

Returning Today  
Greater Than He Was  
When In His  
**SPIRITUAL  
COCOON**

## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Vayishlach

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

**Returning Today Greater Than He Was When In His Spiritual Cocoon**

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**Pained He Would be Less of a Person**

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**Lavan's Levels of Deception**

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**Neither Consumed Or Compromised**

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1. Yaakov sends agents to Esav and relates that he is returning after many years.
2. Yaakov says he sojourned with Lavan.
3. The Hebrew equivalent for sojourned is Garti- 613.
4. Although he was exposed to Lavan's evil ways he was not diminished.
5. If Yaakov kept the 613 mitzvos, it is obvious he did not learn from his ways.
6. When Yaakov fled to Lavan to escape the wrath of Esav, he made a vow.
7. Should he return to his father in peace, he will tithe all his assets for G-d.
8. Rashi: "Whole from sin" – that he does not learn from Lavan's evil eye.
9. One needs divine assistance to escape the influences of Lavan.
10. Despite the overwhelming negative influence of Lavan, Yaakov remained unscathed.
11. Before confronting Esav, Yaakov feared he became sullied with sin.
12. When Yaakov initially fled, he accepted upon himself the exactness of G-d's attribute of justice.



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### Soaring Beyond the Finite to Touch the Infinite

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1. Yaakov flees to Charan to escape Esav's wrath.
2. Yitzchok instructs him to marry one of Lavan's daughters.
3. After twenty years, Yaakov leaves Charan with his wives and children.
4. He sends agents to Esav, saying he sojourned with Lavan and has been delayed.
5. The Hebrew word for "I have sojourned" is Garti.
6. Rashi: The numerical value for Garti is 613.
7. Although in an environment of evil, Yaakov did not learn from Lavan's evil ways.
8. Why does Rashi address the numerical value of the letters and not that letters of Garti also spell Taryag- 613?
9. The numerical value of Garti is 613- the sojourning itself was 613.
10. Yaakov internalized the 613 mitzvos.
11. Because Yaakov totally integrated all 613 mitzvos he didn't learn from Lavan's evil ways.
12. On the fourth year of the sabbatical cycle, he makes the Confession of the Tithes.
13. One says, "I have rejoiced and made others happy as a result of the distributing the tithes to the rightful parties.
14. By giving away serious percentages of one's profit is how is one happy.
15. After the distribution, one supplicates G-d: "Gaze from your Heavenly abode & bless People of Israel."
16. Chazal: We have done what you decreed - If we walk in your statutes, the rains and bounty will come in their time.
17. This refers to toiling in the Torah.
18. Only when toiling in Torah can one internalize the value of mitzvos and have a sense of one's true worth.
19. The only one who could say, "I rejoice" when giving away significant percentage of one's profits is the one who toiled in Torah.



# The Thirteen Tenets of Faith

*A New Series By Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky*

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## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vayishlach



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### When Does One Have It All?

*Torah:* When *Yaakov*, our Patriarch returned to the Land of Israel he was accompanied by angels that were designated to protect him outside of the Land. Upon entering the Land, he came upon another camp of angels who were to protect and accompany him while he would be in the Land. *Yaakov* upon seeing two camps of angels, called the location *Machanayim*.

*Torah:* "Then *Yaakov* sent angels ahead of him to *Esav*..."

*Midrash:* "There were two camps of angels with *Yaakov*. He sent these angels ahead to his brother *Esav*. When they came upon him, they came in the form of two camps of mercenaries. The first group of angels that came upon *Esav* was comprised of four subgroups. When they came upon him, they began to beat and smite him. *Esav* said to them, 'Let me be! I am the grandson of *Avraham*.' They continued to beat him. He then said, 'I am the son of *Yitzchak*, who was bound upon the altar.' They continued to smite him.

