



BS"D

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1541

### **RABBI SHALOM ROSNER**

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh; Senior Ra"M, Kerem  
B'Yavneh

#### **What was Taught in Yeshivat Shem V'Ever?**

Rashi - Vayiskav Bamakom Hahu - Lashon Miut Bioso Mako  
Shachav Aval 14 Shanim Sheshimesh Bibeis Ever Lo  
Shachov Balaila Shehaya Osek Batorah.

And he lay down in that place: [The word hahu is a restrictive expression, meaning that [only] in that place did he lie down, but during the fourteen years that he served in the house of Eber, he did not lie down at night, because he was engaged in Torah study. Based on the language used in the Torah, Rashi derives that Yaakov rested at this location, but for fourteen years he did not rest, rather during that period he engaged in the study of Torah in the Yeshiva of Shem V'Ever.

#### **THIRTY-SIX YEARS AWAY FROM HOME**

We are told that Yaakov resided at the house of Lavan for twenty-two years, and during those years was unable to fulfill the mitzvah of kibbud Av V'em, therefore he was "punished" midah k'neged midah and Yosef was in mitzrayim unable to communicate with Yaakov for twenty-two years. If we add the fourteen years during which Yaakov studied at the Yeshiva of Shem V'Ever, then he was unable to fulfill the mitzvah of Kibbud v V'em for 36 years. Why are the fourteen years in Yeshiva not counted towards the time he did not fulfill kibbud Av V'em?

Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky in Emet L'Yaakov raises this question. Rav Yaakov even offers an example to strengthen the question. Imagine that a father asks his son to pick up some groceries. On his way to the store, the child stops off at the beit midrash to learn for a week. Is that proper behavior? His father requested groceries and the child delayed the chore for a week? Yaakov was tasked with finding a wife in Haran, why would he be justified in pushing that off for fourteen years? **SHEM V'EVER - SURVIVAL IN HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT**

Perhaps we need to understand the nature of what was taught in the Yeshiva of Shem V'Ever. In the house of Avraham and Yitzhak, there was a closed and protected environment. When Sara suspects that Yishmael may have an adverse influence on her son, she demands that Yishmael be removed. Shem, on the other hand, was the son of Noach. He witnessed the wickedness of his surroundings. Ever lived during the Dor Haflaga, when Migdal Bavel was built. Similarly, he grew up in a generation that did not value human life and that did not believe in God. Yet, both Shem V'Ever were able to remain steadfast Ovdei Hashem and moral and ethical beings.

What Shem V'Ever were able to teach Yaakov, was how to survive in the house of Lavan. It was a necessary pit stop before he was to arrive at Lavan's house. It is in accordance with his parent's instructions as it enabled Yaakov to retain his tradition during those twenty-two years. It is like a father asking his son to purchase a Lulav and Etrog on his behalf and on the way to the store, the child stops in the Bet Midrash to learn how to select a kosher Lulav and Etrog. It is part of the mission.

#### **YAAKOV TEACHES YOSEF WHAT HE LEARNED FROM SHEM V'EVER**

A reference to the Bet Midrash of Shem V'Ever appears elsewhere in Sefer Bereshit as well. In Parshat Veyeshev, when we are told that Yaakov favored Yosef, Rashi interprets it to mean that Yaakov taught Yosef what he learned from Shem V'Ever. Why does Rashi specifically cite what Yaakov learned from Shem V'Ever and not from Avraham and Yitzhak? Apparently, Yaakov subconsciously felt that Yosef would be in exile and needed to understand how to survive in a hostile environment. That was Torat Shem V'Ever.

Today, with so many outside influences, like Shem V'Ever, we need to strengthen our commitment to Torah and mitzvot. Chanuka is around the corner. The Greeks sought to discredit the Torah and force us to assimilate. May we be able to continue to educate our children and ourselves in the path of Shem V'Ever. Like Yaakov and Yosef, we need to ensure that the Torah, as our instruction manual, is our moral and ethical compass, irrespective of our surroundings.

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<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/1080920>

Thoughts for Vayeitzei/**War in Israel: Holding on to Truth**

## **Rabbi Moshe Taragin**

November 20 2023

Vayetze: Holding on to Truth Moshe Taragin Ya'akov spends twenty years in the house of lies and deceit. From the outset, he faced constant scheming and chicanery. Though slated to marry Rochel, he woke up the next morning married to a different woman. Confronting his father-in-law about this fraud, he receives a lame answer surrounding local customs of not marrying off younger sisters before their older siblings. Of course, no one ever mentioned the universal norm about being honest, and not lying to your future family. I guess Lavan forgot that one. The longer Ya'akov remains in Lavan's snare the more exploitation and dishonesty he encounters, as his salary is repeatedly and unilaterally reduced. At one point, Ya'akov generously agrees to relinquish all rights to healthy sheep, while committing himself to herding only sickly and damaged animals. Of course, this plan doesn't "work", as Ya'akov, with Hashem's help, continues to prosper. Unable to handle Ya'akov's financial success, Lavan disseminates false rumors about Ya'akov's unethical business practices. Though Ya'akov and his family ultimately flee this house of horrors, they are hunted down by Lavan, and, astonishingly, are accused of treason. Having been victimized for over twenty years by unrelenting manipulation and cheating, Ya'akov is now accused of those very same crimes. Pulling on everyone's heartstrings, Lavan wails that he wasn't even given opportunity to wish goodbye to his daughters. Ironically, by doing his utmost to avoid confrontation and conflict, Ya'akov has committed a humanitarian crime. Thousands of years later, Ya'akov's children find themselves in a similar predicament. A coalition of Israel bashers including antisemites, ignorant stooges, shockingly gullible students, and stubborn but blind denialists, have all teamed up to accuse our people of fictitious crimes, all the while tacitly supporting rape, torture, burning human beings, and taking babies and octogenarians as hostage. The more things change the more they stay the same. You would think that, especially in this instance, moral truth is straightforward. It was pretty clear-cut on Sept 11, and Oct 7th should not be any different. Just in the past decade the entire civilized world firmly supported the cleansing of ISIS, but, astonishingly, Gaza is different. The moral calculus is clear: we are a nation of peace and Arab countries which have normalized relations with us have enjoyed shared prosperity. By contrast, the genocidal murderers who continue to seek our extinction always look to justify their violence with false narratives about colonialism and with hypocritical accusations of immorality. We are literally walking in the footsteps of Ya'akov.

Defending Integrity At some point, Ya'akov had enough. After twenty years of lies and counterfeit claims, he finally defends himself and his record. He calmly accounts for his twenty years of faithful service, through freezing cold nights

and scorching hot summer days. You would imagine that Lavan, when confronted with his own corruption and duplicity, would finally acknowledge Ya'akov's virtue. The facts speak for themselves. However, hate and contempt leave little room for facts and, for those consumed with rage and violence, nothing is obvious. Unable to communicate with one another, the best Ya'akov and Lavan can muster is to agree to disagree. Reluctantly, they sign a treaty of non-aggression and agree to part ways. Exasperated, Ya'akov walks away, failing to convince anyone, but confident in his own moral integrity. Like our grandfather, we too, are unlikely to convince much of this world of our morality in waging a just war. There is too much noise, hate, and ignorance for the truth to shine. Yet, despite the futility of these efforts, we must continue to try, for the sake of the few who may listen. But, even if no one listens, we must still affirm morality and truth for ourselves, so that we can maintain our own moral compass even though so many around us have lost theirs. When truth slowly dies, we must hold on to it even more tightly. The battle for truth This war has many layers. Obviously, this is a continuation of the war of Independence as we continue our struggle to return and resettle our ancient homeland. The world isn't yet ready to grant us this small parcel of land awarded to us by Hashem. One day they will, but it may take a while. The second layer to this war is the battle between good and evil. A struggle is being waged between an axis of bloodthirsty barbarians who care little about life and human dignity and civilized societies who cherish life and condemn unnecessary violence. This is a clash of civilizations and we, as always, are at the forefront. Good will always prevail over evil, provided that courageous people stand up and make a difference. Hashem give us courage and give us strength. As the war unfolds, a third layer is becoming apparent. We are waging a battle to preserve the concept of truth. The world around us has gone mad, losing its ability to identify truth. Facts are recklessly tossed around, and preposterous claims are weaponized to attack and discredit our people. Post-Modernism The popular movement known as post modernism asserts that all truth is subjective, and context dependent, and therefore there is no objective right and wrong. This has generated the concept of moral relativism and the belief that we must always study a diversity of opinions while appreciating multiple competing narratives. Under the terms of moral relativism, there are no absolute moral positions, and any set of moral codes is merely a cultural convention. The absence of objective standards is eroding moral clarity and leading to the moral free-for-all we are all suffering through. It is a disgrace to share a planet with human beings, presumably equipped with brains and hearts, can actually celebrate incinerating other human beings. These people are the hideous monsters of post modernism.

