



Parashat Vayishlach



English version

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## THE ART OF RESILIENCE

People that can keep their calm have what psychologists call resilience, or an ability to cope with problems and setbacks. A loss of a job, a breakup of a relationship, health issues, difficulties raising children... We can't prevent such things from happening, but we can improve the way we react to them. When facing adversity, there are only two options: grow or suffer. You can fall into depression, or come out much stronger. It is all a question of attitude. Successful people, with their positive attitude, choose to grow. They choose to bounce back, find calm in crisis and chaos, and reinvent hope, options and solutions. Resilience is a trait clearly found in our Patriarchs, Avraham and Yaakov.

After Rachel died and was buried in Beth Lechem, the passuk tells us, וַיֵּסַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּגֵט אֶת־הָאֵהָלָה מִקְּדָלְעֵדֶר לְמִגְדַל־עֵדֶר (Bereshit 35, 21) *And Yisrael traveled, and he pitched his tent passed Migdal Eder.* Yaakov did not sulk in sorrow after losing his dearest wife Rachel, the woman he gave up so much for. He did not consider his mourning a long or a last "stop", but continued traveling on in life.

The Alshich asks, what is the importance in mentioning that after Rachel's death, Yaakov moved his tent *passed Migdal Eder*? And what is special about Migdal Eder that the Torah finds it important to mention the place by name, especially if Yaakov did not pitch his tent there, but just passed there?

The Mei Shiloach learns from this that when faced by adversity, Yaakov took it as an opportunity to

grow. "Migdal" is a tower fortress; Yaakov grew on a personal level by making an emotional fortress of acceptance and faith. The Torah praised Yaakov for this superhuman feat of having overcome his emotions by according him here the angelic title of "Yisrael", and not Yaakov.

Yaakov emerged strong from the depths of his sorrow: Rachel was only 36 when she passed away! For seven years, Yaakov had worked for her deceitful father in order to marry her - from the time she was fourteen until their marriage, when she was twenty-one. Rachel was barren for seven years. Then, tragically, when Yosef was only eight years old, Rachel died in childbirth, with Binyamin.

What makes people great is not how they deal with success, but how they deal with difficulties. Yaakov's life did not get better after losing Rachel. Before Yaakov got back home, his mother Rivka died. Rivka was buried at night, with no one from the family there to be at her burial. Yitzchak was blind, Yaakov was forced to leave home at the age 63, and 40 years later, he had not yet returned home. Rivka's passing is not mentioned in the Torah for her burial was done in secrecy. They buried Rivka at night to prevent Esav from knowing about it and attending the funeral, so that people would not curse the wicked man's mother. How sad! Yaakov did not even have a chance to see his mother before she died. He was still on his way back home. And then, within a short time after Rivka died, Leah died, at the age 45. All this did



not break Yaakov. Instead, it made Yaakov more resilient.

How does one become more resilient? How do people go through hard times? Viktor Frankl wrote, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, "*Man can be taken away from everything except one: the last of the human liberties, the choice of the personal attitude he must adopt towards his destiny in order to develop his own path.*" No one can take your choice of attitude away from you. Choice of attitude was the only thing Holocaust survivors had to hold onto to go through the Holocaust.

Choosing a positive attitude when everything else is taken away is no easy task. Yaakov needed to travel passed Migdal Eder, he needed to meditate on accepting G-d's Will with love, and to pass this hard time by becoming a *fortress* against frustration, and *towering* above it all. This is the power of Migdal Eder. And in the merit of Yaakov's faith while in this place, something amazing will happen there. Migdal Eder, which is near Beth Lechem and Efrat, will be the place where Mashiaich will reveal himself!!! (See Targum Yonatan) Because salvation always comes from the place of resilience.

The path to greatness is paved with resilience. Resilience made Yaakov great, winning him the title Yisrael. And only resilience is what won Avraham the title of Chief, נְשִׂיא אֱלֹקִים אֲתָהּ בְּתוֹכָנוּ (Breshit 23:6). The last of the ten tests of Avraham Avinu was that he bought a grave at a high price for his wife Sarah from Efron. (Ramban; Rabenu Yonah) What exactly was this test? And how can this test even be classified a test, after Avraham had proven himself by a much greater test, the Akedat Yitzhak?

