

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE VAYESSE

Haftarah: Hoshea 11:7 – 12:12
NOVEMBER 20-21, 2015 9 KISLEV 5776

DEDICATIONS: In Memory of Sara Mizrahi

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***Met my wife and my daughter and her
friends at a sports bar near Baruch
College. It's at 344 3rd Avenue at 26th
Street. Kosher Sushi! Nice guy owns it.
Without many other options down there,
it's good to have something kosher.
Showed me pictures with Rabbi Sacks
there, Rabbi Zion Setton and all the other
downtown Rabbis. Stop by and say hello
to Jeffrey from me.***

Editors Notes

A Never-ending Battle for Truth, Justice and the American Way

As we closed last week's portion, we find Jacob at the age of 63 being blessed by his father with the blessing of Abraham. He was told by his parents to leave home and find a wife. His mother understood that leaving home would also protect him from his brother Esav. Between last weeks close and this week's opening, the Midrash fills in the blanks. To prepare himself for living outside the land, Jacob registers at the Yeshiva of Ever and spends the next 14 years studying. At age 77, he begins the journey to Haran and almost immediately is attacked by Eliphaz, Esav's son who intended on killing him. Jacob convinces his nephew to spare his life. In lieu of murder, Eliphaz completely strips Jacob of all his goods as a destitute man is likened to a dead man. With nothing, Jacobs continues to Laban. Some might say, from the frying pan into the fire.

And as we close this parasha, Jacob is again on the move, returning home after 22 years. And its Déjà vu all over again. Jacob fled Israel to escape his brother Esav, who had sworn to kill him, and as he leaves his

father-in-law Lavan's home, he is once again being pursued by his father in law who wants to kill him. It's only G-d Himself, interceding on Yaakov's behalf who warns Lavan against harming Yaakov. And the story continues next week when Jacob will confront his brother and settle matters for the time being.

On the surface, Esav hates Jacob for "tricking" him into selling the birthright and for taking his blessing. Lavan hates him for "tricking" him and taking his wealth. While we may cheer our forefather for battling deceit with cunning as a lesson in how we must face the evil inclination, we are told that Jacob wished to never be placed in these circumstances and regretted even the appearance of acting incorrectly. Too many people read these stories and refer to them as examples of Yaakov's and the Jewish people's deceitful nature. People wonder as to how it is possible that Jacob be labeled as the man of truth.

It is only when we learn the Torah properly, guided by the writings of our Rabbis that we see Jacob's unwavering commitment to truth. It seems that G-d himself labels Jacob as complete and a man of truth. In next week's portion Rashi will cite the Midrash that Hashem calls Jacob "God." The midrash elaborates that while Jacob is God of this world, Hashem is God of the heavenly world. Had this not been written in the Midrash it would be impossible for anyone to state.

The Rabbis explain that Jacobs's image of truth in this world is a reflection of Hashem's seal of truth. The Ramban mentions in this context the statement of the Rabbis that Jacob's image is engraved on the heavenly throne. The truth of Yaakov is grounded in the eternity of heaven. There can be no deviation from it; in a sense it is immutable.

Daniel Fine's Short Vort quotes Rav Hutner who speaks of a fascinatingly insightful principle called 'one action proves the other action' ('the exception proves the rule,'). There are two types of honest/truthful people. There is the person who was brought up to only tell the truth, to the extent that he is incapable of dabbling in any form of untruth. And there is the person who is capable of telling a lie, but chooses to cling to truth. For the first person, telling the truth means little as far as we are concerned; he

does not get major reward for telling the truth - he is simply incapable of lying. Telling the truth means nothing to someone who cannot do otherwise. The test of whether someone is truthful because he is incapable of lying or because he is choosing to tell truth is when it is necessary (and permitted) for this person to tell a lie. A person who cannot lie won't be able to lie when necessary and permitted either, but a person who is only clinging to truth because that is what he knows is what HaShem wants, will be able to temporarily separate himself from truth if that is what HaShem wants from him at this moment. Thus, from the fact that Yaakov was able to dabble in things which were not one hundred percent truthful (for the necessary and correct reasons) shows that his general cleaving to truth was not merely because he was incapable of doing otherwise, but was a real meaningful decision to cling to the trait of truth.

