



BS"D

To: parsha@parsha.net
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON VAYISHLACH - 5778

In our 23rd year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click
Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha-subscribe@yahoo.com Please also
copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now
available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored anonymously in memory of
Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov

To sponsor a parsha sheet (proceeds to tzedaka) contact
cshulman@parsha.net

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>

date: Thu, Nov 30, 2017 at 6:38 PM

subject: **Rav Frand - Learning From Lavan, Succos, & Man is Like Stone**
Torah.org/Rav Frand

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Learning From Lavan, Succos, & Man is Like Stone

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion:
##1010 – Davening at Kever Rachel: Is it Permissible? Good Shabbos!
Putting a Different Spin On "I Did Not Learn from His Evil Ways"

I recently saw a teaching of the Chofetz Chaim on a Rashi in Parshas Vayishlach. In truth, this teaching does not really fit in well with the first part of Rashi on the same pasuk, but we will place it in the category of "Ayn Meshivin al ha'Drush" (one cannot be too pedantic in questioning homiletic expositions). The idea is that if the thought is true, we accept it for its mussar value even if the underlying source may not really be saying what the teaching claims it is saying.

Rashi gives a couple of interpretations of the expression Yaakov sent to his brother Eisav: "I have sojourned with Lavan (im Lavan garati)" [Bereshis 32:4]. First Rashi says, "I did not become a dignitary or a notable, but remained a mere sojourner (ger). It does not befit you to hate me over the blessing of your father who blessed me, 'Be a lord to your brothers,' for it has not been fulfilled in me."

Then, Rashi quotes a famous Medrash that the numerical value of garti (gimel-reish-tof-yud) is 613, as if to say, 'I sojourned with Lavan, the evil one, yet I kept the six hundred and thirteen commandments and did not learn from his evil ways.'

Someone asked the Chofetz Chaim, "How could Yaakov Avinu make such a bold statement which literally borders on haughtiness. Here he is meeting his brother after all these years and is saying, "You should know I am a Tzadik. I kept all 613 mitzvos." Does this not smack of gayvah [haughtiness]?"

The Chofetz Chaim addressed the question by focusing on the last words of Yaakov (as quoted in the Medrash), "and I did not learn from his (Lavan's) ways." For the purpose of this drasha, let us concentrate on those words: How did Yaakov have the gayvah to say categorically, "I did not learn any bad habits from Lavan?"

The Chofetz Chaim responds that on the contrary, this is not a reflection of haughtiness. It is a reflection of tremendous humility. The point Yaakov is making is the following: I saw what it means to have mesiras nefesh. I saw what it means to have devotion to a cause. I saw how Lavan worked and how he acted. He did not rest until he completed his task. Of course, Lavan's activities were evil — but his devotion and dedication to these evil actions was uncompromising. Halevie (if only), I would have learned from him how to be devoted to my lifestyle and value system the way he was devoted to his value system. Unfortunately, "I did not learn from his evil actions." Namely, I failed to be inspired to adopt his dedication, and apply that dedication to my own lifestyle.

Recently I had two "aha" moments that struck me in this vein.

Last Friday, I went to pick up my dry cleaning at my Korean-owned dry cleaners. The fellow is an immigrant who barely speaks English. Sometimes there is a communication gap when talking with him. I said to him, "Nu, did you enjoy your Thanksgiving?" He said, "Yeah, I watched football." Ten years ago, he did not know what a football looked like. Now he spends Thanksgiving watching football games. I said, "Which game did you watch?" He said, "I watched all three." A football game lasts approximately three hours. This means he spent nine straight hours of his "vacation" on Thanksgiving watching football. Halevie, I should be able to sit by a Gemara for nine straight hours. However, (unfortunately), "I did not learn from his evil ways."

Then, Friday morning, I was in the car listening to the radio. NPR had a reporter reporting live from a Target store in Rockville, MD. Everybody knows that last Friday was "Black Friday" (the Friday after Thanksgiving when major sales take place to launch the "Xmas shopping season.") The Target store opened at 5:00 am, and they were offering 31-inch flat screen television sets at a great price. Of course, they only had a limited supply, and there were no rain checks for this item. First come, first served.

A fellow waited in line from 9:00 pm the previous night. This means, after eating his turkey, he waited in line from 9:00 pm Thursday night to 5:00 am Friday morning. I just cannot think of anything in this world for which I would "camp out overnight" for eight hours straight. "And I did not learn from his evil ways" (how I should be acting with enthusiasm and mesiras nefesh for those things that I believe in)!

The final thing that hit me in this vein is something I once heard from Rav Gifter.

Rav Gifter once travelled to Mexico to collect money on behalf of the Telshe Yeshiva. Rav Gifter wanted to see a certain individual who was apparently a very wealthy man, in order to ask him for a donation for the Yeshiva. Try as he might, whenever Rav Gifter would come to the man's house, the man was never home. Whenever Rav Gifter appeared — morning, afternoon, evening, or weekends — Rav Gifter was told the fellow was not home — he was "in the office".

Finally, Rav Gifter went to the man's factory. He camped out there early in the morning, and was finally able to catch the man. Rav Gifter told him, "I do not understand you. Morning, evening, night — you are never home! What is going to be? What is going to be with your family?"

The person responded to Rav Gifter (in Yiddish): "Men darff ligger in gesheft," loosely translated as, "in order to be successful in business, 'one must live in his business!'"

I do not know if Rav Gifter collected anything in Mexico City during that trip, but when he came back to the Telshe Yeshiva, he gave a mussar schmooze to the students and kept repeating this phrase "you need to be totally consumed by your business."

Rav Gifter used this sentence repeatedly as a metaphor for his own students, and for many other Torah students from other yeshivas: "If a person wants to be successful in Torah learning, he must LIVE in Torah 24/7." Becoming an accomplished scholar in Torah learning requires total devotion. This was the biggest treasure Rav Gifter found in Mexico City — the lesson that when one is devoted to an enterprise — be it business or (l'havdil) learning Torah

— it must totally consume him.

This is what Rashi means when he explains Yaakov's message to Eisav "I did not learn from Lavan's evil ways." He was not bragging. It was not a statement he was proud to make. It was a confession. Nebach, I had a great teacher. He was a tremendous mentor in the attribute of devotion; and nevertheless I failed to learn from his actions. V'Lo Lamaditi m'ma'asav ha'raim.

As I mentioned at the outset, this does not necessary flow from the statement in the pasuk, which implies "I kept the 613 mitzvos" as a statement of accomplishment, but ayn meshivin al ha'drush.

Succos is a State of Mind

After Yaakov met Eisav, they (at least partially) reconciled, and then they decided to go their separate ways. The pasuk says, "So Esav went back that day on his way toward Seir. Then Yaakov journeyed to Succos and built himself a house, and for his livestock he made shelters (Succos); therefore he called the name of the place Succos." [Bereshis 33:16-17].

There are two problems with this pasuk. The first is that Yaakov only called the name of the place Succos after he got there (after he erected the shelters (Succos) for the livestock). Nevertheless, the pasuk says "he journeyed to Succos" as if that was the pre-existing name of the town. Of course, we can say that the pasuk is speaking in "prophetic future tense" — i.e., Yaakov journeyed to the place that in the future he would name Succos. However, it is strange to find it written that way.

The other question is that it seems that Yaakov named the town for a very insignificant fact — namely the structures he built for his cattle. Why is the town (apparently) named for the huts he made for his livestock?

The author of the sefer Milchemes Yehuda discusses these questions. He says that the pasuk is teaching that Succos is not merely a place on the map — it is a state of mind. The Torah is teaching that Yaakov Avinu is now entering the final stage of his life. Yaakov lived in his parents' house for many years, during which time he sat and learned. Then he went to Yeshivas Shem V'Ever for another fourteen-year period where, again, he sat and learned. Then, as a fugitive running for his life, he left Eretz Yisrael — the Promised Land — and worked by Lavan for twenty years. He worked for one wife, then he worked for another wife, and then he needed to earn a bit of a livelihood for himself. This was all a prelude for the final stage of his life. Now, Yaakov is coming back to Eretz Yisrael. In today's terminology, he is finally "settling down."

Yaakov makes a decision. He said to himself, when I was by Lavan, I saw what is involved in earning a living. I saw how Lavan acts. I am now beginning "the rest of my life." I have seen enough of life to know that materialism (gashmiyus) and the struggle to make a living and all other mundane pursuits in this world can become a person's *raison d'être* — they can become the reason for a person's existence. I do not want this to happen to me because I know that the only thing that counts in this world is spirituality (ruchniyus) and service of Hashem. All the rest is just peripheral. It may be necessary, but it is only a means to an end.

So therefore, when the pasuk says that Yaakov traveled to Succos, it is not referring to the name of that town. It is referring to this concept that a person must look at his pursuit of gashmiyus — the material things in life — houses, livelihood, cattle — as merely just travelling "to Succos." It is all temporary. A person cannot take it with him. All these acquisitions are not going to make a bit of difference after 120 years. They are all transitory. They are like a Succah. When someone is out camping, he does not put up a house for his ten-day camping trip. People put up tents, because it is just a temporary situation. Yaakov traveled to Succos: "Now I am starting my life — I have finished with Lavan, I have finished with Eisav — so now I am beginning. My mindset is to Succos." I called the name of the city I would live in "Temporary Huts" [Succos] because I am making a statement for myself and for my children that this entire world must be viewed in the context of a temporary dwelling — "Succos."

With this idea, the Milchemes Yehuda interprets a puzzling Gemara [Shabbos 33a]. After mentioning that Yaakov named the city Succos, the next pasuk says, "Yaakov came intact to the city of Shechem which is in the land of Canaan, upon his coming from Paddan-aram, and he encamped before the city (va'yichan es pnai ha'ir)" [Bereshis 33:18]. The Gemara asks, what does "he encamped before the city" mean? The Gemara gives three interpretations: Rav answers, "He minted a coin for them" (matbeah tiken lahem). Shmuel answers, "He founded market places for them (shevakim tiken lahem)." Rav Yochanon says, "He founded for them bath houses (merchatzaos tiken lahem)."

