THE WEISS EDITION

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Vayishlach

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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה

וישלח
Vayishlach

לב:ה-ו | 32:5-6

עִם לָבָן גַּרְתִּי... וַיְהִי לִי שׁוֹר
וַחֲמוֹר צֹאן וְעֶבֶד וְשִׁפְחָה

I have sojourned with Lavan...
And I have acquired oxen and donkeys, flocks,
manservants, and maidservants.

Don't Make Yourself at Home

After living with Lavan for 20 years, Yaakov and his family finally left for the land of Canaan. To announce their arrival, Yaakov sent a message to his brother, Eisav: "I have sojourned (גַּרְתִּי) with Lavan and I have tarried until now."[1]

The literal meaning of the word גַּרְתִּי is "I stayed there as a foreigner." Yaakov used these words to emphasize that despite spending 20 years in Lavan's company, and amassing much material wealth there—"oxen and donkeys, flocks, manser-

1. Bereishis 32:5–6.

vants and maidservants—" he continued to view himself as a stranger in Charan. It never became his natural home.

Yaakov's view of himself as a stranger to Lavan and everything Lavan represented was the secret behind the other interpretation that Rashi suggests for the word גַּרְתִּי: "גַּרְתִּי has the numerical value of 613. That is to say: I lived with the wicked Lavan, but I kept the 613 commandments, and I did not learn from his evil deeds."[2] Yaakov's success at maintaining his observance of תרי"ג, the 613 mitzvos, was due to his firm resolve to keep his relationship with his material affairs in a state of גַּרְתִּי, foreignness. He therefore never allowed it to disturb his worship of G-d, and could proudly say, "Despite 20 years of Lavan's company, I kept the 613 commandments."

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, pp. 68–69

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2. Rashi ad loc.

לד:כה | 34:25

וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב שִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחֵי דִינָה אִישׁ
חַרְבּוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ עַל הָעִיר בֶּטַח וַיַּהַרְגוּ כָּל זָכָר

Two of Yaakov's sons—Shimon and Levi, Dinah's brothers—each man took his sword, and they came upon the city with confidence, and they slew every male.

The Jewish Way in Responsible Adulthood

Shimon and Levi are each referred to in this verse as איש, a man. The Midrash[3] calculates that this story took place just 13 years after the birth of Levi, the younger of the two brothers, and yet Levi is called a man, indicating that at the age of 13 he had the emotional maturity of an adult. This is one of the sources from which Jewish law establishes 13 years as the age of maturity, whereupon a boy becomes bar mitzvah—biblically responsible to observe the mitzvos.

Ironically, the context in which the 13-year-old Levi is called a man is not an instance in which he acted with the levelheadedness that comes with maturity: he and Shimon react heatedly to Shechem's exploitation of their sister, attacking the city, putting their own lives in grave danger.

This unusual source for the age of bar mitzvah highlights the true definition of mitzvah responsibility. Certainly, we can be held responsible for the mitzvos only when we have the capacity to understand and appreciate their importance. That is why the obligation to observe mitzvos begins only when

3. Bereishis Rabbah 80:10.

one becomes intellectually and emotionally mature— a "man." But understanding and discernment are only the tools—not the foundation—with which to serve G-d. The foundation of Divine service is *kabbolas ol*, "accepting the yoke of Heaven," submitting oneself to G-d's will with a commitment that transcends understanding and reason.

The Torah alludes to Levi and Shimon's adulthood in the episode of Shechem, for their actions demonstrated that their capacity for critical judgment stood firmly on foundations of *kabbolas ol*, submission to a higher cause. Thus, when defending their values necessitated personal risk and self-sacrifice, they readily put their own interests aside, and "each man took his sword…"

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 15, pp. 289–292

לו:ב-ג | 36:2-3

עֵשָׂו לָקַח אֶת נָשָׁיו... וְאֶת בָּשְׂמַת בַּת יִשְׁמָעֵאל

Eisav chose his wives...
and Bosmas daughter of Yishmael.

Eisav's Yom Kippur

One of Eisav's wives was Bosmas, the daughter of Yishmael, who was previously[4] referred to as "Mochalas." The reason for this change, explain the Sages, is that the name Mochalas alludes to the remarkable spiritual transformation she experienced through marriage. According to Rashi:

> There are three whose sins are forgiven: a convert, someone promoted to a high position, and one who marries. The proof [for the last-named] is from here: she was called Mochalas (מָחֲלַת) because her sins were forgiven [נִמְחֲלוּ, *nimchalu*, in Hebrew, sharing a common root with Mochalas.]

