



אשרינו

**SOUTH FLORIDA
CANDLE LIGHTING**
5:11PM

MOTZEI SHABBAT
6:06PM

A Weinbaum Yeshiva High School Torah Publication

PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

~ י'ג כסלו תשע"א ~

RABBI NOAH ZISQUIT	1
HANNAH BENDER	(13) 2
ADINA SAN SOLO	(11) 2-3
RASHEL MAIHKOR	(12) 3
SAGIV ZEHAVI	(12) 4
TABLE TALK	4

BAD TIMING!

RABBI NOAH ZISQUIT

I once attended the concert of a band that included two brothers who had not performed together in ten years. The crowd was very excited to watch the brothers reunite and perform on stage. In the midst of their performance, one brother casually walked off of the stage because he had a plane to catch. This unusual scene conjured a simple question in my mind. Why did this musician have to book a flight that directly conflicted with his big performance? Couldn't he have finished the show and opted for a later flight?

In this week's *parsha*, Yaakov *Avinu* wrestles with a man who our Sages reveal is none other than the Guardian Angel of Esav in the guise of a man. Our Sages also explain that this was no ordinary wrestling match, rather it was the ultimate struggle between good and evil. If Yaakov were to triumph in this battle, then there would be hope for the spiritual survival. If the Guardian Angel of Esav were to overtake Yaakov, then all hope would be lost. The stakes could not be higher!

In the midst of the wrestling match, as Yaakov is prevailing over the angel of Esav, the angel begs Yaakov to release him. *Rashi* explains that the angel asks Yaakov to have mercy on him and settle the brawl, because it is now time for the angel to depart and sing praises to Hashem.

Talk about bad timing! Right in the middle of one of the most significant battles in Jewish history, the angel has to excuse himself because it's his turn to sing. Couldn't the angel have rescheduled a later appointment to coronate and glorify Hashem, one that did not interfere with his battle against Yaakov?

The *Koshnitzer Magid* explains that this interruption was no mere coincidence. When one sings before Hashem, he praises Hashem for giving him the opportunity to be Hashem's messenger in this world and carry out Hashem's desires. (Note: the words angel and messenger are translated into the same word in Hebrew). The fact is that Hashem encourages us to succeed and to possess the moral strength to be able to refrain from succumbing to our evil inclinations.

Our Sages teach us that the angel of Esav and the *yeitzer hara* are equivalent. As we are well aware, the *yeitzer hara*, as well as the Angel of Esav, serves to sway us off the path of Hashem's ways. While this may be so, ultimately the *yeitzer hara* hopes that we will defeat it.

When Yaakov is fighting with the angel of Esav, the angel realizes that he is not able to defeat Yaakov. It is precisely at that moment that the angel asks to be released. It is only when Yaakov proves himself to be unstoppable against Esav's angel that the angel's mission is complete. By Yaakov showing that he could withstand the angel of Esav, he is attesting to the fact that he will not surrender to the temptations of his *yeitzer harah*. The *yeitzer harah* has now fulfilled his purpose as Hashem's Messenger and therefore praises Hashem in helping in Yaakov's accomplishment.

We must always remember that Hashem loves us and wants us to succeed. *Shabbat Shalom!*

THINK SMALL

HANNAH BENDER ('13)

Upon arriving for his early morning court hearing, Samuel, a lawyer in Jerusalem, was unable to find a parking spot. He encircled the perimeter of the lot for over 30 minutes, but was unsuccessful. Finally, in a helpless plea he cried out: "Hashem, if You help me find a parking spot, I promise to donate ten percent of my annual income to charity, *daven* three times a day, and wait six hours in between eating milk and meat! Please just help me find a parking spot!" Almost instantaneously, the car in front of him slowly reversed from its spot. Astounded and thankful, Samuel turned his head toward the roof of his car (as if actually conversing with G-d) and announced, "Never mind, I found a spot."

Throughout the course of our lives we are privileged with many blessings from Hashem. In response to these *brachot* many tend to react according to one of these two ways. The first is thinking that something bad will follow shortly thereafter. The second is believing that we ourselves did some praiseworthy deed in order to be deserving of the blessing that was granted.

Neither of these reactions is congruent with the philosophy of living a "Torah life." How are we supposed to interpret *brachot* that are given to us on a daily basis without leaning towards either extreme?

The key to internalizing and interpreting blessings is identifying the *shvil hazahav*, or golden mean. We can learn this idea of finding a healthy medium from Yaakov *Avinu* in this week's *parsha*. Before Yaakov met with his brother Esav for the first time since fled from his home, he turned to Hashem and earnestly confessed: "I humbled by the favors you have done for Your servant." It might seem that Yaakov felt as though he had used up all his "points" with Hashem.