The passuk says, וַיִּקַּם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי מֵתוֹ וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל בָּנָיו: *Avraham got up from upon his dead, and talked to the sons of Chet, saying.* What is the purpose in the Passuk telling us that Avraham "got up" from his dead wife Sarah? What else? Did he speak to the Bney Chet while he was still on the floor, crying?

R Yerucham from Mir answered that the purpose of this passuk is to stress that Avraham did not get stuck on this sad time, but got up. He wiped his

tears away, and he spoke to them as he would speak if nothing had happened. This moment, was one of the most emotionally intense moments in Avraham's life. He just aced the test of Akedat Yitzhak, and now, he faced the sudden, tragic death of his Eshet Chayil! And to top all this, Avraham needs to purchase land to bury his wife, land that was promised him by G-d to begin with! But after Avraham eulogizes Sarah with the Eshet Chayil and weeps over her death, he gets up and goes on. וַיִּקַּם אַבְרָהָם.

Avraham's tenth test was not to see if he would buy a grave or not. The test was not to see if Avraham could purchase a Land that was promised to him by G-d, without questioning G-d's promise. Avraham was being tested on his choice of attitude, to see if he could stay positive despite the loss he had suffered. Avraham's final test, the only test after Akeidat Yitzhak, was the test of resilience. Read the pesukim of how Avraham talked to the people of Chet. You will be surprised to notice how he addresses them in a very respectful, thoughtful and calm manner! Avraham does not say, *Look at what I am going through; have pity on me! This land is promised to me, so stop being so difficult about it!*

Why was this test of Avraham's resilience such an important test? How can this be a test after Avraham had passed the unthinkable challenge of Akedat Yitzhak? Because the way you deal with life under duress, the way you deal with people when you are under stress, is the biggest test of who you really are! Our Rabbis teach that there are three things that reveal who a person really is. אדם ניכר בכיסו *the real person is revealed when one gets a trial concerning money.* אדם ניכר בכעסו *the real person is revealed by the type of response he gives when being slighted.* And אדם ניכר בכוסו, a person is revealed through his "cup", when he is going through a hard time, through mourning כוס של תנחומים. The Man you really are, is revealed via three Mediums. When you are Mad, when you are in Mourning, and when you are going through Monetary stress. (Eruvin 65b) This last test of Avraham, was the test that would reveal who he really was, by testing his resilience. After all, a man is not judged by his successes, but by how many times he falls and gets up again.

One of the greatest skills you can learn in life is how to survive and deal with the changes in life that you did not ask for. We have Patriarchs to learn from the importance of being in total control of our emotions. We can learn from them the art of

overcoming feelings of regret, denial and hopelessness. And we can learn from them the importance in preventing negative emotions from stopping us from moving ahead.

Here are the Torah based Selfie- Steps. The self-help steps to master the art of resilience.

1. Accepting and embracing your new reality is the only way to adapt to it. Everything is orchestrated by G-d, and everything is only for our good. Try to find purpose in it all.
2. Thoroughly explore all the options available. G-d opens other doors before He closes the ones you are used to.
3. Pray with passion. Set reasonable goals and take actions to solve the problem.
4. Eat well. Sleep well. Exercise. Pay attention to your needs, and nurture your Nefesh. Turn to others for help, support and to share your feelings.
5. Believe in yourself that G-d put inside you some G-dliness, and that you can somehow deal with and overcome the impossible. “Whether you think you can go on, or you think you can’t – you’re right.”

### DEEP INSIDE KEVER RACHEL

According to one view in the Midrash, Rachel passed away before Leah because she offered an answer ahead of her older sister at a crucial moment in their lives (*Bereishit Rabba* 74). *When Yaakov asked his wives, Rachel and Leah, for permission to leave the home of their father and move the family to the Holy Land, Rachel spoke up and gave her assent first.* The implication of the Midrash is that her death in childbirth on the way back, near Beit Lechem, should be seen as a punishment for not letting her older sister speak first.