Jacob abhorred being placed in a position where he was forced to go against his nature. He hated telling a lie.

But what about the rest of us? The Talmud in Sotah tells that in the days of the Mashiah, HaEmet Tihyeh NeAderet, the Truth will be hidden. If we look around, we can see how true that statement is today.

Steven D. Levitt, coauthor of Freakonomics and a renowned economics professor at the University of Chicago, cites research suggesting that more than 50 percent of people lie on their resumes. And almost 60 percent of employers have caught a lie on a resume. When it comes to dating sites, The National Science Foundation found that 81 percent of people lie. And what about politicians whose lying rate probably comes very close to 100%.

I imagine that politician's lie is because the public doesn't want to hear the truth. People want to hear what they want to hear. It seems that people not only habitually lie, but they would rather be lied to. Take the tragedy in Paris on Friday night with more than 150 dead so far and hundreds more injured. The public on the one hand wants to know that there was nothing anyone could have done to stop this and on the other hand there is no imminent threat to anyone else. The simple truth is that you can't have it both ways.

A group of at least 20 terrorists coordinating six simultaneous terror attacks by a large team called for months of preparation, precise intelligence, a variety of weapons and a large team of dedicated killers backed by exceptional staff work and organization of hundreds who had to be directly involved. If the French, the Americans and the World was unable over the course of months and with chatter among so

many to pick up the slightest clue as to the massive preparations afoot for a horrendous, wide-scale terrorist outrage against Paris, then how can anyone claim that there is no imminent threat anywhere?

Can we call President Obama's statement that "ISIS is JV and contained" a lie? Aside from a professionally mounted hit on Paris, the downing of a Russian plane over Egypt killing 244 people, the double suicide bombing killing 43 in Beirut, the murder of two American trainers along with others in Jordan last week and their consolidation of a territory comprising a third of Syria and Iraq, they are contained and no threat. Ridiculous!

And what of the Presidents claims of victory in Sinjar? He neglected to tell us that the city was already abandoned. And of Mr. Obama's claim to have severed the main road link between ISIS capitals in Syria and Iraq? He forgot to tell us that once the route became vulnerable, ISIS stopped using it.

Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy was to "speak softly, and carry a big stick. Our President as probably most if not all those running to take his place speaks only untruths or at most partial truths. He has no heart to go after ISIS and though he claims otherwise has let the world know through his actions that America no longer carries any stick. The only ones really doing anything are the Kurds, yet the President stands with his Turkish ally, the anti-Semite Erdogan who wants to declare the Kurds the terrorists and the enemy. The President went partner with Russia, yet seeks to partner with Iran making Hezbollah his partner. Yes, it's very confusing. His policy seems to be no policy.

How does he and all of them get away with it? Americans don't want to know the truth. We want to white wash tragedy with some hash tags on Facebook and social media. We write Peace for Paris and soothe our conscience as if we've done something. Jacob our father taught us that truth takes a commitment; a commitment by a nation and by its leaders. Judging by our current leaders and our current state, Superman would be ashamed! Whatever happened to our never-ending Battle for Truth, Justice and the American way?

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading Va'yetsah - Yaacov goes to Laban's house and builds a family

- 1- Hashem appears to Yaacov in a dream. Hashem promises him the land and many children.
- 2- Yaacov meets Rachel by the well. Laban lets Yaacov stay by him.
- 3- Yaacov works for Laban, marries Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah and has 8 children
- 4- Leah gives Rachel the dudaim, Leah gives birth to Yisachar and Zevulun, Rachel gives birth to Yosef
- 5- Spotted goats, brown sheep, Yaacov gets his wages. Hashem tells him to leave Laban's house.
- 6- Yaacov leaves Laban's house. Rachel takes the terafim. Laban runs after them.
- 7- Laban and Yaacov make a peace treaty. Yaacov goes with his family to Eretz Israel.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"And I will be with you and I will protect you."
(Beresheet 28:15)

Hashem promised Ya'akov Abinu that he would take care of him and provide for him.

