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Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayishlach

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The Danger of Leaving Someone Alone

Adam Frieberg

While some may find the very thought of eating the heart, stomach, feet, or liver of an animal repulsive, others consider them to be delicacies. Leaving room for personal taste, Jewish law permits eating all of these parts, albeit with certain guidelines as to how they must be prepared. Yet when it comes to the *gid hanasheh* (sciatic neurovascular bundle), the Torah flatly declares, "... the children of Israel may not eat the *gid hanasheh*...to this day..." (Bereishit 32:33). The reason for this prohibition is presented quite clearly in this same verse: a being, apparently an angel, struck Yaakov in that exact spot.

One obvious way to interpret the prohibition presented in the text is to explain that the Torah wanted us to remember the battle between Yaakov and the angel. By prohibiting us from eating the *gid hanasheh*, the Torah ensures that we will consciously remember this brief episode whenever we begin to eat meat. However, this begs a follow up question: why do we need to remember this episode? What is this fight trying to teach us? Additionally, the Torah presents this prohibition as a commentary upon Yaakov's injury, but why should Yaakov's injury lead to this

prohibition?

Rav Chizkiyah ben Manoach, the author of Chizkuni, answers these questions. To understand the answer he presents, we must first analyze the verse that introduces this episode. The quarrel is introduced when the Torah says, "Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn." (Bereishit 32:25) Why was Yaakov alone? Where was his family? The Talmud (Chullin 91a) explains that Yaakov went back over the river that he had just crossed, in order to retrieve a few small jugs he had accidentally left behind. This explains why he journeyed back, but it should not have been a reason for him to be alone, claims Rav Chizkiyah. Despite being woken up in the middle of the night to cross the river the first time, the eleven sons of Yaakov, or at least some of them, should have fought their desire to crawl back into bed, and should have accompanied their father back across the river if that was where he desired to go. It was specifically the fact that they left him alone, claims Rabbi Chizkiyah, that allowed him to be attacked and injured. Were his strong sons with him, they would have protected him. As a form of repentance, Yaakov's sons swore that they, and all of their descendants (i.e.

"the children of Israel"), would not eat the *gid hanasheh*. This was supposed to serve as a constant reminder about the importance of not abandoning people.

The Zohar famously states that each of the Torah's 365 prohibitions is connected to one of the 365 *gidin* (sinews) in our body. My teacher, Rabbi Mordechai Machlis, has pointed out that the Zohar (Vayishlach 170b) also connects each of the 365 prohibitions to a day of the year. The Zohar says that the 9th of Av, the saddest day on the Jewish calendar, the day upon which we mourn the destruction of both of our Temples in addition to countless other calamities that have befallen our people, is connected to the prohibition against eating the *gid hanasheh*.

Using the interpretation we have discussed above, we can make sense of this connection. Eichah 1:3 says, "Judea has been exiled *mei'oni*." The simple translation is that the Jewish nation has been exiled because of *oni*, or suffering. However, a midrash (Eichah Rabbah 1:28) explains *mei'oni* to mean that they went into exile because (*mei*) they didn't treat the pauper (*oni*) properly. This may help us understand why the Zohar links that day to the mitzvah of refraining from eating the *gid hanasheh*. Both of them come to encourage us to reflect back on times where we didn't care enough for those in need, and commit to not leaving them alone in the future. Whether their needs are physical, spiritual or emotional, on the 9th of Av and every time we sit down to eat meat, we are reminded to be there for those who need us. [Indeed, we eat the meal preceding Tishah b'Av on the floor, alone, reflecting on how the abandoned pauper feels.]

With Chanukah fast approaching, we are presented with the opportunity to include others in our families' festivities. Let us make certain that no one is left alone.

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SHANAH BET? A PANEL DISCUSSION
TUESDAY, 7:30 PM, YESHIVAT OR CHAIM (159 ALMORE)
 ✚
HALACHAH FOR DENTISTS (AND ANYONE WITH TEETH)
DENTAL EMERGENCIES ON SHABBAT
SUNDAY, 8:45 AM, AT BAYT (613 CLARK AVE W)
CME CREDIT AVAILABLE
 ✚
NEW ROVING BEIT MIDRASH FOR DECEMBER
MODERN MASHIACH
WED. 8:00 PM, KEHILLAT SHAAREI TORAH (2640 BAYVIEW)



Question: If my spouse lights a chanukiah in our home on time, and I will not come home until later that night, do I light when I arrive at home?

