

NO ROOM TO RATIONALIZE WHEN THE EVALUATION IS JUSTICE

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Vayeitzei

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Esav Misunderstood Al Charbicha Tichyeh

CLICK TO VIEW!



Why Yaakov had to go to Yeshivah of Shem vAver

CLICK TO VIEW!



Esav is the Antithesis of Yaakov

CLICK TO VIEW!



Evil WILL Come to An End

CLICK TO VIEW!



Vaporizing the Untenable to Assure the Perpetuity of Existence

CLICK TO VIEW!



1. Yaakov leaves Beersheva to go to Charan.
2. Chazal: When a devoutly righteous person leaves a location, its splendor & beauty depart with him.
3. This is extrapolated from the words "Yaakov left Beersheva".
4. Although Yitzchok and Rivka remained, his absence made its mark.
5. He fathered the twelve tribes; his absence was more greatly felt.
6. Was it that the 12 tribes were only a consequence of Yaakov's dimension?
7. Yaakov: "Man of The Tent (of Torah)"; was a personification of the Torah.
8. Midrash: Avraham was thrown into the fiery kiln: the heavenly angels objected to G-d's saving him.
9. "A man whose descendants are going to be evil how do you save him?"
10. G-d: He will have a grandson Yaakov in whose merit he will be saved.
11. Prophets: The house of Yaakov redeemed Avraham.
12. Gemara: "I've created an evil inclination; I've created Torah as its antidote."
13. Midrash: As long as the voice is the voice of Yaakov, the hands can not be the hands of Esav.
14. The counterbalance to Esav is Yaakov.
15. Yaakov will counter all of Avraham's evil descendants (Yishmael, Edom).
16. His absence was felt there because only he could counter the evil of Esav.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vayeitzei

**NO ROOM
TO RATIONALIZE
WHEN THE
EVALUATION
IS JUSTICE**

The Blessing Contained within the Curse: “By the Sweat of Your Brow You Shall Eat Bread...”

Torah: Yaakov needed to flee from his brother Esav. He was instructed by his parents to go to the home of his uncle Lavan to take a wife. Yaakov understood that the home and community of Lavan would expose him to all levels of evil and depravity. He needed G-d's protection in order to survive that environment.

Midrash: “Reb Brechya says, ‘Everything that Yaakov had supplicated 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 (a livelihood), G-d did not respond. G-d said, ‘If I guarantee Yaakov

his bread, he would not have any reason to beseech 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 bread. As King David writes, ‘I have never seen a devoutly righteous person abandoned by G-d so that his children should seek out bread.’” Meaning, G-d does guarantee sustenance to the special *tzaddik*. Understanding the spiritual dimension of Yaakov, is it even conceivable that if he were guaranteed a livelihood, he would not supplicate G-d? Evidently, *Reb Brechya* is of the opinion that it is in fact a valid concern.

The Rabbis on the other hand disagree. Initially when G-d created the world, everything was provided to *Adam* without any need for him to take the initiative. However after *Adam* had sinned by eating of the Tree

of Knowledge of Good and Evil, G-d cursed man "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread..." From this time onward, man needed to take the initiative to provide for himself. Even the food itself was no longer fully edible without some degree of processing/preparation.

Ramchal in Mesilas Yesharim: Although the Gemara tells us that one's yearly allocation for livelihood is determined from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Rosh Hashanah*, in order for one to draw upon this allocation, one needs to take the initiative because of the curse "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread..." Why after the sin of *Adam* was it necessary for man to take the initiative to receive his yearly stipend that was designated for him?

Midrash: Before *Adam* had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, he had a nearly absolute level of clarity. "He was able to see from one end of the world to the other." This clarity emanated from his own innate purity. However after eating of the Tree of Knowledge, because it represented evil, his clarity was compromised and thus occluded. As a result of his diminishment, G-d created another level of circumstances for *Adam* to encounter. He needed a setting in order to be able to make choices despite the distortions of truth. If he were to succeed and take the proper initiatives that were necessary, he would regain much of the clarity, purity, and spirituality that he had lost.

Adam had to be put into a position of need so that he should pray to G-d for His Assistance and to understand that although he may attribute the success of his endeavors to himself, he must realize that in actuality it is G-d. Through this process and conditioning, *Adam* and mankind would be able to gain a level of appreciation and understanding that all that man has is as a result of G-d's Beneficence and Omnipotence. *Adam's* failing not only compromised his own spiritual system, it actually affected that of all mankind.