This is strange. Yaakov arrives in Shechem and he suddenly decides to invent a monetary system? He invents shopping malls? He brings in spas? What does this mean?

The Milchemes Yehuda says that Yaakov came into this city after he established this principle that the whole world has to be looked at as "Succos." He asked himself — what consumes these people? Number 1 — coinage; Number 2 — shopping; Number 3 — spas — the good life. He told them, "My friends, you have it all wrong. This is not the way to live. You must view your major activities in life from a different perspective."

According to the Milchemes Yehuda's reading of the Gemara, the words tiken lahem in each of the three opinions does not mean "he founded" or "he established," as the simple reading of the Talmudic text might lead us to believe. He interprets the verb tiken to mean, "he fixed or improved" (from the infinitive l'saken — to fix). Rav interprets that Yaakov tried to teach them the proper perspective they should have about money. It is not everything in life! Shmuel says that he did not establish market places. On the contrary, he tried to convince them that shopping is not the be-all and end-all of existence. There is no mitzvah to stand nine hours in line at night to buy a 31-inch television set at a discounted price. Finally, Rabbi Yochanon said he tried to "fix" their attitude towards bath houses — just to live an epicurean existence, luxuriating for hours on end in warm soapy water is not what this world is all about.

Tiken does not mean he invented. He tried to be "mesaken" — to correct their perspective in each of the three areas of life cited by these three Rabbinic opinions.

Man is Like Stone

Finally, I wish to share one last observation from the aforementioned sefer, relating to the concept of a tombstone (matzeivah), which we find in this week's parsha. Yaakov took a stone and made it into a matzeivah for his beloved wife, Rochel [Bereshis 35:20].

This is something we do until this very day. We erect monuments to departed loved ones out of stone. The sefer Milchemes Yehuda provides an interesting insight to explain why we make matzeivos out of stone.

We all know that the world consists of four categories of entities: Those who speak (medaber) e.g., humans; those who are alive (chai) e.g., all other creatures; those that grow (tzomeach) e.g., vegetation; and inanimate objects (domem). The category of inanimate objects (of which rocks are a classic example) is at the bottom of the totem pole. Above that is plant life — trees, and so forth. Above that are animals, fish, fowl, and insects. At the top of the pyramid is the human being, who has the capacity of speech.

At first glance, it seems that the distance between the top (medaber) and the bottom (domem) of the totem pole is vast, equal to "the distance between east and west." There is nothing lowlier than a stone. It is something we step on. On the other hand, man stands at the pinnacle of existence. The Milchemes Yehudah says: Yes and no. Stones can be the lowest of the low, something we merely trod upon. And yet stones — if they are used properly — can last for thousands of years.

America is a relatively young country. How old is the "New World?" — It is four hundred, maybe five hundred years old at most. However, in Europe, you can see stone buildings that are 1,000 years old. In Eretz Yisrael, the Kosel Ha'Ma'aravi is made out of stones from the period of the Second Beis

HaMikdash — well over 2,000 years old!

If you want a memorial to last for literally thousands of years, you use stone. The lowly stone that is a mere “domem,” which is stepped on — if used properly — can have an almost everlasting impression. Human beings can be similar. They can come into this world, not do what they are supposed to do, live and die, decompose and typify the statement, “From dust you were taken, and to dust you will return” [see Bereshis 3:19]. On the other hand, if human beings reach their potential, they can have lasting effects for thousands of years.

We are still reading about Rav Yochanan and Rav and Shmuel. They lived in the fifth and sixth century. We are still reading the words of the prophet Yeshayahu. We are still reading the words of Moshe Rabbeinu, which are thousands of years old. Jews all over the world spend countless hours a week analyzing the words of Rashi (on Bible and Talmud). Rashi lived almost a thousand years ago, and still has a powerful effect on all of us.

In a sense, men are like stones. They can have a tremendous effect, but if they do not use their lives correctly, they can leave the world without making any impact whatsoever. That is why the appropriate memorial for a human being is a matzeivah made out of stone. The stone teaches us a lesson. It teaches us that everything depends with what one does with an item. A stone can remain on the ground and be trodden upon or it can be erected into a structure that can last for a thousand years. The same applies to man. If we fulfill our mission in life, we can have influence for generations upon generations. If not “we came from dust, and we will return to dust.”

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. ...A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2017 by Torah.org. Donate to Project Genesis - Torah.org Do you have a question or comment? Feel free to contact us on our website. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> to get your own free copy of this mailing or subscribe to the series of your choice. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org> (410) 602-1350

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbi Wein’s Weekly Blog

VAYISHLACH

The long-awaited confrontation between the brothers Eisav and Yaakov occurs. At the onset Yaakov is quite concerned over the meeting. He fears that his brother, who is arriving with a band of 400 men, will undoubtedly intend to do him harm. And he knows that his brother is capable of slaughtering innocent women and children. There must have been a great feeling of relief that overcame Yaakov when Eisav takes the gifts that were meant to mollify him.

Yaakov is aware that this is only a temporary reprieve and that deep down in his heart Eisav has not yet accepted the fact that Yaakov is entitled to the blessings given to him by his father Yitzchak. Nevertheless, a temporary reprieve is also an accomplishment and the heart of Yaakov certainly must have felt lighter when Eisav departed richer than when he arrived.

This struggle with Eisav is representative of the struggle of the Jewish people with the nations of the world over our long and painful history. There are ups and downs in the story, great tragedies and unbelievable suffering

mixed in with lighter moments of tolerance, freedom and achievement. But, deep down in the hearts of all concerned, there is the fear that the last chapter in this struggle has not yet been written.

The unreasoning hatred, of some in this world, of the Jewish people is one of the great mysteries of the human story. It is the oldest social disease and unfortunately it is still virulently present in today’s society. And it may seem that Eisav cannot be easily bought off this time.

Yet, after all of the encounters that we have endured with the different forms of Eisav in our history, the rejuvenation of the Jewish people in our generations, especially in the world of Torah and in the achievements of the state of Israel is apparent. To a great extent we are witnessing a decline in the influence and power of the Church and of Western society generally. Eisav is losing whatever moral perspective is still retained from the house of his parents and from their connection to the Jewish people over all of the ages.

As such we are witness to the fulfillment of the verse that Yaakov remained alone. There are no longer many who think as we do, that view the world and its history through our lense and perspective. Yaakov is accustomed to remaining alone. He has seen too many fads, ideas, and theories – social and economic – shine temporarily and then fade into the darkness of the past.

It is better to be alone with truth and faith than to be part of the crowd of mockers and sycophants. The final chapter will show that the brothers would unite but under the banner of the faith of Yaakov. This is a process that requires patience and wisdom, items that are always in short human supply. But the promise made between the brothers long ago regarding the judgment of Mount Zion gives us hope and vitality to pursue their dream and make it come to reality.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Shabbat Shalom shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org
subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU
www.ou.org/torah/parsha/rabbi-sacks-on-parsha
Britain’s Former **Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**
The Struggle of Faith (Vayishlach 5778)
Covenant & Conversation

There are Mozarts and there are Beethovens. Which are you?

I have only the most amateur knowledge of music, but the impression one gets about Mozart is that, from him, music flowed. There is something effortless and effervescent about his compositions. They are not “sicklied o’er by the pale cast of thought.” He wrote at speed. He carried the worries of the world lightly.

Not so Beethoven, for whom it sometimes took years for an idea to crystallise into its final form, with countless drafts and revisions and crossings-out. This was a man who could be angry with himself and with the world, for whom creativity was a struggle from which he emerged triumphant with work that is rarely less than strenuous and full of conflict until its final majestic resolution. The ethereal, mystical, almost other-worldly quality of his last compositions, the sublime late piano sonatas and string quartets, are the creation of one who has finally found peace after a life of wrestling with his own angels and demons.

All of this is, for me, a way of coming to understand Jacob, the man who became Israel, our father in faith. Jacob is not the most obvious choice of religious hero. He does not appear – at least on the surface of the biblical text – as a man with Abraham’s courage or kindness, Isaac’s faithfulness and self-restraint, Moses’ vigour and passion, David’s politics and poetry, or Isaiah’s lyricism and hope.

He was a man surrounded by conflict: with his brother Esau, his father-in-law Laban, his wives, Leah and Rachel, and his children, whose sibling rivalry eventually brought the whole family into exile in Egypt. His life seems to have been a field of tensions.

Then there were his transactions: the way he purchased Esau's birthright, took his blessing, and eventually outwitted his wily father-in-law Laban. In each case he seems to have won, but then his situation deteriorates. The episode in which, at Rebekah's request, he dressed up as Esau and deceived his blind father, forced him to leave home and – as we see in this week's parsha – left him traumatised with fear at the prospect of meeting Esau again. Almost the same deception he practised on Isaac, he suffered at the hand of Laban. Even his escape from Laban might have ended in tragedy, had God not warned him not to harm Jacob (Hence the passage in the Haggada: "Go and learn what Laban the Aramean sought to do to our father Jacob"). His life as portrayed in the Torah seems to be a constant series of escapes from one trouble to the next.

So who and what was Jacob?

To this there are two radically different answers. There is the Jacob of midrash who even in the womb longed for a synagogue,[1] who spent his years as a young man studying in the bet midrash,[2] who looked like Abraham[3] and whose arms were like pillars of marble.[4] His motives were always pure. He bought Esau's birthright because he could not bear to see Esau offering sacrifices (the privilege of the firstborn) to idols.[5] As for his father's blessing, the very reason Isaac became blind in old age was so that this could be possible.[6] Esau was the opposite, a violent and mercurial character who had deceived his father into thinking he was ultra-pious,[7] but who had – on the day he came in "tired" from the field – committed a whole series of crimes including murder.[8]

This is an extreme portrayal, but not without scriptural basis. Jacob is called an *ish tam*, which conveys the sense of simplicity, integrity and single-mindedness. The plain sense of the oracle Rebekah received before the twins were born was that "the elder will serve the younger." [9] She knew Jacob was the son destined to prevail. Besides which, as Maharatz Chajes says in his Introduction to the Aggadic Literature, [10] midrash paints biblical characters in moral black-and-white for obvious moral and educational reasons. It is difficult to teach children how to behave if all you have to offer is a series of studies in ambiguity, complexity and shades-of-grey.