In truth, Yaakov was not scared of Hashem abandoning him, but rather he felt unworthy of the boundless *chesed* that Hashem had performed for him throughout his life. When living in *Charan*, Hashem provided Yaakov with vast wealth and a growing family. In return, Yaakov brought himself closer to Hashem. It is precisely this closeness that overwhelmed Yaakov with humility. It is only through accepting Hashem's *brachot* for what they essentially are - unearned privileges - that will we be able to see all that He does for us and how blessed we truly are.

HIDDEN STRENGTH

ADINA SAN SOLO ('11)

"And the angels returned to Yaakov saying, 'We came to your brother to Esav and he is also coming to greet you, and four hundred men are with him.' And Yaakov was very afraid and it distressed him, so he divided the nation that was with him" (Bereishit 32:7-8)

Rashi comments that the seemingly repetitive description of Yaakov of being both "afraid and distressed" signifies that Yaakov feared that he would be killed by Esav, and it distressed him that Esav might kill others.

It is easy to understand why Yaakov would fear death when confronting his enraged brother and his four hundred men. How is it possible then that Yaakov, the studious brother, had a fighting chance for a military victory against his brother the experienced hunter?

In last week's *parsha*, Yaakov approaches the shepherds of *Charan* as they helplessly squatted by a well of water that was covered by a huge rock. That rock served as a communal safe in the sense that the shepherds would only begin removing the rock once all of the flocks had gathered around the well. This rock must have been quite large for it to have demanded such numbers of men in order to be removed.

Adina San Solo continued

When Rachel appears with the sheep the Torah states, "And Yaakov drew close and removed the stone from on top of the well, and he watered the sheep of Lavan, the brother of his mother." *Rashi* comments that Yaakov didn't even roll the rock. He effortlessly pulled it out like one uncorks a bottle, and lifted the rock off of the well.

We learn from here that Yaakov possessed indescribable physical strength. He was not a weak man who avoided confrontation with his brother because he feared being beaten up. Rather, it was a matter of principle for him to avoid a violent conflict by praying and sending gifts instead.

During a London press conference in 1969 Golda Meir was reported to have said that when peace comes "we will perhaps be able to forgive the Arabs for killing our sons. It will be harder, however, for us to forgive them for having forced us to kill theirs."

We can now understand why Yaakov was so concerned to exercise his own terrible might. He preferred not display his "mean side" and, thus, did everything possible to keep it hidden. It was not weakness and vulnerability that compelled Yaakov to search for paths of peace in dealing with his arch enemy Esav, but rather it was a strategy

THE PATH AHEAD

RASHEL MAIKHOR ('12)

High school is known to be a period of trial and error. It is a time when you begin the process of discovering and developing into the person you will become. The way I see it is that there are two paths you can take: a path on which you focus on your future and growth, or a path on which you focus on each day with no regard for tomorrow.

In this week's *parsha*, we can see the consequences and benefits of choosing the right path. The famous fight between Esav's angel and Yaakov, Yaakov's the new name Yisrael, and the encounter Yaakov has with his brother all represent one of paths of life- working towards the future. The fight with Esav's angel is the first step Yaakov takes to regain his strength and move forward; not only physically, but emotionally as well. Yaakov's new name Israel gives him the courage and motivation to continue and work for a better life for his children and future generations.

After meeting face-to face, the two brothers immediately part ways. This encounter is exactly the closure Yaakov needs. At this point, Yaakov realizes that it is time to let go of the past and to focus on the future of his family. Yaakov is a perfect paradigm of a someone who learns to shift from the past and his own mistakes, to a man who achieves his ultimate potential and allows great opportunities for his children.

On the other hand, Shimon and Levi chose the negative path, and decided to act before thinking of the consequences. They took rage over the city of Shechem and burned it down because its prince took Dinah, their sister, and raped her. In life, we may go through hardships and struggles, but we cannot lose hope and use violence as the answer. Shimon and Levi represent those whose *yeitzer hara* takes over and controls them, which in turn causes them to choose a path that revolves around pure instinct and actions. The choices of Shimon and Levi may seem like the easier ones at first, but in the end, their actions follow them forever.