We all know that the expenditures for Shabbat and Yom Tob are not included in the amount that is predetermined for us on Rosh Hashanah. Rather, the rule is that one will be reimbursed for whatever he spends in honor of these special days.

With this in mind, Rabbi Dovid Kaplan explains, we can understand the quaint custom practiced by Harav Shimshon Pincus z"tl. Rav Pincus would take his kids into a grocery store every Friday and tell them to pick out some goodies, but he didn't do it in the way most parents would have. As a true man of faith, he would tell the kids to pick out anything they wanted in the store. "Take whatever you want!" he would tell them. "It's all free, absolutely free. No matter how much you have to pay, Hashem is going to give it back. The whole store is yours, all yours! Just help yourselves!" And he did that week after week.

Please don't get into "but all that sugar is bad for the kids," mode. Please try to absorb the real message here. It's free. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And Ya'akov was afraid and he said, 'How awesome is this place.'" (Beresheet 28:17)

Ya'akov Abinu was traveling to Haran when he was suddenly plunged into darkness, and he lay down to sleep. At that point, he had a phenomenal dream where Hashem revealed Himself to Ya'akov, and promised him Divine protection until he would

return to his father's home. The Midrash says that he also saw the future exiles and the final redemption in this dream. And yet, when Ya'akov wakes up, his first instinct is to cry out, "This is a holy place! Had I known that, I would not have slept here!" That means that Ya'akov would have given up all of the Divine revelations and the promise that he saw in the dream, because he wouldn't want to sleep in a holy place.

From here we see that the ends do not justify the means! If we talk in shul words of Torah during the time we are not allowed to speak, such as Kaddish, Hazarah or Sefer Torah, instead of getting a misvah, we are getting the opposite. We tend to justify our misdeeds by saying, "Hashem would want me to do this for this specific reason" and yet Ya'akov, our forefather, is teaching us that it's not worth the outcome if it means doing something wrong. Let's listen to Sefer Torah, Kaddish and Hazarah, and not talk about anything, and our Torah study will be enhanced by the fact that we are doing the right thing! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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The Two Tests

The Midrash relates that when Yaakov left his parents' home to flee from his brother, Esav, who wanted to kill him in revenge for his "stealing" Yishak's blessings, Esav instructed his son, Elifaz, to run after Yaakov and murder him. Esav made Elifaz swear that he would fulfill this mission. Elifaz consulted with his mother, Timna, who advised him not to obey Esav's command. She warned him that Yaakov was very strong, and Elifaz could be killed if he tried launching an assault on Yaakov. Elifaz was in a quandary, as he wanted to fulfill his father's wish, to which he was bound by oath, but he also feared for his life. The solution was that Yaakov gave Elifaz all his money and everything he had with him. An impoverished person is considered as though he is "dead," and thus by taking Yaakov's money, Elifaz was considered as having fulfilled his father's command without actually killing Yaakov. And thus Yaakov arrived at Haran, where he would stay for twenty years, penniless, without any belongings at all. With Hashem's help, however, he was able to amass a huge fortune working for his wily uncle, Laban, and he returned to Eretz Yisrael a very wealthy man.

We might wonder why things needed to happen this way. Why did Yaakov have to become penniless before earning wealth? Why did G-d arrange that

Yaakov would arrive in Haran without a dime to his name, if he was destined to become wealthy?