But how are we to reconcile this with an entirely different explanation for the time and place of Rachel’s death given elsewhere in the Midrash (*Pesikta Rabbati*)? There, we find an elaboration on the Prophet Yirmiyahu’s famous description of Rachel, weeping for her children going off to exile after the destruction of the First Temple (Ch. 31):

*Why was Rachel buried in Beth Lechem, not in Ma’arat Hamachpelah? G-d commanded Yaakov to bury her there. For in the future, the Temple will be destroyed and the Jews will go into exile...As they walk on the road to exile, they will reach the tombstone of Rachel and pray over her grave. She*

*will then ask mercy from G-d: “Master of the Universe, listen to my cries and have mercy on my children, or give me a reward for the great difficulty I went through in not revealing to Yaakov that he was marrying Leah to save her from embarrassment.” Immediately, G-d listened to her prayers...*

This clearly implies that the reason why Rachel died earlier, and could not be buried in the Ma’arat Hamachpelah – but rather in Beth Lechem on the road to exile – was so that she could plead for her children and redeem them in the future. How, then, can we understand the opinion in the Midrash cited at the outset that this was a punishment for not deferring to her older sister and letting her answer first?

I once heard a beautiful answer to this from a Shabbat guest. But first a bit of background: We know that the *Avot* observed all the Mitzvos of the Torah, but only in Eretz Yisrael (*Ramban*). That is why Yaakov allowed himself to marry two sisters after leaving Eretz Yisrael and settling temporarily in Lavan’s home in Padan Aram. We can now reconcile the two Midrashim. Yaakov knew that he could not stay married to both sisters and also

fulfill G-d's directive that he return to Eretz Yisrael. Thus, when he asked his wives if they were willing to move the family back to his homeland, he was asking much more than if they were willing to pack their bags. *He was asking his wives if they were willing to put their lives on the line.* And Rachel, who spoke up and gave her assent first, essentially sacrificed her life for this

## UNENTITLEMENT

An interesting question occurred to R Yitzhak Zilberstien. A certain philanthropist made a speech about how he made his money. "All my advisors told me not to lose a certain amount of money because of Shabbat, but I lost the money anyway. In that merit, I am rich today."

Was this appropriate? Or maybe, a person is not supposed to attribute any success to his/her merit. After all, the passuk tells us אֲלֹתֵי אֱמֶר בְּלִבְךָ בַּהֲדָר יִקְנֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶתְּמוֹ מִלְפָּנֶיךָ לְאֹמֶר בְּצַדִּיקְתִּי הֵבִיאֵנִי יְקִיָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: *Do not say in your heart (to yourself), when G-d, your G-d, has driven them (the seven Nations of Canaan) away from before you, saying, in my merit Hashem brought me to inherit the Land...*(Devarim 9;4). From these words, Rabbenu Yonah in his *Shaarei Teshuva* derives the golden rule – (Shaar 3; 9) *A person should not accredit any successes to his/her own merit. But rather, everything that we have is a kindness from G-d...* So, was the speech appropriate, or not?

R Zilberstein points out that there is a difference between the between the philanthropists citing his merit and the possuk telling us not to attribute success to our merit. It could be that the problem lies in "saying to yourself". But in public, to inspire other people spiritually, to motivate ... that is a different story. (Chashukei Chemed Ketubot 68a)

One of our most difficult challenges is to be truly humble. Humility means that you are not entitled to anything; it is all a kindness from G-d. And what you don't have is also a gift from G-d. So, this week, I was the guinea pig for trying to undo all my feelings of entitlement. I tried to think about all the resentments I have been holding on to. I tried undoing the underlying mistake, and in that way, getting rid of all the negative repercussions

holy purpose. This is why she was buried on the side of the road leading to exile. She is the only one of the Patriarchs or Matriarchs who can approach G-d and say "I gave up my life in order for my spouse to merit being in the Land of Israel. How, then, can You not allow them (my children) to return?"

resulting from it. The plan was to mentally *unentitle* myself from honor, respect, dignity, rights, smiles, expectations of a returned favor... And I must say, it was very rough to accept that all I have is kindness from G-d, and that I do not *deserve* anything from Him. And to simply let go of all that I thought I was entitled to.

קִטְנִיתִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל-הַאֲמֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-עַבְדְּךָ כִּי בְּמַקְלֵי עֲבָרְתִּי אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן הִזֵּה וְעַתָּה הִיָּיתִי לְשֹׁגֵי מַחְנוֹת: *I am smaller than (unworthy of) all the acts of kindnesses (things I don't deserve) and from all of the truth (things that I deserve) that You have done for Your servant, because I passed over this Jordan river with my Staff alone, and now I am two camps...* (Breshit 32;11) What do those words mean? According to Rashi, the passuk means, "I received so much from G-d, so much blessing, that I have become small". For when one realized how G-d saves him/her from danger, or when someone realizes how he/she is blessed by G-d, this makes one feel how truly undeserving he is.

But there is a Hassidic twist to these words. As the Sfat Emet teaches in the name of the Chozeh of Lublin, *even humility is something to be humble about, for it, too, is a kindness from G-d.* And of all the kindnesses of G-d, the greatest is to stop feeling entitled. As the passuk says, קִטְנִיתִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים

At the outset, I was not successful because the feeling of being entitled for so many years builds up a lot of muscle. I just got stuck on things from my past. It takes time to undo that feeling and free ourselves from resentment/entitlement. If I'd be able to uproot only one thing from my having been brought up in America, it is the feeling of entitlement that infiltrated into my mind/heart/psyche from Western culture. And if there is one thing that I want to preserve from my



American upbringing, it is that *other* people *are* entitled to respect, dignity, space, and their spot on line...

So, what is the solution? How do we undo entitlement, before it undoes us? Judaism, of course, has the ancient and eternal solution. An emotional/psychological exercise, three times a day. You see, not only do we learn to pray three times a day from our Patriarchs, we also learn *how* to pray from our Patriarchs. According to Rabbenu Bachye, it is appropriate, befitting, and correct that a person meditate, while praying, on his total dependency on G-d, and how G-d is the Master to whom he is a servant. This is learnt from Yaakov's prayer, קִטְּבֵנִי מִלֵּל הַחַסְדִּים: Only after Ya'akov's confession of his utter dependence upon G-d, does he ask Him to be saved from his brother Esav. **ONLY AFTER THIS MEDITATION CAN WE OFFER A REQUEST!** So many people complain that G-d has not answered their prayers. But real prayer is changing yourself, undoing all of your supposed entitlement. (Sefer Halkrim 4;18)

The Rabbenu Bachye continues. Even in times of plenty, to meditate on the times we realized how we were totally dependent on G-d, as Yaakov said, that he remembers clearly how he started off at the age of 77, with nothing more than his walking staff. Everything was taken by his nephew and student, Elifaz, son of Esav, in order to spare his life.(Nedarim 64 ; Rashi 29;11) As one of the wealthy first generation Syrian American Jews told me, "They used to call me Banana Boat (a derogatory term for Syrian immigrants and foreigners- Banana is a term for an Asian person living in a Western country, e.g., an Asian American ). Now they call me Luxury Liner! But I will never forget that I was once a Banana Boat!"

In the world of American psychology, undoing entitlement is to say that I am not *more* entitled than the other. Here are some signs of entitlement psychologists look for... 1. You expect the same rules that apply to others shouldn't apply to you. For example, other people might need to start at the bottom and work their way up, but you shouldn't have to. 2. You feel massively put upon when

other people ask you for small favors, but expect that when you ask people for favors, it requires no big effort, on their part. 3. You expect other people to be more interested in you and what's on your agenda than you're interested in them and what's on their agenda. You see your own interests as more interesting than other people's, and see your goals/dreams as more valid or important than theirs. 4. You disregard rules that are intended for everyone's comfort. For example, you ignore signs to "please not put your feet on the chairs in public places". 5. You use programs to download music rather than pay for it. Or, you benefit from free services, shiurim, content, etc., on public platforms all the time, but never donate during donation drives. 6. You inconvenience others, without thinking. For example, you cancel appointments or reservations repeatedly. Or, you make plans with friends and then cancel without considering that your friend may have organized other plans specially to accommodate you. Or, you run into a store 1 minute before closing, without thinking about the fact you'll be delaying the shop assistant from getting home on time. You think "it's only 5 minutes", without considering that the assistant may have somewhere they need to be. 7. You think it's OK to upset or offend other people. 8. You cheat in environments that are based on reciprocity. For example, you use all the gemachs you can, but you don't spend the same amount of time trying to give back...9. When working in groups, you think you should be the leader or get the most credit. And you don't recognize the contributions of others or the balance of the team. (adapted from Psychology Today – Dr. Alice Boyes)

