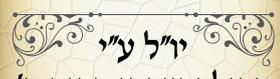


Parshas
Vayishlach

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י"ג כסלו תשפ"ה
5785



קהילת שבתי בבית ד'
בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ
רבי גמליאל הכהן
רבינוביץ שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב המערכת

וישתחו ארצה שבע פעמים

And he bowed earthward seven times

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Yaakov Avinu made all the necessary preparations for his meeting with Eisav, his brother. Yet, at the moment of truth, 'וירץ עשו לקראתו, ויחבקו ויפל על צוארו וישקהו' - 'Eisav ran to meet him, embraced him, fell upon his neck, and kissed him.' (33:4) This outcome was truly surprising. Yaakov might have thought to himself: "I worried for nothing, feared for no reason; perhaps I exaggerated." But no, Yaakov did not exaggerate. Rashi cites the *Sifrei* (Beha'aloscha 69 to Bamidbar 9:10): 'Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai said: It is a well-known rule that Eisav hates Yaakov. However, in that moment, his compassion was stirred, and he kissed him wholeheartedly.' We must understand: If Eisav hates Yaakov, why was his compassion stirred at that moment? On the other hand, if Eisav's compassion was indeed aroused for Yaakov at that moment, perhaps the hatred was not so deep? Perhaps there are times and situations where compassion overrides hatred?

One thing is certain: if Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai said Eisav hates Yaakov, it is absolute. If there were even a tiny fraction of a chance that Eisav did not harbor hatred for Yaakov, Rashbi would not have made this statement or falsely maligned him, *chas v'shalom*. So, what exactly happened here?

To understand the answer, let us look back a little. Yaakov Avinu committed no wrongdoing against his brother, acted justly in all his actions, and was entirely in the right. Thus, he had no reason to send gifts to Eisav, and we are confident that had Yaakov chosen, he could have defeated Eisav and all his warriors. Yet, Yaakov acted differently. He sent gifts to appease his brother, and as he approached him, "he bowed to the ground seven times until he came near his brother." Immediately after, "Eisav ran to meet him and embraced him." On this, Rashi comments: 'His compassion was stirred when he saw him bowing all those bows.'

This is the answer to all the questions. Eisav was wicked and remained utterly wicked. Yet, Yaakov's acts of humility—his repeated bows—subdued Eisav's nature. Even the great evildoer Eisav was moved to compassion.

This teaches us an important lesson: When there is a dispute between two people, the righteous party will not necessarily prevail by force. But through humility, one can achieve victory with remarkable ease. As the wise saying goes: 'I wish to be a victor; therefore, I make myself a loser.'
Tiv HaTorah - Vayishlach

טיב הפרשה

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך

You shall be wholesome with Hashem, your G-d

עם לכן גרתי לב.

I have lived with Lavan (32:5)

Rashi explains: גרתי has the numerical value of 613, as if to say, "I lived with Lavan, the evil one, yet I kept the 613 mitzvos and did not learn from his evil actions."

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Yaakov's words here were meant to appease Eisav, but the question arises: why did he choose to inform Eisav that he had fulfilled all 613 mitzvos? Could this really be a reason for the wicked Eisav to be appeased? Furthermore, what was Yaakov's intention in emphasizing that he upheld these mitzvos while living in the house of Lavan the wicked?

It can be explained that this information was not intended to appease Eisav at all. On the contrary, as long as Yaakov adhered to the mitzvos, he was hated by Eisav. As stated in the Midrash (*Sifrei*, Parashas Beha'aloscha, Pisikta 69): "Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai says, 'It is a known law that Eisav hates Yaakov.'" This hatred is inherently tied to Yaakov's essence and character. Eisav cannot tolerate Yaakov's way of life. As long as Yaakov remains steadfast in observing the 613 mitzvos, it is inconceivable that Eisav would find him agreeable.

Nevertheless, Yaakov wanted to inform Eisav in advance of this matter. When Yaakov decided to reconcile with Eisav, he carefully considered how to do so without compromising his integrity or doing anything that would displease Hashem. He feared that if Eisav saw Yaakov seeking his favor, he might mistakenly assume that Yaakov had abandoned his righteous path and was no longer devoted to the mitzvos. Otherwise, why would Eisav think reconciliation was even possible?