One's spouse may light on his behalf at home, exempting him from his obligation to light. However, one may have a separate obligation to see a lit chanukiah, personally. Therefore, assuming someone will be awake to see his chanukiah when he lights, the person who comes home late should state that he is not relying upon the lighting taking place in his home, and he should light upon arriving home.

(Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 676:3, 677:3; Mishneh Berurah 677:14; Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 676:7; Igrat Moshe Orach Chaim 5:43:1; Mishneh Halachot 15:207:1)

Question: Should the ending of the first blessing on the chanukiah be "I'hadlik ner shel Chanukah", "I'hadlik ner Chanukah", or "I'hadlik ner shelChanukah"?

There is considerable debate regarding the correct text for this berachah. Our edition of the gemara says "I'hadlik ner shel Chanukah", but some suggest that the original edition was just "ner Chanukah". Our edition of the Rambam says "shelChanukah" as one word, but other editions have it as "shel Chanukah", in two words.

For reasons both mystical and legal, many authorities say to recite "ner Chanukah", and this is the practice in much of the Sephardic world. However, some Ashkenazic communities customarily say "ner shel Chanukah". It is recommended that people retain their family customs, and contact their

synagogue rabbi if there is a need to institute a family custom.

(Shabbat 23a; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Megilah v'Chanukah 3:4; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 676:1; Sdei Chemed 8:Chanukah ; Shoel v'Nishal 5:Orach Chaim 112; Ateret Paz I 2:Yoreh Deah 7; Yabia Omer 8:Orach Chaim 11)

Question: May one use an electric chanukiah?

The consensus of many authorities is that electric lights do not fulfill the mitzvah. The reasons include:

1. At the time we light, there must be enough fuel present for the flame to last for the entire period; electricity is continuously generated. (Meorei Eish)
2. We require direct kindling, as takes place when one touches a flame to a wick; flipping a switch or pressing a button is an act of indirect lighting (*grama*). (Har Tzvi Orach Chaim 143)
3. The point is to commemorate the original menorah, which employed fuel and wick. (Dvar Halachah 36)
4. Each flame is supposed to be a single flame, not a *medurah* (lit. bonfire), since the original menorah had a single flame for each wick. A filament, which arcs horizontally, is a *medurah*. (Tzitz Eliezer I:20:12)

Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yabia Omer 3: Orach Chaim 35) says that one who cannot light a standard chanukiah, such as one who is in a hospital, should use an electric chanukiah without a berachah. [Apparently, he is not concerned lest onlookers view this as acceptance of an electric chanukiah in general.]

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613 Mitzvot: #228-230

Varieties of Theft

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

We have already said (#224) that theft is prohibited, but the Torah declares separate prohibitions for different kinds of theft.

Mitzvah 224 prohibits theft of property by subterfuge. Mitzvah 228 prohibits *oshek*, employing fraud to cheat people of what we owe them. Mitzvah 229 prohibits *gezel*, taking property by force. Mitzvah 230 prohibits delaying a worker's salary; we are instructed to pay at the time when the worker expects his

payment. By declaring all of these separate prohibitions, G-d warns us that there is no leeway in this matter; a Jew must always be upfront in his dealings.

Mitzvah 228 includes any case in which money comes to us legitimately, but we withhold it from those who should receive it from us. Therefore, failure to repay a debt is included in this prohibition, although one who intends to pay eventually may not be in violation. (Minchat Chinuch 228:4)

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Hitoriri: Jewish Spirituality Who Are You?

Rabbi Ezra Goldschmiedt

The narrative of Yaakov's mysterious battle with a "man" (Bereishit 32:25-33) leaves us with many questions. Perhaps the strangest element of the story is the dialogue that takes place as the fight comes to its close. After being informed of his new name, Yisrael, "Yaakov asked, 'Please tell me your name.' And he [the man] said, 'What's the purpose of asking my name?'" (32:30) Yaakov's request, particularly in the context of a battle, seems strange, and it seems that he was not given an answer. Why was this empty exchange recorded in the Torah?

