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Lehatzlachat Yossef ben Raaya ve-
chol mishpachto

VAYISHLACH

16th KISLEV 5777

Shabbat begins: 15:37

Shabbat ends: 16:46



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
DIRECTOR, TAL

Master Of Your Destiny

Every test in life makes us bitter or better, every problem comes to break or make us. The choice is ours whether we become Victim or Victor!

The Torah relates the trials and tribulations of our ancestors in order for us to take heed and learn from them. Even in the 21st century there are age old lessons that we can apply to our lives in order to come out as the victor.

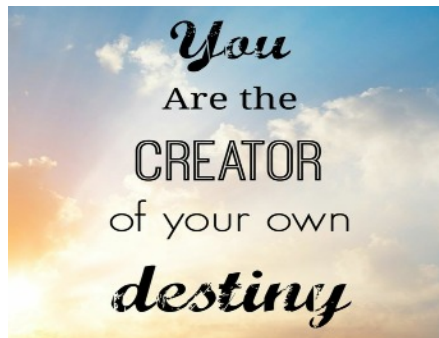
Each of us faces many disappointments, frustrations and losses throughout life. In order to avoid sinking into despair, we must learn to be spiritual warriors. Our forefather Avraham showed us the way. He was commanded by G-d to, "Go," Lech Lecha – literally, go to your true self. This meant leaving "his birthplace, his social milieu and his father's home" (Bereishit 12:1). Avraham's son Yitschak faced his big test at the altar. His son Yaakov led a life full of tests and tribulations ultimately leading to the setting up of the twelve tribes and commencement of Am Yisrael as a multifaceted nation.

Out of all our fathers, Yaakov was the only one whose name was changed by G-d whilst still keeping his previous name.

Put your hand on the back of your head. In Hebrew, this area is called the Oref, it is

where our "reptilian brain" resides. Fully functional at six months in utero, it is responsible for satisfying our physical needs, such as food, touch, stimulation and material comforts. However, the Hebrew word Oref has the same letters as the name Pharaoh, and also as the word for "wild," Paruah. When our Pharaoh-brain dominates, we cannot bear discomfort or deprivation and insist on getting our desires satisfied now, at all costs, even if it means hurting others or indulging in addictive substances or behaviours.

Hold your hands over your ears. Between the two hands, embedded in mid-brain, is a plum-sized mechanism known as the limbic system. It is responsible for getting our emotional needs satisfied; i.e. to feel loved, validated, understood and important. By the age of five, our basic emotional patterns are firmly in place, telling us whether we are lovable or unworthy, capable or



incompetent, and whether we can trust people or must be fearful of contact. If we were criticized and disciplined severely in childhood, we became "addicted" to negative mood states, such as anxiety, jealousy, sadness or anger. The limbic system is loyal to childhood beliefs. Some are good, such as "brush teeth after meals," and some are destructive, like, "I need constant attention and praise."

Together, the reptilian brain and the limbic system make up the lower brain. In this realm, there is no free will—only automatic, instinctive responses based on genetic destiny and socio-cultural conditioning. This is where children – and many adults – spend most of their thinking time! This is why we are told, "Every emotional thought of man is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:2 and 6:5), for the lower brain imprisons us with its primitive impulses and fears. Thankfully, we also have another area of the brain, called the cortex.

Put your hand on your forehead. This is where the cortex, our executive centre, is located. It is our choice centre, which allows us to liberate ourselves from the primitive responses of the lower brain. While the lower brain develops on its own, it takes discipline to develop the cortex. A disciplined mind allows us to respond with logic, delay gratification, anticipate the consequences of our behaviour, focus on long-range goals and empowers us to bring holiness into the world.

The cortex does not reach maximum cellular growth until age twenty! Thus, the lower brain has a huge head start and has determined most of our habits and beliefs long before we had any choice in the matter. This is why our addictions and prejudices persist so tenaciously despite our efforts to free ourselves from their grip. This fact also explains why Torah law does not hold us responsible in certain areas until age twenty.

Thus, the brain is a war zone, with different voices fighting for dominance.

