

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 189

Vayishlach | A Healthy Relationship - The Source of Blessings

MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Vayishlach

Heartbreaking Letters

The door opened, and Binyamin entered. "Rabbi, 70 letters arrived today." He handed them to me, and I began to read.

In the first letter, a difficult and tumultuous life story unfolded about a couple who can't stop arguing for even one moment. In the second letter, the writer requests assistance in choosing a lawyer to obtain alimony. And so, letter after letter, and the vast majority dealt with issues of marital harmony.

The last letter I read came from a man who said that after his divorce, they divided the children between them, and the children in his custody fell into severe and terrible emotional problems, causing them societal issues and other problems that he couldn't deal with anymore.

"Binyamin. What kind of letters have you brought me? I can't read them anymore."

"Rabbi. I'm just the mailman; I bring what they send."

The Rabbi continued, "Problems in marital harmony are a symptom of pride and coarseness of spirit. A couple often reveals that they are filled and saturated with gross and inflated 'air'."

"Rabbi," said Binyamin, "surely that's true. But they don't seem to be the ones to blame. They simply don't know how to deal with their pride."

With pride of such magnitude, they are flawed every moment of their life, and with such pride, it's easy to speak slander, to disgrace others, to follow the desires of the heart, and to be at peace with the bad and coarse traits of the heart. How then, Rabbi, does one deal with this malevolent and destructive pride?"

"One must pray to G-d, beg and cry: 'Please, G-d, You know

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that I am filled with pride of terrible magnitude, pride that causes me to quarrel and distress my spouse. Master of the Universe, You know that when one studies Torah with such a measure of pride, one discovers in their Torah study the 'opposite of life' reserved for those who are utterly unworthy.'

'Master of the Universe, have mercy on me; for what benefit is it to You that yet another Jew wanders for thousands of years in worlds of chaos?'

'Please, merciful Father, grant me, in my lifetime, true marital harmony, and to truly purify myself from my hideous trait of pride.'

The Rabbi turned to Binyamin, and said with heartache "I can't read even one more letter. My heart is torn with sorrow and feelings of compassion."¹

Instead the Rabbi and Binyamin opened the Torah book that lay before them and began to learn, discussing the points which we shall share below.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

1. A short time after the passing of my father, Rabbi Yoram Michael Abergel, of saintly memory, a number of yeshiva students once gathered together, and each shared how they had merited to have come close to the Rabbi.

One of the students recounted:

From the very first day I had the privilege to see and hear Rabbi Yoram, I felt an indescribable love for him. At the time, I was not yet married, and I would regularly attend the Rabbi's weekly classes on Mondays in Ashdod. I was so pleased after each lesson I heard, that I longed to move to Netivot to study in the Rabbi's kollel and merit to see and hear him daily.

One week I approached Rabbi Yoram and expressed this heartfelt desire of mine, but

to my great disappointment, Rabbi Yoram told me that the time had not yet come and that I must first get married.

After about two years, thank G-d, I got married, and initially, I lived in Jerusalem.

Once again, I went to Rabbi Yoram to ask if I could receive his blessing to move to Netivot and study in his kollel.

I waited patiently in line, and when I finally reached the Rabbi, even before I could open my mouth to speak, he said to me: "The time has not yet come."

I was astonished at how Rabbi Yoram knew exactly what I was going to ask him, especially since the last time I had asked was two years prior. I left the Rabbi feeling dejected once more.

Parshat Vayishlach - Eyal's Hurdle

Eyal's Hurdle

Shai entered the dormitory hallway and began to walk down the corridor. After a short distance, he reached his room, knocked lightly on the door and entered.

On one of the chairs sat Eyal, his roommate, staring into space.

Shai called out, breaking the silence, "Hello Eyal, what's up?"

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

Due to the great appreciation that I had for Rabbi Yoram and my desire to be in his presence, I had no patience to wait too long, and barely three months later, I returned to Netivot to ask him again the same question.

When my turn came, I kissed the Rabbi's hand, and before I could utter a word, the Rabbi held my hand and seemed to doze off for a minute - which felt like eternity to me.

Suddenly, he opened his eyes and said: "The time has come for you to join us, you are an excellent student. Welcome," and he directed me to arrange the registration for the kollel at the yeshiva's office. My joy knew no bounds, I was absolutely thrilled.

By G-d's grace, we moved to Netivot, and I began studying in the Rabbi's kollel. I was very happy with the move, but for my wife, the move from Jerusalem to Netivot was quite drastic and difficult. During the initial period after our move, the issue frequently arose, leading to arguments and unpleasantness between us.

One Friday, it escalated significantly, and unfortunately, we entered Shabbat amid a quarrel. Friday night after prayers, I passed by Rabbi Yoram, as did all the other congregants, to wish him "Shabbat Shalom".

While Rabbi Yoram greeted each person warmly, offering kind words and sending them off joyful and invigorated, when I approached, he moved me along without a word or the slightest smile.

It was clear to me that this was due to my dispute with my wife.

I returned home, and the Shabbat meal was somber, the quarrel remained unresolved.

Shabbat morning after prayers, I again passed by the Rabbi, and once more, he greeted everyone warmly except me; he moved me along without a single word, his expression even more serious than the night before. Again, I felt in my heart that this was because I was still in a quarrel with my wife.

On Shabbat afternoon, my wife and I sat down to discuss everything, and thank G-d, we resolved our issues, and peace returned between us.

Afterwards, I went to pray Mincha with the Rabbi, and this time, when I passed by him after the prayer, Rabbi Yoram warmly clasped my hand, smiled at me and gestured with his head, as if to say, "It was about time..."

