

Bais Yaacov Bnos Malka Newsletter

לעילוי נשמת יצחק עקיבא בן אהרן ז"ל

December 2023

Parshas Vayishlach

פרשת וישלח

כסלו תשפ"ד



Dear Parents,

Today (Thursday) I walked round in a fog. Tragedy and terror hit closer to home. Rebbitzin Afergin, HYD, the principal of Bnot Haddassa was a true tzaddekes. Whenever I had the opportunity to sit next to her and schmooze, at one of the Reshset meetings, it was always a treat. She was very interested in how Sefardim acclimated to EY, if they were not in a Sefardy school. The husband of the young, expectant woman, HYD- a teacher in the Bais Yaakov in RBS Gimmel- sits right behind my son in law in the Mir, and was a classmate of my daughter in laws brother... The Jewish world is very, very small.

I read this dvar torah, and it resonated with me, and that is why I wanted to share it with you.

May klal yisroel know no more sorrow- may all the hostages return to the embrace of their families without any further loss of Jewish life, and Moshiach Tzidkenu come soon!

Yaakov Struggles and Survives

The Torah records that before Yaakov encountered Esav, he struggled with a *malach* for an entire night. When the *malach* saw that he would not be able to overcome Yaakov, the *malach* struck Yaakov in the thigh, injuring him. Yaakov was limping in the morning, but he survived. The Torah relates that because of this struggle and this injury, *Bnei Yisroel* are prohibited to eat the *gid hanasheh*, which is located in the area of the thigh near where Yaakov was injured: “על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את” (Bereishis 32:33).

The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains that this episode is a hint for *Am Yisroel* that we will endure *tzaros* in *galus* and we will be injured during that time. However:

Am Yisroel should remain assured that they will not perish and their descendants and name will endure forever and the redeemer will come and deliver them from their oppressor's hand. And by remembering this matter, *Am Yisroel* will stand firm in their faith and righteousness forever.

The *malach* that fought with Yaakov was the “*sar of Esav*,” “the guardian angel of Esav.” This *malach* wanted to remove Yaakov from the world, to wipe him out entirely. Although he injured Yaakov, Yaakov ultimately survived. Yaakov's survival is a symbol for us that we as a nation will survive up until the coming of the *Moshiach*.

This is a very important idea that is *chizuk* for our *emuna*. *Am Yisroel* will survive until the *yemos haMoshiach*. That is a promise from *Hashem*, and that is reflected in the *mitzva* of *gid hanasheh*.

This idea is also emphasized in the *Haggada shel Pesach* when we declare, “היא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו, שלא אחד בלבד,” “עמד עלינו לכלותינו, אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו, והקב"ה מצילנו מידם,” “This promise has protected our fathers and us, for not only one nation has stood up against us to wipe us out, but rather in every generation, they rise up against us to wipe us out, but *Hashem* saves us from their hands.” *Hashem*'s promise to protect us has stayed with us for generations, and no matter what the nations do to us, we will ultimately survive.

In a famous essay called “Concerning the Jews,” Mark Twain describes the survival of *Am Yisroel* against all odds:

If the statistics are right the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.... He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all the ages and has down it with his hands tied behind him...

The Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed and made a vast noise, and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slurring of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind.

All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?

Well, we know what the answer is. The secret is *Hashem's* promise that He will always be with us and not let us be totally destroyed. That promise is reflected in the *mitzva* of *gid hanasheh*, as the *Sefer HaChinuch* explains.

We find this idea in the beginning of *Parshas Vayishlach* as well. Yaakov divides up his camp, figuring that if Esav is able to conquer one part of the camp, the remaining camp will survive: “וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנִּשְׁאֵר לְפָלִיטָה” (32:9). The Ramban writes that this is an example of *ma'aseh avos siman l'banim*. Just as Yaakov worked it out that at least part of his family would survive, in the future, at least part of *Am Yisroel* will survive. The Ramban quotes a *midrash* that teaches that if there are decrees against *Am Yisroel* in one part of the world, it will be comfortable for us in some other part of the world, and in that way we will reestablish ourselves. *Hashem* always works it out that a “remaining camp will survive.”