The other Jacob, though, is the one we read in the plain sense of the text. The obvious question is: why did the Torah choose to portray the third of the patriarchs in this way? The Torah is highly selective in the details it chooses to relate. Why not paint Jacob in more attractive colours?

It seems to me that the Torah is delivering, here as elsewhere, an extraordinary message: that if we can truly relate to God as God, in His full transcendence and majesty, then we can relate to humans as humans in all their fallibility. In every other religious literature known to me, heroes are idealised until they no longer seem human at all. They are Divine or semi-Divine, perfect and infallible. There is no one like that in the whole of Tanakh. Even Noah (righteous, perfect) is seen drunk and dishevelled. Even Job (blameless, upright) eventually curses his fate. The man who, more than any other, epitomises fallibility is Jacob.

And perhaps that is the point. Jacob was a Beethoven, not a Mozart. His life was a series of struggles. Nothing came easily to him. He, alone of the patriarchs, was a man who chose to be chosen. Abraham was called by God. Isaac was chosen before his birth. Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah: these were all singled out by God for their mission. Not so Jacob. It was he who bought the birthright and took the blessing, he who chose to carry Abraham's destiny into the future.

Not until he was running away from home did God appear to him. Not until years later, alone, at night, terrified at the prospect of meeting Esau, did God or an angel wrestle with him. He alone was given, by God or the angel, a completely new name, not an enhancement of his old one but a completely new identity: "Israel." Even more strikingly, despite the fact that he was told "Your name shall no more be called Jacob," [11] the Torah continues to call him Jacob, suggesting that his struggle was lifelong – as, often, is ours.

Were I to choose a soundtrack for the Jacob I have come to know, it would be Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata or his Grosse Fugue, music of such

overwhelming tension that it seems on the verge of bursting through all form and structure. Yet it was through these epic struggles that Beethoven eventually reached his own version of serenity, and it was through Jacob's extended wrestling-match with destiny that he eventually achieved what neither Abraham nor Isaac accomplished: all his children stayed within the faith. "According to the pain is the reward," said the sages. [12] That is Jacob.

There are saintly people for whom spirituality comes as easily as did music to Mozart. But God does not reach out only to saints. He reaches out to all of us. That is why He gave us Abraham for those who love, Isaac for those who fear, and Jacob/Israel for those who struggle.

Hence this week's life-changing idea: if you find yourself struggling with faith, you are in the company of Jacob-who-became-Israel, the father-in-faith of us all.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com

subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

VaYishlach: "I Have an Ox and a Donkey"

Rav Kook

Upon his return to Eretz Yisrael, Jacob sent a message to his brother Esau: "I have an ox and a donkey" (Gen. 31:6). Why was it necessary to tell Esau about this ox and donkey?

According to the Midrash (Breishit Rabbah 75), Jacob was not speaking about the material possessions he had amassed, but about something of far greater significance. The ox refers to Mashiach ben Joseph, the precursive Messianic leader descended from Joseph. The ox is a symbol of the tribe of Joseph; both Jacob and Moses used the imagery of an ox when blessing Joseph (Gen. 49:6; Deut. 33:17).

And the donkey? That is a reference to Mashiach ben David, the ultimate Messianic king descended from David, who will arrive as "a pauper riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9).

Why do we need two Messianic leaders? And why are they represented specifically by these two animals?

Two Forces

In a remarkable eulogy entitled "The Eulogy in Jerusalem," delivered after Theodore Herzl's death in 1904, Rav Kook explained this concept of two Messiahs. The eulogy beautifully articulates his views on the secular Zionist movement and the tragic rift between the religious and secular sectors of the Jewish people.

God created us with both body and soul. We have forces that maintain and strengthen the body, and forces that protect and develop the soul. The ideal is to have a robust body together with a strong and healthy soul. The soul, with its remarkable faculties, is meant to utilize the body to fulfill God's will in this world.

The Jewish people function in an analogous fashion to the body and soul. There are forces within the nation that correspond to the body, working to meet its material and physical needs. These forces prepare a firm basis for Israel's holy mission. And there are forces in the nation that work directly toward developing Israel's special spiritual qualities.

Efforts to promote public security and welfare are common to all nations, just as all creatures have bodily and physical functions. But the higher aspect of furthering our spiritual aspirations on the national level is unique to the Jewish people - "It is a nation dwelling alone, not counted among the other nations" (Num. 23:9).

Joseph and Judah

These two tasks were divided between two tribes, Joseph and Judah. Joseph looked after the material needs of the Israelites in Egypt. The Sages taught that Joseph spoke seventy languages, thus indicating that his task was a

universal one, common to all nations. He protected the Jewish people in Egypt, and is described as “the opposing force to Esau” (Breishit Rabbah), defending the nation against those who attack the Jewish people. Judah, on the other hand, was responsible for cultivating the special holiness of the Jewish people. “Judah became His holy nation” (Psalms 114:2). Ultimately, both of these aspects were to be combined in the Davidic monarchy. David was a warrior who fought the enemies of Israel and brought peace to the nation. But he was also the “sweet singer of Israel,” the psalmist who would rise at midnight to compose holy poems praising God.

The Split

When Jeroboam led the northern tribes of Joseph to split from the southern kingdom of Judah, he introduced a tragic divide between these two forces, the material and the spiritual. The Midrash says that God grabbed Jeroboam by the coat and told him: “If you repent, I and you and [David] the son of Jesse will walk together in the Garden of Eden.” Together, you and the Davidic monarch will nurture the Jewish people and enable them to accomplish their Divine mission.

Jeroboam’s reply, however, was: “Who will lead?”

God answered, “The son of Jesse will lead.”

Jeroboam refused to recognize the pre-eminence of the nation’s spiritual mission. Throughout history, we have witnessed the ongoing conflict between these two forces: secular movements that work towards improving the nation’s material lot, and religious ones that promote its spiritual nature exclusively.

The redemption of the Jewish people can only be attained when both of these forces are functioning. Those who work towards strengthening the nation’s spiritual aspects are preparing for Mashiach ben David, who personifies the ultimate goal of the nation. This spiritual goal, however, cannot be attained without the necessary material foundations. All efforts to better the material conditions of the nation are part of Mashiach ben Joseph’s mission.

The Fall of Mashiach ben Joseph

The Talmud in Sukkah 52a teaches that Mashiach ben Joseph will be killed, and that a “great eulogy in Jerusalem” (Zechariah 12:13) will be delivered at his death. What is the significance of this piercing eulogy, when the nation will mourn the loss of Mashiach ben Joseph “as one mourns for an only child”?

Due to the rift within the Jewish people, these two forces clash. Those who promote the nation’s material aspects belittle the importance of Torah and mitzvot. And those who stress the special nature of Israel reject all changes and attempts to better its material standing. This leads to rebellion against religion on one side, and anemic stagnation on the other.

With the fall of Mashiach ben Joseph, all will realize that these are not opposing movements, but forces that should work together so that material progress will form a basis for developing the unique character of the nation. This is the significance of the “great eulogy in Jerusalem.” All sectors of the nation will mourn this loss, all will recognize that it is a tragic mistake for these forces to be divided and estranged from one another.

The Ox and the Donkey

What about Jacob’s message to Esau? Why did he use these two animals, the ox and the donkey, to allude to the two Messianic leaders?

The ox is used to plow the ground, preparing the area to be planted. This corresponds to the mission of Mashiach ben Joseph - to defend the nation from enemies and prepare the way for the revelation of Mashiach ben David. We also see this in the fact that the Tabernacle, a preparation for the Temple, was established in Shiloh, in the territory of Joseph, while the Temple itself was built in the inheritance of Judah.

The donkey, on the other hand, is used to carry produce from the field. This corresponds to the mission of Mashiach ben David, who brings the final fruit of redemption.

A Hint to Esau

Jacob’s message to his brother, “I have an ox and a donkey,” alluded to the future Messianic Era, a time when he will no longer fear Esau’s enmity. We

find a second hint later on. After the two brothers meet, Jacob promises that he will visit Esau on Mount Seir. The Sages wrote:

“We searched throughout the text of the Torah, but we never found that Jacob visited Esau on Mount Seir. It could not be that Jacob was deceiving him. So when will Jacob go to him? This will take place in the future era, as it says, “Saviors will ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esau” (Obadiah 1:21).” (Breishit Rabbah 78:14)

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Shemuot HaRe’iyah (VaYishlach 5691), quoted in Peninei HaRe’iyah, pp. 68-72. “Eulogy in Jerusalem” from Ma’amarei HaRe’iyah, pp. 94-99.)

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>

to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

Since our parsha shares with us Yaakov’s Avinu’s prayer prior to his confrontation with Eisav, I thought it appropriate to discuss some laws of tefillah.

Slowly Positioned

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Why windows?

Why does a shul have windows? Does this not create a distraction that one should avoid?

Question #2: A ruined davening!

When traveling, is it better to daven inside the ruins of a building or to pray outdoors?

Question #3: Strange title!

What does the title of this article have to do with its topic?

Answer:

At the beginning of parshas Vayishlach, the Torah teaches that one of the ways that Yaakov prepared for his encounter with Eisav was through prayer. This provides ample reason to discuss some of the laws regarding tefillah.

In Chapter 5 of Hilchos Tefillah, the Rambam discusses many important aspects of prayer that he terms “non-essential components,” meaning that if they were not done, one has still fulfilled his mitzvah to pray. Furthermore, someone unable to fulfill these laws is required to daven without observing them.