Yaakov had reason to believe Eisav might come to this conclusion. Eisav knew Yaakov had spent a long period—

about twenty years—in the house of Lavan. He was aware that Yitzchak had specifically instructed Yaakov to marry one of Lavan’s daughters. Eisav also understood that living in Lavan’s home, a place steeped in impurity and sorcery, would make it almost impossible for an ordinary person to remain committed to the 613 mitzvos. Eisav might therefore infer that Yaakov was no longer the righteous person he had once been and was now seeking a connection with someone more like himself.

Yaakov realized that if Eisav entertained this mistaken belief, it would result in a desecration of Hashem’s name (*chillul Hashem*), even if Eisav later discovered the truth. To prevent this entirely, Yaakov decided to preemptively clarify the situation. He informed Eisav that he had remained steadfast in his righteousness, even while living in Lavan’s house, and that his efforts to reconcile were not an acknowledgment of Eisav’s ways or values.

This teaches us a profound lesson: even when pursuing a worthy goal, even one for the sake of Heaven, one must never compromise on any mitzvah. Even if the ultimate goal appears to be a great benefit to Hashem’s will, it is not permissible to justify sin, no matter how minor, for the sake of achieving it. Yaakov’s desire to reconcile with Eisav was driven by a noble purpose—to prevent Eisav from harming the Jewish people. This could have been seen as “choosing the lesser evil,” tolerating a brief *chillul Hashem* to achieve an eternal goal. Yet Yaakov, the greatest of the patriarchs, refused to take such a path.

On this, the Midrash states (Devarim Rabbah, 4:5): “HaKadosh Baruch Hu said: Listen to Me, for no one who listens to Me will suffer loss.”

In other words, if it seems to you that by observing the mitzvos you might incur a loss, know that the opposite is

true. Even if at times it appears that losses occur as a result of fulfilling mitzvos, it will eventually become clear that even those losses were for the best. Therefore, one must adhere to the *posuk* (Devarim 18:13): **‘תמים’** **‘אלקיך’** **‘תהיה עם ה’** **‘אלקיך’** **‘You shall be wholehearted with Hashem, your G-d,’** and in the end, you will see and understand that there was no loss at all. Indeed, this principle was fulfilled in Yaakov, as it is written (Mishlei 16:7): **‘ברצות ה’ דרכי איש גם’** **‘When Hashem is pleased with a man’s ways, even his enemies will make peace with him.’** Yaakov succeeded without desecrating the honor of Heaven.

Sometimes, it is precisely walking wholeheartedly in Hashem’s ways that brings success to a goal. Here is a story that illustrates this concept: In the later years of the holy Rav, the Chasam Sofer, a royal decree was issued against the Jewish faith. Efforts were needed to overturn the decree, and the task was entrusted to the community rabbis, who were appointed to advocate for this mitzvah. They sought the participation of the greatest among them—the Chasam Sofer himself. However, due to his weakened state, the Chasam Sofer could not join them personally. Still, he did not absolve himself entirely from the matter. Instead, he appointed a pious and devout emissary in his stead. When the appointed day for the delegation’s meeting with the king arrived, this emissary joined the other rabbis and community leaders from various parts of the country and went to the royal palace.

At the royal palace, the dignitaries were served milk as a gesture of honor. Although milk produced by non-Jews (*chalav akum*) is forbidden by Jewish law, most of the delegates did not take issue with drinking it. They reasoned that the prohibition was due to a concern that it might contain non-kosher milk, but since non-Jews rarely use such milk, and

given the context of presenting themselves before the king, they felt it permissible. They feared that refusing the milk might offend the king, who could take their refusal as an insult, possibly worsening the decree rather than repealing it. Additionally, some justified drinking it by invoking the principle that “those engaged in a mitzvah are not harmed.”

However, the Chasam Sofer’s emissary, being wholly faithful to the Torah’s commandments, refused to drink the milk under any circumstances. His refusal caught the king’s attention, who inquired why he would not partake. The emissary honestly and respectfully explained that according to the *Shulchan Aruch*, it is forbidden to drink milk produced by non-Jews unless a Jew supervises the milking process to ensure it comes only from kosher animals.

At that moment, the king’s servant entered and informed him that today’s milk was particularly special. Curious, the king asked why, and the servant revealed that the milk was actually camel’s milk.

The king was astounded. He marveled at the wisdom of the Jewish *chachamim*, who established safeguards to protect against even remote risks of transgression. Furthermore, he deeply respected the emissary’s unwavering commitment to his religious principles, even at the risk of offending the king himself. Impressed, the king appointed this emissary as a minister in charge of Jewish affairs throughout the kingdom.

Not only was the decree overturned, but future efforts to legislate against Jewish observance were thwarted entirely.

