

Vaishlach

November 20th 2021

16th of Kislev 5782

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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

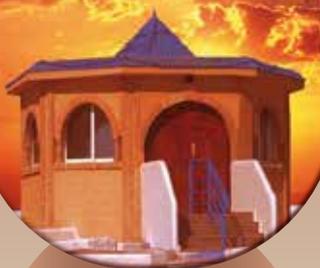
Published by Mosdot "Orot Chaim U'Moshe" in Israel

Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

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Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita



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Hilula

15 - Rabbi Ya'akov Baruch Heizler

16 - Rabbi Yosef Bardugo, author of Divrei Yosef

17 - Rabbi Noach of Ludmir, author of Bi'urim L'Maharam Schiff

18 - Rabbi Baruch of Mezibozh, grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov

19 - Rabbi Dov Ber, Maggid of Mezeritch

20 - Rabbi Dov Ber of Ushpitsin, student of the Chozeh of Lublin

21 - Rabbi Yochanan Perlow, Admor of Karlin-Stolin

Yirat Shamayim Leads to Repentance

"The angels returned to Ya'akov saying, 'We came to your brother, to Esav; moreover, he is heading toward you, and four hundred men are with him.' Ya'akov became very frightened, and it distressed him" (Bereishit 32:7-8).

I read an insight from Rabbeinu the Rishon L'tzion, Hagaon Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef zt"l, in the Yabi'a Omer periodical. He asked: Esav's behavior presents a contradiction. On the one hand, we see that Esav is not scared of Ya'akov Avinu at all, for when the angels returned to Ya'akov and reported back about their mission, they told him Esav was entirely unafraid. On the contrary, he is coming to meet him with four hundred men. But on the other hand, later we find that when Esav actually met Ya'akov, he completely negated himself before him as a servant annuls himself in front of his master, as the verse says (ibid. 33:4), "Esav ran toward him, embraced him, fell upon his neck, and kissed him."

We will try to understand why the wicked Esav was not moved when approached by heavenly angels. Even they did not succeed in planting fear in his heart, to the extent that he set out to meet Ya'akov with four hundred men, planning to fight against him. But when he finally met up with Ya'akov, he showed complete submission and ran towards him and hugged and kissed him like a servant negates himself in front of his master.

I would like to suggest the following answer. When Ya'akov Avinu sent emissaries (angels) to Esav his brother, he told them to begin with an introduction (ibid. 32:5): "I have sojourned with Lavan and have lingered until now." Chazal say (ibid. Midrash Agadah) he was implying that he is not scared of Esav, because he (Ya'akov) lived with the wicked Lavan and observed all 613 mitzvot and did not learn from his bad ways. If he succeeded in prevailing over Lavan, now too he will succeed in overcoming his brother Esav.

Esav, on the other hand, was not put off by hearing these words, since we are told (Yad Mitzrayim), "Hearing cannot be compared to actually seeing." Meaning, as long as Esav did not set his eyes on Ya'akov, his strength and his words meant little to him, since for Esav it was nothing more than a verbal report. Therefore, even when Ya'akov notified him "I lived with Lavan and observed all 613 mitzvot," Esav did not believe him and was confident that his heavenly angel would overcome

Ya'akov. Furthermore, the message Ya'akov sent to him even angered him, and so he set out to meet him with four hundred men, planning to fight against him.

But later when Esav actually came face to face with Ya'akov Avinu, hearing cannot be compared to seeing, and at that point he actually grew afraid of him because he realized the great power of Torah. He saw how Ya'akov had elevated himself through the Torah he studied. So at that point Esav made peace with Ya'akov, hugged and kissed him, and even wanted to remain with him and accompany him. Now Esav saw that Ya'akov had overcome Esav's guardian angel, and also conceded that Ya'akov had been right to take the blessings from their father.

However, this still leaves us bewildered. Esav realized that Ya'akov Avinu had been blessed with a certain strength due to his special connection to the Torah, and that is how he overcame Lavan and the angel of Esav. He saw with his own eyes how Ya'akov Avinu was many times stronger and more distinguished than himself, yet nevertheless this did not cause Esav to learn a lesson and repent. How do we understand this?

The reason could be in line with Chazal's statement (Berachot 33b) that everything is in the hands of Heaven besides fear of Heaven. In other words, man can receive everything as a gift from the Creator, but to acquire yirat Shamayim requires personal toil. Herein lies the reason for Esav's continued wickedness. Since he did not possess yirat Shamayim, he did not succeed in transcending his limitations and repenting. Even though he was surely overcome with despair when he saw his brother Ya'akov so successful and spiritually great, he nevertheless retained his wickedness and did not manage to seize the opportunity to change.

