many years in the house of the wicked Lavan, he did not change his name, his language, or his mode of dress. Rather, he remained the same person that he was on the day that he left his father's home.

The acronym of the word "shalem" spells shem (name), lashon (language), and malbush (dress). Thus, the verse states, "Yaakov arrived intact (shalem) at the city of Shechem."

A Jew is "intact" and whole, continued R' Shapira, when he does not alter these three things.

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

In Cheshvon, 2008, Rebbetzin Kanievsky, a"h, had just returned from a wedding, and she wanted to publicize the story that was the backdrop for this wedding. Four years earlier, a terrible accident had occurred on the highway, which severely injured a fifteen-year-old girl, R"L. She was rushed to the hospital, where she lay unconscious for two weeks. This was in addition to the many injuries that she sustained.

Her parents approached **Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l**, and his Rebbetzin, and asked them to please Daven for their daughter. They Davened, and Hashem responded favourably, as the girl

woke up and began to recognize her family. The joy was profound! They had Davened for a miracle, and Hashem sent them one!

The first thing the girl wanted to know when she woke up was, "Imma, how long was I in a coma?" The mother didn't want her to

know just yet that she had unconscious for so long, as she was afraid of the shock it would cause and the effect it would have on her recovery, so she replied, "What difference does that make right now? The main thing is that you are alive and you are doing so well!"

Everyone there was shaken by the girl's response. She said, "Two weeks before the accident, I accepted on myself to learn two Halachos every day from the Sefer Chofetz Chaim on Hilchos Lashon Hara. I want to make up what I missed!"

This girl was still facing a long recovery with numerous procedures and much rehabilitation, and they were still not sure of her outcome. Yet, this is all she was thinking about— making up the lost time from her Shemiras HaLashon study program.

Rav Chaim and his Rebbetzin were greatly impressed by this girl's devotion, and the Rebbetzin ensured the parents that she would dance with their daughter at her wedding, which at the time, was merely a dream. No one could even imagine it!

Eventually, this girl finally left the hospital and made a miraculous and complete recovery. In just a short time, she resumed her regular schedule. She was a completely healthy girl, and had no sign whatsoever of her injuries!

The Rebbetzin said, "I have just returned from this girl's wedding, where I have fulfilled my promise to dance with her!"



A Wise Man would say:

"Be decisive. Make a decision. The road of life is paved with flat squirrels who couldn't make a decision."

Working on our Middos

The Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Yehudah Zev Segal, zt"l, would relate a story that he had heard as a Bachur. Rav Segal's grandfather was a textile manufacturer in Brisk, and he was known for his exceptional honesty. He ran a successful business and had many satisfied customers. His competitor, however, was jealous of his success, and he was openly hostile to Rav Segal's grandfather.

A Russian soldier once came to the competitor's store to buy some fabric, and inadvertently, after the purchase, he wasn't given the right amount of change, as it was too little. He was furious. He thought the store owner was deliberately trying to cheat him. He informed the authorities, who promptly sent an inspector to the store to check the weights and do an audit.



Through various connections, Rav Segal's grandfather became aware of what was happening. Although there was no reason to suspect that his competitor was actually using incorrect weights and unbalanced scales, he acted swiftly.

Without hesitation, he grabbed his own scales, which he knew were perfectly accurate, and rushed them to his competitor's store, to make sure that he would not be punished for making a simple mistake. When the competitor saw the sincerity of Rav Segal's grandfather, he completely changed the way he felt about him.

Rav Akiva Tendler said that this is the way someone behaves when he understands the catastrophe of Machlokes. You do everything in your ability to end strife and bring Shalom!



Compliment



On the topic of chesed, we share the following story, which was told by a Rosh yeshiva in our generation. It happened to him: His father passed away when he was a young child. His mother worked hard to put food on the table, and there was never money for extras.

Once, he asked his mother for a new shirt. She told him that they couldn't afford it. Nevertheless, understanding how much a new shirt meant to him, she saved up her pennies until she was able to buy him a new shirt. He wanted to put it on immediately, but his mother told him to wait for Rosh Hashanah.

Rosh Hashanah night, he proudly went off to beis medresh in his new shirt, but no one noticed his new shirt. He felt so depressed that he even had thoughts of leaving Yiddishkeit. (Who can judge an orphan with the struggles he went through.) On his way home, he passed Rechov Ralbach in Yerushalayim, and he saw throngs of people going to receive a brachah for the new year from the **Beis Yisrael of Gur zt'l**. On the spur of the moment, he decided to join the crowd.

The Beis Yisrael looked up and saw the boy as he stood in line. The Beis Yisrael immediately picked up on his broken spirit. When it was

the boy's turn to receive a brachah from the Beis Yisrael, the Beis Yisrael held onto his collar as he looked at the boy's shirt, complimenting him on his new shirt.

The Rosh yeshiva concluded the story and told his students that everything his talmidim got from him, was thanks to the Beis Yisrael, who paid attention to the needs of a young orphan.



Maasei Emunim - The Brachah That Overturned His Existence

Last winter, Reb Avigdor, a scholarly and well-respected Yid, fell ill with the flu. As a result, he suffered severe shortness of breath, and he needed to be hospitalized in a facility in central Israel for observation and some rest. Reb Avigdor was not alarmed, because he knew that it was a relatively mild illness, and b'ezras Hashem, with the help of the treatment, it would pass within a few days.

He used his time in the hospital to rest, review his learning and to help patients around him. Reb Avigdor's condition improved rapidly, and on the third day of his hospitalization he felt well enough to return home. He went over to the doctor in charge of the ward and asked if he could be discharged, but the doctor refused, for some reason. "You must stay here for observation at least until tomorrow morning," he declared.

Reb Avigdor tried to plead and argue; as a very active person, the hospitalization was a strain for him, and he longed to return home to his routine. He explained to the doctor that he felt perfectly healthy and there was no reason to keep him in the hospital; but his pleas did not help.

For an inexplicable reason, the doctor was insistent that according to regulations he needed to stay at the very least until the next morning no matter what. Reb Avigdor had no choice but to stay in

the hospital against his will. The next morning, he rose early and immediately went to do the series of tests needed as part of his discharge. After the doctors' rounds, the doctor in charge signed his discharge, and Reb Avigdor felt like he had been released from prison. He hurriedly took his things and set out for home. Before leaving the ward, he had to recite Asher Yatzar.



Reb Avigdor was very scrupulous about saying brachos aloud and with kavanah. After washing his hands, he stood across from a small sign hanging over the sink, and began to recite Asher Yatzar slowly. Naturally, in his situation, he had even more kavanah, and as he said the brachah he pondered the myriad chassadim of Hashem manifested by the normal function of the body's systems. While saying the brachah, Reb Avigdor sensed that someone was standing behind him and observing him. He hoped that as soon as he finished, the other person would answer amen. But to his surprise, instead of amen, he heard the echo of the other man's footsteps receding. Reb Avigdor turned around to see who had listened to his brachah, and he was surprised to see that it was one of the staff members on the ward, a doctor with a clear Arab appearance, named Dr. Youssef.

This made him very curious; he could not fathom what had made the Arab doctor so curious about the brachah of Asher Yatzar, and he decided to ask the doctor what it was about. He hurried after the man, but the doctor seemed displeased by this and picked up his pace to widen the gap between them. But Reb Avigdor did not want to give up.

After a quick 'pursuit' he stopped the doctor and asked him directly: "I saw that you are interested in my brachos," Reb Avigdor said to the doctor. "I'm curious to know why." At first, the doctor tried to be evasive; he was clearly in a state of heightened emotion. But Reb Avigdor pressed and urged the doctor to tell him why he was interested; the man finally gave in and related the following unbelievable story:

"I'm an Arab, as you surely have noticed. When I saw you going over to the sink and washing your hands, and reading the text that you called Asher Yatzar from the sign, I suddenly remembered a distant memory from my childhood. I remembered that my elderly grandmother used to do the exact same thing. Each day, she stood up a few times and read something from a paper hanging on the wall in her kitchen. That is why I stood next to you and listened quietly until you finished." "Your grandmother??" This time it was Reb Avidgor's turn to shiver. "Where does she live?" he asked. "Near my parents' house in one of the mixed cities in the center of the country," the doctor replied. "And for many years now, she's been living in the cemetery…"

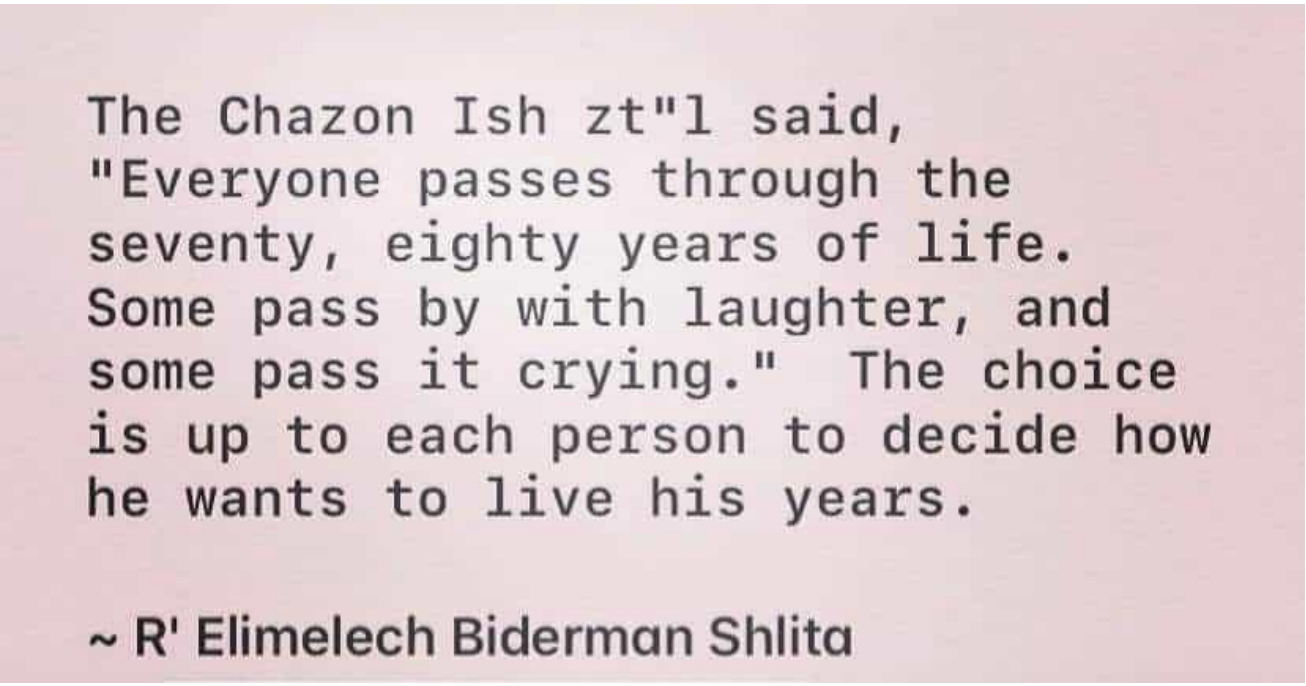
"From which side was this grandmother?" Reb Avigdor asked carefully. "What do you mean?" the doctor was puzzled. "She was my mother's mother." Reb Avigdor felt faint. "You are a Jew!" he cried excitedly and felt an urge to hug the other man, but naturally, the other man recoiled and did not know what he was talking about.

"In Judaism, lineage is determined by the mother," Reb Avigdor explained. "If your mother's mother recited Asher Yatzar, it's likely she was Jewish, and if so, your mother is also Jewish, and so are you. You, Dr. Youssef, are actually Yosef Hatzaddik, assimilated among the non-Jews."

The doctor was stunned; he needed some time to make some inquiries, and then to digest the fact that landed on him like a thunderbolt. He asked for Reb Avigdor's contact information, and

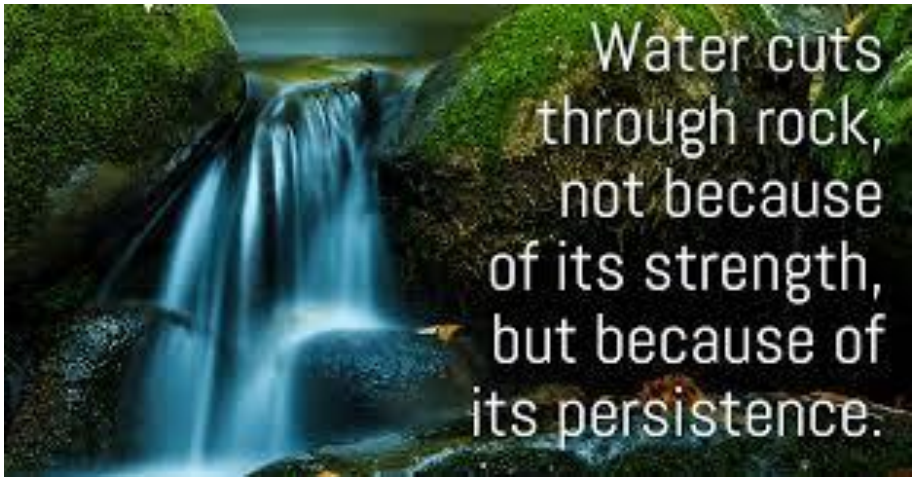
later reached out to him; he slowly began the long process of returning to his roots. "If that doctor would not have insisted on keeping me in the ward until the morning," Reb Avigdor told his friends after sharing this story, "and if I would not be strict about making brachos with kavanah, from the text, and if that doctor's grandmother would not have been strict about the same thing, then it's possible that this distant Jewish soul would have never found its way back to its roots."

This story, related by the maggid Rav Yaakov Shayish, shlita, teaches us that aside for the obligation to recite each brachah properly, when we do this in public, we cause an awakening among those around us, to the extent that it can return a Jewish soul to its source.



"Hashem uses a man's good deeds as seeds to plant trees in Paradise: in this way every man creates his own Paradise." ~~ The Mezeritzer Rabbi

Essential Rabbi Nachman - Water wears away stone



Even if many days and years pass and it seems as if you have accomplished nothing with your prayers and conversations with Hashem, don't give up! Every single word makes an impression. אֲבָנִים שָׁחֲקוּ מַיִם "***Water wears away stone***" (**Iyov** 14: 19).

It may seem that water dripping on hard stone could not make any impression, yet when water drips on stone continuously for many years, it can literally wear a hole in the stone. We actually see this. Even if your heart is like stone and it seems that your words of prayer are making no impression at all, still, as the days and years pass, your heart of stone will also be softened. For: "Water wears away stone".

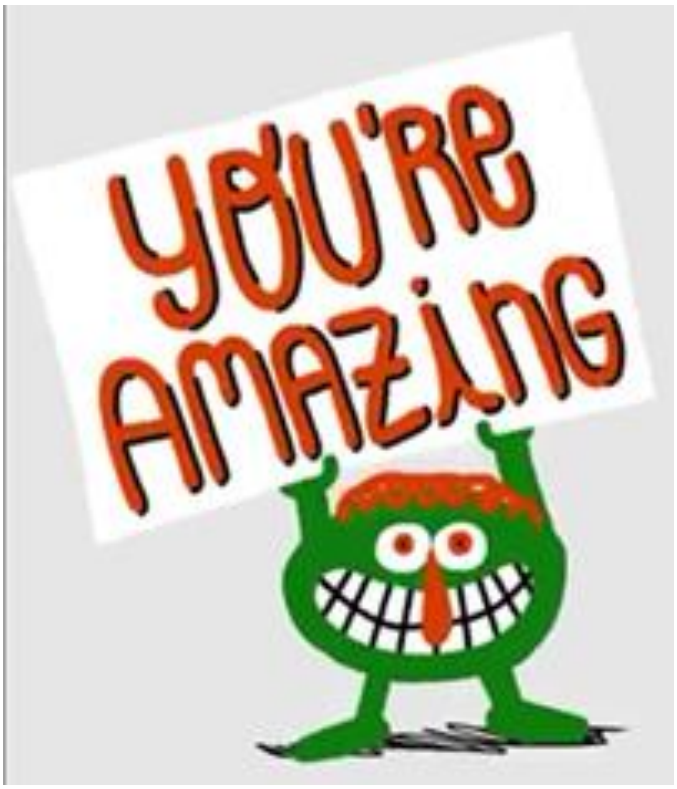
Rav Avigdor Miller on Rock and Roll Music

QUESTION: Is it forbidden to listen to rock and roll music?

ANSWER: The answer is no, it's not forbidden. Isn't that surprising, for me to say that? It's also not forbidden to walk out onto Ocean Parkway, take off your shoes and dance a jig. It's not forbidden. Only that you're a meshugeneh if you do it. And you very well might get a tack in your foot.

And if you listen to rock and roll, you'll get some tacks in your brain. There's no question it's not going to make you any smarter. But if you're asking if it's forbidden, I can't tell you it's forbidden.

You're a Believer!



R' Zecharia Wallerstein zt"l, the legendary Mekareiv and Oheiv Yisroel, recalled the fateful meeting that launched him on his great career of loving Hashem's children. He was asked to speak to an angry young lady who had no interest in Yiddishkeit. Why should she care about Hashem's Torah and His Mitzvos, if Hashem doesn't care about her? Why should she believe in Hashem? She hated G-d because He caused her so much pain. She blamed Hashem for all her troubles. Her life was a mess.

Rabbi Wallerstein said, I'm amazed. You're incredible! You are a bigger believer in Hashem than I am. She looked at him incredulously. Do I sound like a believer?

Of course you believe in Hashem, and more than most. You are blaming Hashem for all your troubles. Hashem is causing you all this pain. Which non-believer believes that everything that happens to him is because of G-d?! The rest is history.

Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be content.- Helen Keller

We could never learn to be brave and patient, if there were only joy in the world. -Helen Keller

L'Maaseh

A childless couple who had tried everything turned to their rav. According to the doctors the only hope for them to have children involved something which seemed clearly against halacha, and their rav saw no way out, but approached **Rav Moshe Feinstein** on their behalf.

Their caring rav had been correct, as even R' Moshe could find no way to circumvent the involved Torah prohibitions. "I can't be matir d'oraisahs - what do you want from me?", asked the gadol ha'dor.

The couple's caring Rav answered that he understood, but he wants R' Moshe to daven for the couple. R' Moshe agreed, "ok, I'll daven". A short time later the woman became pregnant and had one daughter who incidentally went on to have several children of her own and many grandchildren, all due to the compassion and heartfelt tefilos of R' Moshe who was approached by the couple's caring rav.



וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו 32:4

Yaakov sent messengers 'Lefanav' - ahead of him. The **Apter Rov** says something truly remarkable. Yaakov Avinu is the source of the Jewish people, and our symbol. All his life, Yaakov constantly strove to minimize the troubles that would befall his descendants.

Indeed, the incident with Esav - the dispatch of angels and the gift Yaakov sent his brother - has helped the Jewish people throughout the generations. Whenever oppressors come to harm us, the very same angels Yaakov sent to Esav, awaken and work to appease the oppressors (symbolized by Esav) and get us out of trouble.

This is why the posuk states that Yaakov sent the angels 'Lefanav' - 'ahead of him' - they were given a mission for the future: to always protect the Jewish people!





Question: What does it mean to give Hashem *nachas*?

Answer: You must understand that Hashem is so high above us that He cannot be affected by our deeds at all. Our deeds have no effect on Him at all! But still, we have to act according to the teachings of the Torah. And the Torah tells us that Hashem does have *nachas* from our deeds. "*Yismach Hashem b'maasav*." And therefore, we have to act that way. It's very important to act with this in mind. So when you do something, you should say, "I'm doing this to make a *nachas ruach* for my Creator."

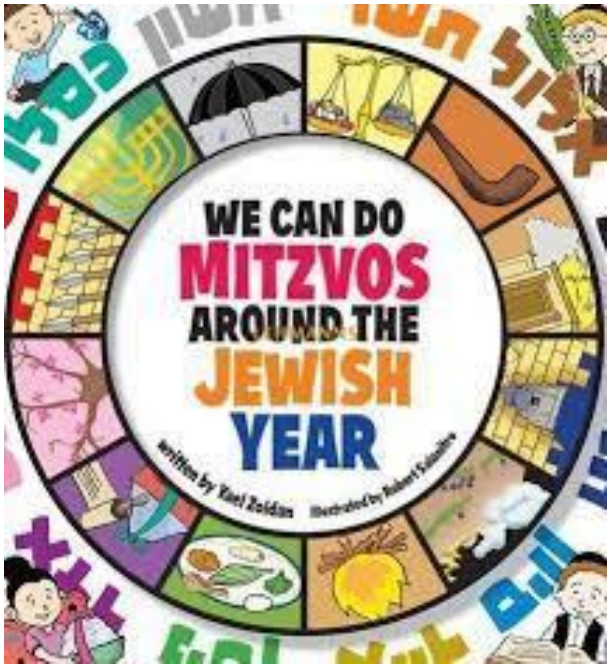
And therefore, whenever you do something, if you can, you should say, "I'm doing this to make Hakodosh Boruch Hu happy." And don't rely on just thinking it because then it won't happen. Say with your mouth, "I'm doing this to make Hashem happy." And Hakodosh Boruch Hu is happy! "*Yismach Hashem b'maasav*." Hashem is happy with us when we do His will.