But the real solution, the only solution is to think out of your box. Not only we are not more entitled than others, but we are not entitled at all! To recognize that whatever we have, even our ability to pray, is a gift, gratis, from Hashem. As we remind ourselves before each prayer, אֲדַנִּי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתָּח, אֲרִי גִיד תִּהְלֶתְךָ: *My Master! Open my lips, and my mouth will say Your prayers!* Without You G-d, I can't even open my lips to praise You!

Of course, it is much easier to say this with our mouths than to say this with our hearts. But we can't afford entitlement beliefs. Entitlement is from the worst traits one can be suffering from. The antonym of entitlement is gratitude – people who feel entitled do not feel grateful. And people who

are not grateful are miserable people. And people who are miserable people become bad people.

If only we could meditate in our hearts on what we say with our lips, our social problems would be solved. We would be happier and better people. And all of our prayers would be answered.

## WORK SMARTER / PRAY HARDER

How does a person know if he is doing the right amount of Hishtadlut, or if he is overdoing it? This is the million dollar question, and one of the most common dilemmas of every-day life. It has ramifications in all areas of performance. In dating, in business, in academic achievement – in almost anything in life that is stress related. How many shadchanim to call? How many hours to work? How long to study for the test, or prepare the lesson for the class? Mastering this balance is one of the keys to happiness (see Orchot Tzaddikim Simcha, שביעיה). And is something that may be worthwhile praying for. This is the underlying message of the serenity prayer, “Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference.”

Yaakov was faced with fear. His brother, Esav, was after him. What does Yaakov do? Three things. He splits up klal Yisrael, his family, into two. He prays that he not get hurt, that he not hurt others. And he sends presents to Esav. Yaakov was afraid that he might be vulnerable because it could be that he had sinned. And that is why he did not want to rely on a miracle. But, don't we know that if Hashem wants something to happen, it will happen anyway? Why was Yaakov even trying, even doing hishtadlut? Also, we know that Yosef was punished with two additional years of jail for doing hishtadlut, when he asked the Sar Hamashkim to remember him. What is the difference between the two scenarios?

The answer is that “G-d does His Thing” through a person's hishtadlut (שער הביטחון פ”ג התנאי השביעית). Whenever a person is faced with confronting an Esav, or worldly matters which Esav represents, he needs to do some type of hishtadlut, to bring about Hashem's Will. For most people of the religious world today, it is not as hard to have emunah and bitachon as it is to balance Hishtadlut with Emunah. Even though we learn from Yaakov's splitting the family that a person should do what needs to be done to make things work, we see that Yaakov was punished for bowing down to Esav and for

calling him “Adoni”, my master. So, was it right or wrong that Yaakov tried to do his best?

The answer is that there is a golden rule at the base of hishtadlut. The rule is the knowledge that whatever G-d wants is going to happen, when and how He wants it to happen. G-d does not need this specific hishtadlut from our part to do what He wants to do. Any hishtadlut can do the job. Hishtadlut brings G-d's blessings, without our having to rely on an open miracle. As R' Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, a”h teaches that it is like buying the ticket to get on the train. The train is going from point A to point B, not moving from its track, even one centimeter. You just need the ticket to get onto that train. But, you are not doing anything more than buying the ticket. The only hishtadlut that can change a decree is prayer and spiritual service. And even prayer does not change the Will of G-d. Prayer just changes the person; he becomes more humble, more accepting. And when he becomes a different person, he deserves different decrees (Sefer HaKrim 4;18).

This underlying rule of hishtadlut has three conditions. The three conditions of proper hishtadlut are based in question format. 1. Am I reacting to a problem or taking control of it? Am I acting out of fear, doubt, insecurity, lack of patience; if so, it is a sign that my emunah is off, or am I able to respond in a way that is most productive? 2. Are my efforts crossing over the boundaries of the spiritual commitments and standard that I believe I could reach? 3. Am I praying as hard as I am trying?