Parshat Vayishlach - Eyal's Hurdle

No response came from Eyal. Shai turned again to Eyal and asked: "Everything ok, Eyal?"

A slight muscle twitched on Eyal's face, and after a moment, his gaze steadied. "Shai, how are you? I'm fine. I've just been daydreaming a bit. When did you get here?"

"Dreaming?" Shai wondered aloud. "At two in the afternoon? About what?"

Eyal shared what had been occupying his mind:

"Last week we were released from yeshiva to visit our homes for Shabbat, and my sister brought home a mystery novel from the local library. I couldn't resist the temptation and spent a few hours reading it.

Eyal continued, "the book's main character is endowed with a commanding presence and charisma and with impressive physical and mental capacity. With his unique qualities, he overcame many obstacles and reached great heights and achievements."

"The novel left a strong impression on me, and since

then," he continued, "a feeling of deep admiration for the protagonist was imprinted in my heart, and I often sit and think about him."

Shai looked confused, "I don't understand, is this a real person?"

"No. This character is a creature of the author's imagination."

"So whom exactly do you admire? The author's imaginary character?"

"You know," said Eyal, "now that you ask, I think the reason I became attached to this imaginary character is because he represents, in my eyes, the ideal individual, endowed with qualities that bring a person fame and renown. When I contemplate the ideals and mannerisms of this character, I feel that something within me comes to life."

Shai looked at Eyal with a perplexed gaze.

Eyal sought sympathy "Don't you agree with me, Shai?" he asked.

Shai replied, "I'll gladly explain what I think about what you said, first, let me begin with a question."

The Virtue of Family

In a talk delivered by Rabbi Yoram Abargel, he said the following:²

When Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and went to Haran, he stopped at Bethel, "and he lodged there because the sun had set" (Genesis 28:11). That night, he merited a holy and awe-inspiring dream that the Torah recorded:

"And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set upon the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it" (ibid., verse 12). In this event, our forefather Yaakov merited to see the ministering angels, "the angels of G-d," ascending and descending on the ladder.

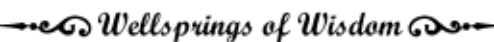
However, despite the immense virtue in this, the Torah emphasizes that all these visions were only a dream.

In contrast, twenty years later, when Yaakov left Laban's house

with his family and went to the Land of the Jewish people, on his way, he once again saw ministering angels, "the angels of G-d," but this time he met them in the physical sense, as the verse states: "And Yaakov went on his way, and the angels of G-d met him. Yaakov said when he saw them: This is G-d's camp; and he called the name of that place Mahanaim" (ibid., 32:2-3).

The Torah emphasizes that these visions were in actual reality, face-to-face.

Another difference between the two incidents: The first time, when our forefather Yaakov saw the angels in a night's dream, he needed G-d to guard him from them so that they wouldn't harm him, as it is said: "And behold, G-d stood above him" (ibid., 28:13). Rashi explains that G-d stood over Yaakov to guard him from the angels so that they wouldn't harm him out of jealousy.³



2. Imrei Noam, Vayetze - Discourse 5.

3. As explained in Siftei Chachamim on the verse.

In contrast, when he left Laban's house and met the angels face to face, he did not need any protection from them; they had no power to harm him.

Moreover, not only was Yaakov not afraid of them, but his stature had ascended so greatly that he was granted permission to make use of the angels as he wished.

Yaakov, called them and said: "Angels, please perform the following mission for me:

I have 580 animals - cows, sheep, camels and more - that I wish to send to my brother Esav to appease him. Dear angels, leave your celestial roles in heaven, and please put on the clothes of shepherds, and take these animals to Esav."

Rashi explains (Genesis 32:4): "And Yaakov sent angels ahead of him to Esav his brother" - actual angels.

We must understand:

What change occurred in our forefather Yaakov between the dream of the ladder - when he was worthy to see angels only in a dream and needed G-d to guard him from them - and when he left Laban's house? Did his status and spiritual state change so drastically and was he at such a high level that he could actually meet the angels and use them for his errands?

We would understand this better in light of the teachings of our Sages (Yevamot 63a), who say that an unmarried person lacks the honorary title of "Man", since the verse states "Male and female He created them, and He blessed them, and called their name 'Adam' (Man)." (Genesis 5:2) - implying that only when both of them are together they are called "Adam," but as long as they are unmarried, they are not bestowed the title of "Man".

In the words of the Zohar:⁴

"Anyone who is not in the state of male and female - that is, who is not married - is called only 'half a

Parshat Vayishlach - The Virtue of Family

body' and not a whole body, and the blessing does not rest on something defective and lacking but rather only in a place of wholeness, and a half thing does not endure and is not blessed forever."

At the time of the dream of the ladder, our forefather Yaakov had not yet merited to marry and establish a family, and his spiritual level was therefore lacking. He was then not yet worthy to see the angels in reality but only in a dream, and even required protection from them.

In contrast, when he left Laban's house, our forefather Yaakov had already merited to marry and bring into the world the souls of the Tribes, from whom the Jewish people would soon emerge. Therefore, his spiritual level at that time was elevated many times more than it had been beforehand,

and was now worthy of seeing the angels in reality and didn't need any protection from them.⁵

This teaches us the immenseness of the family framework. A single person, no matter how holy, is still lacking completeness, protection, blessing, and divine assistance, while a person who merits to marry and bring children into the world is truly complete, and is considered a "vessel that holds blessing."

