

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

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Vayishlach

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Power of Negotiation

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The Significance of Yaakov's Bows to Esav

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Yaakov's Responsibility to the World

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Yaakov's Level Was Where He Didn't Need To Take Certain Initiatives

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Neither Consumed Or Compromised

1. Yaakov sends agents to Esav and relates that he is returning after many years.
2. Yaakov says he sojourned with Lavan. The Hebrew equivalent for sojourned is Garti – 613.
3. Although he was exposed to Lavan's evil ways he was not diminished.
4. If Yaakov kept the 613 mitzvos, it is obvious he did not learn from his ways.
5. When Yaakov fled to Lavan to escape the wrath of Esav, he made a vow.
6. Should he return to his father in peace, he will

tithe all his assets for G-d.

7. Rashi: "Whole from sin" – that he does not learn from Lavan's evil eye.
8. One needs divine assistance to escape the influences of Lavan.
9. Despite the overwhelming negative influence of Lavan, Yaakov remained unscathed.
10. Before confronting Esav, Yaakov feared he became sullied with sin.
11. 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

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 & 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. Because he totally integrated all 613 mitzvos he didn't learn

from Lavan's evil ways.

11. On the 4th year of the sabbatical cycle, he makes the Confession of the Tithes.
12. One says, "I have rejoiced & made others happy as a result of the distributing the tithes to the rightful parties.
13. By giving away serious percentages of one's profit is how is one happy.
14. After the distribution, one supplicates G-d: "Gaze from your Heavenly abode & bless People of Israel."
15. Chazal: We have done what you decreed – If we walk in your statutes, the rains & bounty will come in their time. This refers to toiling in the Torah.
16. Only when toiling in Torah can one internalize the value of mitzvos & have a sense of one's true worth.
17. The only one who could say, "I rejoice" when giving away significant percentage of one's profits is the one who toiled in Torah.

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Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vayishlach



The Incompatibility of Dina and Shechem

Torah: Regarding *Dina*, before she was defiled by *Shechem* the prince of Canaan, “*Dina*, the daughter of *Leah*, went out to look over the daughters of the land.”

Midrash: “Why is *Dina* identified by the *Torah* as ‘the daughter of *Leah*’? Was she not the daughter of *Yaakov*? It is because just as her mother *Leah* possessed the characteristic of ‘going out’ so too did *Dina* possess this characteristic. Where do find the characteristic of outgoingness regarding *Leah*?”

Torah: *Reuvain* had found mandrakes in the field (*dudaim*) and brought them to his mother, *Leah*. *Rachel*, being barren and not being able to conceive wanted to have the mandrakes in order to make her fertile. In exchange for the mandrakes, *Rachel* had exchanged her conjugal night with *Yaakov* to *Leah*. “When *Yaakov* came from the field in the evening, *Leah* went out to meet him and said, ‘It is to me that you must come for I have clearly hired you with my son’s *dudaim*.’” Consequently, *Leah* bore

her fifth son to *Yaakov* and she named him *Yissachar*. *Leah*’s going out to meet *Yaakov* was a manifestation of her characteristic of outgoingness.

Torah: After *Shechem* had defiled *Dina*, the daughter of *Yaakov*, he had asked his father *Chamor* to go *Yaakov* and negotiate for the hand of his daughter in marriage.

Midrash: “*Chamor* said to *Yaakov*, ‘You could demand any amount of money from me for the hand of your daughter *Dina*. I am aware that your grandfather *Avraham* was a prince. I too am a prince of the land.’ Thus, the families are compatible for marriage. *Yaakov* replied, ‘*Avraham* was not a prince, but rather, he was an ox (*shor*).’ As the verse states when *Avraham* hosted the angels, ‘*Avraham* ran to the cattle...’ The verse in *Proverbs* states, ‘The amount of yield given by a field is determined by the strength of the ox.’ You on the other hand are a donkey (*Chamor*). One is not permitted to plow with an ox and a donkey that are hitched together as it is written, ‘You shall not plow with the ox and the

donkey together... Therefore, there is no basis for us to enter into marriage.”