Correct location

The Rambam groups many of these rules under a heading he calls “the proper location in which to pray” (Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah 5:6). We can organize these laws into the following mnemonic heading:

Set place

One should have a set place where he davens.

Low

When standing to daven shemoneh esrei, one should stand in a low place.

Certainly, one should not pray while standing on top of something.

Outdoors

One should not daven outdoors.

Wall

When praying, one should face a wall.

Lodging

One should not pray in a destroyed building, called, in Hebrew, a churvah.

Yerushalayim

In the room where one is davening, some windows or doors should face Yerushalayim and should be open.

As I mentioned above, these are all categorized as non-essential components of prayer. This means that although meeting these requirements is important, circumstances may dictate that one daven without observing them. We will now discuss the details of these six categories.

Set place

A person should daven regularly in the same place, as the Gemara states: Whoever establishes a place for his prayer, the G-d of Avraham will assist

him. Furthermore, upon his passing, they will say about him that he was exceedingly humble and exceedingly righteous and a disciple of Avraham Avinu (Brachos 6b). This passage of Gemara is subsequently quoted verbatim by the Rif and the Rosh, and its conclusion is quoted by all the halachic authorities.

What does the Gemara mean when it says one should pray in an “established place”? This is disputed by the rishonim. Rabbeinu Yonah explains that the main thrust here is that one should pray in a place that is specially set aside for prayer, such as a shul. On the occasions when one cannot daven in shul and one must pray at home, he should have a set place at home where he prays. This should be a place where he will not be disturbed (see Magen Avraham 90:33). However, Rabbeinu Yonah rules that there is no requirement to daven in the same place in shul, which is usually referred to as a makom kavua, since the entire shul is established for prayer.

Furthermore, according to Rabbeinu Yonah, it does not seem to make any difference which shul one attends, since one is, in any event, davening in a place that has been established for prayer. According to this approach, the reason why one who establishes a place for his prayer is promised such special rewards is because he was always careful to daven in a shul. On this basis, many rishonim note that someone who is unable to join the tzibur should still opt to daven in a shul, rather than at home (Rabbeinu Manoach, Hilchos Tefillah 5:6, based on Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah 8:1).

However, other rishonim have a different interpretation of “a set place” to pray. For example, the Rosh contends that even in a shul, one should have a set place where he prays. Rabbeinu Manoach explains that someone who has several shullen in his neighborhood from which to choose should not randomly daven at different ones. He implies that one should always daven in the same shul, and that this is included in the Gemara’s recommendation that one “establish a place for one’s prayer.” If we combine these two approaches, to be rewarded with the special brocha, it is insufficient for one always to be careful to daven in shul – one also must be careful to daven in the same place, in the same shul, at all times. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 90:19) concludes that one should always have a set place to daven, whether at home or in shul. By the way, this law applies equally to women – a woman should have a set place in the house, out of the way of household traffic, where she can daven undisturbed.

Low

Daven from a low place

From the well-known words of Tehillim (130:1) Mima’amakim kerasicha Hashem, “from the depths I call out to You, Hashem,” the Gemara (Brachos 10b) derives that whenever one prays, one should endeavor to do so from a low place. For this reason, in many old shullen, the place from which the chazzan davened was somewhat sunk into the floor. This is also hinted at in the words of the Gemara (Brachos 34a) when it says that the chazzan is yoreid lifnei hateivah, descends when he leads the services.

There are two reasons why one should not stand on something while praying (Mahari Abohav, quoted by Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim 90):

1. Acting this way shows a degree of haughtiness.

2. It is distracting to do so, because the person is afraid he may fall.

Because of the second reason, the Mahari Abohav prohibits davening while standing atop furniture, even when it is less than three tefachim high, which is a subject of dispute. The Rema and the Elyah Rabbah (90:1), follow the approach of the Mahari Abohav and prohibit praying even while standing atop something lower than three tefachim. On the other hand, the Bach, the Taz and the Pri Chodosh permit this, although the Pri Chodosh qualifies that this is permitted only if the person himself will not be distracted because he is standing on something.

Under extenuating circumstances, or if the chazzan wants to daven from an elevated surface so that people can hear him, one may daven from atop a piece of furniture, as long as one is in a secure position (Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim 90, quoting several authorities).

Outdoors

One of the scholars of the Gemara, Rav Kahana, declared that praying in an exposed agricultural area is viewed as being an act of chutzpah (Brachos 34b). Based on this Gemara, the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch rule that one should not pray in an open area, such as a field (Orach Chayim 90:5).

Why is praying in a field considered arrogant? Rashi explains because praying in a secluded place is more conducive to humility and being in awe of G-d. This is explained by the Mahari Abohav (quoted by Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim 90) as meaning that, inherently, man should be inhibited about talking to G-d, and this should manifest itself in wanting to pray in a place where one has privacy. One who davens where there is nowhere to hide implies that his relationship with G-d is chummy.

An alternative explanation why it is considered chutzpah-dik to pray outdoors is that one who does so implies that, although there are distractions outdoors, he is confident that his concentration will not be affected. This attitude implies arrogance (Magen Avraham 90:6, in his explanation of Tosafos, Brachos 34b s.v. Chatzif).

The dispute how to explain this law has halachic ramifications. For example, may one, lechatchilah, daven outdoors in a place where he will not be disturbed?

According to the Magen Avraham’s reason, this is permitted, whereas according to the Mahari Abohav, it is prohibited when he has somewhere else to daven.

According to both approaches, one may pray under the heavens, provided that he is in an area surrounded by walls, even if there is no roof (Shaarei Teshuvah 90:1, quoting Batei Kehunah, Birkei Yosef, and Mizbach Adamah).

Yitzchak in a field

The commentaries (Tosafos, Levush, Bach) ask: If the Gemara rules that it is arrogant to daven outdoors, why did Yitzchak daven in an open field (Bereishis 24:63, see Rashi)? There are many different answers to this question. According to the Bach (Orach Chayim 90), Yitzchak davened between the trees, and this is considered similar to praying in an enclosed, unroofed area. Others explain that since he was praying on Har Hamoriah, the same holy place where the Beis Hamikdash would ultimately be built, this is not considered the same as davening in an open field (Tosafos, Brachos 34b s.v. Chatzif). A third approach is that Yitzchak davened in a place where no one would disturb him (Tosafos, second answer). This last answer implies that it is permitted to daven outdoors in a place where one will not be disturbed, which, as I mentioned above, corresponds only to the second opinion in the dispute as to why one should not daven outdoors. Some later authorities prohibit praying outdoors even in an area where one will not be disturbed, because they rule according to the other reason, that of the Mahari Abohav (Mishnah Berurah, 90:11).

The Magen Avraham (90:6) rules that the halachic assumption is that travelers may daven outdoors. The Mishnah Berurah (90:11) writes that if they have an option to daven under trees, that is preferable.

Wall

The verse in Melachim II 20:2 emphasizes that Chizkiyahu, the king of Yehudah, turned to the wall to pray. Based on this, the Gemara (Brachos 5b) derives that one should not pray with something intervening between himself and a wall. The Gemara’s example is that one should not pray facing a bed. Tosafos (s.v. Shelo) explains that this law does not apply to davening facing a piece of furniture that is not regularly moved, such as a bookcase (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 90:21; cf., however, Taz 90:5, who explains this idea in a different way).

Why did Chazal advise that one not pray with something intervening between himself and the wall? The Rambam explains that this is so that one not daven facing something that will distract him (quoted by Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim 90). For this reason, it does not apply to something being used to help one daven, such as a shtender, table or desk (Taz, Orach Chayim 90:5). It is also permitted to daven facing something lower than 10 tefachim or less wide than four tefachim (Rabbeinu Manoach, Hilchos

Tefillah 5:6; Rema 90:21, quoting Avudraham), although there are authorities who disagree with this (Pri Chodosh; Maamar Mordechai 90:25). It is also permitted to pray facing people (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 90:21 and 98:4).

Since the Rambam rules that this law is in the category of things that are preferred but not vital, one who davened facing a bed has fulfilled his mitzvah. Furthermore, one who has nowhere to daven other than facing a bed or some other piece of furniture may do so. The Taz (90:5) rules that if the only convenient place to create a minyan requires davening with something intervening before the wall, one may do so. He contends that since the reason not to have something intervening is only to avoid distraction, one may disregard this problem when it is the best option. The Mishnah Berurah (90:63) rules according to this Taz.

Lodging

One should not pray in a churvah, a partially destroyed building. In the context of this halachah, the Gemara (Brachos 3a) presents the following anecdote. Rabbi Yosi said: Once, when I was traveling, I entered one of the wrecked hovels of Yerushalayim to pray. Eliyahu, may he be remembered for good, arrived and remained at the door of the hovel to protect me, until I completed my prayer. When I completed my prayer, I greeted him as one greets one's teacher...

Eliyahu proceeded to ask Rabbi Yosi why he had entered a destroyed remnant of a building. Rabbi Yosi replied that he had entered in order to pray in a place that he would not be distracted by other travelers. Eliyahu answered him that he should have recited an abbreviated prayer, rather than enter a churvah to pray!

The Gemara proceeds to explain that there are three reasons why one should not enter a churvah.

Someone might suspect him of using the ruins for sinful activity.

The building might collapse.

Evil spirits might be there.

The Gemara (Brachos 3a-3b) explains that all three reasons are valid, and then elaborates on when some of the reasons apply, but not others. The halachic conclusion is that when there are at least two people and the structure looks stable, none of the three reasons apply, and they may enter the churvah. Therefore, a married couple may enter ruins that look stable, since none of the reasons apply (Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham 90: 8). Also, one may enter a churvah in a case of life-threatening emergency, such as when it is the only place available to provide necessary shelter from the elements.

We should note that all three reasons mentioned for not entering a churvah have nothing to do with praying. A person alone may not enter ruins unless there is a life-threatening emergency, such as the need to rescue people from an imminent building collapse.

Outdoors or in a churvah?