Tower of Babel and the Mabul Tragically, when we abandon absolute moral truths, we also lose dialogue. If we can't agree on universal moral values, our conversation degenerates into shouting matches in which we lodge opposing cultural narratives at each other. Social media exacerbates the racket by providing mock communication, but no real dialogue. Social media platforms merely goad opinionated people into hollering their opinions, as they spar with one another in the cybersphere. The tower of Babel has returned and this time, though we share language we do not possess a common baseline of values. If we can't speak with one another, we can't live side-by-side. Moral relativism also diminishes moral accountability. Absolute moral values provide us with a conscience through which we inspect our behavior. Once every heinous act can be contextualized and justified, all moral accountability vanishes. The next step after the loss of moral accountability is a moral indifference in which people do not feel the responsibility of ethical decision-making, and do not consider the impact of their actions on others. Moral relativism is destroying communication and extinguishing moral sensibility. Without communication we inhabit the tower of Babel. Without moral sensibility we are the generation of the mabul. Finally, when we lose sight of truth in the public arena it becomes more difficult to locate inner truth. Once truth disappears from the broader world it also fades from human hearts and souls. So many in our generation suffer from impostor syndrome in which they doubt their accomplishments and their talents. In the modern swirl of dishonesty, fake news, and untruth is it any surprise that people feel like they themselves are frauds? Our opponents are attacking the concept of truth. Hold fast and hold tight to truth. We know what truth is and that is enough.

The writer is a rabbi at Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, a hesder yeshiva. He has smicha and a BA in computer science from Yeshiva University as well as a masters degree in English literature from the City University of New York. Avn and his culture aren't everything they seem to be. Evidently, we should resist the seductive offer to join him. Evidently, there is more for us to discover back home in history. Lavan's plan is deviously simple. It almost worked then, and it almost worked now. Ultimately though, Lavan reveals his true face, and it is ugly.

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**Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

Tidbits • Parashas Toldos in memory of **Rav Meir Zlotowitz z"l**

Reminders: The final opportunity for Kiddush Levanah in the USA is Monday, November 27th at 6:18 PM EST. Daf Yomi - Friday: Bavli: Bava Kamma 22 • Yerushalmi: Shevi'is 48 • Mishnah Yomis: Yevamos 9:2-3 • Oraysa: Next week is Yoma 34a-36a. Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents

and Rebbe to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well! Next on the Calendar: Chanukah begins on Thursday evening, December 7th. Shabbos Chanukah is Parashas Vayeishev, December 9th.

Summary of Parsha: VAYEITZEI: Yaakov departs Be'er Sheva • The vision of the ladder and angels • Yaakov arrives at Charan and meets Rochel at the well • Lavan agrees to allow Rochel to marry Yaakov in exchange for seven years of labor • On the wedding night, Lavan switches Leah for Rochel • Yaakov reproaches Lavan • After seven days pass, Yaakov marries Rochel in exchange for a commitment of an additional seven years of work • Leah bears Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehudah • Rochel begs Yaakov for children • Rochel gives Yaakov her maid Bilhah, she bears Dan and Naftali • Leah gives her maid Zilpah to Yaakov; she bears Gad and Asher • Rochel exchanges with Leah her opportunity to be with Yaakov for Reuven's duda'im • Leah bears Yisachar, Zevulun, and Dinah • Hashem 'remembers' Rochel and accepts her prayers; she bears Yosef • Lavan attempts to swindle Yaakov, but Hashem makes Yaakov wealthy • Hashem commands Yaakov to return to the land of his fathers • Rochel and Leah agree to leave • Before they leave, Rochel steals Lavan's idols • Lavan pursues them, Hashem warns him not to speak with Yaakov • Lavan rebukes Yaakov • Yaakov curses whoever stole Lavan's gods • Yaakov and Lavan make a treaty at Gal'ed • Yaakov encounters a camp of angels upon his return to Eretz Canaan.

Haftarah: The Navi Hoshea reprimands the nation for their misdeeds, admonishing them that their illustrious ancestry will not protect them from punishment. Yet at the same time, Hashem's love for them always leaves a door open to return to him. Ashkenazim read from Hoshea (12:13-14:10). [Some add Yoel 2:26-27].

For the Shabbos Table: ”הַבָּנוֹת בְּנֹתַי וְהַבָּנִים בְּנֵי הַצֹּאֵן צֹאֲנִי וְכָל הָאֲשֶׁר-אֶתָּה רֹאֶה לִי-הוּא “ “The daughters are my daughters, the sons are my sons, the flock is my flock and everything that you see is mine” (Bereishis 31:43)

The Chofetz Chaim once traveled to Warsaw seeking to obtain a passport, as he wished to emigrate to Eretz Yisrael. The elderly Chofetz Chaim found the bureaucratic office unreasonable in their demands. At that point, in his eighties, he lacked a birth certificate or the ability to gather two witnesses who recalled his birth, which practically speaking would require locating two ninety year olds who originated from his home town of Zittel! The Chofetz Chaim quoted the conversation between Yaakov and Lavan, Yaakov tells Lavan that he has not sinned or taken anything, and a complete search already verified this. Lavan responds that “everything you possess is mine, including your children.” As Lavan already searched and found nothing, how can he say everything belongs to him?

The Chofetz Chaim explained that in order to work things out between two parties, each party must recognize the existence of the other side. Lavan's mindset, however, was that Yaakov had no rights or any existence worth reckoning with whatsoever. Thus everything was up for the taking. So, too, expressed the Chofetz Chaim that despite his predicament there was no mercy forthcoming from the bureaucrats for an elderly man, as his status as a Jew gave him no rights to be recognized.

The Chofetz Chaim further compared this to the plight of Polish Jewry who were facing various decrees against religion. If the Polish Government recognized the Jews as a people worthy of human rights and compassion, they would be in a position to advocate for some relief from these edicts. However, the government isn't acknowledging their basic existence, making the predicament untenable. The Chofetz Chaim concluded that many people approached him for advice on the matter, yet he felt that the advice was clearly spelled out in the Gemara. "Rav Eliezer says 'what should a person do to avoid the birth pangs of Mashiach? He should involve himself in Torah and Chesed' ". The Chofetz Chaim expressed that even if all the sages from previous generations would gather together, no better solution would be found than this!

Halachos of Chanukah: Menorah: Who lights? Both men and women are obligated in this mitzvah. There is a mitzvah of chinuch to train a minor son in this mitzvah. While only the head of household is obligated, the Ashkenazic minhag is to (be zealous and) have all male household members light independently. A woman fulfills her obligation via her husband or with the in-home lighting of an adult male household member, even if she is away from home. Ideally, a husband should wait for his wife to return home before lighting, even if he will miss the preferred z'man. If a husband is away for the night, he may technically fulfill his obligation with his wife's lighting back at home (if he is in a similar time zone). However it is best that he light in his location on his own and have in mind not to be yotze through his household. The wife, in turn, should light at home, having in mind as well not to be yotze with her husband's lighting.

Please reach out to us with any thoughts or comments at [klalgovoah.org](http://klalgovoah.org) Ira Zlotowitz - Founder | [iraz@gparenecy.com](mailto:iraz@gparenecy.com) | 917.597.2197 Ahron Dicker - Editor | [adicker@klalgovoah.org](mailto:adicker@klalgovoah.org) | 732.581.5830 Copyright © 2022 Klal Govoah, All rights reserved.

<https://www.rabbiwein.com/blog/post-2539.html>

**Rabbi Berel Wein's Weekly Blog**

**TOLDOT**

The troubling question that has persisted throughout the ages of biblical commentary on this week's parsha is: What is Yitzchak thinking in regard to giving the blessings and heritage of Avraham to Eisav? Basically the comments and

explanations fall into two categories. One of them is that Yitzchak is fooled by Eisav and is really unaware of his true nature and wanton behavior.

Rashi, quoting Midrash, interprets that Eisav "haunted" his father with his pious speech and cunning conversation. Yitzchak is fooled by Eisav and believes that Eisav, the man of the world and the physically powerful figure is better suited to carry on Avraham's vision than is Yaakov, the more studious and apparently more simple of the brothers.

