

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 134

Vayishlach | Approach success with Humility



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Vayishlach

True Humility

At the age of seventeen, Rabbi Shalom from Belz arrived in Lublin to study under the great righteous sage and miracle worker, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak, known as "the 'Chozeh'" (the seer) of Lublin, where he spent the next fifteen years, eagerly absorbing every word of his teachings.

Our story takes place following the first Shabbat Rabbi Shalom spent under the wing of the "Chozeh":¹

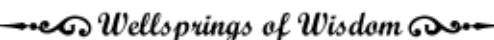
In those days, merely mentioning the name 'Lublin', filled every Jewish heart with a longing for spirituality. The best Jewish minds, those with pure souls, inflamed with the fire of holiness, gathered in Lublin. There, they learned from each other the ways of life, purity, and piety, all while warming themselves by

the fire of faith, truth, and fear of G-d of their great teacher. Assisting one another, their souls united in the aspiration for spiritual ascent, and they progressed higher and higher in the service of the Creator.

Some, while unable to withstand such intensity, had their souls, too, filled with spiritual light. Being close to a righteous person, one is cleansed, each by the extent they are able to reach.

Among those who were not content with mediocrity but wished to ascend yet higher and higher spiritual worlds, was Rabbi Shalom from Belz. Having left his home, he had traveled to Lublin to bask in the light of the Divine Presence.

It was Saturday night. A large number of Chassidim crowded around the table, trying to catch



1. As brought in 'KeMalach Hanitzav' by Rabbi Eichler, p. 93

every word uttered by the 'Chozeh'. The young Rabbi Shalom didn't even think of sitting at the table—occupied by the older, more important people who sat there. Instead, he crawled and sat under the table with the children to have a glimpse of the holy face of the 'Chozeh'. Finding a spot from where he could see the Rabbi, he prepared to listen.

Midway through the meal, the 'Chozeh' lifted the tablecloth, looked under the table, and said, "Shalomke, my dear. Just as you now sit cramped under my table, in the future, thousands of Hasidim will sit cramped around your own table. Now, come and sit with us! 'Although you are small in your own eyes, you are the head of the tribes of Israel!'"

As soon as young Rabbi Shalom was seated among the important Chassidim and great righteous individuals, a glass of wine was presented to him. Rabbi Shalom was perplexed; he had long ago committed to not smoke or drink any form of alcohol.

He had decided to quit smoking

after the following incident: once, during his studies, he saw his friend preparing a pipe for smoking at length. During that time, Rabbi Shalom had already memorized an entire page of Talmud. He then thought, if the time of the preparation of the pipe allows one to learn a page, how much more can they learn by not smoking at all?

Ever since then, the pipe never came close to his lips.

He was now offered a glass of wine was from the table of the great and righteous sage. How could he refuse in front of everyone?

What to do? Rabbi Shalom decided that he would "not notice" this glass.

Everything went on as usual. The 'Chozeh' spoke lofty words, lifting those present to unprecedented heights. Between one talk and another, the Chassidim sang, pouring out their souls in longing before their Creator.

When the righteous sage looked at Rabbi Shalom, he noticed that he hadn't drunk. Ashamed, Rabbi Shalom blushed. Raising his

eyes to the sky, he prayed to the Creator to send him some way out of this awkward situation. Suddenly, the glass cracked, and its contents spilled onto the tablecloth.

However, Rabbi Shalom wasn't off the hook. Looking at Rabbi Shalom, the 'Chozeh' asked for another glass to be poured.

But this glass also wondrously cracked, and was no longer fit for use.

Turning to Rabbi Shalom, the 'Chozeh' said, "Young man, did you come here to ruin my glasses?"

Then Rabbi Shalom had to speak up and said, "I don't drink wine..." which the 'Chozeh' accepted silently, with understanding.

The next morning, during the morning prayers of Shabbat, the Chassidim were once again astonished. The 'Chozeh' who had always been chosen to recite the sixth reading of the Torah in the synagogue on Shabbat, now gave this honor to Rabbi Shalom, explaining, "This young man will be a leader to tens of

thousands of Jews in the future.

He is deserving of a blessing."

Several days passed. One morning, Rabbi Shalom noticed that the Chassidim were walking around amazed. "What happened? Why is all the excitement about?"

Rabbi Shalom asked.

The Chassidim answered, "Today the 'Chozeh', came out of his room, and said that a young man had recently arrived, who is as modest as Moses!"

They were all curious about the identity of this young man, whereupon Rabbi Shalom, without blinking an eye, said, "The 'Chozeh' is referring to me!"

The reaction of the Chassidim was utter shock. In the sudden silence, one could hear the breathing of those present. Almost all the disciples present were among the most outstanding Chassidim in Poland, individuals who spent many years in service of the Creator in prayer, Torah study, fulfilling commandments with complete dedication, and self-improvement.

No one dared to think that they surpassed their comrades, and here came a young man, a recent arrival in Lublin, and yet was confident that when the 'Chozeh' compared the modesty of one of his disciples to that of Moses, he was referring specifically to him. And despite all this humility, he publicly declared it!

