

Session 72

Vayetzi – The Courage to Stand Alone

14 November 2021

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwVZ7_Ae23c&t=1s

Ari

Now can you hear me? Ok, great. Ok, great, great, great, great, great. Good to see all of you! Big time! I'm just enjoying scrolling through your faces. You know I do it, I love it. I love to see all of you. Mindy and Ryan and Brandon. Good to see you, Stan and Sue. Anyways, we're not going to go through all the names. Sister Christophara. Good to see you. Esther! Shalom, Esther, we had such an honor this week to have Esther and Thomas from Germany come out to the farm. They are so holy, they're so sweet. It was such an honor to have them. Really, was so great. And Krista, we miss having you at the farm. You know, Krista, her daughter actually, designed the official logo that is on all of our wine bottles and all of the notebooks for the whole farm. It's so beautiful. She is so talented. And just good to see all of you. Now, I just had one thought as I'm searching through all of your pictures. And that is, maybe, we could like turn on the cameras right before, just so we can see each other's faces. Because I have no idea what Chris Anderson, Charlotte Paige, Pam Rosenthal, Lisa Rogers, Nancy Hitchcock, what any of you look like. And, I want to see what you look like. I don't want to focus on this too much, I'm already running out of time. I can tell Tabitha's rolling her eyes behind the scenes. But there's something to a face. And you get to see me, so I just feel like I should be able to get to see you also.

And you know they say, why do we keep the commandments when we're in the exile? We're in practice. So we're able to recognize them when we come back. And maybe it's important that we're able to recognize each other's faces just so when the day comes when the whole fellowship unites together here in Judea, we recognize each other. We're not foreign to each other. So maybe it's a ridiculous comparison, I don't know, we're going to move on. Don't feel pressured to turn on your cameras unless you really want to. I'm clearly very ADD right now. So there's so much to talk about in this delicious Torah portion. It's so rich and it's so beautiful. But first things first.

I want to introduce a new segment called "Setting the Record Straight."



(singing) Setting the Record Straight. How great was that! Thank you, Tabitha, for making that. Tabitha is the best! We love Ben also, but thank you both so much for everything you do. Now I want to set the record straight because last week Jeremy threw around some pretty hefty accusations about my dogs and his chickens. And so I just want to set it straight.

So, when I moved out to the farm, I was alone on a mountain. And the closest family I was neighbors with was over five mountains over, about a mile away. And my partner said that it was important that the surrounding Arabs think that I'm nuts. I've shared this with you before. It's important that they think I'm nuts, which by the way my parents really believe it to be true to this very day. They actually came out to the farm, my whole family came out to the farm this past Shabbat for the first time, ever. My sisters, my parents, everyone was all out together for Shabbat. It was so holy, it was so magical, I was so, so thankful. Anyways, came out, we had no walls, no security systems, I didn't even have bars on my windows. All I had was my gun and my dog. Now, I've hated dogs like I told you my whole life. It's like this multi-generational thing. And not only in my family, but a lot of Jewish families. My grandmother said that dogs are meant to hunt down Jews. But every security expert I met said that dogs are very important for security, both my personal security and for the whole farm.

Ok, so I've gone through quite a journey in the world of dogs and Shaena and I have not had an easy path. It's been a tough journey just finding the right fit. A dog that will bark and sound scary and is territorial, but not a dog that's actually an insane person or an insane dog. Right? I've had insane dogs before. But we'll talk about Scoop another time. He was gifted in some ways, but he was also totally crazy. He's a special dog, he's in a better place now. Scoop is in a better place now. He's not dead, but he's near Chevron, defending a settlement of holy Jews.

Anyways, Shaena and I finally felt like we had it figured out. We bought an Asian Shepherd named Menchie that just a year ago was this cute little ball of fur.



How cute he was sitting there next to Dvash. Look how delicious he was. Anyways, now he is like a dinosaur.



Look at him. He's massive. He is massive.

We bought him from this famous musician named Udi Davidi. You need to listen to his music. The guy is unbelievable. He's also a sheep farmer and a musician, and he lives in the south Hebron Hills. And we bought him because he's big and scary and we were told that he was imperturbable. That was the word. That he would never ever bite. At least he wouldn't bite people. So, the other dog we got was named, we named him Shugi, because he was white like sugar and we weren't really in a creative mood. And so, we bought him because he was the illegitimate nephew of Jeremy's legendary dog named Oreo that his parents and everybody

says is the perfect specimen of a dog. Perfect mix between intelligent and protective and territorial, but not dangerous. Here's a picture of Shugi.



