

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 238

**Vayishlach** | Knowing One's Place



# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

פרשת וישלח | אנגלית

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Prayer That Went Unanswered . . . . .	1
But G-d refused to listen to his prayer! . . . . .	2
Esau's Worldly Life . . . . .	2
There you have his grand "world." . . . . .	4
Ways to Deal with Esau . . . . .	5
The Root of the Edom Exile . . . . .	7
Do Not Bend Before the Nations . . . . .	10
Seeking-A Backbone . . . . .	12
Jacob Arrives at Tranquility . . . . .	17
He Purified the City of Tiberias . . . . .	18
Gratitude - A Symptom of the Righteous . . . . .	20
The Essence of Closeness-Gratitude . . . . .	21
There Is No Limit to Gratitude . . . . .	23
Purification Upon Purification . . . . .	24
<i>Summary and Practical Conclusions . . . . .</i>	<i>26</i>



**DONATE**

### Beit Hamidrash Hameir La'aretz

Publisher and Distributor of the Teachings of  
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l



500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47  
Teaneck, NJ 07666



en@h-l.org.il



www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en



HaKatzir 666, Netivot, Israel



(954) 800-6526



HameirLaaretsEN



HameirLaaretsEN



054-870-8737

Message Us to Join Our WhatsApp Groups

## Parshat Vayishlach

### A Prayer That Went Unanswered

The Midrash of this week begins as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Pinchas said that when examining the first book of Psalms (chapters 1–41), one finds that King David tries five times to “establish the kingdom of Heaven” – each time represented by the words “Arise, O L-rd.”

These five instances are:

“Arise, O L-rd! Save me, my G-d, for You have struck all my enemies on the cheek; You have broken the teeth of the wicked.” (Psalms 3:8)

“Arise, O L-rd, in Your anger; lift Yourself up against the fury of my foes; awake for me the judgment You have commanded.” (Psalms 7:7)

“Arise, O L-rd, let not man prevail; let the nations be judged in Your presence.” (Psalms 9:20)

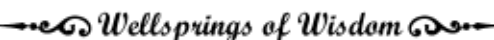
“Arise, O L-rd G-d, lift up Your hand; do not forget the humble.” (Psalms 10:12)

“Arise, O L-rd, confront him, bring him down; rescue my soul from the wicked, Your sword.” (Psalms 17:13)

Rabbi Pinchas continues:

“The Holy One, blessed be He, said to [King] David: ‘My son David! Even if you invoke Me to arise many times, I will not rise. And when will I rise? When you will see the poor plundered and the destitute groaning.’ As it is said: ‘For the plundering of the poor, for the groaning of the needy, now I will arise,’ says the L-rd.”

The Midrash goes on to bring the words of Rabbi Yehoshua of Sikhnin (in the name of Rabbi Levi):



1. Bereshit Rabbah (Parashah 75, §1).

**Parshat Vayishlach - But G-d refused to listen to his prayer !**

King David continued to pray before G-d: "Master of the Universe! You have already revealed to our forefather Abraham (at the Covenant between the Parts) and to our forefather Jacob (in the Dream of the Ladder) that the people of Israel are destined to endure four exiles – namely: Babylon, Media, Greece, and Edom (Rome). You revealed to them that the harshest and most terrible exile would be under the descendants

of the wicked Esau, known as the 'Edomite Exile.' Please, Master of the Universe," David continued to plead, "nullify the Exile of Edom. Do to him already now what You are destined to do to him at the End of Days – 'rescue my soul' from that wicked one who is destined to fall by Your sword,<sup>2</sup> as it is said: 'For My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens...'”  
(Isaiah 34:5).

## **But G-d refused to listen to his prayer !**

And so the questions are asked:

1. What is the meaning of G-d's response that He will arise “when You will see the poor plundered and the destitute groaning”? Have we not seen such an occurrence in

the past? Hasn't the whole world been full of wrongdoing and deceit in times gone by?

2. Why did G-d refuse to listen to David, who asked to abolish the Exile of Edom?

Before we answer, let us first preface with some background...

## **Esau's Worldly Life**

In a talk given by the righteous Rabbi Yaakov

Galinsky zt”l, he taught the following:<sup>3</sup>

### Wellsprings of Wisdom

2. The Etz Yosef explains: “Since, in the end, he is destined to fall, it is proper that you act now, for

*gavra ketila katal*—‘you will have merely slain one who was already dead!’”

We are all familiar with the Midrash that says when Jacob and Esau were in their mother's womb, they divided the worlds between them: Jacob chose the World to Come, and Esau chose this world. However, what we are perhaps not as familiar with is what "this world" of Esau actually looked like.

Let us consider the first time the Torah mentions Esau's world:

"And Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted." (Genesis 25:29) – Our Sages reveal (Bava Batra 16b) that "Esau committed five sins on that day." He then came back from the field alone, without friends or companions – abandoned and hungry as a dog.

For whatever reason, he ran out of food at home, or something else occurred – and Esau went out to search for food at other houses. But at whose door did he knock to ask for food?

He happened to have a brother who was a great Torah scholar, and it was to that

brother's home that he went to seek food!

What?! Food in Jacob's house?! Hadn't they already agreed between them that Jacob would take the World to Come – is that where he was meant to go looking for a tasty lunch?!

Esau knocked on Jacob's door and indeed found Jacob cooking something red in the kitchen. Immediately, Esau demanded, "Pour into my mouth some of that red porridge!" (Genesis 25:30). And he got it.

That, then, is Esau's very "worldly" life for you!

Wait, there's even more.

When our forefather Jacob was about to receive the blessings from his father Isaac, he said to Rebecca, his mother: "*How can I go to my father? After all, Esau, my brother, is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man!*" (Genesis 27:11).