Yaakov's encounter with the "man" has been understood as representative of our struggle with the yetzer hara ("evil inclination"); see, for example, Zohar I, 35b. It would follow, then, that Yaakov's request for the man's name was a serious matter with tremendous significance. A name reflects the essential character of a being or object; see, for example, Bereishit Rabbah 17:4. Yaakov was asking for some insight concerning the essence and nature of the yetzer hara, information that would prove invaluable in our life's mission to conquer our baser desires.

Viewing the story from this perspective, Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (Sichot Mussar, Essay 91) remarks that the man actually gave Yaakov a precise and insightful answer. "What's the purpose of asking my name" is the yetzer hara's very name and essence! In causing us to stumble, the primary method that the yetzer hara uses is pressure for us to go forward without examining our ways. As soon as one feels the tug of his conscience, the yetzer hara urges him to continue, without stopping to ask questions about his intentions.

Knowing the yetzer hara's battle plan is the greatest key for defeating him. If we would only commit ourselves to question our motives and goals before taking action, stopping to think rationally before being pulled by our baser instincts, we would conquer our yetzer hara. That the yetzer hara ultimately has no name shows us the ultimate truth: His power, when confronted, is easily overtaken.

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**Torah in Translation
Rachel's Argument****Eichah Rabbah, Petichta 24
Translated by Yair Manas**

Avraham said to G-d, "Master of the Universe, why did You exile my children and hand them to the nations, and kill them with many abnormal deaths, and destroy the Temple, the place where I brought Yitzchak as a burnt offering to You?" G-d responded, "Your children sinned and violated the Torah and its twenty-two letters" ...

Avraham replied, "Master of the Universe, who will testify that Israel violated the Torah?" G-d responded, "Let the Torah come and testify." The Torah immediately came to testify. Avraham said to her "My daughter, you come to testify that the Jews violated your commandments, and you are not embarrassed before me? I remember when G-d brought you to all of the nations and languages and they did not want to accept you, until my children came to Mount Sinai and accepted you and honoured you. And now you wish to testify against them on a day of their distress?" Once the Torah heard this, she stood aside and did not testify....

Immediately, Avraham began before G-d, saying, "Master of the Universe, when I reached the age of 100 You gave me a son. When he matured and was 37 years old You told me to bring him as an offering before You. I was transformed into a cruel person for him, and I didn't have mercy. I personally bound him! You won't remember this for me and have mercy upon my children?"

Yitzchak began, saying, "Master of the Universe, when my father told me, 'G-d will provide a sheep to sacrifice, my son,' (Bereishit 22:8) I did not prevent fulfillment of Your words and I was willingly bound on the altar, and I stuck out my neck under the knife, and You won't remember this and have mercy on my children?"

Yaakov began, saying, "Master of the Universe, did I not remain for twenty years in Lavan's home? When I left, wicked Esav encountered me and wanted to kill my children, and I gave myself over for death on their behalf? Now my children are given to their enemies like sheep for the slaughter, after I raised them like baby chicks and I suffered on their behalf the difficulty of raising children; for most of my days I was in pain because of them. Now You won't remember this and have mercy on my children?"...

At that moment, our mother Rachel jumped before G-d and said, "Master of the Universe,

Midrash Eichah Rabbah, one of the earlier midrashim written in Israel, serves as an elucidation to the book of Eichah. Likely edited in the fifth century CE, approximately two centuries after the composition of the Talmud Yerushalmi, it begins with 36 introductory pieces, constituting about 25% of the book. These introductions serve as an anthology of how different amoraim (sages whose lessons comprise the gemara) would introduce their study of Megilat Eichah; this may be why many of the lessons end with "How," the opening word of Eichah. According to Solomon Buber, the introductions were added over a longer time period, after the midrash was completed. Much of the book discusses the destruction of both Temples, inspiring people to learn it on Tishah B'Av.

The portion translated is from one of the introductory pieces, and is a well-known passage about how the forefathers, and others, failed to convince G-d to allow the Jewish people to survive. The Matriarch Rachel was the one who convinced G-d to save the Jewish people from total destruction, and to return them to their land.