The family framework grants a person wondrous protection, and a person too must invest great efforts to maintain his family framework and ensure it is maintained and does not collapse, G-d forbid; one is obligated to do everything in his power to protect their marital harmony.⁶

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

5. In the words of the Zohar (Vayetze 149b):
"And he dreamed' - did the holy Yaakov, the most complete of the patriarchs, receive revelations only in a dream; In this sacred place, did he see visions only in a dream ?

Rather, Yaakov at that time was not yet married.

But after he came to the Holy Land with the tribes, and the matriarch of the home was 'the joyful mother of children,' it is written: 'And G-d appeared to Yaakov' (Genesis 35:9), and it is written: 'And G-d said to Israel in visions of the night' (Genesis 46:2)."

6. Rabbi Yaakov Katina, of blessed memory, recounted (Korban HaAni, Parshat Vayetze):

Parshat Vayishlach - A Spouse is the Ultimate Assistant

Let us consider these words of Rabbi Yoram. One may think differently, that our forefather Yaakov, merited wonderful revelations not in merit of his being married, but because he

toiled over many years in Torah, holiness, and self-sacrifice.

But how can we measure up to that? Is marital harmony alone the lesson we must learn from our forefather Yaakov?

A Spouse is the Ultimate Assistant

We quote the following from the Talmud (Yevamot 62b): "Rabbi Tanchum said in the name of Rabbi

Chanilai:⁷ Whoever lacks a wife, lives without joy, without blessing, and without goodness."⁸ It then

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibuz, of blessed memory, said that after his wedding, they brought him into a private room with his bride, as is the Jewish custom.

He suddenly began to weep, and cried out "how can I possibly have a love to anything at all other than the Creator, blessed be His Name," and overcome with emotion, he fell faint to the ground.

His holy grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, appeared to him and said: "My son, do not fear. After all, even our forefather Abraham, and Moses the prophet married, and the world must follow its natural course."

If Abraham our forefather and Moses our teacher married, surely they loved their wives with profound, genuine love, as commanded by the holy Torah (Yevamot 62b): a person should love his wife as himself and honor her more than himself.

7. The Talmud adds that the sages of the West (of the Land of Israel) said, "One who dwells without a wife dwells without Torah."

The Kabbalist Rabbi Sasson Mizrahi, once explained:

One who sits and studies Torah but achieves little success in his studies, may not be at fault at all; his lack of understanding may be due to the lack of the enlightening air of the Land of Israel. How would he know that it is because he lacks a wife that his understanding of Torah is hindered.

Therefore, specifically the sages of the West, of the Holy Land, who breathe the enlightening air of the Land of Israel, can assert: "One who dwells without a wife will never truly acquire Torah" (MiBeit Tzion, p. 109).

8. Our sages enumerate at length the shortcomings of a person who has not married: "He dwells without joy, without

Parshat Vayishlach - A Spouse is the Ultimate Assistant

follows that one who is married merits joy, blessing, and goodness.⁹

In a talk delivered by Rabbi Azriel Tauber, he said:¹⁰

It is stated in the Torah: "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him an assistant corresponding to him" (Bereshit 2:18).

To our great wonder, it is precisely Man, the crown and purpose of creation, about whom the Torah says "It is not good," whereas the rest of the animals - the squirrel on the tree, the beetle on the ground, the fish in the sea,

and the fluttering butterflies - the Torah immediately finds to be pleasing in the eyes of the Holy One, blessed be He upon their creation, as it states: "And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (ibid., 1:31).

We even find that our Sages of blessed memory uphold this assertion, as our Sages have taught: "Whoever lacks a wife, lives without joy, without blessing, without goodness."

That is, according to the Torah's perspective, a man without a wife is incomplete. And the question

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blessing, without Torah, without protection, without peace."

In contrast, when one marries, his wife "assists him, enlightens his eyes, and sets him on his feet."

Certainly, someone who hasn't yet married cannot truly appreciate the good he is missing.

Did Adam, before the creation of Eve, know what he lacked? Certainly not. The Creator declared about him: "It is not good for man to be alone," for only He, blessed be He, who created Mankind, knows the extent of this shortcoming.

9. After a person marries according to the Jewish law, he discovers that in marital life, there can be two different states:

The first is when the souls of both spouses are united and connected. One who lives in this way merits the fulfillment of the words of our sages, mentioned above.

The second state is when only their physical being shares the same house, but their souls are constantly at odds. One who lives like this is far from experiencing blessings in his home.

10. 'Pirkei Machshavah' - The Jewish Home, page 36.

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arises: Why was Man created as "not good" and incomplete?

The Torah clearly states that the ultimate purpose is that Man: "shall cleave to his wife" (ibid., 2:24), but this concept is not entirely clear.

Firstly, what is the meaning of "he shall cleave to his wife"? To what level of cleaving must a man attain?

Moreover, in the Torah we find the term "cleaving" in relation to the Creator of the universe: "and to Him you shall cleave" (Deuteronomy 10:20). Is there a connection between cleaving to G-d and the degree of cleaving that a person is required to achieve with his wife? The Torah uses this term only in relation to these two.

In the Zohar¹¹ the two are equated: "When a man marries a woman, he cleaves to the Divine Presence."

Many expressions of the Sages express the perfection that a person

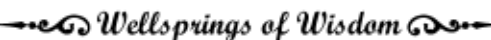
attains through marriage. Here as well the question arises: Why does one merit at marriage to cleave to the Shechinah and to so many other attainments? What is it about marriage that brings all these?