But anyways, the reason I'm giving you all of this background and showing you these pictures is very simply because I want you to be sympathetic to MY cause, not to Jeremy's cause, to MY cause. I want you all to side with me.

So anyways, I closed off my balcony and Menchie patrols it at night and barks at things and looks big. And Shugi, he sleeps in the house and barks when people knock at the door, so we're protected inside and outside. He also really like me, and he expresses that by jumping on me, embracing my leg and peeing all over me. That happens to me probably once a day. Anyways, Dvash plays with both of them and the way she says their names, Shugi, Menchie, I'm not saying it right. It just melts your heart. And a few months ago, when all was in harmony after years of searching, I remember Shaena and I looked at each other. We looked in each other's eyes, "We got it! We figured out this dog thing. We can move on with our lives now."

But just like in the Torah portion, Vayeshev Ya'acov, when Ya'acov settled down to really just settle down and relax, that's when the problem starts. And in come Jeremy's golden chickens. Now these aren't just any chickens. These are Rhode Island chickens. You could Google that right now, Rhode Island chickens. And what's special about them is that they both lay eggs and can be used for meat. And Jeremy claims they're quite beautiful, although I do not see it. They can also do advanced mathematics or at least they should be able to, considering the fact that they're 250 shekels each. Just think, it's like 60 dollars for a chicken. That's insane. Anyways, he didn't buy all of his chickens, he hatched a bunch of them. I'm not going to keep going on, I feel like we're going on for too long here. He would have made it much more concise.

But that being said, the families at the farm, we let our dogs off the leash to roam around. They're safe and they're friendly, and that's just the culture at the farm. Now here's where the story begins. That's right, we're just beginning it. One day, Jeremy accused my dog, Shugi, of killing two of his chickens. It was an unwarranted and unfounded accusation which I would have denied if it wasn't for the fact that Shugi actually dragged the chicken's dead bodies back to my balcony into my Sukkah. It was on Sukkot. And he looked at me with those puppy dog eyes and a face full of blood, showing me his big find that he expected me to be proud of him. So it's sort of hard to deny, he was the murderer. He literally was red-faced in the matter. So, I tied Shugi up and that was it. All was well. But he got off the leash and I was going to get him,

but I was with a group, and by the time the group was over, he killed another two of Jeremy's chickens.

And now, Jeremy was starting to get really upset, not at himself by the way. That his chickens were free roaming outside and not in the lul, meaning the chicken coop. But because my dog killed his chickens again. I get it. But why weren't his chickens in his coop? You're probably all asking that. I don't know, you have to take that up with Jeremy. Either way, we had a little bit of a falling out. A little bit more than a little bit of a falling out. And it actually got to be a family thing. His kids were mad at me, Shaena and Tehila, they're more dignified and evolved than we are, so they were loving to each other. But it was a thing. And so, Jeremy claimed that my dog was an aberrant sociopath and my claim was that he was a dog and it's relatively normal behavior for dogs to kill chickens. Either way, we said we'd keep them tied up.

And then it happened, one of Jeremy's kids, Emunah, felt bad for Shugi that he was tied up and she let him out. And while Jeremy by this point had ensured me that his chickens would be kept in safe protection of his lul, and there was no real danger, and he told me they were safe, there's nothing to fear. There was a breach in the chicken coop caused by Jeremy's horse. That's right. Hector! Enter Hector the horse, screen right. We will get back to him soon. Either way, he kicked open the coop and the chicken got out and Shugi liberated the chicken from the trials and tribulations of this world. Unfortunately, the murder happened in front of Jeremy's daughter, Emunah, who is so cute and delicious. You need to meet her, you need to come to Judea just to meet Emunah. And she loves all creatures of life and she was apparently and understandably so sad and shaken by the circle of life which she witnessed, that Jeremy was just furious. He came in my house, barged in. He was super upset. And we had the biggest fight that we've had in a number of years.

That Shabbat I went to a Rabbi and I asked him what the halachic ruling is according to Jewish law and he asked me whose yard the chickens were in when they were killed and I said that they were in Jeremy's yard. Then without even batting an eyelash, he said, "Well, it's very easy, you're without a doubt, you are responsible to pay for the chickens. You are guilty."