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it is known to you you're your servant Yaakov loved me, and he worked on my behalf for my father for seven years, and when those years were complete and the time for the wedding came, my father plotted to switch me for my sister. This was extraordinarily difficult for me, for I knew of the plan and I informed my husband and I gave him a sign to distinguish between me and my sister, so that my father wouldn't be able to swap us. I regretted this later, but bore my desires and had mercy on my sister lest she be shamed. That night, my sister was switched for me for my husband, and I gave her all of the signs I had given my husband, so that he would think that he was marrying Rachel...

If I, a creature of flesh and blood, dust and ash, was not jealous of my rival and did not shame her, then You, the Everlasting Merciful King, why should You be jealous of worthless idol worship, such that You sent my children into exile, and they were killed by the sword, and their enemies did with them as they wished. Immediately, G-d's Mercy prevailed, and He said, "On account of you, Rachel, I will return Israel to its place" ... as it says, "There will be hope for your end, these are the words of G-d, and the children will return to their borders." (Yirmiyahu 31:16)

**This Week in
Israeli History
Kislev 18, 1976
The F-15 Arrives
Hillel Horovitz***Sunday is the 18th of Kislev*

After Arab forces succeeded in downing seventeen Israeli planes during the Yom Kippur War, the IDF decided to arm itself with improved planes in order to protect their airspace. On Friday, the 18th of Kislev, the first three F-15s arrived at the Tel Nof Air Force Base. With the arrival of these planes from St. Louis, Israel became the only country with such advanced planes, outside of the United States.

The new planes were received with a festive celebration, in the presence of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin and various ministers. However, strong winds and trouble in the in-flight refueling procedure delayed the arrival of the aircraft, and the ceremony was delayed, ending very close to the start of Shabbat. Some of the ministers were unable to arrive home before Shabbat. Days later, the ministers associated with Agudat Yisrael and Poalei Agudat Yisrael filed a motion of no-confidence in the government. Two of Mafdal's three ministers abstained.

Prime Minister Rabin, in counsel with Justice Minister Haim Tzadok, took this vote as dismissal; one week later, he declared his intention to resign. President Ephraim Katzir accepted his resignation, a motion to disband the Knesset was passed, and early elections were declared for May 1977. Rabin and his colleagues expected to win re-election easily, taking advantage of a rule prohibiting no-confidence votes until the election to structure circumstances in their favour. In the end, though, a chain of events prepared the ground for an electoral revolution that put Menachem Begin in power.

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Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

Several men in Tanach are named "Ovadiah", but two, who lived roughly two hundred years after King David, are the most likely candidates to have been the prophet of our haftorah:

- One, an officer of King Yehoshaphat, taught Torah in the southern Jewish kingdom of Yehudah (Divrei haYamim II 17:7). Rav Saadia Gaon contends that this is the prophet of our haftorah.

- The second served King Achav, and is described as G-d-fearing (Melachim I 18:3). He is also credited with saving the prophets of G-d when Queen Izevel tried to murder them. The sages of the Talmud (Sanhedrin 39b) believe that this latter Ovadiah is the prophet of our haftorah. Ibn Ezra disagreed with this identification, because this Ovadiah was not identified as a prophet in the biblical account of his service to Achav, but Abarbanel counters that he may have become a prophet only afterward.

As noted by the sages of the gemara (Sanhedrin 89a), there is a strong resemblance between Ovadiah's prophecy and Yirmiyahu 49.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah, the only non-Yom Tov haftorah consisting of an entire book of Tanach, is a message of destruction for

Esav's descendants, the nation of Edom. [Bereishit 36 explicitly identifies Edom as the descendants of Esav.]

Edom occupied the area which is currently southern Jordan; in approximately the fourth century BCE, the Nabatean Arabs drove Edom west into the Judean Desert. The Chashmonaim ultimately conquered Edom, but the sages viewed the Romans as heirs of Esav/Edom, perhaps because Edomites had a presence in Rome (Radak to Ovadiah 1) or because Edom supported Rome (Ibn Ezra to Bereishit 27:40), or because Edomites were early supporters of Christianity (Ibn Ezra to Bereishit 27:40).