Rebecca answered him: Don't worry – "*Esau left one of his garments with me for*

## Parshat Vayishlach - There you have his grand “world.”

*safekeeping. I will dress you in it, and then even if Isaac feels you, he won't notice the difference.”*

Rashi asks there (Genesis 27:15): *“Esau was at that time 56 years old and married to four wives. Would such a man need to leave clothing with his mother? Does he not have a wardrobe in his own big house?!”*

Rashi answers: Esau knew that his wives were thieves! The “fine women” he had married took from his possession every valuable item. His wives stole from him whatever they could. Therefore, the things that were valuable and important to him – he kept by his mother for safekeeping...

## **There you have his grand “world.”**

Such was the wrecked family of Esau – the same Esau who cried out, “I don't need the World to Come; it's enough for me that I have This World...”

“And Esau Hated Jacob, His Brother”

Let us now return to the process of Jacob receiving the blessings:

Jacob, our forefather, dressed in Esau's garments, took the delicacies his mother Rebecca had prepared and entered into the presence of his father Isaac. Isaac sensed that something was not as it seemed, and so he asked the person before him, “Please come

closer, so I can feel you, my son – whether you are really my son Esau or not” (Genesis 27:21). Then, after that, Isaac requested again, “Please come closer and kiss me, my son” (Genesis 27:26).

Jacob drew close and kissed him, and Isaac smelled the scent of Jacob's garments<sup>5</sup> and blessed him, saying: “See, the smell of my son is like the scent of a field which the L-rd has blessed!” (Genesis 27:27).

The blessing ceremony concluded, and Jacob returned to his place. “And it was, just as Jacob had gone out from his father Isaac's presence, that

**Parshat Vayishlach - Ways to Deal with Esau**

Esau his brother came in from his hunt.” (Genesis 27:30)...

When Esau realized that Jacob had received the blessings in his stead, he was filled with intense hatred toward Jacob. “And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing which [Isaac] had blessed him, and Esau said in his heart: ‘The days of mourning for my father are approaching, and I will kill my brother Jacob’” (Genesis 27:41).

If you think that this hatred weakened over time, you are mistaken! The fire of hatred

burned and smoldered in Esau’s heart continuously, day after day, without respite. The intense hatred disturbed his peace by day and agitated the tranquility of his soul at night! Thoughts of revenge formed in his mind, and Esau lost his peace of mind entirely.

So – *this* then was Esau’s “glorious” worldly life!

Our forefather Jacob was fully aware of what was brewing in Esau's heart... And at this point, this week’s Torah portion, Parashat Vayishlach, begins.

**Ways to Deal with Esau**

In a talk delivered by my father, Rabbi Yoram Michael Abergel zt”l (recorded in *Imrei Noam*, Vayishlach, ma’amar 1), he taught as follows:

At the end of the previous parasha (Vayetze), we learned that our forefather Jacob left Laban’s house and began his journey back toward the Land of Israel. Because this route was long and passed through

exposed areas with no hiding places in case of danger, Jacob became filled with fear of Esau – “Jacob was very afraid and distressed” (Genesis 32:8).

Therefore, he decided that he must prepare for meeting Esau.

This is how he prepared:

First and foremost, Jacob, our forefather, chose to act with gentleness and to attempt to

appease the wicked Esau with a generous gift. To that end, Jacob prepared an extremely large tribute consisting of a total of 580 animals (hundreds of goats, sheep, camels, cows, and donkeys). After all the herds were readied, Jacob our forefather called three angels<sup>6</sup> and commanded them: *“Please lead these herds to Esau, my brother, and thus you shall say to my L-rd, to Esau: ‘Thus says your servant Jacob...’”* (Genesis 32:5).

At the same time, Jacob, our forefather, took up the tool of prayer, and he prayed to G-d from the depths of his heart: *“Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him – lest he come and strike me, [and strike] mother and children.”* (Genesis 32:12). Jacob knew with absolute certainty that without genuine prayer to the Blessed One, nothing in the world could possibly succeed.

Only if, after all this, the wicked Esau would still seek to

harm him and his family, Jacob was prepared to go to war. However, Jacob relegated this possibility to the bottom of the list since he knew that no one really gains from war. At the end of every war, both sides suffer grievous losses – losses of lives that can never be restored. Therefore, one must strive with all one's might to avoid war as much as possible.

Indeed, the gentle and humble approach of Jacob, our forefather, toward his brother Esau had its effect – it melted the heart of stone within him. Concerning this, the Midrash applies King Solomon's words: *“Wisdom is better than weapons of war”* (Ecclesiastes 9:18). In other words, the wisdom of Jacob, our forefather, was superior to all the weapons of war that the wicked Esau had prepared to use against him. For Jacob, in his great wisdom, saw fit to act specifically with submission and appeasement – and by doing so, he succeeded in disarming Esau of all the weapons he had brought with him.



**Parshat Vayishlach - The Root of the Edom Exile**

At the moment when Jacob approached with all his family and bowed down before the wicked Esau, Esau's compassion was aroused upon them. He let go of his malicious intent to harm them, as it is said: "Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept."<sup>7</sup> (Genesis 33:4) – and as Rashi explains there: "*Esau's mercy was moved when he saw Jacob bowing all those bows.*"

Jacob's manner of conduct here was essential, and we are commanded to emulate it for generations. As the holy Shelah (*Shnei Luchot HaBrit*) wrote (Parshat Vayishlach, Torah Ohr, sec. 6):

"Know that the events of this parasha apply not only to Jacob himself but also to his descendants – for *ma'aseh avot siman la-banim*, the deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children... All of Jacob's battles

with Esau allude to the future. And just as he dealt with [Esau through] a gift, prayer, and war, so do we conduct ourselves in our times with the children of Esau. Our only strength is in our mouth – to pray to the Blessed One in times of trouble – and waging war against the nations is not relevant for us.

As for "war" that must be waged with them – this refers to the utmost effort that the Jewish activists are obligated to make: to stand up with boldness against the [gentile] kings and ministers and to advocate for the people of Israel with all their might. Even if the authorities display angry faces and reject them, [the activists] must keep returning and pressing their case. And this is a principle rule and pillar throughout exile – for this entire parasha is for [the lesson of] future generations, until the coming of our righteous Moshiach."