In our time, he surely would have been expelled from the Beit Midrash, explaining, however, those were different times...

One of the choice disciples approached Rabbi Shalom and said, "Let's assume that the 'Chozeh' actually meant you.

But if you're as modest as you say, how can you talk about it?
Can that be called modesty?"

Rabbi Shalom responded, "In our holy Torah, it is written, 'Moses was very humble, more than any man on the face of the earth.'

Was this not written as well by Moses himself? The humblest man on earth wrote this about himself! If you understand this, you will also understand how I was able I said that the 'Chozeh' meant me...²

To try to understand about the unique humility that Rabbi Shalom of Belz referred to, let us start from the beginning...

Wellsprings of Wisdom

2. The great Halachic Authority Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, was blessed with many long years of life. He lived for ninety-one years in this world, serving the Creator and teaching the Torah to the people of Israel (5655-5746; 1895-1986). He served as the Rabbi of the city of Luban in Belarus until 5697 (- 1937). Seeing that, despite all efforts, it was difficult to raise children devoted to the Torah under communist rule, he was forced to leave the community and move to the United States. There, he led the yeshiva "Tiferet Yerushalayim" in New York, gaining worldwide recognition

as one of the outstanding Halachic authorities of the last generations. Many of his students also became heads of yeshivas and Halachic authorities.

Rabbi Moshe was also known for his great humility.

Once a person sitting in a car parked below Rabbi Moshe's apartment called out to his son playing nearby, "Moishe, Moishe, come here!" Rabbi Moshe Feinstein stuck his head out of the window of his apartment, asking, "Yes, did you call me, how can I help?"

Parshat Vayishlach - True Humility

- and the man almost had a heart attack.

Similarly, the following tale was shared by his grandson ('Hemdat Shlomo', part 2, page 31):

At the end of his life, when Rabbi Moshe Feinstein lay in the hospital suffering from severe pain, doctors prohibited from anyone, including close relatives, to enter his room to avoid disturbing him. Any unnecessary exertion on his part was forbidden too.

One day, when he felt slightly better, and a few family members were allowed to enter for a few minutes. But upon entering, they saw the Rabbi with a concerned look and a furrowed brow. The monitor showed that he was in severe pain and he looked deeply troubled. Suddenly, he began to cry, saying that this suffering did not demonstrate the love of the Creator, since these sufferings distracted him from studying the Torah

(See Tractate Berakhot 5a).

Suddenly, he started whispering the names of the many years that had past: 5735, 5734, 5733, and so on.

The doctor who entered the room, looked at the monitor and sent everyone outside, saying that the Rabbi's heartbeat was irregular, and any exertion was dangerous for him.

Some time passed, and Rabbi Moshe felt a little better. One day, his grandson couldn't resist and asked his grandfather about the list of years that Rabbi Moshe whispered while suffering from pain.

Rabbi Moshe was surprised...

"Did I express my thoughts aloud? Well, if so, let me tell you.

The sufferings that overwhelmed me were not the sufferings showing the love of the Creator. I tried with all my might to focus on studying the Torah, but I couldn't. So, I tried to understand what I may have committed that such sufferings were sent to me. Obviously, I sinned sometime, and now I was receiving punishment for it.

Therefore, I decided to review all my actions to find where I had erred and needed to repent. I began to scroll back through the years in my memory, reviewing all my actions in the last ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty years. When I went back in my memory to sixty years ago, I remembered the sin I committed at that time, and now I understand why I'm suffering so much.

It was when I studied under Rabbi Pesach Pruskin Zt"l. Once, during a lesson, the head of the yeshiva asked a very difficult question. The entire yeshiva was buzzing like a beehive: the students debated with each other, raising possible answers and refuting them. After about half an hour, everyone fell silent. No one could find the answer...

Suddenly, I felt an illumination insight in my head. Everything fell into place. Standing up, I gave the answer to the question.

The head of the yeshiva, hearing my answer, said, 'Indeed, that's it. That's the right answer!' Everyone looked at me

Why Mix in ?

The Creator fashioned our world in seven days. On each

day, a new element was added to the creation. In total, 22 types

Wellsprings of Wisdom

with admiration. A sense of satisfaction filled me. I was still very young then.

My heart swelled with pride.

More than sixty years have passed since that time. Yet because of that pride I had in my heart then, I now suffer pain in my heart..."The Al-mighty waited a long time for me to repent, but I had forgotten everything that had transpired then.

(Note the greatness of our righteous sages. Rabbi Moshe remembered all his actions 60 years back, yet found nothing that needed correction, except for that incident in the yeshiva...)

At the very same time Rabbi Feinstein, however, knew of his own greatness, as illustrated in the following story ('Orchot Mussar' p. 326).

Once, during hospitalization, doctors decided to implant a pacemaker in Rabbi Moshe. Rabbi Moshe asked them to wait. He needed to think.

In the end, he agreed.

One of his closest students asked, "Rabbi, why did you ask them to wait ?"