If someone has two options for davening, outdoors or in a churvah, where should he daven? We see from the conversation between Eliyahu and Rabbi Yosi that it is better to daven outdoors than in a ruin (Magen Avraham 90:7). Yerushalayim

When praying in a room, some windows or doors should face Yerushalayim and should be open, as implied by the verse in Daniel (6:11): "He had windows open, facing Jerusalem, in the upper story of his house and, three times a day... he prayed to Hashem." From this verse, the Gemara (Brachos 31a) and the Rambam derive that one should pray in a building that contains windows. It is interesting to note that the Kesef Mishneh quotes a responsum of the Rambam that the requirement that there be windows applies only to someone davening at home, but not to a shul. However, the custom is to have windows in a shul. The later authorities note that this is implied by the Zohar, and contend that the Shulchan Aruch, the author of the Kesef Mishneh, himself, followed this approach (Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham 90:4; Kaf Hachayim 90:19).

We should note that there appears to be a dispute among early authorities as to whether the primary reason that one should pray in a room with windows is so that one can see the heavens, or whether it is so that one look in the direction of Yerushalayim (see Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham 90:4). This question will be discussed shortly.

Windows or outdoors?

What should a person do if he has two places in which he could daven, one outdoors and the other indoors in a room without windows. Since the Gemara states that it is a chutzpah to daven outdoors, the Pri Megadim rules that someone with this choice should pray indoors, in the building without windows (Eishel Avraham 90:4). This ruling is subsequently followed by the Mishnah Berurah (90:10).

Twelve windows

There is a practice that a shul has twelve windows. This is based on a Zohar (parshas Pekudei), which is quoted by the Beis Yosef (90) and the Shulchan Aruch (90:4), who says that "it is good" to have 12 windows. As long as at least one of these windows faces Yerushalayim, it does not matter in what the direction the other windows face (Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham 90:4; Mishnah Berurah 90:9). Some windows or doors that face Yerushalayim should be open (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 90:4).

This ruling prompts the following question of the Magen Avraham (90:4): Why should a shul have windows? After all, one is supposed to daven by looking downward, to avoid distraction. The Magen Avraham answers that the windows are there so that if one is having difficulty concentrating while praying, he can look heavenward for inspiration. The Machatzis Hashekel explains, differently, that one is not supposed to look out the windows. He explains that the reason for the windows is so that one realizes that, wherever he is, the tefillah travels first to Yerushalayim and then to heaven.

Conclusion

Having studied many of the laws about proper positioning in davening, let us also use the above mnemonic to realize that we should always daven slowly and meaningfully. Understanding how much concern Chazal placed in the relatively minor aspects of davening should make us more aware of the fact that davening is our attempt at building a relationship with Hashem. As the Kuzari notes, every day should have three very high points: the three times that we daven. We should gain our strength and inspiration for the rest of the day from these three prayers.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

http://www.ou.org/torah/author/Rabbi_Dr_Tzvi_Hersh_Weinreb

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Vayishlach: Unheralded Heroes

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

You don't hear much about them, and sometimes you don't even know their names. But they are the true heroes and heroines in our lives and in our times.

As I hope to demonstrate, it was also true in biblical times that very important characters in the narrative are hardly mentioned, perhaps only hinted at.

I first became interested in this phenomenon shortly after the events of September 11, 2001. I was listening to one of my favorite radio talk shows while driving. The guest was a professor of sociology who was insisting, much to the chagrin of the talk show host, that the firemen who lost their lives saving others at the World Trade Center were not true heroes.

He maintained that a true hero does something very unusual, something neither he nor anyone else typically does. These firemen, he argued, were simply doing their duty. They showed up to work in the morning, went through their usual routine, and responded to this assignment as part of their job.

The announcer was horrified by this professor's opinion and pronounced it a typical example of "academic snobbery". My gut reaction was identical to the announcer's horror. Of course, those firemen were heroes, great heroes. And they were heroes by virtue of the very fact that they carried out their life-saving duties with such astounding courage.

Continuing to drive, I began to reflect upon the question of the definition of "hero" in the Jewish tradition. From the Jewish perspective, is a hero some kind of Superman who behaves in some extraordinarily dramatic fashion? Or is the true hero the person who, day in and day out, does what is expected of him in a faithful and diligent manner, humbly and anonymously, never making the headlines?

My research soon convinced me that the latter definition was the accurate one from a Jewish point of view. He or she, who dutifully and loyally does his or her job, be it in the mundane or the sacred sphere, is the true hero or heroine.

As an example, let me introduce you to a personage who is mentioned in this week's Torah portion, Vayishlach, although even if you read the portion carefully, you may not have noticed her name. Her name was Deborah.

Open your Bible with me and turn to Genesis 35:8. Jacob, his wives, and their many children have returned to the Land of Israel. They have reached Bethel, Jacob's original starting point. Jacob erected an altar there.

And then we read: "And Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died and she was buried... under the oak, and it was called the 'Oak of Tears.'"

Who was this woman, never mentioned by name before? Why did her demise evoke such grief? Why is she important enough to "make it" into the biblical narrative?

Now turn back a few pages with me to Genesis 24:59. Here we read that when Rebecca left her birthplace to journey to the Land of Israel and marry Isaac, she took her nurse with her. A nurse with no name, whom we know nothing about until we learn of her death in this week's Torah portion.

Our rabbis speculate that nurse Deborah was a major part of the entire epic drama of Rebecca's life with Isaac and Jacob. They suggest that she was the one sent by Rebecca to retrieve Jacob from his long exile.

Our rabbis tell us, too, that she was nurse to Rebecca's many grandchildren who shed those many tears under the old oak tree.

Jewish mystical sources even aver that nurse Deborah was reincarnated into the much later Deborah, who was a Judge and Prophet in Israel!

Deborah is an excellent example of someone who "just did her job", regularly and consistently, and who had an impact upon three generations of major biblical characters, including a matriarch, two patriarchs, and the forebearers of the 12 tribes.

She exemplifies the type of person that the Talmud refers to when it asks: "Who deserves a place in the world to come," and answers: "He who slips in silently and slips out silently."

Rabbi Akiva, one of the great Jewish heroes and sages, taught us a similar lesson. At a critical juncture in his life, he was inspired by the fact that a stone is impenetrable by ordinary means. But when a gentle waterfall drips upon stone for hundreds of years, it succeeds in boring a hole in stone. Quiet consistency and persistence are the true ingredients of heroism and strength.

In the Bible, as in all of life, there are major figures who work behind the scenes but who are indispensable to the important events of history. They are unheralded and often anonymous. They are real heroes too.

In the words of the poet John Keats, they are the children "of silence and slow time". They help us see the truth in that poet's exquisite words:

"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter."

© 2017 Orthodox Union | All Rights Reserved

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

Vayishlach: Talmudic Risk-Diversification

The Times of Israel | November 28, 2017

Risk more than others think is safe. Care more than others think is wise. Dream more than others think is practical. Expect more than others think is possible. — Cadet Maxim

The Torah is filled with stories of people who risked it all, put their faith in God and beat the odds. Perhaps the most famous is Moses, the humble shepherd with a speech impediment, who listened to God and challenged mighty Pharaoh and the Egyptian empire. Moses went on to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt, leaving Egypt decimated and in ruins.

However, for those that haven't heard the voice of God, our sages suggest a more nuanced approach to risk.

Our patriarch Jacob faced the possibility of war against his brother Esau; therefore, he spread out his risk in preparation for the potential battle, splitting his forces into two. Rabbeinu Bechaye on Genesis 32:9 (Vayishlach) connects the strategy of spreading or diversifying risk to an important talmudic teaching related to financial risk management:

A person should always split his capital into three: one third should go into land, one third should go into business and one third should be readily available."

The logic behind the Talmudic dictum is both reasonable and fiscally sound. To have one third of one's capital in land (back then it wasn't as volatile as today) was a stable long-term investment. One third in business was where one could earn a greater return on investment, with its accompanying level of risk. To keep one third liquid allowed the possibility for fast reaction to opportunities in the market, emergencies, or as became common in later centuries, rapid escape. Included in this mix is the other financial command of setting aside one tenth of one's income to charity.

A modern-day portfolio according to Talmudic financial advice would then consist of the following:

- 30% in stable, long-term investments,
- 30% in higher risk, higher reward entities,
- 30% in cash or highly liquid instruments, and
- 10% for charity.

The Torah tells us of the fantastic financial success that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob enjoyed and attributes it to divine intervention.

However, it is likely that once they had their wealth they knew how to protect it and grow it intelligently, with continued divine assistance.

May both our risky and our more mundane endeavors be blessed with divine success.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Ben-Tzion Spitz

from: torahweb@torahweb.org

to: weeklydt@torahweb.org

date: Tue, Nov 28, 2017 at 9:50 PM

subject: Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - From a Tent to a House - Yaakov's Journey
From a Tent to a House - Yaakov's Journey

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

The name "Bais Yaakov - the house of Yaakov" has become synonymous with the Jewish People. Yaakov's efforts to build the foundation of the Jewish People are related in the parshios of Vayeitzei and Vayishlach. There is another house that Yaakov built in these parshios. Parshas Vayeitzei begins with his promise to build a house for Hashem upon his return to Eretz Yisrael and Parshas Vayishlach concludes with the fulfillment of this commitment. Chazal comment that unlike Avraham and Yitzchak who liken the future location of the Beis Hamikdash to a mountain and a field, Yaakov calls it a home. It is this term that becomes the permanent name, as we refer to the Beis Hamikdash which is built on the Har Habayis. What is the significance of a house that plays such a vital role in Yaakov's existence and particularly in his relationship with Hashem?

