

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYISHLACH · 17 KISLEV 5777 · DEC. 17, 2016 · VOL. 24 NO. 8

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

### HIS HEART'S DESIRE

*“And Yaakov became frightened, and it distressed him.” (13:17)*

Rashi explains that, sensing his forthcoming encounter with Esav, Yaakov “became frightened” lest he be killed, and “it distressed him” lest he kill Esav.

The halacha states that if someone comes to kill you, it is a mitzvah to pre-empt him and kill him first. Given that Yaakov knew this mitzvah, why should he be *distressed*? Yaakov Avinu certainly knew the difference between sensitivity and sentimentality.

The only reason that Yaakov bought the portion of the firstborn from Esav was so he could perform the Divine Service of the Beit Hamikdash. The Shulchan Aruch, the universal Code of Jewish Law, says (Orach Chaim 128:35) that a *kohen* who kills someone, even inadvertently, may no

longer “*duchan*” (he may no longer raise his hands in the priestly blessing), for “*his hands are full of blood.*” If bloody hands proscribe the giving of the priestly blessing, all the more so would be forbidden the higher level of the Temple Service at the Altar.

Thus, were Yaakov to kill Esav he would forfeit the Temple Service, and the buying of the firstborn’s portion would have been for naught (not to mention the concomitant hatred of Esav).

For this reason Yaakov was distressed at the possibility that he might have to kill Esav and lose his heart’s most precious desire.

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Eisav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Eisav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Eisav. That night Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Eisav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason why it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Yisrael, signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Eisav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Eisav’s offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov’s daughter. In return for Dina’s hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his family intermarry and enjoy the

fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov’s sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement. However, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo *brit mila*. Shimon and Levi, two of Dina’s brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is justified by the city’s tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. G-d commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka’s nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El. G-d appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beit Lechem road. Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Eisav’s descendants.

## BAVA METZIA 82 - 88

*Rabbi Elazar said, "This teaches that righteous people promise little and perform much; whereas the wicked promise much and do not perform even little."*

This teaching on our *daf* appears to relate the same message as the statement by the Sage Shammai in Pirkei Avot (1:15) "Say little and do much." In fact, the Maharsha writes that Rabbi Elazar's statement is indeed the same one as that recorded in the name of Shammai in Pirkei Avot (although it may seem unusual for the Gemara to record the teaching of an Amora that seems to repeat the teaching of a Tana in a Mishna).

Rabbi Elazar explains that he learns this "tip" from Avraham Avinu. Avraham *said* to the three visitors who came to him after he circumcised himself, "And I will give you some bread to eat, and afterwards you shall continue on your way." (Gen. 18:5) However, the verses tell us what he actually *did*: "And he ran to the cattle, and he took a calf, tender and good... and he took cream and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and he placed it all before them..." (Gen. 18:7-8) Avraham also requested that bread be prepared for them quickly. (Gen. 18:6)

Why do righteous people promise little and perform much? The Maharsha offers a reason. Sometimes, if a host offers too much, the guest will not want to enter, or a recipient will not want to accept what is offered. This is because the guest will not want to cause excessive bother to the host, and also does not want to feel a need to stay longer than he wishes, due to gratitude for the excessive bother. Therefore, the host should offer only a minimal amount, but yet try to perform and give in the most generous way possible for him. The Maharsha states that Avraham was conveying to the guests that they were not a burden to him, nor would he impose upon them after they ate. He told them, "And I will give you some bread to eat, and *afterwards you shall continue on your way.*"

While the Maharsha does not explicitly explain the "flip-side" that Rabbi Elazar also teaches — "the wicked promise much and do not perform even little" — we should also be able to understand the reason for this from the reason provided by the Maharsha. A host who offers too much to a guest is, in a sense, offering nothing. It is a near certainty that the guest will refuse the offer, due to its being a great burden on the host, and also because the guest will feel overly beholden to the host. Therefore, the guest will end up refusing to accept the offer, and the wicked host is happily "off the hook".

• *Bava Metzia 87a*

## LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

## SHECHEM — TOMB OF YOSEF

**A**lthough Yosef, a son of Yaakov, lived only 17 of his 110 years in Eretz Yisrael, he insisted on being buried in the Holy Land.