Rabbi Moshe explained, "When Moshiach comes, he will want to reestablish the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Rabbinical Court of 71 sages) and will be looking for suitable candidates for the

position of judges. Certainly, he will choose me to be one of the members of the Sanhedrin. So, I needed to determine if this would be considered a blemish. (Members of Sanhedrin must be unblemished, Tractate Sanhedrin 36b).

After I concluded that the installation of a pacemaker is not a blemish, I agreed...

These two stories illustrate the ability to have these two traits of humility while knowing one's worth, at one and the same time.

One more anecdote that highlights this contrast was shared by Rabbi Kook ('Bahalu Neiro' page 226):

After the "Steipler" (Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, father of Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky) passed away, the head of the "Maor HaTalmud" yeshiva recounted that he had the privilege of being with the Steipler often. Many times when people came to ask for his blessing, he would retort, "What do they want from me ? I am just an old man !"...

However, before his death, he turned to the Creator in prayer: "Al-mighty ! The great Rabbi from Brisk is no more, the Chazon Ish is no more, only I am left in this generation, therefore, I ask You, send me healing for the sake of the generation !"

of various creations were brought into existence.

The Midrash states:

"Parallel to the twenty-two letters of the Torah, 22 types of creations were formed in the world over the seven days of Creation: on the first day, seven kinds were created—sky, earth, water, darkness, wind, abyss, and light. On the second day, only the firmament was created. On the third day, four—all the water was gathered in one place, fresh water emerged from the earth, annual plants and trees. On the fourth day, three—the sun, moon, and stars. On the fifth day, three—creeping creatures, birds, and large sea creatures. On the sixth day, four—wild animals, domestic animals, insects, and humans."

One who looks at our world with an unbiased eye, with all its beauty and complexity, exotic creatures and majestic landscapes, the laws of gravity and molecular biology, fragrant flowers and juicy fruits, crystal-clear springs and fresh forests, cannot help but see the great wisdom of the

Creator behind it all. "Lift up your eyes on high to the heavens and see who created these ?"

The sages in later generations categorized everything in our material world into four main categories (from bottom upward): inanimate objects, the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, and the "speaking" (human) category. In the animal kingdom which was created on the sixth day of Creation, various animals existed: lions, cows, bears, deer, and many others. Against the backdrop of all this, one animal stood out: the serpent.

Without a doubt, it had all the qualifications to earn the title "King of the beasts": it was intelligent, cunning, bold, and walked on two hind legs. As stated: "The serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the L-rd G-d had made."

The power, abilities, and might it received went to its head, and it fell into the trap of overestimating its greatness. However, this wasn't entirely unfounded, as indeed there were no other animals like it.

A most important thing one should know is how to relate to their successes. The serpent did not know this, puffing up its chest, it imagined itself to be smarter than everyone else, even more intelligent than the Creator Himself. And from here, the road to its complete downfall was short.

Turning to Eve, it said, "In my opinion, there's no difference between you and the Creator. Well, maybe in one thing: He can create 'something out of nothing,' but you can't... However, I found out the secret of His power! He tasted from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and learned how it's done, so He forbids it to you! And if you taste it too, you can be on the same level as Him!"

As Rashi comments on the verse "But the L-rd knows that on the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like G-d, knowing good and evil."

"Every craftsman despises their colleagues: After tasting the fruit of the tree He created the world."

With its poisonous words, the serpent managed to persuade Adam and Eve to taste from the tree of knowledge, leading to the punishment for all involved: Adam, Eve, the serpent, and the entire Earth.

This leads us to ask:

Even if the serpent had extraordinary abilities, why did he mix in to the business of Adam and Eve, especially since it was unsolicited?

Did the serpent forget that it was just an animal - albeit more advanced than others? With all its greatness, there's a huge qualitative difference between it and a human!

2088 years passed...

Isaac and Rebecca, waited, praying for offspring for twenty years.

Everything is Fine

One beautiful day, the agonizing wait came to an end:

Rebecca discovered that she was expecting. However, the more time

passed, the more her perplexity intensified. Every time she walked past the synagogue or house of learning, she felt contractions. But also when she passed by idol worship, the contractions recurred.

What's happening? What kind of strange child, with a split personality, is growing in her womb? There were no ultrasounds back then, but there were prophets. Seeking advice from Shem, she received the following prophecy:

"Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body."

Hearing this, Rebecca was reassured: "Raising two different children is something else... It will be easier with the righteous one, and with the wicked, I already have experience in dealing with them."

Closing her eyes, Rebecca travelled back into the not-so-distant past...

Rose Among the Thorns

Let's not dwell on the description of the ways of Haran and its inhabitants, let's only add a few pertinent details. In the holy book of the Zohar, it is written that the name Haran comes from the expression "Charon af" (the anger of the Creator), as the inhabitants of this place were very sinful. Among the most important persons in the city were Bethuel and his son Laban, who were universally recognized authorities, showing others the "path to a gloomy future."

It was in such a place, that Rebecca grew up. Seeing all the evil around her, she, like Abraham her great uncle in his time, managed to understand what is good and what is bad, learned to go against the current, ignoring mockery, and created an inner strength capable of recognizing any evil and resisting it.