**The Root of the Edom Exile**

Despite seeming on the surface as though Jacob, our

forefather, did all that was required of him, we find in the

## Parshat Vayishlach - The Root of the Edom Exile

Midrash complaint and surprise against Jacob for his conduct. Thus says the Midrash (Tanchuma, Vayishlach 3):

Jacob was sleeping, and G-d and His angels were guarding him – as it says: “And behold, angels of G-d were ascending and descending near him, and behold, the L-rd was standing over him” (Genesis 28:12-13) – and yet he sends a tribute and flatters [Esau]: “Thus shall you say to my L-rd, to Esau...” (Genesis 32:5)?! We must apply to him the verse: “Like a muddied spring and a ruined fountain, so is a righteous man fallen down before the wicked” (Proverbs 25:26).

In other words, G-d lodged a complaint against Jacob, our forefather, saying: *"Jacob! You are a righteous man and a scholar of Torah who toils in the holy Torah with all your might – and from every single word of Torah that you study, an angel is created! Innumerable ministering*

*angels stand by your side, and the holy Shechinah hovers over you – yet you abase yourself before the wicked Esau?! This is a tremendous sin!"*

Because Jacob sinned in this way, G-d became angry with him and did not answer his prayer – until Jacob was forced to humble himself greatly and was punished. Furthermore, due to this, his descendants became obligated to suffer exile and subjugation under the hand of Esau's offspring, all since Jacob had accepted Esau's lordship over himself!<sup>4</sup>

G-d's anger at Jacob was so great that even many years later, when King David stood in prayer and pleaded, “Rescue my soul” from that wicked one who is destined to fall by Your sword (as it says, “*For My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens...*” – Isaiah 34:5), G-d refused to listen to his prayer. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to David: *It*

---

### Wellsprings of Wisdom

---

3. His words are cited in LeHagid (Bereshit, p. 249) by Rabbi Yaakov Aryeh Ariel.

4. Quoted from Nezer HaKodesh (opening of Parshat Vayishlach).

**Parshat Vayishlach - The Root of the Edom Exile**

*is impossible to abolish the Exile of Edom because Jacob's sin has not yet been atoned!*

Thus says the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 75:1):

“The Holy One, blessed be He, said to [Jacob]: He (Esau) was simply on his way, and you sent messengers to him saying ‘Thus says your servant Jacob’ (Genesis 32:5)?”

Rabbi Yerucham of Mir zt”l explained the essence of this sin as follows (Da’at Torah, Bereshit, p. 200):

“‘A muddied spring and a ruined fountain – a righteous man fallen before a wicked one.’ The entire creation from its inception was designed such that G-d’s glory would be revealed through it completely. Now, when a righteous person bows down before a wicked one, it overturns the very purpose of creation – for it then appears as if the root of things exists without serving G-d. This is literally a topsy-turvy world.”

Rabbi Yerucham continues:

“The punishment that Jacob received was not a matter of mere punishment alone, but rather it is inherent to the very trait [of his action]: since Jacob lowered himself under [Esau], automatically [Esau] became the head and in control!”

The Ramban writes (Genesis 32:4): "In my opinion, this [our Parasha] also hints that we initiated our downfall at the hands of Edom. For the Hasmonean kings of the Second Temple period entered into a treaty with the Romans – some of them went to Rome – and that was the cause of their downfall at [the Romans'] hand. This is mentioned in the words of our Sages and is well known in the books."

It is astonishing and dreadful to consider that perhaps the entire Exile of Edom was caused by “a righteous person falling before a wicked one”! Do we have any concept of the enormity of this great and terrible punishment – a punishment measure for measure? For it is the very nature of the transgression: *you made*

**Parshat Vayishlach - Do Not Bend Before the Nations**

*them masters, so automatically,  
you became slaves !*

Now, let us turn to our own  
times...

**Do Not Bend Before the Nations**

In a talk delivered by Rabbi Shalom Meir Wallach Shlita (published in *Ma'ayan HaShavua*, Bereshit, p. 447), he said the following:<sup>5</sup>

We cannot even comprehend the greatness of our early sages – certainly not the Amoraim and Tannaim, and all the more so not the Prophets, and especially not the Patriarchs and the choicest of the Patriarchs (Jacob).

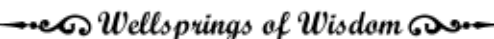
However, the Torah is eternal, and the deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children in every generation. And the deeds of Jacob our forefather in particular (for “Jacob our forefather did not die” – he lives on in the heart of every Jew–his progeny) speak to us. Every Jew must proudly and resolutely say to himself: “The Holy One, blessed be He, and His angels are guarding me – and

I should submit before Esau ? !”

We are reminded of an episode told in the Prophets (II Kings, ch. 6):

The army of Aram was laying traps and ambushes for the army of Israel, and the prophet Elisha kept warning the king of Israel each day about those ambushes. The king of Aram was perplexed; he launched a thorough investigation to find the “spy” who was leaking his military secrets to the Jews. One of his servants told him: “*No, my master, the king. There is no spy here and no mole ! Rather, it is Elisha the prophet who reveals to the king of Israel all your plans – he even tells him the words you speak in your bedroom.*”

The king of Aram decided to capture the prophet. He discovered that Elisha was staying in Dothan, and he sent



5. Ma'ayan HaShavua (Bereshit, p. 447).

Parshat Vayishlach - Do Not Bend Before the Nations

horses, chariots, and a heavy force there, which surrounded the town with a ring of siege. In the morning, Elisha's servant got up and saw that the town was besieged! Terrified, he cried out, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?!" Elisha said to him: "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more numerous than those who are with them." (II Kings 6:16).

And it is written further: "And Elisha prayed and said, 'L-rd, please open his eyes so he may see'" (II Kings 6:17).