The **Rambam** asks, "What is "*kavod Hashem*?" And he says that thinking about Hashem – that's *kavod Hashem*. The more you think about Hashem, the more you are honouring Him. A person must train himself to think about Hashem all the time.

And this is how we must live our lives. We must live with the teachings of the Torah. Not with the teachings of the Philosophers. Although with Philosophy we would say that Hashem is too sublime to be affected by our deeds, we live by the words of the Torah always, and we feel a *hargasha*, an actual feeling, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is rejoicing when He sees His children doing the things that they are supposed to be doing.

Sparks Of Shabbos

Every yom tov has its unique mitzvos. On Rosh Hashana, we blow shofar, on Pesach, we eat matzah, and on Succos we sit in a succah and shake lulav.



R' Shimshon Pinkus explains that the reason for this is because we must create the kedusha of yom tov. Without these mitzvos and their corresponding 'instruments', the yom tov lacks kedusha. However, Shabbos is different. It is a gift to us from Hashem yisbaracha. Its kedusha is automatic and we don't need any such kli to experience this. Rather, it is by preparing delicious foods and bathing, getting dressed, and shining our shoes that we demonstrate how we wait for the Shabbos with excitement. Then, we can truly feel and experience its kedusha.

Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk

At a meeting of department heads at a large hospital, a nurse turned to her neighbour, a Jewish doctor (identifiable by his yarmulka), and asked: "I have noticed that orthodox Jewish children act towards their parents in a way that is respectful and obedient. Can you tell me why this is so?"

The doctor swallowed hard and said: "Before I answer your question, I want to ask you a question. How many times a year does the average family sit down together at a meal? Not just a hurried meal, but one where the family can enjoy good food, and talk, uninterruptedly, for a period of time?"

The nurse said, "My family eats together on Thanksgiving and holidays." Then looking around the room she asked if anyone had a different answer. Everyone agreed that their families rarely ate together.

The doctor then said, "You may be surprised to learn that an observant Jewish family eats together no less than 200 times a year – three meals on each Saturday and two meals on every holiday! These meals encourage discussion and are usually accompanied by songs and stories. The family spends time enjoying each other's company. Perhaps this contributes to the close bond observant children have with their parents; and this, in turn, translates into respectful behaviour."

I was reminded of this episode when I read a Wall Street Journal Opinion Article entitled Much Depends on Dinner. In this piece, the author, Cameron Strocher, quotes a study: "The National Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that teens from families that almost never eat dinner together are 72% more likely to use illegal drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol." The dinner table can be a highly effective time to convey family values and the type of lifestyle that parents are hoping to inculcate in their children. This can be done warmly and gently, not as a lecture but as part of a family discussion. Love can be shown and overtly expressed by saying to each child, "I love you." Over time, these mealtime discussions, stories, and anecdotes help form a clear understanding of the family's values.

Being so busy, we have little time to talk with our children and counteract the external influences which entice our children to "buy" into the outside culture, often, at the expense of our "Family Values."

We can make a resolution and start a new family tradition. When we sit together at our family meal, maybe we can do so with the electronics turned off. Let's talk with our family, speaking face to

face instead of texting across the table. Let's make our family our first and primary Social Media Network. Let's begin to reuse the special gift which differentiates us from the animal kingdom, the Gift of Speech.

We can set up guidelines for respectful, encouraging speech and limit the topics to positive and uplifting subjects. We can read a motivating, inspiring story. We can go around the table and share something each of us did during the day, or previous week, that we are proud of having done. And we can encourage and applaud the good each of us has done, reinforcing positive behaviour. And maybe, just maybe, we can extend our new family tradition to one meal a day at home, either breakfast or dinner where the family enjoys each other's company, undisturbed.

Or, maybe, at least once a week we can set a beautiful Shabbos table in our home and make good use of the opportunity afforded by our Family Dinner Table. This will be a very valuable investment, bringing long term dividends, in what is truly most important to all of us.

The Yetzer Harah

R' Shlomo from Kalrin, zt"l, would say, "The greatest *Yetzer Harah* is for a Jew to forget that he is a *Ben HaMelech,* a prince of the King of Kings." A Jew must remember that he is a prince of the King of Kings, a son of our Father in Heaven, of *Hashem*. Therefore, *Hashem* always desires and yearns for us to be closer to Him through the Torah and *mitzvos,* just like a father always yearns for his son regardless of how he has behaved.

"The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending, then having the two as close together as possible."

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld-Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid

Rav Issur Zalman Meltzer 1870-1953



Rav Issur Zalman Meltzer, the Rosh Yeshiva in Slutzk and later in Yerushalayim in Eitz Chaim, was niftar on 10 Kislev.

Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer was born in the city of Mir 5630/1870. At the age of 10 he learned at the Mir Yeshiva. By the age of 14 he went to learn in Volozhin yeshiva under the Netziv and Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, where he remained for seven years. During his engagement period Rav Isser Zalman became gravely ill. He sent a letter to his Kalla suggesting that under the circumstances she could break the Shidduch. His Kalla set out to ask the Chofetz Chaim what to do. The Chofetz Chaim told her that health and long life are not necessarily synonymous. He recommended that they get married and wished them both Arichas Yamim which they had.

Reb Issur Zalman- the gadol Hador, was once walking home surrounded by his talmidim. As he reaches his home, the talmidim step back and they allowed the Rebbe to walk up the steps of his home.

He walked up the steps, but paused for a moment, and turned around and came back down the steps, and continued to walk with his talmidim.

The Talmidim asked their Rebbe, "What happened? We normally leave your presence here. Why did you turn around this time, and come back down?"

Reb Issur Zalman's answer is a penetrating one, that we can all learn from.

He said, "When I got to the door, I heard the non-Jewish female cleaner singing a song, and if I would have entered at that moment, firstly, she would have been embarrassed, and secondly, she would have stopped singing. She needs to sing while she works, in order to make things easier, and I didn't want to stop her from doing that!"

That is the sensitivity of a gadol for somebody else. What a zechus. This is something that we should learn from and be a zechus for our families and communities, and for all of Klal Yisrael.

At the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution Rav Isser Zalman fled Russia to Poland. Rav Isser Zalman then emigrated to Eretz Yisroel and was appointed Rosh Yeshiva of Eitz Chaim in Yerushalayim. Rav Isser Zalman is credited with introducing the derech of the Lithuanian Yeshivos to Eretz Yisroel and he was "Rosh Yeshiva" to the "Roshei Yeshivos."

His Even HaEzel on the Rambam has become a classic in the Yeshiva world. He was Niftar 10th Kislev 5714/1953 at the age of 83 years old.



Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

"No need to search for treasures buried far away – they can be found in your own backyard!" – Harav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa.

Chizuk In Our Lives

When **Rav Yechezkel Abramsky** זצ"ל lived in Russia, the Communist regime exiled him to Siberia on trumped up charges. He had to spend his days chopping wood in freezing temperatures.

One morning, a fellow inmate noticed that Rav Yechezkel had been tossing and turning for a long time in the early morning. He asked Rav Yechezkel, "What was on your mind? Were you thinking about all the terrible atrocities and hardships that we will have to endure again today?"

Rav Yechezkel answered, "No, that is not what went through my mind. Rather, I was about to say **מודה אני**, when I thought to myself, what am I thanking **ה'** for? What kind of life is this, that I am glad that He has returned my **נשמה** to me? Just another day of chopping wood in the frigid winter?!

But then I got to the words, '**רבה אמונתך**', and I calmed down. I realised that it was worth being alive just for the knowledge that **ה'** has faith in me and I can repay that faith even through the most difficult of times."

Unstable Ground – Rabbi Joey Haber

This story happened in the 1940's.

There was a woman that lived in Israel. Her name was Chana. She lost her husband when he was young. She had a young son of 11 years old called Chaim. This boy was not just a weak student, but extremely weak. Here is a single mother who can hardly afford to buy anything, and her son in in school and still can't read or write properly. Her friends suggested to her that she should take him out of school and get him a job. She said, "He's nearly 12. I can't take him out of school before he's Bar Mitzvah."

She left him in school for another year. At the end of the year after much studying, he knew how to read one Pasuk! Because of this small improvement, she decided to leave him there.

She eventually sent him to the Slabodka Yeshiva. He was the weakest student in the entire yeshiva. Nobody in the whole yeshiva wanted to learn with Chaim because he was so weak. They said, "It is easier to learn with a table than to learn with him!" But he had one strength – he never stopped learning. He was the biggest masmid in the entire yeshiva- by far. He kept going, and trying with incredible determination, even though there were all kinds of rejection around him. Nobody wanted to study with him.



He then moved to the Mir Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. There was a Rabbi there, who would one day become the famous Rosh Yeshiva- **Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz Zt'l**. The Rosh said, "In order for me to prepare my class, I want to learn with somebody who is extremely diligent but is intellectually slow. This would enable me to practice giving over the shiur in a manner in which it would be understood clearly by all."

There was no better candidate than Chaim. Every day, the great Reb Chaim learnt and practised his shiur with this boy.

A young boy who came from Chicago joined the yeshiva. He had incredible potential, and the Rosh Yeshiva told him to learn with someone who has a tremendous love for Torah like nobody else… Chaim.

He ends up learning with Chaim all day and all night – every day! They didn't stop learning.



This kid from Chicago would become… **Reb Nosson Zvi Finkle Zt'l**! (The late Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva) A giant of a person who built the yeshiva from a small group of boys, into a place of learning Torah with 6000-7000 students in it!

Later on in life , when they asked Reb Noson Zvi who his Rebbe was, he replied, " My Rebbe was Chaim Kimmel, the boy that I learnt with in yeshiva!"

That kid that couldn't learn, that kid that was harder to learn with than a table, from a most vulnerable position, that kid would help to build the future infrastructure of the Jewish Nation!

The fact that he was weak was his strength. If you feel in some way a weakness, or instability, know that in your lonely moment, in your vulnerable moment, always know that Hashem is always there with you – holding on to you!



Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

Once saw in an ancient sefer, that a person is granted a set number of words he may speak in his lifetime. – One would be wise to limit his words- This way he will live longer…. Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld-Rosh Yeshivas Beis Dovid

Rav Avram Dov M'Avritch – The Bas Ayin 1759-1840

The Heilige Bas Ayin – Rabbi Avraham Dov Auerbach of Avritch - The Avritcher. He was a Rebbe in Europe for forty years and in Safed (Tzfat) for ten. Before that he had been a disciple of **Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev** and the first two Rebbes of the **Chernobyl** dynasty. You can still visit his shul today in Zfas. He had a burning passion to come to Eretz Yisrael. He was desperate to come here, and you can see throughout his sefer – The Bas Ayin, his love of Eretz Yisrael.



One particular visitor used to tell him, again and again, how great and special the kedusha of Eretz Yisrael is. The Heilige Bas Ayin – The Avritcher would ask him questions about Eretz Yisrael.

The visitor would tell him repeatedly all good things, including that even the rocks of Eretz Yisrael are like precious jewels! When the Avritcher heard this, he said, "That's it, I must go."

It was in 1830, at the age of 65, that Rabbi Avraham Dov of Avritch settled in the holy city of Zefas. The visitor that came to him in Chutz La'aretz also made it and came to visit the Bas Ayin in Eretz Yisrael. He said to the Bas Ayin, "Nu, Rebbe, how is it in Eretz Yisrael?"

The Rebbe answered, "It's amazing, it's gevaldige. Everything you said is here, except one thing – I don't see the rocks being jewels!" The hardships were all too apparent, while the holiness of the land was hard to discern.

The visitor told him, "You have to be zoche to be able to see this phenomenon." Rabbi Avraham Dov began to think of returning to his home in Avritch, where he had been the Rebbe since 1785. "After all," he reasoned, "I left my relatives and my students behind in order to live in the land, but it is to no avail, for I am suffering so bitterly. Let me return to Avritch; they will be happy to see me, and I will be glad as well."

One day, as he was walking to shul, he heard noises coming from the surrounding rooftops. He couldn't identify the strange sounds, so he asked the townspeople he passed for an explanation. They were amused that he didn't know.

"Here in Tzfat," they explained, "we have the custom of performing household chores on our flat roofs. We also use the roofs for storing food and other household supplies. The noise you hear is caused by the women scurrying about, removing everything from the roofs."

"Why are they doing that?" the Rabbi asked. "Why, so that nothing gets ruined by the rain, of course," was the incredulous reply.

But Rabbi Avraham Dov was still confused. He looked up at a sky as blue as the sea when there are no clouds in sight. "It certainly doesn't look like rain," he said, hoping for some further clarification.

"Surely you remember that tonight will be the 7th of the month of *MarCheshvan*, when we start to say the prayer for rain. We beseech G-d to be merciful and send rains to water our crops and provide water for us. Since we are **sure** that our Father in Heaven will hear our prayers and will heed our request, we take precautions so that our possessions won't be ruined when the rains come."

The unquestioning faith of the people affected the rabbi deeply. Suddenly his eyes were opened, and he saw the sublime heights of faith achieved by the simple Jews of the Holy Land.

His pain and disappointment were replaced by a sense of awe at the holiness of the land and its people. At that moment, he abandoned

all thoughts of returning to Avritch and began a new leg of his own spiritual journey in the Holy Land. Shortly thereafter, he became established as the leader of Tzfat's burgeoning chassidic community.

Many years later, when the Bas Ayin was making a siyum, and kiddush on Shabbos, everybody was wondering what the occasion was for. There was no apparent reason for it.

The Bas Ayin explained, "Only now I realise that we have to be able to see beyond the physicality of the world. To see the potential and see what's hidden beneath the surface." The Bas Ayin realised that this is what his visitor meant by saying, " The rocks of Eretz Yisrael are like precious jewels." It means that the opportunity is here in Eretz Yisrael.



But what he is most famous for (besides his monumental book of chassidic thought, *Bas Ayin*) is his part in the earthquake miracle of 1837.

In the deadly earthquake of 24 Tevet 5597 (January 1, 1837), 5,000 people lost their lives, of whom 4000 were Jews, more than 80% of the community! It was between the afternoon and evening prayers, when most of the men were in shul, that the tremors and rumblings suddenly began.

Of all of Tzfat's shuls only two remained standing (Ari-Sephardi and Abuhav), and many hundreds of Jews at prayer perished under the collapsed debris. In the shul of the Avritcher Rebbe, as elsewhere, panic set in, and the congregants began to bolt for the outdoors.

"Come to the ark if you wish to be saved!" shouted the Rebbe in a powerful voice. Immediately everyone crowded around him. The Rebbe threw himself on the ground, praying and weeping.

Local tradition records that although most of the building collapsed, the part where the men were clustered remained upright and everyone was saved.

The Bas Ayin did not merit children but invested much during his last years to bring his life's work to print. He called it **בת עין** which has the same **גמטריא** as his name **אברהם דוב בער** . Although the Rebbe wished he would live to see his sefer in print, that dream would not be fulfilled in his lifetime. Just before Rabbi Avraham Dov passed away in the epidemic of 1840, on the 12th day of Kislev, he announced that his would be the last life claimed by the terrible plague. And so it was. A Tzaddik in his time.

It should be a zechus on the day of his heilige yartzeit, for our families and for all of Klal Yisrael. Zechuso yagen aleinu. May his memory be a source of protection for us all. He was Niftar 12th Kislev 5601 /1840. [Adapted from *Anaf Etz Avot*]

Comfort In Times Of Trouble

וַתְּקָרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶּן־אוֹנִי וְאָבִיו קָרָא־לוֹ בִנְיָמִין "***And it came to pass when her soul died, and she called his name Ben Oni, and his father called him Benjamin***" (35:18)

However, this act of Jacob was done wisely. If Rachel's son had carried the name "Ben Oni" all his life, he would have constantly remembered his mother's suffering. Sages also say that Jacob knew

that the temple would be built on Benjamin's part and would be associated with Benjamin's name (see Deuteronomy 3:12). And since the temple must be associated with things of joy and not of sorrow, Jacob felt that his son should not carry a name that reminds him of suffering.

And there are those who suggest another reason why Jacob preferred not to name his son "Ben Oni": Rachel, who realized that her son would grow up as an orphan, without a mother's love and motherly care, regretted the great suffering he had in his life. However, Jacob sought to encourage his beloved wife and tell her that her son would not be abandoned. "I will name him Benjamin," he said, "which means - son of my right hand. I will watch over him and always be by his side and help him, comfort him and guide his path."



The Bas Ayin

The Sifri says, R'Shimon held that it is not a kiddush Hashem to say, "When a tzaddik departs from this world, his positive influence ends."

On the contrary, on the day of his yartzeit, his power of influencing yeshuos and blessing is so much greater!

The Bas Ayin is here with us, removing all of the obstacles!

The Minchas Yitzchok, the Posek Hador, said an interesting thought…Listen well to this vort and you will realise the immense power we have now!

The gemara in Bava Basra says,that a precious stone hung around the neck of Avraham avinu, and every sick person who saw it – was instantly cured. And when Avraham Avinu was niftar, Hakadosh Baruch Hu transferred its power – where to…? The sun.

'What does that mean?' The Minchas Yitzchok asks. He explains, that Avraham Avinu represents all the tzaddikim.

When the Bas Ayin was alive, he annulled much hardship and suffering. But he was niftar… So how can we tap into this power today? Do you know what the answer is?

When he was niftar, Hakadosh Baruch Hu transferred his power to the sun. And every year on the day of his yartzeit, the sun is in exactly the same position in it's orbit as it was then! It arrives at the exact spot it was on the day he was niftar! That's where his power lies – On the day of his yartzeit!

We All have the ability to overcome difficult decrees! We can daven that the holy Bas Ayin plead for us, and bring upon us the days of the final Geulah… **זְכוֹר אַהֲבַת קְדוּמִים וְהַחֲיֵה נִרְדָּמִים וְקָרֵב הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר בֶּן יִשַׁי חָי**

MeOros HaTzaddikim - The Ba'al Shem's Segula

There was a revolt among the goyim when the ruler Ibrahim Facha was in control. The ruler of Tzefas guaranteed **The Avritcher (The Bas Ayin)** safe haven, but he would have none of it and declared, "Wherever all the Jews will be, so will I be there with them."

When the revolutionaries found out that the Avritcher was present, they captured him and some of his followers, taking them as prisoners and marching them to their deaths! As they were being led to the slaughter, the younger captives began whispering about a planned revenge to take their captors' swords and to attack them.

The Avritcher overheard their plans and ordered them to abandon the idea. Instead, he told them to ask their captors for some water. He feigned thirst and was given some water to drink, over which he fervently recited the blessing Shehakol niheya bidvoro – and afterward, he explained his behaviour to the Chassidim:

"There is a segula from the holy Ba'al Shem Tov to recite the Shehakol berocha in times of distress as a salvation from danger!" Just then, a well-dressed, respectable-looking Arab approached and began to berate the rebels, asking them to release the Rebbe and his followers, for were the rebels not honourable, respected men as he had heard?

Having to uphold their new reputation, they released the prisoners and ordered the Avritcher and his Chassidim to go home.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

Please Don't Hand Me Those Animals!



Many years ago, Dr. Nachman Kook practiced medicine in Yerushalayim. Since he did not have a receptionist, his patients would sit down and wait to be called. When the doctor asked who was next, that person would stand up and go into the examination room.

Rabbi Yechezkel Sarna, Rosh Yeshiva of the Chevron yeshiva, was the one exception to the rule. Rabbi Sarna's medical condition required him to regularly see Dr. Kook. With great respect for this Torah luminary, whenever Rabbi Sarna came, Dr. Kook called him to be seen next.