These memories that Rebecca had recalled, gave her the conviction that even with a child born with a propensity for evil, she could, with G-d's help, cope.

Illuminated Home

In the year 2108 to creation of the world, Isaac and Rebecca had twin boys, Jacob and Esau. In a house filled with holiness, they took their first steps. The entire atmosphere of the house, the air, conversations—everything was permeated with one common purpose: to fulfill the will of the Creator.

Jacob and Esau, together

with their mother's milk, absorbed the understanding that a person has a purpose in life. Together they studied Torah, together they performed commandments.

This all, until Esau turned thirteen, and discovered his personal destiny.

This will better be understood by way of introduction:

Two Types of Souls

The people of Israel are categorized in several ways, into twelve tribes, each tribe with their own purpose, each tribe and its path.

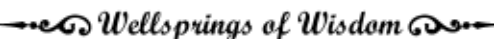
As well as divided into seven as recorded by Zechariah:

The period of the prophets spans several centuries, with the prophets - Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi – completing the exalted period of divine revelation.

In the seventieth year to the destruction of the First Temple, Zechariah saw a vision that he shared:

"I saw, and behold, a golden menorah, all of it complete, with a bowl on its top, and its seven lamps on it... two olive trees above it, one on the right side of the bowl and one on its left" (Zechariah 4:2-3).

In Yalkut Shimoni,³ is explained: 'a golden menorah' - this is the assembly of Israel.



Parshat Vayishlach - Two Types of Souls

All souls (the assembly) of Israel are one existence from the souls of the great righteous to the lowly souls - all are one golden menorah!

Therefore, the Torah commands us, to fulfill the mitzvah of loving a fellow Jew, and it is indeed possible to reach this love, just as the body of a person loves all its parts...

However, despite this unity each individual has their specific service to G-d, to illuminate their own soul and part in the world (each person and his mission: one is responsible for illuminating their family, and one is responsible for illuminating their neighborhood, etc.)...

This is what is referred to later in the vision: 'And the Menorah's seven lamps' - these are the seven categories in the service of G-d, seven types of service (

And divided even more narrowly, the souls can be divided into two main branches, as the Ba'al HaTanya writes⁴:

"It can be explained what the Arizal writes, that there are two types of souls in Israel:

1. Souls of the Torah scholars (baalei Torah), who are constantly engaged in Torah.

2. Souls of those who perform commandments, engage in charity, and do good deeds (baalei mitzvot)."

The souls whose purpose is to engage in Torah must dedicate their primary time to this, devoting their body and soul to this goal. Naturally, they must also engage in charity and good deeds.

The souls whose purpose is to earn a living and allocate part of their income to charity and good deeds should know that their purpose in the world is to support the spiritual world with their money. At the same time, they are also obligated to dedicate time to the study of Torah.

And now, let's return to Esau.

Esau — A Man Of The Field

For thirteen years, Jacob and Esau studied Torah. When Esau turned 13, he realized that he belonged to those souls whose purpose is to work and use their earned money to support Torah. Therefore, leaving the study house, he went to work in the field.

As Rabbi Freund writes in ‘Alufei Yehuda’:⁵

"**And** the boys grew up, and Esau became a man skilled in hunting, a man of the field, and Jacob was a simple man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because of the game in his mouth."

It is necessary to understand why Isaac loved Esau more than

Jacob when, seemingly, Jacob's level was higher, as he was constantly engaged in Torah study in the Beit Midrash.

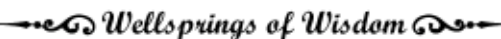
Possibly, the explanation is this: Esau, engaging in worldly matters that distracted him from serving the Creator, could reach a higher level by intending to fulfill the Creator's will in all his worldly actions even more than Jacob, who, sitting in the Beit Midrash, hardly faced various challenges.

Isaac knew that by engaging in material matters, one could elevate them to a spiritual level if done for heavenly purposes, and therefore greatly appreciated Esau.

Uncovering Light

Esau began on the right foot. He turned his mind and heart towards the Creator, performing

all his actions for heavenly purposes, which drew down a high spiritual light upon him.⁶



5. P. 102

6. Rabbi Moshe from Sambur earned a living from selling merchandise. He didn't have a store, so he would travel from village to village offering his goods...

Once, during one of his encounters with his brother, the great Rabbi Zvi Hirsch from Zidichov, he turned to him and asked:

"**My** brother, Rabbi Zvi, you know that I am involved in worldly matters, for my

Parshat Vayishlach - Uncovering Light

Maimonides writes: A person should direct all his actions in a way that leads him only to the knowledge of the Creator. When he sits, stands, speaks, let it all be with this intention. For example, when buying or selling or working in anticipation of a salary, his intention should not be merely to make a profit, to acquire things necessary for the body, such as food, drink, a home, and the ability to marry. Rather it should

be with the intention to serve G-d in all one's ways.

One who follows this path serves the Creator throughout his life, even when engaged in trade.