Seemingly, had *Leah* not possessed the characteristic of outgoingness, she would not have gone out to inform *Yaakov* that it was her night to be with him. Consequently, *Yissachar* would not have been conceived. *Yissachar* was only conceived as a result of *Leah*’s characteristic of outgoingness. This characteristic regarding *Yissachar* manifested itself in a positive result. However, regarding *Dina*, the characteristic of outgoingness, manifested itself in tragedy.

Torah: Before *Yaakov* passed away he blessed his sons, to establish each of them as a tribe. Regarding *Yissachar*, *Yaakov* had said, “*Yissachar* is a big-boned donkey; who rests between the boundaries.” Meaning, he has the capacity to bear the heavy burden, which is the unceasing immersion in *Torah* study. Because of *Yissachar*’s single focus, he achieved a unique level of clarity in *Torah*.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: *Reb Yosef* would cite the verse “The amount of yield given by a field is determined by the strength of the ox” regarding himself. *Reb Yosef* is quantified by the *Gemara* as “*Sinai*” because of his proficiency of *Torah* knowledge. Why was *Reb Yosef* able to disseminate the *Torah* at the most advanced level? It was because of the dimension of *Torah* knowledge that he possessed.

We see that the quantification of one who possesses and engages in *Torah* on an advanced level is quantified as the “ox (*shor*)” and the “donkey (*Chamor*).” If this is so then both of these species have relevance to one’s spirituality. *Avraham* ran to the oxen to host the angels in order utilize his characteristic of *chessed* (kindness) as a vehicle to espouse G-d’s Presence in the world as the Omnipotent One. His hurrying to accommodate the needs of his guests was not an end unto itself but rather it was a means for the sake of spirituality.

Maharal in *Neir Mitzvah* (*Chanuka*): “The *Gemara* in Tractate *Betzah* tells us that among the nations of the Jewish people are the most fierce (*aazim*). We also find in *Ethics of our Fathers*, ‘One must be fierce like a leopard.’” One would think that fierceness should be seen as a negative characteristic because it connotes a level of aggressiveness that is unrestrained.

Mishna in *Ethics of our Fathers*: “The one who is shy cannot study (*Torah*).” Meaning, in order for one to

advance in the study of *Torah* the level of application must be on an unrestrained level. This level of application is a manifestation of the characteristic of fierceness. It is because the one who is fierce will not cease to evaluate and question until he comes upon truth, whereas the one who is shy will not.

Because the Jewish people are innately spiritual, which is unlimited and uncontained, they therefore possess the characteristic of fierceness, which is being uninhibited. The characteristic that *Leah* possessed was one that is essential to *Torah*. However, it is the characteristic that is normally manifest in a man and not of a woman.

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: “It is the way of a man to conquer a wife and not a woman.” The husband acquires the wife in marriage and not the reverse. This characteristic of unceasing application and the pursuit of truth expresses itself in *Yissachar* who is the equivalent of the “big-boned donkey.” Equating *Yissachar* with the donkey is only because the beast of burden has the capacity to accommodate enormous loads. However, *Chamor*, the father of *Shechem*, when he is quantified as the “donkey” it is to indicate that he is one who is devoid of spirituality.

The prophet *Yechezkel* refers to the Egyptian people as “donkeys” (*Chamor*): “Their flesh is the flesh of donkeys.”

Maharal of Prague: The word “*Chamor*” (donkey) is derived from “*chomer*” which means material. Of all nations, the Egyptians were the most devoid of spirituality. Thus what *Yaakov* had said to *Chamor*, “My grandfather *Avraham* who is equated with the ox, who is the spritual being, has no relevance to you who is totally physical. Therefore there is no basis of compatibility between our families.”