The Ketab Sofer (Rav Avraham Shemuel Binyamin Sofer, 1815-1871) explains that there are two basic spiritual tests that people face in life: the test of poverty, and the test of wealth. An impoverished man is tempted to lose faith, to question G-d's justice, to betray G-d out of anger and resentment over his plight, and to steal in order to sustain himself. At the same time, however, wealth also poses difficult tests. Wealthy people can easily become arrogant and conceited, and look down on other people. Also, while a poor person understands human fragility and how we are all dependent on G-d's grace, the wealthy man is prone to feel self-sufficient and independently capable of caring for himself, without any sense of dependence on the Almighty's kindness and compassion. Yaakov Abinu passed both these tests at both stages of his life. After losing all his money to Elifaz, he still did not lose his faith, and when he returned to Eretz Yisrael as a wealthy man, he remained fully devoted and loyal to G-d.

This is why Yaakov had to endure poverty before being blessed wealth. "Ma'aseh Abot Siman La'banim" – the actions of our patriarchs serve as a model and blueprint for us, their descendants. By successfully passing both tests – the test of poverty and the test of wealth – Yaakov paved the way for us to pass both these tests. He set for us the example and precedent that we need throughout our lives – both in good times, and in times of hardship. We look to Yaakov for inspiration during life's darker moments, as he reminds us to retain our faith and rely on G-d's kindness and assistance, as well as during periods of joy and success, as he reminds us to remain humble and ever cognizant of our dependence on the Almighty for everything.

VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA
The Eye Within the Eye

The light associated with the first day of creation אור הגנוז is termed by our sages as the אור; the hidden light stored away for the righteous for use in the future. The sages do admit though that it can be accessed intermittently during this epoch by those who advance themselves spiritually. It appears that any spiritual undertaking to access the light must include an elevated state of vision by that individual. This in essence will throw him back to a spiritual era prior to the sin of Adam Harishon and a period when the light of creation had been fully revealed. In order

to perceive this light the enlightened cannot merely use his physical eyes but must evoke an elevated spiritual vision.

This vehicle of perception of the אור הגנוז is termed biblically as עין בעין an eye within the eye. This vehicle was used by the Children of Israel during their 40 year sojourn in the desert. Their spiritual advancement allowed them to access and perceive the original light of creation as it says in Bemidbar 14:14 " For you are אלהים who was seen by the eye within the eye, you אלהים and your cloud standing over them, and in a pillar of cloud You are traveling ahead of them by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. Obviously this being a reference to their ability to live in the desert above the laws of nature, in a state reminiscent of Adam before the sin.

In this weeks Parasha, Yaakov entered into an agreement with his father-in-law Lavan. Lavan separated a group of solid black or white sheep and goats and told Yaakov that he would be paid for his years of service with whatever spotted streaked or banded offspring this flock yielded. Yaakov peeled streaks into branches of poplar and other trees and put them by water troughs where the flocks drank and mated. The offspring of the flock were subsequently banded, spotted or streaked. All agree that an obvious conclusion would be that what parents see, prior to marital relations has a decided effect on their resulting offspring. That alone however would not account for the fact that 100% of the animal offspring did not follow the genetic code of their biological parents! Something else was in play here.

Let us understand that Yaakov had earlier anticipated this episode. He recalls in a later conversation with Rahel and Leah that an Angel of God had revealed to him a method to alter the genetic make up of the sheep. It appears to me that he was taught that this can only truly be accomplished by accessing or seeing the creative properties of the original light of creation. He was taught by the angel that the properties can be perceived only through a raised spiritual vision of ones eyes. As Yaakov recounts (Ber 31:12) " I suddenly had a vision...An angel called me in God's name, Yaakov! and I replied Yes. He said " You must raise your eyes in order to see" this will allow you to alter the genetic make up of the animals. One might mistakenly think that it was only the peeling of the trees which altered the genetic make up of the offspring. Rather it appears that it was

also necessary to include a raising of the eyes to perceive and access the original creative and genetic properties of the אור הגנוז.

Based on this tradition taught to Yaakov by the angel; we know that the ability to alter the genetic make up of beings must include a revelation of the original light of creation. The only vehicle that can perceive this light is the eye within the eye. Without it, there is no detection of the אור הגנוז - the light of creation - And without it there is no ability to alter the genetic make up of beings.