The first rule is based on the Chazon Ish's answer to what Yosef did wrong. Yosef's asking the Sar Hamashkim was not proper hishtadlut. Why was he asking this low-grade person to remember him? The chance that this type of hishtadlut would work is nil! Yosef's belief in G-d was not off, but his hishtadlut was not appropriate. It was rooted in despair; such hishtadlut is not emunah-based hishtadlut. Another point here, made by R' B. D. Povarski, is that Yosef asked for the favor 3 days before the Sar Hamashkim was taken out of



jail. At that point, Yosef did not have to ask for help from this Sar Hamashkim, it could have been that Yosef would be freed from prison before the three days were up. This shows that Yosef's response was one of despair, not of emunah and proper hishtadlut (Adapted from the Mashgiach, ז"ל, Rav Dov Yaffeh, לַעֲבֹד בְּאַמְתּוֹ).

This is a great lesson. Proper hishtadlut is only when someone acts with intent, not as a reaction to emotions or external situations. Proper hishtadlut has to be planned ahead, thought out, its degree, timing and manner carefully considered. What makes the most sense? How much do I have to do in order for it not to be an open miracle that G-d helps me? This is such an important rule in all areas of life. To think ahead, before letting hishtadlut take over your headspace, your schedule, and your spirituality.

I recently saw a piece of sound business advice from Dale Carnegie, one that can knock down 50% of your worries at work and in so many other areas of hishtadlut. It can quadruple your productivity. It is a solution to having mindfulness, instead of losing it. You see, usually, the question that people ask themselves in business management or any other management is, What do I do next? This question is ineffective. The best

### **I DON'T CARE ANYMORE**

I coached someone who once had a lot of money. We had a heart to heart discussion about those years when EVERYONE was his best friend. He would take guys out to restaurants, on trips, and pay for all of his "friends'" expenses. He told me, "Yosef, none of the guys knew this, but I could not sleep at nights. I used to lie in bed for endless hours, wondering who really cares for me and who cares about my money. More than once, I concluded that no one cared for me. I wanted to commit suicide." I was shocked! Lack of being cared for can cause suicidal thoughts?

I finally got around to reading a great book, The Charge, by Brendon Burchard, and this is what he writes. "Babies who are not cared for die. Suicide notes ring with the haunting assumptions that no one cared and no one will care. People without a caring environment demonstrate erratic behavior, lack positive emotional range, get divorced, cheat, and abruptly quit jobs. The number-one reason people quit jobs across all industries is lack of appreciation- no one demonstrated that they cared about or were grateful for the person's hard work and contributions. Caring is serious business."

hishtadlut to approach a business problem, or any problem in life is with the four questions. 1. What, exactly, is the problem? 2. What is the core of the problem, why does it exist and why is it still here? 3. What are all the possible solutions to the problem? 4. What is the best solution? ... and then choosing that solution as your hishtadlut.

The second rule is based on the fact that Yaakov was punished for bowing down to Esav seven times, and from calling him my master eight times. This was improper, because if hishtadlut in anyway crosses tracks with emunah or bitachon, it is inappropriate. I remember what R Yehuda Ades, Shlita, said in a class to some working people from the Syrian community in New York. He said that if you set up time for prayer, time for Torah, and you are giving up from your service of G-d for the sake of your hishtadlut, you are overstepping the boundaries of proper hishtadlut, as if G-d can't bring your salvation while doing His Will.

And the third lesson is, that if you are not putting your hishtadlut in prayer, but in physical work alone, that means that your hishtadlut is not emunah-based. These three laws of Hishtadlut are so applicable, so measurable, so real. They are all life changers.

People have asked me what sparked me to want to become a coach. Well, it happened one day when a long lost friend came over to me and said he wanted to thank me for something. He said that our first winter semester in Yeshiva together, due to his serious case of acne, no one was interested in talking to him. I met him one time, as we crossed the street together, and I asked how he was doing. He said, "Ah, okay, I guess." I asked him, "Are your acne creams working? Are you seeing results?"

