



From the desk of
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Vayishlach

HAMELECH

Oh! What a pity!

In Parashat Vayishlach, Yaakov Avinu is on his way back to Eretz Yisroel with his family and belongings. He arrives at Ma'avar Yabok and must cross the river. After he helped his wives and children across, he remained on the other side, because there were a few small items of his which had remained behind. In those days, it was very dangerous to remain alone at night. Nonetheless, Yaakov would not leave these seemingly insignificant articles behind. Why was he so insistent to go back for them? Of this, our Sages say (Hullin 91a): The righteous cherish their monetary possessions more than their physical bodies.

Now, this statement is somewhat puzzling. Certainly the righteous are people who place more emphasis upon spirituality than materialism. Yaakov himself, in last week's *parashah*, asked only for the bare minimum – bread to eat and clothing to wear. Additionally, he was now quite well-off. Hashem had not abandoned him. We would have thought that he could manage just fine without those last few belongings. Yaakov had no problem sending Eisav several large herds and flocks, but for a few flasks he put his life on the line?! Even if avoiding unnecessary wastefulness is virtuous, but at what cost?

It seems that Yaakov, our wise and holy Patriarch, knew a whole lot more than we do when it comes to making the most out of every last thing.

Why Pity the Petty?

The Arizal teaches that the soul of a *tsaddik* is comprised of 248 spiritual "limbs" and each and every limb contains "sparks of souls" of other *tsaddikim*. When Adam Harishon sinned, that contaminated many spiritual worlds, spreading

holy "sparks" far and wide. Those sparks achieve their rectification through Klal Yisroel's *mitzvot* and *tefillot*.

Sefer Pit-hei She'arim teaches that it is appropriate for a person to be aware of the harm wrought in all worlds as a result of sins. Certainly in the other direction, a person should know how much is accomplished by learning Torah and doing *mitzvot*.

Hashem created all worlds and all that they contain for the sake of Klal Yisroel. All aspects of creation are invisibly connected to each and every Jew. Therefore, a Jew's every action, word and even thought bear a major impact on everything. This is an earth-shaking concept. At the same time, when used right, it can provide an immeasurable surge of multi-cosmic constructive energy. Every last Jew has a mission to fulfill which affects many other people, places and things. These can be thousands of miles away; nonetheless, a person's simple twist of a wrist or backhanded comment can be catastrophic or remarkably therapeutic and constructive, if a *mitzvah* or *aveirah* was performed in the process.

Where do you want to live?

Rabbi Yosi son of Rabbi Chanina teaches (Berachot 31a) that Adam Harishon was given the job of determining which regions would be inhabited and which would not. We are also taught (Sotah 47a) that different people bear a liking to different locations, as far as choosing appropriate living accommodations.

Arizal explains that different Jews have to go to exile in different locations, because each one has a mission to fulfill in the place to which he is sent. There are spiritual sparks which have been sent there, at the time of the original sin, and this



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messenger's soul is specifically aligned such that his *mitzvah* performance will do the job of redeeming those specific sparks from their captivity.

Adam Harishon only decreed upon a location to become inhabited if he sensed that sparks from his elevated soul had been exiled to that place.

Where are you going?

People travel from place to place. All the time, people are on the go, Jews as well. People do not even know why they are going different places. On the forefront of their consciousness, they can be convinced that they are going for one reason, while Hashem has a totally different reason in mind. Quite often, a person is "inconvenienced". He really planned to go to one place, or via a certain route, and much to his disappointment, dismay and displeasure, he is re-routed through a detour. He ends up somewhere he never heard of or never dreamed of visiting. In the spiritual realm, he could very well have a mission to do right then and there, a *tefillah* to pray, an act of kindness to perform, a certain amount of Torah to learn, even a *middah* to break or an aspect of *emunah* to acknowledge and/or express. That is why he was sent there at the exact time that was most conducive for the rectification to be accomplished.

Part of the purpose of Yaakov Avinu's dream as he visited Mt. Moriah was to set Yaakov's progeny on this path. That is why all of Eretz Yisroel was folded up under him as he slept, for most of the rectifications are to be accomplished in the Holy Land. In this way, it is as if Yaakov personally visited each and every site in Eretz Yisroel. Much was accomplished in that very night's "sleep", and what remains to be accomplished by Yaakov's offspring was made all

the much easier by having a part of Yaakov visit there on that fateful night.