Yaakov experienced and manifested this battle in essence throughout his life. From the outset, even within the womb he was twinned with a brother that would fight and contest him all the way. Yaakov emerged clinging on to Eisav's heel signifying he would not give up. He



1. Why does the Torah detail the whole process of how Yakov dealt with Esav?

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became an Ish Tam trying to choose a simple life concentrating on Torah and mastering his characteristics. Yet his life was full of tests and challenges. These trials and tribulations reached a pinnacle when Yaakov's name was changed.

Eisav together with four hundred generals had set out to kill Yaakov. On the night before their meeting, Yaakov found himself alone and was attacked by the angel of Eisav. The Torah relates that they wrestled which "raised dust up to the Supernal Throne". It was not only a physical battle but a cosmic struggle between two nations and two worlds -- the spirituality of Israel and the materiality of Edom.

As dawn broke, Eisav's angel conceded and Yaakov would not let him go until he blessed him.

He informed Yaakov that his name would be changed to Yisrael.

"No longer will it be said that your name is Yaakov, but Yisrael, for you have striven with the divine and with man and have overcome." (Bereishit 32:29)

The angel had no power to change his name; rather he was only informing him of the future that G-d would change his name. This came true: "G-d said to him, 'Your name is Yaakov. Your name shall not always be

called Yaakov, but Yisrael should be your name.' Then he called his name Yisrael." What's interesting to note is that whilst G-d changed Avram's name to Avraham -- Yaakov was at the same time given a new name whilst being told to keep the old one. The Gemara Berachot 13 relates that Bar Kapara said anyone who calls Avraham by his original name Avram, has transgressed a Mitsvat Asei (positive commandment) whereas Rabbi Eliezer held he has transgressed a negative commandment. Why the difference between Yaakov and Avraham?

Avraham was not the first person to ever live. He had a clear lineage of twenty generations to Adam. His father Terach was an idol worshipper. In order to begin the Jewish nation, there needed to be a change. The letter "Heh" was added to symbolise G-d. Avraham was the first to recognise and spread belief in G-d whilst surrounded by an environment full of idol worship.

Born as Avram, G-d now entirely changed his name to Avraham. Not allowing anyone to call him by his previous name symbolised that the Jewish nation was now beginning from him.

Yaakov on the other hand was grandson of Avraham and son of the holy Yitschak. He did not represent a new nation.

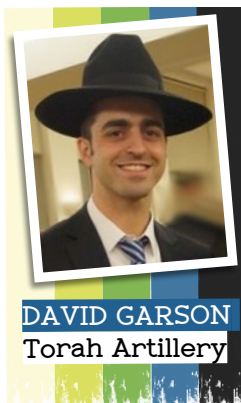
When Yaakov was born the Torah tells us that Vayikra Shemo -- he called his name Yaakov. The Rabbis explain that it was G-d that called him this name. A name granted by G-d never changes.

But he led a challenged life. To symbolise his success and complete control over the physical world, many years later when he was able to beat the angel of Eisav he earned a second name. This too was granted directly by G-d.

Hence he kept both names.

The Chatam Sofer (Drashot vol. I, p. 57) explains that the angel of Esav is the Satan, and in order to vanquish the power of the Satan, we need these two names -- Yaakov and Yisrael, since their Gematria (numerical value) together is Kera Satan (tear the Satan). Yaakov led the way for future generations, teaching us that although your name is G-d given, you can achieve through life's tests even greater heights than you ever expected. There is always room to grow. Each decision we make, every step we take in the right direction has an effect.

You are not the victim of the world, but rather the master of your own destiny. It is your choices and decisions that determine your destiny -- be the Victor!



In a speech at a Rabbis conference in Europe, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman z"l Hy"d shared the following insight in the name of his Rabbi, the Chafetz Chaim. The Chafetz Chaim asked, since the angel who fought against Yaakov Avinu is known to be the Satan/Yetser Hara, why is it that the angel only decided to fight against Yaakov Avinu and not pick an earlier fight with Abraham and Yitschak Avinu?