"*Esav* then said, 'I am the brother of *Yaakov* who is returning from *Paddanaram*. I have not seen him for twenty years. I would like to see him.' The moment he mentioned the name of *Yaakov*, the angels ceased their attack. They said to *Esav*, 'You mean to say that you are the brother of *Yaakov*, our beloved? We will not beat you out of respect and love for him. You may ask us about his welfare.'

"After this group of angels departed, *Esav* was attacked by the second, third, and fourth group. Each time it was only the name of *Yaakov* being mentioned that would cause the angels to cease their attack upon him. How do we know that *Esav* was confronted with all of these groups of angels? It is because *Esav* had said when he met *Yaakov*, 'Who are these camps that I have met?'"

*Eitz Yosef* (commentator on the *Midrash*): When *Esav* had said, "Who are these camps that I have met?" he is not referring to the herds and flocks that *Yaakov* had

sent to him, but rather he is referring to the spiritual camps of angels that had come upon him to attack. *Esav* had not only seen the exceptional level of wealth that his brother *Yaakov* had acquired, but he also had seen *Yaakov's* dominance over the spiritual realm as a result of being attacked by the camps of angels.

It was clear and evident to *Esav* that not only did *Yaakov* surpass him in the spiritual realm, but also in the material arena, which was the domain of *Esav*. *Yaakov* had succeeded beyond *Esav's* level of expectation. Understanding that all of *Yaakov's* financial success emanated from his dimension of spirituality, why did *Esav* not reconsider his position of being the man of the physical, in which he had prided himself?

*Reb Shimon Bar Yochai*: The definitive law states, "*Esav* hates *Yaakov* (to the extreme)." One would think that after experiencing the encounter with the angels, *Esav* would have gained an appreciation and reverence for what *Yaakov* represented. *Yaakov's* dimension of uniqueness could not be denied. Despite all of this, *Esav* did not change his position and did not recognize what was seemingly obvious. Why was this so?

*Yaakov* had succeeded materially at an unusual level only because he had dedicated his life to the study of *Torah*. He is quantified by the *Torah* as, "the perfect man who dwelt in the tent (of *Torah*)." It was because of *Yaakov's* perception of G-d's Omnipotence that he had negated himself and became fully subordinated to His Will. The concept of "ego" had no relevance to *Yaakov*. He understood that his strength and ability was rooted in his relationship with G-d.

In contrast, *Esav* is quantified by the *Torah* as "the man of the field." He had no relevance to self-negation but rather he was completely absorbed in material pursuits to ingratiate and advance his own persona of power. *Esav* was consumed by his drive to maximize his lust and self-interest. *Esav* understood that *Yaakov's* success lied in his humility and ability to negate himself to G-d, the source of all existence. *Esav* would not consider doing so because the negation of his own self to G-d would be the equivalent of his own non-existence.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: Had the *Torah* not been given through *Moshe*, it could have been given through *Hillel* the Elder. It was because of *Hillel's* unique level of humility, he was able to achieve a special dimension of spirituality. He had said, "If I am not for

myself who will be for me? And if I am for myself, then what am I?" Although he understood that he needed to take initiative in order to advance himself, he was simultaneously cognizant that every aspect of his growth would be dependent on G-d's Assistance.

*Hillel*, as *Yaakov* our Patriarch, had understood that the ultimate level of success in one's life is to be rooted in the Infinite, G-d Himself, in order to merit the unlimited. *Esav* was only affected and moved by the encounter with *Yaakov* because *Yaakov* bowed to him seven times. When *Esav* saw that his brother who had control over the material and spiritual realms prostrate himself before him, he ran towards his brother and cried. *Esav* was touched because the all-encompassing person had submitted himself to him.

Despite *Esav's* quest to have it all, he will never be able attain it. It is because he was not willing to submit before the Master of all. In contrast, *Yaakov* responded to *Esav* that he has it all because even if he would not necessarily possess the material, he had achieved an accomplishment of unlimited dimension because he had rooted himself in G-d.