Once, Rabbi Sarna was sitting in the waiting room when Dr. Kook came out. Expecting to be next, as usual, Rabbi Sarna got up from his seat and headed to the examination room. Dr. Kook apologized to Rabbi Sarna and said that he had to first see a lady who had already been waiting.

When Dr. Kook finished examining the elderly lady, he called in Rabbi Sarna. Dr. Kook explained to Rabbi Sarna why he did not call him in right away, as he was accustomed to do. He explained that the elderly lady was poor, and he did not charge her for her examination. Dr. Kook was concerned that if he took Rabbi Sarna ahead of her, she may have thought that priority treatment was being given to those patients who paid. She may have felt badly that as a non-paying patient, she wasn't getting the same attention as the paying patients. That's why the doctor took her right away. (In the footsteps of the Maggid by Rabbi Paysach Krohn) Dr. Kook thought the situation through and showed such sensitivity to the elderly lady.

After being away for many years, our forefather Yaakov was finally returning home to the land of Israel. Yaakov sent messengers to Esav to find out if Esav still harboured a murderous hatred towards him for receiving Yitzchak's blessings. The messengers returned to Yaakov saying that Esav was coming to "greet" Yaakov, together with 400 men.

The Kli Yakar says that Esav was coming with an army to fight Yaakov. Yaakov realized that he was in a dangerous situation. Rashi says that Yaakov prepared for the upcoming encounter in 3 ways. He prepared for a possible battle, he prayed to Hashem, and he prepared a gift to appease Esav. If Esav would be appeased by Yaakov's gift, then war would be averted. Obviously, the type of gift was of utmost importance. Yaakov sent Esav a very generous gift of over 500 animals! Yaakov told his servants to space the animals in such a way, as to magnify the appearance of the many animals that he was sending.

Since the purpose of this magnificent gift was to appease Esav, we would think that Yaakov would have chosen the best and finest quality animals. Yet, surprisingly, that was not the case. The Torah tells us (Bereishis 32:14) that Yaakov took whichever animals came into his hand. That means that among the animals, Yaakov may have sent animals that were sickly or blemished. How could Yaakov do such a thing?



The Chofetz Chaim zt"l (in sefer Chofetz Chaim on the Torah) explains that Yaakov did not feel it was proper for him to actively choose which specific animals to send to Esav. Those animals that had belonged to Yaakov would now be going to the rasha, Esav. Yaakov did not want to be directly involved in choosing the animals since that would have caused some measure of suffering to them.

Yaakov had learned about this sensitivity from an event that had occurred to himself many years earlier. When he left home to travel to the house of Besuel and Lavan, Yaakov stopped in Bethel. He prepared to spend the night outside, in the open.

Rashi (Bereishis 28:11) says that Yaakov took 12 stones to encircle his head like a cape, to protect himself from wild animals. The stones "quarrelled" with one another, vying for the privilege of being the stone that the tzadik, Yaakov rested his head upon. Immediately, Hashem fused the 12 stones into 1 large stone so that Yaakov was resting his head on all the stones, which were now 1 stone.

From this, Yaakov understood that even an inanimate object, such as a stone, had the urge to draw close to holiness. If that was the case

then certainly, animals, who are living creatures, feel the need to be attached to holiness and not to wickedness.

Therefore, Yaakov understood that the animals which would be sent to Esav, would undergo a measure of suffering. Yaakov had to send the animals. However, he limited his hands-on involvement by not actively choosing which animals to send. Yaakov's gift had potential life-saving repercussions and it seemed important to send only the finest animals to Esav. However, Yaakov's sensitivity determined that he had to take that chance. It would not have been appropriate otherwise.

This is such a meaningful lesson for us. We must be so sensitive to the feelings of others so as not to cause them to suffer. We must be so careful even if that means that an action which we want to do will not be as effective.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series [לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה]





This week's parsha, Vayishlach, begins with Yaakov's preparations to meet his brother Esav. Fearful of this encounter, Yaakov prepares in three ways. "doron (presents), milchamah (war) and tefillah (prayer). Yet when bringing a prooftext for each one, Rashi switches the order to "doron, tefilah, vemilchamah - presents, prayer, and war." Why switch the order and place tefillah in the middle?

Rabbi Meyer Juzint zt"l explains in his sefer Nechmas Meyer that tefillah is the bridge between hishtadlus (effort) and bitachon (faith). When Yaakov prepared the doron (presents), he davened it would be successful; and when he prepared for war, he also davened that it would be successful.

Rabbi Juzint would always say: "Do your best and Hashem will do the rest!" Our tefillot root our efforts in our faith, hope, and optimism.

(Interestingly, when he prays, he asks Hashem, **הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו** (32:12)" – ***please save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav***.

Being that he only had one brother, why was there a need for this redundancy of "the hand of my brother, the hand of Esav"?

The Beis HaLevi explains that Yaakov was worried about two different, dangerous aspects – the 'brother' aspect and the 'Esav' aspect. Yaakov realized that this meeting would presumably lead to one of two situations. Esav would either remain angry and try to kill him or would calm down and want to build a brotherly relationship. Yaakov's prayer was not redundant at all – he was asking to be saved from both of these possibilities.)

The order of the pesukim tells us that Yaakov prepared for battle first. Than he sends presents. But Rashi switches the order as mentioned above. Why? - **Reb Yaakov Kamenetski** (Titen Emess L'Yaakov) addresses this anomaly.

He says that Rashi mentions the present first, because the present is the most important thing. Yaakov was primarily seeking out Achvah with his brother. This is what The Riboino Shel Olam wanted. That Yaakov should build the brotherly love between two brothers. Then you would require Tefillah that the presents should be effective. Then in the worst-case scenario, there would have to be Milchamah.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

וַיָּלֶן שָׁם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיִּקַּח מִן־הַבָּא בְיָדוֹ מִנְחָה לְעֵשָׂו אָחִיו 'So he lodged there on that night, <u>and he took from what came into his hand</u> a gift for his brother Esav' 32:14

What do the words **וַיִּקַּח מִן־הַבָּא בְיָדוֹ** come to tell us?

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank explains this unusual phrase based on a fascinating insight of the Tashbatz (553), which is quoted by the Darkei Moshe (Yoreh Deah 35:1). After an animal is shected [slaughtered], an intricate examination of its organs must be performed to make sure that none of them are damaged in a way that renders the animal forbidden for consumption. The Tashbatz describes an interesting test by which a person can determine if an animal is unhealthy and non-kosher even while it is still alive. The test is to run one's hand over the back of the animal. An animal which crouches and drops to the ground is kosher, while one which remains standing is not.



Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank explains that Yaakov found himself in a dilemma. On the one hand, he was compelled to send gifts to appease his angry brother Eisav. At the same time, Yaakov didn't want to give him animals which were fit to be brought as korbonos, lest Eisav offer them for idolatrous purposes. His brilliant solution was to send those animals "which remained in his hand" and didn't drop to the ground, thereby revealing an internal blemish and disqualification.

The Remah (36) says that there is a method that you can use to see if an animal is kosher or treife, whilst it is still alive before shechting it. A treife animal has certain traits that display

arrogance. If the animal displays this behaviour, then it is probably treife, whereas a kosher animal would display submissive tendencies.

If you put your hand right in front of its head, and it goes beneath your hand, then it is kosher. But if it lifts its head up and smacks into your hand, pushes you away, then it is treife.

This is pshat over here in the Pasuk **וַיִּקַּח מִן־הַבָּא בְיָדוֹ** Yaakov sent all the treife animals to Easav! All the animals were blemished (ba'alei mumin). He did this in order to prevent Eisav from bringing them as Korbanos.

Minchah

The Tur (232) writes, "***One must be very cautious with tefillas Minchah… Eliyahu was answered at Minchah time***…"



The Tur explains that it is difficult to remember to daven Minchah because it is in the middle of the workday, and we can easily miss the time. Shacharis and Maariv are easier to remember since they are davened at the beginning and end of the day. But Minchah is a hard time to catch.

The Tur writes, "He must pay attention [not to miss the time and must] put aside all his work and daven. If he does so, his reward is very great."

Kibud Av v'Em

The *Chayei Adam* (*siman* 67) writes, "Honouring parents is a mitzvah from the Torah, and it is **חמורה שבחמורות** , from among the most stringent obligations. A person must honour his father and mother and fear them. One must be very cautious with this mitzvah because honouring and fearing parents is compared to honouring and fearing Hashem."

It is possible to keep this mitzvah anytime and wherever one lives, even if it is distant from his parents.

1] To Honour in Thought



The Chayei Adam writes, "The mitzvah of kibud av v'em is to honour one's parents with one's thoughts, actions, and words. Honouring with one's thought means that one should consider his parents the most respected people in the world. This is the primary mitzvah of honouring them. "

This part of the mitzvah can be fulfilled anywhere, whether one lives close or farther away from his parents.

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l* excelled in this form of kibud av v'em. He considered his parents to be **גדולים ונכבדי ארץ**, "from the most important and respected people in the land," as the Chayei Adam describes it. And in this way, he kept the mitzvah every day, even when he was distant from his parents.

Also, after his parent's demise, he would think about how special his parents were; in this manner, he performed kibud av v'em daily.

2] Acquiring a Good Reputation

The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (143:21) writes, "If someone truly desires to honour his father and mother, he should study Torah and do good deeds because that will bring immense honour to his parents. People will say, 'Fortunate is the father and mother who raised this child.'

So, we've found yet another way to honour parents from a distance. When you act properly, you will bring honour to your parents. They will be proud to hear good reports about you.

3] Giving Reward to your Parents

The *Zohar* (vol.2, 115) says that when people do good deeds and study Torah, their parents are honoured in heaven.

The *Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah* (*Tzavaah Hakdoshah* ch.28) advises that when people do good deeds, they should have in mind that they are performing the mitzvah of *kibud av ve'em*, because their parents will be honoured in heaven.

It states (32:8), **וירא יעקב מאד ויצר לו** , "Yaakov was very afraid, and he was distressed." The *Daas Zekenim m'Baalei HaTosfos* writes, "Yaakov was afraid that Eisav would benefit from the mitzvah of *kibud av v'em*, which Yaakov didn't perform for twenty years."

Yaakov feared that Eisav's merits of *kibud av v'em* might give Eisav the upper hand, and Eisav might be able to harm him.

Throughout those twenty years, Yaakov *avinu* certainly performed *kibud av v'em* from a distance in the manner described above. However, Eisav did *kibud av ve'em* with his deeds, and Yaakov Avinu lacked that aspect of the mitzvah for twenty years.

The Or HaChayim (*Shemos* 20:12) writes, "There are mitzvos that have wonderful *segulos* attached to them, in addition to the reward that Hashem will give for those mitzvos. And for this mitzvah [of

kibud av v'em], the Torah revealed [that its *mesugal* for living a long life]."

Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes, "We see clearly that those who honour their parents live long lives, or they have success and serenity in all their ways."

The Beis Ahron of Stolin *zt'l* said that he attained his spiritual levels from performing the mitzvah of *kibud av v'em*.

No Worries

The Torah (32:8) tells us that when Yaakov Avinu heard that Eisav was coming towards him with an army of four hundred men, **יעקב מאד ויירא ויצר לו** "Yaakov was very afraid and he was distressed."

The Daas Zekanim MiBaalei HaTosefos explains that he was distressed that he was afraid because he knew that he shouldn't be scared since Hashem promised him that He would protect him, as it states (28:15) **והנה אנכי עמך ושמרתיך בכל אשר תלך** , "Behold I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go."

Yaakov said (32:11), "I crossed this Yarden with my staff, and now I have become two camps."

Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* explains that also in this *pasuk*, Yaakov is bemoaning that he lost his *bitachon*. Yaakov said, "I used to have *bitachon*, and with my firm trust in Hashem, I put my staff in the Yarden and the waters split, but now I've divided my camp into two groups because I am afraid that Eisav might smite one of them."

When one is afraid, he is more liable to fail.

The Riv'a (from the *Baalei HaTosfos*) teaches that Yaakov lost his protection because of his fear, and therefore, the malach was able to smite Yaakov.

Horav Shlomo Freifeld, zl, was wont to say that the same letters that comprise the word ratzon (reish, tzaddik, vov, nun) also make up the word tzinor, pipe.



He explained that when a person has a true, definite plan to achieve a goal, Hashem will give him the strength as if through a pipe. It will flow to him from Above.

The entrance exam for Yeshivas Shaar Yashuv (Rav Freifeld's yeshivah) consisted of one question: Do you want to learn? An affirmative response received the Rosh Yeshivah's acceptance – regardless of the student's past history or lack of erudition.

As long as he demonstrated a positive desire to "make it," he was in. Ein davar ha'omeid bifnei ha'ratzon.

Torah Compilations with Yossi



I have always been saddened by the fact that Holocaust victims have no **מצבה** - 'Headstone.' You can't visit a cemetery and see a tombstone over a grave for them as one does for all others. Yet I derive some some support, from the beautiful teaching in Parshat Vayishlach.

Here the Torah provides the details of the sad passing of Rachel. She was buried in **בית לחם**, Beit Lechem, and one can visit her tomb to this very day. Indeed the Torah refers to the place of her burial by saying - **הוא מצבת קברת רחל עד היום**, This is the memorial to the burial place of Rachel to this very day."

Now some of our commentators ask about a redundant word here. The Torah could have said, **הוא מצבת רחל** - "This is the memorial of Rachel." Why does it say, **הוא מצבת קברת רחל** - This is a memorial of the burial place of Rachel"?

The Sefer Chomat Aish explains beautifully. He cites the teaching of Chazal, our Sages, who say, **אין עושים נפשות לצדיקים דבריהם הם זכרונם** - "There is no need to make a memorial in stone, for outstanding people. Their words and their deeds, that is their everlasting memorial."

Indeed this is so very true, because the true impact, the legacy of such people continues to exist in people's hearts and in people's minds. In turn, they pass it on to the generations to come and that's how great people continue to live forever.

Now we can understand why the Torah does not say, **הוא מצבת רחל** - "This is the memorial of Rachel." It is because Rachel has a far greater memorial than a memorial in stone. Rachel's legacy has endured within our hearts and our minds for all time and that's why the Torah says "**הוא מצבת קברת רחל**"

The essence of that place is as a memorial in stone marking the place where she was buried, and that's the place which we can come to in order to pay our respects to her.

With regard to the six million precious Jewish souls who perished in the Holocaust, it is beyond words to explain. But in truth, they continue to live on through us. The torch of their Judaism and their good deeds are borne aloft by us with pride, guaranteeing that despite the efforts of our enemies to destroy us, **עם ישראל חי** - through our efforts and our faith, the people of Israel live on forever. Despite the fact that there are no headstones for them, nonetheless, the victims of the Holocaust will remain alive within us for all time.

Divrei Torah Ba'er Heitev

וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ הֵיטֵב אֵיטִיב *'And You had said, I will surely do you good'* (32:13)

Rav Zalmen Brizel would say in the name of Karliner Tzadikim on this Possuk, "If you say it will be good, oh hoh it will surely be good".

A Yid from Russia was in America a century ago when it was very desolate of Yiddishkeit. He wrote to his Rebbe in Russia a letter bemoaning the state of the lack of Ruchnius he found himself in and how it was desolate from serving Hashem.

His Rebbe wrote him back, "If you would live up to every trial and tribulation and realize that it is to raise you in Avodas Hashem, you would then grow from your situation. It would be a situation of elevation for you.



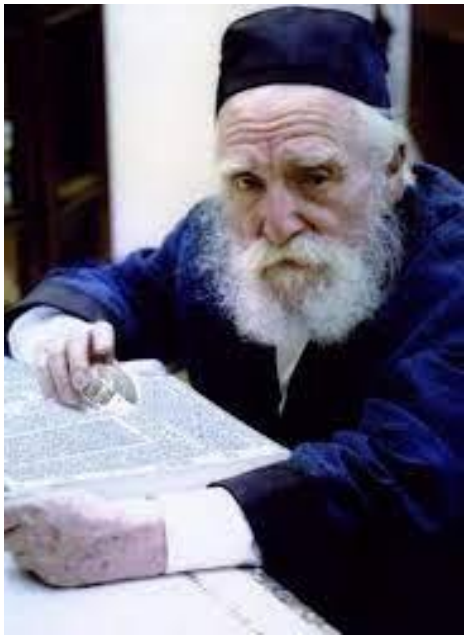
"***Tracht gut vet zein gut – think good it will be good***". If a person takes a situation in the correct frame of mind, it will then work out for him in the best possible manner. One who hopes for the best, Hashem bestows him the best.

As we approach the days of Chanukoh we must realize the more we thank Hashem for the good He gives us the more we shall receive in the future. We must "Count our blessings" and not be a "Kofuy Tov" – one who does not appreciate the good bestowed upon him.

In this Zechus may we merit the ultimate Geulah (redemption). And light the Menorah this year in the Third Beis HaMikdosh in Yerusholayim Ir HaKodesh, Omein.

L'Maaseh

Before getting into the car that would drive them each home from a simcha, two great friends, none other than **Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l and Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky** stood outside in conversation. Eventually, Rav Moshe got into the back seat of the car and R' Yaakov took his seat in front, next to the driver.





First, the driver arrived at R' Moshe's home and helped him out of the car. When he returned and resumed driving with Rav Yaakov beside him, the Rosh Yeshiva excused himself for delaying entering the vehicle in the first place:

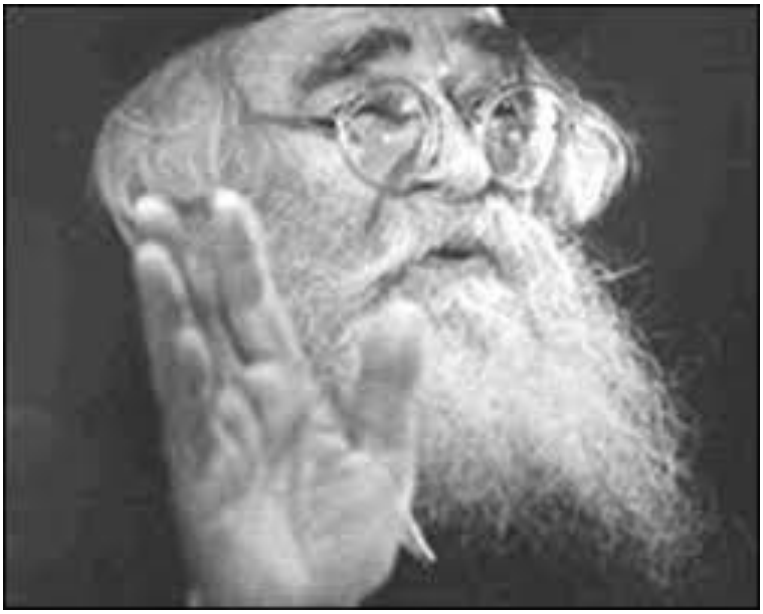
"You see," he explained, "we were trying to figure out who you would drive home first so that the other one of us could sit next to you so you shouldn't feel like a chauffeur on the last leg of the journey!'

Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zl, says: The value of any noble action is measured by how much the person who executes it values it.

Every mitzvah is valued in accordance with a person's understanding of its infinite worth. Sadly, some just do not understand the mitzvos and good deeds that they perform, hence devaluating their spiritual worth.

L'Maaseh

A yeshivah bochur in Bnei Brak was once found acting inappropriately . His Roshei Yeshivah wanted to expel him, but before taking this drastic step, they decided to consult with **Rav Shach**, the Gadol Hador and Rosh Yeshivah of Ponevezh.



Rav Shach requested to meet the bachur before he offered his opinion. He did so and realized that the boy was having doubts in emunah. Rav Shach spoke with him at length and tried to strengthen his faith in Hashem. This meeting took place at the end of the winter zman.

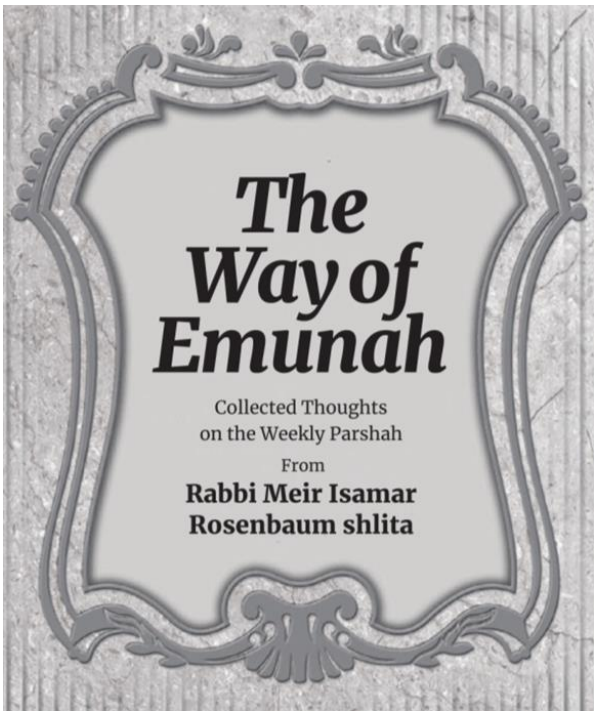
Rav Shach asked the bachur, who lived in Tel Aviv, to meet with him again over the Pesach break. After Pesach, the boy's Rebbi asked Rav Shach if the boy had indeed made the effort to travel to Bnei Brak to see him.