Additionally, in the fourth blessing of the Sheva Brachot recited at a wedding, we say: "and He established from Man an everlasting edifice." This seems to be an oxymoron - how can the connection between a couple be an eternal connection, "everlasting," when they are merely beings of flesh whose years are numbered?

Moreover, the Torah obligates us to marry, and one cannot exempt oneself from this.

A person cannot claim that he can live without the 'assistant' that G-d assigned to him, and as the Bach writes:¹²

"There are some people who entertain the misguided thought that since marriage was made for their benefit, as the verse states:



11. Zohar Chadash, Chukat, page 62a.

12. Beginning of Even HaEzer.

Parshat Vayishlach - Esav's Downward Descent

'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him an assistant corresponding to him,' once they do not desire it, they may discard its use.

In one's opinion, it may be better to sit without a wife and find himself an 'assistant' in the form of a close friend or sibling. Therefore, to remove this error from the heart, the Torah stresses that G-d, blessed be He, knows what is an assistant - unlike the thought of a person who errs in

estimating what an assistant corresponding to him actually is."

From the words of the Bach we learn that only a wife can serve as an "assistant" to Man, and without her, he remains "alone."

The Bach emphasizes the idea that by design, G-d created the world such that marriage is the true path to fulfillment and happiness. Such is G-d's blessed will - that only a married person can fully cleave to the Shechinah.

Esav's Downward Descent

Let us return to discuss Esav, and the various appearances he makes in our Torah portion.

The first time we encounter him he is unnamed. Thus it is said in the Torah: "And the children struggled within her... And G-d said to her: Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be separated from your bowels; and one nation shall be stronger than the other; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:22-23).

The subsequent verses describe these "two nations" to be Esav and Yaakov, and although they had not yet been born, their character traits were already discernable. As the Midrash says: "When Rebecca would pass by synagogues and houses of Torah study, Yaakov would stir to go out; and when she would pass by houses of idolatry, Esav would run and stir to go out."

When the days of pregnancy were completed, the first one came out "red, all over like a

Parshat Vayishlach - Esav's Downward Descent

hairy garment; and they called his name Esav" (Genesis 25:25).

The next information the Torah offers is that "Esav was a cunning hunter, a man of the field" (ibid., verse 27). Then, when Esav was 15 years old, the sale of the birthright occurred, as the Torah states: "And Yaakov gave Esav bread and lentil stew; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way; thus Esav despised his birthright" (ibid., verse 34).¹³

25 years later the Torah records: "And Esav was forty years old, and he took a wife, Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite" (ibid., 26:34) - very wicked and corrupt women, about whom the Torah declares: "And they caused bitterness of spirit to Yitzchak and to Rebecca" (ibid., verse 35).

When Esav was 63 years old, his father Yitzchak called him and asked him to prepare a meal, and he would bestow upon him great and abundant blessings.

Ultimately, our forefather Yaakov received the blessing, and Esav was filled with immense hatred, as it is said: "And Esav hated Yaakov because of the blessing which his father blessed him; and Esav said in his heart: The days of mourning for my father are at near; and then I will slay my brother Yaakov" (ibid., 27:41).

Following this event, Esav married a third wife: "And Esav went to Ishmael, and took in addition to the wives he had, Mahalath daughter of Ishmael son of Avraham, sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife" (ibid., 28:9).

Thirty-four years passed, and Esav heard that Yaakov was

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

13. Let us imagine the conversation between Esav and his parents:

Isaac and Rebecca sat together, discussing how they might help Esau go on the proper path and become a better person. Perhaps it would be good to find him a wife.

They approach Esau to suggest that he consider getting married.

But Esau responds negatively, deflecting criticism to his father: "Father, you married only at the age of 40; I too will marry at the age of 40."

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returning to his father's home. Esav went to his mercenaries and recruited 400 guerrilla fighters, and set out to take revenge against Yaakov.

After this decisive encounter, Esav is mentioned one more time at the end of our Parsha; thereafter, Esav disappears from the horizon, and we do not mention him ever again in the Torah.

We need to understand: Esav and Yaakov were twins, born to one family, grown in one home, who ate from the same food. Both of them had been blessed

to have found a spouse and be married.

It follows then, that both of them should have had the fulfillment of the statement of the Zohar: "When a person marries a woman, he cleaves to the Shechinah."

If so, why did our forefather Yaakov merit, through living a family life, to ascend to lofty and untold heights, while Esav descended to the depths of the abyss, and his memory was erased from the Torah?

To answer this wonder, we must begin with a small clarification.

Esav The First

As is known, the entirety of a matter can be determined and recognized by its beginnings and origins. That is, we may understand and properly recognize a subject by analyzing where the matter is discussed for the first time, and through contemplation, grasp the entire matter itself.

The same is true for the lack of marital harmony; we must consider who was the first

character in the Torah who had problems in this area.

The first couple mentioned in the Torah is Adam and Eve, and the Torah testifies: "And Adam knew Eve his wife" (Genesis 4:1). Adam certainly led his household with wisdom, and surely had marital harmony.

The second couple is Cain, as the Torah testifies: "And Cain knew his wife" (ibid., 4:17). We do

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not find any disagreements or disunity between him and his wife, as well for the third couple, Lemech. He had two wives, Adah and Zillah, and he too surely had marital harmony.

The fourth couple is Avraham and Sarah. Avraham was a man of kindness in all his limbs, and without any doubt at all, had marital harmony.