Yaakov, our Patriarch, despite his unique level of spirituality, being a descendant of *Adam*, also possessed a natural degree of lack of clarity. Thus he was required to be in need in some aspect of his life. If G-d were to guarantee his sustenance/livelihood, then he would no longer have any reason to beseech Him. Consequently, the mechanism that was set in place to enable man to acquire and regain clarity would be denied to him.

However, the Rabbis argue with *Reb Brechya*. Although in concept and principle they agree with him, regarding *Yaakov* our Patriarch, because of his dimension of

spirituality and involvement in *Torah* study, he did not need to be subjected to this circumstance. Therefore *Yaakov* was also guaranteed a livelihood by G-d.

Because *Yaakov* is quantified by the *Torah* as, "the complete man who dwelt in the tent (of *Torah*)" the issue of lack of clarity had no relevance to him. This is based on the principle of "I have created an evil inclination and the *Torah* as its antidote." Since he had this special level of clarity, *Yaakov* would continuously recognize and experience G-d's presence.

Yaakov, the Father of the Jewish People

Torah: "Yaakov departed *Beersheva* and went toward *Haran*. He encountered the place (Mt. Moria) and spent the night there...he took from the stones of the place which he arranged around his head, and lay down in that place... and he dreamt...*Yaakov* arose early in the morning and took the stone that he had placed around his head..."

Midrash: *Yaakov* had arranged twelve stones around his head in order to determine whether he was going to be in fact the Patriarch who would father the tribes of Israel. If the stones were to fuse together into one stone, it would indicate to him that he was sufficiently pure enough to establish the twelve tribes. This is in fact what had happened. Although G-d had told him, "...the ground upon which you are lying, to you I will give it and to your descendants..." it was not an indication that he would be the last Patriarch from which the Jewish people would descend.

Torah: After *Yaakov* had awoken from his sleep, "he took the stone that he had placed around his head and set it up as a pillar; and he poured oil on its top. And he named the place *Beth-el* (the house of G-d)." The one stone that was in essence comprised of twelve was symbolic of the future Jewish people who were meant to serve G-d in that location. As King David refers to the tribes of Israel as "*Shiftei ka* – the tribes of G-d." It is interesting to note that although ultimately the Jewish people would be comprised of thirteen tribes, *Yaakov* only took twelve stones. This is because the tribes of *Efrayim* and *Menashe* were in essence the totality of *Yosef*.

Torah: After *Yaakov* designated the stone as '*Beth-el*', "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; and Hashem will be a G-d to me – then this stone which I have set up as a pillar shall become a house of G-d, and whatever You will give me, I shall repeatedly tithe to You.” What is the significance of Yaakov's vow to tithe from all that G-d gives him?

Torah: If one wears a four-cornered garment, one is obligated to put fringes (*tzitzis*) upon its corners. However one is not obligated to wear a four-cornered garment.

Ramchal: Although the majority of one's garments do not necessarily have four corners; nevertheless, G-d commanded the Jew that if he does wear a four-cornered garment it must have *tzitzis*. The value and effect of this *mitzvah* is to give one's total attire relevance and connection to something that represents holiness/*kedusha*. This is because contained among his garments there is a garment that has relevance to *kedusha*, thus his entire wardrobe assumes an elevated level by association.

This principle holds true with all other aspects of the life of a Jew. When the *Torah* touches upon one aspect of a particular area in one's life all that is associated with that aspect will assume a greater level of value and importance. Therefore when one tithes all of his possessions, he is in essence acknowledging that everything that he has amassed is from G-d. By doing so, one brings a level of sanctity to all that he owns.

After it was confirmed to Yaakov through the fusion of the twelve stones that he was chosen to be the father of the Jewish people, it was necessary for all that was associated with him (even the mundane) to assume a relevance to *kedusha*. The reason he had committed himself to tithing his assets at this moment was because he needed to create an environment of an elevated spiritual status in which the future tribes of Israel will be born and nurtured. Although one may be a personal beneficiary of his own initiative, if the impetus for that initiative was to participate in a *mitzvah*, the entire initiative assumes a level of *kedusha*.