Rabbi Elchanan used the following analogy to illustrate the Chafetz Chaim's answer to this question. When two countries are at war, the best strategy to win the war is to disarm the artillery and weaponry of the enemy.

Once the weapons have been destroyed, the other side can attack without worry of retaliation and be victorious in the war.

The same idea applies with the Satan only fighting Yaakov and not fighting Abraham and Yitschak. Each of the Patriarchs embodied a certain attribute, Abraham embodied chessed - kindness, Yitschak exemplified prayer and service and Yaakov embodied the study of Torah. Based on these traits, the Chafetz Chaim explained that the Satan is capable of tolerating the Mitsvot of chessed as well as Tefillah and sacrifices. These Mitsvot are not an existential threat to him. However, when the Mitsvah of Torah study is performed, then an all-out war is waged. This is because Hashem says, "I created the Yetser Hara and I created the Torah as an antidote" (Kiddushin 30b).

Hence, the Torah is the antidote, the weaponry and artillery of the Jewish people in the war against the Satan. So by combatting Yaakov Avinu, the Satan attempted to destroy the essence of Torah -- our arsenal of weapons, so that he could fulfil his purpose of causing Jewish people to sin.

The Jewish people are often referred to as the "People of the Book." This is most certainly true, because only through

studying Torah and learning its laws and values, have the Jews had the steadfast fortitude to withstand all the detrimental ideologies and philosophies throughout history and remain loyal to Hashem's will in this world.

Rabbi Asher Weiss was recently in London and shared the following idea in the name of his late father. The Anshei Keneset Hagedolah (Men of the Great Assembly) were the entity who formulated the Kaddish and Kedushah prayers. Since these prayers are considered matters of holiness, a minyan of ten people was required to recite these holy prayers. Therefore, in order to ensure the presence of a quorum of ten people, the advent of a Shul came into existence. Before this time, people would seemingly pray alone, as there was no need for a minyan, seeing as the Kaddish and Kedushah prayers weren't yet created nor incorporated. So the foundation of a Shul only came into fruition at the time of the Anshei Keneset Hagedolah.

However, the institution of a Bet Hamidrash -- a place of Torah study, was in existence very early on in history. From the time of Shem and Eiver, going on to Abraham, Yitschak and Yaakov Avinu, as it says "Veyaaakov yoshev ohalim" and



2. Why did Rochel die and was buried on the way, not meriting to be buried in Meoras Hamachpeile?

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throughout history, there has always been a place of Torah study. This teaches us that although a Shul is certainly an important and holy place, which plays a major role in the lifestyle of a Jew, nevertheless, the Bet Hamidrash is an essential and vital entity, without which the Jewish nation would not have been able to survive. It has always been the place that allowed the existence and continuity of Jewish values and education to perpetuate.

In fact, the word "Shul" in Yiddish means "school." This is because the Shul and Beit Hamidrash are one and the same. A Shul is not only a gathering place for a minyan of ten people only to pray; it is also a "school," an educational institution, a place where one learns Torah and develops in growing and committing to the adherence of Torah values to come closer to Hashem. The Gemara in Sota (21a) reveals to us that by learning Torah one "saves and protects," his surroundings. Thus any amount of time

one invests during the week by joining a shiur of Torah or learning Torah with a chavruta in any local Shul or Beit Hamidrash is a praiseworthy investment. This investment "protects and saves" oneself as well as the community around him, against the Yetser Hara's influences of decadence and destructive ideologies in society today. By learning Torah one is utilising the weapons and artillery against the Yetser Hara and with the help of Hashem, one is able to be victorious in this continuous war.



RABBI ALAN GARBEL
Shenley United Jewish
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The "Love" Bite!

When Jacob and Esau finally meet in this week's sedra the Torah describes;
"Esau ran to meet him and hug him, and he fell on his neck, and he kissed him and they cried".
(Genesis 33:4)

In a Torah scroll, there is a dot written above every letter of the word *vayishakayhu*, "and he kissed him"

The Midrash Rabbah (78:9) brings a dispute as to what this represents;

Rabbi Shimon Ben Elazar says: "Whenever there are more letters than dots, we expound on the letters, and when there are more dots than letters we expound on the dots. Here, where the number of letters and dots are equal we learn that at that moment Esau's mercy was aroused and he kissed Jacob with all his heart".