His wish was fulfilled by the Children of Israel car-



rying his remains with them for 40 years on their way to the Promised Land, and burying him near Shechem in the field that his father had bought many years before.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Eisav?
2. Why was Yaakov both “afraid” and “distressed?”
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Eisav?
4. Where did Dina hide and why?
5. After helping his family across the river, Yaakov remained alone on the other side. Why?
6. What was the angel forced to do before Yaakov agreed to release him?
7. What was it that healed Yaakov’s leg?
8. Why did Eisav embrace Yaakov?
9. Why did Yosef stand between Eisav and Rachel?
10. Give an exact translation of the word *nisa* in verse 33:12.
11. What happened to the 400 men who accompanied Eisav?
12. Why does the Torah refer to Dina as the daughter of Leah and not as the daughter of Yaakov?
13. Whom should Shimon and Levi have consulted concerning their plan to kill the people of Shechem?
14. Who was born along with Binyamin?
15. What does the name Binyamin mean? Why did Yaakov call him that?
16. The Torah states, “The sons of Yaakov were twelve.” Why?
17. How old was Yaakov when Yosef was sold?
18. Eisav changed his wife’s name to Yehudit. Why?
19. Which three categories of people have their sins pardoned?
20. What is the connection between the Egyptian oppression of the Jewish people and Eisav’s decision to leave the land of Canaan?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 32:4 - Angels.
2. 32:8 - He was afraid he would be killed. He was distressed that he would have to kill.
3. 32:9 - He sent gifts, he prayed, and he prepared for war.
4. 32:23 - Yaakov hid her in a chest so that Eisav wouldn’t see her and want to marry her.
5. 32:25 - He went back to get some small containers he had forgotten.
6. 32:27 - Admit that the blessings given by Yitzchak rightfully belong to Yaakov.
7. 32:32 - The shining of the sun.
8. 33:4 - His pity was aroused when he saw Yaakov bowing to him so many times.
9. 33:7 - To stop Eisav from gazing at her.
10. 33:12 - It means “travel”. It does not mean “we will travel.” This is because the letter *nun* is part of the word and does not mean “we” as it sometimes does.
11. 33:16 - They slipped away one by one.
12. 34:1 - Because she was outgoing like her mother, Leah.
13. 34:25 - Their father, Yaakov.
14. 35:17 - His two twin sisters.
15. 35:18 - *Ben-Yemin* means “Son of the South.” He was the only son born in the Land of Israel, which is south of Aram Naharaim.
16. 35:22 - To stress that all of them, including Reuven, were righteous.
17. 35:29 - One hundred and eight.
18. 36:2 - To fool Yitzchak into thinking that she had abandoned idolatry.
19. 36:3 - One who converts to Judaism, one who is elevated to a position of leadership, and one who marries.
20. 36:6 - Eisav knew that the privilege of living in the Land of Israel was accompanied by the prophecy that the Jews would be “foreigners in a land not their own.” Therefore Eisav said, “I’m leaving — I don’t want the Land if it means I have to ‘pay the bill’ of subjugation in Egypt.”

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## YAAKOV'S FEAR OF ESAV

### Vayishlach

In this week's Torah portion Yaakov is told that his brother Esav is coming to meet him with four hundred armed men. Yaakov's reaction is "...he became very frightened and it distressed him." Abarbanel finds Yaakov's fear very puzzling. First of all, G-d has already assured Yaakov that he would always have Divine protection: "Behold, I am with you, I will guard you wherever you go." Similarly, just prior to this point in time, as he was preparing to leave his father-in-law Lavan, G-d told him, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your native land and I will be with you." Secondly, once Yaakov's fear became apparent, why doesn't G-d reassure him of His protection, as He does later on? At that point, when Yaakov is hesitant to bring his family to Egypt, G-d reassures him by telling him, "Don't be afraid to descend to Egypt...I will descend with you."