This story vividly demonstrates that adhering to mitzvos, even when logic might suggest it could lead to harm, often produces the opposite outcome—great benefit and blessing.

'The One Who Trusts in Hashem' – “הבוטח בה”

My story took place many years ago when I was a young *chasan* who had just gotten married. Both sides agreed on a certain sum for an apartment, and as the *chasan*, the responsibility fell on me to find a suitable apartment within the allocated budget, supplemented by a bank loan (a mortgage). After much searching, I found an apartment that seemed fitting and asked my father if he had the money ready to sign a contract with the contractor.

My father responded that I should proceed as needed, and when the time came, he would have the money for me. From my father-in-law, I expected nothing, knowing their financial situation. Still, I asked him cautiously and with trepidation whether he had the required sum to sign the contract. Surprisingly, I received the exact same response: “Sign, and with Hashem’s help, I’ll have the money ready by the due date.”

I am not one to believe in phrases like “it’ll be fine” or “just sign, and Heaven will send us what we need.” So, I politely asked my father again: “How much money do you have right now?” My father replied earnestly: “I don’t have a single penny on me, but I’m sure that when the time comes, it will work out!”

I realized there was no money to purchase the apartment and halted the process. A month later, I thought to myself that if I continued on my path of insisting that everything be ready in advance, I might never buy an apartment. Perhaps it was worth trying their way and relying on a miracle!

I contacted a lawyer and scheduled an appointment for signing the contract a week later, on Monday at precisely 2:00 PM. I arranged with my parents to come by two hours earlier to pick up the money. I was under immense pressure and called my father every day to ask if he had managed to secure the required amount, but my father calmly replied that he hadn’t yet and that there was still time until Monday. Friday, Shabbos night, and Sunday, I called again, only to hear the same calm response: “There’s still time until Monday.”

In my heart, I was convinced that nothing would come of this, but I had done my part in making the effort. On Monday at 11:00 AM, I arrived at my father’s peaceful and serene home and asked if any money had come in. His response was that the time hadn’t yet arrived. I was stunned by his answer and knew there would be no apartment. Just as I came to terms with the fact that there wouldn’t be an apartment, my father-in-law knocked on my father’s door and brought his share. I have no idea where he got the money, but he fulfilled his commitment. In the meantime, I sat and chatted with my mother about everyday matters. Then my father approached me with a check for \$40,000 and told me I could go sign for the apartment in good health and success!

I was stunned—I couldn’t believe my eyes. It turns out that my father’s cousin had arrived from abroad and decided to visit my father at exactly 11:45 AM, just before my appointment with the lawyer. The cousin inquired about my father’s well-being and offered his help. My father asked if he could lend him \$40,000, to be repaid in installments of \$300 a month. The cousin gladly agreed.

Even though I witnessed firsthand that one who trusts in Hashem is surrounded by kindness, and that Hashem alters the natural order on their behalf, I am still far from truly trusting. I hope one day to reach this level and live a life of tranquility and serenity!

Let All Your Actions Be for the Sake of Heaven!

(Avos 2:12)

“And it was on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Yaakov’s sons, Shimon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city confidently and killed every male” (*Bereishis* 34:25).

It is astonishing that among all the men of Shechem, not a single warrior could overcome the pain and weakness of their *milah* to mount a defense against Shimon and Levi, two young boys barely at the age of bar mitzvah. The wording of the verse suggests they approached the city “confident,” without fear or hesitation, taking advantage of the people’s vulnerability on the third day after their *milah*, killing all the males—24,000 people, including Chamor, the prince of the land, and his son Shechem. This requires explanation. On the other hand, earlier in *Parashas Vayerah*, we find Avraham, who was circumcised in his old age of ninety-nine years, demonstrating remarkable strength on the third day after his *bris milah*. Despite the pain, he exerted himself to greet guests in the heat of the day, running to welcome and host them with joy and generosity. It seemed as if he had completely forgotten his pain, running with full strength to prepare a lavish meal for them, described as more abundant than Solomon’s feast (*Bava Metzia* 86b). He stood under the tree to serve them with vigor and enthusiasm and, after the meal, escorted them on their way. That same day, he stood in prolonged *tefillah* to save S’dom, engaged in sacred service throughout the third day after his *bris milah*—an *avodah* so profound that it became an entire portion of our holy Torah.

In contrast, the men of Shechem were completely weakened and incapacitated, like flies, on their third day of *bris milah*. How could they be so different from Avraham?