The Positive Side of Bribery

Torah: *Yaakov* had sent a valuable gift comprised of many herds and flocks to his brother *Esav* as a tribute in order to appease him. The servants of *Yaakov* who delivered the many components of the tribute addressed *Esav* in the name of *Yaakov* as “master” and referred to *Yaakov* as “his servant.” When *Esav* finally met with *Yaakov* his brother, he initially did not want to accept the gift. “*Esav* had said, ‘What did you intend by that whole camp (the gift) that you sent me? *Yaakov*

answered, 'To gain favor in my lord's eyes.' *Esav* said, 'I have plenty. My brother let what you have remain yours.' But *Yaakov* said, 'No, I beg you!...Please accept my gift.'...He urged him and he accepted." If *Esav* had acknowledged what *Yaakov* had intended to give him, why was it necessary for *Yaakov* to urge him to accept the gift?

Torah: "You shall not take bribery (*shochad*) because it blinds the eyes of the wise and corrupts the devoutly righteous."

Gemara in Tractate *Kesubos*: If a judge accepts a gift from one of the defendants he is disqualified as a judge because he has lost his impartiality. The word "*shochad* (bribery)" connotes the Aramaic word "*shechad* (like one)." Meaning, the one who accepts a gift from another becomes one mind with the one from whom he had accepted the gift, even if the gift was not intended to be a bribe. Thus, the judge who accepts a gift from a defendant is disqualified because he will evaluate the evidence based on the perspective of the defendant who gave him the gift.

Midrash: The reason *Yaakov* had sent *Esav* the gift was the equivalent of bribery. As it states, "Bribery blinds the eyes of the wise..." *Yaakov* wanted to defuse *Esav's* anger by influencing to appreciate his innate value of spirituality. If *Esav* would have an appreciation for *Yaakov's* dimension of person and spirituality, he would not want to kill him. Although he had acknowledged *Yaakov's* overture through the gift as an act of subservience, it was not sufficient to affect *Esav* to become one with *Yaakov*. *Yaakov* needed to urge him to accept the gift, which was the equivalent of bribery, in order to bring about this favorable result.

Prophets: The Assyrian General *Naamon* became a leper. He was advised to seek out *Elisha* the Prophet to be healed. *Elisha* told him to bathe in the Jordan river, in order to be healed. *Naamon*, after being healed, wanted to reward *Elisha* with great wealth comprised of gold and silver.

Sforno: Although *Naamon* urged *Elisha* to accept the gift, he refused. Why did he refuse? *Elisha* understood that if he were to accept the gift of *Naamon*, who was a pagan and possessed many negative characteristics, he would be affected as a result of becoming one with him (*shechad*).

King Solomon in *Proverbs*: "The one who despises gifts shall live." Why is this so? It is because when one receives a gift from another, it has a semblance of bribery. One becomes vulnerable to the ideas and values of the benefactor. If one wants to retain his objectivity and not allow himself to become biased, he must not accept gifts.

Rambam in *The Laws of Deos*: For one to evaluate and process something correctly one's innate characteristics cannot be to either extreme – either positive or negative. One must be at the equidistant point to be able to have clarity to make a proper evaluation. *Yaakov's* bribery did not have any pejorative connotation, but rather it was to give *Esav* an appreciation for spirituality although it was for the moment.

The Danger of Self-Incrimination

Torah: When *Yaakov* had sent the gift to *Esav* along with his servants he instructed each of them how to address *Esav* and present themselves with the greatest level of reverence.

Midrash: "The moment *Yaakov* our Patriarch referred to *Esav* as 'My master' G-d said to him, 'You lowered yourself before your brother and referred to him as 'Master' eight times! Because you did this, I will establish from him eight kings, who will come to power eight generations before you establish your kings.'" Seemingly, G-d was critical of *Yaakov* for lowering himself before his brother, *Esav*. *Yaakov* understood the imminent danger that was in hand because his agents informed him that *Esav* was coming towards him with 400 men in order to kill him. *Esav* still harbored hatred against *Yaakov* because he had taken his blessing.

The blessing that *Yaakov* had received from his father *Yitzchak* dictated that he would be the master and *Esav* would be the servant. If *Yaakov* were to demonstrate to any degree a sense of empowerment and superiority, it would only incite *Esav*. Therefore, in order to defuse and quell *Esav's* anger, *Yaakov* chose to present himself as the servant and *Esav* as the master so that *Esav* should believe that he was in a dominant position. If *Yaakov* in fact had no choice because of the circumstance to refer to *Esav* as the master, why should *Yaakov* be punished and be put in a compromised position?