And even when he sleeps, if he goes to sleep with the intention of being healthy, to serve the Creator, his sleep becomes a service to the Creator. As our sages have said: "Let all your thoughts be for the sake of heaven..."⁷

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

livelihood I sell goods in villages. So how is it that when I pray Mincha (the afternoon prayer), my soul is ignited with wondrous inspiration and vitality? Where does this spiritual energy come from?

Rabbi Zvi answered him: "Why are you surprised, my brother? You always go with holy and pure thoughts, and then all the souls and sparks of holiness that exist in the inanimate, vegetative, living, and speaking beings cling to you.

And when you engage in commerce with faith, according to the boundaries of the Halacha, additional holiness and purity accrue to you. Therefore, when you stand to pray, sparks ignite within you like a blazing fire, and that is the illumination you have!"

7. One of the hidden righteous individuals in the past generation was Rabbi Yosef Dayan. During his lifetime, few people knew of his greatness, and he became known only after his passing.

One of those fortunate enough to know him during his lifetime recounted: "Once, I entered his house and saw him preparing to hammer a nail into the wall, yet his face illuminated with an intense light, and he said the intention: 'For the sake of the unification of the Holy Blessed One and His Divine Presence.'"

He knew how in every action and movement to unify the lower world with the upper.

Greatness Complex

Undoubtedly, Esau had all the qualities to become one of the greatest righteous individuals. He had developed intellect, ambition, and lofty aspirations. He possessed immense strength too. But instead, this power got to his head.

One of the essential things one should know is how to relate to their successes. Esau did not know or want to know this. And from here, the road to a complete downfall was short. Esau started neglecting everything, even the Creator Himself.

As written in 'Biur Tanya':⁸

"A person's reaction to the good that the Almighty bestows upon him should be such that he becomes even more humble before the Creator, in proportion to the amount of good bestowed upon him.

The problem is that human nature is the opposite: when things go well for a person, he

not only feels better but also considers himself more important and better. Often, when a person becomes wealthier than others, he imagines himself to be smarter and more G-d-fearing than others, even though this is not necessarily connected to reality.

The inner explanation for this is that the essence of good is expansion. The one who receives some good becomes greater because of it, leading him to believe that he is indeed greater. This was Esau's mistake. Receiving the Al-mighty's blessings, he developed a complex of greatness, leading him to disdain others.

As the verse states explicitly: "and Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he ate and drank and arose and went his way; thus Esau despised the birthright." Rashi explains: "the Torah testifies to Esau's wickedness, that he scorned the service of the Omnipresent G-d."

What to Cling to

Esau was then 15 years old. Beforehand, he had managed to withstand the forces of evil, but he now fell into their trap. The forces of evil were jubilant. Half of Isaac's descendants were already in their hands.

At this time, all the forces of evil honed in on Jacob. However, since Jacob was fully immersed in Torah, they couldn't succeed. Constantly studying Torah from childhood, the Torah purified him so much that the forces of evil simply had nothing to cling on to.

World of Understanding

Sixty-three years of Torah labor for its own sake. And then, suddenly, without prior preparation, Rebecca calls Jacob, dresses him in Esau's charming clothes, prepares a dish of goat meat, and sends him to Isaac, his father, to receive the blessings...

Jacob entered the sacred chamber of his father Isaac and there, he received the holy blessings from Isaac.

The great sage Rabbi Yitzhak Eizik of Kamarna writes that when Jacob received the blessings from his father Isaac, he attained a new level; he ascended to the world of understanding, to

the source of joy and happiness...

After sixty-three consecutive years of toil and the arrival of the Torah, Jacob gained entry to the world of understanding !

And after attaining the pleasant freedom of understanding, he spent fourteen years in the study hall of Shem and Eber, learning Torah with vibrant vitality, with a heart burning with love for Torah, and the Divine Presence dwelled upon him. From the greatness of the light, his countenance shone like a flaming torch. From the greatness of the light and holiness, and the flaming fire surrounding him, he did not rise to his bed to sleep for 5,110 days !

Parshat Vayishlach - Charan - the city of Ghosts

At the age of 63, Jacob received the blessings, and in Esau's vengeful heart, the flame of revenge was kindled, but he feared that if he informed Isaac that he killed Jacob, Isaac would reprimand him,

and his strictness might lead to punishment and the loss of everything he had. Instead he decided to wait until "the days of mourning for my father come, then I will kill Jacob, my brother" (Genesis 27:41).

Charan - the city of Ghosts

Fourteen years of study in the study hall of Shem and Eber passed in tremendous dedication, and Jacob understood that now G-d's will be that he goes out into this world to establish a home and bring holy children into the world.

Jacob set out and went to Haran, and on his way, he reached Beit El, where he dreamed the dream of the ladder, had a prophetic vision, as it is written: "And he called the place Beit El, but the name of the city was Luz at first" (Genesis 28:19).

The divine revelation ended, and Jacob continued on his way to Charan...

As he walked and approached, the green landscape turned gray...

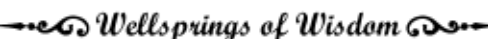
on the sides of the path leading to the city, thorny bushes grew, and scattered stones hindered the smooth walk...

On the side of the road stood a dust-covered pillar, and on it hung a signpost, 'To Charan, straight ahead'...

