

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

והוא עבר לפניהם וישתחו ארצה שבע פעמים עד נשתו עד אחיו ... (לג-ג)

The *posuk* relates that *Yaakov Avinu* bowed to Esav seven times. His sons, the *shevatim*, also bowed and were looked upon by *Hashem* with dissatisfaction for this act. Yet, strangely enough, Yaakov himself was not criticized. The **Nefesh HaChaim** (*shaar 3:12*) states that by establishing and concentrating in one’s heart the principle of the supremacy of *Hashem*, that there is nothing in the world with any intrinsic significance except *Hashem* and His power, one can unshackle himself from any potential threat of danger. The power and strength of this protection is in correlation to the strength of one’s ability to focus on this thought. Thus, when *Yaakov Avinu* appeared to be bowing down to Esav, his true focus was “*Ein od Milvado*” - *Hashem* is the Supreme Ruler. Yaakov was in actuality “wrestling” with Esav and subduing him under his control with these thoughts. As **Rashi** states here: “*Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai declared, ‘Halacha B’yeduah, it is a fact that Esav hates Yaakov.’ However, at this moment his pity was aroused and he kissed Yaakov with all his heart.*” That was some control that Yaakov exercised!

A number of years ago, a shiny new car driven by an Arab youth pulled up at the Erez checkpoint on its way into the tightly controlled Gaza Strip. The soldiers on duty made their routine inspection to determine that it was not a stolen vehicle. The driver produced all the proper documents and the soldiers were about to let him drive away when they suddenly heard the commander calling out to them, ordering them to wait. Coming from behind the car, the commander approached the Arab and demanded to know where the vehicle was from and if it belonged to him. The youth insisted that it was, but he was warned by the commander that if he did not admit the truth, his punishment would be quite severe. After a few moments of haggling, his confidence was shattered and the Arab youth confessed that he had stolen the car in *Ma’aleh Adumim*.

The soldiers standing about were all amazed. “How did you know it wasn’t his?” they asked the commander. “What are you, some kind of prophet?” “I’m no prophet,” he replied, chuckling, “just look at the bumper sticker.”

On the back of the car, in big bold letters, were written three Hebrew words that explained everything: “אין עוד מלבדו”!

Another story in a similar vein occurred years later. An *avreich* who lives in a new neighborhood in the *Ramat Beit Shemesh* area told the following story: “There are many Arabs working near my home on the still uncompleted buildings around me. There are many thefts each week so residents are careful to not leave anything outside. But since there’s no elevator in my building, the residents of the top floors have no choice but to leave their strollers downstairs.

“One day, one of my neighbors from the sixth floor knocked on my door and asked to make an urgent phone call. He said he left his stroller at the entrance to the building and ten minutes later, he realized that he left his bag in the stroller. He had withdrawn money from the bank that day and inside the bag were his cell phone, cash, credit card, and important documents. He ran downstairs but not only was his bag missing, the stroller was missing as well. He didn’t know what to do.

“He used my phone to call his cell phone in the hope that someone would answer but it just rang and rang. He persisted and kept calling it over and over. Ten minutes later, a man who identified himself as a police officer called my phone and said: ‘Did you lose a stroller?’ Shortly later, the police officer appeared at his home with the stroller and bag in hand.

“The police officer explained: ‘I was driving near the exit to the city and I saw a group of Arab workers, including one hauling an expensive stroller. I stopped the Arab and asked him: ‘Where’s the stroller from?’ He responded: ‘I found it in the garbage.’ Of course, I suspected that he wasn’t telling the truth but I didn’t have any proof that he stole it so I couldn’t search him. Suddenly, the phone inside the bag he was holding began ringing to a song that only a Jew would play: ‘*Reb Yeshaya ben Reb Moshe, po’alt far Klal Yisroel.*’ The police officer immediately understood that an Arab worker wouldn’t have set his ringtone to ‘*Reb Yeshaya ben Reb Moshe*’ so he had his proof. He ordered the Arab to hand over the stroller and bag and immediately called back the last number on the phone!” (Excerpt from **Heroes of Courage** by **Rabbi D. Hoffman**)

מוחכם אהוד יעקב תכסף בושח
ונברת לעולם ... (עובדיה א-ג)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAPTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN תורת הצבי על הפטרות

Ovadia *HaNavi*, an Edomite convert, was given the divine task of prophecy regarding the downfall of his birth nation. *Ovadia* even explains that because of Esav’s (the ancestor of Edom) “*Outrage to your brother, Yaakov, disgrace shall engulf you, and you shall perish forever.*” But why indeed should Esav be destroyed completely for simply being angry at Yaakov?

R’ Yosef Patzanovsky ז”ל (Pardes Yosef) explains with a *marshal*. There was once a father who had two sons; a good son and a troublesome one. Every day the good son would report to his father on the good things he did as well as how his brother had hit him and tortured him. However, one day the troubled son came to his father and complained that his

brother, the good son, had hit him. Instead of taking his side, the father proceeded to lash out at his troubled son. The father explained to his bewildered family that the troubled son must have done something horrible to provoke the good son, otherwise he would not have lashed out.

Yaakov was an “איש תם” who had one goal in mind - to serve *Hashem* with all his heart. Esav hated Yaakov for taking the *berachos* that were slated for him, but for the righteous Yaakov to go to such lengths as to steal what wasn’t meant for him, he had to have been provoked - and not just this one time, rather over the course of his entire life. Therefore, Esav’s outrage at Yaakov was the last straw for him and *Hashem* decided to exact retribution for it all.

