Points to Ponder

Vayishlach 5779

**וַֽיְהִי־לִי֙ שׁ֣וֹר וַֽחֲמ֔וֹר צֹ֖אן וְעֶ֣בֶד וְשִׁפְחָ֑ה I have an ox and a donkey (32:6)** – Why doesn’t Yaakov mention the camels? **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted the **Meshech Chochma** who explains that the original purpose of creation was to only do “good” always. After Chava’s sin with the Nachash, the concept of Tumah became apparent within the world. At that point it became the job of the Jew to do Tov in the face of Eisav who are bent on achieving Ra – hence the argument that he kept the 613 Mitzvos – a fitting contrast to Shor, Chamor etc which are distinctly categorized as either Kosher or non-kosher as opposed to camels which demonstrate their split hooves but are not Kosher.

**קָטֹ֜נְתִּי מִכֹּ֤ל הַֽחֲסָדִים֙ וּמִכָּל־הָ֣אֱמֶ֔ת  I am undeserving of all of the Chessed and the Emes (32:11) – Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** pointed out that the land of Israel is the land of Chessed because without it, the land becomes filled with hatred. At the same time, it needs to be a place of Emes because otherwise it would be a land filled with Tumah. Thus, the land of Israel is a land that mimics the raison d’Etra of the Jewish people – to maximize the elements of truth and Chessed.

**כִּֽי־שָׂרִ֧יתָ For you fought with angels and men (32:34) – Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** points out that Yaakov is the role model among the Avos that speaks to those of us with internal tests and come through those tests on top. Using Yaakov as a model, those who deal with struggles (and I do not know anyone who does not) tend to grow from the experience and this often opens the path to better Avodas Hashem. **Rav Kook ztl.** notes that this is why we bow at the beginning of Shmoneh Esrai. At that moment we are trying to break free from our Yetzer HaRa and thus, we submit to Hashem and rise on His name. Thus, although Yaakov emerges from this experience as Yisrael, the winner, he is also still Yaakov, the one who claws from challenge to challenge.

**עַד־גִּשְׁתּ֖וֹ עַד־אָחִֽיו: He bowed 7 times until he reached his brother (33:3) – Rav Yisrael Reisman Shlita** noted that Yaakov realized that in order to defeat Eisav, he needed to recognize that he had no hatred toward him. Quoting **Rav Mordechai Schwab ztl,** Rav Reisman explained that the 7 bows brought him into contact not with Achicha Eisav but rather only until he approached his brother. The warrior enemy Eisav was gone.

**כִּֽי־חַנַּ֥נִי אֱלֹהִ֖ים וְכִ֣י יֶשׁ־לִי־כֹ֑ל I have it all (33:11)** – Eisav notes that he has much while Yaakov learns that he has it all. What did Yaakov mean when he said he had it all? He did not relate to physical items and when can one say he has all the spirituality he needs? Perhaps Yaakov wanted to make it clear that he had his priorities set straight and this was all he needed to guarantee success in life.

**עֲכַרְתֶּ֣ם אֹתִי֒ לְהַבְאִישֵׁ֨נִי֙ בְּישֵׁ֣ב הָאָ֔רֶץ בַּכְּנַֽעֲנִ֖י וּבַפְּרִזִּ֑י You have embarrassed me (34:30)** – What kind of answer do Shimon and Levi provide to Yaakov’s concern? And why was Yaakov so worried about what everyone thought of him anyway? **Sforno** notes that Yaakov thought that although the brothers may have been justified in their action, the way that they appeared to be disingenuous in demanding that the men receive a Bris, was a problem because they would be accused of being dishonest and ruthless. Therefore, he felt, they should have been more thoughtful before they acted. **Rav Elya Svei ztl.** explained that in their eyes, Shimon and Levi responded from the perspective of what would be said in the Shuls and Battei Midrash (See **Targum Yirushalmi**) where the Chilul Hashem would be most apparent. Thus, Yaakov and his sons differed on where the focus of the Chilul Hashem was to be – and to seek to minimize it at all costs.

**וַיֵּ֣לֶךְ אֶל־אֶ֔רֶץ מִפְּנֵ֖י יַֽעֲקֹ֥ב אָחִֽיו: Eisav took his wives and his family and went to a different land (36:6)** – Rashi explains that he was embarrassed so he ran away. **Rav Gershon Leibman ztl**. explained that Eisav realized that as the son of Yitzchak and grandson of Avraham he thought he should have achieved more in life. However, in the end, it was the “Battlan” who was the “Chacham”. That very embarrassment which led him to be known as the “Red” for his selling of the Bechora for red lentils , made him want to run away. However, rest assured that while one thinks s/he can run away in this world, one cannot run away in the world of truth. There Yaakov and his style will forever dominate.

**Haftara: וּבְהַ֥ר צִיּ֛וֹן תִּֽהְיֶ֥ה פְלֵיטָ֖ה And on Har Tzion there will be a refuge (Ovadiah 1:17) - Rav Dov Lior Shlita** explained that one needs to recall that with all of the antisemitism throughout the world and even post-Holocaust and with the founding of the State of Israel, one needs to simply open his or her eyes to see the incredible Hashgacha of Hashem in the world. S/he who can “get it” will be Zocheh to see the Yeshuos of Hashem which include the great consolations our prophets speak of.