The other opinion, more popular among the later commentators to the Torah, is that Yitzchak is aware of the shortcomings of behavior and attitude of his elder son. His desire to give the blessings to Eisav is due to his wish to redeem and save his son, and to enable Eisav to turn his life around and become a worthy heir to the traditions of his father and grandfather. He thinks that by somehow giving the blessings to Eisav, Yaakov will not really suffer any disadvantage in his life's work, while Eisav will find his way back to holiness through the blessings that he has now received.

These two divergent attitudes towards the wayward child in Jewish families is one that is enacted daily in Jewish family life. Later Yitzchaks either willfully allow themselves to be deluded regarding the behavior and lifestyle of children or they are aware of the problem and attempt to solve it with a giving nature and a plethora of blessings.

Rivkah, Eisav's mother, is not fooled by her son's apparently soothing words nor does she believe that granting him blessings will somehow accomplish any major shift in his chosen lifestyle. To a great measure she adopts a policy of triage, saving Yaakov and blessing him while thus abandoning Eisav to his own chosen wanton ways.

The Torah does not record for us the "what if" scenario – what if Eisav had received the blessings would he then have been different in behavior and attitude, belief and mission.

However, from the words of the later prophets of Israel, especially those of Ovadiah, it appears to be clear that God somehow concurred with Rivkah's policy and holds Eisav to be redeemable only in the very long run of history and human events.

The verdict seems to be that one must be clear eyed and realistic about the painful waywardness and misbehavior of enemies of Yaakov, be they from within or without our immediate family and milieu. There are many painful choices that need to be made within one's lifetime and especially in family relations.

There are few pat answers to varying and difficult situations. Perhaps that is why the Torah itself does not delve too deeply into the motives of Yitzchak and Rivkah but is content merely to reflect the different emotional relationships each had with their two very different sons. The Torah emphasizes the role

that human emotions play in our lives and does not consign all matters to rational thought and decision-making.

Shabat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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fw from Hamelaket@gmail.com

## HARAV MATISYAHU SALOMON ON A TIME OF WAR IN ERETZ YISROEL

Several years ago, HaRav Matisyahu Salomon, Shlita, had given Shiurim with practical advice to Bnei Torah in a time of war in Eretz Yisroel, published as a Hebrew Kuntrus Ki SaVo'u Milchama B'Artzechem.

We present below a short summary of his points:

1. The first time we were attacked as a people was when Paroh and the Mitzriyim chased us, and it is from there that we must learn. The pasuk records that the first reaction of Bnei Yisroel is VaYitzaku Bnei Yisroel Ehl Hashem. The Torah is teaching us that the first thing we are to do in time of danger is to daven to Hashem to save us. We have to understand that Paroh chased us not because of his own mastermind but because VaYechazek Hashem Es Lev Paroh...VaYirdof Acharei Bnei Yisroel. Enemies are sent by Hashem. Indeed, the Pasuk continues U'Pharoh Hikriv....Chazal teach that Paroh's drawing closer to attack was a more powerful source of Teshuva for Bnei Yisroel than a hundred fasts--for they turned to heaven and cried out in Prayer and Teshuva.

2. But what did Bnei Yisroel have to do Teshuva for? After initially crying out in Mitzrayim, and experiencing their salvation during the 10 Makkos that the Mitzriyim suffered, Bnei Yisroel stopped davening, as they were already confident in their position. They had forgotten that the Avos established davening, our daily tefillos of Shacharis, Mincha and Maariv, and that when the Avos davened--even when not in an Eis Tzara--it was with an absolute sense of Ein Ohd Milevado and with the absolute awareness that we are always in need of Chesed and Rachamim Min HaShomayim. It is for this reason that Rashi brings here--when Bnei Yisroel cried out to Hashem at the sea--Tofsu Umanus Avosam, that by crying out Bnei Yisroel followed the path of the Avos. Incredibly, HaRav Matisyahu teaches that the Teshuva Bnei Yisroel had to do was actually in Tefillah! HaRav Matisyahu continues that this means that one must have the proper appreciation for Tefillah at all times, even when not in trouble--by such matters as starting on time, not talking during davening, not rushing away, focusing and trying hard to concentrate so that one has Kavannah, and recognizing that one is standing before Hashem Who is the Only Capable One. Every individual needs to make a Cheshbon HaNefesh if there is an aspect of Tefillah to which he is not giving the proper regard. Our Teshuva has to be to have charata (remorse) on any zilzul in Tefillah, and to be mekabel to daven as a son before his father, and a servant before his master--with the appropriate fear and respect, with

supplication just as a person in need who stands at the door, from the depths of our hearts and feeling, with the knowledge that all of our success is in Hashem's Hands--just as our Avos did! Hashem in turn responds because He is a Kel Chanun V'Rachum Erech Apayim V'Rav Chesed V'nicham Ahl Ha'Ra'ah (Avos 2:13, Devorim 4:7).

3. HaRav Matisyahu then brings the powerful words of the Chofetz Chaim in his Sefer Machane Yisroel (Chapter 10), addressed to the needs of Jewish soldiers in the Russian army. The Sefer is known for its straightforward and sincere direction to soldiers. The Chofetz Chaim teaches them two essential points to follow when davening. First, davening should be from deep in the heart and not by lip service, if possible with tears. This will indicate true sincerity and feeling in davening. Second, one should have Kavana that his Tefillos travel to Eretz Yisroel and from there to Yerushalayim and then to the Kodesh HaKodoshim (see Melachim Aleph, 8:44-49, and 9:3, regarding Shlomo HaMelech's request about davening towards Eretz Yisrael and the Beis HaMikdash, and Hashem's acceptance of his Tefillah). Picture your Tefillah's route! If one follows these two rules, the Chofetz Chaim assures the soldiers that their Tefillos will not be returned empty handed. HaRav Matisyahu teaches that the Chofetz Chaim's guidance is especially directed to the soldiers and to all instances of sakana.

We have the direction--we have the guidance--it is up to us to follow it through--to success for all of K'lal Yisroel!

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from: Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein <ravadlerstein@torah.org>  
to: targumim@torah.org date: Nov 23, 2023, 8:48 AM subject:  
Ksav Sofer - Sleep-Learning

**Ksav Sofer**

**By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**

Parshas Vayeitzei

Sleep-Learning

Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely Hashem is present in this place, and I did not know." [1]

The word for "from his sleep" is mishnaso. A midrash [2] curiously suggests that it should be read as mimishnaso -- from his learning. How are these related, and what is the midrash trying to tell us?

A Mishnah [3] teaches that all our actions should be for the sake of Heaven. Rambam [4] explains the implications: A person, he says, should eat and sleep and engage in commerce -- all with one intention: that he should have the strength to learn and deeply comprehend Torah, and perform his avodah. One who does so cannot be considered idle even when asleep. Rather, he is seen as performing a mitzvah and learning Torah, since his rest is a necessary preparation for his Torah study! Yaakov was no slouch, and no late-riser. Chazal tell us that he eschewed regular sleep all the years that he spent in Shem's beis medrash. This was the first night in many years that he

allowed himself some conventional sleep. And it is clear that his intention in getting this rest was pure. Were it not, he would not have been graced with his prophetic vision that evening. Clearly, his sleep was regarded positively in heaven, as fulfilling a mitzvah.

This is what the midrash means in substituting mimishnaso for mishnaso. Yaakov's sleep had become an integral part of his learning.

This explains as well the gemara's[5] understanding of the angels ascending and descending the ladder that Yaakov saw in his vision. The gemara explains that the angels ascended to the heavenly throne, where they saw Yaakov's image engraved upon it. When they subsequently descended, they found him asleep. They were livid to find a Yaakov with such potential wasting his time sleeping, basking in self-indulgence, and accomplishing nothing of value during that time. They wished to harm him. He was saved only by Hashem's standing over him and protecting Yaakov from their designs.

The angels could not read Yaakov's mind. They saw an inactive, inert Yaakov, apparently failing in his mission. Hashem, however, knew Yaakov's intentions. He understood that Yaakov slept for the sole purpose of renewing himself, so that he could better attend to his avodas Hashem the next day. This saved him from the wrath of the angels.

Indeed, the ladder itself spoke of earthly events rising to the level of cosmic significance. The ladder was planted firmly on the ground, but reached the heavens. It spoke of pedestrian actions attaining significance in shomayim, if they were accompanied by mitzvah intentions.

Yaakov's ladder shows us that we can turn every second of life, 24/7, into avodas Hashem.