Jacob entered Charan, and the people were astonished: 'Has a guest arrived, behold, no one dares to come to the city of Laban'!

Thus is written in the Holy Zohar:⁹ 'Laban the Aramean, his name spread throughout the world, no one dared to escape from him.'

The whole world knew that Laban was great in wisdom, magic, and sorcery, and anyone who wanted to escape him with



Parshat Vayishlach - Jacob's Attempt

his magic could not escape him'.

Jacob, our patriarch, stayed in Laban's house for twenty years. And about all the events, sufferings, and persecutions he experienced there, we learned in the previous Torah portion.

Finally, after twenty years of dwelling among lions and facing daily confrontations against Laban's wicked schemes and deceptive ways, the time of redemption arrived...

Suddenly, without prior preparation, G-d revealed Himself to him: "And the L-rd said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your fathers and to your birthplace, and I will be with you'" (Genesis 31:3)!

Jacob, at the age of ninety-seven, organized his family, took all his belongings, and set out on the road...

And the voice was heard in

'Seir,' Jacob is on his way to the land of Israel... "And Esau's anger was kindled," and quickly, he entered his neighborhood and blew a long whistle. From all sides, his cronies gathered and surrounded him: 'Esau, what's going on'?

And the crimson face of the wicked Esau reddened even more with anger, and from his nostrils, smoke rose: 'Remember that I told you about my brother Jacob, the one who stole my birthright and took away my blessings, well, now he is on his way to the land of Israel.'

And they armed themselves with all kinds of weapons, and went on their way...

Parenthetically, the emotion of revenge brings a person down to the lowest level. Indeed, Isaac, his father, was still alive, and he knew that by killing Jacob, he would risk Isaac's reprimand, yet he could not withstand himself.

Jacob's Attempt

Our Torah portion opens with Jacob's attempt to reconcile

with Esau, and it begins as follows: "And Jacob sent

Parshat Vayishlach - Jacob's Prayer

messengers ahead of him to Esau his brother to the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, 'Thus you shall speak to my L-rd Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now'" (Genesis 32:4-5).

Jacob sent messengers to Esau, and in their mouths, he delivered the message: Esau, you are angry with me because I took the blessings from you. You think that by taking the blessings, I received new abundance,

blessings, and influences that I was not supposed to receive.

So, know this: these blessings have not yet been fulfilled in me, and they will only be fulfilled in the future. And since they have not yet been fulfilled in me, you have no reason to be angry with me because we are equal. You also received blessings suitable for you, and they will only be fulfilled in the future.

So, I have not caused you any harm, and if you still feel hurt by me, I apologize, do not be angry...

Jacob's Prayer

Jacob sends messengers to Esau, informing him of his arrival. However, they return with unsettling news: "Esau, at the head of a band of four hundred men, is coming to meet you." Understanding Esau's intentions, Jacob prepares for the encounter by turning to the Creator in prayer, preparing a gift, and, just in case, readying for war.

Let's turn to Jacob's prayer:

"and Jacob said: 'almighty g-d of my father Abraham and g-d of my father Isaac, the L-rd who

said to me: return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you ! I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which you have shown your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children."

Jacob said, 'Master of the world! I know that I am

Parshat Vayishlach - Jacob's Prayer

unworthy of all the goodness
You have done to me! I went to
Haran with nothing, and now I
return with children and wealth.'

'I am small in comparison to all
the kindness and all the truth that
You have done with Your servant.'

'I know that I have not
acquired all this good with my

own hands but received it from
You! There is no merit of
mine here; You have done it
all !'¹⁰

Therefore, I ask You, save
me from the hand of Esau (and his
ideology), who thinks that he has
achieved everything with his
own hands."

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

10. The Prophet Isaiah prophesied and
said: "For all our works You have done
for us" (Isaiah 26:12) - 'All our deeds are
done solely through the Creator's
power, yet by His grace, He considers
our commandments as if they were
from our own strength and actions'...

Regarding this, the following story is
shared:

The Gaon Rabbi Asher Freund, sought
throughout his life to draw closer to the
Almighty and sense His reality. In the
beginning of his path, he searched for
servants of the L-rd willing to serve the
Almighty for the sake of Heaven, to be
wholly devoted to Him.

In his quest, he succeeded in connecting
with many good people. Yet, Rabbi
Asher's spirit remained unquenched, a
fiery passion burning within him,
seeking its unique path...

Throughout the years, he succeeded in
forming his unique approach. He was
greatly disappointed by the level of

devotion of many individuals within our
community. He argued that people serve
themselves rather than the Master of the
Universe. There's an expression used
about someone who prays well, 'He has
sweetness and pleasantness in prayer.' At
first glance, this seems like a compliment.
But Rabbi Asher, with his penetrating
gaze that reached the depths of the soul,
removed the mask and revealed the truth:
'One has a taste in eating, and one has a
taste in prayer.' Meaning, you are seeking
yourself and your pleasure in the matter.
The moment you lack taste in prayer -
you won't pray well.