## **Meriting Protection from the Onslaught of Prosecution**

*Torah*: *Yaakov* was informed that his brother was coming towards him with 400-armed men to attack him. It was clear to *Yaakov* that despite all the years of separation, *Esav's* hate had not dissipated. *Yaakov* began to supplicate G-d, "I have been diminished by all the kindnesses and by all the truth that You have done Your servant; for with my staff I crossed this Jordan and now I have become two camps. Rescue me..."

*Rashi* citing the *Midrash*: *Yaakov* was concerned that his merits may have been depleted because when he had crossed the Jordan on his way to *Charan* his only possession was his walking staff. However, now because of the kindness of G-d, he was returning with great wealth and a large family. He therefore was concerned that since G-d had bestowed such kindness upon him, that perhaps he did not have sufficient merit to be protected from his brother *Esav*.

*Midrash*: "Although You have promised me that I will be protected, perhaps I have become soiled with sin. Because of I have become soiled with sin, I

am no longer worthy of Your Protection against my brother *Esav*." On one hand, *Yaakov* had expressed his concern that he would not merit Divine Protection from his brother because he had depleted his merits by receiving G-d's exceptional blessing. On the other hand, *Yaakov* said that he would not merit protection because he had become soiled with sin. Is it the lack of merit that allows him to be vulnerable to his brother *Esav* or is it because of his spiritual deficiency (caused by sin) that will allow him to fall victim. Seemingly, there is a correlation between the two.

There is a concept, "The feet of His scrupulously pious He will be protect." Meaning, if one's classification is "scrupulously pious", G-d will protect him from unavoidable spiritual pitfalls that life offers. Although, as King Solomon states in Ecclesiastes, "There is no devoutly righteous person (*tzaddik*) in the land who does good and does not sin" this individual will be protected. Since *Yaakov* was the personification of one who is scrupulously pious, why was he concerned that he may have become soiled with sin? Why would he have not merited G-d's protection from spiritual diminishment?

*Yaakov* was concerned that the original guarantee of G-d's protection would no longer be in place and thus he would fall into the hands of *Esav*. Why was this so? Perhaps the principle of "The feet of His devoutly pious He will be protect" applies only to those who had accumulated an unusual degree of merit in their lifetime. In order for one to be worthy of the clarity to recognize and be protected against spiritual pitfalls, one must be meritorious due to his own spiritual achievements.

However, if one were to have his merits depleted because of the unlimited kindness of G-d that had come upon him, he may no longer merit the clarity and cognizance not to sin. *Yaakov* was thus concerned that since G-d had taken him from being destitute, with only a walking stick, to being extremely wealthy, he feared that he no longer had sufficient merit to be protected from sin. Without that special spiritual protection, it would be inevitable that he would be soiled with sin, thus allowing him to fall victim to *Esav*. However, there is another way to understand *Yaakov's* concern.

King Solomon in Ecclesiastes: "There is no devoutly righteous person (*tzaddik*) in the land who does

good and does not sin." Meaning, regardless of one's advanced spiritual dimension, there is no perfect person. The devoutly righteous are scrutinized by the Attribute of Justice on the most extreme level, because of their special spiritual status. If there is any degree of imperfection that is found on the record of the *tzaddik*, he then would be subject to prosecution. However, because the Attribute of Mercy intercedes on behalf of the *tzaddik* his slightly blemished record would go unnoticed and thus give him the opportunity to repent.

When *Yaakov* said, "I have been diminished by all the kindness...", he was concerned that since G-d had provided him with unlimited kindness, he was no longer worthy of evoking the Attribute of Mercy. *Yaakov* would thus be prosecuted by the Attribute Justice as a result of being soiled by sin. This would render *Yaakov* unworthy of G-d's protection against *Esav*.