1. Bereishis 28:16; 2. Bereishis Rabbah 69:5; 3. Avos 2:12; 4. Hilchos Deos 3:2; 5. Chulin 91b

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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Nov 22, 2023, 3:54 PM subject: Rav Frand - Giving Thanks to Hashem for His Past Kindness Is Not Sufficient

Rav Frand By **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**  
Parshas Vayeitzei

### **Giving Thanks to Hashem for His Past Kindness Is Not Sufficient**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1270 – "It's Just Too Hard": Is That an Excuse Not to Fulfill a Mitzvah? Good Shabbos!

After Leah had her fourth son (Yehudah), she said "...This time I will thank (o'deh) Hashem, therefore she called his name Yehudah. And she stopped having children." (Bereshis 29:35) The Perush haTur ha'Aruch al haTorah (not to be confused the shorter commentary by the same author known as the Baal HaTurim) says an amazing thing: Leah recognized

that she received her fair allotment of shvatim (tribes) and asked for nothing more, therefore she stopped giving birth. If a person does not ask for more, they will not get more.

I would have thought, on the contrary, someone receives, and then thanks, and should not be greedy by always asking for more. And yet, the Tur says that when a person thanks and does not include asking for more, then he does not deserve more.

The truth is that we see the same idea from the language used by the Rambam (Hilchos Brochos 10:26). The Rambam beautifully writes: "The general principle is that a person should always cry out for the future, asking for mercy, and giving thanks for the past." The Rambam is saying that when you express gratitude to Hashem, you not only need to give thanks for what you have already received, but you should simultaneously pray intensely for what will be coming your way in the future.

We see several examples of this in our siddur: In "Modim d'Rabanan" we say... "We gratefully thank You... who have given us life and sustained us. So may You continue to give us life and sustain us..." In the middle of Hallel, we say...

"Please Hashem, save us! Please Hashem bring us success!" What is the essence of Hallel? Thanksgiving! Why are we inserting a request for salvation and future success in the middle? We include in our thanksgiving a request for the future.

Likewise, when we recite the "Hadran" that we say when concluding a tractate of Talmud, we first say "Modim anachnu lach..." (We express gratitude before You...) and then we say "...k'shem she'azartani l'sayem Maseches X, ken te'azreinee..." (May it be Your will... that just as You have helped me complete Tractate X, so may You help me to begin and complete other tractates and books...)

We see a principle: When we thank Hashem, it is not sufficient to merely thank Him for what we have received, but we must ask for the future as well. What is the reason for this? At first glance, it seems counterintuitive. Our first thought might be that we should be thankful for what we received and not be greedy by asking for more.

I saw an interesting explanation in the sefer Abir Yakov. Let's say a person wins \$25,000,000 in a lottery. What is his reaction? "Wow! I am set for life! No more job. No more boss. No more anything. I have my 25 million bucks. I can do whatever I want!" A Jew must know that he is never "set for life." Every single day and every single moment our lives are dependent on the Almighty with whom our souls are deposited. Every single minute of life is a gift. There is no such thing in Judaism as "I have arrived. I am set for life." Therefore, when a person gives thanks for the past, he needs to bear in mind "Thank you Hashem for giving me this, but I recognize and am aware that I am not set, and unless You

continuously shower me with Your Blessings, I could be gone in a minute!”

As we have said many times, the Hebrew word “Ho’da’ah” has two meanings. It means to thank and it means to admit. When we thank we also admit, confessing that we are totally dependent on the ongoing assistance and support of “Yotzreinu, Yotzer Bereshis” (our Molder, the Molder of the Universe). That is what we learn from Leah, and that is what the Tur ha’Aruch says.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem

DavidATwersky@gmail.com

Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD

dhoffman@torah.org

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from: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net> date: Nov 23, 2023, 7:05 PM subject: Gratitude & Thanksgiving During Insane Times - New Essay by Rabbi YY Gratitude & Thanksgiving During Insane Times How Rachel Taught Her Child—and the World—the Secret to Happiness

These are challenging times for our people, and for all good people. For Jews, one of most powerful resources for millennia has been thanksgiving and gratitude. In our transition, we express gratitude hundreds of times a day, at every step of the road. Before I eat an apple, after I come out of the bathroom, when I open my eyes in the morning, and when I am about to retire. How do we cultivate this life-changing gift during times of visceral pain and distress?

What’s the Shame?

It is a perplexing response in this week’s Torah portion, Vayeitzei. Rachel, who has been childless for many years, gives birth. In the words of the Torah:

“And she conceived and bore a son, and she said, “God has taken away my shame.”

What type of shame was she referring to? What shame is there in infertility, which is not her fault? Sarah and Rebecca were also barren, but we never hear that they were ashamed. In the world of Torah, there is no room for shame for a condition you never caused. Pain, anguish, or jealousy are sentiments we can appreciate, but why shame?

Rashi presents the astounding and disturbing answer in the Midrash:

The Aggadah (Midrash Rabbah 73:5) explains it: As long as a woman has no child, she has no one to blame for her faults. As soon as she has a child, she blames him. “Who broke this dish? Your child!” “Who ate these figs? Your child!”

Rachel was previously ashamed because she had nobody to blame for any errors, oversights, or flaws. The food was burnt? Rachel must be a lousy cook. The keys to the car are lost?

Rachel is irresponsible. Rachel is in a bad mood? She is impulsive and irrational. A plate breaks? She is a shlimazal. The couch is dirty? She is a lazy couch potato. The home is unkempt? Rachel just can’t get it together.

Ah, but now, with the birth of Joseph, the shame is gone. The food burnt because the baby ran a fever, and she had to rush him to the doctor. The keys to the car lost? The baby got a hold of them and cast them in the dustbin. The plate broke? The baby dropped it. The couch is dirty? The baby decided to have his ice cream on the couch. The house is a mess? Of course, the baby is at fault.

So, if I am understanding this correctly, that is why Rachel who was childless for 7 years wanted a baby—not for the incredible experience of creating a life, not for the infinite joy of having a child, not for the happiness that comes with the singular mother-child relationship—all of this was not the motivating factor. Why did Rachel want a child? So that she has somebody to blame for getting the turkey and cranberry sauce all over the floor?!

Absurd or what? Our mother Rachel, barren and infertile, was yearning for a child—to the point of her telling Jacob: “If I don’t have children I am dead”—So that she blame all her mistakes on her child?

What is more, this seems so dishonest. If Rachel did not really make errors like breaking dishes and eating up figs, she would have not been ashamed to begin with. If she did, and she was constantly getting embarrassed, what exactly was her comfort now? That when she breaks a china plate she will lie and say that her child did it?

What is even more disturbing is that she names her baby “Yosef,” which means removed, to celebrate the fact that now her shame has been “removed” (asaf). You are giving your child whom you waited for so many years a name which represents your newfound ability now to blame him for your mistakes?!

How can we make sense of this perplexing Midrash?

Of course, we need to dig deeper to uncover the gems contained here. In essence, Rachel was teaching us one of the primary secrets to live a life of gratitude.

Rachel’s Magic

In all our lives there is a gap between what we have, and what we want. No one gets everything. And even when we are given blessings, the “package” comes with “fine print” you may have not realized in the beginning. Human nature is to focus on that which we are missing, while forgetting that which we have.



We take our blessings for granted and we obsess about the missing pieces.

Rachel knew about the human proclivity to focus on the negative instead of the positive, and that even after you experienced an extraordinary gift, after a while you take it for granted and begin kvetching about the imperfections. To counterbalance this human recipe for misery, she exclaimed, “G-d has removed my shame,” to remind herself of the idea that she must attribute the things going wrong to her child. When your child breaks the dish or eats the figs, remember that the only reason you have this problem is because you were blessed with a child. When your child breaks something or eats up the fresh food you made for the guests, attribute the problem to your child, to the miracle and blessing of having a child.

You can say: Oy, my child MADE A MESS. Or you can say: Thank G-d, MY CHILD made a mess. Same words, but with a different emphasis.

It is the Jewish custom that when a glass breaks, we shout: Mazal Tov! When the groom breaks the glass under the chuppah, we exclaim Mazal Tov! Why don’t we say: Oy, 10 dollars down the drain? This is Rachel’s gift: When the plate breaks, be grateful. It means you have a home; you own dishes. When your husband breaks something, say: Mazal Tov! Thank goodness, I married a human being, not an angel. To live means to become aware of the miracle of the breath I am emitting at this moment. Every breath is a Divine gift. I am alive, wow. I am grateful. I do not own life; I did not create life; I am privileged to be a channel for life, for the infinite source of life, at this moment—wow. And I have a child sitting near me—wow, I can now be a channel for love and light. Yes, life presents us with painful moments, and we can feel overwhelmed, scared, and sad. And at that very moment, I can talk to my mind and say: And now, I want to go into space of gratitude—of knowing that G-d creates me at this moment so I can be a channel for His infinite love, light, peace, and compassion, and to radiate that to all around me.