Consistently, Rabbi Asher paved his
path, seeing in the Almighty the vision
of all, granting everything and returning
the person to their natural dimensions.

It is written: "His kindness endures all day
long" (Psalms 52:3) - the kindness of G-d
accompanies a person all day. Whatever a
person does is not from themselves. Even
if they perform commandments or study
Torah, it's not their doing; rather, the

To Who to be Thankful

In a letter sent by the "Baal HaTanya" to his students,¹¹ he wrote:

"The more [You bestow upon me] and [the more] You reveal the truth, the more insignificant I feel in my own eyes" [— said Jacob to the Almighty when he learned that Esau was coming to meet him].

A person who has been granted the mercy of the Almighty must keenly feel his own insignificance... The closer he is to the Almighty, the more exalted he becomes, the more insignificant he must appear in his own eyes, as it is written: "He reveals Himself to me when I [feel] distant from Him." As

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

Almighty in His abundant mercy credits them and provides freely to perform the action. All your actions come from Him.

These matters are explicitly explained in the Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah Parshah 27:2):

"Who preceded Me, that I should repay?" (Job 41:3) - Who acted before I gave him a soul? Who spoke My name before I gave him a male child? Who made for Me an altar before I gave him a roof? Who made a mezuzah before I gave him a house? Who made a sukkah before I gave him a place? Who made a lulav before I gave him a palm? Who made tzitzit before I gave him a garment? Who separated tithes before I gave him a field? Who separated dough before I gave him dough? Who separated a portion before I gave him an animal?

Meaning, the ability to fulfill a commandment, all the conditions given

to you, you didn't have them by yourself; rather, He, may He be blessed, gave them to you.

Thus, you cannot boast about a commandment you've performed, for it isn't yours. Or if you overcome a trial, you immediately understand that the L-rd helped and empowered you. So why boast about victory and triumph?

Contrarily, if you fail, do not blame the Creator for tripping you. This failure comes to illustrate your true reality. You are not righteous; rather, the Almighty consistently has mercy on you and prevents you from sin. And this is proof that this time you failed because He did not assist you. The moment His help was absent, your failure was revealed within you...

11. Iggeret Hakodesh epistle 2

Parshat Vayishlach - To Who to be Thankful

known, "everything turns into nothingness when approaching Him." From this, it follows that as one approaches Him, a person feels increasingly small, ultimately turning into nothing.

This is the characteristic reaction to the mercy of the Almighty when His kindness, whose symbol is the right hand, is manifested. Abraham, who said, "I am dust and ashes," perceived [the mercy of the Creator] in the same way. Jacob also perceived [the mercy of the Creator], justifying his fear of Esau with an awareness of his own insignificance, not relying on the promise of the Almighty: "I am with you; I will keep you wherever you go." Jacob underestimated himself, considering himself unworthy of the mercies already bestowed upon him by the Almighty, and said himself: "I crossed the Jordan with only a staff, and now I have two camps."

Ishmael however, had a completely different understanding of the mercy of the Almighty.

The more merciful the Almighty was to him, the more pride, arrogance, impudence, and self-satisfaction he harbors.

In the book "Biur HaTanya," it is explained as follows:

Regarding success, there can be two different reactions, revealing the internal essence of a person. If, after success in the spiritual or material realm, a person considers himself greater and more perfect, it is a sign of klipah 'husks' of unholiness. However, if, after success, a person feels smaller and more dependent on G-d, it is a sign of holiness.

Let's clarify a bit:

When a person assumes that if he has received something, he deserves even more, that is chesed d'klipah (good belonging to the unholy shells).

Jacob, receiving blessings, said, "I have everything" - the Almighty has endowed me with everything I need.

Esau, on the other hand, says, "I have plenty" - technically, he

Parshat Vayishlach - Inadequately Grateful

has, but he desires much more.

It is still the same good that is bestowed upon the person. However, it becomes chesed d'klipah for the recipient. A person receiving good can use it for spiritual advancement, but he can also become proud, considering himself a VIP. Sometimes, a person's charity is done just to publicize his name.

It turns out that not only difficult times are a trial for a person, but also times of success and abundance. A person who receives good and doesn't thank the Creator, and doesn't feel

small and dependent, turns that good into chesed d'klipah.

However, a person who withstands the trial, understanding that all good and all success were given by the Creator, is filled with joy: I am not entitled to anything, but the Creator, in His great mercy, decided to give me... How much the Creator loves me, cares for me...

This is the essence of true humility: knowing their true level, a person is not proud but understands and acknowledges that all good (whether it's knowledge, wisdom, physical strength, or wealth) is a gift from the Creator.

Inadequately Grateful

In "Chelev Haaretz" on the Shulchan Aruch is written as follows:

When a person feels his own insignificance, he acquires humility, through which he attains constant joy. After all, if he lowers himself, knowing his lowly position, then he automatically fills with gratitude to the Creator for any achievement and success, material

or spiritual, giving Him credit, as it is said: "remember the L-rd your G-d, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth." Such a person knows how to appreciate every breath, thanking the Creator for it. He thanks the Creator for being a Jew, possessing a divine soul.