Making the Most of it

In Rosh Hashana (27a) we are taught that the Torah is concerned that a Jew's finances not be wasted away. The Baal Shem Tov explains that any time a person eats food or wears clothing or uses an article, he benefits from a spiritual aspect of that article, which was begging for fulfillment. It is the spiritual aspect of any item which provides for its very existence. This is why different people have different tastes and likings. It is deep-rooted; it stems in the soul. Sometimes it is so that they will eat and use those things that, due to the specific aspects of their soul, they are in a position to uplift the spiritual aspects found in those items. Sometimes it can work the other way. A person could have a liking towards something just so that by controlling his liking and not indulging, that is how he accomplishes rectification. We do not know all of the world's secrets of this complex universe which Hashem created. We just must be aware that there is a lot more going on than meets the eye and that our strict adherence to all of the Torah's "dos and don'ts" will achieve a whole lot for ourselves and for all of creation.

Sometimes, quite often, items and articles are transferred from one person to another. This is because the first person already accomplished what he was meant to accomplish with this article and the new owner is now the one who is to perform a rectification which only he can do, due to his particular spiritual make-up.

Yaakov Avinu understood this deep concept so he was not quick to part with any of his belongings because he felt that he had not, as of yet, used them to their fullest.



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You Were Born to the Right Parents

This deep concept should help a person accept his lot in life on all fronts. Nobody chose their parents, siblings, uncles and aunts. Nobody chose his own size and weight, degree of handsomeness and beauty, health, etc. Some of these aspects are slightly within a person's ability to adjust, but only so much. If people were to be given the choice, many would opt to be born into a wealthy and healthy and prestigious family. But they would not really be any happier, and they would only be further from fulfilling their true purpose. Only Hashem knows every aspect of each *neshamah* and why it is so utterly befitting that this specific *neshamah* be born into this specific family setting, both for the benefit of the *neshamah* and all surrounding *neshamot* (parents, siblings, neighbors, etc.), each one as part of his or her mission in life.

When choosing a spouse, a person is given to feel that he has the right to exercise free will to some extent. But the fact of the matter is that, this too, is extremely limited and at the end of the day, he or she will be matched up with exactly that particular one which is most suited to his or her soul's mission.

Together with the Heavenly announcement of predestined marriage partners, are announcements of predestined residences and sources of livelihood (Sotah 2a). So a person should not try too hard to fight with reality and change life's circumstances. For the most part, the place in which you were put is exactly where you were meant to be. Sometimes you were meant to put in some degree of effort to get out of there. The main thing is to follow Torah and *mitzvot* in each and every situation. By doing so, a person will automatically get to where he or she is meant to go.

If a person really feels that his current situation is not best for him, he can contact a Rabbinic leader or mentor and discuss the matter with him. In earlier times, we had prophets. One of the roles of a prophet was that he could direct a person and reveal to him his specific mission. Today we do not have prophets. That is also part of Hashem's Divine Plan. If we really needed them, we would still have them. If we do not have them, we are meant to manage without them.

The Right Job for the Man

There are all sorts of occupations and professions. Before choosing one, why doesn't a person take a survey which is most profitable and go into that field? One answer is that just about every field has people more successful and less successful, whether success is measured in terms of customer satisfaction, income, or any other relevant factor.

On a spiritual realm, Hashem injects into a person's heart an attraction to the realm of activity he is meant to be involved in. As mentioned, each person has a specific mission, often unbeknownst to him. Some like gardening, some like building, some like carpentry, each person according to his soul's mission. Sometimes, Hashem has someone land a job at a certain corporation or office building, because there is someone there whom he offended or owes money from a previous *gilgul* (transmigration of souls). This rectification is generally accomplished by dealing honestly and politely with everyone in his surroundings.

Thou Shalt Not Steal

In Parashat Vayikra we are taught that *korbanot* may not come from stolen goods. The *pasuk* says, "Odom ki yakriv mikem." Rashi explains that just like Adam Harishon did not offer a sacrifice from



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stolen goods, as everything in the world was at his disposal, so too, none of us may bring a stolen sacrifice.

Why is this lesson learned specifically from Adam Harishon?

Explains Rabbi Leib Hasman: Our Sages wished to teach us that not only simple theft is to be avoided, but any trace of misappropriating that which is designated for others. When Adam was first around, there was no competition whatsoever. There was no other landowner or cattle-owner for that matter. Adam was the only one around. All was his. He couldn't steal if he wanted to. So are to be the sacrifices we bring to Hashem, with no trace of *gezel* of any stripe or colour.

First Question in the Final Exam

What will be the very first question each one of us will be asked on our final exam? "Did you conduct business dealings honestly?" (Shabbat 31a) This is really a general question if we acted properly throughout all of our interactions.

In Berachot 35b, Rabbi Yehudah ben Rabbi Ilai makes the following observation: Those who make Torah study their focal point and treat their job as secondary are successful in both. Those who put their all into their job and only learn Torah when they have a few minutes here and there, such people are not successful at either.