Since he did not wish to submit himself to Hashem's authority, after Esav's death Hashem told Bnei Yisrael via the prophet (Malachi 1:2-3), "... yet I loved Ya'akov. But I hated Esav..." because he could have repented in his lifetime but instead held onto his wicked ways. From this verse we also learn that one who repents and draws closer to Hashem is considered Hashem's beloved, cherished child, as the Rambam tells us (Hilchot Teshuva 7:6), "and Hashem loves him."



The Paradoxical Life of the Defector

A group of men once came to me to receive a blessing in the merit of my forefathers, zy"ra. Upon entering my room, they kissed my hand in reverence. Throughout their visit, they demonstrated tremendous faith in Hashem and in the blessings of tzaddikim.

After they left, I was informed that these men were hardened thieves who caused people to quake in fear. Only in my presence did they act with submission and belief in Hashem. This left me puzzled. How could a person be a believer on the one hand, while being a criminal or Torah transgressor on the other? This self-contradiction comes from one source – a lack of Torah study.

When a person does not toil in Torah, the Yetzer Hara wreaks havoc with his sensitivities. One day he can be a believer in all things holy, and the next day he can transgress the worst sins.

I remember the Jewish congregation in Lyon. There were certain members who would drive to the beit kneset on Shabbat. At first, I could not resolve this paradox. These people wanted to pray with a congregation on Shabbat, but they desecrated Shabbat in the process. Upon second thought, I understood that their inner desire was to come close to Hashem, but since they were not involved in learning Torah, they did not seek to do Hashem's will in the correct manner. Instead they just tried to feel close to Hashem the way they found convenient.

Of course, I asked these people to desist from desecrating Shabbat. Baruch Hashem, after much cajoling, when they finally realized the contradiction in their deeds, they returned to their Heavenly Father. They repented their wrongdoings and began observing mitzvot and consistently scheduling times for Torah study.

The Haftarah

"The vision of Ovadiah" (Ovadiah 1)

The connection to the Parshah: The Haftarah speaks about Esav's constant hatred of Ya'akov, as is described at length in the Parshah when Esav headed towards Ya'akov with four hundred men, intending to harm him.

The Path of the Upright

Benefit of the Doubt: When a person commits an act that can be judged either positively or negatively, if he is a G-d fearing Jew you are obligated to judge him favorably, even if logically you lean towards condemning him.

If he is an average person who is careful not to sin and only sometimes stumbles, if the question about his intent does not appear to favor either interpretation, one should give him the benefit of the doubt. Even if it seems more likely that he indeed sinned, one should leave the matter unresolved. However, it is considered an act of piety to judge him favorably.

If the majority of his actions are bad or if he is not a G-d fearing Jew, one may judge him negatively. Nevertheless, if the person is a stranger and the act is ambiguous, one should give him the benefit of the doubt.

Do We Really Enjoy Material Abundance?

Food, clothing, possessions, and all that man is surrounded with are not important in themselves; we give them significance as long as they are out of our reach. But if a person possesses fancy furniture and gold and silver chandeliers, when he visits a rich home he will not feel the difference and they will not bring him pleasure!

The poor person, who does not possess these things, will greatly enjoy every minute in the presence of expensive, luxury furniture. And he will continue enjoying it as long as for him these things are rare and a special novelty. But as soon as he grows accustomed to them, his enjoyment will disappear.

"The significance of different foods," explains Hagaon Rabbi Ya'akov Galinsky zt"l, "just as with silver, good taste, and all pleasures and excitements, exists only when the object is not readily available. This is the principle behind the difference between Ya'akov Avinu and the wicked Esav, which manifests itself in the verse, 'Esav said: I have plenty. My brother, let what you have remain yours.' Although he has many possessions, he does not enjoy his riches.

The following story highlights this idea. A rich person walks around the beit kneset and notices a poor man who seems happy and content. "How can it be? What happened to this poor man that made him so happy?" he wonders.

"They appointed him as gabbai for the aliyot for the entire year," he was told.

"Why is he so happy?" the rich man ponders. "He has no bread at home and

In Our Father's Path

look how his shoes are torn. All in all, he was given a small honor, yet he is so happy?! Here I am – a wealthy man, but the only thing that makes me happy is when I hear that I earned a large profit. And he is happy about being chosen as gabbai, as if he received who knows what..."

The next day, the poor man passed the home of the rich man and decided to try his luck and ask for a few pennies for charity. He knocked on the door but was told by the servant, "Today my master is not receiving anyone!" "What happened?" asked the poor man, "every Monday morning there are reception hours."

"Yesterday there was a merchant here who spoke with a lack of courtesy. My master was insulted and seethed the entire night. Early this morning he was informed about slight losses on the stock market. There is nothing to talk about. He won't see you..."

The poor man grasped his head in bewilderment: "Master of the World, he is angry? He?! I don't have even one millionth of this person's wealth and happiness, of his greatness and assets. If I would have a quarter of what he possesses, I would go out into the streets and dance with joy! I would never feel anger. I would be jubilant from morning to night! And here he is, angry and broken. Wonder of wonders!"