And I said what I think any one of you would have said, which was, "Thanks a lot, but I'm going to go find myself another rabbi," right? Anyways, I'm just kidding, of course. From the beginning I was willing to reimburse Jeremy for the chickens, but he said he wanted me to actually drive up north to buy the actual chickens. Ok, so fair enough, but I said he'd have to come with me because otherwise it would be boring and we haven't taken a road trip in a while and he readily agreed. Ok, so the story could end there and I probably should end it there because I'm already using up so much of the fellowship on this. But no. Jeremy just couldn't let it sit. But at the rate I'm telling the story, if I told the rest of it at this pace, I'd take up the entire fellowship, so I'll let you hear the rest of the story via audio message that Jeremy and I sent to

our beloved Rabbi and friend, Shlomo Katz, which I think maybe is a little bit more concise. But I think maybe not. Anyways, here was Jeremy's message to Rabbi Katz:



(audio – Jeremy) Hey Rav Shlomo, I have a question. Ari's dogs ate my chickens, five of them. And he hasn't restored them to me yet. So, it's really upsetting. I don't have as many eggs anymore. I have to go buy eggs. I used to just be able to have my own eggs. Now I have to go buy them. Oh my God, ok.



But, I have a horse and my horse right now is in his garden. And I think I've left him there so long that he probably pooped in the grass, and I'm not going to lie, Rabbi, I'm sort of happy that that happened.



I know that that's bad midot. I know that that shouldn't be the case, but that's just what happened, and maybe that's fair. Until I get my chickens back, my horse can poop in his garden and he can eat the grass there because the grass there is really green and beautiful and it just saves me money that way because I don't have to kash.

So, is that a good psak from the Rabbi? If my horse has grazing rights in Ari's garden, kollel, the right to poop there and I don't have to clean it? So, I wanted to ask what the halachic answer is to that. (end of audio)

Ari

Ok, so that was his question. The word kollel means including also that he doesn't have to clean it. And this was my response to his message that I sent to both him and Rabbi Shlomo Katz.

Ari's audio

Ok, so thank you so much Rabbi. To answer your question, this is for real. It is a true situation he is describing, however, I think most of it he's sending to you because he loves you and I love you and he wants to entertain you with the funny scenario.



We are very beloved friends. We're getting along great and we're going to figure this whole thing out, but just to sort of iron things out so you understand the entirety of the situation, yes, my dog did eat his chickens and yes, they were 250-shekel Rhode Island chickens that

are so great and blah, blah, blah.



Fine. So, I didn't know like what the matzav is exactly with the chickens, even though he did tell me the last day, he like, "Ok, my chickens are in the lul, they're safe. If Shugi gets off it's ok, he's not going to eat the chickens." So, when Shugi got off, I didn't freak out about it and go bring him back because he and Tehila both told me that the chickens were safe.

It turns out that his horse, that yes indeed has pooped in my garden, a massive steaming pile of poop in my garden and eaten my grass. It kicked open the barn and his chicken got out and Shugi killed his chicken. So that's what happened. I did tell Jeremy that I would reimburse his chickens and restore his chickens, I would pay for them, even though they're a way inflated price of 250 shekels per chicken, yes that's true. But he hasn't been able to figure out a time that we'll go together to buy the chickens. So he's sort of milking this, "Ari hasn't restored my chickens yet," when I already said I will restore his chickens. Let's just pick a time to go together because I don't want to bring back Rhode Island chickens that don't meet your expectations, oh Jeremy Gimpel.

So that's the matzav right now. And yes, he brought his horse to my yard and it took a massive steaming pile and that was not good midot, and it wasn't. And that's why on Shabbat in the morning, I actually on the way to shul, I was walking to shul from the farm and I ran into a goat. And I brought the goat to Jeremy's house and I brought him into his house and let that goat run around his house as I locked the doors and the kids were trying to get the goat out and I was not letting them out. Then they figured it out, they let the goat out the back door. And so the goat followed me all the way to shul. So I tied him up outside of shul and then all the kids in Ibei Hanachal were playing with the goat and having a great time with the goat. And I brought the goat to visit Josef Rubinoff and told Yosef Rubinoff that this is my new dog. And Yosef Rubinoff laughed. So a lot of light came from this whole situation via the goat on Shabbat. So everything has HaShem's fingerprint on it. I just wanted to share that with you. HaShem should bless you, Rabbi, I love you so much. (end)