The stark contrast can only be explained by the foundation of their respective intentions. As the Mishnah in *Pirkei Avos* (2:12) teaches: “Rav Yosi says... let all your actions be for the sake of Heaven.” The quality and impact of any deed depend entirely on the intention behind it. The same act can either reach the pinnacle of spiritual elevation or sink to the depths of depravity, depending on whether it is performed for the sake of Heaven. As *Chazal* teach (*Nazir* 23b), two individuals may eat a *korban Pesach*, but (*depending on their intent*) “the righteous walk in them, and the wicked stumble in them” (*Tehillim* 1:6).

Avraham’s *bris milah* was performed purely for the sake of Heaven, fulfilling God’s command: “Walk before Me and be perfect” (*Bereishis* 17:1). As a result, not only did the mitzvah not weaken him, but its sanctity and spiritual energy strengthened him further, enabling him to serve his Creator with renewed vigor. The mitzvah led to another mitzvah—he ran with great enthusiasm to greet guests, demonstrating the extraordinary strength of his spirit. In contrast, the men of Shechem did not intend their *milah* for the sake of the mitzvah or Divine service. Their motive was purely selfish—to marry Yaakov’s daughters and engage in trade with his family. Their *milah* lacked any spiritual purpose and was no more than a physical act of cutting flesh. Consequently, they succumbed entirely to natural pain, which intensified on the third day, leaving them without the strength or courage to fight.

On the other hand, Shimon and Levi acted solely for Heaven’s sake, defending Yaakov’s household’s honor and sanctifying God’s name against the disgrace perpetrated in Yisrael. They were imbued with immense strength and courage, allowing them to kill all the city’s

inhabitants confidently. While undoubtedly their success was accompanied by Divine miracles, the simple lesson we learn from this portion is that when actions are performed genuinely for the sake of Heaven, the entire nature and essence of the act are transformed, as are its outcomes and effects, both spiritually and physically. Let all your actions be for the sake of Heaven!

(From "Tiv HaChanukah," based on the new edition)



For many years, Rav Zundel Kroizer, *zt"l*, regularly came to my home during his midday break to refresh himself and study *Gemara* with me.

During that break, people would sometimes knock on my door or call on the phone with various questions, requests, or matters related to my *g'mach* (*charity fund*) and similar communal needs. I often needed to respond to these calls or open the door, attending to the community's needs as they arose.

Rav Zundel, *zt"l*, said to me: "When you rise to open the door or pick up the telephone, take a moment to think and intend that you are performing the mitzvah of *gemilus chassadim* (*acts of kindness*). After all, I see that most people who reach out to you need your help, whether physical, financial, or emotional. By having this intention, even the seemingly mundane act of opening a door or answering a phone will be transformed into an act of mitzvah! After all, even non-Jews, *lehavdil*, open doors and answer phones.

"Yet, even though these are merely simple, external actions that are often performed absentmindedly, through the power of your intention to perform a mitzvah, these minor actions will be elevated to great spiritual heights—like a kohen serving and ministering before his Creator and before God's beloved children. Reflect on this deeply."

"And let all your actions be for the sake of Heaven!"

He also said that receiving a monthly stipend, as is customary nowadays to provide salaries to kollel *avreichim*, depends entirely on the quality of the individual's intention and the purpose for which he attends the kollel. If he attends to study and fulfill the mitzvah of Torah learning, and the stipend, handed to him in an envelope at the end of the month, is viewed by him as a secondary matter—a necessity to support his household and family—while his primary goal is to grow (*shtaignen*) in the acquisition of our holy Torah, then he fulfills the mitzvah of *talmud Torah* properly. His reward is guaranteed, as is the case for all who engage in Torah study, who merit to enjoy its fruits in this world while the principal reward remains intact for the World to Come (*Peah 1:1*).

However, if his primary intention is not Torah study but rather "earning" the salary, and his heart is not directed toward Torah as its ultimate goal, he begins to resemble a carpenter, shoemaker, or other tradesman, who also reports

to work each morning to earn his wages.

(The later authorities have already discussed this matter. Generally, they conclude that the primary intent of a kollel *avreich* is for the sake of Torah study, not for financial gain. If his primary concern were money, he could enter the workforce and earn significantly more, as is well known. A further indication of sincerity can often be seen in the additional learning undertaken by the *avreich* beyond the required study schedule.)

"And let all your actions be for the sake of Heaven!"

We can understand this elevated subject from a story shared with me by a *sofer*, the righteous Rav Yisrael Rosenzweig, *zt"l*, widely known as Rav Yisrael Sofer. He was one of the elder sages of Yerushalayim, a man of purity and refinement, a chassid and close associate of the Rebbe of Biala, the Chelkas Yehoshua, *zt"l*.