The emphasis on a house was not always part of Yaakov's life. Yaakov is described as a dweller of tents, which Chazal interpret to refer to the tents of the yeshiva of Shem and Ever. In his youth, Yaakov relates to Hashem through the vehicle of a tent, yet in later years he serves Hashem in a house. This model of transformation from tent to the house is not only found in the personal life of Yaakov. The Jewish People in their youth worship Hashem in a tent-like structure, i.e. the Mishkan, which is referred to as a tent. It is only centuries later when the tent of the Mishkan is replaced with the house known as the Beis Hamikdash. How does a house differ from a tent and why is it crucial that both Yaakov and his descendants incorporate aspects of the world of tents and of houses into their Avodas Hashem?

A tent conjures up the image of being temporary. It is a dwelling place for those who are traveling and have not yet set down their roots. In contrast, a house is a symbol of prominence. The Mishkan was a tent as it was dismantled and reassembled as the Jewish People traveled through the desert. Although the Mishkan was endowed with sanctity, as soon as it was moved from its location it lost its holiness. Even the sanctity of the location of the Mishkan in the city of Shiloh, which housed the Mishkan for 369 years, was only temporary. After the Mishkan was destroyed, Shiloh lost its unique status. Only Yerushalayim, which housed the Beis Hamikdash, would take on the status of a permanent sanctuary. The Beis Hamikdash was not a tent but a house in the fullest sense.

In Tehillim, Dovid HaMelech describes his yearning to dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of his life and to visit the sanctuary of Hashem. These two requests seem contradictory. How can one simultaneously live somewhere permanently and yet merely be a visitor? Obviously the optimal reality in avodas Hashem is to be in Hashem's presence all the time. Yet, there is a danger in such an existence since we tend to take for granted things that we constantly have; we lose enthusiasm if we no longer view something as being fresh and new. Dovid is beseeching Hashem to enable him to serve Him on a constant basis with the excitement of a first time experience. He wants to be a dweller all of his days yet never lose the passion of a visitor. Yaakov begins his avodas Hashem in the world of the tent. The freshness and excitement that accompanies one on his travels are found in the tents and Shem and Ever. As Yaakov gets older, he must build a permanent home for his family to serve Hashem. Nevertheless, he must draw inspiration from the days of his youth. As Dovid Hamelech taught us, he must live in a house with the enthusiasm of a tent. The tent and the house of Yaakov becomes the model from his descendants. They first construct a tent and then endow the house of Hashem with the enthusiasm of the Mishkan in the now permanent structure.

This message speaks to many of us at different stages of life. Those who are still in the tents of Torah in their youth should continue to thrive and grow with the enthusiasm of youth. Many of us have reached the stage in which we are building structures of permanence for ourselves and our families. At this critical period, we can sometimes lose sight of our original goals in life which we may have formulated during our years in the tents. The challenges of daily life can make it difficult to approach avodas Hashem with the excitement of youth. Yet, we must rise to the challenge. If we do not create a permanent structure of avodas Hashem with the enthusiasm of our youth, our structure will be hollow and devoid of meaning. Let us turn to our great models from the past who taught us how to thrive in both the tents and houses of Torah. Let us turn to Hashem with a sincere plea to be able to dwell in His house all of the days of our lives and still remain like visitors in His home.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
www.matzav.com or www.torah.org/learning/drasha
Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Parshas Vayishlach

Animal House

Hutz 'n' plutz. That was a fictitious name my mother would give to a place where everything was bliss and very simple. It was the home of Chaim Yankel or whoever the mythical Jewish character of a given fable lived. But believe it or not, there was a place called Huts 'n' plutz. Of course, the 'n' plutz suffix was not added, nor was the place actually called Huts in the English language. It did however take the name in Hebrew. And it was called Sukkos. And a Sukkos are huts.

After Yaakov departed peacefully from his brother, he dwelled in a place for 18 months. When he arrived he built a quasi-infrastructure — homes for his kin and sukkos, huts, for his great herd. Then he named the city. He did not call it for the homes he built, rather for the myriad structures that he built for the animals — Sukkos, Huts.

Many commentaries are puzzled as to why Yaakov chose a name representing the temporal, animal structures as opposed to calling the city Houses or Batim, referring to the permanent dwellings he erected for his kin. After all, is it not more appropriate to name a village after the human abodes as opposed to the animal ones? Some answer that naming the city Sukkos was a symbolic expression of the paradox of all worldly permanence. Yaakov was saying that every abode, from glorious mansions to marble edifices, is only temporal. They are all Sukkos. Thus he named the town Sukkos.

My grandfather, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, once offered a very practical approach. After Yaakov constructed homes for both his children and livestock, the dominant feature of the landscape was myriad huts scattered across the countryside. Gazing at the amazingly transformed dessert, he appropriately named the town after the scene. He called it Huts. But why tell us that? Who cares? Perhaps both questions can be answered as one.

In the northern part of Israel, Yeshiva K'far Chasidim had established itself as a prominent center of Torah scholarship. Students flocked to the Yeshiva to gain from the spiritual nourishment that the Mashgiach, Dean of Ethics, Reb Elya Lopian offered. But the Yeshiva attracted more than students seeking spiritual nourishment.

The basement in which the, pasta, flour and other dry goods were stored also attracted those seeking nourishment. It had become infested with rodents! The students decided on a simple solution to their problem of diminishing food supply and the health hazard.

They scoured the rubbish piles of the city and brought a stray cat back to the campus. Every day it would play in the yard and each evening they would bring back to the basement where it would earn its keep, receiving room and board simultaneously. Within a few weeks there was not a rodent to be found. But the cat remained. The boys lapsed in their commitment to its welfare and even forgot to feed it.

One evening it scratched on the screen door of the aged Mashgiach HaGaon Reb Elya Lopian's home. He was puzzled. Not informed about the extermination stratagem of the student body, he wondered where the cat came from. One of the younger students explained the problems of the mice and their ingenious solution. With that, the boy explained the presence of the cat that had made its way to the sage's home.

"Are there still mice?" asked Reb Elya. "No," exclaimed the student, "there hasn't been a rodent in days!" Then he smiled while looking down at the cat and added, "thanks to this fellow." "And since there are no mice, what has he been eating?" The boy just shrugged. He simply did not know. "Ahh," sighed the sage. "You have been lax in your responsibility and gratitude. I will show you how to feed a cat." With that, Reb Elya, a man in his eighties, went into his kitchen, poured milk into a saucer and placed it down for the hungry feline.

At that moment a young student named Kavinsky captured the moment on film. The picture of the white-bearded Torah giant bending down and

feeding a cat remains one of the most popular pictures among thousands of youngsters in America and Israel.

It has become Reb Elya's proud testament that even G-d's simplest creatures must be cared for, even by a sage in Israel.

Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai, a Sefardic sage who lived in the latter part of the 18th century, better known as the Chida, offers a brilliant and revolutionary explanation to the peculiar name Sukkos.

(I purchased this set of the Chida's writings after being encouraged by a reader, Boruch Meir (Bobby) Ohrbach, and I am grateful for the wealth of knowledge I have since attained. Thank you!)

The Chida explains that Yaakov Avinu did something unprecedented for that era. Realizing that he would be spending a year and a half in unsheltered terrain, he built a sanctuary of protection for animals!

Others would have left them in the cold, caring selfishly for only their own welfare and that of their kin. Yaakov was proud of building huts for the animals and he expressed that pride in naming the entire city, not after the act that any husband and father would do for his family. He did not enshrine the town after his labor of love that would be personally enjoyed by members of his family.

He did not call the village Levittown or Jacobsville. He called it after the labor of love sweated for his temporal flock. He gave a name to tell the world that he not only cared for his flesh and blood. He named the town in honor of what he had done for the beings who had no one else to depend upon. He declared the compassion one must accord to the simplest beings, even a cat.

Dedicated by the Schulman family in memory of Milton Schulman of blessed memory

If you would like to be on a shiur update list which sends messages regarding Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky's various lectures in NY City and Long Island and other locations, please send a blank email to rmkshiur-subscribe@jif.org.il You will receive bulletins about those classes.

If you want to be on a shiur announcement faxlist, fax request along with your fax number (dedicated line, please) to 516-569-7954

PARABOLIC REFLECTIONS

In Parshas Noach's Drasha I wrote, "Recently, a billion dollar project to Mars was destroyed because the language of the metric system was spoken in one factory and feet and inches were spoken in the other."

I received this brief letter from Harvey Schabes, a NASA engineer.

"Just a brief note from your friendly NASA Engineer: I am almost positive that the Mars project was in the low hundreds of millions and not billions. But what's a few million between friends."

If you would like to be on a shiur update list which sends messages regarding Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky's various lectures in NY City and Long Island and other locations, please send a blank email to rmkshiur-subscribe@jif.org.il You will receive bulletins about those classes.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
to: weekly@ohr.edu
subject: Torah Weekly

Parshat Vayishlach

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Stay Thirsty My Friends: Parshat Toldot

Overview

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Eisav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Eisav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Eisav. That night, Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Eisav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason that it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Yisrael, signifying that he

has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Eisav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Eisav's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dinah's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his family in termarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement; however, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo brit mila. Shimon and Levi, two of Dinah's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. G-d commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El. G-d appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beit Lechem Road. Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Eisav's descendants.

Insights

A Master of Disguise

"Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him..." (32:25)

The secular Jewish newspapers make depressing reading. (Serves me right for reading them!)

It seems that every Torah prohibition — especially its norms of family life — have now been overridden by "enlightened" thought. What the Torah terms "abominable" has now not only become "acceptable" but even "admirable".

Ironically, the rainbow, that symbol of G-d's withholding His anger from Mankind, has been commandeered by that group provoking that same anger. The negative drive in man has always had two agents provocateurs. One blatant and the other sophisticated.

"Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him..."

Rashi comments: "One said (Rav Shmuel bar Nachmani): 'he appeared to him (to Yaakov) as an idolater,' and one (Rav Shmuel bar Acha) said: 'he appeared as a Torah scholar.'" (Talmud Chulin 91)

The evil impulse has two faces: that of the idolater and that of the sophisticate.