Silence is Only an Indication of Something Greater

Torah: Rachel, the wife of Yaakov, initially was barren. “G-d remembered Rachel...” – and subsequently she was able to conceive.

Midrash: “There was no one who was more pleasant and beautiful than Rachel. It was because of this unique pleasantness that Yaakov wanted to marry her. During their seven-year engagement period, Yaakov sent many gifts to Rachel; however, Lavan, her father, gave the gifts to Leah her sister. Rachel remained silent.

“*Reb Shimon Ben Gamliel:* ‘All of my days I have developed in the company of great *Torah* sages and I have not found a greater quality than silence.’ Rachel took hold of this character trait. Because she had done so, her descendants also assumed this characteristic. She had seen the gifts that were meant for her in the hands of her sister Leah, but she remained silent.

“The stone in the breastplate of the High Priest that represented the Tribe of *Binyamin*, the younger son of Rachel, was called ‘*yishpei*.’ What is the meaning of ‘*yishpei*?’ Although *Binyamin* was aware of the sale of his brother Yosef into slavery, he did not share this with his father Yaakov. ‘*Yishpei*’ is an contraction for ‘*yesh peh*’ which means, ‘he has a mouth.’ *Binyamin* had the ability to communicate the information to his father, yet he remained silent. Queen *Esther*, who descended from Rachel also possessed the characteristic of remaining silent. It was because of her silence that Rachel merited to have a son.”

Gemara in Tractate *Rosh Hashanah:* One who is willing to overlook a claim against another, which is justified (*maavir aal midosov*) measure for measure, G-d will overlook and not prosecute him even for a defiant act. One may think that G-d's response to Rachel's silence was due to it being an expression of her “*maavir aal midoseha*” – suppressing her pain and disappointment and not reacting to the injustice of her father Lavan. However, the *Midrash* clearly indicates that her meriting the child is unrelated to this principle.

Midrash: “Why did Rachel remain silent? Rachel had thought, ‘If I should inform Yaakov that my father Lavan had given the gifts that were meant for me to my sister Leah, Yaakov would not tolerate this. Yaakov would then enter into a dispute with my father and consequently he would deny me Yaakov as a husband. Although I have a claim, I shall remain silent so that I shall not be distanced from this special *tzaddik*, Yaakov.’”

Rachel, despite the overwhelming pain and anguish that she was experiencing as a result of the gifts that were denied to her, chose to endure so that she

could ultimately be attached to *Yaakov* the *tzaddik*. Because of *Rachel's* appreciation and understanding of the dimension of *Yaakov's* spirituality, even experiencing the greatest hardship was worthwhile in order to become his wife. She thus remained silent. It is because of this appreciation of *Yaakov*, which manifested itself in her silence, that she merited to become the primary Matriarch of the Jewish people.

Midrash: Rachel merited to have an additional two tribes – the sons of *Yosef*. *Yosef*, the son of *Yaakov* was divided into two tribes – *Efrayim* and *Menashe*. *Leah*, her sister, did not merit having one of her children dividing into two tribes. *Rachel* was only able to endure as she had because of her deep appreciation of spirituality. Therefore, her descendants were endowed by G-d with the same capacity to appreciate spirituality on a level that would not allow them to speak – thus not jeopardizing that spirituality.

Binyamin, the son of *Rachel*, although he knew that his brother *Yosef* was sold into slavery (which caused him untold pain), he did not share that information with his father *Yaakov*. If *Yaakov* was told that his sons had sold *Yosef* into slavery, he would have cursed them. This would have put the future of the Jewish people into jeopardy. Therefore, regardless of how pained *Binyamin* was, he remained silent.

Esther, was offered half of the kingdom by her husband the Persian Emperor – *Achashverosh*. He had said to her “If you reveal your lineage and pedigree to me, I will give you up to half of my kingdom.” Despite the fact that his kingdom encompassed the entire world, *Esther* remained silent. By remaining silent as she was instructed by *Mordechai* (the leader of the Jewish people), the events of *Purim* were able to unfold.

Yaakov, the Embodiment of Torah

Torah: “He (*Yaakov*) encountered the place...”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: When *Yaakov*, our Patriarch, came upon Mt. Moriah he prayed.