The Talmud teaches us how the light can be accessed to alter the genetic make up of a future fetus. R. Yohanan was accustomed to sit next to the women's mikveh. He explained that when the Jewish women emerge and come out from their required immersion, let them look at me and they will have children as beautiful and learned as I (BM 84 & Ber 20). R. Yohanan was questioned how he can remain unabashed in making such a claim without fearing the evil eye. R. Yohanan asserts that since he is a descendent of Yosef Hasadik he is naturally endowed with a spiritual aspect allowing him to soar above the evil eye. This is referred to the aspect of עלי עין. Namely that which is above normal vision which is not subject to being tampered with. I propose that R. Yohanan's claim was that he is naturally endowed with the eye within the eye which allows him access to the אור הגנוז. Therefore he maintains that any women that contemplates the rabbi and his spiritual nature while exiting the Mikveh will also have some access to the אור הגנוז. This comes with the possibility to physically and spiritually influence the genetic make up of the fetus.

In the future, the אור הגנוז, the light of creation will be revealed as a result of the advanced spiritual state of humankind. I would also like to suggest that a heightened perception activating the eye within the eye is a necessary spiritual step leading us towards the messianic era. It must initially be ushered in by the Mashiah Ben Yosef who as the seed of Yosef Hasadik is naturally endowed with this facet of vision. Therefore, Yishaya advises that only those who will advance spiritually in the secret of עין בעין the eye within the eye will witness the ultimate redemption which is nothing more than the revealment of the אור הגנוז. Hence the נביא Navi writes "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger of good news, who announces

peace, the harbinger of good news who announces salvation, who says to Siyon: Your God reigns!. Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices and sing together יראו בשוב ה' ציון for via the eye within the eye they will see God's return to Siyon. (Yishaya 51:8).

Rabbi Wein THE IRRELEVANCE OF IT ALL

In attempting to be currently relevant, in the long view of history and human events, is the danger of becoming totally irrelevant. This occurs when dealing with transient issues, when a long-term view is what is really necessary. By reading and listening to the media, the bloggers, and the party and convention planners among us, one would believe that the fate of the Jewish people, the State of Israel, the salvation of Torah Judaism and the general welfare of humankind is dependent on empowering women rabbis or excluding them, destroying or preserving an illegally built synagogue building and giving pat answers to very complex and complicated personal and family problems and issues.

All of these issues have an importance in their own right but none of them, in the long run, are relevant to Jewish survival in a general sense. Women rabbis have been around for decades in the non-Orthodox synagogue world. Has their presence strengthened any of these faltering and failing groups?

Is there any evidence whatsoever that women rabbis strengthened Jewish commitment among the unaffiliated? Is there any reason, except for the empowerment of a few diehard women, to think that this issue should be at the forefront of Jewish life and rabbinic savants?

It is completely irrelevant to the current situation of Jews and Judaism in the world. It will not convince the unfortunately alienated Jew to become more Jewishly committed and it will certainly not resonate with the vast majority of Orthodox Jews. So why pursue something that is so unnecessarily divisive and essentially useless? Why, indeed?!

Europe declared that it was going to label Israeli products grown, produced, or manufactured east of the "green line" as being from occupied territory. This is Europe's contribution to achieving peace in the Middle East. The response of the Moslem extremists, who Israel has to deal with on a daily basis, to this gesture of European solidarity, was the horrendous massacre of innocents this past weekend in Paris.

The labeling issue now appears as it should be, to be absurd, useless and completely irrelevant to the realities of the Middle East and the Moslem world. By now it should be evident even to the most obtuse Israel-basher that the problem is not the “settlements” but rather a militant Islam that refuses the right of others to exist in the Middle East..... and now, for that matter even in the USA and Europe.