We find this idea echoed in the Midrash:

Rav says, "The yetzer hara (evil inclination) is like a fly that sits on two openings of the heart". Shmuel says, "It is like a grain of wheat". (Midrash on Bereishet 4:7)

In search of his pleasures, the fly will visit the most putrid and disgusting places in the world. He is blatant in his lust.

Wheat is the symbol of sophistication, as the Talmud says: "A baby does not know how to say 'Daddy' and 'Mommy' until it tastes the taste of wheat." (Berachot 40)

A Jew must know that the yetzer hara is much stronger than he. The yetzer hara is a malach — an angel. He is a master of disguise, and if G-d did not constantly help us we would not be able to withstand his onslaught.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
http://ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/
Ohr Somayach

Insights into Halacha

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

The Gid Hanasheh Incongruity

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

In Parshas Vayishlach, after Yaakov Avinu's epic battle with Eisav's guardian angel[1], where he got injured in his hip socket[2], we are given a Biblical commandment, the third and last of the whole sefer Bereishis, that Bnei Yisrael may not partake of the Gid Hanasheh, the sciatic nerve, of any animal. Additionally, there is a Rabbinic prohibition

on eating from the outer sinew of the animal's thigh tendon[3]. The Sefer HaChinuch[4] writes that this mitzvah actually serves as a constant reminder that eventually we will be redeemed from this protracted exile.

To fulfill this mitzvah properly, every last trace of said nerves and the fat covering the sciatic nerve must be removed as well. This act is called nikkur, a.k.a. treibbering, deveining, or porging the forbidden nerves and fats, and it takes an expert to do it properly[5].

Trouble was the Traveling Treibberer

One of the most outstanding experts in hilchos nikkur known was Rav Yonason Eibeshutz zt"l (1690 - 1764), one of the greatest Torah giants of his period and famed author of 89(!) works[6], including the renowned Yaaros Devash, Urim V'Tumim, and Kreisi U'Pleisi. In the latter sefer, in his commentary to the laws of Gid Hanasheh[7], Rav Yonason recorded a fascinating historical incident, which posthumously sparked a raging halachic controversy.

He related that an expert porger came to town (Prague) claiming that the sinew that Jews have been removing for centuries was the wrong one! This treibberer alleged that a different sinew was the true Gid Hanasheh. The ramifications of his claim were gargantuan, for if it were deemed accurate, consequently all of World Jewry would have chas veshalom been eating non-kosher from time immemorial!

Rav Yonason writes that he showed this fellow the error of his ways as the sinew this porger was referring to was found exclusively in male animals, and could therefore not possibly be the correct one, for it states in the "SMAg(ostensibly the Sefer Mitzvos Hagadol, written by Rav Moshe of Coucy in the 13th century, Negative Commandment 139) that the prohibition of Gid Hanasheh applies to both males and females". With his vast knowledge and expertise, Rav Eibeshutz thus averted potential communal disaster. He concludes his passage reiterating the importance and necessity of a porger's proficiency and capability.

Kreisi Controversy

However, as many puzzled people later pointed out, this logic seemed inherently flawed, as this quote does not actually appear in the SMAg! The SMAg in his actual quote (Mitzvos Lo Sa'aseh 139) was referring to people, not animals! In other words, he wrote that women were similarly obligated in keeping this prohibition as men do[8]. They wondered, is it possible the great Rav Eibeshutz could have made such a simple mistake? And, if so, what was it that the Kreisi U'Pleisi showed this traveling treibberer that refuted his taynos? Many scholars over the years searched for a proper solution to this perplexing conundrum.

One suggestion was that the porger was unlearned, and Rav Yonason wanted to expose his ignorance and therefore set a trap and easily refute him[9]. The issue with this is that, by Rav Yonason's own testimony, the porger was a "Talmid Chacham and expert", which would negate this solution.

The Pischei Teshuvah[10] cites the Toldos Adam, who takes a different approach and makes an example out of this story as proof that even Gedolim can err. Following this would mean that one may not partake in eating said meat without removing both sinews. Although the Toldos Adam's intent was merely to uncover the truth, he unwittingly fueled the fires of the Haskalah, as one of their primary goals was the undermining of Rabbinic authority[11]. In fact, this author personally heard noted historian Rabbi Berel Wein aver that the Haskalah used this story as propaganda to sway the masses.

On the other hand, many Rabbinic luminaries wrote responsae[12], including a tremendous pilpul by the Chasam Sofer[13], not only defending the Rav Eibeshutz's words from attack, but actually each citing different proofs and logic how his shittah is truly correct, that the Gid Hanasheh must be present in both male and female animals. Several authorities[14] wrote that it must be a printing mistake and the correct point of reference was the S - H - G (ס"ג), referring to the Sefer Halachos Gedolos, a ninth century Halachic code which contains a section on hilchos treifos[15], who actually does imply that the Gid Hanasheh is found in both male and female animals. Others[16] feel that he meant "a sefer mitzvos gadol", meaning a big book of mitzvos, possibly referring to the Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzva 3), who implies this as well.

"VeHetzdiku es HaTzaddik"

However, the whole truth did not actually come out until 1930, when a rabbi in Los Angeles, Rabbi Shlomo Michael Neches, wrote in the Shaarei Tzion Torah Journal[17] that he had in his possession an original manuscript of the Kreisi U'Pleisi, and the words SMAg were crossed out by Rav Yonason Eibeshutz himself, and written on top of them were the letters S - H - N (ס"ן), which stood for Seder Hilchos Nikkur, referring to the Seder HaNikkur of the Baal HaTzur[18]. There it was written explicitly that the Gid Hanasheh that both men and women are forbidden from consuming is found in both male and female animals. Finally and justly, a Gadol Hador was vindicated - 165 years after his death[19]!

Although we had to wait over a century and a half to attain clarity on this halachic mystery, it is imperative that we realize that our true mesorah (in this case - all the way

back to Yaakov Avinu!) is rock solid and our chachamim are given special siyatta dishmaya to arrive at the correct halachic conclusions. It might take a century or even a millennium, but in the end we clearly see why our chachamim are called "Einei HaEidah"[20].

Postscript: Interestingly, and quite apropos, this fascinating historical episode has had a recent, and equally fascinating, addendum. Apparently, Rabbi Neches' sefarim, including his original copy of the Kreisi U'Pleisi, were donated to the UCLA Research Library. Several scholars traveled there to see Rav Eibeshutz's original amendment and came upon an astonishing discovery. It turns out that it was not the handwritten correction of that renowned Rav Yonason Eibeshutz, but that of another, later Rav Yonason Eibeshutz, who lived at least a century after the first. This second Rav Eibeshutz, a Torah scholar of note, was the Av Beis Din of Lashitz, Poland, and author of Shu"t Tiferes Yonason. Apparently, this was his personal copy of Kreisi U'Pleisi, and he was the one who made the amendment which was later proven accurate in shedding light on the original Rav Yonason's puzzling citation, and not the author himself[21]. Either way, and whichever Rav Eibeshutz, we manifestly see the Divine orchestration involved in clearing up this complicated complexity of historical record. This article was written l'Zechus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikif umiyad!

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz serves as the Sho'el U' Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled "Insights Into Halacha": http://ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/.

[1] Bereishis (end of Ch. 32). This follows Rashi's understanding (ad loc. 25, end s.v. vaye'aveik ish), based on the Midrash Rabbah (ad loc. 77: 3) and Midrash Tanchuma (ad loc. 8; who adds that the guardian angel of Eisav was Sama-el). However, there is another opinion, cited in Otzar HaMidrashim (ad loc.), that it was really the ma'alach Michael that Yaakov fought, and not Eisav's guardian angel, in order to prove to Yaakov that he had nothing to fear from Eisav. [2] Due to the dictum of 'Maaseh Avos Siman L'Banim' [see recent article titled 'Mysterious Omens and our Forefathers'] we are still feeling the repercussions of this act nowadays. See Chofetz Chaim al HaTorah to this parshah. [3] Gemara Chullin (Ch. Gid Hanasheh, 91a - 93b); Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 65, 8). [4] Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 3). Several Rishonim, including the Ramban (Bereishis Ch. 32: 26), Rabbeinu Bachaya (ad loc.), Rashba (Chiddushei Agados, Chullin 91a), and Ra'ah (Pekudas HaLeviim, Brachos 33b), as well as the Midrash Rabba (Parshas Vayishlach 78, 5), also imply this message. See the Machon Yerushalayim version of Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 3, footnote 3) at length. [5] See Shulchan Aruch and Rema (Yoreh Deah 65, 13 & 14), and their commentaries. [6] See preface to sefer 'Chacham HaRazim - Rabbi Yonason Eibeshutz'. [7] Kreisi U'Pleisi (Yoreh Deah 65, Kreisi 16). [8] See for example, the Baruch Taam's glosses to the Kreisi U'Pleisi ad loc. Although others, including the Tzemach Hasadeh (on Yoreh Deah 65, pg. 41), assumed he meant the SMAg, it is also not found there; neither is it in the Ramban's Sefer HaMitzvos (Mitzvos Lo Sa'aseh 183). See also Rav Shmuel Ashkenazi's Alpha Beta Tinyeisa D'Shmuel Ze'ira (vol. 1, pg. 195 - 196). [9] See Hegos B'Parshiyos HaTorah by Rabbi Yehuda Nachshoni, on Parshas Vayishlach, pg. 137. [10] Pischei Teshuva (Yoreh Deah 65, 2), citing the Toldos Adam (Rav Yechezkel Feivel Wolfe of Vilna; vol. 2, Ch. 15, pg. 237). [11] Paraphrase from Professor Shnayer Zalman Leiman's excellent "Rabbi Jonathon Eibeshuetz and the Porger" (pg. 16). Thanks are due to Rabbi Eliezer Brodt, author of Bein Kesseh L'Essor and Lekutei Eliezer, for providing me with this important source. [12] Including the Mahar"i Assad (Shu"t Yehuda Ya'aleh, Yoreh Deah 102), Rav Shlomo Kluger (Shu"t Tuv Taam V'Daas, Mahadura Kama vol. 1, 100) [neither of whom actually approved of the Chasam Sofer's pilpul], the Butchatcher Gaon (Daas Kedoshim, Yoreh Deah 65, Hilchos Giddin HaAssurin 4; see explanation in Gidulei HaKodesh there, 1), the Ginzei Yosef (Shu"t 96, 2, quoting the Einei Yisrael), the Mahar"i HaLevi (Shu"t vol. 1, end 36, s.v. mah shetamah), and the Arugas Habosem (Shu"t Yoreh Deah 64, 4). See also Rav Moshe Yosef Shapiro of Prague's 'Bris Avraham' (Parshas Vayishlach) who, quite thoroughly argues on the whole premise of those who questioned Rav Eibeshutz, as once the Torah wrote that Bnei Yisroel may not partake of any Gid Hanasheh, it is patently obvious that it must occur in all kosher beheimos, with no differentiation between male and female. Additionally, as the Rambam writes in his preface to his Pirush HaMishnayos regarding the Torah's 'Pri Eitz Hadar' being identified as the Esrog, once we have a Mesorah L'Doros dating back to Moshe Rabbeinu, all other so-called 'proofs' to the contrary immediately fall off. Therefore, he avers, the same would apply here as well regarding the Gid Hanasheh. [13] Shu"t Chasam Sofer (Yoreh Deah 69), cited approvingly by the Pischei Teshuva (ibid.) and Shu"t HaRava"z (Yoreh Deah 111). The Aruch Hashulchan (Yoreh Deah 65, 25, in the brackets) might be referring to this solution as well. [14] Including the Mishmeres Shalom (Yoreh Deah 65,