The fifth couple is Yitzchak and Rebecca, and although Yitzchak was a figure of severity and strictness - "girded with strength," even so, the Torah testifies: "And Yitzchak brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebecca, and she became his wife; and he loved her" (ibid., 24:67).

The sixth couple is most relevant to our discussion. We speak of Esav the wicked.

When Esav was forty years old, he married two women: Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite.

Thirty-two years passed, and Esav married a third wife. As the verse states: "And Esav went to Ishmael, and took in addition to the wives he had, Mahalath daughter of Ishmael son of Avraham, sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife" (ibid., 28:9). Rashi explains: "'In addition to his wives' - He added wickedness upon his prior wickedness, for he did not divorce the first ones."

The Torah reveals that Esav had terrible and awful marital problems, and his wives begged him: "We can't get along. Let us get divorced," but Esav refused to divorce. When he saw that they were causing him problems, instead of divorcing them, he went and married an additional woman (who was certain to suffer from his wickedness just the same).

Thus, we discover that Esav has "copyright" claims on marital problems, and we would do well to dissect and understand the underlying and root cause for his many marital problems.

The House of Esav, A House of Critics

As is known, the prophet Obadiah was a descendant of Esav, and merited to convert to Judaism. From the moment of his conversion, he served his Creator with all his might and heart, and he was even granted prophecy regarding the ultimate end of Esav, which is recorded in the Book of the Twelve Prophets ("Trei Asar").

In his prophetic words, he said: "And the house of Yaakov shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esav straw" (Obadiah 1:18).

This prophecy demonstrates that the essence of the Jewish people is "fire", and those who - like Joseph the righteous - maintain their sanctity and guard their eyes, are compared to a "flame".

On the other extreme, the inner essence of Esav is merely "straw".

To better understand the significance of 'straw', let us preface:

The Mishnah (Bava Batra 3:8) states:

"One may not extend projections and balconies into the public domain. However, if he wishes, he may recess into his own property and extend them."

That is, a person is forbidden from extending beams from the wall of his house into the public domain lest the public stumble over them. If he still needs to extend them, he should recess the wall into his own property, and over the space created (which is his property), he can extend the beams.

The Talmud (Bava Batra 60a) relates:

Rabbi Yannai had a tree that grew in his property, and its branches extended into the public domain.

One day, a group of people approached him and said, "We wish to bring to judgment a man who has a tree in his property, whose branches extend into the public domain and hinder our passage."

Rabbi Yannai heard the complaint, closed his eyes, pondered, and then said, "I

cannot judge this case now; please come back tomorrow."

That evening, Rabbi Yannai called his gardener and asked him, "Go and cut all the branches of my tree that extend into the public domain."

The next day, when the people returned, Rabbi Yannai ruled, "You must cut the branches."

The man boldly protested, "But does not the Rabbi have the same violation? Is it permitted for the Rabbi but forbidden for me?"

Rabbi Yannai calmly replied, "Let's make a deal: if my tree extends into the public domain, you may also leave yours. But if not, then you must cut your branches that extend."

The Talmud asks regarding this tale: Why did Rabbi Yannai only realize now, when the case was brought before him, that he needed to cut the branches?

The Talmud answers: Initially, Rabbi Yannai thought the public

appreciated the branches extending into the public domain since they provided shade. But after a complaint came before him, he understood it was inconvenient for them and that they hadn't mentioned it earlier out of respect for him.

The Talmud further asks: Why did Rabbi Yannai postpone the judgment until the next day? He could have ruled immediately that the branches needed to be cut and mention in passing that he would also cut his own.

The Talmud answers that he learned from the prophet's word, as expounded by Resh Lakish: "Gather yourselves, gather" (התקוששו וקושו) (Zephaniah 2:1) and interpreted it to mean - "Rectify yourself first, and then rectify others" (קשוט עצמך ואחר כך קשוט אחרים).

The Rashbam explains this passage: The words "Gather yourselves, gather", is also akin to the words "First remove the straw from between your own eyes."¹⁴

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

**14.** If Rabbi Yannai would have told the man to correct his own flaw before he

had first corrected himself, he would have been a man of "straw".

Parshat Vayishlach - Scattered Character, Akin to Threshed Straw

From this Talmud passage, we learn that a man of "straw" is one who is focused on others' faults while ignoring his own. This is the characteristic of such

a person: criticize others - for you are already perfect.

Now, let's move on to the second flawed characteristic of Esav.

**Scattered Character, Akin to Threshed Straw**

In Parshat Beshalach, Moses revealed to the Jewish people the sanctity of Shabbat and said, "See, G-d has given you the Shabbat" (Exodus 16:29).

Rabbi Natan of Breslov, of blessed memory, explained:<sup>15</sup>

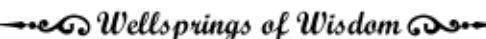
"G-d, in His love and compassion, gave us the Shabbat, which is the day of rest and tranquility - and is a very high and sublime holiness that no defect can reach. The sanctity of the Shabbat is very high and exceedingly lofty."

Moses told the Jewish people: Know that the essence of the Shabbat is the very light of G-d; on the day of Shabbat, there is an immense and awe-inspiring revelation of His holiness.

I hereby bless you: "See, G-d has given you the Shabbat" - may you all merit to see with your own eyes how the sanctity of the Shabbat illuminates every corner of the world's atmosphere, and may you merit that the sanctity of Shabbat fills the chambers of your heart and the knowledge of your mind, and may you dwell and take refuge in its sweet and pleasant aura.