ויאמר לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל
כי שרית עם אלקים ועם אנשים ותוכל ... (לג-כב)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R’ CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT”L

מחשבת הלב

The **Ramban** writes 3 times that this week’s *parsha* is symbolic. He says it is “מעשה אבות סימן לבנים” and refers to it as the *parsha of galus*, teaching us how to deal with Esav’s descendants in future trying times. Additionally, he says, there lies herein a comforting lesson: *Hashem* will save us from our stronger and mightier enemies. As we say in *davening*: “וגאלו מיד חזק ממנו”. The way Yaakov dealt with Esav sets a precedent for us. *Chazal* teach us that Yaakov and his family armed themselves in preparation for battle, sent presents and *davened*. The *Medrash* tells us that *Amoraim* would study this *parsha* before embarking towards Rome, to Esav’s progeny. With this introduction, it would behoove us, as well, to take a lesson from the ‘*Parsha of Galus*’ as we, more than ever, feel so fragile. In the *parsha*, the *Torah* relates the encounter between Yaakov and the *Sar shel Esav*, a *malach*. It would seem that their fight had to precede Yaakov’s meeting with Esav. The question is why?

After Yaakov succeeded in “vanquishing” the *malach*, his name was changed to Yisroel. The *posuk* says the reason is on account “כי שרית עם אלקים ועם אנשים ותוכל”. **Rashi** tells us that “אנשים” refers to Lavan and Esav. But, if Esav had not yet arrived, how can the *posuk* say, “You defeated אנשים” - referring to Esav?

The **Brisker Rav ז”ל** explains that the main fight isn’t waged here on earth, but rather in heaven. If we are *zoche* to win “upstairs” with *siyata d’shmaya*, then no harm can befall us down here. Hence, Yaakov defeating the *Sar shel Esav* was foreshadowing his impending defeat of Esav, even though they hadn’t yet met. Therefore, the *Torah* aptly states “אנשים” including עש. This *machshava* should be a source of *chizuk* as we now face a cruel enemy. As we know, “השוכה תפילה ודוקה” עש. Our renewed *tefillos*, along with our improved *Torah* learning, increased *mitzvos* and tremendous *achdus*, must pierce the heavens. Remember! The war is being fought “upstairs” and we are on the front lines!

משל למה הדבר דומה

הצלני נא מיד אחי מיד עשו ... (לג-יב)

משל: R’ Mottel of Chernobyl ז”ל, was known for his extraordinary pious traits. In addition to his intense *avodas Hashem*, he was exceptionally kind and benevolent to everyone he encountered. Once, however, when a woman came to him pleading for a blessing to have a child, he not only refused to bless her, but to the amazement of all bystanders, he brusquely said to her, “I’m sorry but I cannot help you.” The woman left the room tearful and broken hearted. Noting the bewilderment of his *chassidim*, R’ Mottel told them, “Just wait a little and you’ll understand.”

A short while later R’ Mottel asked them to find the woman and bring her back. The *chassidim* did as they were told, and when the woman came back, R’ Mottel asked her, “What did you do when you left here?”

The woman replied, “I turned my eyes to the heaven and I said, ‘Almighty, the Rabbi refuses to help me. Now you are my only hope. I beg of you, please give me a child!’”

R’ Mottel turned to the *chassidim*, “This woman believed that I have magical powers, and placed her trust in me. When I refused her request, she returned her full and complete trust to where it belongs. Now she will be blessed with a child!”

נמשל: *Chazal* tell us that Yaakov prepared himself with three strategies to fight Esav: *Doron* (flattery), *Milchamah* (war), and *Tefillah* (prayer). However, *Yaakov Avinu* needed no strategy other than *tefillah*. He simply drew close to *Hashem*. For our sake, though, he prepared to encounter Esav, in order to demonstrate for future generations the pathways of *milchamah* and *doron*. Nowadays, when so many of our brethren live without *Torah* and *mitzvos*, we must know, these are the only choices we have.

וישלה יעקב מלאכים לפניו אל עשו
אחיו ארצה שקייר שדה אדום (לג-ד)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

Parshas Vayishlach is the *parsha* that teaches us how to handle ourselves when we have to deal with gentiles. The **Maharal** writes that one should say the words of *Parshas Vayishlach* when meeting with a *goy*. It is a *shemira*. Whenever **Rabbeinu HaKadosh** would meet the Roman Caesar, he would say this *parsha*. One time he was in the midst of meeting with the Caesar and realized that he did not say the *parsha*. He asked if he may be excused and hurried home to properly say the *parsha*, when a group of bandits attacked him. He attributed this incident to the fact that he did not say *Parshas Vayishlach* before he left.

The **Ramban** writes that this *parsha* was written to teach us that *Hashem* saved Yaakov from a hand that was stronger than his. Additionally, we learn that whatever happened to our father Yaakov with Esav, will happen to us and it is incumbent upon us to follow our father Yaakov who prepared himself in three ways. They are *Tefillah*, prayer, *Doron*, giving gifts and *Milchamah*, war tactics. These three activities are actually the three necessary steps for a person to become complete. These are the things we must do to achieve *shleimus*, perfection in ourselves, so that we can fulfill our true mission which is to be a light unto the nations. It is not always what one does, but rather who one is that has the greatest influence on others.

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

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