Mishbetzos Zahav); Rav Avraham Shimon Traub, the Kaidan Gaon, in a new edition of Sefer Halachos Gedolos (pg. 296) that he published; the Ginzei Yosef (ibid.); and Rav Yosef Adler (cited in Shu"t Mishnah Halachos vol. 3, 67). The Tzitz Eliezer (Shu"t vol. 8, 25, 2 and vol. 18, 63, 6 s.v. v'ani) actually prefers this amending to the later one, opining that Rabbi Neches must not have been able to read Rav Yonason's handwriting clearly. [15] BeHa"G (61, Hilchos Treifos pg 129a; exact location cited in Maadanei Hashulchan, Yoreh Deah 65, footnote 118). Still, others feel that the BeHa"G's words are also not entirely clear that he was referring to female animals; see Haghos Rav Ezriel Hildesheimer to the BeHa"G (ad loc.), Chadrei De'ah (ad loc. 8), Giluy Daas (ad loc. 7), and Daas Yonason (glosses on the recent Zichron Aharon version of the Kreisi U'Pleisi 65, 16). [16] See Shu"t Mishnah Halachos (vol. 3, 68, s.v. u'mah). One can also infer this from the Minchas Chinuch's comments (Mitzva 3, 13). [17] Shaarei Tzion Torah Journal (Choveret HaYovel 1930, 25) - under the title "VeHetzdiku es HaTzaddik" - "The Tzaddik Was Justified" (Devarim Ch. 25, verse 1); also printed in HaPardes Journal (vol. 4, Journal 1: 10 pg. 18 - 19). This important historical tidbit is found in Pardes Yosef (Parshas Vayishlach, 33 s.v. uv'kru"p), as well as in Torah Shleimah (Parshas Vayishlach, 169), and Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer (ibid.). It is also added as an important footnote in many recent editions of the Shulchan Aruch, some printed with the words "mitzvah l'farsen". [18] Seder HaNikkur (Shaar HaRishon, Hechsher HaBassar 8b - exact location cited in Maadanei Hashulchan Yoreh Deah 65, footnote 118), also brought in the Tur (end Yoreh Deah 65), as well as in Rabbeinu Yerucham (Nesiv 15, 14, pg. 128b). According to Professor Leiman (cited above) the version Rav Eibeshutz showed the porger was the 1577 version with the glosses of Rav Tzvi Bochner, a master treibber and contemporary of the Rema, as there are those [see Prishah (Yoreh Deah 65, 56) and Shu"t Mishnah Halachos (vol. 3, 68 s.v. bram and s.v. mevuar)] who explain that in other versions, the words "male" and "female" are actually referring to types of muscles, not the gender of the animals. [19] Also thereby proving that Rav Eibeshutz chose the right name for his sefer, Kreisi U'Pleisi - See Gemara Brachos (4a) and Rashi (ad loc. s.v. shekorsim). [20] Parshas Shelach (Bamidbar Ch. 15, verse 24). Interestingly, this author has seen it averred that history has proven that in the whole sefer Kreisi U'Pleisi on all of Yoreh Deah only one (!) actual mistake was found, but it turns out that it was clearly an error in Geometry - see Kreisi U'Pleisi (Tiferes Yisrael, Yoreh Deah 190, 14) and the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch's Lechem V'Simlah (ad loc. Simlah 11). This will Bez"rH be addressed fully in this author's upcoming maamar in Kovetz Eitz Chaim (vol. 25). [21] See Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok HaKohen Miller's maamar in Kovetz Hama'ayan (vol. 215; Tishrei 5776, pg 100 - 102), with pictures of the title page and amendment of Rabbi Neches's copy of Kreisi U'Pleisi. Thanks are due to R' Moshe Boruch Kaufman and R' Dovid Wasserlauf for pointing out this startling recent development in the saga of Rav Eibeshutz and the traveling treibber.

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda, and l'zchus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam and her children for a yeshua teikef u'miyad!

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
 from: Ohr Torah Stone <ohrtorahstone@otsny.org>
 reply-to: yishai@ots.org.il
 subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion
Parshat Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4-36:43)

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – "And he said, Your name will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob asked him and said, 'Tell me, if you would, your name.' 'Why do you ask for my name?' And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place 'Peniel' because I have seen God face to face and I have survived" [Gen. 32:29-31].

Three times each day, we begin the Amidah prayer with the words, "Blessed are You, Hashem, our God and God of our ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob..." Why the apparent repetition in addressing the Almighty? Why do we not simply say, "Blessed are You, Hashem, our God...?"

Rabbi Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov (d. 1760, Ukraine), founder of the Hasidic tradition, explained that it is preferable and appropriate for a person to attempt to discover God on one's own and to establish a personal relationship with Him. At the same time, however, one should also relate to God as did our ancestors.

Certainly, if a person were to develop his or her own unique contact with God, that devotion would be genuine and spontaneous, rather than mechanical and formalized. But such a search is inevitably fraught with setbacks and disappointments. And what if the Almighty still remains elusive, even after a lengthy quest?

The search for God is the underlying theme of Jacob's life. This was to be a search for God unique to him, not reliant solely on the discoveries of God made by Abraham and Isaac, respectively. Most importantly, Jacob had to feel worthy of God's "friendship" in order to enter into a fellowship with the Divine.

Thus, in order for Jacob to find his way to God, he must first come to grips with his own personality flaws, with his own inner and truest self and identity, and with the image of God within himself! And that would require a fateful confrontation with his arch-nemesis and twin brother, Esau. He must somehow atone for his sin of deceitfully having stolen the "blessings" away from Esau. He can only meet God with a clear conscience!

Will Esau stand in the way of God's promise to Jacob and his seed? Can Jacob atone for the guilt he feels vis-à-vis Esau, and exorcise the jealousy he feels towards his brother, who had been the beneficiary of Isaac's favor? Addressing the Almighty, Jacob prays to the "God of my father Abraham and the God of my father Isaac..." [ibid., 32:10], not yet able to mention "my God".

Because of what follows, it becomes clear that the wedge between Jacob and himself—indeed, between Jacob and God—is Esau. Only after Jacob can successfully separate himself from Esau will he be able to confront his own God.

On the night before he is to meet his brother in the flesh after a twenty-year estrangement, the Torah records how Jacob remained alone and wrestled with an unidentified stranger over whom he prevailed. Our Sages identify this stranger as the angel of Esau. Fascinatingly, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888, Germany) suggests that it may well have been the Esau within Jacob who is haunting the patriarch with guilt and jealousy.

Jacob receives the victory name Yisrael (Israel) from the stranger; he has prevailed against men and God. In what way? He has finally confronted the twin personality within himself: the grasping, cheating Esau he desired to become in order to obtain his father's favor and achieve momentary materialistic enjoyment, and the Esau (and Esauism) from within himself.

Hence, he is ready to take the wealth he received from Laban during his Esau stage and return it to Esau when they meet on the morrow: "take my blessing ('which I received under false pretenses')", he will say [ibid., 33:11] – and once he repents and returns his ill-gotten gain, Jacob is ready to accept himself.

Only after he has successfully wrestled with the stranger—exorcising the pain and guilt created by his jealousy and deception—is Jacob finally rewarded by seeing God face to face.

And after his mastery over the angel of Esau, Jacob calls the place of the encounter Peniel, "because I have seen the Lord face to face, and my soul has been saved" [ibid., 32:31]. Jacob exorcised Esau—and in the process found both himself and his God. His struggle and search has ended in victory. The true Jacob has triumphed over himself and has become "Isra-el".

Immediately afterward, the Torah records that Jacob "came in peace [shalem] to the city of Shekhem." [ibid., 33:18]. "Shalem" can also be understood as "complete." He is now, finally, his whole, independent self.

And so he erects an altar to his own God, calling it Kel Elokei Yisrael' [ibid., v. 20], "God, the God of Israel." Finally God is not only the God of his grandfather and of his father, but also the God of Israel, the God of the "complete" Jacob, his own personal God, Whom he has discovered after many travails and much pain.

The circle is thus complete; Jacob has succeeded in his search for his true self and only then, for his own God. And because of that search, we pray in the Amidah to God as encountered by each of our patriarchs. Standing on the shoulders of (spiritual) giants, we pray to the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, reminding us of our need to pursue our own personal discoveries of ourselves and then of our own personal God!

Shabbat Shalom