#### The Hunch of a Mother

With the hunch of a mother, Rachel decided to immortalize this message in the name of her child, Yosef, meaning “G-d removed my shame.” This became the secret of Joseph’s success.

Joseph endured enormous pain and suffering. His brothers despised him, they sold him into slavery, he was accused of promiscuity, and thrown into a dungeon for twelve years. And yet throughout his entire life, Joseph never lost his joy, grace, passion for life, love for people, ambition to succeed, and his ability to forgive. Joseph comes across as one of the most integrated, wholesome, cheerful, loveable persons in the entire Tanach. With a life story like his, we would expect him to be bitter, cynical, resentful, angry, stone-like, and harsh. “A rock

feels no pain and an island never cries,” yet Joseph weeps more than everyone in the Hebrew Bible.

How did he do this? This, perhaps, was his mother’s gift.

Though she died when he was nine years of age, she infused him with perspective on how to live: Every challenge can only exist because it has a blessing as its backdrop. I feel pain? But that means I am alive, and I have feelings. It also means that there is something new I must discover about myself and the world. I am hurt, but that means that I am sensitive, and I can be here for people. I have a disagreement with my spouse?

That means that I am blessed to have a soul partner who cares for me, and that we have an opportunity to create a deeper relationship. My children challenge me? That means I have children whom I love, and I am given an opportunity to dig deeper and find the light beyond the darkness.

#### The Backdrop of Pain

When your husband comes home late from work, instead of thinking: He is so irresponsible and unreliable, you can choose to say: Thank G-d I have a husband, who loves me and cares for me, and he has a job he loves, and works hard. (Sure, speak to him about coming home on time, but choose what you will focus on).

When your mother or father call you for help, instead of saying to yourself: Oy, my entire life must revolve around her needs, say instead: Thank G-d I have parents.

When you come into the office and you experience overload, with 90 emails to respond to, six different options for future growth, tell yourself: Thank G-d I have a job, I have six different options, I have so much to do, I am busy and productive, and I am driven.

When your wife rebukes you for your mistakes, instead of thinking, why do I need someone who criticized me? Say to yourself: I am so grateful to I have a wife who cares about me so deeply.

When your kids or grandkids make a “balagan” in your home and turn the place upside down, don’t zoom in exclusively on the mess; rather focus on the fact that you have children and grandchildren who are filled with good spirit.

When your car breaks down and you must get it towed, instead of cursing your lot, say to yourself: I own a car. That puts me in the one percent bracket superior to most humans on this planet.

#### An Appetite

Chassidim tell a story about the holy Reb Zusha of Anipoli.

When he was a child, he often went hungry. But he was always thankful. Once, when he was really hungry, someone overheard him talking to G-d. This is what he said: G-d, I want to thank you so much for giving me an appetite!

Even the hunger he experienced as something that can exist only in the context of a blessing. G-d gave me an appetite.

Gratitude Even As I Don't Get It



I do not comprehend the reason and purpose of so much of what is going on in our world; it is much larger than our brains. The pain we are all feeling is visceral and profound; it is the pain of peoplehood, of being part of a singular organism challenged to its core. How can I show up best in such a situation? How can I remain anchored in hope, faith, and courage? How can I, and each of us, become a beacon of light, love, and strength?

Rachel teaches us, by choosing to live in a space of gratitude, because that allows us to remain anchored in the source of all life, love, and strength, not get washed away by the tides of anger, frustration, and madness. My heart swells with gratitude to the majestic people of Israel, to my people, my brothers and sisters who are so holy and good; toward the loved ones in my life who are Divine gifts; to my inner soul which has so much light and love.

And, finally, gratitude for the privilege of being a conduit for Hashem's truth, strength, and clarity.

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from: **Rabbi Efrem Goldberg** <reg@brsonline.org> date:  
Nov 22, 2023, 8:55 PM subject: Davening For Soldiers. . . |  
DAVENING FOR SOLDIERS DOESN'T CONFLICT WITH  
FAITH IN HASHEM

BY RABBI EFREM GOLDBERG

For the last month and a half, nobody I know has slept through the night. Certainly, those in Israel, especially those married to soldiers, and those who are parents or siblings of soldiers are perpetually restless, on edge, anxious, and concerned. But in truth, all of us, the Jewish people around the world, can't rest comfortably, we can't settle into a deep sleep while our people are at war, while our family members, direct and extended, are on the front lines, risking their lives, fighting an evil enemy, laying it all on the line to protect the Jewish people and the Jewish homeland. We are comforted by the knowledge that our soldiers' faith, resolve, tenacity, determination, moral clarity, and sense of mission are unparalleled, but it is only natural to remain concerned and worried nonetheless.

These ordinary soldiers and reservists are in fact extraordinary and special people. They are motivated and inspired not by simple patriotism and nationalism, but by a deep sense of conviction that we are a people of an illustrious history and a distinct destiny. The IDF's soldiers are well-trained, well-armed, and well-informed. They are skilled professionals with a military superiority, but the images, videos and reports from the front lines tell of soldiers who know that the secret to their victory is not in their weapons or intelligence. In fact, it is not in their hands, but it is in their hearts, their souls, and pouring out of their mouths. The clips of IDF bombings and operations are powerful, but they pale in comparison to the power of the clips of soldiers putting on Tefillin, asking for tzitzis, praying, singing, dancing, and proclaiming al tirah Yisrael, don't be afraid Israel, ein lanu al mi l'hishaein elah al Avinu

She'bashamayim, we have nobody to lean on other than our Father in Heaven, anachnu ma'aminim b'nei ma'aminim, we are believers the children of believers.

Our soldiers know and feel that the wind at their backs, the spiritual iron dome over their heads, are the heartfelt prayers on their behalf being uttered nonstop by all of us, their brothers and sisters around the world who love them, cherish them, admire them, and feel boundless gratitude to them.

To deny the potency, power, and effectiveness of Torah and Tefilla as an indispensable part of any military victory is to deny a basic foundation of our faith. Ultimately, every area of our lives, certainly our national safety and well-being is dictated from Above and is in the hands of Hashem. There must be no doubt that our davening, our learning, our merits have meaning, they matter, they make a difference. Just as we know it is not the doctor nor the surgeon who heals, but it is Hashem. It is not the lawyer who makes the winning argument or the earthly judge who decides, but true justice is served by the Heavenly Judge. It is not the businessperson or entrepreneur who closes the deal, but it is the Senior Partner of every endeavor, Hashem. And it is not the soldier who wins the war, but the true General, the Master of all Legions, the Ribono Shel Olam. Living with Emunah and Bitachon, tenets of our faith, means recognizing and living this axiomatic truth, recognizing that we live in a matrix of illusion, while the reality of everything comes from Hashem.

Of course, simultaneously, it is also true that we don't passively wait to be healed, we don't sit on the couch waiting for money to fall from the sky, we search out the best doctor and we take initiative to earn an income. Excessive effort with no faith in Hashem is heresy, but claiming to rely on faith without making any legitimate effort is not genuine faith.

Chazal say harbei sheluchim l'Makom, Hashem has many agents and messengers. We must always remember that He is guiding their hand and outcome. But, while Hashem gives the talent and strength, the shliach, the agent still puts in the effort and energy to use it and is deserving of our most basic hakaras ha'tov, our gratitude and appreciation. During a loved one's surgery we daven and pour out our heart to Hashem. And when it is a success we thank Him, but we have never been concerned that showing appropriate appreciation to the doctor is a contradiction to knowing that Hashem is the one who guided his hand. Just the opposite, failing to recognize the doctor's critical role is its own denial of Hashem's hand. We daven that the lawyer find the right words and that the judge come to a favorable conclusion. But we have never felt finding the best representation or preparing diligently for a case somehow contradicts the reality and truth that Hashem is the real Judge whose opinion and conclusion is the one that truly matters. In every area of our lives, we seek to strike the balance between hishtadlus, our initiative and effort, with bitachon, trust and faith. We see them not as a contradiction or

source of confusion, but two complementary, critical elements of a Jew's life.

During this urgent time, with Am Yisroel at war, it is no different. The brave soldiers of the IDF represent our people's initiative, they are the shlichei Hashem fighting this milchemes mitzvah to defend the Jewish people. Remarkably, overwhelmingly, they practice their initiative powered by profound emunah and bitachon, both theirs and ours.

