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פרשת וישלח Parshat Vayishlach

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ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



SUCCOT IN KISLEV

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REBECCA ADLER ('23)

CHANI KAMINETSKY ('20)

EVELYN GILL ('23)

YAFFA SHEKHTER ('20)

After a successful reunion with his brother Esav at the beginning of Parshat Vayishlach, Yaakov is able to complete his journey back to the home in Canaan that he left 22 years earlier.

On his way, he stops in the city of Succot, which he names for the huts he builds there for his cattle.

It may come as somewhat of a surprise that the concept of Succot, the name of both a place and a temporary structure, appears in the Torah this early! Yaakov's journey from Charan to Chevron takes place hundreds of years before the Jews wander in the wilderness under the special canopy of God's protection, a miracle we celebrate each year on the holiday of...Succot! Is there any connection between

the Succot of Yaakov and the Succot we sit in each fall, beyond a simple structural similarity?

To add to our question: The city of Succot appears yet another time in the Chumash, as the Jews are fleeing Egypt. Succot is where they stop to bake their dough into matzah before proceeding towards the Yam Suf. Is this story connected to the story of Yaakov stopping in Succot, and are either of these incidents related to our commemoration of being sheltered in the wilderness?

R' Yitzchak Twersky (Amittah shel Torah, vol. 1, 160) points out something fascinating. Both stories about the city of Succot include a mention of cattle. Yaakov travels to Succot and builds huts for his flocks. The Jews leave Egypt and stop in Succot with their multitudes of sheep and cattle. R' Twersky explains that this is no coincidence. These flocks of cattle have something in common; neither of them should, by rights, belong to their owners.

What does this mean? When Yaakov leaves Lavan's house, Lavan intends to trick Yaakov once again, this time out of the wages he owes Yaakov for his last 6 years of service (see Bereishit 31:41-42). Only through miraculous means, by the hand of God, does Yaakov manage to escape Lavan's house with tremendous wealth in the form of flocks of sheep and cattle. The same holds true for the Jewish people as they left Egypt. Pharaoh intends for them to leave with nothing; God sees to it that they leave with **מאד כבד מקנה** (Shmot 12:38), flocks of sheep and cattle as payment for their years of slavery.

These flocks of cattle in both cases represent God's intervention on our behalf, Divine Providence, our belief that God loves us, watches over us, and takes care of us. This is why Succot is the place where Yaakov and the Jewish People stop with their sheep and cattle on their way to the Land of Israel. Not only do the huts (or clouds) that protected us in the wilderness show us God's love and care, but the city of Succot also reminds us that God is out there watching over us.

We are commemorating all of these ideas when we celebrate Succot (Yalkut Shimoni Bo 186). God's love for us is not limited to huts in the wilderness, but extends to ensuring we are consistently provided for in every way.

LESS IS MORE

REBECCA ADLER ('23)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Vayishlach, Yaakov and Esav reunite. Yaakov is told by his messengers that Esav is preparing to fight alongside 400 men against Yaakov. Yaakov attempts to make peace with his brother by bringing him some of his flocks. When Esav sees him with the gift, he rejects it and says **יֵשׁ לִי רַב**, "I have plenty" (Bereishit 33:9). Yaakov wants to have peace between him and his brother, so he continues to try to convince Esav to accept his cattle, a peace treaty. Yaakov continues and says that Esav should accept the gift because **יֵשׁ לִי כָל**, "I have everything" (Bereishit 33:11). It

may seem that Yaakov is acting arrogant and overconfident, which is unusual from a great role model in the Torah; but actually it is the opposite.

Rashi says that really it was Esav who was talking in the arrogant and haughty tone. He comments that when Esav said he had plenty, he was bragging that he had much more than he needed. When Yaakov said "I have everything," that meant he had just the necessities for life. Yaakov had Hashem on his side, and that was enough.

The Kli Yakar also comments on these pesukim, although he approaches these phrases in a different way. He says that when Esav said he had plenty, he was a rich man and simply wanted more. The wicked always desire more than they have. Esav, an evil man, always wanted more money and was never satisfied with what he had. On the other hand, Yaakov had **כָּל** -- he had everything. He didn't want or need more and was truly satisfied with what he had. In reality, Yaakov was a wealthy man, but didn't have a desire for more money. Instead of focusing on materialistic riches, he devoted his life towards spirituality. Yaakov was a righteous man who recognized that his life should not revolve around his wealth. Rather, it was dependent on his level of spirituality and his relationship with Hashem.

We learn a beautiful trait from Yaakov: balance. Yaakov displays great focus in serving Hashem, but at the same time took time to worry about his financial situation. He was not simply davening and relying on Hashem to help push him through life, as important as that is. He recognized that he had to put in some effort as well, and with the help of Hashem, he would be successful. In this week's parsha, Yaakov displays an attribute that we can all learn from and incorporate into our own lives.