Also, in the struggle against negative tendencies, a person does not attribute success to

Parshat Vayishlach - Inadequately Grateful

himself but to the Creator because without His help, overcoming the negative would be impossible. Such joy is an aspect of humility before the Almighty and gratitude for all His infinite goodness. Such a person comes to realize the greatness of the Creator and then to a sense of constant joy...

This is the difference between the two approaches: one believes that he deserves

nothing, so everything he receives brings him joy, and for every little thing, he thanks the Creator.

The other, thinking that he deserves everything, cannot rejoice even when receiving much, because he believes he deserves much more...

Happy is the one who, in every success, is privileged to see the hand of the Creator !

Shabbat Shalom !



Summary and Practical Conclusions

A. Many trials pass over a person. Almost all trials arise during times of distress and suffering. However, sometimes trials come from prosperity and grace. This occurs when a person succeeds in his endeavors, and success brings honor and greatness. At that point, a trial of pride and arrogance arises, G-d forbid, until he forgets the Creator.

B. There are two possible reactions to a person's success, both of which reveal his personality. If, following success, whether material or spiritual, a person becomes greater, more complete, and better - in his own eyes, this indicates that all belongs to the shells. However, if, following success, a person feels smaller and more lacking - this is a sign of holiness.

C. Before the creation of souls, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, observed all generations and assigned each soul its unique mission and destiny in the rectification of the world. A task that only it, and no other, could

perform. According to its mission, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, arranged its life, family, surroundings, and granted it the necessary strengths, abilities, and tools needed for fulfilling its mission.

After the soul received its mission and the strengths to carry it out, it descended into the world and executed its task. When it succeeds, this success engenders a sense of self-satisfaction. However, the person must understand that all his successes are given to him as a gift from the Holy One, Blessed Be He. This knowledge should cause the person to feel small and humble in his own eyes. This is the essence of the concept of humility: recognizing one's levels and virtues while attributing greatness to his Master (the Holy One, Blessed Be He).

D. A person who merits reaching this level is full with feelings of joy and gratitude within him. This understanding fills his heart with happiness: The Holy One, Blessed Be He, is so great, without end or

limit to His greatness. Yet He agreed, and not only agreed but chose me to serve Him, to fulfill His commandments. How much does the Holy One love us! Like water reflects a face to a face, this awakens in our hearts a love for Him.

E. Through this feeling of 'Katonti,' a person is born with profound humility. From the power of this attribute, constant joy will emerge. When a person minimizes himself, recognizing his worthlessness, his heart is filled with gratitude and internal acknowledgment to the blessed G-d for every achievement and success he attains, both in material and spiritual aspects. He attributes the greatness to his Master, following the verse: "For it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth." Additionally, he continually expresses gratitude for every breath, acknowledging that he is a Jew in whom a divine portion resides.

F. Similarly, in the constant battle with the evil inclination, all his successes are attributed to the blessed G-d. Without the

assistance of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, he would not prevail. This joy is akin to humility, expressing gratitude to the blessed G-d, for He is always good. This joy leads the soul to a state of constant joy derived from contemplation and deepening one's understanding of the greatness of the blessed G-d. From this, the soul reaches the joy of fulfilling commandments continually.

G. This is the fundamental concept that every Jew should internalize. When one senses that he deserves nothing, his heart is filled with feelings of gratitude and constant acknowledgment to the blessed G-d for every breath and every success, whether in material or spiritual matters. The recognition that he is a Jew in whom a divine portion genuinely resides and that every achievement and success is a gift from G-d is the foundation for the elevation of the soul and the avoidance of constant stumbling.

H. Fortunate is the Jew who continually experiences this profound connection to G-d!

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Shabbat Times Vayishlach

19th of Kislev, 5784



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New York	4:11 pm	5:14 pm	5:41 pm
Miami	5:11 pm	6:06 pm	6:41 pm
Los Angeles	4:26 pm	5:24 pm	5:56 pm
Montreal	3:55 pm	5:01 pm	5:24 pm
Toronto	4:24 pm	5:29 pm	5:54 pm
London	3:37 pm	4:52 pm	5:06 pm
Jerusalem	4:20 pm	5:10 pm	5:42 pm
Tel Aviv	4:16 pm	5:06 pm	5:37 pm
Haifa	4:13 pm	5:03 pm	5:34 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:17 pm	5:07 pm	5:39 pm

Pathways to the Heart

*From the Words of
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l*

Always remember what our sages say 'do not look at the pitcher, but what is inside of it'. Therefore, do not belittle any Jew, since you may not know how great his qualities are.

One may seem outwardly very lowly, but inside contain great treasures of wisdom, faith, purity, and good character traits. One should thus be careful to respect and cherish every Jew.



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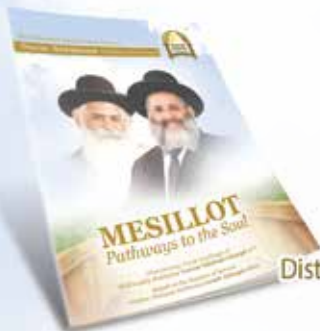
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