And both are correct in their assumptions.

The poor man, rightfully so, doesn't understand the rich man. How is he capable of feeling sad? And the wealthy man is perplexed, rightfully so, about the poor man's joy. How do such small things make him so happy? Neither understands the other.

This shows that absolute good cannot be found in This World, only relative good. This is the rule: every single thing, as long as it is rare and not readily available, is good. But as soon as one gets close to it and attains it for some time, it loses its special taste. This is what Shlomo Hamel-ech meant when he said, "What profit does man have for all his labor which he toils beneath the sun?" Man works hard to attain wealth but this wealth quickly loses its flavor once you grow accustomed to it.



The Sabbatical Year

1. One is permitted to uproot a fruit tree during Shemittah if one requires the space. One may be lenient and replant the tree, together with some of its surrounding earth, in a non-perforated flower pot inside one's house. Or one can erect a tent in the new location and then move the tree to there. (This would be like planting inside a house.) It is better to be stringent and move the tree together with some of the earth that surrounds its roots.

2. During Shemittah one may not cut down fruit trees to use the branches if the fruit has begun to grow. (For a grapevine this means from when the seeds form, an olive tree from when it blossoms, and all other trees from when they begin producing small, unripe fruit). This would be considered wasting the fruit. The Torah tells us "The Shabbat (Shemittah) produce of the land shall be yours to eat" and Chazal interpret this to mean that produce having kedushat shevi'it is to be eaten and not wasted, spoiled or destroyed.

However, before the tree begins producing fruit one may cut down branches for heating fuel. One may also cut for food purposes, because the Torah says, "The Shabbat of the land shall be yours to eat". When the Torah tells us, "you shall desist from plowing and harvesting," it means we should not harvest the fruit in the normal way of harvesting, for example to harvest a large amount at once etc. Accordingly, thinning done to benefit the fruit is permitted until the stage of bosef, when unripe fruit are discernable on the tree, several days after the blossoms fall off.

3. One may not cut off a branch from a fruit tree if it has begun to produce small, unripe fruit. One is also forbidden to pick the fruit at this stage, since it is considered wasting the fruit. Fruit may only be picked once it has reached a stage considered ripe.

4. The prohibition to pick unripe fruit refers to picking them from the tree, but if the fruit fell off the tree or was already mistakenly picked, one may eat it even though it is not the usual manner. This is not considered wasting the fruit.

5. One may pick and pickle produce that is not fully ripe if it is the normal way to pickle this produce, for example green tomatoes.

6. If you cut a leaf from a bunch of grapes so the bunch should not be damaged, this is not included in the prohibition of pruning. But it is preferable to do it in a different manner than the usual.

For any questions in practical application of these halachot, please consult a rabbinical authority.

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



This World Is Compared to a Temporary Dwelling

"But Ya'akov journeyed to Sukkot and built himself a house, and for his livestock he made shelters" (Bereishit 33:17).

Why did Ya'akov build an actual house for his family, while for his livestock he only made shelters?

One can suggest that Ya'akov did this intentionally in line with what we are told about him (ibid. 25:27), "Ya'akov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents." Chazal say (Bereishit Raba 63:10) that 'tents' refers to the fact that he sat in the tents of Shem and Ever and engaged in Torah. In other words, Ya'akov Avinu was entirely spiritual and understood that the pleasures of This World are fleeting vanities; the main thing is our spiritual life – engaging in Torah with toil.

This is how the Rif on Ein Ya'akov explains the discrepancy. Ya'akov Avinu was concerned about his children's spirituality, therefore he built a house for them for extra protection, to keep them away from challenges. But for his livestock it was good enough to make sukkot, which are temporary shelters. Chazal tell us that Ya'akov possessed incredible wealth, and the gift he sent to Esav was only a six hundred thousandth of what he owned. Despite this, he made shelters, not houses, for his livestock because he understood what really counts in This World.

As we know, a house is built from durable materials so it can stand for many years, but a sukkah, built with boards and nails, is only a temporary structure that can be dismantled easily. Ya'akov Avinu wanted to impart this outlook to all his descendants – that the main thing in This World is spirituality; this alone is what we take with us to the Next World and what carries weight in the Heavenly Court. Since materialism is insignificant and lacks permanence, Ya'akov built a temporary abode for his livestock.



The Gaon Rabbi Shaul Mekiketz Sheli zt"l

Rabbi Shaul Mekiketz Sheli was known as a master educator who dedicated his life to spreading Torah and transmitting it to all sectors of the local populace.