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

CHANI KAMINETSKY ('20)

In this week's parsha, Yaakov fights with a myste-

rious angelic being which ultimately results in a name change for Yaakov. As they fight, the angel begs Yaakov to set him free, but Yaakov gives the angel a condition:

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחֲנִי כִּי עֹלָה הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר
לֹא אֲשַׁלְּחֶךָּ כִּי אִם בְּרַכְתָּנִי

“Then he said, “Let me go, for dawn is breaking.” But he answered, ‘I will not let you go, unless you bless me’ (Bereshit, 32:27).

Yaakov says he will only allow the angel to leave if the angel blesses him. The pesukim that follow do not seem to clearly follow the pattern we would have expected. The angel replies and gives Yaakov a name change to Yisrael. Following this name change the angel is able to leave, so clearly this name change must have constituted Yaakov’s “required blessing.” What about the name Yisrael constitutes a blessing?

Yaakov struggled many times throughout his life, but one of the main hardships was his fight and relationship with Esav. This began in the womb and continued into their birth, when Yaakov emerged holding the heel of Esav and earned the name Yaakov:

וַאֲחֵרֵי כֵן יָצָא אַחִיו וַיְדוּ אַחְזָת בַּעֲקֵב עֵשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא
שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְחָק בֵּן שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּלִדְתוֹ אֹתָם

“Then his brother emerged, holding on to the heel of Esav; so they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born” (Bereishit 25:26).

Yaakov’s name, his essence, had been defined by his struggle with Esav. Rabbi Fohrman suggests that the name change to Yisrael represents a change in character.

The name Yisrael connotes the ability to face difficulties head on, it represents the ability to withstand outside pressure and be confident. Therefore, this name change is truly a blessing which gives Yaakov a new strength in his identity.

We can learn from this change of character to play an active role in our own lives. Our name and role

should be determined by ourselves so we can use that to inspire others.

THE NAME GAME

EVELYN GILL ('23)

In this week’s parsha, Parshat Vayishlach, the name Yisrael is mentioned for the first time. After Yaakov finishes preparing for his reunion with Esav, he is attacked by a mysterious man, who he defeats. The man turns out to be an angel, who says to Yaakov:

לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֹאמַר עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל

“Your name shall no longer be Yaakov, but Yisrael” (Bereishit 32:29).

The name Yisrael didn’t just end up being Yaakov’s new name, but also ended up being the name for the Jewish People, B’nei Yisrael, and the name of our home country, Israel. Why is this name so significant? Doesn’t it seem to have a negative meaning, “fighting with God?” Shouldn’t such a significant name be more positive?

Rashi gives a unique answer to this. Two parshiyot ago, in Parshat Toldot, Yaakov tricks his father Yitzchak into giving him the blessing that was intended for Esav. While Yaakov and his mother Rivka had very good reasons for wanting Yaakov to get that blessing, Yaakov still had to disguise himself and pretend to be Esav. Rashi says that when Yaakov is given the name Yisrael, it indicates that now the blessings aren’t coming to him through secrecy and trickery, but because he earned them.

Throughout his further journeys and through his victory against the angel, Yaakov has truly earned the blessings that he was given in a proper way. The name Yisrael represents striving towards goals and working to succeed in a noble way, even if that means overcoming difficult challenges. This is a message that we can take with us through our lives. We must always strive for the best and try to accomplish our goals even if they seem difficult. Shabbat Shalom!

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

YAFFA SHEKHTER ('20)

This week's parsha, Parshat Vayishlach, includes the famous and long-awaited reunion of Yaakov and Esav. Although one might expect two brothers to be happy after 22 years apart, this is not such a happy reunion, as the brothers left each other with one wanting to kill the other.

Regarding Yaakov's feelings prior to the reunion, the parsha says, וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֵר לוֹ -- "Yaakov was greatly frightened in his anxiety" (Bereishit, 32:8). Rashi explains that Yaakov was not afraid that he would be killed, rather he worried about whether he would be in a situation where he would have to kill someone. Focusing on the wording of the pasuk, doesn't Yaakov expressing fear or distress mean the same thing? It would make sense that he is scared, but is it necessary to also say that he is distressed or anxious?

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks explains that according to the midrash, the word "fear" expressed first refers to the physical anxiety that Yaakov felt as he was preparing for war with Esav, which could have cost him his life. The second word, "distress," refers to the moral distress Yaakov had for potentially being the cause of someone else's death.

The Daat Zekenim offers another approach, explaining an alternative reason that Yaakov feared his impending encounter with Esav. Yaakov had worked for 20 years for Lavan in order to marry his daughters and gain wealth. What was Esav doing during that time? He was doing the mitzvah of *kibud av v'em*. Because of this, Yaakov was afraid that he would not have the merits to surpass Esav.

From this we can learn that no one is a completely bad person. Yaakov saw good in Esav, and even thought he might have had a greater *zechut* than Yaakov himself. Just as Yaakov was able to see the good in Esav who had expressed a desire to kill him, we should work to see the good in every person, even if their previous actions may suggest otherwise.



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