The story is told that Rav Kahanaman *ztz"l* met the Chofetz Chaim when Hitler, *yemach shmo*, was just coming to power and things looked bad, and he asked him what the proper approach should be. The Chofetz Chaim quoted this *pasuk* and said that *Am Yisroel* will always survive. When Rav Kahanaman asked where the “remaining camp” would be, the Chofetz Chaim quoted another *pasuk* indicating that it would be in *Eretz Yisroel*. This encounter was one of the events that inspired Rav Kahanaman to open Yeshivas Ponovezh after the Holocaust, and he put this *pasuk* up on the wall of his office. As European Jewry was being destroyed, *Hashem* worked it out that Israel would be a center of Torah and that there would be learning in America and England as well. *Am Yisroel* will always survive.

This theme is also reflected in the holiday of Chanuka, which always falls in proximity to *Parshas Vayishlach*. Many sources indicate that the lighting of the *menora* on Chanuka is a *hemshech*, a continuation, of the lighting of the *menora* in the *Beis HaMikdash*. Thus, the *neiros Chanuka* represent the eternal survival of the Jewish People.

Survival of the *Mesora*

Hashem has promised us that the Jewish People will survive to greet *Moshiach*. Our challenge is to make sure that we and our descendants are vibrant, productive members of *Am Yisroel* who will survive until that time comes. How do we ensure that we properly transmit this *mesora* to the next generation? If we want our children to carry on the *mesora*, we must live our lives according to the Torah's values. We have to be models for our children. We cannot expect our children to want to keep the Torah and *mitzvos* properly if we don't do it ourselves.

The transmission of the *mesora* also often entails emphasizing that the Jewish People are different from the non-Jews and that we therefore have to live differently. This is an important theme of Chanuka. The *midrash* compares *Bnei Yisroel* to an olive; while all liquids mingle with one another, oil always remains separate. The Bnei Yisaschar explains that this is why we light the *menora* with olive oil – to remind ourselves that it is our separateness, our performance of the *mitzvos*, which has ensured our eternity. But it isn't enough to simply light the *menora*; we must allow the light of Torah to guide our lives in a way that will inspire our children to serve *Hashem* as well.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski *ztz"l* discussed this idea in an important lecture. We live in an era in which technology is progressing very quickly and children are exposed to many different forms of media that are unhealthy for their spiritual growth. We have to inspire our children to feel a sense of *kedusha* in their lives so that they feel that these things simply “don't fit” with who they are. If a Jew is holding a *Chumash* and wants to enter the bathroom, he instinctively puts the *Chumash* down first – even if he is not fully observant and doesn't appreciate or understand the wisdom that the *Chumash* contains. He knows that the *Chumash* is holy and does not belong there. We must similarly inspire our children to feel that they are holy and that these activities are therefore not for them .

If we live a life based on the Torah's values, we can hope that we will pass along the *mesora* to the next generation. We can then be *zocheh* to be a link in the chain of the Eternal Jew, as described so beautifully by Mark Twain.

Have a wonderful and peaceful Shabbos!

Chana Ginsburg

This dvar torah has been adapted from the writings of Rav Beinish Ginsburg



Kita Alef is cruising through the Alef Bet. For the letter Daled they listed words on 'dagim', and received a small bottle for 'Dani' who says 'd,d,d'. The girls mastered the Vet and Vav sound by writing 'michtaVim ohaVim', love letters, to Ima and focused on a 'miVtza Vitur'. Learning 'Ayin', the girls put on a play about Aliza who had a sore throat and opened her mouth to say 'Ahh.



Kita Bet made a siyum on Parshat Noach, and each girl made their own Teivat Noach!



“Chonchot Kriyah” Kita Gimmel and Alef participated in an inter-class activity for language enrichment, and to encourage reading. In small groups, the Gimmel girls read a story to Alef girls, discussed the content and created a new book jacket for the story.

Kita Bet learned about the ‘Asnachta’ and used their green highlighters to mark each one.