Rav Shach replied that the boy did not have to come to him, because he himself travelled to Tel Aviv **twice** to see him over the Pesach break.

At the beginning of the new z'man, the bochur returned to yeshivah ready to learn, and reported to his rebbe that his faith was now strong and steadfast.

He said, "If Klal Yisrael includes a person who is so caring that he travelled twice to Tel Aviv to see me, I have no more questions in Emunah!"

Hashem Stood Before Him and He Bowed



וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו *'Yaakov sent angels ahead of him'* 32:4

Sefer Agrah D'Kallah asks why it needs to say that Yaakov sent the messengers "**לְפָנָיו**", in front of him. This word seems to be superfluous.

He answers that Yaakov knew that he was about to come face-to-face with the wicked Esav and that he would have to bow to him. He did not want to bow to a rasha, just like Mordechai Hatzadik didn't want to bow to Haman, because it is forbidden to show honour to a wicked person. Therefore, he sent the messengers – who actually were real angels – in front of him.



The malachim now were stationed in between him and Esav. When he bowed, he had in mind that he was bowing to the angels, but Esav thought that Yaakov was bowing to him.

Since Yaakov's intentions were good, he merited Hashem's help. Hashem himself passed before him when he met Esav and it turned out that Yaakov bowed to Him, and not to Esav.

No prayer is too much or too little. As long as it's said with all our heart, it's a perfect prayer – Living emunah

Trusting in Hashem Before The Difficulties Start

The Medrash Rabbah (75:3) states: "Rav Huna began to quote the verse (Mishlei 26:17): מַחֲזִיק בְּאָזְנֵי־כֶלֶב עֹבֵר מִתְעַבֵּר עַל־רִיב לֹא־לוֹ 'A ***passer-by who mixes into a fight that is not his is like one who grabs a dog by its ears***.'



Shmuel bar Nachmeni says this is like the parable of a leader of robbers who is sleeping at a crossroads. A man passes by and wakes him up. He tells him, 'You should wake up because a bad person is nearby.' The robber gets up and starts to hit him. The robber told him, 'You are the one who woke the bad man.'

This is what Hashem told Yaakov. Esav was going his own way and you sent a message to him and said, 'Thus says your servant Yaakov…'"

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l (Sefer Ohr Yechezkel) asks how it can be said that Yaakov Avinu "mixed into a fight that wasn't his." The fight between Yaakov and Esav had been going on for a long time. Yaakov had to run away from his home and go to Charan because Esav wanted to kill him. Even now, 22 years later, he was still in danger, as the Navi says (Amos 1:11), Esav';s hatred of Yaakov lasts forever.

It makes perfect sense that Yaakov would send messengers to Esav as he left Charan in order to try to appease him. Why do Chazal compare him to a man who wakes a sleeping robber? Why does the Medrash seem to criticize him for stirring up a fight?

He answers that this Medrash is teaching us how much bitachon Hashem demands from a person. Yes, Esav still hated Yaakov and

wanted to kill him. However, as long as the danger was still at a distance, one should not engage in any attempts to thwart it. Rather, a person should trust in Hashem and not do anything until the danger is at his door. Until then, it is "not his fight."

Sefer Otzros Hatorah adds that when the residents of Eretz Yisroel were in grave danger in the year 1948, **the Brisker Rov zt"l** was living in Yerushalaim. The city was under a barrage of bombs but the Rov continued to learn in his room on the top floor of a building. He refused to go down to the bottom floor, which was considered a much safer place.



When the bombing intensified, the Rov's family members feared for his life. His son begged him to come down to the ground floor, saying that even if he wasn't scared, everyone else was, and it would help calm everyone down if he came down to be with them.

The Rov agreed, but once the bombing subsided, he returned to his room upstairs. When he got to the room, he saw that shrapnel from a bomb had come through the wall and landed on his bed. The Rov turned to his son and said, "You caused this damage! If I had stayed in the room, the wall wouldn't have been broken!"

He was certain that if Hashem did not want him to be hurt, nothing would happen to him an no bomb would enter his room. He was positive that the bomb only damaged the wall because he wasn't there.

Eliyahu Hanavi Was Involved In The Shlichus

וַיָּשֻׁבוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים אֶל־יַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר בָּאנוּ אֶל־אָחִיךָ אֶל־עֵשָׂו ***And the messengers returned to Yaakov saying: We went to your brother, to Esav…*****(32:7)**

Rav Pinchos of Koritz zy"a (Sefer Imrei Pinchos) notes that the first letters of the words "**וַיָּשֻׁבוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים אֶל־יַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר**", and the messengers returned to Yaakov saying, spell out the name "Eliyahu."

This indicates that Eliyahu Hanavi was involved in this mission, even though he hadn't been born yet. Although he didn't exist yet as a person, the concept of Eliyahu Hanavi, the fiery angel of Hashem, already existed and was part of this mission.

Trusting in Hashem, The Perfect Source of Goodness

וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ הֵיטֵב אֵיטִיב עִמָּךְ וְשַׂמְתִּי אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ כְּחוֹל הַיָּם ***And You said: I will surely do good with you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the sand of the sea.*** **(32:13)**

The Sefas Emes (5633) explains that the pasuk is saying that a person shouldn't ask Hashem to provide him with success through the means that he personally thinks is best. For example, a person shouldn't ask Hashem to provide success to a certain business deal that he thinks is good.

Rather, he should say that Hashem will "surely do good." He should ask Hashem to provide him with success in whatever way He thinks is best because whatever Hashem does truly is the best.

There is no shame in asking for help. It doesn't mean you are weak, but that you wish to remain strong.

הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו 'Save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau' (32:12)

Jacob feared two things: The "hand of Esau" - Esau's sword, and "the hand of my brother" - the hand of friendship Esau would extend toward him. Fraternizing with Esau more than necessary worried Jacob even more than the physical threat he posed. Esau's might threatened Jacob's body, but the other put Jacob's soul in danger. (Rabbi Yosef-Ber of Brisk)



Talking to Hashem

QUESTION: How does one talk to Hashem?

ANSWER: And this I'll answer as follows. At first you have to be a hypocrite. You have to do it superficially; you have to say the words. And that's what we do when we daven. We're talking to Hashem although actually it's **קרוב אתה בפיהם ורחוק מכליותיהם**. That's what the Navi said: "You are close in their mouths, but You are far away from their kidneys" – that means from their insides. And that's the truth. That's what davenen is; it's superficial.

It's only when a man sincerely embarks on a career of learning to speak to Hashem that his davenen becomes meaningful. After a while when he says **אתה** - "You," he feels he's talking to somebody. And when that great day comes, then you know you have arrived.

And so first do it superficially. You're a hypocrite. Of course, it's a good hypocrisy. You're doing it to train yourself. You talk to Hashem whenever you can and you say, "I thank You Hashem that You have made me healthy."



When you see a man hopping in the street with one empty trousers leg, and he has crutches; and you have two good legs – you don't need any crutches – so you have to stop and say, "Boruch atah Hashem that I have two good legs." You see a man walking in the street with one empty sleeve pinned to his pocket, then you have to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu that your sleeves are not empty.

And little by little you'll get accustomed to saying the words, and after a while you're going to feel that there's Somebody actually listening.

That's what the Mesillas Yesharim says, that at first you say it and after a while the realization enters your mind. Because you have an instinct that all human beings have that Hashem is actually there and He's listening.

Someone told the Chazon Ish that he suffers from headaches due to his intense concentration in tefillah. The Chazon Ish responded, "What does tefillah have to do with the mind? Tefillah is with the heart!"

Quick to the Punch

Little Yonatan was strolling down the deserted cobblestone street in the village of Pintshov, when a bully approached him and began to beat him mercilessly. The beating went on for a few minutes. The child began to wail loudly, and the ruffian, fearful of discovery, started to walk away. Yonatan ran after him, stuck his hand in his pocket, and thrust a few coins into his attacker's hand. "Here, this is for you. Take my money, and I'll have a mitzvah."

The ruffian looked at the boy. Nobody had ever paid him for a beating before!

"What's this, Jew? Why are you paying me?"

"Don't you know anything about Jewish holidays? Today is the fourteenth day of Kislev. If a person attacks a Jew today, it is a big mitzvah to give him all the money he owns. It is absolutely forbidden to retaliate. It's just a shame you happened to find me. All I have is those few coins I gave you."



The bully pocketed the coin and smiled. What a fantastic mitzvah! This was his great day, for sure.

He walked purposefully to the main street, searching to an appropriate target. He scrutinized the bustling crowd going about their business until his eyes fell on the rosh hakahal, Reb Zundel. With that elegant fur collar and fancy silver tipped cane, he was sure to have loads of money with him. He ran to Reb Zundel, threw him to the ground, and punched him in the face. Then, he stuck his hand out in a gesture suggesting payment.

In seconds the crowd was upon him. Throngs of men ran to the rosh hakahal's aid. They bound his attacker and called the police, not before administering a bit of justice on their own. At the police station, the bully defended his action. He argued that a little boy had told him it was a mitzvah to hit Jews today.

The police took a description of the child, and someone in the crowd said that could be none other than little Yonatan. A group of men was dispatched to Yonatan's home. The child was playing outside.

"How could you tell somebody that it is a mitzvah to beat Jews today?" they asked.

"The scoundrel found me on a deserted street, and beat me black and blue," the child explained, displaying his bruised arm. "I knew I'd never be able to take revenge. Now, however, that I convinced him that it is worthwhile to beat wealthy Jews, he will be properly punished for striking me too. And please," he continued, "can I get my money back?"

The chief of police and all the assembled were astounded by the child's sharp wisdom. Little Yonatan grew up to be the famed **Reb Yonatan Eibishitz**, who continued to use his great wisdom for the benefit of his congregation and all of Klal Yisrael. (Brilliant Gems)

Once, in the winter, a chassid made a hole in the ice over a lake and was tovel there. But he couldn't find his way out. People saw this and panicked.

The Yesod HaAvodah zt'l said, "Nu, he should say Nishmas." He intended that the heat produced from saying Nishmas with hislahavos would surely melt the ice, and he would be able to get out.

Etz Hachaim - Try And Fail, Try And Fail, But Never Fail To Try.

רבי לייב איגר פרק לב פסוק כט

ויאמר לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל כי שרית עם אלהים ועם אנשים ותוכל ***He said, no longer will your name be spoken of as Yaakov, but as Yisrael, for you have fought with G-dly beings and with men, and you have won.'"***



Why was Yaakov's name changed to Yisrael, which comes from the word sarisa, to strive and do battle?

Why ignore the last word of the pasuk, **ותוכל**, you prevailed? Why wasn't his name changed to Yitachal, which comes from the word **ותוכל**?

The Torah is teaching us an invaluable eternal lesson. **ותוכל**, prevailing, winning, is not what defines us; winning is not the essence of who we are.

Sarisa, striving and struggling is what defines our essence. The name which focuses on our perseverance is the greatest title that can be given to Bnei Yisrael .

Trust Hashem. What's stressing you could often be what's blessing you!

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick

Yaakov davened to Hashem and asked Him, **הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו** – ***Please save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav.***" (32:12)



The Nachal Kedomim says that the last letters of the words **הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד** equal fifteen, which can hint to the fifteen years that Yaakov learnt with Avrohom and Yitzchok.

Yaakov davened to Hashem that in the merit of those fifteen years of learning, he should be saved from Eisav. [**ספר פרשה פשעטיל**]

Concepts in Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר 32:25

Yaakov Avinu crossed over the river to retrieve "small jars" and faced a formidable foe in the Sar shel Esav. As they were pitted against each other, **אבק** - dust, arose from their feet (see Rashi).

It is impossible for us to fathom what exactly transpired and the levels of kedusha that Yaakov attained as he vanquished an angel! However, the **Ben Yehoyada** cites a Medrash that gives us a tiny inkling as to the benefits we are still reaping till this day from that battle.



The Medrash in Shir Hashirim says all "roichlos" - loosely translated as business - that Klal Yisrael succeeds in, is due to the avak from Yaakov Avinu. Rav Azarya says all the battles that Klal Yisrael are victorious in are due to Yaakov's dust in his victory. Rav Avahu goes even further and states that Hashem places this special and unique dust under the kisei hakavod.

Now these concepts are indeed mystical. Yet on a practical level, perhaps we can glean the following machshava. The aforementioned zechusim that we have, didn't come from the actual victory of Yaakov. Rather the Medrash stresses that it came from the avak, the dust, the battle, the perseverance of Yaakov and this is what Hashem cherishes the most; the trying, the attempts, that we do to so valiantly, to ward off the yetzer hara. That is so chashuv and so beloved to HKB"H.

The word **אבק** has the gematria of 103, same as the words **מנחה** and **מחנה**. In the middle of a busy workday, when people stop to daven Mincha, that is avak, and it is so very precious to Hashem. Our children are our machane, our camps. Our efforts expended on behalf of our children are priceless regardless of the outcome. Hashem keeps this "dust" close to him. May we all be zoche to keep on trying in all areas of avodas Hashem with yiddishe nachas - not the nachas of Esav!

"Hard as the world is to explain with the Almighty, it is harder yet without the Holy One. " ~~ Moses Montefiore

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

עַל־כֵּ֗ן לֹא־יֹאכְל֤וּ בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ אֶת־גִּ֣יד הַנָּשֶׁ֔ה 32:33



In Parshas Vayishlach, we are commanded not to eat the Gid Hanashe, the displaced nerve (sciatica nerve), because Yaakov was hit in the thigh by the angel of Esav when he wrestled with him all night.

The Me'am Lo'ez says the reason it is called the displaced nerve is because eating it causes one's thoughts to be misplaced and takes away one's Yiras Shamayim! In fact, this is why eating kosher is so important for the Jewish neshama. When one eats something that is not kosher, he is literally blocking his ability to connect to Hashem.

Sefer HaChinuch says that the root of the mitzvah of Gid Hanashe is to be a constant reminder for all Yidden in all generations, that even though we will suffer torture and persecution from our enemies, the descendants of Esav, we should know that we will never be totally destroyed.

This mitzvah is meant to instil within us the Emunah that we may be hurt, just as Yaakov was hit in the leg, but he emerged victorious! And just as the sun came out early and healed Yaakov's thigh, so too, the light of Moshiach will shine upon us and heal all of our pain and bring us all out of this Golus! May it be speedily in our days!

Short Story Of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin

Reb Menachem Porush, ZT"L, a member of the Israeli Knesset and a confidant of the **Brisker Rav, ZT"L**, recalled an interaction that he had with the Rav that showed how Gedolei Yisroel, leaders of the Jewish People, think and act.

Late one Friday, he was told that the Brisker Rav wished to see him immediately. Even though Rav Porush was busy preparing for Shabbos, he dropped everything and went directly to the Rav's home. The Rav brought to Rav Porush's attention an issue that he was working on to help a specific individual. He asked Rav Porush to write a letter on the individual's behalf.

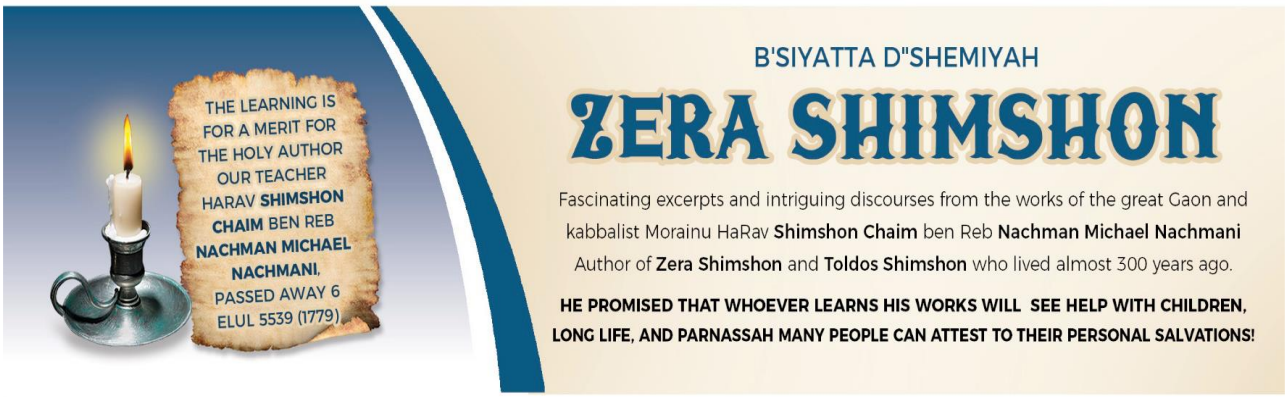
Rav Porush answered that first thing Sunday morning he will dictate a letter to his secretary and send it out, and the Rav was satisfied.

Rav Porush was puzzled and built up the nerve to ask the Brisker Rav why this issue could not have waited until after Shabbos. Rav Porush never forgot the Brisker Rav's answer:

"First of all, who knows if we will be here Motzei Shabbos? Man gets no guarantees and must do what has to be done when he has the opportunity." Secondly, "When it comes to doing a favour for a Jew, one must break down walls."

Rav Porush never forgot the lesson that he learned that day - how a Torah Giant cared so much about the needs of a single Jew. ("*On the Shoulder of Giants,*" Bloom)

Perhaps that is precisely the lesson taught us by Yaakov Avinu, when he went back to retrieve "pachim kitanim," small vessels that had been left behind (Gemara, Chullin 91a). Yaakov was instilling in us the idea that there's a proper way to care about everything, and that even the smallest items have importance and purpose.



קָטֹנְתִּי מִכֹּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל הָאֱמֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת עַבְדֶּךָ "I have been diminished by all the kindness and by all of the truth that You have done Your servant; for with my staff alone I crossed this Yarden and I now I have become two camps. Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav; else, I fear, he may come and strike me down, mother and children alike. And You said, 'I will deal bountifully with you and I will make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which is too numerous to count'." (Bereishis 32/11-13)

Zera Shimshon is bothered by the order of these *pessukim*. In the first *possuk*, *Yaakov Avinu* expresses to *Hashem* that since *Hashem* has been so good to him, he is afraid that *Hashem* will not save him from *Eisav* because he has used up his merits. In the next *possuk*, *Yaakov Avinu* prays to be saved from *Eisav*. After that *Yaakov Avinu* concludes his prayer to *Hashem* by reminding *Hashem* that He promised to do good to him.

Zera Shimshon asks, it would seem more appropriate for *Yaakov* to pray to be saved from Esav after he mentioned that Hashem promised to be good to him and not after he expresses his fear that he has no merits!

Zera Shimshon answers in light of a concept set forth by *Torahs Chaim* (*Babba Metziah* 106/A) *Hashem* performs three types of miracles for three types of people. For a *tzaddik*, *Hashem* performs clear unmistakable miracles that the person does nothing and *Hashem* changes nature to help the *tzaddik*.

For a person with fewer merits there are two types of miracles. The first type is a miracle completely clothed in nature or in common daily events. For instance, the enemy gets lost on the way, or the animal finds another animal to quell his hunger. In this type of miracle the recipient of *Hashem's* kindness doesn't even realize that a miracle took place!

For the third type of miracle, the person participates slightly but the outcome does not really have too much to do with him. For instance, a weak person kills an attacking lion or conquers a whole army. For such a miracle even though the person took action, since it is obvious that he is not the cause of his being saved he recognizes that *Hashem* is the One that saved him and is able to gives thanks to *Hashem* for His kindness.

In light of this, *Zera Shimshon* explains that *Yaakov* knew that since *Hashem* promised to protect him *Hashem* would surely fulfil His promise. *Yaakov* was only uncertain in which of the three ways *Hashem* would do this. *Yaakov* was afraid that he had sinned and therefore only merited a small miracle, that *Hashem* would protect him from *Eisav* in some natural way.