Torah: Yaakov's mother, through her prophetic vision, instructed him to go to his father and take the blessings that were rightfully his. In order for Yaakov to accomplish this task, he needed to present himself as his brother Esav who was designated to be the recipient of Yitzchak's blessings. When Yaakov presented himself to his father, Yitzchak asked him, "Are you my first born Esav?" Yaakov responded, "I am Esav your first born."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: What Yaakov had said was, "I am (meaning I am who I am) and Esav is your first born." In actuality, the words which were expressed by Yaakov, if understood correctly, were not a lie. It was only because of Yitzchak's understanding that he believed that it was Esav— as it was intended by Yaakov. Seemingly, Yaakov would not present himself in a manner that would cause Yitzchak to believe that he was not Esav. Because Esav was a hairy man and Yaakov was smooth skinned, Yaakov wore hides in order to disguise himself. If this was so, why did Yaakov when speaking to his father express himself in refined manner that was not the way of Esav?

Yaakov had said to his father "Please rise," which Esav would not have said. He also chose to attribute the success of his trapping the game for the delicacies that he prepared for his father to G-d rather than himself. As it states, Yitzchak asked him, "How is it that you were so quick?" Yaakov responded, "Because Hashem your G-d arranged it for me." If Yaakov was trying to conceal his true identity in order to receive the blessings, why would he expose himself through his manner of speech?

Although Yaakov understood that he needed to take sufficient initiative to have a semblance of his brother in order to receive the blessings, he understood that the initiative must conform with his belief in G-d. If Yaakov did not attribute his success regarding the trapping of the game to G-d, it would have been heretical. Yaakov understood that if he were to receive what was meant to be his, his initiative could be contrary to his beliefs. To speak in a manner that was not sufficiently respectful to his father in order to imitate Esav, would be sinful. He therefore addressed his father in a humble and respectful manner and attributed his success to G-d. Yaakov had immersed spiritually unscathed despite his stay with Lavan, as he had said, "I have sojourned with Lavan (*im Lavan gartie*) and lingered until now."

Rashi: The word "*gartie*" is numerically the equivalent of "*taryag*," which corresponds to the 613 *mitzvos* of the *Torah*. If this was so, Yaakov had no reason to be concerned that if he did not acknowledge Esav as "the master" he would be compromised. His father's blessing was still intact because he had maintained his spiritual standing. By taking this unnecessary initiative (referring to Esav as "master"), it was considered to be a failing. Thus, because Yaakov humbled himself before Esav, G-d established for Esav eight kings that would be in a dominant position in contrast to Yaakov.

Chofetz Chaim in his introduction to *Guarding One's Speech*: When one speaks *lashon hara* about another, it brings about an intense level of prosecution upon the Jewish people that results in great tragedy. Why is this so? It is because the prosecutor, *satan*, continuously wants to prosecute the spiritual record of the Jewish people; however, because of the Attribute of Mercy, G-d does not allow him to prosecute. If the Jewish people speak negatively about one another, in a context that has no value, *satan* goes before G-d and says, "Why do you not allow me to prosecute the Jewish people? They are prosecuting one another by pointing out their failings to one another!" G-d then allows *satan* to prosecute the record of the Jewish people, causing death and destruction.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: One should not "incriminate oneself when tragedy comes upon him by saying, 'I deserve what is coming upon me.' One should not open his mouth to *satan*. By incriminating oneself, it demonstrates that he supports the prosecution.

Chazal: The archangel of Esav is *satan*. When Yaakov referred to his brother as his "master" it was an admission that in fact his brother was superior to him, thus allowing him to dominate. G-d therefore allowed Esav to have eight generations of kings before the Jewish people had their own.