A person who strives to attain this truly fulfills the verse: "Remember the Shabbat day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

However, the Shabbat also has another commandment: "Observe the Shabbat day, to keep it holy, as G-d your G-d commanded you" (Deuteronomy 5:12), and this includes



15. Likutei Halachot (Laws of Shabbat, 7:7).

**Parshat Vayishlach - Esav - The Master of Domestic Disputes**

all precautions against desecrating the Shabbat by performing prohibited labor, and engaging in forbidden speech on the Shabbat.

There are 39 primary prohibited labors on the Shabbat detailed extensively in the Shulchan Aruch, the sixth of which is winnowing. This labor involves separating grains from the straw and chaff.

After threshing the grain, the grains remain mixed with the straw and chaff, and to separate them, the mixture is thrown upward using a winnowing fork. The wind then disperses the lightweight straw and chaff, while the heavier grains fall back down.

Thus, straw is something very light that is carried away by the wind.

**Esav - The Master of Domestic Disputes**

Esav was the first to discover the perfect recipe for domestic disputes, composed of two basic ingredients: light-mindedness and scattered thoughts.

Let us imagine and narrate the thoughts and events that must

This is the second characteristic of a man of "straw" - he lacks a backbone and mental stability. He builds his personality and opinions based on the prevailing winds; he observes the direction of the wind vane, and shapes his ideology accordingly.

The man of "straw" feels internal emptiness and believes that all the others possess an inner world full of happiness and experiences, and constantly tries to imitate others.

Esav, the man of "straw," excelled in these two evil characteristics: light-mindedness and scattered thoughts.

"And the house of Esav shall be as straw," this personified his ugly character.

have occurred to Esav, thousands of years ago:

In a Torah class that Esav attended one evening, he heard about the importance of self-reflection, and he sat down and began to examine his deeds.

**Parshat Vayishlach - Esav - The Master of Domestic Disputes**

"For twenty years I've been serving G-d but haven't progressed at all. How can that be ?

Oh yes, it's simple. My wife is to blame for everything. Because of her, and only her, I'm suffering."

Esav angrily rose, stormed into the house, and unleashed all his frustrations on his wife, as was his usual ritual, rightfully earning the title "Esav the Wicked".

Many years prior, Esav, having reached the appropriate age - the age of 40, must have approached a matchmaker and said simply, "I need a match."

"What are you looking for?"

"I want to live a proper Jewish life. I'll be at the synagogue for the prayers and Torah lessons in the mornings and evenings. During the day, I'll work for my livelihood and set aside time to help my wife at home. I'm looking for a woman who agrees to all of this."

The matchmaker found exactly what he wanted, and they got married.

The first month passed relatively well, but then on one clear summer day, Esav approached his wife and said, "I've decided that my service to G-d is lacking, I want to live like Grandfather Avraham," and for the next week, he busied himself with acts of kindness and hospitality.

After this week concluded, he told his wife, "I've decided to instead emulate our Father Yitzchak; I'm going out to meditate in the fields," and he disappeared for a month out in the wilderness.

A month later, he returned during lunchtime, and told his wife, "I've discovered that the root and primary service of my soul is Torah study. I want to be like my brother Yaakov; I'm going to study Torah all day."

Then, after no more than a few hours, he returned and said to his family members, "I want to be a shepherd like Abel, many generations ago," and he soon appeared with a flock of sheep.

Barely two days had passed, and he decided once again to

**Parshat Vayishlach - The Value of Being Slow to Anger**

change course and that he wanted to be like Cain, a farmer.

He was a fickle man of "straw" in every sense of the word.

Years passed, and Esav's wife passed away and arrived in Heaven. There, at the heavenly court, they asked her, "The Sages have said,<sup>16</sup> 'Who is a righteous woman? One who fulfills her husband's will.' Did you fulfill your husband's will?"

The woman replied, "How could I have fulfilled Esav's will when he never had one himself?"

One day he decided to follow in the footsteps of Avraham, but the next day of Yitzchak, Yaakov, Cain, Abel, and on and on. Enough, my husband was entirely unbalanced in his service of G-d."

**The Value of Being Slow to Anger**

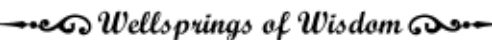
In a lecture by Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, he said the following:<sup>17</sup>

"Our sages teach 'rectify yourself first, and then rectify others.' Each spouse must work on self-improvement, with G-d's help, through prayer and personal effort, and not demand that their partner change first.

Would one during their lifetime, correct even a fraction of one's own traits and deeds that alone would be laudable and greatly commended.

But with regard to one's spouse, one should emulate the ways of the Blessed Holy One: 'Just as He is merciful, so should you be merciful. Just as He is slow to anger, so should you be slow to anger.'

The character trait of being 'slow to anger' - exercising patience in all matters - is the ultimate expression of humility for which Moses our teacher was praised, as the verse states: 'Moses was very humble, more than any person on the face of the earth'



16. Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Rabbah, Chapter 9.

17. 'Shechinah Beineihem', p. 133.

**Parshat Vayishlach - These Are the Generations of the World**

(Numbers 12:3), as Rashi explains:  
'Humble' - lowly and patient.

Only through the trait of being 'slow to anger' can one attain true domestic harmony. Through the trait of patience, the sublime light of Keter - which is the aspect of Arich Anpin - dwells upon a person, and is the mystical of domestic peace.

Chassidut explains that the trait of 'slow to anger' is uniquely characteristic of the Land of Life - the Land of Israel. Through genuine humility - as per the

dictum of our sages 'Be very, very humble' - one reaches the inner and essential revelation of the sanctity of the Land of Israel: 'The land is very, very good' (Numbers 14:7).

