Points to Ponder

Vayishlach 5781

**וַֽיְהִי־לִי֙ שׁ֣וֹר וַֽחֲמ֔וֹר צֹ֖אן וְעֶ֣בֶד וְשִׁפְחָ֑ה I had an ox, a donkey sheep etc. (32:6) - Rabeinu Bachaya** notes that whenever we mention assets, it is the sheep that always come first. Here, the sheep are close to the end. Why the difference? Rabbeinu Bachaya answers that Eisav lost the Bechora because of the sheep that Yaakov brought so Yaakov didn’t highlight it. But why does Yaakov place the goats first when he sends the gifts to Eisav? Why wasn’t he worried that Eisav would react badly to THAT? **Rav Mordechai Druk ztl.** explained that from the time that Yaakov contacted Eisav, he also had davened to Hashem. Yaakov was secure in his Tefillah that he had nothing to worry about -- because Hashem WOULD accept his Tefillah.

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**וַיֹּ֨אמֶר֙ לֹ֣א אֲשַׁלֵּֽחֲךָ֔ כִּ֖י אִם־בֵּֽרַכְתָּֽנִי: I will not send you (32:27)** - Why did Yaakov hold the Malach back? As soon as he let the Malach go, he would be the undisputed winner of the battle? And why wait for a Beracha? **Rav Avrohom Rivlin Shlita** explained that when we deal with Eisav there is no stalemate. Tumah and Kedusha cannot comfortably co-exist. Therefore Yaakov would not let the angel go until he blessed Yaakov.

**לֹ֤א יַֽעֲקֹב֙ יֵֽאָמֵ֥ר עוֹד֙ שִׁמְךָ֔ כִּ֖י אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל No longer will your name be Yaakov rather Yisrael (32:29) -** We find that Yaakov is still referred to as Yaakov so what was the big deal in the name change? **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ztl**. explained thatthe malach and ultimately Hashem, hallenged Yaakov  to, “Let your name no longer be Jacob but Israel,” meaning, “Act in such a way that this is what people call you. Be a prince. Be royalty. Be upright. Be yourself. Don’t long to be someone else. This would turn out to be a challenge not just then but many times in the Jewish future.” Because often, Jews have been content to be who they are born to be. But from time to time, they have come into contact with a civilization whose intellectual, cultural and even spiritual sophistication was undeniable. It made them feel awkward, inferior, like a villager who comes to a city for the first time. At these times Jews lapsed into the condition of Jacob. They wanted to be someone else. Rabbi Sacks explained that the challenge issued by the angel still echoes today. Are we Jacob, embarrassed by who we are? Or are we Israel, with the courage to stand upright and walk tall in the path of faith? We have both titles but we do not need to be stuck being Yaakov -- sidekick to Eisav.

**לָ֥מָּה זֶּ֖ה תִּשְׁאַ֣ל לִשְׁמִ֑י  Why do you ask my name? (32:30) - The Kotzker Rebbe** explained that thisi s the style of the Yetzer Hara. It messes with the head of Bnei Yisrael. The letter of Yisrael are also the letters in the words “Lee Rosh” -- that I have a head. The Yetzer HaRa messes with the heads of Bnei Yisrael by asking why we should bother thinking about things.

**עַל־כֵּ֡ן לֹא־יֹֽאכְל֨וּ בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֜ל אֶת־גִּ֣יד הַנָּשֶׁ֗ה Therefore Bnei Yisrael do not eat Gid HaNasheh (32:33)** - What is the reason we do not eat the Gid HaNashe? **Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlita** explained that Gid HaNashe represents the Yetzer HaRa and that Hashem is demonstrating to us that even with all of its enticements, the Yetzer Hara is flavorless...it is nothing more than a piece of wood!

**וַיָּבֹא֩ יַֽעֲקֹ֨ב שָׁלֵ֜ם עִ֣יר שְׁכֶ֗ם Yaakov came to Shechem Shalem (33:18)** - The Talmud (Shabbos 33b) notes that he was Shalem in body, material wealth and Torah. **The Satmar Rebbe ztl (VaYoel Moshe**) noted that if one’s Torah is complete then everything will work out. This is the Maalah of Yaakov who didn’t forget his Torah even when facing challenge. Yosef did note that he forgot (hence the name of Menashe).

**Haftara- וְעָל֚וּ מֽוֹשִׁעִים֙ בְּהַ֣ר צִיּ֔וֹן לִשְׁפֹּ֖ט אֶת־הַ֣ר עֵשָׂ֑ו  The victors shall of Har Tzion shall go to judge the mountain of Eisav (Ovadiah 1:21)** - Ovadiah refers to the nations of Eisav as Bazui, despised. Why? **Rav Aharon Kotler ztl** explained that Eisav was so distressed when he didn’t get the Berachos that he gave up any and all connection with Hashem. This is a foolish mistake. For we are to use whatever we have in serving Hashem in this world and only then can we begin to worry about tomorrow. **Rav Dov Lior Shlita** added that when we see world events, we have also seen that Hashem is behind these events. If we recognize that and appreciate it, we will be Zocheh to Yeshuas Hashem.