Abarbanel answers as follows: In reality, Yaakov's fear had nothing to do with any lack of trust in G-d. As such, he did not require any further reassurance. Man is a combination of a physical entity and a rational/spiritual entity. Yaakov's physical side had a genuine fear of death. He can be compared to a warrior going into battle. A true hero goes into battle knowing that death is possible. But a sense of a higher responsibility and a higher virtue enables him to

overcome that fear. One who goes into battle with no sense of danger is not a true hero, as his rational/spiritual side is not being challenged. Yaakov's physical side was genuinely and viscerally afraid of death at the hands of his brother. But his rational/spiritual side predominated and enabled him to overcome that fear and meet Esav directly. The profound depth of his trust in G-d is demonstrated by the fact that he could have employed other, safer means to escape Esav. He could have fled or sought refuge in a fortified city, while sending word to his father Yitzchak to intercede on his behalf. Yaakov did not require any further reassurance, as his strategy was a clear demonstration of his trust in the veracity of G-d's earlier promises.

This conflict between our two opposing natures is a pattern that is constantly repeated in our daily lives. However, an individual who, for example, refrains from a forbidden intimate relationship or from a forbidden food because he finds the person unattractive or the food disgusting is not demonstrating his trust or the strength of his rational/spiritual nature. Only when our physical fears and desires pull us can we demonstrate the spiritual strength personified in Yaakov.

## PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אחינו כל בית ישראל

*"Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon."*

## ON THE BUTTON

**From: Phil**

*Dear Rabbi,  
If a button unexpectedly pops off a garment on Shabbat, is it permitted to pick it up in order to save it to sew it back on after Shabbat, or does it become "muktze" and thereby forbidden to handle on Shabbat? I don't see why it would be forbidden, but a friend says it is. If it cannot be handled, could anything be done to prevent it from getting lost?*

Dear Phil,

Of the two opinions, yours is on the button. Generally, it would be permitted to pick up a button that falls off on Shabbat.

That being said, there is basis for your friend's opinion to forbid it because of *muktze*, which might be a reason to be stringent in certain circumstances. So let's elaborate on the reasons why it might be forbidden before explaining why it's actually permitted.

There are two very broad types of *muktze*. The more stringent one includes raw materials that are not vessels or instruments, such as dirt, rocks or metals. As such, they have no basis for permitted use on Shabbat, and are out of sight and out of mind, and thereby off limits for use on Shabbat. The other less stringent one includes vessels or instruments whose primary use or function involves a prohibition of Shabbat, such as a hammer, lighter or grater. Since these instruments are used for actions which are forbidden on Shabbat, they are also off limits, unless for some permitted purpose, like using a hammer as a paper-weight.

Within the category of *muktze* vessels, there are several subcategories. One of these pertains even to objects whose normal use is permitted, but which have been set and fixed in a specific place, and thus set aside from use on Shabbat. A typical example of this type of *muktze* (which literally means something that has been "set aside" or "designated") is a wall-painting. As a free-standing picture it is permitted to handle; but when it is permanently hung on the wall it is thereby set aside and put "out of reach" on Shabbat.

Arguably, buttons, which are permanently sewn in a specific place on garments, purses and the like, could be considered like paintings which are fixed on the wall, and thus would be *muktze* if they fall off on Shabbat, as is the case with a picture that falls off the wall.

However, we find an interesting case which serves as a point of distinction between the button and the painting. In a case where a movable chest or closet has parts which have been affixed to it, such as a lid, door or shelf, and such a part detaches on Shabbat, the separated part is not *muktze* even though it was set permanently on the chest. The reason given for this is that since the part was fixed on something moveable, the part was never set aside from being moved, such that when it falls off, it may be handled on its own. In this way, such a door or shelf is different than one which was fixed on or in a wall, which, if detached, would be *muktze* since it maintains its status as when on the wall, i.e. immovable (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 308:8 and Mishneh Berurah 35).

According to this, even though a button is permanently sewn in place, that place is on something that is constantly moved. Thus, even if the button falls off it does not thereby become *muktze* but rather may be picked up and handled since it is an instrument. Thus, its use is permitted on Shabbat as it was never set aside from being moved. And in fact, this is the generally accepted halacha.

Still, some make a distinction between the button and between the door or the shelf of the moveable closet since not only are these "fixed" parts considered moveable as parts of the chest, they are also usable on their own even when separated from the chest (for example, as a covering or seat, or any number of other uses). But this is not the case with a button, which has no use on its own and might thus be *muktze* because of this lack of purpose (Rabbi S. Z. Auerbach, *zatazi*, based on Meiri and Ran, Shabbat 126b).