It is well known that the Rebbe, *zt"l*, would extend his prayers with deep outpourings of the soul. He began *Shacharis* in the early morning hours each day and concluded it late, often near midday. He invested immense effort and dedication in his *tefillos*, with tremendous intensity and profound concentration, particularly during every mention of God's name. His approach to prayer followed in the footsteps of his ancestor, the Holy Jew of Peshischa, *zt"l*, whose prayer was marked by extraordinary power and self-sacrifice.

One day, Rav Yisrael Sofer, *zt"l*, needed to consult with the Rebbe, as is customary among chassidim, to present and seek guidance on any matter before their Rebbe. For as it is written (*I Shmuel 9:6*), "Behold, there is a man of God in this city, and the man is highly esteemed; everything he says indeed happens. Now let us go there; perhaps he will tell us our way we should go."

Rav Yisrael remained after the conclusion of *Shacharis* in the *beis midrash* located on Yosef ben Matityahu Street, at the edge of the old Geula neighborhood. He sat down to study for several hours, patiently waiting for the Rebbe to conclude his prolonged and heartfelt prayers so that he could enter the inner sanctum.

When the Rebbe finally finished his pleasant prayer, it was close to midday, and Rav Yisrael was called into the holy presence.

When he entered the Rebbe's room, the holy Rebbe closed the door behind him, and they sat together for an elevated and pleasant conversation that lasted a long time. The Rebbe would always enjoy extending their discussions on Torah and chassidus, in which Rav Yisrael was well-versed. Naturally, the Rebbe resolved all of Rav Yisrael's doubts, one by one, until everything became clear and illuminated like a laid out table.

Meanwhile, time did not stand still. By the time Rav Yisrael left the Rebbe's room, it was already midday. Having not yet eaten his morning bread, he felt an intense hunger after spending more than half the day in prayer and sacred study, in pure and devoted toil. He, therefore, descended

from the *beis midrash* to the well-known and long existent "Gerlitz Bakery" in the center of the Geula neighborhood, where he purchased some fresh and delicious pastries—*mezonos* cookies in the classic Gerlitz tradition.

Rav Yisrael did not behave proudly. Despite his great righteousness and piety, he was always seen walking the streets of Yerushalayim and elsewhere with his head humbly bowed, immersing in a *mikvah* before writing holy names in his holy profession, as was well known. Yet he conducted himself regularly, a "*gavra beguvrin*," a man among men (*Berachos 31a*). When he needed to eat, he simply purchased his food.

He returned with his modest purchase to the *beis midrash*, entering the small, low-ceilinged corner of the *kave shtiebel* (coffee room). He poured himself a steaming hot cup of coffee and began to eat, strengthening his body to continue his Divine *avodah*.

However, to his dismay, the door to the Rebbe's adjacent room suddenly opened right in the middle of his simple meal. The Rebbe, resplendent in his glory, emerged on his way upstairs to his home on the second floor. As he passed through the narrow, low corridor and walked by the sink and small kitchen area, the Rebbe caught sight of Rav Yisrael seated in the corner, partaking of his *rugelach* and coffee.

The Rebbe greeted him warmly and, with a loving smile, turned to him with gentle reproach: "I don't understand—why did you choose to fulfill your obligation (*be yotzei zayn*) with *mezonos*? Do you think God gave you the feeling of hunger so that you would merely satisfy it with a snack? Hunger is an opportunity! When you need to eat, you should eat bread and fulfill many mitzvos: washing your hands properly, drying them, eating bread with salt, reciting the blessings appropriately, performing *mayim acharonim*, and saying *Birkas Hamazon* properly, among others. If so many mitzvos can be fulfilled in a meal with bread, why settle for something lesser and miss out on such great spiritual gains?"

This was a reflection of the Rebbe's well-known love and yearning to "seize" as many mitzvos as possible, constantly striving to bring delight and joy to his Creator.

When Rav Yisrael later recounted this story to me, he added that he had learned a vital life lesson from this incident.

Even in physical life, one must imbue actions with holiness and service to God. In even the simplest daily activities, one should always think and calculate: What does God want me to do in this situation? What is the halacha, and what is the mitzvah? How can I cleave to God and bring greater delight to the Creator of all? Such reflections are the essence of true *avodah*, elevating all aspects of life to holiness. "And let all your actions be for the sake of Heaven!"

(Source: *Ibid*)