Gemara in Tractate *Chulin*: *Yaakov* had intended to pray at Mt. Moriah (the Temple Mount); however, he had inadvertently passed it on his way to *Charan*. When he realized that he had passed it, miraculously he was returned to Mt. Moriah. This is the meaning of the term, “He encountered the place...” The prayer

that *Yaakov* had established at this location was *Arvis* (evening prayer service).

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: Prior to *Yaakov's* departure from the Land of *Canaan*, he had spent 14 additional years studying *Torah* in the *Yeshivah* of *Shem v'Aver*. *Yaakov* had dedicated his entire life to *Torah* study – as he is quantified by the verse, “The perfect man who sits in the tent (the tent of *Torah*).” *Yaakov* at the time of receiving the blessings from his father was 63 years old. What was the value and necessity of the additional 14 years of *Torah* study that *Yaakov* had invested before departing *Charan*?

Chazal: Yitzchak, who is identified as “the unblemished offering” was not permitted to leave the Land of *Canaan* to go to Egypt. Just as an offering is invalidated if it is taken out of the Sanctuary, so too *Yitzchak* would be diminished if he were to leave the confines of the Land of *Canaan*. *Yaakov* believed after being mentored in a home which was the equivalent of the Holy of Holies, that he would never leave the Land of *Canaan* (the Holy Land). Thus, all the *Torah* that he had studied until the age of 63 was directed to his spiritual development within the confines of the Holy Land.

When *Yaakov* needed to flee to *Charan*, the community of *Lavan*, he understood that the moral and ethical fabric of that community was the antithesis of what he valued and represented. The fare of the day in *Charan* was the three cardinal sins (murder, idolatry, and adultery). *Yaakov* understood that without sufficient preparation before entering into that negative spiritual environment, he would be diminished. He thus had to spend an additional 14 years in the *Yeshivah* of *Shem v'Aver* to gain the *Torah* that was necessary for him to confront all of the spiritual challenges that may present themselves in the future. *Yaakov*, is the Patriarch who represents *galus* (exile). None of the other Patriarchs suffered or were displaced to the degree of *Yaakov*.

Gemara: Exile is analogous to the nighttime period. During the period of darkness/nighttime one's perception of reality is very often distorted. Because of the lack of illumination one lacks clarity. Thus, the nighttime period is fraught with confusion. Similarly when one is in a state of exile, one is subject to confusion, distraction, and unanswered questions. Therefore *Yaakov* the Patriarch of *galus* (exile) is the one to establish *Arvis*, which is the nighttime prayer service.

Yaakov, despite being exposed for many years to the overwhelming negative influences of *Charan* emerged spiritually unscathed. He fathered 12 sons who were worthy to be classified as “the Tribes of G-d.” They were individuals who were spiritually attuned and had a capacity for unlimited growth. How was *Yaakov* able to accomplish this impossible feat? It was only because he is the Patriarch who epitomizes and personifies *Torah* study. It is only through *Torah* study that one is able to ward-off and dispel all negative influences. *Yaakov* was able to create an insular environment for his family to develop and blossom as spiritual giants.

Gemara: “I (G-d) have created the evil inclination and the *Torah* is its antidote.” Thus, the only way to achieve clarity, despite one’s being engulfed in darkness/confusion, is through the *Torah*. *Yaakov* chose to author the nighttime service (*Arvis*) when he came upon Mt. Moriah. Why did *Yaakov* not establish this prayer service earlier in his life? It is not because he could only enact this service when he assumed the role of “Patriarch” because when he did establish *Arvis*, both of his parents were still alive. Why was it only after investing 14 years at the *Yeshivah* of *Shem v’Aver* that *Yaakov* was ready to establish the *tefillah* (prayer) of *Arvis*?

In order to enact the prayer of the nighttime period, *Yaakov* needed to appreciate and understand all the issues and nuances that one must face while in exile. Prior to his *Torah* study in *Shem v’Aver*, *Yaakov* had not yet fully understood how to confront the negativity of exile. It was only after 14 years of studying the *Torah* that was necessary to approach the challenges of exile, did *Yaakov* come upon Mt. Moriah to establish *Arvis*. The evening service encompasses and addresses all the conceivable issues that the Jewish people will be confronted with throughout their existence in exile.