Every use of the term 'very, very' in the Torah hints at the 'Unique One,' G-d's very essence, so to speak, who 'bears opposites', who 'bears and tolerates all,' in the aspect of 'slow to anger'."

As we continue, let us add another clarification.

**These Are the Generations of the World**

It was G-d's will, that the Jewish people would undergo four exiles: Babylon, Media, Greece, and Edom.

In the Book of Genesis, we find two places, where the Holy One, blessed be He, hinted at these four exiles that the Jewish people would experience.

The first is during the creation of the world, where it says: "In the beginning G-d created... And the

earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." (Genesis 1:1-2). The Sages interpreted (Bereishit Rabbah 2:4):

'Unformed' (תהו) - refers to the exile of Babylon, as it says: 'I beheld the earth, and behold, it was unformed' (Jeremiah 4:23).

'Void' (וְרֵקָה) - refers to the exile of Media, as it says: 'And they hastened (וַיִּבְהֲלוּ) to bring Haman' (Esther 6:14).

**Parshat Vayishlach - The Essence of Exile**

'Darkness' - refers to the exile of Greece, the nation who darkened the eyes of the Jewish people with their decrees, saying to them, 'Write on the horn of an ox that you have no portion in the G-d of Israel.'

'Upon the face of the deep' - refers to the exile of the wicked kingdom of Edom, whose depth is unfathomable like the abyss; just as the abyss is endless, so too are the wicked."

The second time these four exiles are hinted to is during the Covenant Of the Parts, as the verses state: "And the sun was setting, and a deep slumber fell upon Abram; and behold, a dread, and a great darkness fell upon him" (Genesis 15:12).

The Sages interpreted this verse:<sup>18</sup>

'Dread' - is Babylon, as it says: 'They are dreadful and terrible; their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves' (Habakkuk 1:7).

'Darkness' - is Media, who darkened the eyes of the Jewish people with their decrees.

'Great' - is Greece, as it says: 'When he was strong, the great horn was broken.' (Daniel 8:8).

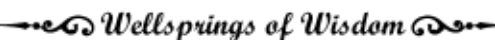
'Fell upon him' - is Edom, as it says: 'At the sound of their fall, the earth trembled' (Jeremiah 49:21).

Since the time of creation, we have already completed, thank G-d, three of the exiles, and we are now nearing the very end of the fourth exile - the exile of Edom.

**The Essence of Exile**

In a lecture delivered by Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler of blessed memory, he said:<sup>19</sup>

"At first glance, it seems that all the exiles the Jewish people endured among the nations, from



18. Shemot Rabbah 51:7.

19. 'Michtav Me'Eliyahu' Part 3, p. 208.



**Parshat Vayishlach - The Essence of Exile**

the exile in Egypt until the current exile in which we find ourselves, they are all essentially the same - the Jewish people were delivered into the hands of idolaters who ruled over them, and subjugated and tormented them. However, this is merely a superficial point of view.

One who delves deeply and meditates upon the spiritual essence of exile will understand that the sufferings are not the essence of the exile, but rather, the trials and tribulations that are brought about by the circumstances of exile; they are the very purpose and essence of exile.

And the sufferings, they only come to increase and deepen the trials that we are meant to persevere through.

Let us expand upon this important principle:

The true essence of exile is 'the Shechinah which is in exile' - holiness and spirituality are in exile under the dominion of impurity.

When the Jewish people are exiled to an environment where

truth is demeaned and concealed, it appears as if matters of spirituality and service to G-d lack any importance, and those engaged in them are at the lowest rung of importance and honor.

Conversely, falsehood and impurity reign supreme in their stead; people value material pursuits and exalt those who succeed in them.

This is the main aspect of exile - the exile of holiness, which is suppressed and humiliated by the evil powers' impurity.

Within these circumstances lies the great potential of trials:

Will we strengthen ourselves in faith and spiritual effort, to not be influenced by our surroundings and not drawn after them, or, might we be - G-d forbid - to the contrary, be influenced by our environment, be drawn after it, and desire to be like them, in which case we will have failed our trial.

When we contemplate the different exiles from this perspective, we will find that not all exiles are the same. Holiness

**Parshat Vayishlach - The Essence of Exile**

is in each exile under a different form and intensity of impurity, and therefore, there's a significant difference between one exile and another.

The trials of the exile in Egypt were unlike those of the Babylonian exile. The trial under Greek rule was not the same as those under Edom and its capital of Rome.<sup>20</sup> The unique character and traits of each nation and each nation's distinctive attributes determine to

what extent and in which manner the exile of the Jewish people among each nation will be.

When a nation uses its common characteristic trait for impurity, that trait becomes the source of its opposition to holiness. Thus, each nation has its unique way of opposing holiness."

Rabbi Dessler continued:

"As abovementioned, the variation of a nation's impure

—*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*—

**20.** Rabbi Shmuel of Sochatchov, of blessed memory, wrote (Shem Mishmuel, Chanukah 5673, Sixth Night):

"Behold, the wicked Greek empire was seen in a vision by Daniel in the form of a leopard - the boldest of animals - as our sages said (Avot 5:20): 'Be bold as a leopard.'

Therefore, they possessed the attribute of extreme boldness, as is known from the scriptures.

However, the Holy One, blessed be He, creates a remedy from the very wound itself, as it is written: 'And from your wounds I will heal you' (Jeremiah 30:17); that is, from this very attribute - of boldness - the salvation of the Jewish people began.