For this reason, if the button is unique and would be difficult to replace if lost, one may rely on the basic halacha stated above that a button which falls off on Shabbat is not *muktze* and may be picked up and handled. However, if it may be easily replaced, there is basis to be stringent and not pick it up. In such a case, even if one chooses not to handle it, it is permitted to move it in an indirect way, such as by kicking it on the floor to a place where it will be guarded until after Shabbat.

• Sources: *Shemirat Shabbat K'Hilchata* 15:72

## TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT

One of the classic questions regarding the holiday of Chanuka is whether there is a mitzvah to have a festive meal or not. One would wonder: Why is there a *machloket* (halachic dispute) about whether to have a festive meal or not? Is there a special occasion in the Jewish calendar that doesn't have a meal attached to it? When in doubt, eat!

The Shulchan Aruch rules in accordance with the Tur, who quotes the Maharam of Rotenberg, stating that the Rabbis did not include festive meals as part of the celebration of Chanuka. Therefore, the increased meals one has during the holiday are optional (not a mitzvah).

The Rema comments on this ruling, citing an opinion that maintains that there is a *partial* mitzvah to have festive meals during Chanuka because during the days of Chanuka the Altar of the Beit Hamikdash was rededicated. He concludes this point by stating that the custom is to sing songs of praise at the festive meals, thereby seemingly making the meals a mitzvah according to all opinions. A difference, however, still remains between the two opinions. According to the Maharam of Rotenberg, though the meal becomes a mitzvah, it remains optional, while according to the other opinion, which is based on a

Midrash, festive meals are part of the holiday. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 670)

The Ben Ish Chai writes that one should increase the Shabbat meals of Chanuka in order to publicize the miracle, more than during other weeks, especially if Shabbat falls out on Rosh Chodesh Tevet.

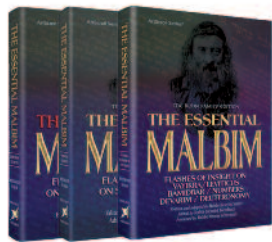
The Levush explains that a festive meal was not included in the celebration of Chanuka because the Greeks didn't really want to kill our ancestors, but, rather, they wanted the Jewish People to be like them. It was only because a group of "stubborn Jews" began to fight back that things got violent. G-d protected His people who risked their lives for His sake. They fought for G-d and His Torah, not for their own lives. Purim, on the other hand, which certainly does include a mitzvah to have a meal, was about saving the lives of the Jewish People. Haman wanted, and tried, to kill every Jew. Even if the Jews would have agreed to denounce Judaism, he still wanted to kill them. This, according to the Luvish, is the reason why on Purim we feast, while on Chanuka we praise and give thanks. (Mishneh Berurah)

In closing, don't forget to enjoy the donuts ("*sufganiyot*" here in Israel).

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## CLARIFYING A COLLECTION OF CURSES

The Torah says, “A judge you shall not curse and a prince/king in your nation shall you not curse” (Ex. 22:27). This passage forbids cursing a judge or king because one might otherwise be tempted to do so if the judge or king does something against one’s own personal interests. In other words, if a judge rules against somebody in court, or a king makes a decree which negatively impacts a given individual, that person might vent his frustrations by “cursing” the relevant authority. In order to offset this attitude the Torah expressly forbids cursing a justice or sovereign. Interestingly, in this context, the Torah uses two different words for “curse”. Regarding the judge the Torah uses the word *kelalah* to denote cursing, while regarding the king the Torah uses the word *arur*. Why, in the same verse, does the Torah switch from using one word to using the other?

The Vilna Gaon explains that there is a difference between the word *kelalah* and *arur*. The word *kelalah*, while colloquially used to mean “curse”, is literally a diminutive, which one might invoke to belittle another, but is not truly a “curse”. The word *kelalah* is related to the Hebrew word *kal* which means “light” or “easy”, as one who offers a *kelelah* about another essentially dismisses him as someone unimportant. When discussing one’s “cursing” a judge the Torah uses the word *kelalah* because, in general, the harm a judge can do to an individual is not usually so damaging (especially given that society always strives to appoint upright judges), so his “victim” will merely suffice with disparaging the judge and need not actually curse him.