Rambam in *The Laws of Torah Study*: The optimum time for one to study *Torah* is during the nighttime period. He quotes a verse from *Eicha* which are the words of *Yirmiyahu* the Prophet (who had witnessed the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jews to Babylon): “Rise and sing out in the night.” The word “sing” refers to *Torah* study because the song of the Jew is the *Torah* itself. *Yirmiyahu* the Prophet was saying that after the Jews had experienced destruction and upheaval in their lives, the only why one is able to gain clarity is through the study of *Torah*. It is fitting that *Yaakov* is the Patriarch who represents exile, because

it was only he (who is the embodiment of *Torah*) had the ability to navigate through the confusion and darkness of *galus/exile*. King Solomon encapsulates this reality by stating, “The receptacle is the *mitzvah*, and the *Torah* is the illuminator.”

The Functionality of the Heart (from *Toldos*)

Torah: “...*Esav* came in from the field, and he was exhausted. *Esav* said to *Yaakov*, ‘Pour into me, now, some of that very red stuff for I am exhausted. *Yaakov* said, ‘Sell, as this day, your birthright to me...’ Thus, *Yaakov* had purchased the birthright from his brother *Esav* for the value of a bowl of lentil soup and some bread. After consuming what was given to him by *Yaakov*, the *Torah* states, “*Esav* got up and left; thus, *Esav* disgraced the birthright.” After *Esav* had satisfied his physical needs, he was not concerned that he had sold his birthright for something of such little value. He had given away something of infinite value for a pittance.

Although the commentators explain that the lentil soup was not the full value of what *Yaakov* had agreed to pay for the birthright (it was only a down payment), nevertheless, *Esav*’s behavior after consuming the food confirmed without question that he had no sense of value regarding the birthright. Spirituality and G-d had no place in his life.

Baal HaTurim citing a verse from the *Megillah* of *Esther* regarding *Haman* (a descendant of *Esav*): “He became disgraced in his eyes.” When *Haman* had seen that *Mordechai* would not bow to him, he detested the existence of *Mordechai*.

Midrash: “*Haman* was the disgracer who descends from the one who disgraced (*Esav*).” Although *Mordechai* was a the leader of the Jewish people, representing the most advanced level of spirituality and purity, *Haman* had no appreciation for his existence. Identically regarding his forbearer, *Esav*, who did not have any appreciation or relevance to spirituality (the birthright). *Yitzchak*, the Patriarch, in addition to his own personal wealth, was the sole heir of his father *Avraham* who had great material wealth. The one who possessed the birthright would inherit all of *Yitzchak*’s fortune.

Ramban: “Knowing that the birthright was linked to such material wealth, how could have *Esav* been so limited – not realizing its material value? It was

because *Esav* possessed cruelty/evil in his heart that he was not able to internalize and relate to the true value of the birthright." This cruelty of heart not only denied him the spiritual, but also caused him to forfeit the material.

Gemara: Acher, the teacher of *Rebbe Meir*, *Elisha Ben Avuya*, despite the fact that he was one of the greatest *Torah* sages of his generation, abandoned the *Torah*. He had declared (as *Esav* had done because of an incident that he had witnessed), "There is no judgment and there is no judge!" He denied G-d and consequently His *Torah*. How was it possible that one who had invested his life in *Torah* study at such an advanced level should not be protected from the evil inclination?

Gemara: "It was because he had possessed an impurity in his heart." Despite being the repository of a unique level of *Torah*, the impurity in his heart had caused a blockage that did not allow him to merit the clarity, which the *Torah* offers. Therefore what he had witnessed was in a distorted context. Similarly, *Esav* and *Haman*, because of the cruelty that existed within

their hearts, despite their dimension of genius, were not able to appreciate spirituality for what it truly is. It is the heart that gives one the capacity to evaluate and esteem what is proper.

In contrast, *Moshe* is quantified by King Solomon in *Proverbs* as "the one with the wise heart will take *mitzvos*." *Moshe* had sought out the remains of *Yosef* while the Jewish people were borrowing the wealth of the Egyptians. It was only because *Moshe* had purity of heart that he was able to appreciate and understand what needed to be done at that moment. Without the remains of *Yosef*, the Jewish people could not leave Egypt.

We supplicate G-d in the *Amidah* (silent prayer) on the *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* to, "purify our hearts to serve Him with Truth." It is not sufficient to have great intellectual capability without the heart having the capacity to appreciate and sense the true value of spirituality. The degree of impurity that exists in one's heart will determine one's level of sensitivity or lack of it.



Yad Avraham Institute