This is what he thought in the first *possuk*, "I have been diminished by all the kindnesses and by all the truth that You have done Your servant".

Yaakov saw, that *Eisav* actually came and was ready to fight. *Yaakov* therefore thought *Hashem* wants to perform a miracle for which *Yaakov* will pray and thank *Hashem*. Yaaakov therefore davened, "Save me from the hand of my brother, from the hands of *Eisav*, because I'm afraid of him..."

On the other hand, *Yaakov* might not have sinned and therefore merited a full unmistakable miracle. To cover this possibility *Yaakov* simply reminded *Hashem* of the promise, "And You said, "I will surely do good with you and I will make your offspring...."

To summarize: *Zera Shimshon* initially understood that *Yaakov* requested only one thing from *Hashem*, to be saved from *Eisav*. In the first *possuk Yaakov* expressed his fear of not being saved and in the last possuk *Yaakov* expresses why he felt Hashem should save him. If this was the case, *Yaakov* should have made his request to be saved after he expressed why *Hashem* should save him, not after *Yaakov* mentioned that he felt he wasn't worthy of being saved.

Zera Shimshon concludes; *Yaakov* didn't only have one prayer to be saved from the hands of *Eisav*. *Yaakov* was sure that *Hashem* would save him, as *Hashem* had promised him, but he was unsure in what manner Hashem would execute His promise. Therefore, *Yaakov davened* three different prayers, one for each of the three different possibilities. In the first *possuk* "I have been diminished by all the kindness..." *Yaakov* expressed to *Hashem* that he thought he used up all his merits and *Hashem* would save him in a natural way.

Yaakov then had a second thought that if this would be the case then Hashem would have caused *Eisav* not to have come at all. *Yaakov* concluded that it must be that Hashem wants him to pray. He therefore prayed, "Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of *Eisav*..."

Yaakov wasn't one hundred percent sure that his merits were diminished by all the kindness Hashem had done for him and therefore there existed a possibility that *Hashem* will perform an open miracle for him. To cover this possibility *Yaakov* mentioned to *Hashem*, "And You said, 'I will deal bountifully with you ...".

Since each of these three *pessukim* are referring to three distinct and unconnected situations there is nothing wrong for *Yaakov* praying to be saved from *Eisav* after he mentioned that he was afraid that he had no merits.

Zera Shimshon

וַיְצַו אֹתָם לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לַאדֹנִי לְעֵשָׂו כֹּה אָמַר עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב עִם לָבָן גַּרְתִּי וָאֵחַר עַד עָתָּה (בראשית לב/ד) ***And Yaakov sent (heavenly messengers) malachim before him to Eisav his brother... (Braishis 32/4)***

On this possuk the Medrash comments, "Rav Chama the son of Chanina said, 'We can understand why Yaakov merited to have heavenly messengers (malachim) assist him with the following logic, If five malachim appeared to Hagar, who was merely the maid servant of Sarah, then it is certainly reasonable that they come to aid Yaakov who was a beloved family member. Another proof is, if Eliezer, who was merely the servant of Avraham's family, merited malachim, when he went to look for a wife for Yitzchok, it is certainly reasonable that they come to assist Yaakov who was a beloved family member.'"

Zera Shimshon asks why does Rav Chama the son of Chanina bring two sources to explain why Yaakov merited malachim to assist him when he met Eisav?

Zera Shimshon answers; Hashem sent malachim to help Hagar and to help of Eliezer for two completely different reasons.

The malachim that appeared to Hagar came to comfort her and to relieve her from the humiliation that she suffered under Sarah. Hashem wanted to comfort her, even though she deserved to be humiliated because she was very disrespectful to Sarah.

The malachim that travelled with Eliezer served an entirely different purpose. They went so that, in the event that Lavan and Besuel would object to Rivkah marrying Yitzchak, they would convince them to change their mind until they would willingly agree with the shidduch. In actuality this wasn't so crucial. Firstly, Rivkah was willing to marry Yitzchak even if her father and brother didn't agree (as Rashi writes).

And secondly, even if she wouldn't consent to go, Eliezer had the choice of taking a shidduch from Anar, Eshkol, and Mamrei. Even though it wasn't so crucial, Hashem still sent malachim to help him.

Yaakov hoped to gain these two very same things when he met with Eisav. Firstly, he wanted Eisav to stop humiliating him for taking the Berochos and, secondly but more important, he wanted Eisav to "scrap" his plan to kill him.

Zera Shimshon

קָטֹנְתִּי מִכֹּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל־הָאֱמֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־עַבְדֶּךָ כִּי בְמַקְלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הָיִיתִי לִשְׁנֵי מַחֲנוֹת ***I have become small from the kindness etc. for with my staff I crossed the Yarden and now I have become two camps*** (32:11).

Rashi explains that Yaakov Avinu was saying that he was afraid that his merits had diminished and he had nothing to protect himself with against Esav. As well, he was nervous that he had sinned, and his sins would allow Esav to harm him.

The Zera Shimshon points out that in reality, Yaakov Avinu's fear of his 'sins' was unfounded. The reason for this is because the Gemara (Yoma 38b), says that once a person has passed the middle point of his life and he has not sinned, he is protected from sinning for the rest of his life. As well, Chazal teach that a person usually dies within a five-year span of the age his parents died at.

In Yaakov Avinu's case, his father, Yitzchok Avinu, passed away at one hundred and eighty years old. When Yaakov Avinu was about to confront Esav, he was ninety-seven years old; he got married to Leah at eighty four years old. He worked another seven years for Rochel (91). He waited an additional six years to finally get paid for his work (97). If so, Yaakov Avinu had already passed the midpoint of his life without sin (180/2-90), and was assured that he would no longer sin,

why then did he fear that his sins would allow Esav to harm him, he had no sins to be afraid of?

The Zera Shimshon explains that what Yaakov Avinu was afraid had diminished his merits was not the fact that Hashem had protected him from Lavan since as the Zera Shimshon explains (last week's parsha), that Yaakov Avinu received a promise from Hashem that he would protect him, and when one receives a promise of protection from Hashem he doesn't lose his merits.

The real point that Yaakov Avinu was afraid had reduced his merits was the fact that Hashem had given him so much money, as is implied by his words, "for with my staff I crossed the Yarden and now I have become two camps".

However, if a person receives money due to his mazal, then it does not diminish from his eternal reward. This is seen from the Gemara (Ta'anis 2a), that says that children, life and sustenance that a person receives are not a result of his good deeds rather they are dependent on a person's mazal.

If this was the case, then Yaakov Avinu did not have to worry about his merits being consumed by the money Hashem sent him since it was based on his mazal and not on his merits. On the other hand, if his mazal was so strong, there exists the possibility that he could merit more years to his life, since life is also dependent on one's mazal. If this was true, then he no longer knew that he had passed the midpoint of his life and would now merit Heavenly protection not to sin.

This is why Yaakov Avinu mentioned that he was afraid of Esav because he was nervous that he had used up his merits with the good that Hashem sent him and he also mentioned that he was nervous that perhaps he sinned and that would allow him to fall into Esav's hnds. If the money he received was due to his merits, then although he was at this point protected from sin, still, he lacked merits to

face Esav. And if the money he received was due to his mazal, then although his merits were not consumed by his wealth, perhaps his mazal dictated that he could live longer thus, placing him before the midpoint of his life subjecting him to the possibility of sin, which would allow Esav to harm him.



Zera Shimshon

וְאַרְבַּע־מֵאוֹת אִישׁ עִמּוֹ ***And four hundred men with him*** (32:7)

The Yalkut Re'uvaini writes that Yaakov Avinu went to greet Esav wearing his Tefillin. He did so to counter Esav's force of 400 men. The 3 letters of Esav's name together with 400 equal 403 (meaning that the numerical value of these letters is not calculated, just the amount of letters in Esav's name).

The number of words in the parshi'os placed in the Tefillin are 403. Yaakov Avinu wore his Tefillin that contained 403 words to be able to overcome Esav (3) and his 400 men (403).

Yaakov Avinu's conduct needs some explanation. Why did he pick the merit of Tefillin to save himself from Esav and his men? The explanation is based a few teachings the Sages tell us about Tefillin. The Gemara says (Menachos 44a), that wearing Tefillin lengthens one's life. The Kevod Chachamim writes that the secret of the fact that Hashem created man (Bereishis 1:26) 'In His image', is when we wear Tefillin. In other words, all humans are created in the image of Hashem, however, they are like servants. When we wear Tefillin, we are like Hashem's children.

When a person wears Tefillin, then he is feared by all other humans the same way the servants of the king fear the king's children. This is why Yaakov Avinu went to meet Esav, wearing his Tefillin, so that if Esav tried to harm him, he would be protected and he would live long, as the Gemara says happens to one who wears Tefillin. This also explains why the passuk says that the house of Yaakov is compared

to fire and Esav is like straw (Ovadia 1:18). If the passuk wanted to say that Yaakov Avinu will destroy Esav, why did it specify that he will consume Esav like fire, there are many ways Esav can be destroyed?



According the story in the Yerushalmi with R' Avin and the abovementioned Yalkut Re'uvaini, the passuk's choice of fire is understood. Tefillin protects one from harm and as seen from the story in the Yerushalmi, one of the ways it frightens the enemy is that it creates a protection of fire.

The reason why the Tefillin seemed to shoot out fire is as follows. The passuk says (Shemos 13:9), that we should wear Tefillin - so that the Torah of Hashem should be in your mouth.

The Yalkut Shimoni writes (Shemos §222) that one who wears Tefillin is as though he studies Torah day and night. Since Tefillin is equated to Torah study and Torah is compared to fire (Devarim 33:2), therefore, the protection that the Tefillin provided for R' Avin came out in the form of fire.

The Chazon Ish zt'l (Emunah u'Bitachon 2:7) writes, "A holy spirit (ruach hakodesh) rests upon a person who has bitachon. He attains a spirit of courage that assures him that Hashem will surely help him."



ותן טל ומטר



Reb Chaim Brim zt'l brought a beautiful source that tefillos, without kavanah, are very effective: If someone says **ותן טל ומטר** in the summer, he must repeat the Shemonah Esrei because, in Eretz Yisrael, rain is a curse during the summer. This halachah also applies if he said **ותן טל ומטר** without kavanah. How much value and power can his words have?

He probably has no idea what he said! Yet, it is considered a curse, and he must daven again. We see that all tefillos, including those said without kavanah, accomplish so much!

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

Do not mistakenly believe that I am a masmid (a diligent learner) after seeing me studying an entire night in the beis medrash- An old man sitting next to me had fallen asleep. I realised that he was sitting on my coat, and I was afraid that if I moved from my place, I would wake him! – Rabbi Avraham of Porisov.

1 kind word is a project set up in the wake of the Meron tragedy with the belief that 1 kind word can make a difference.



Try to make at least one person happy every day. If you cannot do a kind deed, speak a kind word. If you cannot speak a kind word, think a kind thought. Count up, if you can, the treasure of happiness that you would dispense in a week, in a year, in a lifetime!

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez לעילוי נשמת יהושע ע״ה בן ברוך הלוי נ״ו וְגַם֙ הֹלֵ֣ךְ לִקְרָאתְךָ֔ וְאַרְבַּע־מֵא֥וֹת אִ֖ישׁ עִמּ֑וֹ 32:7



Esav was coming towards Yaakov with 400 men. The Medrash Rabbah tells us that these men that the pasuk mentions here, were the Generals of Esav's army! Each one of these 400 men were accompanied by **another** 400 men!

The question is obvious: Why did Esav need so many thousands of men to accompany him? What was his reckoning?

The Ostrovtza Gaon Zt'l explains: Yaakov's camp consisted of 16 people. Himself, his eleven sons (Binyamin had not been born yet), and his four wives.

The pasuk says in Tehillim (91:7) יִפֹּ֣ל מִצִּדְּךָ֣ אֶ֭לֶף וּרְבָבָ֣ה מִֽימִינֶ֑ךָ - ***10,000 enemies will fall at your right hand...***

When a person merits rachamim from Hashem, even one person alone can defeat 10,000. So, considering Yaakov's help he would have from shamayim, Esav brought along 400 men with *another* 400 men

accompanying each one of **them**- 400x400 for a total of 160,000 men besides for Esav himself!

His plan was as follows: Even in the event that the 16 people in Yaakov's camp each take down 10,000 men – as the pasuk teaches us in Tehillim, this means that 16x 10,000 = 160,000... his entire army would be defeated!

However, Esav would remain alive (not being part of the 160,000) and would remain, and be able to overpower Yaakov during the whole commotion!

This explains Yaakov's fear in the pasuk - כִּי־יָרֵא אָנֹכִי אֹתוֹ ***for I am afraid of him***. It was Esav himself – the extra man- of whomYaakov feared.

Yaakov knew that his camp of 16 would be able to take down 160,000, but it was Esav he was nervous about!

We can now also understand why as Rashi tells us – Yaakov was punished for hiding Dinah in a box.

Had she been amongst the rest of them, they could have easily defeated Esav as well, and not have to rely on a special miracle!

When one says that their life is good, Hashem will make their life even better. Hashem promised yaakov היטב איטב עמך "I will do kindness to you."

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozhmir Zt'l explained the double expression of היטב איטב -היטב If a person will say that their life is good, Hashem will reply, "do you think your life is good?" - היטב איטב - "I will show you what a good life truly is", and Hashem will bestow on them even greater kindness. ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez

Yaakov was in great danger. Esav was coming to fight with pure hatred. He remembered how Yaakov took the brachos away from him, and he very much wanted them back. He reasoned that by killing Yaakov, the brachos would revert back to him.



The Rabeinu Efraim notes that Yaakov's tefillah to Hashem in these 4 pesukim (32:10-13) to save him from Esav – contain exactly 63 words. Yaakov was 63 years old when he received the brachos from Yitzchok! Now he was davening to Hashem that the brachos should be fulfilled in him and his family – sparing him from Esav!!This is why the tefillah that we say on a taanis called **עננו** - contains exactly 63 words as well! Chazal learned from Yaakov how to daven in times of trouble.

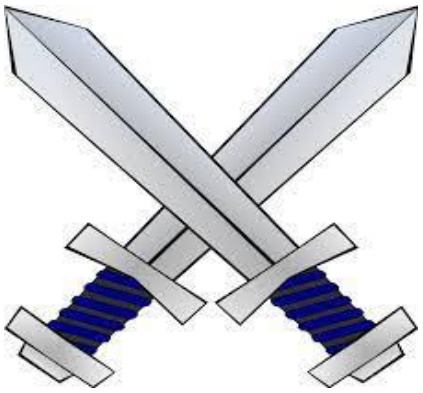
Yaakov davened that in the zechus of the Avos and the future of Klal Yisrael they should all be saved. Amazingly, **אברהם יצחק יעקב ראובן שמעון לוי יהודה יששכר זבולן דן נפתלי גד אשר יוסף בנימין** – contain 63 letters too!! - So, we see that the number 63 represents the power of Klal Yisrael being saved from dark times and tragedy. Yaakov Avinu understood that Yitzchak bentched him when he was 63 years old for this reason, and so he incorporated this idea into his tefillah to Hashem of 63 words here in our parsha.

Years later, when we find ourselves in the terrible Galus of Mitzrayim, Hashem tells Moshe Rabeinu that His Name **אֶ-הְ-יֶ-ה** will accompany us in this bitter tragic Galus…. **... אֶ-הְ-יֶ-ה אֲשֶׁר אֶ-הְ-יֶ-ה אֶ-הְ-יֶ-ה שְׁלָחַנִי אֲלֵיכֶם** (Shemos 3:14)

3x אֶ-הְ-יֶ-ה = 63!!

Ba'al HaTurim Links Yaakov's Bribe of Eisav With Mordechai's Advice to Esther by Rav Yissochor Frand





Our Sages say that in preparation for his encounter with Eisav, Yaakov prepared himself with a three pronged strategy: Prayer, Presents, and Battle. The pasuk describes in detail the magnificent gifts of appeasement that Yaakov prepared for Eisav. Yaakov entrusted the various flocks to his messengers and instructed them to place a distance between each of the flocks as they were being delivered to Eisav, rather than presenting all the sheep and camels to Eisav at once.

The Baal HaTurim comments regarding the words "make sure that there is room between each of the flocks" (v'Revach tasim bein eidar l'eidar) that there is only one other place in the entire Tanach where the word Revach is used. The other place is "Revach v'Hatzalah ya-amod l'Yehudim mimakom acher" [Esther 4:14] (Breathing space and salvation will come to the Jews from another source).

What is the connection between these two pasukim? The Baal HaTurim says that this is a sign for all generations regarding dealings with evil governments. We are taught to expect a long and bitter exile, full of persecutions and exterminations. If we hope to achieve breathing space (Revach) and salvation for the Jewish people, we must bear in mind the other mention of 'Revach' in the Torah: the presents that Yaakov gave to Eisav.

The message of the Baal HaTurim is that we should avoid being confrontational. This is not a popular message today. Our modern mentality is "I'm not going to be pushed around. I'm going to show my stuff!" Our patriarch Yaakov only held that option open as a last re-

sort. If the enemy can be bought off or appeased, if they can be flattered, if they can be sweet-talked, whatever the cost – that is the preferred approach. If it can be avoided, do not confront Eisav.

This does not mean, G-d forbid, that in the Land of Israel the Israeli Defense Force should unilaterally disarm or not defend itself. When there is no alternative, we must confront and fight. Eretz Yisroel is in a category by itself. But the classic Jew in Exile is strongly cautioned – do not fight with Eisav unless it is absolutely necessary.

This may seem cowardly. It may seem like we are being (the worst of all insults) wimps! But if it was good enough for Yaakov to look like a wimp, it is good enough for us. If appeasement gets the job done, there is no mitzvah to be a macho man.

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser - Influence for Life



Upon preparing to face Eisav, Rashi tells us that Yaakov Avinu placed his daughter, Dina, into a chest so that Eisav would not see her. Because of this, however, Yaakov was punished, because he prevented his brother from the possibility that Dina might have caused him to repent and come back to a life of G-d.

How, though, would it be possible that Dina at her young age would bring Eisav to repent? And in fact, the halacha is that if a shidduch was made and then it is found out that either the man or woman is an apikorus, heretic, the shidduch is annulled due to its misrepresentation.

Certainly, Eisav was wicked, and yet Yaakov is held accountable for not enabling Dina to possibly influence him. Why then is the halacha otherwise, that should someone be found to be a heretic, the engagement is annulled? We should consider the possibility that the other spouse would be able to steer them toward repentance.

There is an unbelievable comment made by the **Daas Zekeinim from the Baalei HaTosfos**. When Eisav saw the grandeur of the House of Yaakov, the honour, the dignity, the holiness, even Eisav was moved. Even he was inspired and kissed Yaakov. He wanted to become a part of it. Yes, Dina possibly could have brought him back in repentance, because that could have been the turning point of his entire life.

How amazing it is that there is hope for everybody, that anybody can be turned around. Sometimes, in a minute. Sometimes, in a flash.

The great R' Yanky Meyer, the founder of Misaskim, worked tirelessly day and night, with self-sacrifice, on behalf of Klal Yisrael. He once called me to attend a gathering where the police department was going to be represented. There are a lot of policemen, and I was waiting for the meeting to begin. One of the policemen that I knew approached me and said, "Rabbi, good to see you." Yes," I said, "it's very nice to see you too." "You know," he said, "when I watch Jack (they used to call R' Yanky by the name Jack), sometimes I feel like I want to be Jewish."

Imagine the influence, the moment, the ability that a person has to change themselves and alongside, change the world.

The Noem Elimelech (parashas Vayishlach) teaches that **דין** which represents judgment and punishment can turn into compassion, when one adds an aleph to it. Because then **דין** becomes Hashem's holy name, **א-ד-נ-י**.

Birkat Halevana & Yaakov – Rabbi Eli Mansour

We make a blessing on the moon. The moon is the more humble of the planets (when compared to the sun). The moon waxes and wanes. The moon doesn't have light of its own.

The Gemarah says that Hashem wanted to appease the moon after punishing it, and said to the moon, "***The tzadikim are going to use you as their nickname***!" – Every time a real Tzadik is called, they add to his name the word **קטן** – '***the humble one***' (small). Eg **שמואל הקטן** – just like the moon is called **המאור הקטן**- the humble of the planets. And therefore, the moon represents humility.