Rabbi Yannai replied: "If that is the case why are their dots at all? Rather, Esau came not to kiss Jacob, but to bite him. Jacob's neck miraculously turned to marble, and Esau blunted his teeth on it. That is the meaning of and they wept - Jacob because of his neck and Esau because of his teeth".

How can there be such a divergence of opinion about Esau's intentions? The Shem MiShmuel suggests that Esau came to attack Jacob in two methods, and that rather than disputing each other Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Yannai are presenting the two different sides of Esau's attack. Before the meeting with Esau, Jacob prepares himself in three ways; by sending gifts of

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3. How do we see a different outlook on life between Yakov and Esav?

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appeasement, by practically preparing for war, and through prayer. In Jacob's prayer he makes a strange request: "Save me please from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau" (Genesis 32:12)

Jacob has only one brother, and furthermore, why does he describe Esau first as a brother and then state his name? The Ohr HaChaim (1696-1743) points out that Jacob was more fearful of Esau as a *brother*, than Esau, the physical threat. The Esau as a brother represented the spiritual threat of being befriended and influenced by Esau's immoral outlook on life.

This explains the two opinions in the Midrash. According to Rabbi Shimon, by embracing and kissing Jacob, Esau hoped to bring Jacob down by attaching Jacob to his immoral outlook. According to Rabbi Yannai, Esau also approached Jacob as the physical threat.

In a few weeks time we will be celebrating Chanukah. Unlike Purim which celebrates the victory and the saviour of the Jewish people from the threat of physical destruction, on Chanukah we celebrate our saviour from spiritual destruction. The Greek-Assyrians didn't want to annihilate us; rather they sought to assimilate us into Hellenistic culture. Throughout our history we have faced this two pronged attack of Esau. Today we are living at a time where Jews around the world are generally not under the fear of physical attack. Our biggest threat is being spiritually drawn away from our heritage and assimilated into the wider culture.

The Shem Mishmuel points out that the Midrash specifies that Jacob's neck turned to marble as opposed to metal which is often used as an analogy of something that is hard. He points out that unlike metal; marble has a special halachic status that it can not contract spiritual impurity. Jacob, our spiritual fore-bearer, set a precedent of being able to face the attack of Esau's "brotherly love-bite" and remain impervious to it.



The Baal Shem Tov

The Baal Shem Tov related that a very harsh heavenly decree had been issued, which many Tsadikim were unable to overturn, even with their most fervent prayers.

"What we were unable to do," the Baal Shem Tov said, "was accomplished by a pious woman, who, upon hearing the tearful prayers of the congregation, addressed G-d: 'Master of the Universe! How can You not accept the supplications of Your children? I am only a human being,

and my mercies are limited. Yet when any of my children cry, it breaks my heart, and I would do anything to stop their tears. But You are infinite and Your mercies are infinite. Listen how all Your children are crying. Surely You do not have a heart of stone. You must help them and relieve their suffering!' "It was this simple but fervent prayer that caused G-d to annul the harsh decree."



1. The Ramban (introduction to Parshas Vayishlach and 33:15) explains that it is to teach us in exile how to deal with the goyim as seen in how Yakov dealt with Esav. Great Jewish representatives would specially learn this parsha before travelling to Rome on behalf of the Jews.
2. Rashi (31:32) brings that since Yakov cursed anyone who had stolen the terofim from Lovon, and it had been Rochel, she therefore died on the journey. Rashi (30:15) brings another reason. When Rochel gave up her night with Yakov in exchange for the Dudoim, since she put down the importance of being with Yakov she did not merit to be buried next to him.
3. Esav says he has **a lot** (33:9) while Yakov says he has **everything** (33:11). In life we can have the view that we deserving nothing and then we will be grateful for **everything** that we have or we can expect things coming to us and therefore are happy with **a lot** but always want more.

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