The Superiority of Yaakov Over Esav

Torah: After Yaakov had not seen his brother Esav for nearly 36 years, he communicated to him through angels as his saying, "I have sojourned with Lavan and have lingered until now. I have acquired oxen and donkeys, flocks, servants, and maidservants..." Yaakov had delineated to Esav all that he had amassed during his stay with Lavan. Why would Yaakov want

share this information with his brother *Esav*, who had despised him?

Midrash: What *Yaakov* was actually telling *Esav* was that he was fearful of him, because of his own personal spiritual dimension. “*Yaakov* said, ‘I have no reason to fear you (*Esav*) because I have acquired oxen...’ The ‘ox’ refers to *Yaakov*’s son *Yosef*. As it states, ‘A sovereignty is his ox-like one-majesty is his.’ Another reason *Yaakov* had no reason to fear *Esav* was because he had ‘donkeys.’

“This is an allusion to *Moshiach*, the son of (King) David, who will redeem the Jewish people and bring existence to spiritual perfection. As it is stated, ‘*Moshiach* will come like a poor man riding on a donkey... The ‘sheep (flock)’ mentioned by *Yaakov* refers to the merits of the sons of the Tribes – who are referred to as flocks. Additionally, *Yehudah* is the antagonist of *Esav*. As the verse states, ‘The lion like the cattle will eat the straw...’ The ‘lion’ refers to *Yehudah* and the ‘straw’ refers to *Esav*.” Therefore, because of all of these reasons, He had no reason to fear *Esav*.

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra*: “The progeny of *Esav* can only fall into the hands of the progeny of *Rachel*.” The Jewish people were never victorious in a battle against *Amalek* (descendents of *Esav*) unless the progeny of *Rachel* had participated. For example, after the Jewish people were attacked by the Amelekites in the desert (after leaving Egypt) *Yehoshua bin Nun*, who was from the Tribe of *Ephraim* (Son of *Yosef*) led them into battle. King *Shaul*, who was from the Tribe of *Binyamin* (Son of *Rachel*), fought the second battle against *Amalek*, which took place in the Land of Israel. *Mordechai* and *Esther*, who brought about the destruction of *Amalek* in their time were from the tribe of *Binyamin*. Why are the progeny of *Rachel* uniquely qualified to defeat the progeny of *Esav*?

Rachel our Matriarch, although she was exceptionally beautiful, as the *Gemara* tells us that she was one of the most beautiful women to ever live, was fully dedicated to fulfilling G-d’s will. She was the primary wife of *Yaakov* the most special of the Patriarchs. She subordinated and dominated her physicality for the sake of spirituality. Her physical existence was only a means to an end. *Yosef*, her son, also possessed exceptional beauty. His intellect transcended the human capacity. He had ascended to the position of Viceroy of Egypt. Despite his beauty and power he is identified as “*Yosef ha’tzaddik* (*Yosef* the

righteous).” His physical essence was only a means to facilitate a spiritual end. He prepared the location for the Jewish people to experience their extended exile in Egypt. *Yosef* is quantified by the *Torah* as “the ruler (shalit).” He dominated the most advanced civilization in existence.

Esav, in contrast, personified physicality on the most exaggerated level. The *Torah* refers to him as, “the man of the field.” He was the consummate hedonist who had no relevance to spirituality whatsoever. His involvement in the material was an end unto itself. Because *Yosef*, the son of *Rachel* possessed the characteristic of his mother, the ability to dominate the physical for the sake of the spiritual, *Yaakov* was not fearful of *Esav*’s presence. Because he possessed “oxen” which alludes to his son *Yosef*.

The final conflict that will bring about the ultimate redemption will come through *Moshiach* the son of *Yosef*. This battle will prepare the way for the coming of *Moshiach* the son of David, who will then dispel all falsehood from existence, which is disseminated by *Esav*. Ultimately, Mt. Seir, the location of *Esav* and the Edomites will be judged – concluding with G-d’s dominion over all existence. Every Jew has the ability to infuse the physical with the spiritual – thus spiritualizing existence. By doing so, the Jewish people will hasten the coming of *Moshiach* and the ultimate redemption.

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: “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. As it states in *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*).”



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