When we make a bracha on the moon, who better is there to remind us of it -if not Yaakov Avinu (who was most humble). Even when Hashem was bentching Yaakov Avinu, Yaakov said **קָטֹנְתִּי** .Yaakov Avinu was the epitome of humility.

At the end of Birchas Halevanah, we say the following words:

בָּרוּךְ יוֹצְרֵךְ בָּרוּךְ עוֹשֵׂךְ בָּרוּךְ קוֹנֵךְ בָּרוּךְ בּוֹרְאֵךְ

The Roshei Tevos spell out **יעקב**! We are saying Baruch Yaakov!

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

וַיִּתֵּן בְּיַד־עֲבָדָיו עֵדֶר עֵדֶר לְבַדּוֹ '***And he gave into the hands of his servants each herd individually***.' 32:17. Rashi says **כל מין ומין לעצמו** - he sent each species by itself.

What did Yaakv Avinu actually send to Esav as a present? He sent five different groups of animals. **עִזִּים מָאתַיִם וּתְיָשִׁים עֶשְׂרִים רְחֵלִים מָאתַיִם וְאֵילִים עֶשְׂרִים** 32:15-16 Two groups of 220 kosher animals. Then he sent him **גְּמַלִּים מֵינִיקוֹת וּבְנֵיהֶם שְׁלֹשִׁים** - treife animals. Followed by **פָּרוֹת אַרְבָּעִים וּפָרִים עֲשָׂרָה עֲשָׂרָה** – Kosher animals. Followed by **אֲתֹנֹת עֶשְׂרִים וַעְיָרִם עֲשָׂרָה** – Treife animals

The Ben Ish Chai makes a very interesting observation: This is a remez that Yaakov Avinu was hinting to us that there would be five **תקופות** (periods) in the history of Klal Yisrael.

The kosher animal represent Klal Yisrael, and the treife animals represent the **אומות העולם** (the nations of the world) which over here is Esav who chastised us and brought us into Galus.

The 1st two groups (Kosher) refer to the Mishkan and the Bayis Rishon, when Klal Yisrael ruled supreme. This is followed by a group of treife animals, which refers to the first Galus. The next set of Kosher animals represents Bayis Sheini. This is followed by the 5th and final group of treife animals, which represent the current Galus that we are in now.



The Ben Ish Chai says, "Don't think that this is where it all ends."

Yaakov Avinu was sending us an eternal message:- The 1st Bayis was in the zechus of Avraham Avinu. The 2nd Bayis was in the zechus of Yitzchok Avinu. The 3rd Bayis, which we are waiting for, will be in the zechus of Yaakov Avinu.

So Yaakov says - When you meet Esav my brother **אָמַרְתֶּ֣ם לְעַבְדְּךָ֣ לְיַעֲקֹ֔ב... וְהִנֵּ֥ה גַם־הֽוּא אַחֲרֵינוּ** - ***'you should tell him, behold, he himself is behind us.'*** 32:19

Meaning that Yaakov – The Bayis Shlishi is on its way, it is still coming!

The Way of Emunah - The Malachim's Mission Was to Bring Him to Perfect Emunah

Recently, a distinguished young talmid chochom from Lakewood called me and told me an amazing vort in the name of the **Alter of Slobodka zt"l**.

It is related in Sefer Malachim (2:6) that the king of Aram waged a war against Yisroel. The king sat down with his advisors to scheme and plan how to kill the king of Yisroel. They decided to ambush him by lying in wait in a place where he regularly passes by and to kill him as he passes.

Elisha Hanavi knew of the plan and sent his attendant to inform the king not to pass that place because Aram would be waiting to ambush him there. The king sent his servants to check it out and they reported that it was true. Therefore, he changed his regular route, and he was not caught by the ambushers.

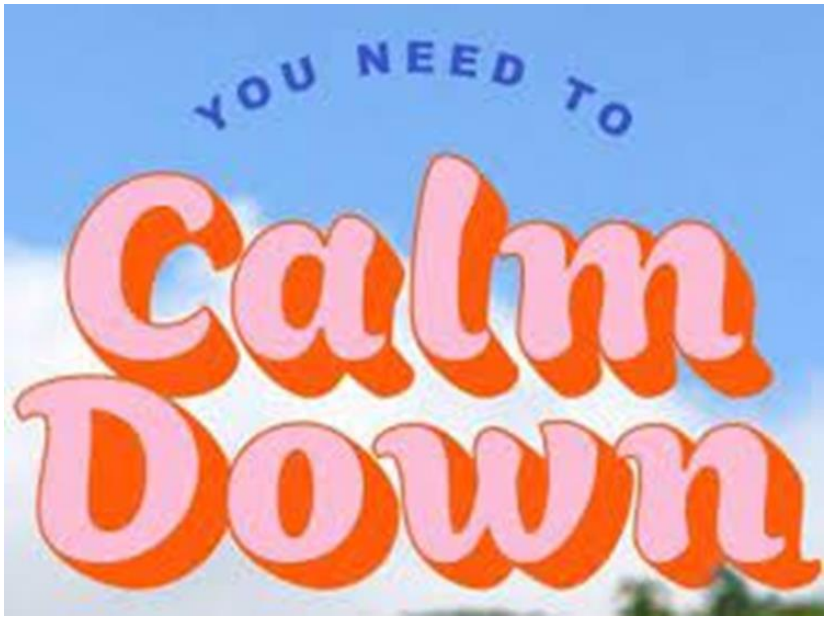
The king of Aram became very upset. He was convinced that one of his advisors must be a spy who had revealed the plan to the Jewish king. He gathered them all together and threatened to kill them if the spy did not come forward. One of his servants then told him that there was no spy. Rather, the Jews have a prophet named Elisha who knew all their secrets and he revealed the plan to the king of Yehuda.

The king of Aram commanded his cabinet to find out where the prophet is and to capture him. The king's men went to find Elisha but, of course, their plan was a joke. Obviously, Elisha knew they were coming, and he easily managed to avoid them. However, in his idiocy, the king sent "horses, riders and many soldiers" to surround the city and find him.

In the morning, Elisha's assistant (the commentators explain that this was not Geichazi, who was a metzorah at the time and was in isolation; rather, it was a different attendant) saw that the city was surrounded. He went to Elisha and asked him what to do. Elisha told

him, "Don't be afraid because there are more with us than there are with them." Elisha then davened that Hashem should open the eyes of the attendant to allow him to see. The eyes of the lad were opened, and he could see how many malachim came down from Shomayim to help Elisha. Elisha then davened for Aram's army to be struck with blindness. Hashem made them blind, and they couldn't find Elisha.

Elisha, the man they were looking for, went out amongst them but they couldn't see him. He told them to follow him, and they did. He led them to Shomron, the place where the king of Yisroel and his army were camped. Elisha then davened for Hashem to open their eyes and their vision was returned to them. They saw that they were not captives of the Jewish army. The king referred to Elisha as "my father", and asked, "My father, what should we do with them? Should we hit them or kill them?" Elisha told him not to kill them. Rather, he told him to give them food and water and send them back to their master.



The Metzudas Dovid asks why the malachim had to be sent down from Shomayim. In the end, the miracle occurred through the army going blind and being led to the king of Yisroel. What purpose did the malachim serve?

The Alter answers that this is meant to teach us an important lesson. For Hashem to perform a miracle to save Jews from danger, they must first be calm. They must trust in Hashem and not feel any fear. If a person is hysterical or if he feels hopeless, his salvation cannot be sent to him.

When Elisha saw that his attendant was frightened, he first needed to calm him down. He did so by showing him the angels that were coming to help them. This calmed him and strengthened his bitachon, and now the second miracle was able to occur, which is what really led to the salvation.

The talmid chochom who related this to me added that this also explains the connection between the pesukim in this week's Parshah. It first says (32:2-3) that Yaakov "went on his way, and angels of Hashem met him. And Yaakov said when he saw them, 'This is the camp of Hashem,' and he named the place Machanaim."

When Yaakov was going on the way, he was afraid of Esav; therefore, Hashem could not send him a miraculous salvation. Hashem first had to calm him down. To do so, He showed him a camp of malachim who were escorting him as he walked. Once Yaakov saw that he had a Heavenly entourage, he was comforted. He was now prepared to do what he had to do to face Esav and receive Hashem's salvation!

A Message from the Kalever Rebbe - The Power of a Minyan

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***". (Breishis 32:25)

The Baal Shem Tov, zt"l, and his students were once davening together in a minyan. When they reached the Shmoneh Esrei, each of the students slowly concluded their silent prayer and waited patiently for their Rebbe to finish so that the minyan could continue with the repetition.

However, the Baal Shem Tov remained immersed in his tefilos for an extremely long time. Eventually, the students decided to leave and come back when the Baal Shem Tov would be finished and they could continue with the repetition.

When they returned, the Baal Shem Tov reprimanded them for leaving him without a minyan as he davened. He explained that he needed the power of tzibur, of the congregation, for his tefilos to have their desired impact. And he shared the following parable:

Everyone knows that the birds fly to warmer climates in the winter. One time, the residents in one of these warmer climates saw a truly remarkable bird amongst the flock. The different shades of its feathers' colours were astonishing and elegant. They had never seen a bird quite like this one. It was a marvel! The bird settled in and perched itself high up in a tree that was beyond the reach of anyone who wanted to try and capture it.



When the king heard about this magnificent bird perched high up in the tree, he ordered a group of his followers to stand on one another's shoulders until the highest one of them could reach the bird and bring it back to the king.

As they were building this human tower, some of those on the bottom became restless and started moving around a little bit. As they started to disperse, the men that were further up plummeted to the ground and were injured. The entire group failed to capture the bird as the king had wished.

The Baal Shem Tov was able to access and draw down tremendous brachos, blessings, from the heavens through his tefilos. However, this only happened when he was connected to and joined by nine other Jews. When they left him alone, the entire tefilah fell apart. The brachos were unable to be captured.

This story teaches us the potency of davening with a minyan and demonstrates how much more powerful prayers are when they are

said together with a tzibur, a congregation, compared to when someone davens alone. Even the tefilos of the holy Baal Shem Tov were unable to rise to the heavens and have their potential impact without a minyan.



A king's crown is adorned with various gems and precious stones, each one affixed by tiny holes and grooves. All around the crown there are elaborate etchings and other carvings. If these same scratches and holes were placed in a wall or on a painting, they would ruin its beauty. However, on a crown, they add to its grandeur and splendour.

So too, when someone prays alone, their tefilos are examined scrupulously. There are little holes and punctures that are created by their lack of focus during tefilah, by a lack of kavanah, or by something they may have done, etc. When someone davens with a minyan, however, his tefilos are not inspected for flaws and blemishes. Rather, his prayers are joined with everyone else's, and they form a crown for Hashem. Those holes and groves become ornaments on the King of Kings' crown.

When someone davens alone, Hashem turns towards those prayers and examines if his heart is in the right place, if he has the proper intentions and if he is truly a tzaddik whose prayers are worthy of being heard. However, when a congregation is davening together, Hashem does not "turn" to inspect the quality of those tefilos or those people; He does not examine their intentions or thoughts. Those tefilos are accepted immediately. Even if there are those in the minyan who are unworthy of their prayers being accepted because of their wayward behaviour, their tefilos are still accepted immediately.

In his sefer the Divrei Yisroel, **R' Yisroel from Madzitz, zt"l** quotes the teaching of Chazal that anything which is numbered does not become nullified, even by 1000. Something which is "counted" (minyan in Hebrew) is referring to davening with a minyan. Even if there are 1000 accusations trying to destroy those tefilos, they will not be annulled. Hashem does not listen to the claims of the angels when it comes to prayer said with a congregation, a minyan.

The Mishmeres Isomar (end of Parshas Mishpatim) recounts, that while he was going through a challenging time, he went to meet with the **Chozeh from Lublin, zt"l**. The Rebbe told him that the answer to all his problems was to be careful to always daven with a minyan and to never be lenient and daven alone. And, the Rebbe concluded with very sobering words, "When someone chooses to daven alone when they could have done so with a minyan, this leads to a heavenly accusation against that person, chas v'shalom."

This is alluded to in the story of Yaakov's battle with the Satan. The Torah tells us, "And Yaakov was left alone" - When a person is davening alone, "the Satan battles him" to try and nullify his prayers through heavenly accusations.

However, when someone davens with a minyan, those tefilos instantly are accepted.

Essential Rabbi Nachman - Start with thanks

When a person wants to pray to Hashem and ask for what he needs, he should first thank Him for all of His past kindnesses and only then ask for what he needs.

Because if he starts by asking only for what he needs, Hashem says, "Have you nothing to thank Me for then?"



וַיֹּאמֶר שַׁלְּחֵנִי כִּי עָלָה הַשָּׁחַר ***And he (the angel) said, "Let me go, for dawn is breaking***," 32:27

After a full night of struggling with **יעקב**, the **מלאך** asked to be set free "because the morning had risen". Rashi, based on the **גמרא** in **חולין** explains that the **מלאך** was telling **יעקב** he had to go because it was his turn that morning to sing **שירה** to *Hashem*.

Many **מפרשים** ask the perplexing question: why on Earth, literally, did the **מלאך** choose that night of all nights, the very night before he was on duty, to attack **יעקב אבינו**?! It could be compared to a person going out late with his friends the night before his **חתונה** ! To make things worse, **חז"ל** say that most **מלאכים** only get one chance to sing **שירה**. So, this was the night before his big moment, and he decides to get into a scrap with **יעקב**?

The **Koshnitzer Maggid** **זיע"א** answers beautifully and fundamentally. This **מלאך** is the **שטן**, the **יצר הרע**, the **שר** of **עשו** no less. His job was to attack **יעקב** then and continue attacking **יעקב** 's children until the end of **גלות**. But his job is not to win. His job, in fact, is to lose! At the end of the day, or night in this case, he is a **מלאך** fulfilling *Hashem's* **שליחות**. He is there to push **יעקב**, test us, challenge us. But he only succeeds when we win. That's his real purpose.

Therefore, in this instance, only once **וירא כי לא יכול לו**, he saw that he could not conquer **יעקב** was he able to go and sing **שירה**, his song of success in having achieved his mission.

We are all **בני יעקב** and we are all in a fight with the **יצר הרע** . But we can win. That's the whole point of the **יצר הרע** – to present a challenge we can overcome. And when we do, a beautiful **שירה** is sung in ...**שמים**



וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל־עֵשָׂו אָחִיו אַרְצָה שֵׂעִיר שְׂדֵה אֱדוֹם

The Ohr Hachaim will explain why Yaakov specifically sent angels to Eisav.

We must understand the reason the pasuk wrote the word **לְפָנָיו** obviously Yaakov was sending the malachim before him as he was coming to meet Eisav. Moreover, why does the pasuk need to tell us something we all know, that Eisav was his brother.

The pasuk tells us that the malachim were sent to the land of Seir the field of Edom. Why do we need to know the place where the malachim were being sent to. Their mission was not dependent on where they were going rather it was depended on the person they were going to - Eisav. In addition, why does the pasuk say **אַרְצָה** and not La'aretz?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the pasuk is coming to teach us how Yaakov thought that it was permissible for him use angels as messengers when he could have used people.

Eisav Yaakov realized that since the malachim were in front of him he was given permission to use them if he thought it would be necessary, specifically if the mission could not be accomplished by humans. So this is what the word **לְפָנָיו** is hinting to- **אֶל עֵשָׂו.** The reason that the mission specifically needed malachim was because he was going to Eisav.

In addition, Yaakov hoped that when Eisav would see the Malachim he would get scared and rethink his plans to attack Yaakov. As the medrash says some of the angles were wrapped in fire on chariots and some were on horses with steel armour.

Yaakov also he needed the messengers to find out Eisav's true intention, was he coming as a brother or as an enemy to fight a war. This was something that only angels could truly ascertain.

Another potential possibility is that Yaakov wanted to immediately let Eisav know that he was on the way to meet him. As the chachamim teach us that we should pre-empt a rasha. For this reason, he chose malachim who for them the whole world is in their four amos (they can be anywhere in the world in a split second). This is what the words אַרְצָה שֵׂעִיר שְׂדֵה אֱדֽוֹם is showing, that Eisav was too far for humans to get to into time. However, for malachim, all they needed to do was to turn their face and they would be able to speak to Eisav and then still standing they can turn and speak to Yaakov and relay their impression, even though he as far away.

אור החיים הקדוש

וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן בְּבֹאוֹ מִפַּדַּן אֲרָם וַיִּחַן אֶת־פְּנֵי הָעִיר
33:18 Asks the Ohr Hachaim, what is the passuk trying to convey when it says Yaakov arrived whole. What was he missing?

Now even though in Gemorah Shabbos gives some answers the Ohr Hachaim wants to know what the simple meaning of the passuk is. In addition, what is the meaning when it says Yaakov came from Padan Aram? We know clearly that Yaakov was travelling home from Lavan's house which was in Padan Aram?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the passuk is coming to teach us that whatever assets Yaakov lost as a result of him sending presents to Eisav, Hashem replaced in full and were in the same amount as they were "when he was coming from Padan Aram". And even though the losses were considerable, Hashem's bracha was fulfilled and everything that was lost was replaced.

אור החיים הקדוש

הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו כִּי־יָרֵא אָנֹכִי אֹתוֹ פֶּן־יָבוֹא וְהִכַּנִי אֵם עַל־בָּנִים

Why did Yaakov have to mention in his tefilla to save me from my brother and eisav - are they not one and the same?

The Ohr Hachaim offers two explanations. One, Yaakov davened to Hashem to save him from the hands of my brother but who does not act like my brother rather like Eisav who the world knows as the evil one.

Another explanation is that Eisav had two forces that Yaakov had to contend with. One the merit of Yitzchak and second Eisav's natural strength and huge army. To this Yaakov davened firstly **הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי**- that the merit of Eisav's forefathers should not stand in his favour. The second tefilla was save me **מִיַּד עֵשָׂו** - who is powerful.

Another explanation says the Ohr Hachaim was that Yaakov was afraid that Eisav would not try to take him head on, rather he would try and trick Yaakov. This was also the purpose of the Tefillah of **מִיַּד עֵשָׂו.**

In addition, Yaakov wanted to point out the wickedness of Eisav that he was ready to kill his own brother. For this alone he should be saved.

The Weekly Vort

■ **וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־יָבֹוא עֵשָׂו אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה הָאַחַת וְהִכָּהוּ** – ***And he said, 'If Eisav comes to one camp and destroys it...'*** (32:9). The word **והכהו** (and destroys it) is a palindrome – it reads the same backward and forward. This signifies that whoever inflicts harm on *Bnei Yisroel*, will ultimately suffer harm himself. (Daas Chachomim)

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

The Great Merit of Chesed

At the beginning of the parashah, it states (32:4), **וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל עֵשָׂו אָחִיו** - "*Yaakov sent malachim ahead of him to Eisav his brother…*"

Rashi writes **מלאכים ממש**, that **מַלְאָכִים** in this pasuk is literal. He sent actual angels. He didn't send his servants to be the messengers.

But why was that necessary? Why disturb the malachim from their avodas hakodesh?

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l answers that there is no greater *avodas hakodesh* than to do a favor for Yidden. The malachim were glad to do this *shlichus*, and to help Yaakov Avinu and his family, to save them from *Eisav HaRasha*. This deed is greater than the avodah the malachim perform before Hashem. Yaakov sent **מלאכים ממש**, literal angels, to teach us this lesson.

Chesed is from the highest accomplishments and greatest deeds one can do.

The Ahavas Shalom zt'l (parashas Kedoshim, in the הגה"ה) tells a personal anecdote: "When I was learning Torah, or when I was having deep, holy thoughts, and then I saw a Yid, even a simple Yid, who was sad, and wanted to speak to me for a half-hour to calm down and relieve his distress, I would stop my Torah and all the great things I was occupied in. - The main thing is to do a favor for a Yid."

It is known that the **Baal Shem Tov zt'l** said, "It is worthwhile for a person to live seventy or eighty years, just to do a favor for a Yid, once."

Reb Shalom Schwadron zt'l lived in Yerushalayim, and he often traveled to Bnei Brak to speak with the **Chazon Ish zt'l**. His friends and neighbors in Yerushalayim heard about this and began asking him

to travel to the Chazon Ish on their behalf so that he could ask the Chazon Ish their questions.

After this occurred several times, he asked the Chazon Ish whether he must travel from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak for their sake, as this resulted in bitul Torah.

The Chazon Ish replied, **חסד איז די פינטאלע פון די נשמה**, "Chesed is the innermost point of the neshamah."