Rabbi Shaul was born in Djerba to Rabbi Matok Sheli zt"l. In his youth Rabbi Shaul studied under Harav David (Dido) HaKohen zt"l. He began to serve as an assistant educator of young children, together with Harav Yosef Barbi, in the beit midrash named after Harav Chizkiya Peretz. When Harav Barbi passed away, Rabbi Shaul was appointed to serve as Rosh Yeshiva and with his immense talents he was able to explain his Torah thoughts in an exceptionally clear fashion.

Many of the community's greatest scholars studied under his tutelage, among them Hagaon Rabbi Shlomo Mazuz, Hagaon Rabbi Mordechai Sagron, Hagaon Rabbi Refael Kadir Tzeban and others, may their memory be a blessing.

His rich daily routine began with the Shacharit prayer at dawn, after which he taught 'arba amot halacha', an in-depth daily gemara shiur for the ba'alei batim of Tunisia and Djerba. Following this he would go to the beit midrash where his family would bring him a light meal. He stayed there until the evening, teaching his students Torah. He would then deliver another 'arba amot halacha' shiur to the older men, among them fathers and grandfathers of his yeshiva students. At the end of a day's work, this shiur infused the ba'alei batim with a true feeling of pleasure and satisfaction.

Despite his greatness in Torah and his many talmidim, Rabbi Shaul was extremely modest and did not consider himself as someone of worth. Despite his humility, when he entered the yeshiva or even when he walked through the city streets, the place would immediately grow silent out of the great awe and respect that all accorded him.

On arriving home, he did not hurry to rest but spent several hours editing manuscripts of rabbanim and authors, ensuring a superior result. He added his own comments to these writings, which he would sign with an abbreviation of his name, 'Hamaki"sh'. This love for writing he implanted in the hearts of his talmidim, and encouraged them to write down their innovative Torah thoughts. They would show him their writings and he would correct and polish their words.

His talmid Hagaon Rabbi Alter Mazuz zt"l related that to encourage his talmidim to study Torah with diligence and commit their Torah ideas to writing, Rabbi Shaul would tell them about himself, how in his youth he would study Torah diligently, even during the late hours of the night, and formulate novel Torah thoughts (chiddushim). Sometimes, after lying down to sleep at a late hour, he would reflect on what he had learned that day and suddenly come up with some chiddush, difficulty or resolution, and overcome with joy he would jump out of bed and switch on the light so he could write down his thoughts and not forget them.

Rabbi Mekiketz also served as shaliach tzibbur (cantor who leads the prayers), mainly on Shabbat and Chagim, in the beit kneset named after Harav Chizkiya Peretz. He also served as a scribe for the beit din for twenty-four years, writing ketubot (marriage contracts) and other documents. He was appointed a halachic authority by Harav Kalphon Moshe Kohen. Twice a year he would deliver a public lecture in the Beit Hamidrash Hagadol of Djerba. He gave over inspiring, heartfelt words that entered the hearts of his listeners, arousing them to repent and improve their ways.

During the Second World War when the flames of the Holocaust began subsiding across Europe, they began to ignite in

North Africa. Their murderous appetite brought the Germans to Tunisia, and the oppressors walked the streets with their nailed boots and deadly weapons, causing much harm to the local Jews.

On Shabbat Parshat Terumah, the Nazis arrived on the island of Djerba, where they threatened the Chief Rabbi that if he does not succeed in collecting 50 kilograms of gold from the Jews within three hours, they would blow up the entire island. And as if to demonstrate their wicked intentions, the Germans flew two fighter planes in the skies of Djerba, back and forth, as a threat to the local Jews.

After collecting the gold in the midst of the Shabbat day, the congregants gathered for the Mincha prayer where they read from the Torah, "And they shall take the gold". Rabbi Shaul gathered the worshippers and told them: "The holy Torah taught us that the Germans will take the gold, but nothing more than that. This will be the end of the evil decree! We must thank Hashem for taking money as an atonement, and saving our souls!"

Years later, the Rosh Yeshiva of Kisei Rachamim, Hagaon Rabbi Meir Mazuz shlita, found another hint in this verse. He explained that the word וְהֵם, 'and they', has a numerical value of 51, corresponding to the weight of gold the wicked Germans ym"sh demanded they hand over (according to the rule that a gematriya can be off by one.) Furthermore, the last letters of אֶת יְקוּחַוּם, 'And they will take the (gold)', spells מוֹת, death. This alludes to the fact that through this (donation of gold), the entire community was saved from death.

As soon as it was possible to settle in our Holy Land, Rabbi Mekiketz prepared himself to make aliya due to his strong love for Eretz Yisrael. Despite being old and sick, he trusted that Hashem would help him.

His passing left a gaping void for all the Djerba scholars. They acknowledged his significance in their lives by tearing kriya, as a talmid tears his garment on his Rebbe's passing. According to his will, his holy body was buried in Be'er Sheva. He told his followers: "Avraham Avinu planted an eshel in Be'er Sheva and I wish to plant my entire body there."