"And the L-rd opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw – behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (II Kings 6:17).

The Malbim comments there: *"Open his eyes' – to see that the angel of the L-rd encamps around those who fear Him, and hosts of angels surround the man of G-d to protect him. The angels that were now appointed to save him came in the form of chariots of fire and horses of*

*fire to parallel the chariots and horses of the Aramean camp."*

We have always been "one lamb among seventy wolves" (Esther Rabbah 10:11). Even now – perhaps *especially* now – we focus on our nearby enemies, and our attention is diverted from the enemies further around us and those behind them (may G-d guard us and rescue us).

What strength do we have – a tiny island of the Holy Land in the midst of a raging, hostile sea of nations whose missiles cover our entire land? Our only strength is the knowledge that "those who are with us are more than those with them" – that G-d is guarding us and His angels are defending us around on all sides.

Where do those angels come from?

"Whoever performs one mitzvah acquires one advocate (angel)." (Avot 4:11) Each mitzvah creates an angel! If you recited *Shema*, put on tefillin, kept Shabbat, observed the kosher laws, and guarded family purity

**Parshat Vayishlach - Seeking-A Backbone**

– you have surrounded yourself with a protective wall ! And all this is true on both the national level and the personal level: “A mitzvah protects and saves,” and “the angel of the L-rd encamps around those who fear Him, and He rescues them.”

(Psalms 34:8)

But there is an additional lesson here, no less important:

When Esau came with four hundred men – an immense camp that inspired terror and dread, and Jacob our forefather sent him a gift, instructing to say: “Thus says your servant Jacob” (Genesis 32:5). There was criticism brandished against him: G-d is with you, and angels are all around you – and yet you diminish yourself before him, belittle and grovel ? !

To what is this referring ? To our own attitude toward what is called “Western culture.” Yes, we may well be impressed by

the achievements of technology, by the sophisticated inventions – as the saying goes, “*If you are told there is wisdom among the nations – believe it.*” By all means, let us utilize and make use of these advances, ease our lives, and enjoy the innovations.

But one thing we will not do ! Not under any circumstances ! We will not abase ourselves, diminish ourselves, or make ourselves small. technology, for all its advantages, is still nothing more than “external wisdom” – it enriches the external conditions of life. But the holy Torah enriches the inner life, forges the character, and charges a person with spiritual treasures beyond measure. In comparison to that, everything else is dwarfed and loses any of its importance !

Let them envy us. Let them want to come and join us !

And here we pause for a story...

**Seeking-A Backbone**

Rabbi Aryeh Shechter zt”l told the following story

(recorded in *Aryeh Sha’ag*, Pesach, p. 127):

The following story took place at a “kiruv seminar” (an outreach retreat) that was held in the United States. The seminar opened on a Thursday and was scheduled to last several days.

On Friday morning, a young man came up to me and said, “Rabbi, I must go home!”

“Who says you *must*?” I asked him bluntly.

“Rabbi!” – the young man burst out – “Let me tell you my story, and then *you* will decide whether I must or not.”

And he proceeded to tell me:

“I arrived in the U.S. about 11 months ago. My friends had told me that dollars were ‘rolling in the streets’ here. I flew to America, and not only did I not find those dollars, but once my buddies realized that I’d come without a penny – I couldn’t find *them* either.

“I was left all alone, with no money for a hotel or an apartment, and without the faintest clue what I was doing or where to turn. For

several days, I wandered, dazed, roaming the streets aimlessly, with no roof over my head.

“At a certain point, I discovered that one could sneak onto the subway without paying a cent. And the subway has wonderful climate control – cool in the summer and warm in the winter! From then on, the subway (and its stations) became my home. At each station, the train stops, and every few minutes, a new train comes.

“I would get off at stations located in wealthy areas, rummage through garbage bins, find some bags of food, and pick out of them any leftover food that passersby had thrown away during the day.

“When I wanted to breathe some fresh air, I would go up to the streets, wander a bit above ground, and then slip back into the safe haven of the subway tunnels. Needless to say, during that whole terrible period, I hardly got a haircut or a proper shower... I lived like a

vagabond for a full nine months !

"Then, one fine day, I ran into a guy who eyed me and asked, '*Aren't you Israeli ? !*'

"Yes, that's right, I'm Israeli," I blurted out, a bit embarrassed.

"The fellow stared in surprise at my overgrown hair and filthy face. '*What are you doing here ? You look like a bum !*'

"I recounted my tale to him, and the fellow sprang up and proclaimed with passion: '*The time of your salvation has come ! Come, join me – as of today, you're working with me !*'

"He took me home with him. I had to shower ten times to get rid of the grime I had accumulated over nine months. The water running off my body was as black as tar !

"I learned that the fellow's name was Michael. He gave me clean clothes and arranged a furnished two-room apartment for me. Michael gave me a few

days to settle in, and then we started working full force. He owned a huge semi-trailer truck filled with merchandise. From time to time, we go out on runs and sell our wares – with the main work taking place on Saturdays and Sundays !

"At the end of his account, the young man said to me: 'Rabbi, this Shabbat, we have a special trip planned that carries the promise of big profit, and Michael is expecting me to help him. If I don't go back today, by Monday, I'll have to return to wandering around subway stations. So what do you say ? What is your ruling ? What should I do ? !'"

"I warmly grasped the young man's hand and looked at him with emotion, not even noticing the big tears rolling from my eyes.

"*"Rabbi, why are you crying ?"* the boy asked in surprise.

"I told him, '*I envy you so much,*' and I explained to him in what way, and why, I envy him:

"After the Holy One, blessed be He, struck the Egyptians



with nine miraculous plagues and showed them Who is Master of the world, He tested the people of Israel with an almost unbearable trial:

"Take for yourselves a lamb and tie it to your bedpost. Keep it for four days, and then, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, on the eve of Passover, offer it as a sacrifice."

"Where was the test? The lamb was the idol of the Egyptians.