Yosef got a priceless blessing of **עלי עין** that **עין הרע** will not affect Yosef or his children forever.

Why did **יוסף** merit this unbelievable **ברכה** ?

One answer is that it was a reward **מידה כנגד מידה** because his eyes didn't look at the aveirah (Berachos 20a).

The **מדרש** says that each one of the limbs of **יוסף** - his mouth, his body, his hands, his feet and his **מחשבה** got special reward for not sinning with the wife of **פוטיפר**. It is clear in the **מדרש** that all these rewards were given specifically to **יוסף** himself, however, the reward that he got for his eyes did not just go to **יוסף**. It went to **יוסף** and his children for all generations.

The question is, why was his reward for his eyes not looking greater than all the rewards that he received for the other limbs?

The answer is that when **יוסף** would travel on his horse and he would go through **מצרים**, all the **מצרי** woman would climb on top of the walls of their houses and they would toss down jewelry in order that Yosef should look up at them. And **יוסף** did not look up at even one of them.

The **בן איש חי** says that his eyes were tested hundreds of times more that all the other limbs of his body (which only had a test by **אשת פוטיפר**). Therefore, the reward **יוסף** got for his eyes, didn't just go to him, it went to him and all his future generations, corresponding to all the hundreds of **נסיונות** that he withstood.

Rashi (**לג:ז**) explains why Yosef merited the bracha of **עלי עין**:- When the mishpacha met Eisav, Yosef said to himself "I don't want that Rasha to look at my mother!" - Rashi continues and says that it was in that very zchus, that Yosef blocked Rochel and prevented Eisav from seeing Rochel which caused Yosef to receive the tremendous Bracha of **עלי עין** years later.

If so, the big question is which was the reason why Yosef was zocheh to this tremendous bracha that Ayin Hara has no effect on him, was it because of his own shmiras einayem or was it because Yosef blocked his mother?

The answer is that dmus dyuknoi shel aviv is what it says saved him from sinning with eishes Potifar, however it does not say what saved him on his walks when they were throwing jewelry at him!

However now we understand where he got the siyata dishmaya. The very fact he was shoimer his mother from the eyes of the Rasha [as Rashi says] is what gave him the siyata dishmaya to overcome looking at all those women tossing jewelry at him.

Schar Mitzvah Mitzvah! Which means that of course the ultimate bracha was only made possible in the merit of his own shmiras einayem but what gave him the koach and extra siyata deshmaya was the fact that he protected his mother from Eisav's eyes.

Both reasons together were the cause of Yosef receiving the tremendous bracha of being shamur against the evil eye.

שמירת עינים



There was a holy Yid from Eretz Yisroel who had to undergo major treatment in America. He had an appointment scheduled with a top doctor in Manhattan shortly after he landed. When the time came for his appointment, he was not there. He did not show up until a full hour after his appointment.

The doctor asked him why he was late to such an important appointment. He told him that he had waited for an hour for a taxi from the airport. The people were quite surprised, "Suddenly the hundreds of airport taxis went on strike?"

Even with his painful sickness he went on to explain – "I had to wait a full hour for a taxi that did not have an immodest picture on it. The people wondered and asked him –what difference it made to him – he would be inside the car?!

He explained to them that he had to stop in Boro Park on his way - and he was not willing to be the cause of anyone to be **נכשל** in their **שמירת עינים** because of him!

The Chida writes that if a person envisions in his mind a *tsurah kedosha*, a holy image like an image of a **צדיק**, that image will have a tremendous positive effect on him and his mind.

The Chazon Ish said that in the kindergartens, they should have only pictures of *Gedolai Yisroel*, and not of lions, tigers, or monkeys. Because these pictures of **גדולים**, shining, sparkling and splendid, have a great positive effect on the tender souls of little children.

The Steipler said that throughout the **Chofetz Chaim's** life, he would periodically look at the picture of his Rebbe, **Reb Nochomka from Rodna**, and that it was mashpia on him in a powerful way.



"ויירא יעקב מאד ויצר לו" - *"And Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him*…" [Bereishis 32:8]

When Yaakov hears in this week's parsha that Eisav is approaching with an army of 400 men, the Torah describes Yaakov's feelings just before his fateful encounter with Him. We are told **"ויירא יעקב מאד ויצר לו"** - 'And Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him…' [Bereishis 32:8]

Rashi and all the meforshim take note of the double expression in the pasuk – first he was very afraid (**ויירא יעקב מאד**) and then he was distressed **ויצר לו** .

Why does the Torah, which is usually clear and concise with its wording, repeat the fact that Yaakov was fearful for his life two times?! Why is it necessary for both descriptions? Surely, if he was afraid he was distressed and if he was distressed then he was afraid? What are the nuances of differences implied by these two expressions?

Rashi, citing Breishis Raba and Tanchuma, suggests that Yaakov has, in fact, two different concerns regarding the encounter that lies ahead of him. "And Yaakov was afraid – lest he or members of his family be killed; and he was distressed – lest he kill others (especially his brother)." With a potential battle on the horizon, Yaakov is not only fearful for his own life and that of his family; he is, in that very moment, deeply concerned about the prospect of killing others.

The Or Hachaim Hakadosh gives a similar yet different explanation. He explains that the term **ויירא** - "and he was fearful" tells us that

Yaakov was afraid that Eisav would kill him and his family. But the word **ויצר** - "and he was distressed" teaches us that Yaakov was anxious and worried that he might have to kill his own brother. He was pained by the possible need to kill in self-defence. This is why the pasuk mentions **מאד**, very much - a connection with his fear.

Sefer Avir Yosef by **Rav Yaakov Yosef Reinman** says: Yaakov's distress was not at the potential need to kill per se but rather that the act of killing in self-defence, would infect him with a natural de-sensitivity to the preciousness and value of life and have a negative and corrosive impact on his personality and psyche. [See the **אור החיים הקדוש** in Devarim (13:18)].

The Daas Zekenim writes, Yaakov was afraid that Eisav would benefit from the mitzvah of kibud av v'em, which Yaakov didn't perform for twenty years, and Yaakov was distressed as Esav had said "I'll kill my brother once our father is dead." - If Esav is coming at Yaakov now with an army, that means their father has most likely died; so Yaakov is afraid of Esav's attack and distressed by the [erroneous] inference that his father has died.

Rav Yitzchak Blaser, often called **Rav Itzele Peterberger**, (the most prominent of the disciples of **Rav Yisrael Salanter**) expresses this so beautifully. He writes: According to the Daas Zekenim the pasuk reads as follows: **וייראא יעקב מאד**, Yaakov was afraid, **ויצר לו**, and his fear caused him distress because he knew that he should trust in Hashem's promise.



לע"נ The Bas Ayin 12th of Kislev

The Bas Ayin taught that - "Joy opens gates that cannot be opened in any other way."

Reflections On Parshas Vayishlach - Rav Dovid Ashear



In this week's parasha, the pasuk tells us, Yaakov Avinu was afraid when he heard Esav was marching toward him with an army. The question was asked, why would Yaakov be afraid? The Gemara tells us, **כמה גבורתו של יעקב בוא וראה** - come see how mighty Yaakov was – and there it describes the enormous boulder that he lifted when establishing a monument with Lavan. - The Torah tells us how he single handedly pushed a boulder off of a well that would normally need many people to move. It also says Yaakov was able to transport all of his animals across Nachal Yabok. He lifted thousands of animals and passed them over a deep river. He had superhuman strength. The Midrash tells us, he had 40,000 angels with him to protect him. Even one angel was able to wipe out the entire army of Sancheriv, 185,000 soldiers. And here Yaakov had 40,000 of them. He also had children capable of wiping out entire cities. So what exactly was Yaakov afraid of?

One explanation is, Yaakov knew that no matter how much strength a person has and no matter how big his army is, if he doesn't have help from Hashem, he has nothing. Wars are not won with might. They are won by Hashem.

Chazal tell us, Yaakov was afraid of sin. Maybe he did something that would have affected how much siyata d'Shamaya he would get. And therefore, Chazal tell us, he prayed, he learned, he made the spiritual hishtadlut necessary to prepare for his meeting with Esav. He also had to make a physical hishtadlut because Hashem wants us to go through the motions and make things look natural. But Yaakov knew, nothing would be natural, it would all depend on Hashem.

We must always remember with everything we do, all success depends solely on Hashem. There are no guarantees in life. No matter how much money a person has, no matter how smart he is, how good looking he is or how smooth talking he is, he cannot accomplish anything without help from Hashem.

If a person truly believes this, he'll accompany every physical hishtadlut with a spiritual one, whether it is tefila or extra mitzvot, that is the real way to access siyata d'Shamaya. And when a person does get help from Hashem, even if in the natural way of things it may seem unlikely that he'll succeed, that will not matter because if we have help from Hashem, we have everything.

The Alter of Marinover *shlita* (Ish Echod) would say:

אֲשַׁלֵּחֲךָ כִּי אִם־בֵּרַכְתָּנִי - After Yaakov fought with the angel and won, it said, 'Let me go.' Yaakov replied, 'Not until you *bentch* me.' (32:27)

Why was it so important that it *bentch* Yaakov then?

When a person loses a fight, he is usually degraded and embarrassed and we know that if a person is embarrassed and does not respond, his words have great power. – Yaakov realized that now that he lost the fight, the *Sar shel Esav* may be embarrassed, thus, it was the perfect time to ask for a *bracha*."

אֵיזֶהוּ חָכָם – הָרוֹאֶה אֶת הַנּוֹלָד 'Who is wise? - One who sees ahead'.

The Bas Ayin explained the words of Chazal (Tamid 32a): Who is wise? What is the wisdom involved in being a Yid? - The ability to see oneself as a "נוֹלָד," newborn, at every moment, looking only ahead and not backward." ~ Rav Avrohom Dov (ben Reb Dovid) of Avrutch, the Bas Ayin.

Concepts in Avodas Halev From The Family of R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם - "***Yaakov came in peace (lit. whole) to the city of Shechem***..." (33:18)

After more than two decades at the hands of Lavan and Esav, *Yaakov Avinu* emerged not just unscathed, but "**שָׁלֵם** " - complete; elevated both *b'ruchniusu v'gashmius*. (See **Rashi**)

It is said in the name of the *heilige* **Bnei Yissaschar** that the word "**שָׁלֵם** " is an acronym for **שמם לשונם מלבושם**. The Hebrew letters in the word shalem, used here for "in peace" (lit., "whole"), form the initials of the Hebrew words Shem (name), Lashon (language) and Malbush (dress).

Their *Yiddish* names, language, and mode of dress remained unchanged. The three areas in which *Klal Yisroel* remained steadfast and didn't alter themselves to mimic the ways of the *goyim*.

This is to teach us that despite his long association with Lavan and his friendship - in the end - with Eisav, Yaakov remained "whole," clinging to his traditional Hebrew name, language, and dress. - A Jews "wholeness" or "integrity" is measured by the extent to which they refuse to part with these three identifying Jewish characteristics.

Presumably, the religious fortitude and conviction that the Jewish people displayed in *Mitzrayim* many years later was enabled and empowered by the *mesiras nefesh* and dedication that *Yaakov Avinu* demonstrated here. Hence, for twenty-plus years, Yaakov remained in the home of Lavan and yet he was able to proudly say, "**תרי"ג מצות שמרתי**". I didn't learn from the *rasha's* ways.

This is a lesson we all know. The devotion and adherence to the *mesorah* with which our forebears lived is what gives us the ability and motivation to perpetuate their legacies.

How does the mere external fact of **שלא שינו את שמם** show their true colors? Maybe outwardly they lived as Jews, unaffected by their surroundings, but privately the *Mitzriyim's* influence had a detrimental effect on them?

The first letters of acronym for **שמם לשונם מלבושם** as we said, spell **שָׁלֵם**. Now note the second (inner) letter of these three words. If we take the second letter of **שמם לשונם מלבושם**, lo and behold; they too spell **שָׁלֵם**! This tells us that *Klal Yisroel* was **תוכם כברם**. Their outside matched their inside and was testimony to their essence as **יראים ושלמים** - Fearful and complete.

May we too merit to always follow in the ways of *Yisroel Saba* ignoring the outside influences.

Parshah Pearls

A Shadow of Doubt - "And he commanded them saying 'So you shall say to my master Eisav" (32:5).

Because he called Eisav his master he was punished, says the **Da'as Zekeinim M.T.** 'I told you that ***the younger one will serve the older one',*** said Hashem, 'and you called him 'my master', not once, but eight times!

By your life, eight kings from Eisav will rule in Edom, before a king rules over Yisrael!' And that is why the Torah writes (at the end of the Parshah) "***And these are the kings who ruled in Edom before a king ruled over Yisrael".***

'The primary gemilas chasadim, kindness you can do for your fellow man, is to feel his pain as though it were your own.' ~ The Bas Ayin.

Why They Killed Sh'chem

"And it was on the third day, when they were in pain, that the two sons of Ya'akov, Shimon and Levi … took their swords and they came upon the unsuspecting city, and they slayed all the males" (34:25).

If Chamor and Sh'chem deserved the death-penalty, what did the rest of the town do to deserve it, asks the **Rosh**?

And he cites the **Rambam** in Hilchos Melachim (9:10), who rules that one ben No'ach who sees another ben No'ach transgressing one of the seven Noachide Mitzvos and does not have him killed in Beis-Din is himself guilty of the death penalty. And his source is this Parshah.

Consequently, all the inhabitants of Sh'chem, who witnessed Sh'chem's abduction of Dinah (an act of theft) and did nothing about it, were Chayav Miysah.

On the Third Day, *Ibid.*

Why on the third day, asks the **Da'as Zekeinim M.T**?

Rejecting the suggestion (accepted by some commentaries) that the pain is the most intense on the third day, they attribute it to the fact that it was not possible to circumcise all the males in Sh'chem in one, or even on two, days, and it was only on the third day, when the job was complete, that Shimon and Levi put their plan into action.

R' Moshe Schwab ZT"L would say:

"I keep many pictures of my children and grandchildren on the walls of my home. I want to be able to constantly look at them and remember the great kindness which the Almighty has bestowed upon me!"

Parsha Points to Ponder by Oizer Alport



Why did Shimon and Levi first kill the men in Shechem's town and only afterward kill Shechem and his father (Bereishis 34:25-26), when they were the primary perpetrators of the crime and presumably should have been punished first?

Rav Berel Povarsky cites the Rambam (Hilchos Melochim 9:14), who explains that the townspeople were killed because one of the seven Noahide mitzvos is the requirement to establish courts. Because they were aware that Sh'chem had sinned by forcibly stealing Dina and did nothing to judge him, they were liable to be killed.

Since the entire reason that they were killed was for their failure to punish Sh'chem, if Shimon and Levi had first killed Sh'chem, there would no longer be grounds to kill the rest of the townspeople since at the end of the day, his judgment had been carried out and they were no longer sinning by neglecting to punish him, so Shimon and Levi killed them first.

R' Shimon Shkop ZT"L would say:

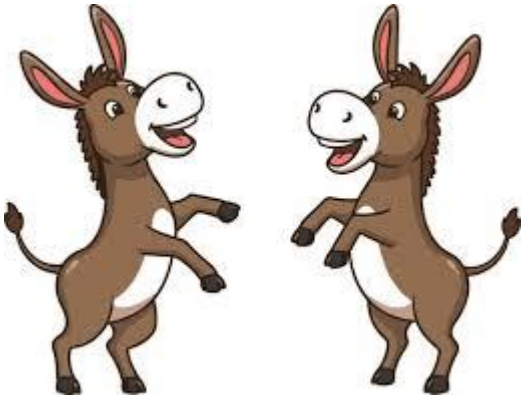
"Torah, like money, is entrusted to a person by Hashem. If a person proves himself a reliable caretaker, he is entrusted with even more wealth.

Thus, one who gives charity is rewarded with greater monetary wealth, while one who teaches Torah is rewarded with greater knowledge."

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Yaakov said, עִם־לָבָן גַּרְתִּי – I dwelled with Lavan. The word גַּרְתִּי has the numerical value of 613, which was Yaakov's way of telling Esav he had remained steadfast in his service of Hashem, even keeping all the mitzvos while he was in Lavan's domain.



One aspect of interest in Yaakov's statement was the despite having spent twenty years with Lavan, it had not influenced Yaakov to weaken in his Avodas Hashem. But how did he do it? How did he maintain his lofty level when we know people are normally very influenced by their surroundings?

Someone once explained the next verse tongue-in-cheek, before the **Bais HaLevi**, and though it isn't the simple understanding, he liked what the fellow said.

The next verse says, וַיְהִי־לִי שׁוֹר וַחֲמוֹר "And there were to me oxen and donkeys…" (32:6). He said, "When Yaakov told Esav he'd lived with Lavan for many years, Esav would expect Yaakov to be influenced by Lavan. However, Yaakov said, "To me [Lavan and his ilk] were [like] oxen and donkeys.

Yaakov told Esav, "The whole time I was there, when I saw Lavan's despicable behavior, I told myself, "He isn't a human being; he's an animal that walks on two feet."" - By recognizing that this wasn't how a person was meant to behave, and that those acting that way were not people, Yaakov clearly felt how this was beneath him. Therefore, he was not influenced by Lavan and was able to keep the entire Torah, for that was his lofty calling in life.

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

ויקח מן <u>הבא בידו</u> מנחה לעשו אחיו (32:14)

In its description of the gifts that Yaakov sent to pacify his irate brother Eisav, the Torah uses an unusual expression, stating that Yaakov took from the animals *that were in his hand*. What does it mean that the animals he sent were in his hand, and what is the significance of this seemingly trivial fact?

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank explains this uncommon phrase based on a fascinating idea of the **Tashbatz** (553), which is quoted by the **Darkei Moshe** (Yoreh Deah 35:1). After shechting an animal, an intricate examination of its organs must be performed to make sure none of them is damaged in a way that renders the animal forbidden for consumption.

The Tashbatz describes a test through which it can be determined whether an animal is unhealthy and non-kosher even while it is still alive (although it is not foolproof and should not be relied upon for practical kashrus matters). The exam involves running one's hand over the animal's back. An animal that crouches and drops to the ground is kosher, while one that remains standing is not. The pasuk in Yeshaya (57:15) alludes to this test: **ושפל רוח להחיות** – the lowly of spirit will live, a hint that those animals that drop to the ground (representing a low spirit) are physically healthy and fit to live.

Rav Tzvi Pesach suggests that Yaakov had a dilemma. On the one hand, he felt com-pelled to send gifts to appease his angry brother. At the same time, Yaakov did not want to give him animals that were fit to be brought as korbanos, lest Eisav use them for idolatrous purposes. His brilliant solution was to send those animals "that remained in his hand" and did not drop to the ground, thereby revealing that they had a disqualifying internal blemish.



Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld - Busy with Spirituality

"Yaakov Avinu was left alone and a man wrestled with him until daybreak" (*Bereishis* 32:24).

Chazal tell us that the "man" who grappled with Yaakov throughout the night was none other than the angel of Esav, the embodiment of spiritual opposition. Interestingly, in next week's Parsha we encounter another mysterious "man": "*Vayimtza'eihu ish*—A man found Yosef wandering in the field." Chazal there identify the "man" as the angel Gavriel, a holy *malach* sent to guide Yosef toward his destiny.

But how does the Midrash know? How does it determine that one "man" is a destructive force while the other is an angel of light? What clues reveal the nature of each encounter?

Rav Yaakov Galinsky *zt"l* explained this with a story.

The holy Sanzer Rebbe, the Divrei Chaim, was once visited by a very wealthy man who had come seeking a *beracha*. The Rebbe asked where he was from. "Lemberg," the man replied. The Rebbe continued, "Tell me, did the teacher in your town, Reb Zelig, manage to raise the money for his daughter's wedding?"

The visitor looked puzzled. He had no idea what the Rebbe was referring to. The Divrei Chaim explained that just a month earlier, a broken-hearted teacher from Lemberg had come asking for help. His daughter was engaged, but the dowry was missing, and the shidduch was on the verge of collapsing. The Rebbe had written him a letter of recommendation to help him collect funds.

"Do you know if the situation was resolved?" the Rebbe asked.

"Oh… Reb Zelig," the wealthy man said. "Yes, he's well-liked. But I didn't know he had a daughter, or that she was engaged, or that he needed money. Someone did come to me for help, but I didn't realize it was serious."

The Rebbe was astonished. How could he, living in Sanz, know the needs of a simple melamed in Lemberg, while the wealthy man living next door knew nothing?