Based on the above, we can explain that every job has the physical side and the spiritual fulfillment of mission. The spiritual side is accomplished by adhering to the Torah's directions. Someone who lives with *emunah* thinks about what he is doing. He does not look at his profession merely as a source of income but also as part of his general mission in this world.

He seeks as many *mitzvah* opportunities as possible. Every paid job is fertile testing ground for honesty and integrity. Am I working according to the employer's conditions, expectations and satisfaction? If customers or clients are involved, do I treat them courteously and deal with them honestly? Do I make a *Kiddush Hashem* with all of my actions and words, especially when I am in view and/or earshot of non-Jews or not-yet-observant Jews? Do I make sure not to compromise on the Torah's standards of *kashrut*, *shmirat halashon*, modesty, etc. just in order to make a good impression upon my boss, co-workers or clients? If I am in a position of authority, do I treat my underlings with patience and respect? All of this and more could very well be closely connected to my degree of fulfillment of mission in this world.

No Extra Pennies

Not only are a person's place of residence, family setting, job placement, character traits and tendencies all part of his personal package, tailor-made to suit his particular job; all of his possessions are part of that as well. A person was not given any extra pennies, nor pins and needles. All that he has is for a purpose.

That is why *tsaddikim* are more concerned for their money than for their bodies; because their money is very much part of their mission. Each and every last *perutah* (small coin) makes a difference in the big picture.

The Return of Eleven Cents

A *bachur* in Yeshivat Volozhin was ill. The Rosh Hayeshivah, Reb Chaim, sent him home, escorted by another *bachur*. On the way, they stopped at an inn, but they did not have enough money to pay. So they owed eleven *perutot*. As it happened, the young man did not make it. He



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has asked his friend to pay up the loan on his return trip, but the matter slipped his mind.

The Yeshivah heard of the young man's passing. They mourned from afar.

R' Chaim, the Rosh Hayeshiva used to walk around the yeshivah late into the night. One night, he saw the dead *bachur* and asked him, "Didn't you die already?"

"I sure did, Rebbi," he replied, "but I cannot get into Gan Eden until all my loans are paid up and I owe that innkeeper eleven *perutot*."

The next morning, R' Chaim called over the *bachur* who had escorted the sick boy. He told him about what had happened and had him travel immediately to take care of the loan. The *bachur* paid up, and the deceased *bachur* came to Reb Chaim in a dream and thanked him for seeing to it that the loan got paid up.

We see from here how important it is to pay up loans and to exercise caution in all monetary matters. We also must be careful not to squander or waste or destroy property unnecessarily. Everything was given for a purpose and we should do what we can to get it to its purpose.

Prioritizing Charity and Kindness

We now understand the Halachic guidelines regarding *tzedakah* distribution. A person is obligated to care first for family and neighbours, then fellow city residents and then for all of Klal Yisrael. Being that one's assets were given to him for a defined purpose, is quite sensible Hashem wants him to first tend to the needs of the people who are closest to him. These two networks were pre-arranged accordingly: the network of who exactly is his closest family and friends, and the network of for whom his assets were destined to be distributed, thereby having him achieve his personal task in seeing to that distribution.

The Gravity of Theft

In Bava Kama 119a, Rabbi Yochanan teaches that anyone who steals from a fellow Jew even one *perutah* (approximately five cents); it is as if he took his victim's soul! The Gemara sources this in Mishlei 1:19 and the Rambam says it as well (Hilchot Gezeila 1:13), as does Shulchan Aruch (C.M. 359:3).

Now this is quite a bold statement. Granted that in some extreme cases, the victim's food supply could have dwindled to such an extent that this last *perutah* is really what made the difference; but in most circumstances, that is not the case, and R' Yochanan made his statement all-inclusive.

According to our above discussion, we can suggest that "taking the victim's soul" in this context means depriving him of his soul's ability to achieve perfection. As we mentioned, each person is supplied with a very exact amount of resources in order to fulfill his unique mission. It follows that one who relieves him of even one *perutah* denies him that ability to achieve perfection, which leaves one aspect of his soul unfulfilled. Those in touch with spirituality understand that this is nothing less than small-scale murder.

Mission Made Possible

This week's essay has been a real eye-opener. It bears major impact on our entire perspective of life, down to the last detail. It answers many of the questions which gnaw at the mind of every thinking individual. May we be inspired to serve Hashem joyously using exactly those instruments at our disposal, realizing all the while that each person's circumstances were tailor-made for his personal mission.

Fondly,
Mordechai Malka