"True, *logically*, the Israelites already understood that they had no reason to fear the Egyptians – nine plagues had proven to everyone that G-d runs the world and that He protects His people. But on an *emotional* level – there was still a tremendous difficulty involved. The Egyptians had unprecedented control over their slaves. Chazal say<sup>6</sup> that no slave ever had any chance of escaping from Egypt! Russia, under the iron fist of the deadly KGB, was child's play in comparison...

"The Children of Israel lived in such terrible dread of the Egyptians that even after the great, openly miraculous wonders they had witnessed through nine plagues, they still were afraid to do something that would arouse the wrath of the Egyptian people against them.

"G-d is placing you in the same test that He placed the Israelites who left Egypt,' I said to the young man. 'Do you understand why I envy you? Who knows what great soul you have that it is deemed worthy of such a test... On an emotional level, you feel enslaved to Michael – and that feeling is natural for someone who went through nine months of hell and then received months of paradise. But let's engage our intellect because here lies the test. In first grade, you get first-grade tests; in eighth grade – eighth-grade tests; and at university, you take exams toward a doctoral degree...

“This test is an enormous test in which you are determining who, in your view, is the Master of the world: G-d or Michael.

"Now let's examine this: Michael – in the best case, is here today and tomorrow too, but only his merchandise will accompany him to the grave. In the worst case, Heaven forbid, Michael himself might already not be here tomorrow. But G-d is alive and exists forever, and His commandments are the direct orders from the Master of the entire world.

"So who is your boss – Michael or G-d? Emotionally, there's no doubt you feel you must go back to Michael. But logically, you must decide: Who is the Boss of the world – Michael or G-d? Michael could be here today and, G-d forbid, in the grave tomorrow, but G-d lives and endures forever and ever. Heaven has given you the rare privilege to decide whom you will follow – Michael or G-d. Don't miss the train !'

“At that, the young man stood at attention, saluted like a soldier before battle, and cried out loud: ‘Rabbi, I’ve made my decision – G-d is the Boss ! I’m staying !’

“In the end, even after Shabbat, the young man did not go back to Michael – and he stayed on.

“He did not return to Michael, nor did he return to living on the subway. When the seminar concluded on Tuesday, he went to Rabbi Bacharach’s yeshivah in Monsey and began to study there diligently. He learned there for two and a half years, receiving food, drink, and lodging the entire time.

"From time to time, a wealthy Torah-Jew would visit the yeshivah in Monsey. He would chat with the boys, and especially with this former 'subway boy,' for whom he developed a special fondness.

“In the end, that wealthy Jew took the young man as a groom for his daughter – and he provided him with a five-room apartment, a luxury car, and

**Parshat Vayishlach - Jacob Arrives at Tranquility**

promised to support him for 15 years so that he could sit and learn in peace, without the burden of livelihood and worries !

"Often, we stand before a trial. In those moments, it may appear to us that, according to the natural order, there is only one way out – and that path does *not* accord with the way of the Torah.

"But in truth, at those moments, we must take to heart that the world is not ownerless, Heaven forbid. G-d is watching, observing, and supervising every detail, and when we stand firm in a test and choose G-d, despite our fears and misgivings – we can merit to have both “tables” together (spiritual wealth and material success) !”

**Jacob Arrives at Tranquility**

The encounter with Esau concluded, and Jacob continued on his journey toward the city where his father lived. On the way, he encamped at a certain place, where “he built himself a house and made booths for his livestock; therefore he called the name of the place Succoth (Booths)” (Genesis 33:17).

The verse does not specify how long he stayed there. But Rashi brings the words of the Midrash, which say that Jacob stayed there for 18 months – a summer, a winter, and another summer.

This place where Jacob encamped was exposed to all of

the winds of heaven - an open area without protection. Therefore, throughout those long 18 months, Jacob, our forefather, still had not calmed his fear of Esau. As a result, he continued to send Esau money and gifts that entire time.

Thus says the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 78:16): “*Rabbi Berachiah said in the name of Rabbi Levi: All those months that [Jacob] spent in Succoth, he kept honoring Esau with those same gifts !*”

Yet despite the fear and dread, Jacob did not rush to proceed on his journey to his father's residence - because he

## Parshat Vayishlach - He Purified the City of Tiberias

knew that one cannot enter the Land of Israel without first becoming sanctified and purified. Only after an additional eighteen months did Jacob, our forefather, feel that he was ready; he then continued on his journey to the Land of Israel.

Then, when he arrived, the very first thing he did was to purchase a portion of land in Eretz Yisrael.

There, on that plot that he bought, he finally felt calm. All the fear of Esau melted away and disappeared as if it had never been. The Ramban writes (Genesis 33:18): *"In Succoth, [Jacob] was afraid of Esau, because Succoth... was close to Seir. Until he reached the Land of Canaan, his heart did not become tranquil - for then he knew Esau would not strike him since his father was nearby, or alternatively, the people of the land would help him (for his father was 'a prince of G-d' among*

*them), or because the merit of the Land would save him."*

The general principle that emerges is that there, in that small parcel of land near Shechem, Jacob's heart finally rested from his fear. The peace and tranquility filled his heart with gratitude toward the local people of Shechem.

The Torah continues and says: "And [Jacob] camped before the city" (Genesis 33:18). The Midrash explains (Bereishit Rabbah 79:6) that Jacob did two things for the city: He sent gifts to all the important people of Shechem; he set up market stalls and sold goods at extremely low prices so that there would be profit and benefit for the people of Shechem.

From this conduct of Jacob, we learn for future generations that "a person must show gratitude to the place from which he derives benefit."

## He Purified the City of Tiberias

The Midrash (ibid.) continues with a story:

When the Roman emperor was pursuing Rabbi Shimon bar

Parshat Vayishlach - He Purified the City of Tiberias

Yochai to kill him, Rabbi Shimon fled with his son, Rabbi Elazar. They ran from place to place until finally, they decided that the best place to hide was in a cave. They hid in the cave for thirteen years - thirteen difficult years during which their entire sustenance consisted of carobs until, by the end, their bodies were chapped and cracked from malnutrition.