The man defended himself. "I work all day to earn a livelihood. And the little free time I have, I rush to the beis medrash to learn, for my Olam Haba. I don't have time for other people's problems."

He expected the Rebbe to admire his dedication. And at first, the Rebbe said, "Yes, a Jew should indeed learn whenever he has a free moment." But then the Divrei Chaim added: "In that case, you must be a learned man. So let me ask you a question on Rashi."- And he proceeded to ask our very question: How does the Midrash know that the "ish" who met Yosef was a holy angel, while the "ish" who fought with Yaakov was an evil one? The wealthy man had no answer.

So the Rebbe explained: "It is really quite simple. When Yosef was lost, a 'man' appeared and helped him—that is the mark of a holy angel. But when Yaakov asked the 'man' who wrestled with him for a blessing, the angel refused, saying he had no time—he had to go sing shira. An angel who is *too busy with his own spiritual matters to help another Jew*… that is an angel of destruction."

The lesson is unmistakable. - A person who is so absorbed in his own spiritual growth that he cannot pause to help another Jew, even for a moment, resembles the angel of Esav.

As the Kedushas Tzion taught: "Another's gashmiyus—another Jew's physical needs—is my ruchniyus. Their material welfare *is* your spiritual greatness."

Yes, strive for spiritual elevation. Yes, pursue growth, learning, and avodah. But on that journey, do not forget those around you. A

friend who needs a good word. A neighbor who needs a smile. A family that needs a few dollars. A stranger who needs a helping hand.

Your care for another Jew may be your greatest spiritual achievement.

Lesson from the mitzvoh of גיד הנשה Dayan Yehoshua Posen

"***We shouldn't look for נסיונות, but if they find us then we daven for Siyatoh DiShmayoh.***"

יעקב אבינו battles with the **מלאך**. During the clash, the **מלאך** inflicts a wound on his **גיד הנשה** which **הקב"ה** subsequently heals. The **פסוק** says **על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את גיד הנשה** - in future generations **כלל ישראל** may not eat the **גיד הנשה**.

The **חינוך** writes that this **לאו** will serve as a form of **חיזוק** for us. Even though we have trials and tribulations and **נסיונות** in life, **הקב"ה** will help us get through them and overcome them.

One can ask, if this is the message we are meant to take from this **מצוה**, why doesn't the **תורה** give us a positive **מצות עשה**? In so many other areas, there are **מצוות** to commemorate things which give us **חיזוק**. Why are we commanded just to refrain from eating the **גיד הנשה**?

Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that although the **חיזוק** we are meant to get is that **הקב"ה** will help us overcome challenges when we are faced by them, we are not actively looking for challenges. It would be easier if we did not face challenges, our enemies and other hurdles. Therefore, the **תורה** did not give us a positive **מצוה**, but rather a **לאו**, a refrain.

If anything happens to **כלל ישראל**, we gain **חיזוק** from knowing that **הקב"ה** is always there for us, and **אם ירצה ה'**, He will grant us the ultimate **ישועה**.

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

כִּי־חַנַּנִי אֱלֹקִים וְכִי יֶשׁ־לִי־כֹל - Yaakov told Eisav that Hashem had given him gifts and that he had everything (33:11).

Rav Shimon Sofer observes that Yaakov was saying that since he realized that everything he had, came from Hashem, and that Hashem, gave him everything that he needs, therefore, whatever he had, was everything.

He said that he had no need for more. It was a gift from Hashem to be able to see that all of his needs were cared for and that he was not lacking anything.

The Great Boxing Match - Rabbi Jeremy Golker



Picture the scene. You're at a boxing match. The bell rings and the boxer in the blue corner confidently makes his way to the centre, getting ready to pummel his opponent. The boxer in the red corner, a little bit more hesitant, makes his way to the middle of the ring. But his lips are moving. And that's because he's offering a silent prayer.

As he approaches his opponent, he says, G-d, please help me. In the merits of my father and grandfather, let me defeat my opponent.

That perhaps would make sense in a regular situation. But if the two boxers were brothers, it would make no sense at all. How can one brother draw on the merits of his father and grandfather, where his opponent, his brother, has the same father and grandfather?

Isn't that what happens in this week's Sedra? Yaakov has a showdown with the Sar Shel Esov. They duel and they fight. But before they begin battle, Yaakov offers a prayer. In the Zuchus of his father Yitzchok and his grandfather Avraham, he should defeat his opponents. But his brother Esov has the same father and grandfather. Says the **Sfas Emes**, zuchus Avos only helps if you follow in the ways of your fathers. If you've abandoned those ways, you have no Zuchus Ovos.

Yaakov Avinu, therefore, was entitled to draw on the Zuchus of his father Yitzchok and his grandfather Avraham. But Esav had abandoned their ways, and therefore it was of no help to him.

The way to counter our enemy is to draw on the Zuchus Ovis, not only by davening for the Zuchus Ovis, but by following in their ways.

Rabbi Shlomo Hoff Shlita – The Attitude of Our Avos

This week's parasha focuses on the encounter between Yaakov and Esau, highlighting the contrast between their personalities and approaches to possession and generosity. A subtle yet profound difference is presented through their responses regarding the gift (matana) that Yaakov wished to give Esav:

One of the perhaps subtle ways in which the Torah tells us a little bit of an insight between Yaakov and Esav is the way they referred to the present, the gifts that Yaakov wanted to give to Esav.

Esav said יֶשׁ־לִי רָב אָחִי יְהִי לְךָ אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ – "*I have plenty, my brother; let what you have remain yours.*" (33:9). [Implying sufficiency and perhaps detachment from needing the gift.] Yaakov famously turned around and said to Esau, קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּרְכָתִי - *take it*, וְכִי יֶשׁ־לִי־כֹל – '*I have everything*'. (33:11) [Indicating a deeper sense of completeness and abundance.]

A key insight is the contrast between the nature of this world (Olam Hazeh) and the World to Come (Olam HaBa):

Olam Hazeh is characterized by want, desire, and lack. It draws people through their cravings and unmet needs. Olam HaBa is a state of total satisfaction and completeness, where a person lacks nothing.

How can a person truly feel that they have everything?

Human nature tends toward endless desire; when one has wealth or possessions, the urge is often to acquire more. But if one is שָׂמֵחַ בְּחֶלְקוֹ - He is content with his lot because he sees it as a portion given by Hashem, not something he earned, this leads to genuine satisfaction.

Yaakov's statement "Yesh Li Kol" is not only about having everything but is underpinned by a profound spiritual attitude:

He recognizes all that he has is from HaKadosh Baruch Hu— it is divine grace, not a result of his own actions or merit. This acknowledgment leads to true contentment and the feeling of having everything, with no lack or need. Conversely, if one attributes success solely to personal effort, the desire for more will continue indefinitely.

Recognizing everything as a matana from Hashem can positively impact mental and emotional well-being.

Adopting this mindset allows one to feel fulfilled and grateful, reducing anxiety and dissatisfaction. The lesson from Yaakov Avinu encourages us to live with the awareness that our "lot" in life is a blessed portion from Hashem, beyond what we truly deserve.

This perspective enables us to feel that we have everything and to experience true contentment and blessing.

May we all merit bracha and simcha in our lives.

UK*for*TORAH @gmail
Authentic Hashkofa from Gedolei Yisroel

Insights Into The Torah Perspective From Great Personalities Of The Last Generation & Beyond

These articles were sent out over the last two years in the weekly UK forTorah email updates, each one for the yahrtzeit of the subject of the article and sometimes accompanied by pecies written by him. It goes without saying that each Torah personality warrants full length books detailing his accomplishments and presenting his legacy.

The articles in this collection are simply snippets of insights into hashkofa which were taken to give ourselves chizuk, but do not represent even a fraction of what there is to write.

In general, we do not elaborate on the lives of those Torah luminaries who already have books written about them or who are well-known, and instead limit ourselves to presenting some of their insights. Articles about Torah luminaries who are less well-known (particularly to the English-speaking readership) usually include some historical and biographical information.

Here is a **more concise, tightened version** that keeps the substance while reducing length and repetition.

14 Kislev: Rav Yehudah Aryeh Shechter

Rav Yehudah Aryeh Shechter was a unique Torah personality who devoted his life to spreading Torah and emunah in both Eretz Yisroel and America. He served as a rosh kollel, rosh yeshiva, and founding kiruv rav of Arachim, drawing thousands of distant Jews closer to Torah.

Raised in Bnei Brak in the shadow of the Chazon Ish, with whom his family was closely connected, Rav Shechter also maintained relationships with leading gedolim of the previous generation, including the Brisker Rav and the Steipler Gaon. For many years he was also a chavrusa of Rav Chaim Kanievsky.

Describing himself as "incurably ill with ahavas Yisroel," Rav Shechter combined deep Torah scholarship with a strong belief in

the value of every Jewish soul. A pioneer in kiruv, he presented authentic Torah hashkafah without dilution. He addressed both kiruv audiences and chareidi gatherings, often speaking candidly about contemporary issues such as Zionism and modern ideological challenges.

His drashos were published in the multi-volume **Aryeh Sha'ag** on Chumash and mo'adim, and a volume of his shiurim on the Chazon Ish's *Emunah U'Bitachon* has also appeared.

The Final Hours

Quoting the mashgiach Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, Rav Shechter noted that the Chofetz Chaim once said the First World War would seem like "child's play" compared to the next war—and the Second World War likewise compared to the spiritual struggle that would follow.

Today, he explained, the battle between tumah and kedushah often comes not through open persecution but through subtle influences—especially modern technology and media—which weaken spiritual defenses.

Yaakov Avinu foresaw this danger when he prayed: "Save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav." The danger is not only from an open enemy, but from influences that appear friendly and familiar.

According to Chazal, the world is destined for six thousand years. If so, we are now in the final "hours" of history—times that are spiritually the most difficult.

Keeping Our Emunah Authentic

Rav Shechter warned that modern confusion has produced a form of "hybrid Judaism," in which outward observance exists alongside ideological compromise.

Quoting Rav Elazar Shach, he noted sharply: Judaism has thirteen principles of faith, while some have effectively added a "fourteenth"—loyalty to the state and its laws even when they conflict with the Torah.

Such attitudes, he explained, reflect a form of intellectual exile. Even sincere Jews can become influenced by surrounding culture and ideology. When homes are open to harmful influences such as the internet, foreign ideas inevitably seep in and weaken authentic emunah.

Reflections on the Founding of the State

Rav Shechter also questioned why the international community allowed the establishment of the State of Israel despite widespread hostility toward Jews.

He suggested that world leaders believed that a secular Jewish state would ultimately weaken traditional Judaism. By bringing large numbers of immigrants and reshaping them through secular culture, they expected Jewish religious identity to fade.

From this perspective, he argued, the state's early leadership pursued policies intended to secularize many of the new immigrants, particularly those arriving from traditional communities in Eastern lands.

These excerpts illustrate Rav Shechter's passionate defence of authentic Torah hashkafah and his concern for preserving clear emunah in an age of ideological confusion.

"It's not how much or how little you have that makes you great or small, but it's how much or how little you accomplish with what you do have!" ~ Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch, zt"l.

Rabbi Shloime Zalman Hoff - Divrei Chizuk Hisorerus - Asoro BTeves 5786 - Lilui Nishmas אבינו הצדיק Reb Moshe Ben Reb Yakov Z'tl (Abridged)

We gather with gratitude for the opportunity to reflect on the life of my father, **הריני כפרת משכבו**. Nothing can fully capture who he was, but the purpose is **התעוררות**— to draw lessons and strengthen ourselves. As **חז"ל** say, the tragedies of **עשרה בטבת** are meant **" יהיה לעורר בתשובה"**

My father's life was defined by focus, mission, and total dedication. He lived eighteen-hour days with no idle moments. He never relaxed on couches or wasted time; every minute was directed toward **תכלית**. His **עבודת ה'** was done with **התלהבות**, not laziness. As the pasuk says, *"Everything he did was* **בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך**."

Torah

He was an **אוהב תורה ורודף תורה**. His youth was scarred by the horrors of war, yet when he reached **ישיבה**, he found deep **דביקות** and learned with tremendous **התמדה**. Even after entering the workforce, his connection to Torah only grew.

He cherished every word of Torah. Walking to and from shul was for reviewing his children's learning or sharing a **וואַרט**. He could enter any **סוגיא** his grandchildren were learning and correct them precisely. He loved saying over a **משך חכמה**, learned with **עמילות**, and shared Torah constantly because it gave him **שמחת החיים**.

He reviewed **משניות בעל פה** on journeys, and many people recall that traveling with him meant hearing **דברי תורה** the entire way. Torah was his oxygen.

He taught others to live with "**תורתך בתוך מעי**," always having a **וואַרט** ready. As Chazal say: *"To have it on your tongue — that's a different* **דרגה**."

His **חברותא** of 64 years was a gift from **שמים**. He never closed the Gemara first; their learning was pure **חשק** and **דביקות**.

Tefillah

His **תפילה** was a world of its own — deep, prepared, heartfelt. He lived the words **היכון לקראת אלוקיך**. Before davening he prepared with **צדקה** and **תהילים**. Even when he could no longer come to shul, he kept a **חשבון** of **צדקה** and sent it in regularly.

His concentration during **חזרת הש״ץ** was visible; he davened with heart and mind fully engaged. His **יהא שמיה רבא** was famous for its power.

His **קריאת שמע על המטה** was extraordinary — 20–25 minutes of total immersion, every word from the siddur, often with added **תפילות** for others.
He once rested specifically so he could say it with proper **כוונה**.

His passing was described as a **מיתת נשיקה**, fitting the teaching that one's **קריאת שמע על המטה** reflects one's **הסתלקות**.

Chesed & Nosei Be'ol

Perhaps the greatest revelation during the **שבעה** was the extent of his **חסד**. He was a true **משכיל אל דל**. He never allowed anyone at the door to be turned away. He brought them inside, listened deeply, felt their pain, and walked them out personally.

He helped raise money for others for decades — even when asked only once. His phone was a **כלי שרת** to help people, not for convenience. He never missed a **שמחה**; he would put on **שבת** clothing and go from simchah to simchah to give joy to others.

He lived with **מידת האמת** and **נקיות כפיים**. He was careful never to take from another, never to harm another's livelihood, and always paid workers **ביומו**. His smile was sincere, his care genuine. Everything about him was sincerity… his whole hallmark was **אמת**.

He created a tremendous **קידוש השם** in all he did.

Legacy

He never spoke **דברי חולין** in the **בית המדרש**. If someone needed advice, he would step outside. The **בית המדרש** was for **דברי תורה** only — a personal **קדושה** he maintained.

Our task now is not only to speak about him but to **live** what he embodied: more sincerity, more focus, more Torah, more tefillah, more **חסד**, more **קידוש השם**. If we strengthen ourselves even a little in these areas, his **נשמה** will continue to be a **מליץ יושר** for us.



וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר - "***And Yaakov was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until daybreak.***" 32:25

The *Midrash* explains that the man who wrestled with *Yaakov* through the night was actually the angel of *Eisav*. Very interesting, because there's another *pasuk* in next week's *parsha* that also refers to a man. **וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ אִישׁ וְהִנֵּה תֹעֶה בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּשְׁאָלֵהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מַה־תְּבַקֵּשׁ**. 37:15 -*Yosef* was looking for his brothers and this man noticed that he looked lost and asked him if he could help him.

Regarding that *pasuk*, the *Midrash* says that that man was the *Malach*, the angel *Gavriel*. The obvious question is: how does the *Midrash* know that in one place the word man refers to an evil angel and in another place the word man refers to a holy angel?

הרב יעקב גלינסקי זצ״ל, the legendary *maggid*, explains this with a story. **The *Heilige Sanzer Rebbe***, the *Divrei Chaim*, was once visited

by a very wealthy individual who sought a *bracha* from him. The *Rebbe* asked him, "Where are you from?" And he answered he was from Lemberg.

The *Rebbe* asked him, "Tell me, did the *melamed*, the teacher in your town, manage to find money for his daughter's wedding?" The person didn't know what the *Rebbe* was talking about. The *Rebbe* explained, "About a month ago, a teacher from Lemberg, *Reb Zelig*, came to see me and he told me that his daughter is getting married but he had no money and the other side was threatening to call off the *shidduch*."

The *Rebbe* continued, "I did whatever I could and gave him a letter of recommendation to help him raise the money. Do you know if the problem was resolved?"

The rich man replied, "Oh, I know him. He's a very fine person, but I didn't know that he had a daughter or that she's engaged or can't even pay for the wedding.

Now that I think of it, someone came to me to ask me for some money, but I have no idea if the problem was solved."

The *Rebbe* couldn't understand. How is it possible that he, who lived in Sanz, knew and worried about the problem, but the rich man from Lemberg didn't know anything about it?

The rich man explained, "I'm busy working all day, making a living. When I have a few minutes to spare, I go into the *beis medrash* to learn. I have to think about my *olam habah*, right? I don't have time to be involved in other people's affairs."

He was certain that the *Rebbe* would value the fact that he didn't like to waste time, and indeed the *Rebbe* said, "Yes, that's how a Jew should behave, to learn whenever he has a free moment."

But then the *Rebbe* continued, "Then in that case, you must be a learned person. - Let me ask you a question on *Rashi*." And the *Divrei*

Chaim went on to ask him exactly our question: Why does the *Midrash* interpret the word man in one case to be an evil angel and in the other case to be a holy angel?

The rich man sat in silence; he had no words. He waited to hear the *Rebbe*'s answer.

The *Divrei Chaim* spoke up and he explained, "It's really simple. When *Yosef* was wandering around and suddenly he met a man who offered to help him, that was a sign that he was a holy angel.

However, after *Yaakov* fought with the angel and asked him for a *bracha*, we see that the angel replied that he couldn't give him one because it was almost dawn and he had to go and sing *shira*, thanks to *Hashem*.

If he was so busy, explained the *Rebbe*, with his own *ruchnius* that he couldn't bless *Yaakov Avinu*, there was no doubt that he was definitely an angel of destruction."

The message is very clear. Someone who invests in his own spiritual growth at the expense of another Jew's welfare and cannot find the moment to help his friend is like the angel of *Eisav*. As the ***Kedushas Tziyon*** once said: *yennems gashmius*, caring for other people's physical needs, is *dain ruchnius*, it's your personal spiritual growth.

Yes, it's great to aspire to spiritual greatness, but along that road don't forget about others. Those that need a good word, a smile, perhaps a few dollars. Your care for others may be your greatest spiritual achievement. - Have an amazing *Shabbos*.

"Serving Hashem begins the moment you take one step past what feels natural.- That extra effort matters more than everything that came effortlessly." ~ The Alter Rebbe zt"l



ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר וגו' (לב-כה)

In the city of Frankfurt, about two hundred years ago, an undercurrent of "enlightenment" infected many inhabitants of the city. During this period of time, **R' Pinchos Halevi Horowitz ZT"L, the famous Ba'al Hafla'ah**, held the rabbinical seat in the city. A number of the city's intellectuals and prominent lay-leaders came to him, arguing that the time was right for effecting new changes in the religious practices of the city of Franfurt.

The Rov had heard about the group's intentions and was expecting their visit. He greeted them hospitably and asked his wife to bring in cake and some drinks for the guests. R' Pinchos lived modestly and therefore, could only afford a few bottles of wine and some small glasses to drink from. One of the guests, a man who enjoyed drinking a bit too much, was put off by his host's lack of alcoholic supply, and belligerently commented to the rabbi, "You know, the Talmud states that a man can be distinguished "**בכוסו**" - by his glass - or in your case, lack of it!"

The entire group enjoyed a laugh at the Rov's expense, until R' Pinchos answered him. "In the Torah it states that when Yaakov Avinu transferred over his entire family and possessions to the other side of the river to escape from his brother Esav, he returned alone. Rashi explains that Yaakov had forgotten some small jars on the other side and went to retrieve them.

It is a wonder," asked R' Pinchos, "why would Yaakov bother to expose himself by going back alone just to pick up a few small jars and containers?"

The group waited expectantly for the rabbi's reply.

"The answer is quite simple and quite obvious," said the Rov. "Yaakov heard that Esav was coming to him, and he knew that he would have to offer him a drink. But when he found out that Esav had with him

four hundred men and he would have to ply each and every one with enough liquor to satisfy him, he hurried back, alone and unprotected, to retrieve those extra jars and glasses that he left behind!"

R' Pinchos looked directly at the rude man and said, "Had I known that "Esav" was coming, I would have surely done my utmost to provide adequate glasses and alcohol!"