Were it not for their attribute of boldness, it would have been inconceivable for

Matityahu and his sons alone to dare wage battle against the massive Greek army - warriors as numerous as the sand on the seashore, who had conquered the entire world.

They should have resigned themselves to martyrdom, as thousands and myriads of the Jewish nation before them have done, not daring to fight back.

But at that time, when the attribute of boldness prevailed and dominated the world - the very impure power (klipah) of Greece - they harnessed for divine service and dared to battle them. Thus, they redirected this very attribute toward holiness and this itself was their salvation: the Greeks' power reverted to holiness, leaving them devoid of strength, and their protection departed from them."

**Parshat Vayishlach - The Essence of Exile**

traits alters its measure and form of opposition to holiness. The primary trial of exile among a particular nation is to withstand its influence - the prevalent way of thinking and way of life - and to steadfastly adhere to the path of Torah and service of G-d.

As stated earlier, we are currently in the fourth exile - the exile of Edom - whose great flaw and wicked impulses were that of a man of 'straw,' as outlined above.

'You see,' Shay said to Eyal, 'we are currently in the fourth exile, under Esav's dominion, and our exile is entirely characterized by his flaws.'

Our task is to clarify, refine, and redeem these qualities. But

when you immerse yourself in your imaginary thoughts and ideals taken from un reputable sources, you're drowning in 'straw.'

'Rabbi,' Benjamin asked, 'After these enlightening ideas, I'm sure we'll have more insight in guiding the many individuals who turn in their letters for guidance and inspiration.'

But it all begins, I now understand, with removing the straw from above our eyes.'

'Indeed it is so, my dear Benjamin,' the Rabbi replied, 'I have many more ideas to share on the topic, and I'll be sure we'll discuss this matter at another time, G-d willing.'



## Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. The Talmud says: "Rabbi Tanchum said in the name of Rabbi Chanilai, whoever lacks a wife, lives without joy, without blessing, and without goodness." It of course follows that one who is indeed married, merits much joy, blessing, and goodness.

2. An unmarried person is not considered complete, as stated in the Zohar: "Anyone who is not united in the aspect of male and female - that is, not married - is called merely 'half a body'.

Divine blessing does not dwell in something defective and lacking. Only a complete entity can endure and be blessed."

3. A person who is unmarried, no matter how holy, lacks completeness, protection, blessing, and divine assistance. It is when one merits to marry and bring children into the world, that he becomes truly complete, as well as a "vessel that holds blessing."

The family framework provides remarkable protection, and it acts like a fortified wall. However,

one must invest considerable effort to maintain their family structure, and one is obligated to do everything in their power to preserve harmony at home with their spouse and children.

4. One must love his wife as himself and honor her even more than himself. We find that all of the great leaders of the Jewish people, despite the intense love for G-d and Torah that burned in their hearts, greatly loved and honored their wives. In fact, it was precisely because of this that they attained exalted levels and virtues.

5. The "best" recipe to avoid domestic disputes are two basic ingredients: avoiding light-mindedness as well as scattered thoughts.

Light-mindedness involves focusing on one's wife's faults but ignoring one's own. This must be avoided at all costs.

Scattered thoughts are when one feels internal emptiness but believes that others experience an inner world full of happiness and

wonderful experiences. In that case, instead of building their own inner world, one wanders aimlessly with vain thoughts and fantasies.

6. By honoring one's spouse, they avoid causing their wife to be a 'living widow'. While a married woman unburdens her

heart to her husband about every matter that troubles her, a widow has no one to turn to to seek help when she needs it.

A woman whose husband disrespects or ignores her, may feel that she has no husband to turn to, and may even feel "widowed," G-d forbid.

**Shabbat Shalom !**



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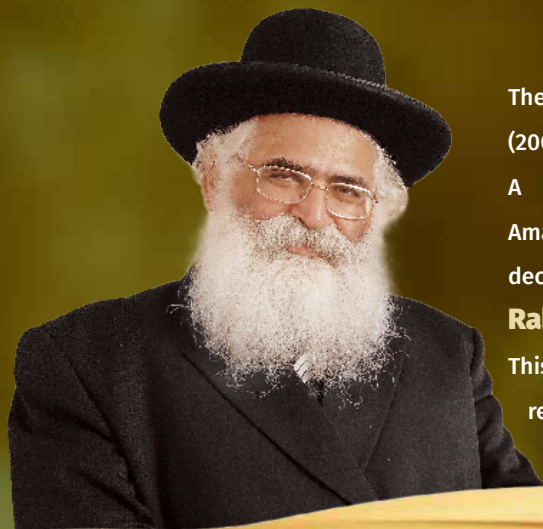
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| Miami       | 5:14 pm         | 6:09 pm      | 6:44 pm      |
| Los Angeles | 4:27 pm         | 5:27 pm      | 5:58 pm      |
| Montreal    | 3:53 pm         | 5:01 pm      | 5:23 pm      |
| Toronto     | 4:23 pm         | 5:29 pm      | 5:53 pm      |
| London      | 3:33 pm         | 4:50 pm      | 5:03 pm      |
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| Tel Aviv    | 4:17 pm         | 5:08 pm      | 5:39 pm      |
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*The Ramban writes to emulate Yaakov; his actions and thoughts were pure and holy, and he merited that the twelve holy tribes emerged from him.*

*Often, the slightest error can cause a person much anguish for generations to come. Thoughts and intentions have much importance and value, and as our sages declare, "In all your ways, know Him," even in your worldly and mundane affairs, know and have intent for divine service.*



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