Then Rabbi Shimon decided that the time had come to go out a bit and see what was happening in the world. Rabbi Shimon left the cave and stood near its opening, and behold - he saw a hunter trying to trap birds.

The Midrash continues: Rabbi Shimon watched the hunter, and he noticed that before each attempt at trapping, a heavenly voice went forth and announced the outcome of the attempt: If the voice announced "Dimus" (meaning "freedom"), the bird escaped. And if the voice announced "Spekula" (meaning "capture"), the bird was caught.

Rabbi Shimon said: "No bird is trapped without a decree from

*Heaven - how much more so a human soul ! Therefore, I will go and return to my place: if no decree has been issued from Heaven ( against me), I will not die; and if, G-d forbid, a decree has been issued, my fleeing [from the Romans] will not help."*

He left the cave and soon heard that the decree (against his life) had been annulled, and from then on, he was free. Rabbi Shimon and his son went to the hot springs of Tiberias, and there, their flesh was healed (from the lesions caused by their long isolation).

Rabbi Shimon said to his son: "We must do a good deed to the people of Tiberias, just as Jacob, our forefather, did for the people of Shechem."

So they went and purified the paths of the city of Tiberias from ritual impurity caused by unmarked graves that were scattered about, thereby helping the kohanim (priests) and those who observe the laws of purity to shorten their routes through the city (since they no longer had to detour around the areas of impurity).

**Gratitude - A Symptom of the Righteous**

Rabbi Yerucham of Mir zt"l wrote (*Da'at Torah*, Bereshit, p.210):

When Jacob purchased a certain piece of field near Shechem - he bought it for a hefty sum, paying one hundred kesitah in hard currency. And what were all the many benefits he had from it?

Rather, the person who feels grateful will find at every step various benefits (to thank for). After all, he finds himself in an inhabited city - he finds he can buy bread to eat and clothes to wear. For the person who feels gratitude, that alone is enough to make him indebted to those people.

Our holy Patriarchs always acknowledged and repaid the good done to them - because in every place, in every matter, they immediately sensed the kindness that others did for them. And since that was so, they regarded themselves as debtors "to acknowledge good" - and a debtor, of course, pays his debts.

Now, when we see people who do not "repay their social debt" to others - it is because they do not feel themselves to be debtors. Only when they feel they have no way to escape - out of sheer necessity - do they grudgingly concede some gratitude. Therefore, people like that are called "ingrates" (literally "deniers of good") because their recognition of good comes only from obligation and coercion...

By contrast, our holy Patriarchs always felt grateful - they always paid back generously because they recognized the good that others did for them, and one who recognizes good holds on to it.

From this, we understand well why the concept of "tikkun olam" (the proper functioning of society) plays such a large role in the words of our Sages. For it is the duty of every person to always consider himself as benefiting from the world - if not

**Parshat Vayishlach - The Essence of Closeness-Gratitude**

for other people of society, how could he live all by himself?

After all, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son were people who *could* live in a cave - yet even so, for having received some benefit, they immediately

felt obligated and indebted to the entire city!

The principle that emerges is: We must always acknowledge and appreciate good just as our forefathers acknowledged it!

**The Essence of Closeness-Gratitude**

It is a positive Torah commandment to recite the *Shema* every day, twice a day - once in the morning and once in the evening. The Men of the Great Assembly additionally instituted that we recite two blessings before the *Shema* prayer.

In the morning, we say the blessing “Yotzer Or” (“Who forms light”) and the blessing “Ahavat Olam” (“Everlasting Love”), and in the evening, we say “Ma’ariv Aravim” (“Who brings on evening”) and “Ahavat Olam.”

Before the morning *Shema*, in the *Ahavat Olam* blessing, we declare: “And You have brought us close, our King, to

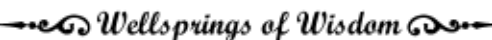
Your great Name in love - to thank You and proclaim Your Oneness, to love Your Name and to adore You.”

Rabbi Yerachmiel Raphael Shaul Miller zt”l wrote:<sup>7</sup>

It is explicitly stated here that closeness and connection (love) to G-d is defined as “to thank You - and declare Your Oneness.” The explanation is as follows:

Every person perceives the reality around him in accordance with the feelings of his heart, and this holds true in the realm of “*receiving*” as well.

A person who in his heart feels that everything is coming to him,



7. His remarks are quoted in *Mizmor Le-Todah* (p. 279) by Rabbi Daniel Yaakov Travis.

that others are obligated to give him - then when he receives a certain thing from someone else, he is unfazed. He thinks to himself, *"What has that person done already? All he did was give me what I had coming to me."* Consequently, he feels no need to thank - and even if he does say "thank you," it will be perfunctory and superficial.

However, a person who is illuminated by Divine light feels that "I deserve nothing at all." He feels, *"I don't deserve for my wife or my children to give me anything; I don't deserve for my parents to help me; I don't deserve for my friends and those around me to bestow anything upon me."* Consequently, when others - even those closest to him, such as his wife - give him something, his heart fills with feelings of gratitude, and those feelings well up and overflow, and the words of thanks burst from his lips in a very special, pleasant, and sweet melody...

This gratitude is a special quality of the people of Israel!

And if all this is true for one favor, how much thanks must we give G-d, who benefits us constantly, at every time and every moment - "for in the light of Your countenance You, G-d our G-d, have given us Torah and life, love and kindness, charity and mercy, blessing and peace. And it pleased You to bless us..."

(from the *Ahavat Olam* prayer).

When a Jew feels that everything G-d gives him is an act of kindness and a free gift, an inner emotion of thanks and gratitude is revealed in his heart. Those feelings are the truest state of a person's relationship with his Creator.

When the created being nullifies his physical self before his Creator-that is a state of genuine connection.