We continuously supplicate G-d in the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer) saying, "Bring us back, our Father, to Your *Torah*, and bring us near, our King, to Your service, and influence us to return in perfect repentance before You. Blessed are You Hashem Who desires repentance." If one is sincere in his supplication for G-d's Assistance to repent, he will merit Divine Protection.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Makkos*: "Whatever path one chooses to walk in, he will be assisted (by G-d)." We should all merit that level of sincerity to merit His Assistance.

## **Yaakov, the Unaffected Patriarch**

*Torah*: After *Yaakov* had encountered his brother *Esav*, "*Yaakov* arrived complete (*shaleim*) at the city of *Shechem*..."

*Rashi*: "The term 'complete (*shaleim*)' refers to the fact that *Yaakov* was physically whole. Despite the fact that *Yaakov* had initially sustained a hip injury due to the struggle with the archangel of *Esav*, he was completely healed by the time he arrived in *Shechem*. *Yaakov* was financially intact, regardless of the valuable gift that he had sent to *Esav*. It did not detract from his financial standing in any way. *Yaakov* was complete in his *Torah*. Although he had been exposed to an environment of impurity and evil a period of twenty years, he did not forget any of his *Torah* while he was in the house of *Lavan*."

*Torah:* "And they (Yosef's brothers) told him (Yaakov), 'Yosef is still alive,' also that he is ruler over all the land of Egypt...when he saw the wagons (*agalos*) that Yosef had sent to transport him, then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived." After Yosef had revealed himself to his brothers, he had sent his brothers with provisions to get their father Yaakov and bring him to Egypt.

*Chazal:* It was only after Yaakov had seen the wagons that he understood that his son Yosef was truly alive and his state of prophecy returned.

*Rashi* citing *Chazal:* By sending wagons (*agalos*) to his father, Yosef communicated that although they had been separated for twenty-two years he had not forgotten the last *Torah* subject that they had studied together. This subject was the law of *eglah arufa* (the decapitated calf). The law of *eglah arufa* dictates that if one finds a corpse of a Jew, who was murdered, outside of a community and one is not able to locate the murderer, the elders of the community (*Sanhedrin*) must bring a calf (*eigel*) to a valley and break its neck and declare, "We are not in any way culpable for the death of this person..."

The *agalos* (wagons) that were sent by Yosef were an allusion to this law that he had studied with his father. Despite the fact that Yosef had been in Egypt, which was a location that was most spiritually impure and depraved location in existence, he was not spiritually affected or diminished to any degree. Just as Yaakov had remained completely intact despite his exposure to *Lavan*, his son Yosef, who was the equivalent of his father, also remained complete.

By revealing that Yaakov arrived in *Shechem* complete (*shaleim*), the *Torah* is confirming that he was in fact a spiritual being. It is only if one's perspective and aspirations are those of physical being, will one be affected by his surroundings. If however one aspires to the ultimate spiritual experience, which is having a relationship with G-d that individual will not be affected to any degree by the influences of the physical world.

*Maharal* of Prague: It is only the physical/material that is subject to influence (cause and effect). In contrast, the spiritual can affect and influence but it is not affected. Yaakov, being complete in every way revealed that he was in fact the being that affects and is not affected.

*Chazal:* Despite the fact that Yaakov had given valuable gifts to his brother *Esav*, his financial status was not

affected to any degree. Seemingly, if Yaakov had given away items of such great value, his wealth should have been diminished to the degree of the value of the gifts. How is it possible that his wealth was not diminished to any degree?

*Mishna* in *Ethics of our Fathers:* One of the miracles which took place on the Temple Mount was that when the Jewish people stood in the Holy Temple and were crowded to the point that they were pressed against one another, when they heard the pronouncement of the Name of G-d by the High Priest, they were able to fully prostrate themselves on the ground without any difficulty. How was this possible?

*Gemara* in Tractate *Megillah:* The location that contained the Holy Ark and the Cherubs was not of sufficient physical dimension to contain them. However, despite the limited dimension, the location of the Holy of Holies was adequate. Although the *Mishkan* and the Temple were a physical in their make up and location, the dimension of those locations was spiritual. Such a location has no relevance to the finite, but is rooted in the infinite.

