

Vayishlach

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Vayishlach: You can't be too sure of yourself even with insurance.

What a fascinating parsha, every page every posuk is another story and narrative, without mipharshim would seem confusing.

The Parsha begins with Ya'akov sending messengers (actual Angels – Rashi) to Esav.

וַיֵּצֵא אֹתָם לְאֶמֶר כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לְעֵשָׂו כֹּה אָמַר עֲבָדֶיךָ
יַעֲקֹב עַם-לָבָן וְאֶתִי וְאֶתֶּר עַד-עַתָּה

This is the message Ya'akov sends to Esav. So you should tell Esav, that your servant Ya'akov was living with Lavan until now.

Rashi explains, 2 things, 1) perhaps Esav should no longer be upset, as Ya'akov was saying that he had no conquered his brother, like Yitzchak blessed as he had been a sojourner or 2) that regardless of living with Lavan Ya'akov kept the 613 (taryag-an anagram of the word וְאֶתִי) commandments, and therefore was on a moral high ground.

It is evident by this explanation of Rashi that before the Torah was given, the fore parents kept the Torah. We know this to be true, except the performance was devoid of the halachik details set out after the Torah was given. (For example, with the mitzvah of tefillin, it is unlikely that the forefathers wore tefillin like we wear today, rather they wore some symbolic sign (such as stick) on their head and arms). The importance of this detail reifies the fact that the Torah is the blueprint of the earth, and therefore the Torah in its entirety has to be kept.

But importantly, it reflects that Ya'akov understood how the world works, which is that Hashem set how history will play itself out,

but it can constantly be changed by human intervention. So even if there is a prediction (such as the one received by Rifka from Ever, when she was pregnant that the young will dominate the old), as Yitzchak would have blessed Esav, and Rifka had to intervene to ensure that Ya'akov was blessed first.

So by Rashi telling us this point, he is telling us and establishing the precedent that through Taryag observance, we have the power to alter and maintain destiny. In this case, Ya'akov being his mother's son understood that it isn't obvious that the prophecy of Ever would persist, or that Yitzchak would give the blessing to the correct son (without intervention).

Then in posuk 8 Ya'akov says the following:

וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֵר לּוֹ וַיַּחֲסֵן אֶת-הָעֶמֶם אֲשֶׁר-אֵתָּו וְאֶת-
הַצֹּאן וְאֶת-הַבָּקָר וְהַגְּמָלִים לְשֵׁנֵי מַחֲנֹת:

Jacob was greatly frightened; in his anxiety, he divided the people with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps,

After Ya'akov heard from the angels, that Esav was armed with 400 men, that is Ya'akov would have to be prepared to war with his brother.

וַיִּירָא means fearful. One could ask, why was Ya'akov fearful, wasn't he blessed from the prophecy he received last parsha, that he and his offspring will inherit the land, and be fruitful. Why was Ya'akov scared? He had a guarantee.

The answer is twofold, 1) Ya'akov was fearful that Esav has the merits of his respect for his father on his side, which would result in his ability to change destiny, 2) Ya'akov was human, and this is what the Torah is telling us. That even with the assurance of a prophecy, the destiny of Humans are not written in stone, rather changed, through our actions. Ya'akov had to ensure that the trajectory of history as he understood it would persist, and therefore it required his fear and anxiety to ensure that the outcomes would result as they are supposed to.

The destiny of the earth is based on rules that Hashem set up when He created the world. That is what will happen will happen, what is supposed to happen will happen. Can we change this?

Rambam and others deal with this issue, with the question of whether a negative event can be altered, or prevented through good deeds. It seems that the consensus among the rabbonim, is that we have the power to change an outcome (at least in the short run) through good deeds and prayer. The implications of this narrative from the Parsha would indicate same. That is, Ya'akov knew that Esav's actions and mitzvah of Kibud Av V'Eim could alter the destiny that he figured would be set in stone, but that is not the way of the world. In hindsight we know the prophecy was fulfilled, or how it had to be manifest Hashem made occur, but in the moment Ya'akov's intervention was still required.

Ya'akov even tells us that he is aware that he has a prophecy on his side, in posuk 10 וַיֹּאמֶר וַיִּעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֵלֵהִי אָבִי יִצְחָק יְהוָה הָאֵמֶר אֵלַי שׁוּב לְאֶרֶצְךָ וְלִמְלֻכְתְּךָ וְאִיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ: Why would Ya'akov repeat this. Almost in my mind, to allay the concern that we can question Ya'akov's anxiety. He was aware that he had the blessings on his side, and therefore ought not had anything to fear.