On the other hand, if one does not recognize good and, on the contrary, feels everything is owed to him - "it's me and no one else" - then he senses his own *sovereignty* and does not submit himself to his



**Parshat Vayishlach - There Is No Limit to Gratitude**

Creator. By doing so, he builds a wall of separation between himself and his Creator and becomes distant from Him.

It turns out that “You have brought us close, our King, to Your great Name” is a direct result of “to thank You.”

**There Is No Limit to Gratitude**

In a talk delivered by Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler zt”l (*Michtav Me'Eliyahu*, vol. 5, p. 79), he said:

One of the commands we were given is: “You shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land... The third generation [of Egyptians] may enter the congregation of G-d” (Deuteronomy 23:8-9).

This command is utterly astounding. To acknowledge the kindness of the Egyptians - for what?! For the backbreaking slavery, the slaughter of our sons, the entombing of infants in buildings, their being cast into the river?! Or possibly for the cruel decree of Pharaoh, *"No straw shall be given to you, but you must deliver the quota of bricks,"* and when our people went out to the fields to gather stubble, the Egyptians beat them mercilessly

(Midrash Tanchuma, Va'era 6)?! Are these the people to whom we are obligated to show gratitude?!

Furthermore, these were a nation of ingrates, whom Joseph kept alive during the famine and enriched abundantly, who gained honor through the arrival of Jacob and his sons (if not for Joseph's sworn promise, the Egyptians would not have even allowed Jacob's body to be taken out of Egypt being that he blessed the Nile, and Jacob's blessing still to this day spares them the need for rain); and yet these same Egyptians were so cruel to the children of Jacob and Joseph?! There was no greater ingratitude than theirs!

Nevertheless, the Torah had pity on them because of those years that “they served as your hosts in time of need” (Rashi on Deuteronomy 23:8).

**Parshat Vayishlach - Purification Upon Purification**

From the plain meaning of the verse, it seems that we are obligated to acknowledge the good of the Egyptians for all the years that we dwelled on their soil, even though our life there was a life of affliction - for in the end, *“you were a stranger in his land.”* All that cruelty does not extinguish this kindness !

From here, we learn how far the duty of gratitude extends.

Rabbi Dessler continues: This offers us great consolation in our affliction and also great hope. For, as is known, the Holy One, blessed be He, also fulfills the Torah that He gave us.

If in the midst of the Egyptians' horrific cruelty, G-d found a point of good in them and commanded us to acknowledge their good - how much more good does He find in

each and every Jew, and how much more gratitude does He (so to speak) have toward each Jew !

How much appreciation must the Holy One, blessed be He, feel for every single Jew - for every desire, every thought, every word, and every deed that a Jew does for His sake !

“Happy are we ! How good is our portion, how pleasant our lot, and how beautiful is our heritage !”

Now we can return to the first question we asked: *What is the meaning of G-d arising specifically “when You will see the poor plundered and the destitute groaning” ?* When exactly was this meant to happen ? Have such things not occurred until some later point in time ? Is the world not already full of wrongs and lies ?

**Purification Upon Purification**

When the dreadful Holocaust had finally come to an end, the Slonimer Rebbe, of saintly memory, delivered

a discourse (Netivot Shalom - *Kuntres Ha-Harugah Alecha*, p. 68), in which he said the following:

“Indeed, as an inseparable part of the complete redemption with the coming of Moshiach, our Sages described the concept of Chevlei Moshiach - the “birth pangs” of Moshiach: many troubles and harsh decrees will befall the people of Israel prior to the redemption. As they said (Sanhedrin 98a): “If you see a generation upon which numerous troubles come like a river - expect him (the Moshiach).”

“The holy Zohar (Balak 212b) uses the expression that in the generation of Moshiach, there will be “akt'a batar akt'a” - trouble after trouble, in order to purify and prepare the people for the glorious future that awaits them.

“All of creation has been awaiting the final rectification for nearly six thousand years - for King Moshiach to come and the entire creation will be transformed for the good; all will then desire only good and have no craving at all for evil, and they will merit to be like Adam before the sin - which is the highest level that any human can attain.

“In order for Israel to be worthy of this level, they must undergo a difficult purification through all the sufferings and troubles of the birth pangs of Moshiach...”

Moreover - when Moshiach comes, we will be reborn and become a completely new reality; therefore, in the final period close to Moshiach, our entire old reality will rot and disintegrate into nothingness, and from that nothingness, a new existence will be born !

As it is said: “He will see that power is gone, and there is nothing left, confined or free” (Deuteronomy 32:36). The commentators explain that near the time of Moshiach, all holy and positive feelings will disappear from hearts, and in their place feelings of bitterness and pressure will appear. All people will yearn and long for holy feelings and not attain them.

Thus, at this time, we are in when all people are "poor" and "needy," destitute with respect to their feelings; it is precisely

at this time that G-d will rise - The plundering of the poor, for the groaning of the

needy, now I will arise,' says the L-rd"- and Moshiach will come!

### ***Summary and Practical Conclusions***

1. G-d created the entire universe in order that His glory be revealed through Creation. The main revelation of His glory is achieved through those who study His Torah. Therefore, if a Torah scholar *submits his personal dignity* to someone estranged from Torah, he overturns and upends the entire purpose and place of the Creator in Creation - and his punishment is great, Heaven forbid.

2. A person is obligated to show gratitude to anyone who benefits him - to his parents, to his wife, to his children, and to all those around him. One must recognize that nobody in the world owes him anything; if someone nevertheless does him a kindness, it is done willingly (not out of obligation). Therefore, one's heart should fill with feelings of thankfulness - feelings that well up and surface and prompt him to say "thank you" in a melodious, pleasant, and sweet way. Showing gratitude is among the special virtues of the people of Israel!