The Torah alludes to this remarkable power of marriage specifically in reference to the *wicked* Eisav, to make evident that it is the marriage, in and of itself, that causes the bride and groom to be forgiven: their very decision to build a Jewish family, fulfilling the fundamental mitzvah to "be fruitful and multiply," brings about their extraordinary elevation and transformation.

The Talmud teaches, "He who teaches Torah to another person's child, the Torah considers it as if he fathered him."[5] Accordingly, just as a person who resolves to marry and build

4. Bereishis 28:9.
5. Sanhedrin 19b.

a family is forgiven for all his sins, so is one who resolves to fulfill the spiritual equivalent of this mitzvah by drawing others closer to the Torah.

Moreover, by using Eisav's marriage to Bosmas to teach us that marriage brings atonement for one's sins, the Torah is teaching us that even if you are not perfect, even if you view yourself as unworthy as "Eisav," G-d forbid, and have plenty to work on yourself, you should not hesitate to build your spiritual family—to devote yourself to drawing others closer to the Torah way of life. For through the marriage alone—i.e., through your very resolve to devote yourself to this vital mission—G-d will assist you and raise you to spiritual heights.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 30, pp. 163–168

36:6-8 | לו:ו-ח

וַיִּקַּח עֵשָׂו אֶת נָשָׁיו וְאֶת בָּנָיו וְאֶת בְּנֹתָיו
וְאֵת כָּל נַפְשׁוֹת בֵּיתוֹ וְאֶת מִקְנֵהוּ וְאֶת כָּל בְּהֶמְתּוֹ
וְאֵת כָּל קִנְיָנוֹ אֲשֶׁר רָכַשׁ בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל אֶרֶץ
מִפְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב אָחִיו... וַיֵּשֶׁב עֵשָׂו בְּהַר שֵׂעִיר

Eisav took his wives, his sons, and his daughters, and all the people of his household, and his cattle, and all his animals, and all his possessions that he had acquired in the land of Canaan; and he moved to another land, because of his brother Yaakov... And Eisav settled on Mount Se'ir.

The Unsettled Jew

Eisav's move from the land of Canaan to Mount Se'ir was motivated by practical considerations. He knew that the land of Canaan had been promised to the descendants of his grandfather Avraham, but it came with a price tag. Whoever would inherit the Promised Land would first pay off the "family debt"—G-d's decree that Avraham's descendants would be "strangers in a land that is not theirs."[6] Eisav reasoned, "Let me move away from here. I will share neither in the gift nor in the payment of the debt."[7]

But why was Eisav's move to Se'ir regarded as avoiding the debt? Couldn't his move be considered paying it off? After all, G-d decreed that Avraham's descendants would be "strangers in a land that is not theirs"—but not necessarily in Egypt. In what way was Eisav's moving his entire family and fortune to

6. Bereishis 15:13.

7. Rashi, Bereishis 36:7.

Se'ir less payment of the debt than Yaakov's relocating with his family to Egypt?

Careful analysis of the above mentioned decree shows, however, that the debt left for Yaakov to pay was not that his family would have to merely leave their homeland, as Eisav did, but that "גר יהי' זרעך—your children will be strangers": they will never assimilate with their host nation.

Eisav "*settled* on Mount Se'ir." He wanted his children to have the comfort of blending in with their new neighbors rather than remaining perpetual outsiders. Yaakov's children, however, never became citizens of their host country. The payment of the family debt meant they would remain foreigners throughout their stay in the land of Egypt.

The same is true of the Jewish people, the descendants of Yaakov, in the current exile—the debt of which we continue to pay until the coming of Moshiach. Unlike Eisav and his descendants in their new surroundings in Se'ir, we must constantly maintain our unease with the norms of exile, anxiously awaiting the Geulah, the Redemption, when we will be able to collect our long-awaited inheritance and finally settle peacefully in the Land of Israel.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 10, p. 114




לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ת **יוסף חיים**

ב"ר **זאב אברהם** ע"ה

סלאווין

נלב"ע ביום כ"ב כסלו ה'תשל"ב

תנצב"ה

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נדפס ע"י בני משפחתו שיחיו




לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ת **זיסא בן ציון**

ב"ר **לוי** ע"ה

ליבערמאן

נלב"ע ביום ח"י כסלו ה'תשע"ג

תנצב"ה

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נדפס ע"י בני משפחתו שיחיו



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THROUGH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT *of*
Rabbi Moshe Aaron Tzvi and Mrs. Ruty Weiss