The relationship between the Jews and Edom is hostile from the start; Edom refuses to allow the Jews to pass through their land on their way into Canaan (Bamidbar 20:14-21). King David battles them (Shemuel II 8:13-14, and see Ramban to Bereishit 27:40 and Radak to Shemuel II 8:13). Edom attacked the Jews as well, in the days of King Yehoshaphat (Divrei haYamim II 20) and King Achaz (Divrei haYamim II 28). They attacked again when the first Beit haMikdash was destroyed (Eichah 4:21, Tehillim 137:4), and when the second Beit haMikdash was destroyed (Amos 1:9-12).

There are many reasons for the bitter enmity between the Jews and Edom, including: their heritage from Esav, their attacks against the Jews, and their relationship with Esav's grandson Amalek. Ovadiah predicts the downfall of Edom as punishment for their sins against the Jews, and he envisions a time of redemption for the Jews.

The link between our parshah's focus on Esav and Ovadiah's prophecy regarding Esav's descendants is clear. Further, though, a midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 78:14) says that when Yaakov pledged to meet Esav in Seir (Bereishit 33:14), he was referring to Ovadiah 1:21, which predicts an ultimate reunion of Yaakov and Esav at Seir.

France and Spain?

The penultimate verse in Ovadiah refers to a Jewish exile which reaches *Tzarfat* and *Sfarad*, names which correspond with France and Spain in modern Hebrew. Rashi and Ibn Ezra suggest that the prophet could be referring to the sites of modern France and Spain. However, Daat Mikra suggests that *Tzarfat* could be the Phoenician city of Sarepta, and *Sfarad* could be Sardis, which we know hosted a synagogue during the Roman era.

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Highlights for December 1-7 / 17 Kislev - 23 Kislev

Shabbat, December 1—SHABBATON AT TCS!

Friday night dinner: Shiur Theatre: Galen and Maimonides Face Off, followed by **Oneg Shabbat**

Derashah Yair Manas

Shiurim after Musaf:

- R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Chanukah's Complicated Heroes
- Hillel Horovitz, "Did G-d Form a Perfect World?", women
- R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara: Forced Procreation
- R' Baruch Weintraub, "The Golden Way: From Aristotle to Maimonides", men

Extended Seudah Shlishit—stories and songs!

6:30 PM Yair Manas, Parent-Child Learning: Davening, Shaarei Shomayim

Sunday, December 2

8:45 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Dental Emergencies on Shabbat, CME credit for dentists, BAYT

9:15 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, The War in Shechem, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew (Shacharit 8:30 AM)

After Shacharit Hillel Horovitz, "Did Ezra Receive the Torah from Sinai?", Bnai Torah

After maariv R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, **men**

8 PM R' Ezra and Elyssa Goldschmiedt, R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shiur Theatre: When Konstantinos Met Sarah, BAYT

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep, **mixed**

Monday, December 3

8-10 PM Monday night Beit Midrash at Bnai Torah

8 PM Hillel Horovitz, Shemuel II, Bnai Torah

8 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Mesilat Yesharim, Bnai Torah, *high school students*

9 PM Hillel Horovitz, Writings of Rav Kook: Ein Ayah, Bnai Torah

8-10 PM Monday night Beit Midrash at Clanton Park

Tuesday, December 4

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Malachi 3: The End of Days, *Mekorot*

7:30 PM Shanah Bet: A Panel Discussion with R' Yair Spitz, R' Mordechai Torczyner and R' Baruch Weintraub, at Yeshivat Or Chaim

8 PM Yair Manas, Chaburah: Sanhedrin, 33 Meadowbrook

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam's Laws of Kings, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

8:45 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Jewish Clothing Controversies, Week 6, BAYT

Wednesday, December 5

10 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Supernatural/Superstition, Week 8: The Soul and the Afterlife, BEBY, *Melton*

8 PM Roving Beit Midrash R' Baruch Weintraub, Messianism: Opiate of the Masses?, Kehilat Shaarei Torah

Thursday, December 6

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Sotah, Clanton Park