High school should be used as a stepping stone to the real world- a world filled with different and unique people and beliefs, but also about learning and growing from them. The two paths- growing towards our futures or living for the present- are difficult paths to choose from. With the help of the Torah, we can learn from our ancestors and realize that our goal in life is not to live simply for the present. Our goal is to have the end in mind from the beginning, in order to reach and accomplish our objective. Hashem does not present us with challenges so we can just fail. He places obstacles before us for He has the confidence in us that we can overcome them, make the right choices, and chose the right path. *Shabbat Shalom!*

מיתת אנשי שכם

SAGIV ZEHAVI ('12)

ויבואו על העיר בטח ויהרגו כל זכר' (ל"ד, כ"ה) - למה הרגו כל אנשי העיר, אף אלו שלא באו על דינה? הרמב"ן מביא את פירוש הרמב"ם שמבאר שכל העיר חטאה, כי אחת ממצוות בני נח היא מצוות "דינים", דהיינו לשפוט ולהוכיח את החוטאים, ובני העיר לא עשו משפט בחוטאים. מכיוון שעברו על אחת משבע מצוות בני נח, ממילא היו חייבים מיתה (כי ההלכה היא שבן נח שעבר על אחת מז' מצוות בני נח, חייב מיתה, שכך הוא הדין "אזהרה שלהם זו היא מיתתם") ועוד לגוים יש רק שבע מצוות, ולכן אין להם אזהרה לפני העונש, כי אין להם במה להיתבלבל לישיאת, ולכן דינם הוא מיתה.

הרמב"ן חולק על ביאור זה מכוח כמה קושיות, בין היתר משום שהכלל הנ"ל שבן נח חייב מיתה אם עובר על אחת ממצוותיו, הוא דווקא כשעובר על איסורי לאו שלו (לא לגנוב, לא לאכול אבר מן החי וכו'), אבל מצוות "דינים" היא מצוות עשה, ואינו נהרג עליה [וכמו כן עיין עוד בדברי הרמב"ן, מהם עולה שהוא חולק על הרמב"ם גם בעצם ההבנה של מצוות "דינים" שנאמרה לבני נח]. על כן מבאר הרמב"ן את הריגת בני שכם באופן אחר. למעשה, אנשי שכם, כמו כל האומות בזמנם, היו נגועים בעבודה זרה ושאר עבירות שבן נח חייב עליהם מיתה. אלא שבמציאות, בני יעקב לא יכולים היו להילחם נגד כל אומות העולם, אבל אנשי שכם, כיוון שעשו מה שעשו, מצאו לנכון להינקם מהם ולהורגם.

האור החיים ביאר את כל עניני ההריגה באופן אחר - "אכן הנה בני יעקב לא היה בדעתם להרוג אלא בעל עבירה, אלא שכל בני העיר רצו לעמוד בפרץ כנגדם לבל יהרגו מלכם, אשר על כן הרגום מדין רודף, והוא אמרו 'ויהרגו כל זכר', ובזה השיגו להרוג את חמור ואת שכם, וזולת זה לא היו יכולים לנקום נקם מהמחוייב להם מיתה". ביאור נוסף אומר האור החיים "שהרגו כל בני העיר, לצד שהם היו בעזר שכם לגזול דינה, ובני נח מחוייבים מיתה על הגזל, אבל על העריות אין חיוב, כי דינה לא הייתה אשת איש".

TABLE TALK

HADASSAH TIRSCHWELL ('11)

The Torah describes Yaakov as an "*ish tam, yoshev ohalim*" - a pure and innocent man who sits in his tent and learns. This description of Yaakov seems very different from the way his parents view him. It does not seem to refer to the man who tricked his brother out of a birthright using his wits. It does not seem to describe the man who convinced his father that he was his brother in order to receive the *brachah* that Yitzchak had planned to give to Esav.

At the start of this week's *parsha*, Yaakov is on the move as he returns to Canaan after his prolonged visit to Lavan's house. Yaakov prepares his household for a final confrontation with his brother Esav, dividing his family into two separate camps. As Yaakov plans a strategic military operation, we find ourselves confused about the essence of Yaakov's true character. The militarily savvy patriarch who cleverly convinces his bloodthirsty brother to spare his household does not seem to be the same man as the "*ish tam, yoshev ohalim*" of last week's *parsha*.

What do you think: Who is the *real* Yaakov Avinu? How do the many seemingly contradictory aspects of Yaakov unite harmoniously?

Interested in sponsoring Ashreinu?
Contact Rabbi Hochman at
RAVH@WYHS.NET

This publication contains Torah matter-
Please treat it with respect

Ashreinu Staff

Editor-in-Chief

Eram Zaghi ('12)

Staff

Gila Allswang ('11)

Racheli Mizrahi ('11)

Etan Shachter ('12)

Matthew Silkin ('14)

Yedidyah Weiss ('11)

Sagiv Zehavi ('12)

Layout

Eliana Feldan ('13)

Elana Kaminetsky ('12)

Editing

Arie Hizkiya ('11)

Leora Litwin ('12)

Adam Poliak ('11)

Hadassah Tirschwell ('11)

Proofreader

Joshua Stadlan ('11)

Faculty Advisor

Rabbi Avi Hochman

7902 Montoya Circle
Boca Raton, FL 33433
Phone: 561-417-7422
Fax: 561-417-7028