Yaakov, because he was in essence a spiritual being, was not subject to the influences and limitations of the physical world. He was the most special of the Patriarch who had fathered the twelve tribes of Israel who were known as the Tribes of G-d. The *Torah* confirms this special dimension of Yaakov by revealing that he arrived in *Shechem* complete/whole.

## Perceiving True Value

*Torah:* Yaakov had sent angels to inform his brother *Esav* his degree of financial success and that he is seeking to find favor in his eyes. He had said, "I have sojourned with *Lavan* and have lingered until now. I have acquired an ox and a donkey, a flock, a (male) servant, and a maidservant..."

*Midrash:* "Did Yaakov only have one ox and one donkey? Surely not, he had many herds, flocks, and servants. This is evident from the gift that he had sent to his brother *Esav*. If so, why did Yaakov express himself in the singular when describing his accomplishments to *Esav*?"

*Rashi:* When one expresses himself in the singular, it is only referring to the species rather than the number.

Meaning, “ox” connotes “many oxen” and “flock” connotes many flocks.

*Midrash:* This can be explained differently. “When a *tzaddik* (righteous individual) speaks about his own accomplishments, he does so in a manner that minimizes himself. In contrast, when a *rasha* (evil person) speaks about himself he does so in a way that magnifies and elevates himself. As it states after *Esav* had received the gift that *Yaakov* had sent, ‘*Esav* said, ‘I have plenty. My brother, let what you have remain yours.’ As it states in Proverbs, ‘There is one who makes himself wealthy, yet he has nothing. There is one who makes himself impoverished, yet he has great wealth.’” This is the contrast between *Yaakov* and *Esav*. Why does the *tzaddik* minimize himself, despite his great level of wealth?

*Torah:* When the Divine Presence had descended upon Mt. Sinai, no one was permitted to approach the mountain because it was holy. However, after G-d’s presence ascended the mountain, one was permitted to approach it because it had returned to its original ordinary status.

*Gemara:* “From this we learn that it is not the location that glorifies the individual but rather, it is the individual who brings glory to the location.” It was only because G-d associated Himself with the mountain that it became holy. However, when His Presence departed, it reverted back to its ordinary status. Regardless of one’s material wealth, if one’s essence is truly spiritual, he will bring special value to all that is associated with him. However, if one only possesses the material and He is devoid of spirituality, his wealth has no special value. The *tzaddik* understands and appreciates that his only true worth is his relationship with G-d. Whatever material that he may possess is only an endowment from Him.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Berachos*: “Everything is predestined, except for the fear of heaven.” It is only because of the *tzaddik*’s choice to adhere to the Word of G-d that he is classified as “righteous.” The *tzaddik*’s true accomplishments all those that relate to his spirituality. When *Yaakov* expressed his degree of material success he did so in a manner that reflected his understanding of the material. His assets, were of great material worth, they were of minimal importance to *Yaakov* because all that mattered to him was his spiritual success.

*Esav*, in contrast, believed that he had “plenty” because his accomplishment manifested itself in the material realm. This was what he truly valued. If he had any understanding or appreciation for spirituality he would have realized that he truly had nothing.

Proverbs: “There is one who makes himself wealthy, yet he has nothing (*Esav*). There is one who makes himself impoverished, yet he has great wealth (*Yaakov*).”

## **The Pitfalls of Distraction** (From *Vayeitzei*)

*Torah:* Before *Yaakov* fled to the house of *Lavan* he supplicated G-d. “*Yaakov* took a vow saying, ‘If G-d will be with me, will guard me on this way that I am going, will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear; and I return in peace to my father’s house...”