3. By showing appreciation to those who do good to him, a person will merit to elevate himself and eventually recognize the goodness of the Holy One, blessed be He, who benefits him always, at every moment. By doing so, he will merit a true attachment to the Creator of the world. In contrast, one who fails to acknowledge good - and, on the contrary, feels that everything is coming to him and "I alone matter" - is essentially feeling his own sovereignty and does not submit to his Creator. By that, he is building a wall that separates between him and his Creator, and he becomes distant from Him. (May Heaven save us from this.)

4. The Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to acknowledge the kindness of the Egyptians for having "hosted" us during the period of the Egyptian exile.

Although the Egyptians subjected us to crushing slave labor and caused us countless troubles, the Egyptians' cruelty does not extinguish this debt of gratitude!

**Parshat Vayishlach - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

We learn from this how far the obligation of gratitude extends.

This principle is our consolation in our affliction and our great hope, for, as is well known, the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, observes the Torah that He gave us. If, amid the Egyptians' dreadful cruelty, G-d still found good and instructed us to recognize it, how much more good does He find in every single Jew, and

how much does he fully acknowledge it !

How profound is the gratitude the Holy One, blessed be He, feels toward every Jew for every desire, thought, word, and action undertaken for His sake !

"Happy are we: how good is our portion, how pleasant our lot, and how beautiful indeed is our inheritance !"

**Shabbat Shalom !**



**New!**

On the tenth anniversary of the passing of our teacher and master,  
**Rabbi Yoram Abergel, of blessed memory.**

**New and rare books from his teachings have been published:**

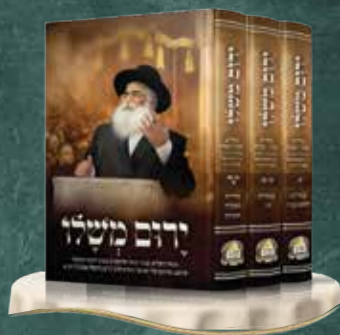


## ❧ Bashir Yarom ❧

A treasure of articles on awe of G-d  
 With striking stories and parables  
 On Shir HaShirim, the Song of Songs,  
 Arranged from the lessons of our  
 teacher, of blessed memory

## ❧ Yarom Mishlo ❧

Parables and pearls of wisdom that were  
 collected and arranged In a captivating  
 and heart-winning language  
 From the lessons of our teacher and leader  
 Rabbi Yoram Abergel, of blessed memory



## ❧ Shufra DiYosef ❧

On the Five Books of the Torah  
 Sweeter than honey  
 Composed by the holy kabbalist Rabbi Yosef  
 HaKohen, of blessed memory  
 Now published for the first time  
 In a new and magnificent edition



**Hurry to order: 08-931-1785**  
**shop.hameir-laarets.org.il**

666 HaKatzir Street, Netivot | +1(347)352-8125



**New!**

On the tenth anniversary of the passing of our teacher and master,  
Rabbi Yoram Abergel, of blessed memory.

New and rare books from his teachings have been published:



## Imrei Noam

Shabbat talks of Rabbi Yoram, in a new edition with titles for each discourse, with the addition of 'Amirah Ne'imah'—practical guidance for daily life

## Hameir L'Yisrael

Selected lessons interwoven with the holy words  
of our Sages,  
Including guidance and a path in serving Hashem,  
And practical tools  
For confronting the challenges of our generation.



## Batzur Yarom

The “Batzur Yarom” lessons of our teacher of  
blessed memory,  
Now published for the first time,  
On the section Shaar HaYichud VeHaEminah  
From the book Tanya.



Hurry to order: 08-931-1785  
[shop.hameir-laarets.org.il](http://shop.hameir-laarets.org.il)

666 HaKatzir Street, Netivot | +1(347)352-8125





**Distribution free of charge**  
publication Requires Genizah

T"03

## Shabbat Times Vayishlach

16<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, 5786



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	4:10 pm	5:13 pm	5:40 pm
Miami	5:12 pm	6:07 pm	6:42 pm
Los Angeles	4:26 pm	5:25 pm	5:56 pm
Montreal	3:53 pm	5:01 pm	5:23 pm
Toronto	4:23 pm	5:28 pm	5:53 pm
London	3:35 pm	4:50 pm	5:04 pm
Jerusalem	4:20 pm	5:10 pm	5:42 pm
Tel Aviv	4:16 pm	5:07 pm	5:38 pm
Haifa	4:13 pm	5:07 pm	5:37 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:17 pm	5:11 pm	5:42pm

### Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*"It's never a good sign—Heaven forbid—when one's sense of joy begins to fade. That's a warning light for the divine soul. It's like a drop in oxygen levels: just as the body must always keep its blood fully oxygenated, so the soul must be constantly nourished through joy.*

*But to make space for true joy, a person must reach complete bittul—self-nullification before Hashem. As long as the ego, the sense of 'I,' still takes up space, joy cannot enter. The work of joy is the work of bittul. That's why Chochmah (wisdom) is bittul, and Binah (understanding) is joy. When a person truly nullifies himself before Hashem, joy follows naturally—immediately and effortlessly."*



## Become a Partner!

For Donations:

American Friends of Netivot Inc  
980 Broadway St 336 Thornwood, NY 10594  
PCSB Bank  
Routing- #221970980  
Checking- 5151000774

Or Visit: [Hameir-Laarets.org.il/Donate](http://Hameir-Laarets.org.il/Donate)  
+1 (954) 800-6526

RECOGNIZED BY THE IRS AS A 501(c)(3)  
TAX DEDUCTIBLE ORGANIZATION



## Do You Enjoy Mesilot?

Distribute Pathways to the Soul in  
Your Synagogue!

# Receive Mesilot Weekly Anywhere Worldwide!

- Free of Charge -

Join Now!



Ask The Rabbi!



## Media

[hameir-laarets.org.il/en](http://hameir-laarets.org.il/en)

Hameir Laarets

(954) 800-6526

054-870-8737

[en@h-l.org.il](mailto:en@h-l.org.il)



**Français**

joindre :



**Русский**

присоединиться:



**English**

to join:



**Español**

Para unirse:



**עברית**

להצטרפות:

