

# PARSHAS VAYISHLACH

תשע"ט

From Parshas Vayeishev and onward till the end of Sefer Bereishis is the story of Yosef Hatzaddik. Parshas Toldos, Vayeitzei, and Vayishlach are about Yaakov and his development. From the very beginning, even in utero, there is a confrontation between Yaakov and Eisov. Chazal told us that Yaakov and Eisov were born with vastly different predispositions. But that didn't mean they didn't have bechirah chofshis and were destined to become who they became. Both Yaakov and Eisov had to struggle with their own personal trials. One had a natural yearning for kedushoh and one had a natural yearning for tumoh. If they followed their natural inclinations, one would learn Torah and one would serve avodo zoro. They were placed in the home of the Ovos. Yitzchok and Rivka, as well as Avrohom, participated in their upbringing.

Rivka was told that the cultures of Yaakov and Eisov would dominate the world.

Eisov went out to the field, developing his physical prowess hunting and killing. But not only that, he trapped people—his father. Yaakov was an ish tom. He was straight—no deceit, no duplicity. He was not capable of dealing with falsehood.

Eisov came home starving and Yaakov convinced Eisov to sell his birthright for a pot of lentils. He agreed to have the mesorah from Avrohom and Yitzchok pass over him and go over to Yaakov. Why? Because he knew that taking on the mesorah comes with mitzvos and absolute demands with severe consequences. Eisov says he isn't interested. He wants freedom from moral constraints.

The Torah records that not only did Eisov hand over the mesorah of avodas Hashem to Yaakov, he despised it. He cheapened it by giving it away for a pot of food. The difference between the yetzer horo and yetzer tov is a simple one. The yetzer horo pays you in cash—on the spot—immediate gratification. You see it, you want it, you take it. The yetzer tov on the other hand, pays you on credit. The reward is waiting in the future if you delay your gratification for now. Eisov isn't willing to wait and invest, to build for a perfect future. He wants it all and he wants it now—even if it means ultimately he will lose out on eternity.

At the end of Parshas Toldos, after he was tricked into giving Yaakov the brochos meant for Eisov, Yitzchok still decides to give the spiritual brochos of Avrohom Ovinu to Yaakov. But this was never in question. Yitzchok has two things to offer his descendants. A spiritual mesorah and material prosperity. He thought he should give the brochos of material prosperity to Eisov because he planned that Eisov would participate in a partnership with Yaakov. But he knew all along that the spiritual brochos of Avrohom belonged to Yaakov.

Yitzchok thought while Eisov was no great tzaddik, he was still able to contribute to Yaakov's material well-being and fulfill a productive purpose in the field, outside the beis midrash. Only Rivka was aware that not only is Eisov no tzaddik, he is actually evil. He will poison the partnership with Yaakov and sabotage any kind of spiritual endeavor Yitzchok envisioned. Rivka was raised amongst evil people and could recognize the evil in Eisov when she saw it. Yitzchok was blind. He was an olah temimoh who couldn't fathom that such darkness could exist. Rivka knew Yaakov had to be independent from Eisov and had to do both jobs of ruchniyus and gashmiyus on his own. When Yitzchok realized what happened, he immediately recognized that this was the hashgochoh and did not resent the deception. But he gave Eisov something. He is given wealth and prosperity. Although he will serve his brother, there is a condition—Yaakov must fulfill his spiritual

calling. If not, then Eisov will be free from servitude to Yaakov.

Yaakov gets the spiritual yerushoh, but he has to be true and faithful to that yerushoh in order to succeed in the outside world and dominate Eisov.

Yaakov comes to Choron and is fooled and tricked by the master swindler, Lovon, time and time again. Finally, Lovon is forced to admit that before Yaakov came on the scene, Lovon was in poverty. Once Yaakov came, his wealth exploded and he had sons. So now Yaakov demanded some independence. He suggested that Lovon take away all the spotted sheep and goats, and he will watch the remaining white animals and only take for himself the spotted and colored animals that will be born from now on. Then it will be very clear which animals are mine and which are yours. Lovon says "Great!" Yaakov has placed himself in Hashem's hands entirely. If you take all the spotted and colored sheep aside, the remaining white sheep will never naturally produce colored offspring among themselves. It would seem that Yaakov will get nothing. But Yaakov employed a strategy with speckled sticks to produce spotted sheep anyway. Eventually, Yaakov became tremendously wealthy, and Lovon becomes resentful and jealous of Yaakov—even though he admitted that all his wealth really came from Yaakov to begin with!

Yaakov consulted with his wives. He told them about the divine vision he received—informing him that all his genetic engineering was really in vain. The truth is that Hashem miraculously arranged for the spotted colored sheep that were far away to secretly impregnate the white sheep under Yaakov's care. Hashem took care of Yaakov and protected him from Lovon's trickery. Why? Because of the promise Yaakov made in Beis-El. Now it is time to go back. He said that he worked for Lovon with all his power and he was being tricked and swindled every step of the way. The wives said it is true—we should take the wealth you worked for with us.

Lovon chased after Yaakov and confronted him, and Yaakov asserted that he is totally within his rights to escape Lovon's household with his family. Lovon says "it's all mine, but Hashem told me not to touch you". They made a pact and parted ways.

Yaakov met with Eisov and was faced with a choice as to how to deal with Eisov. Yaakov had no ego—he is prepared to appease Eisov with his hard-earned money if he can avoid fighting—which is the last resort. He makes a careful three-fold preparation of tefilloh, gifts, and battle strategy. In Israel there are some people who prefer war as a first option even though it always exacts a steep price. Their egos and twisted nationalism tell them it is a show of weakness to negotiate and make compromises for the sake of peace. Better to kill and die for one's country than to capitulate to political pressure. There is nothing in the Torah which condones such an attitude. War is always the last option. There is immeasurable value to human life.

Yaakov got away with the tribute and avoided the fight. But he remained still very wealthy. Why is he wealthy? He had dealt with a master swindler on a daily basis. Some people think that if you are dealing with a corrupt system, you are justified to become just as corrupt as everybody else. But Yaakov showed us that this is false. Yaakov worked his head off—for whom? For his swindling boss. He lost sleep and went through freezing cold nights and sweltering hot days. He always made up for losses from his own pocket. Lovon went through all Yaakov's family's belongings looking for his teraphim and

couldn't find a single item that belonged to him. After 20 years of living with Lovon he couldn't find a single fork or spoon! Despite all the falsehood around him, Yaakov insisted on remaining with the truth of the Torah.

The Rambam in Hilchos Sechirus says that an employee cannot steal from his employer nor waste time for the time he is paid to work. You have to give it everything you got. We learn this from Yaakov the Tzaddik. Because of Yaakov's dedication and honesty, he succeeded in the end—even in this world.

Yaakov Ovinu had every excuse and every justification to swindle Lovon back or at least be slack in his work. You can be a smart and shrewd businessman, but not a dishonest one. The extreme truth of Yaakov produced his wealth—and it didn't come from where he expected it. Hashem arranged his parnossoh from a completely different direction from where Yaakov invested his efforts. It is so hidden, that Hashem had to give Yaakov a special vision to show him.

Eisov confronts Yaakov, but it's not what he expects. He thinks Yaakov is this nebach yoshev ohalim who is such a tam that he can barely stay alive in the real world, while he is the strong, powerful man of the world, leading an imposing band of marauders. But he is in for a surprise. Yaakov is wealthy, he has huge flocks and servants and angels at his command, and a sizeable family. He is leading a small nation!

Why did Yaakov prefer to buy Eisov off rather than to fight him and keep what is rightfully his?

The answer lies in the posuk which tells us that Yaakov built a house and huts for his flocks before he reaches Yitzchok in Be'er Shevah. Why did he bother making a house before he was finished traveling? The Targum explains the house was a house of study—the only permanent structures are for learning Torah. Temporary structures are for parnossoh.

Not only was Yaakov complete in the physical realm, he was complete in the spiritual realm. Even after paying off Eisov, his wealth was immediately restored and he wasn't missing anything. Even after living with Lovon for 20 years in a culture of falsehood and avodo zoro

and deception, nothing rubbed off on him. How was that possible? It happened because he immersed himself in Torah and absorbed it in his bones. Without holding on to Torah you will get swept up in a culture which will infiltrate and corrupt you. How did Yosef convince Yaakov that he was still Yosef Hatzaddik? By showing him he was still holding in the same sugya that he departed with—even after being a slave and being in prison and being in the royal palace. That is how Yosef remained Yosef and Yaakov remained Yaakov.

Torah is truth and it is supposed to teach you to live by truth. By staying with the truth, Yaakov became wealthy after being with Lovon, and remained wealthy after meeting with Eisov. The Rambam says don't think your honesty in business and standing by your principles only pays off in the next world. It also pays off in this world. Yaakov Ovinu is one of the Ovos who teaches us how to survive and even thrive in golus. It happens only after immersing himself in Torah and becoming a Torah personality. He remains a Torah personality throughout all his trials. He left totally poverty stricken and destitute, because Elifaz took everything away from him. But he comes back wealthy because he stayed with the truth.

It is a difficult lesson to learn in our world because we live in a world of complete falsehood and corruption. No one is honest and genuine. The culture of deception and dishonestly weaves its way into our thought patterns and into our way of looking at things. But there is a truth of Torah. One has to stay with the truth of Torah and use it to fight all forms of falsehood. Don't think you'll get ahead by cheating and relying on your own ingenuity. Your attempts are ultimately futile—if Hashem doesn't grant you success. You can come up with all kinds of business strategies, but there is a higher power in this world. You are faithful to Him and He takes care of you in return.

We survive and prosper in golus by immersing ourselves in Torah and by acquiring the truth of Torah, and then holding on to Torah by making the learning of Torah a permanent concern and your livelihood a temporary concern. Never forget that this is how we succeed in this world.