*Midrash:* “*Reb Brechya* says, ‘Everything that *Yaakov* had requested from G-d was granted. *Yaakov* had asked that G-d be with him. The verse states, ‘I (G-d) will accompany you...’ *Yaakov* had asked to be protected. The verse states, ‘I shall watch over you wherever you go.’ *Yaakov* asked that he should return to his home in peace. The verse states, ‘I will bring you back...’ *Yaakov* had asked G-d to guarantee him bread (sustenance), G-d did not respond. G-d said, ‘If I guarantee *Yaakov* his bread, he would not have any reason to supplicate Me. Therefore I will not guarantee him his bread.’

“The Rabbis argue with *Reb Brechya*: G-d in fact did respond to *Yaakov* – guaranteeing him his sustenance/ bread – as it states, ‘I will not abandon you...’ The expression of abandonment refers to sustenance. As King David writes, ‘I have never seen a devoutly righteous person abandoned by G-d so that his children should seek out bread.’”

*Gemara* in Tractate *Berachos*: There is an argument between *Reb Yishmael* and *Reb Shimon Bar Yochai* regarding how one should conduct himself regarding his livelihood. *Reb Shimon Bar Yochai* is of the opinion that one must dedicate his life to *Torah* study without any degree of involvement in the attainment of the material. When one is engaged in *Torah* study at this level, his material needs will be provided through the labor of others.

*Reb Yishmael* argues by citing the verse from the second paragraph of the *Shema*: “If you will adhere



to My mitzvos that I command you...you will bring in your harvest.” Based on this, *Reb Yishmael* concludes that one must approach life in a conventional manner. One must do the Will of G-d and concurrently take the initiative to attain one’s material needs.

*Reb Shimon Bar Yochai* argues that the verse in the second paragraph in the *Shema* “...you will bring in your harvest” is actually referring to when the Jewish people are not doing the Will of G-d. Seemingly, the Rabbis cited in the *Midrash* are going according to the opinion of *Reb Shimon Bar Yochai*. Meaning, if *Yaakov* would be totally dedicated and immersed in *Torah* study, he would not need to take any initiative to attain his livelihood. However, this is not so.

It is important to note that according to both *Reb Shimon Bar Yochai* and *Reb Yishmael* that one must still supplicate G-d for one’s livelihood. The argument between them is that in addition to one’s supplication, to what degree does one need to take the physical initiative to actualize G-d’s blessing. According to *Reb Brechya*, G-d denied the guarantee for livelihood because He wanted him to continuously supplicate Him for it. *Yaakov* had to feel needy and lacking in order to have a reason to supplicate G-d.

On the other hand, the Rabbi’s position is that *Yaakov* was guaranteed sustenance by G-d so that there should not be any degree of distraction from his *Torah* study. *Yaakov* needed to be fully focused and immersed in

*Torah* in order to create an insular environment so as not to be influenced by the evil that surrounded him.

*Lavan* and his community comprised a setting that was the antithesis of everything that represented holiness and purity. Eleven of the twelve sons of *Yaakov* were born in this spiritual abyss. *Yaakov* thus needed to create a spiritual barrier that would guarantee the spiritual future of the Jewish people. *Yaakov* and his family could not be exposed to the evil of *Lavan*. In order for him to create a pure and holy environment, *Yaakov* needed to be immersed in *Torah* without distraction because it was the future of the Jewish people that was at risk.

Although normally the Rabbis would agree that one must supplicate G-d for livelihood, regardless of one’s degree of initiative; however, regarding *Yaakov* he did not even need to do so. G-d guaranteed him a livelihood so that he should be able to not be distracted to any degree in order to secure the future of the Jewish people. *Reb Brechya* argues that in order for one’s *Torah* to be studied at the most advanced level, one must feel needy. If one does not need to supplicate G-d for one’s needs, he will not be sufficiently cognizant of the role of the Omnipotent one in daily life. Therefore, *Reb Brechya* believed that although *Yaakov* needed to be fully immersed in *Torah*, he also had to feel needy to beseech G-d for his livelihood in order for his *Torah* study to be at the most advanced level.



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