Of course Europe, its media and academia, has a long history of dwelling on the irrelevant. It is trapped in its own tangled web of moral equivalency where good is evil and evil is good. Orwell's 1984 is Europe 2015. Anti-Semitism knows no logical boundaries or sensible argument or debate. And make no mistake about it, today's anti-Israel rhetoric, demonstrations and actions are motivated by anti-Semitism. This curse has haunted Europe for millennia and it is still thriving there today. Labeling products is completely irrelevant to the future of Israel and of Europe. But Moslem migration and Moslem extremism and terrorism are the stuff of Europe's future. Europe should stop whistling past the graveyard.

The current tense situation in Israel – Jerusalem is still far safer than New York, Chicago or Paris – again points out the irrelevance of two-state solutions. Without a change in the Palestinian mindset, which disavows Israel's right to exist, all the diplomatic efforts at peace are doomed to failure. All of the proposals for bridging the gap are completely irrelevant to the realities of the situation.

President Obama himself realized this to be the situation when he stated that no real progress can be expected during the remainder of his term in office. There is a begrudging admittance in that statement – inferred but certainly not explicit – that not everything is the fault of Benjamin Netanyahu's obstinacy.

Of course, the Israeli Left, which itself is rapidly becoming more and more irrelevant in much of Israel's society, will never admit its errors or basically change its tune and policies. But the result of becoming irrelevant is that eventually people stop listening. Irrelevance only breeds continuing and more intensified irrelevance.

Thus we will have to wait and see what events will occur in the future that will change the present situation and give us an opportunity to truly bridge the gaps and create a more stable and even peaceful Middle East.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks How the Light Gets In

Why Jacob? That is the question we find ourselves asking repeatedly as we read the narratives of Genesis. Jacob is not what Noah was: righteous, perfect in his generations, one who walked with God. He did not, like Abraham, leave his land, his birthplace and his father's house in response to a Divine call. He did not, like Isaac, offer himself up as a sacrifice. Nor did he have the burning sense of justice and willingness to intervene that we see in the vignettes of Moses' early life. Yet we are defined for all time as the descendants of Jacob, the children of Israel. Hence the force of the question: Why Jacob?

The answer, it seems to me, is intimated in the beginning of this week's parsha. Jacob was in the middle of a journey from one danger to another. He had left home because Esau had vowed to kill him when Isaac died. He was about to enter the household of his uncle Laban, which would itself present other dangers. Far from home, alone, he was at a point of maximum vulnerability. The sun set. Night fell. Jacob lay down to sleep, and then saw this majestic vision:

He dreamed and, look, there was a ladder set on the earth, with its top reaching heaven; and, look, angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And, look, the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread forth to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you and through your offspring. And look, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. 28:12-17)

Note the fourfold "and look," in Hebrew *ve-hinei*, an expression of surprise. Nothing has prepared Jacob for this encounter, a point emphasized in his own words when he says, "the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it." The very verb used at the beginning of the passage, "He came upon a place," in Hebrew *vayifga ba-makom*, also means an unexpected encounter. Later, in rabbinic Hebrew, the word *ha-Makom*, "the Place," came to mean "God." Hence in a poetic way the phrase *vayifga ba-makom* could be

read as, “Jacob happened on, had an unexpected encounter with, God.”

Add to this Jacob’s night-time wrestling match with the angel in next week’s parsha and we have an answer to our question. Jacob is the man who has his deepest spiritual experiences alone, at night, in the face of danger and far from home. He is the man who meets God when he least expects to, when his mind is on other things, when he is in a state of fear and possibly on the brink of despair. Jacob is the man who, in liminal space, in the middle of the journey, discovers that “Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!”

Jacob thus became the father of the people who had their closest encounter with God in what Moses was later to describe as “the howling wasteland of a wilderness” (Deut. 32:10). Uniquely, Jews survived a whole series of exiles, and though at first they said, “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” they discovered that the Shekhinah, the Divine presence, was still with them. Though they had lost everything else, they had not lost contact with God. They could still discover that “the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!”

Abraham gave Jews the courage to challenge the idols of the age. Isaac gave them the capacity for self-sacrifice. Moses taught them to be passionate fighters for justice. But Jacob gave them the knowledge that precisely when you feel most alone, God is still with you, giving you the courage to hope and the strength to dream.