This combination, the relationship of initiative and faith, has always been evident in our attitude to war. Commenting on the words, **וְלִזְבוּלֹן אָמַר שְׁמַח זְבוּלֹן בְּצִאתָהּ וַיִּשָּׁשָׁךְ בְּאֶהְלֶיהָ: עֲמִים** [לִזְבוּלֹן אָמַר שְׁמַח זְבוּלֹן בְּצִאתָהּ וַיִּשָּׁשָׁךְ בְּאֶהְלֶיהָ: עֲמִים], "And of Zebulun he said: rejoice, O Zevulun, on your journeys, And Yissachar, in your tents, they invite their kin to the mountain, where they offer sacrifices of success," the Chassam Sofer (Toras Moshe) comments: It can be explained that we find that Shmuel and Shaul, when they went out to war, before going out, they would offer a sacrifice for protection... And when it says, 'Rejoice, Zevulun, in your going out to war, for Yissachar in your tents,' it means Zevulun's success at war will come in the merit of Yissachar's learning in the tents."

Soldiers who fight absent Am Yisroel davening and learning cannot be successful. But it is also true that Am Yisroel learning and davening without soldiers fighting and protecting them cannot survive. Yaakov Avinu prepared in three ways to defeat Esav, including diplomacy, preparing militarily, and davening. Dovid HaMelech, the very author of the Tehillim we passionately recite, also led an army with generals and soldiers, as did the Jewish Kings we find throughout Tanach.

The Chiddushei HaRim of Ger, Rav Yitzchak Meir Alter, points out that we are called Yehudim after Yehudah specifically because we as a nation are to be characterized by an ever-present sense of gratitude, by an appreciation first and foremost of Hashem, but also of His loyal agents and emissaries who carry out His will. There must be enough room in our hearts and on our lips to express gratitude to all. We must be grateful to those making spiritual contributions, to those storming the Heavens, and certainly to those making extreme sacrifices, our incredible soldiers who take the ultimate risks and an army who are moseir nefesh for our people.

Loving soldiers, davening for them, showing appreciating to them has always been the Torah way, it is the example our gedolim have set, and it is the responsibility we bear at this time, something that should be obvious and intuitive. In 2005, Rav Simcha HaKohen Kook and the Bostoner Rebbe of Yerushalayim made an urgent call to have every active soldier partnered in solidarity with someone davening for their safety. They launched the "Elef Lamateh, Elef Lamateh" campaign based on a Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah) that says for every thousand Jewish soldiers that went to fight, one thousand who

remained behind matched with them and davened and learned on their behalf.

In the introduction to the third volume of Tzitz Eliezer, Rav Waldenberg writes:

A shudder runs through my entire body when I think about that terrible period of the birth of the state... We the residents of Jerusalem in particular were cut off without any connection with the other cities and surrounded by enemies in the soul, who are passionate and busy as we were driven out to swallow us... There wasn't a neighborhood that wasn't hit and there wasn't a street where victims didn't fall... Glory and praise to our heroic soldiers who sacrificed their lives to fight like lions for the conquest of our holy land from foreigners and for the establishment of our state with the face of a lion, their face like deer on the mountains to hurry and with God's help were the messengers of the Supreme Providence to carry out This historic mission, God will remember those who fell in the fulfillment of their holy mission and will enshrine in memory the glory and eternity of those who are alive with us today.

Rav Shach, during a visit with soldiers to his home, expressed gratitude to them, emphasizing "that you are esteemed, important people and you provide excellent protection of the Land of Israel." He thanked them for their actions and acknowledged their contribution, stating that he stands before them in great appreciation.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz (1912-1979), the Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir once said: "The Gemara (Bava Basra 10b) says about those that gave their lives defending Lod, no creature can stand in their place. It is because they sacrificed their lives for Israel. I say the same about those who sacrifice themselves for our salvation. The entire world cannot stand in their place. The obligation upon us to pray for them is boundless because, as our Sages said, 'One who opens for his friend, his soul is obligated to him.' All the more so for one who sacrifices his life for us. The obligation upon us is boundless." Rav Yitzchak Brand described that during the Six Day War, he witnessed Rav Chaim Shmulevitz stand before each soldier he saw in appreciation for their mesirus nefesh to save the Jewish people. And Rav Yisroel Lau relates how no less a Gadol Hador than Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l, when asked about traveling to daven at Kivrei Tzadikim, would respond, "In order to pray at the graves of tzadikim, one doesn't have to travel up to the Galil. Whenever I feel the need to pray at the graves of tzadikim, I go to Mount Herzl, [the national cemetery for fallen IDF soliders in Jerusalem], to the graves of the soliders...who fell 'Al Kiddush Hashem' for the sanctification of G-d."

In 1980, at the 6th Knessiah Gedolah of Agudas Yisroel, a special Kayl Maleh was recited for Chayalei Tzahal, the soldiers of the IDF who gave their lives al Kiddush Hashem. It was said in the presence of Rav Shach, The Gerrer Rebbe, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky, Rav Ruderman,

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, the Slonimer Rebbe, the Modzitzer Rebbe, and the Biala Rebbe who all stood and honored the fallen soldiers.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein related that once when he returned to America and was visiting with his father-in-law, Rav Soloveitchik, he posed a series of questions from students who were serving in the IDF. One student worked in the tanks division and his job was cleaning out and maintaining the tanks. Often his uniform got covered in oil and grime and he wanted to know if he needed to change before davening Mincha, something that would be terribly inconvenient and difficult. The Rav looked at Rav Lichtenstein and wondered out loud, “Why would he need to change? He is wearing bigdei kodesh (holy clothing).”

Rav Yitzchak Yosef, the current Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, said, “One must express gratitude that we are here in Eretz Yisroel, that we can sit and fulfill mitzvos, each as they want. If we didn’t have security forces, if we didn’t have soldiers could we sit in quiet and study Torah, could we educate our children?! What was here before eighty years, there was nothing, Hashem helps through them, they are shlichim of Hashem and in their merit do we sit and fulfill mitzvos and study Torah. We must be grateful.”

During the Yom Kippur War, a soldier approached the holy rebbe, the Bais Yisroel of Ger z”l and shared that the soldiers are extremely cold during the night in the north. The Bais Yisroel wished him well and gave him a bracha that he should return whole. That Sukkos, the young Gerrer student appointed to help the Rebbe heard the Bais Yisroel knocking on the door to his own home, unable to get in. The “hoiz buchir” unlocked the door and the rebbe apologized to him and explained, “The key is metal and my hands are extremely cold. I tried lifting it but I just couldn’t.” The Sukkos weather was actually rather pleasant so the young man asked why the Rebbe’s hand was cold. The Rebbe explained, ever since the soldier told me it’s cold in the north and the soldiers are freezing, I have been feeling so cold.

When the First Lebanon War broke out, Rabbi Yisroel Zev Gustman declared that it was a milchemes mitzvah and later announced that since Jews were fighting on the front, every yeshiva student must sleep at night like soldiers, meaning a few hours and with shoes as if they were on the front lines, and not to waste even a minute.

Klal Yisroel has children literally putting their lives on the line every day to protect all of us. Their service involves sleepless nights, stormy weather, parents who don’t hear from their children for days, wives who have no idea if their husband will ever make it home, children who yearn for their fathers and live in constant fear, loss of life, severe injuries, and the strong risk of all of it. This is what faces our soldiers and their families daily and it is frightening.

If we want those whose service to the Klal right now is through learning Torah to understand the urgency of the moment and how essential their role is to Klal Yisrael’s protection, now is the time for yeshivas to consider a call for no more off shabbosim until the war is over. Maybe those who can should eliminate bein hasdorim, breaks during the day, and all should limit their breaks for coffee. Of course the yeshiva students are diligent and are no doubt having proper intentions in learning as a merit for the safety and security of the IDF and the people of Israel. But what are they doing, what are we doing, to really feel עמו אנכי בצרה, we feel the pain of our brothers?

Our soldiers and their families are being moseir nefesh for our cause, are we doing our part to leave our comfort zone, push ourselves, maximize our time and efforts to make our contribution? Our soldiers are living in unimaginably limited ways, are we minimally adopting limitations on our lives to at least be nosei b’ol, feel the plight and pain and discomfort of our brothers and sisters?

I was talking to a friend from our community this week and he mentioned in passing that he hasn’t had chocolate since the war started. Each time he has a craving and is tempted to indulge, he reminds himself of the conditions the soldiers are living in and decides he can forgo a pleasure as a small way of feeling their pain.

What adjustments are we making to our lives and routines to reflect that for so many of our people, nothing is normal? Will we really indulge in an elaborate vacation during Yeshiva Week this year while a war rages for our people, or will we mute our vacation and recreation as a way of demonstrating a connection with those who haven’t had a moment off since this began? Do our simchas reflect our condition or do they carry on as if no existential threat faces our people? Can we complain about petty discomforts or inconveniences while members of our family are sleeping on the floor, outdoors under trees, fighting not only our enemies, but the elements like bitter cold and rain?