Yet, Ya'akov says; קִטְנֵתִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל-הָאֲמָת; אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֵת-עֲבֹדְךָ כִּי בְמִקְלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הֵייתִי לְשֹׁגֵי מַחְנֹת: That is קִטְנֵתִי made small (unworthy), Rashi tells us either this means Ya'akov recognized that his merits had been diminished and therefore runs the risk of being tarnished by sin, and will lose to Esav, or according to the Medrish Ya'akov is telling us that he is remaining humble regardless if the prophecy seems to be in action to being fulfilled. He wasn't haughty, or over sure of himself, because we still have a job in ensuring that the right outcomes occur. Furthermore, by Ya'akov splitting the two camps, he was saying, (as is evidence by the wording in the posukim and

Rashi) that Ya'akov could lose one camp to Esav, and therefore in one swoop lose 50% of his wealth and accumulation, which is a testament to his faith, that is he believed that since it all came from Hashem, it can also all be taken away.

This is evident and concluded with: וְאַתָּה אֵמַרְתָּ הֵיטֵב אִיטִיב עִמָּךְ וְשָׂמַתִּי אֶת-יֹרְעֶךָ כְּחֹל הַיָּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִסְפָּר מִרְבּוֹ:

Yet You have said, 'I will deal bountifully with you and make your offspring as the sands of the sea, which are too numerous to count.'” Ya'akov is telling us that he knows Hashem told Ya'akov what will be, yet it was still not clear that the destiny could be altered.

Then Ya'akov kept traveling with his camp (after splitting his crowd), he takes all his moveable items, and returns across the Yabok river to retrieve his small parcels, and then wrestles with the angel.

Rashi tells us that Tzadikim value their objects highly, even small “useless” ones. There are multiple interpretations from this explanation.

- 1) Tzadikim value objects, even small ones, because of Ba'al Tashchis,
- 2) Tzadikim value small objects, as even they come from Hashem
- 3) Perhaps this focus on valuing small objects is a lesson that if you borrow someone else's object you should treat it with value, even if it is seemingly less valuable in your eyes. Drawing on a connection between the Pirkey Avos 5:10 mishna, where the trait of a Tzadik is one who says, my objects or yours, and what's yours is yours, to tell us, that just as one values their own possessions, they ought to value other's possessions the same.
- 4) Point 3 is related here because later when Ya'akov offers gifts to Esav, Esav refuses them by saying what's yours is yours, which would seem laudible. But we know this is the trait of a beinoni, or as the Rabbis say, it is the trait of Sodom, i.e., not righteous, so as not to confuse Esav for being righteous, which

he was not. Similarly, this is pointed out by the fact that the word and he (Esav) kissed Ya'akov has the dots on top (posuk 33:4 to tell us that Esav went in for a bite, but Ya'akov's neck hardened, and it made Esav look like he was kissing Ya'akov.)

- 5) There are practical Halachik implications of valuing personal property (see Pesachim)

Then Ya'akov, upon finishing his battle with the angel, says, I cannot let you go unless you bless me. וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחְנִי כִּי עָלָה הַשָּׁמַר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶשְׁלַחְךָ כִּי אִם-בְּרַכְתִּנִּי

Aside from the obvious request for a blessing in the presence of a divine agent, (the angel), why would Ya'akov need a blessing if he was given one by Hashem. Rashi answers this for us by telling us on the word בְּרַכְתִּנִּי to reassure that the blessings of Yitzchak remain intact. And the angel therefore answers that Ya'akov will get reassurance of Yitzchak's blessing, through a name change. Ya'akov therefore gets the reestablishment, and assurance that the prophecy and blessings imbued in him will come to fruition; notwithstanding Ya'akov wasn't overly sure of himself, nor did he waiver in his service to Hashem (Taryag Mitzvos Shomarti) even with the known outcome.

One final point to the parsha, וַתִּגְשֵׁן הַשָּׂפָחוֹת תִּנָּה וַיִּלְדִּיהֶן וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶינָהּ וַתִּגָּשׁ גַּם-לֵאָה וַיִּלְדֶּיהָ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶי וְאַחֵר נָגַשׁ יוֹסֵף וַרְחֵל וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ:

The torah is very explicit in detailing out who bowed and that they bowed. It would beg the question why. Later in Megilas Esther, when haman would traverse the city everyone would bow to him. Even the Jews. This was problematic, because Haman would wear idols so that the Jews would sin by showing their respect. Mordechai never bowed, and the Jews questioned his tenacity, audacity, and objections, by quoting the above posuk, saying there is Halachik precedent to bow even to an

idolator, as the foremothers, and their children did so. Mordechai answered, explains the medrish, since he was from the house of Binyamin, his forefather didn't bow, as Binyamin hadn't been born during this episode. So according to Mordechai, he didn't have precedent to bow to haman, and therefore didn't, perhaps this is why the posuk was so detailed in telling us who bowed.

This Shabbos is 19 Kislev which is the Rosh Hashana of Chassidus, "Vyofutzu Mainosecha Chutza" and Ufaratsza Yomo V'keidman Tzofona Vanegba". Through the revelation of Chassidus in the world, we became one step closer to Moashiach, and the fulfillment of the Prophecy of Ever, and Hashem, and the blessings of Yitzchak, which is the young will conquer the old, and the strong will rule the weak, which is the era of when Mashiach will arrive B'imheira V'yameinu.

Good Shabbos