He said, "Not really." And then, he said I told him something that saved his life. "People don't care what type of a person you are on the outside as much as they care about what type of person you are on the inside". "From that day on," he said, "I started opening up to the guys, and I saw that people actually did care about me. I never told anyone, but I was planning suicide. You saved my life. I owe you one."

There was never a generation like ours, where people don't show genuine care for others, just for the sake of genuinely caring, or carrying on a conversation just for the sake of giving the other person a feeling of being



cared for. We do chessed, but unfortunately, too much of our chessed is political chessed. What do I mean by political chessed? What are politics? That's when people do or say things with an ulterior motive, not because they really believe in what they are saying or doing. Political Chessed is Chessed with an ulterior motive.

When we ponder over the ulterior motives of ourselves and those around us, we will see a different world than the world we see. Have men become rabbis because they care to pass on the word of G-d, or because that is a job they found themselves in? “ כי שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת ותורה “ יבקשו מפיהו כי מלאך ה' צבאות הוא, אם דומה הרב למלאך ה' יבקשו תורה מפיו ואם לאו אל יבקשו תורה מפיו (Moed Kattan 17a) If you want to know who to choose as a Rabbi, make sure that he is a messenger totally dedicated to G-d, that he has no ulterior motives, and that his only wish is to pass on G-d's word. Just like an angel, whose only agenda is G-d's agenda. In chinuch, are our mentors there for the sake of chinuch, or is there prime concern keeping a job, to control others, or a need for honor and respect? Do we, as parents, care about the modesty of our daughters with their best interest in mind, or because we are afraid about the family image? Do we stay frum because we have become comfortable doing so, or because we love and fear G-d and want to serve Him? This political caring is Esav's way.

When Yaakov was coming home, after 34 years of missing out on the mitzvah of Kibud Av Va-em, he planned how to deal with Esav. Esav now lived in the Land of Seir, in the Field of Edom. Yaakov knew that Esav still harbored hatred in his heart, because the names that Esav gave the places where he lived, showed that he had not forgotten the episode of the Berachot. Se-ir means hair. Esav was known as איש שעיר, a person with a hairy body, and Yaakov's mother Rivka, placed goat skins on his arms and neck to trick his father into thinking that he was the hairy son Esav. He called his field Edom, Red, to remember forever the red lentils that Yaakov used to buy the rights of the firstborn son from him.

R Yonasan Eibeshits comments that we know that Esav's behavior was the epitome of Kibud Av Va-em. When he would serve his father, he would don royal clothing. He would say, “It does not accord honor to my father, if I serve him with any other clothes.”(BR 65, 16) If so, why did Esav leave his father, in his father's old age, when his father was blind, and move to Edom, Seir ? Why was Esav in Edom, not home taking care of his father Yitzchak? He answers that it was because Esav saw that Yaakov left Eretz Yisrael and married two sisters, Even though marrying two sisters is forbidden by the Torah; but outside of Eretz Yisrael, before the Torah was given, the forefathers did not keep certain parts of the Torah. So Esav decided to leave Eretz Yisrael, so he could sin as much as his heart desired, without looking bad in his father's eyes.

R Shlomo Levenstien, answers in a different way. Esav only respected his father for the sake of getting the Berachot from him. Esav was so good at this political Kibud Av Va-em that he reached the highest level of Kibud Av Va-em while putting on his show! Once the Berachot had been given to Yaakov, Esav left his father.

But this is not the Jewish way. Yaakov was the exact opposite: he was the epitome of the trait of Tiferet, congruent, consistent in his behavior, always honoring his parents. תתן אמת ליעקב. Even after Yaakov had four wives, twelve Tribes and considerable wealth, and he needed nothing more from his father, he came home to perform the mitzvah of Kibud Av Va-em. Until today, we do not eat the Gid Hanasheh, the sciatic nerve, to remind the Jewish People for all generations, that our ancestors, the Twelve Tribes, did not join their father Yaakov when he went back to get the small jugs, which resulted in Yaakov fighting the angel alone, and having the Gid Hanasheh knocked out of place. (See Chizkuni) To always remember that the Tribes did not care for their father enough, when he needed them.

The Jewish way is to care for our parents, our spouses, our children, the people in our lives, even when we don't feel that we “need” them. To show them we care for them, even when it costs us money, time and effort.

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