The man who gave the most profound poetic expression to this was undoubtedly David in the book of Psalms. Time and again he calls to God from the heart of darkness, afflicted, alone, pained, afraid:

Save me, O God,
for the floodwaters are up to my neck.
Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire;
I can’t find a foothold.
I am in deep water,
and the floods overwhelm me. (Ps 69:2-3)

From the depths, O Lord,
I call for your help. (Ps. 130:1)

Sometimes our deepest spiritual experiences come when we least expect them, when we are closest to despair. It is then that the masks we wear are stripped away. We are at our point of maximum vulnerability – and it is when we are most fully open to God that God is most fully open to us. “The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are

crushed in spirit” (Ps.34:18). “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise”(Ps. 51:17). God “heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds” (Ps. 147:3).

Rav Nahman of Bratslav used to say; “A person needs to cry to his Father in heaven with a powerful voice from the depths of his heart. Then God will listen to his voice and turn to his cry. And it may be that from this act itself, all doubts and obstacles that are keeping him back from true service of Hashem will fall from him and be completely nullified.”[1]

We find God not only in holy or familiar places but also in the midst of a journey, alone at night. “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for You are with me.” The most profound of all spiritual experiences, the base of all others, is the knowledge that we are not alone. God is holding us by the hand, sheltering us, lifting us when we fall, forgiving us when we fail, healing the wounds in our soul through the power of His love.

My late father of blessed memory was not a learned Jew. He did not have the chance to become one. He came to Britain as a child and a refugee. He had to leave school young, and besides, the possibilities of Jewish education in those days were limited. Merely surviving took up most of the family’s time. But I saw him walk tall as a Jew, unafraid, even defiant at times, because when he prayed or read the Psalms he felt intensely that God was with him. That simple faith gave him immense dignity and strength of mind.

That was his heritage from Jacob, as it is ours. Though we may fall, we fall into the arms of God. Though others may lose faith in us, and though we may even lose faith in ourselves, God never loses faith in us. And though we may feel utterly alone, we are not. God is there, beside us, within us, urging us to stand and move on, for there is a task to do that we have not yet done and that we were created to fulfil. A singer of our time wrote, “There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.” The broken heart lets in the light of God, and becomes the gate of heaven.

[1] Likkutei Maharar 2:46.

**AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL
 “And Jacob went on his way, and Messengers
 (or Angels) of G-d met him” (32:2)**

At the beginning of our Perasha Yaacob Avinu is making his way to the house of his mother's family. He stops in order to sleep, using a rock as a pillow. It is here that Hashem appears to Yaacob for the first time at the age of 75, in the famous vision of the ladder with Angels traversing both up and down. From here we understand that Yaacob had the zechut to see Angels in a vision.

At the conclusion of our Perasha Yaacob Avinu is able to sight Angels with his sensory faculties. As it states, “And Yaacob went on his way and Messengers (or Angels) of G-d met him” (32:2). In next week's Perasha Yaacob is “wrestling” with the Angel of Esav.

What did Yaacob do in order to increase his spiritual levels from dreaming to seeing to touching holy Angels?

It is certain that Yaacob had progressed in the service of Hashem and gained perfection through many trials, however the Torah only reveals the details of his steadfast loyalty to the service of Laban. The Torah states, “And you know that with all my strength I served your father” (31:6). “That which was torn (by beasts) I did not bring to you (Laban). I replaced the loss of my hand...” (31:39). “Thus I was, in the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes” (31:40).

From this we learn how Yaacob attained his chief perfection in Hashem's service, by his exceptional loyalty in the service to Laban (who was dishonest).

Loyalty is the trait which is at the foundation upon which our holy father Yaacob built his edifice of perfection. It is our loyalty and steadfastness to our parents, spouse, teachers, children, nation and country which further develops this character trait for more perfect loyalty in the service of Hashem, Torah & Mitzvot.
 Adapted from “The Beginning” By R' Miller ZT'L

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