Passing up on a piece of chocolate or forgoing an elaborate vacation or business as usual simcha may not directly eliminate Hamas, but it does connect us to our people, helps us resonate with their conditions, and powers us to pour it into heartfelt tefillos, and that makes all the difference in the world.

Nothing gets a parent’s attention or response more than children caring about one another and feeling each other’s pain.

The lives of our precious soldiers and of all our brothers and sisters in Israel has been interrupted and severely disrupted. Those contributing from within the walls of the Beis Medrash, and all of us wherever we are with whatever we have to offer, must push ourselves to the limit as well. We cannot carry on in ordinary ways during these extraordinary times.

from: OU Israel <tt@ouisrael.org> date: Nov 24, 2023,  
1:08 AM subject: Torah Tidbits - Parshat Vayeitzei - Issue  
1541

### **Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Zt"l**

#### **The Character of Yaakov**

What kind of man was Jacob? This is the question that cries out to us in episode after episode of his life. The first time we hear a description of him he is called *ish tam*: a simple, quiet, plain, straightforward man. But that is exactly what he seems not to be. We see him taking Esau's birthright in exchange for a bowl of soup. We see him taking Esau's blessing, in borrowed clothes, taking advantage of their father's blindness. These are troubling episodes. We can read them midrashically. The Midrash makes Jacob all-good and Esau all-bad. It rereads the biblical text to make it consistent with the highest standards of the moral life. There is much to be said for this approach.

Alternatively we could say that in these cases the end justifies the means. In the case of the birthright, Jacob might have been testing Esau to see if he really cared about it. Since he gave it away so readily, Jacob might be right in concluding that it should go to one who valued it. In the case of the blessing, Jacob was obeying his mother, who had received a Divine oracle saying that "the older shall serve the younger."

Yet the text remains disturbing. Isaac says to Esau, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." Esau says, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob [supplanter]? He has supplanted me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Such accusations are not levelled against any other biblical hero.

Nor does the story end there. In this week's parsha a similar deceit is practiced on him. After his wedding night, he discovers that he has married Leah, not, as he thought, his beloved Rachel. He complains to Laban:

"What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?"

Gen. 29:25 Laban replies: "It is not done in our place to give the younger before the firstborn."

Gen. 29:26 It's hard not to see this as precise measure-for-measure retribution. The younger Jacob pretended to be the older Esau. Now the elder Leah has been disguised as the younger Rachel. A fundamental principle of biblical morality is at work here: As you do, so shall be done to you.

Yet the web of deception continues. After Rachel has given birth to Joseph, Jacob wants to return home. He has been with Laban long enough. Laban urges him to stay and tells him to name his price. Jacob then embarks on an extraordinary course of action. He tells Laban he wants no wages at all. Let Laban remove every spotted or streaked lamb from the flock, and every streaked or spotted goat. Jacob will then keep, as his hire, any new born spotted or streaked animals.

It is an offer that speaks simultaneously to Laban's greed and his ignorance. He seems to be getting Jacob's labour for almost nothing. He is demanding no wages. And the chance of unspotted animals giving birth to spotted offspring seems remote.

Jacob knows better. In charge of the flocks, he goes through an elaborate procedure involving peeled branches of poplar, almond, and plane trees, which he places with their drinking water. The result is that they do in fact produce streaked and spotted offspring.

How this happened has intrigued not only the commentators (who mostly assume that it was a miracle, God's way of assuring Jacob's welfare) but also scientists. Some argue that Jacob must have had an understanding of genetics. Two unspotted sheep can produce spotted offspring. Jacob had doubtless noticed this in his many years of tending Laban's flocks.

Others have suggested that prenatal nutrition can have an epigenetic effect – that is, it can cause a certain gene to be expressed which might not have been otherwise. Had the peeled branches of poplar, almond, and plane trees been added to the water the sheep drank, they might have affected the Agouti gene that determines the colour of fur in sheep and mice.[1]

However it happened, the result was dramatic. Jacob became rich: In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys.

Gen. 30:43 Inevitably, Laban and his sons felt cheated. Jacob sensed their displeasure, and – having taken counsel with his wives and being advised to leave by God Himself – departs while Laban is away sheep-shearing. Laban eventually discovers that Jacob has left, and pursues him for seven days, catching up with him in the mountains of Gilead.

The text is fraught with accusation and counter-accusation. Laban and Jacob both feel cheated. They both believe that the flocks and herds are rightfully theirs. They both regard themselves as the victim of the other's deceitfulness. The end result is that Jacob finds himself forced to run away from Laban as he was earlier forced to run away from Esau, in both cases in fear of his life.

So the question returns. What kind of man was Jacob? He seems anything but an *ish tam*, a straightforward man. And surely this is not the way for a religious role model to behave – in such a way that first his father, then his brother, then his father-in-law, accuse him of deceit. What kind of story is the Torah telling us in the way it narrates the life of Jacob?

One way of approaching an answer is to look at a specific character – often a hare, or in African-American tradition, "Brer Rabbit" – in the folktales of oppressed people. Henry Louis Gates, the American literary critic, has argued that such figures represent "the creative way the slave community

responded to the oppressor's failure to address them as human beings created in the image of God." They have "a fragile body but a deceptively strong mind." Using their intelligence to outwit their stronger opponents, they are able to deconstruct and subvert, in small ways, the hierarchy of dominance favouring the rich and the strong. They represent the momentary freedom of the unfree, a protest against the random injustices of the world.[2]

That, it seems to me, is what Jacob represents in this, the early phase of his life. He enters the world as the younger of two twins. His brother is strong, ruddy, hairy, a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, whereas Jacob is quiet, a scholar. Then he must confront the fact that his father loves his brother more than him. Then he finds himself at the mercy of Laban, a possessive, exploitative, and deceptive figure who takes advantage of his vulnerability. Jacob is the man who – as almost all of us do at some time or other – finds that life is unfair.

What Jacob shows, by his sheer quick-wittedness, is that the strength of the strong can also be their weakness. So it is when Esau comes in exhausted from the hunt, famished, that he is willing to impulsively trade his birthright for some soup. So it is when the blind Isaac is prepared to bless the son who will bring him venison to eat. So it is when Laban hears the prospect of getting Jacob's labour for free. Every strength has its Achilles' heel, its weakness, and this can be used by the weak to gain victory over the strong.

Jacob represents the refusal of the weak to accept the hierarchy created by the strong. His acts are a form of defiance, an insistence on the dignity of the weak (vis-a-vis Esau), the less loved (by Isaac), and the refugee (in Laban's house). In this sense he is one element of what, historically, it has been like to be a Jew.

But the Jacob we see in these chapters is not the figure whom, ultimately, we are called on to emulate. We can see why. Jacob wins his battles with Esau and Laban but at the cost of eventually having to flee in fear of his life. Quick-wittedness is merely a temporary solution.

It is only later, after his wrestling match with the angel, that he receives a new name – that is, a new identity – as Israel, "because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." As Israel he is unafraid to contend with people face-to-face. He no longer needs to outwit them by clever but ultimately futile stratagems. His children will eventually become the people whose dignity lies in the unbreakable covenant they make with God.

Yet we can see something of Jacob's early life in one of the most remarkable features of Jewish history. For almost two thousand years Jews were looked down on as pariahs, yet they refused to internalise that image, just as Jacob refused to accept the hierarchies of power or affection that condemned him to be a mere second-best. Jews throughout history, like

Jacob, have relied not on physical strength or material wealth but on qualities of the mind.

In the end, though, Jacob must become Israel. For it is not the quick-witted victor but the hero of moral courage who stands tall in the eyes of humanity and God.

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from: TorahWeb [torahweb@torahweb.org](mailto:torahweb@torahweb.org) at: Nov 23, 2023, 7:05 PM subject: Rabbi Mayer Twersky: Rallying for Israel - The Halachic Perspective

**Rabbi Mayer Twersky**

Rallying for Israel - The Halachic Perspective[1]

Hashem runs the world.[2]

The Torah guarantees that whenever we repent and cry out wholeheartedly, He answers our prayers.[3]

These realities and fundamentals of faith notwithstanding, it is a sacred, categorical obligation that (in addition to prayer) we also vigorously defend ourselves by natural means.

Specifically, we are obligated to defend ourselves militarily and diplomatically.