However, when discussing an individual who feels wronged by a king, the Torah uses the word *arur* because a king’s powers are more overreaching than those of a judge, so he can potentially hurt somebody more than a judge can (especially given that kingship is commonly an inherited position and the king’s moral standing is generally irrelevant). In such a case of grave maltreatment one might be tempted to actually *curse* the king, not just disparage him. Because of this the Torah uses the more intense word *arur* when warning one not to curse a king.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg writes that *arur* is a

broad, all-encompassing curse that wishes all sorts of calamities and misfortunes to befall one’s adversary, while a *kelalah* is the word for a specific type of curse, and cannot be used to stand alone. In other words, one who curses another with an *arur* can simply declare that an *arur* shall befall him, while one who offers a *kelalah* must specify in what way that curse should affect his victim (i.e. he offers a *kelalah* that...).

Furthermore, Rabbi Mecklenburg writes that an *arur* can apply to something abstract while a *kelalah* can only apply to something which physically exists. Based on this, Rabbi Mecklenburg explains G-d’s promise to Abraham in which He says (Genesis 12:3), “Whoever curses (*kelelah*) you, I will curse (*arur*)”. G-d promises to protect Abraham so much so that whoever curses Abraham with a more specific curse — a *kelalah* — will receive in return an all-encompassing curse (*arur*) from Above.

There are two more words found in the Bible to mean curse: *kavah* and *allah*. How do these words differ from the other words that mean “curse”?

Malbim explains that *kavah* refers to a general curse in which one declares a certain individual and everything pertaining to him “cursed”. Furthermore, Malbim explains that *kavah* denotes a curse uttered in public in which the name of the cursed is stated explicitly (e.g. see Num. 1:17), while an *arur* does not have such connotations. On the other hand, *arur* refers to the practical ramifications of a curse manifested in a specific element of one’s victim (for example, his body or his property). It is related to the Hebrew word *mearah* which means “decrease” (see Deut. 28:20) and refers to a reduction in the net yield of, for example, his property as a result of a curse.

Regarding the curse-word *allah*, Radak explains that an *allah* is specifically a type of curse in which one expressly invokes G-d to carry out the misfortune. Rabbi Mecklenburg disagrees with this assessment and instead explains that an *allah* is a curse with conditions. Meaning, if one imposes a curse with certain stipulations (e.g., “Whoever does such-and-such should be cursed”), that curse is called an *allah*.

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## RABBI CATRIEL BLUM - MASHGIACH OF THE YEAR

**Born: NYC - Currently: Toronto, Canada**  
**Five university degrees, including a PhD in Musicology**  
**At Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem from 1984-87**  
**Graduate of Rabbi Moshe Pindrus' Shiur in the Beit Midrash**

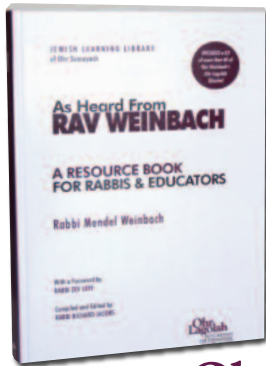
**K**ASHRUS Magazine, the Brooklyn-based periodical for the kosher consumer, has chosen Rabbi Catriel Blum of the "COR-Kashruth Council of Canada" as their 6th annual "Mashgiach of the Year". He was presented with a check for \$1,000. The presentation was made on November 16th at Kosherfest, the world's largest trade show for the kosher industry.

Rabbi Blum was chosen from among the nominees of the 1,371 kosher agencies worldwide. He has worked for the "COR" for 15 years as a "route mashgiach," a kosher supervisor for multiple establishments. Rabbi Blum supervises 12 establishments, including both dairy and meat restaurants and bakeries, visiting each as many as six times

a day. Rabbi Blum has literally become a legend in the Bathurst section of Toronto as he is seen walking from store to store in a three-block area. People there see him as a "community kosher supervisor" and he sees them as "my people."



"A mashgiach is not a policeman," said Rabbi Yosef Wikler, editor of Kashrus Magazine. "Rather, he is the representative of kosher and Judaism to the staff in his facility and to the administration of the company he works for. Rabbi Catriel Blum, through his winning personality and firm resolve, wins daily the hearts and cooperation of proprietors, kitchen staff, and the 'COR', truly deserving the title 'Mashgiach of the Year'." *Mazal tov to our winning alumnus!*



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