This episode (of Ya'akov's encounter with Esau) . . . teaches us that he (the patriarch Ya'akov) did not (passively) rely on his righteousness; instead, he exerted himself to the maximum in pursuing all avenues of rescue. What transpired between Ya'akov and Esau foretells what will happen throughout history between us and the descendants of Esau; in its detailed account of Ya'akov's actions the Torah provides a blueprint for future generations. We ought to emulate our righteous forebearer and prepare ourselves for prayer, diplomacy (literally, sending gifts), and war, to escape and be rescued. Our Sages have already recognized this eternal lesson, as I shall subsequently mention. (Ramban, introduction to Bereishis, 32:4)[4]

Everyone recognizes that the support of the United States in Israel's defensive, existential war against Hamas is crucial.

America provides vital armaments and billions of dollars of financial aid; additionally, it serves as a bulwark against international pressure. Everyone also knows that it is imperative to demonstrate widespread support amongst the electorate for such support. Tuesday's rally did just that.

We are not more deserving or righteous than Ya'akov; we too must exert ourselves to the maximum in pursuing avenues of rescue. Indubitably, Tuesday's rally comprised one aspect of that effort.

Without unstinting American support, there is a very real danger that, ל"ר, the IDF will be constrained in a way that presently endangers our soldiers and, in the future, endangers the civilian population in the State of Israel. Rallying to sustain and expand such support was thus unquestionably also a fulfillment of (Vayikra 19:16), "לא תעמד על דם רעך" ("Do not stand idly while your friend's blood is spilled").

At the rally religious and not yet religious Jews stood side by side. Jews who believe and those who do not yet believe stood

shoulder to shoulder. The existential threat in 1967 similarly galvanized Jews from across the spectrum. (In fact, in 1967 all Yeshiva students participated in the rally.) Wonderful! If only all Jews already appreciated the gift of Torah and were believers and religious. Tragically, that is not yet the case. In the interim it is wonderful that myriads of Jews, to a degree, embraced their identity and shared destiny and overwhelmingly came to support the Jewish people, their people.

Of course, we can never act or speak in a way that legitimizes or validates inauthentic forms of Yahadus (Judaism), which is why in some other contexts inter-denominational activities are proscribed. Attending the political rally, however, simply expressed unwavering support for our brethren in the State of Israel in their battle for survival and security; it clearly did not affirm or validate anyone else's beliefs.

Attending the rally condemned Hamas' savage butchering, massacre, and mutilation of Jews (and some non-Jews) and called for their (Hamas') eradication; it obviously did not endorse any aspect of the program, the choice of speakers, their respective beliefs or lifestyles.

The prophetic verse (Zechariah 4:6), "לא בחיל ולא בכח כי" ("neither with army troops nor with strength rather with My spirit, said Hashem Tzevakos"), narrowly refers to the building of the second Temple. Even as a figure of speech it is irrelevant and inapplicable in the present context wherein our מסורה (tradition) demands that we exert ourselves to the maximum in pursuing all avenues of rescue.

May Hashem answer our prayer וכל הרשעה כרגע תאבד וכל אויבי (May all evil instantaneously perish and all Your nation's enemies be speedily excised) and may there be no need for any further rallies.

[1] An edited transcript of remarks delivered to students in Yeshiva University on November 16, 2023. A slightly expanded Hebrew version, קראו עצרה, is also available.

[2] אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל "הברואים והוא לבדו עשה ועושה ויעשה לכל המעשים"

[3] כי מי גוי גדול אשר לו אלהים קרבים אליו כיהוה אלהינו בכל קראנו "אליו" (דברים ד:ז). "אבל צבור כל זמן שעושים תשובה וצוועקין בלב שלם (הם נענין שנאמר כה' אלהינו בכל קראנו אליו) (רמב"ם הל' תשובה ב:ו)

[4] נכתבה הפרשה הזאת . . . ללמדנו עוד שהוא לא בטח בצדקתו והשתדל בהצלה בכל יכלתו. ויש בה עוד רמז לדורות כי כל אשר אירע לאבינו עם עשו אחיו יארע לנו תמיד עם בני עשו, וראוי לנו לאחז בדרכו של צדיק שנוזמן עצמו לשלש הדברים שהזמין הוא את עצמו, לתפלה ולדורון ולהצלה בדרך מלחמה, לברוח ולהנצל, וכבר ראו רבותינו הרמז הזה מן הפרשה הזאת כאשר אזכיר

See also ibid. 33:15:

Our sages discerned (in Ya'akov's response) (normative) counsel. They related that R. Yanai, before traveling to intercede with the (Roman) government, would study this section (of the Torah) . . . because our Sages had a tradition

that this section teaches the modus vivendi in exile. When R. Yanai would travel to the royal court in Rome, he would (first) study this section to follow the counsel of the sagacious elder, because all generations look to him to follow his example.

ורבותינו ראו עוד בזה עצה, אמרו (ב"ר עז טו) רבי ינאי כד הוה סליק למלכותא הוה מסתכל בהדא פרשתא וכו'. מפני שהיתה קבלה בידם שזו פרשת גלות. כשהיה בא ברומה בחצר מלכי אדום על עסקי הצבור היה מסתכל בפרשה זו ללכת אחרי עצת הזקן החכם, כי ממנו יראו הדורות וכן יעשו

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<https://dusiznies.blogspot.com/2023/11/must-listen-rabbi-wein-on-dc-rally-frum.html>

### Rabbi Berel Wein

Talmid: So a lot of the guys are talking about ... attending the rally, that said, I think (that people shouldn't go to the rally) because of the agenda of the people involved (in the rally)

Rabbi Wein: .....there were rallies for Soviet Jewry and ... the only reason that the Soviet Jews got out was because there were rallies... The agenda is that Jewish people in America are being persecuted.. .. The gemaarah says that when it is a milchemes mitzva even a Chassan at his Chuppah has to go, everybody goes ....you know if we don't win this there won't be any "sedarim" Talmid: Despite the fact there was a Reform Rabbi getting up (speaking) or .... Rabbi Wein: That battle is not with reform anymore, that battle is not with reform anymore, that battle is over ...your fighting the 18th century all over again.... it is obvious that reform is gone! hat difference does it make? American Jewry is gone and now "omdim aleinu" you won't be able to walk the streets in Chicago and New York... Talmid:I think they said that there were about 300,000 but I suppose it obviously could have been a lot more than that Rabbi Wein: It should have been more. A Mazel it was 300,000. ..You have 5 million Jews in America and you only had 300,000? That shows how weak we are! Part of it is that they are convinced that the goyim don't mean them, and they will manage to ride it out., that is very shortsighted. The lack of perspective of the past and of the future and all those guys weren't alive at the Holocaust, I was and they don't remember what it looked like in 1946 after the war when a Jew in America couldn't raise his head They don't remember What Eretz Yisrael did for us!

Talmid: If you don't learn history you are bound to repeat it? Rabbi Wein You don't have to repeat it, You just don't have a perspective of what is going on You do things that are counter productive to you and that's how we got into this mess today because Israel didn't ..... they knew there is no hope, they knew Oslo was wrong, but they like to kick the can down then road until you can't anymore ... The middas hadin was pogeiah. ... We are always worried that we have to "recognize them " we don't have to recognize them anymore its been 200 year gone already... Reb Yisrael Salanter said when reform started,

he said that the Chasam Sofer put them all in Chierim he said that if it was up to me I would have put a Bais Medrash in every reform temple. You are not allowed to talk to them.... so if you are not allowed to talk to then what do you expect from them? The only one who had anything to do with them was the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Talmid: In what way? Rabbi Wein: Chabad will go into a reform temple. If ..would go into a reform temple they would also have an influence. This war in Israel has made more Jews.... traditional.. I cannot measure tzidkis but the country became traditional ...there is Shabbos and Yom Tov and Kosher... 80% of Americans are eating Neiveilis and treifis and here everything is kosher and here is where its no good (sarcastically) because it's not MY kosher.?.I don't get it I just don't get it

My rabbaim were not like that. I remember my rebbe Rav Mendel Kaplan z"l who certainly was no Zionist so when Ben Gurion came to Chicago in the Stevens Hotel selling Israel Bonds [in 1951], he went down there to see it and the next day in the shiur he said "you know what I saw? I saw the Bnei Avraham give money " So I come from a different cheder. I cant relate to it.

.... Rabbi wein: ...Everything can happen that is what this war taught us, that everything can happen, they can burn your baby in front of your eyes, everything that is written in Parshas Nitzavim Happened We learn Chumash but we don't believe in it we don't think that the chumash actually meant it "veyisam meshugah me'mareh amecha" we don't believe it.