Ari

Ok, that was too long. I think I just included so you hear the story about the goat which I introduced to everyone as my new dog. Anyways, just to end the story because I need to have closure here, yesterday my other dog Menchie, who Jeremy said was not a murderer, he ate one of Jeremy's chickens, so that makes six chickens that I need to buy Jeremy this week. And please, my friends, do not send me offers to help me with this expense. Do not set up an emergency chicken fund on my behalf. This is on me. I can do it. We can afford it. I just wanted to share this with you, the true story behind the dog/chicken massacre of 5782, because last week Jeremy opened the topic and I just wanted to share my side with all of you so that I could do my best at setting the record straight! I thought that that'd be a cool thing to do.

Anyways, that being said, the time has come to introduce the guy who is still my very best friend, my Rebbe Jeremy Gimpel who is going to share a beautiful Torah idea with you which he shared with me on Shabbat. Really, it is truly beautiful. Jeremy you are up.

Jeremy

Hey fellowship, just making a video for you here in the mountains. It's just, the camera can't possibly capture the beauty of this place. But I just wanted to give you a taste of what it's like living out here and just being in this beautiful autumn day. And we're learning about Ya'acov Avinu, Jacob our father, he's out in the mountains with his sheep, doing business. And the last few weeks, we've gone through a deeper understanding of the story of the patriarchs.

We learned that Avraham is chesed, representing loving kindness. Yitzchak was gevurah, representing restraint, representing control, discipline. Ya'acov Avinu represents the final ingredient that was needed in order to birth the nation of Israel. And Abraham he not only represented chesed, but he also represented the positive mitzvot, the positive commandments. Yitzchak, in his restraint, represented withholding, not doing, the avarot, not doing the sins. So, we have one that's outward, action, going to do the positive, seeing the orphan, seeing the widow, seeing someone in need. Seeing the darkness and bringing the light. Yitzchak on the other hand, saw the darkness and made sure to not allow it to come in.

Ya'acov Avinu, Jacob our father, something totally different. Also, in the stories of Jacob, we get really deep into his insides of the business that he was running. We don't really hear about that. We hear that Abraham was sometimes poor, and sometimes he was quite wealthy. And Yitzchak we hear that he plants some weed and was very successful in reaping his crops. Jacob, I mean, we hear how many years he's working, his strategy for getting the sheep. I mean we're entering into this whole world of the inner workings of his business and how he became so successful. How he crossed the Jordan with just a stick in his hand and came back to the Land of Israel quite a wealthy man. So wealthy that he was able to divide his camp up into two

camps. He walked to outside of Israel with a stick and he came back with so much, he was able to divide his property into two full camps. And we learned how that happened.

And so, what does Ya'akov represent? Ya'akov represents an area of life which is actually most of our lives. Which aren't necessarily about positive commandments or negative commandments, mitzvot and avarot. Just about living life, running a business, raising a family, how we deal with our neighbors, how we deal with our business associates, how we deal with our employees, how we deal with our students, how we deal with our teachers. It's just life. It's that whole area of just mutar, it's just what you're allowed to do, just the world that you could act in a good way, in a bad way. But there's not really a rule book saying this is a positive commandment, this is a negative commandment. It's just how we interact with the world. And Jacob is the one, the third father that brings in the final piece to the puzzle that teaches us how to be in the world. And the attribute and the virtue that Ya'akov represents in this soul map, if we have love and compassion and giving on one side with Abraham, and then we have restraint, discipline, persistence on the other side with Yitzchak. Ya'akov represents the attribute and the virtue of truth – emet. God gave truth to Jacob.

But when you look at the stories of Jacob, out of all of the patriarchs, he was the most controversial when it came to being honest. He sort of manipulated Esav when he came in from the field, sold him a bowl of soup for something a lot more valuable. He tricked Jacob, he tricked Yitzchak when he walked in, dressing up like Esav, I mean just blatant lies. He also pulled a fast one on Lavan his father-in-law. I mean out of all of the avot, of all of the patriarchs, for him to represent truth is really, really peculiar. But I think that's the lesson that's being taught to us, is that in the world that isn't very defined, that isn't, "yes, it's a positive commandment to do this, it's a negative commandment to do that," there's just room to live. Where are you supposed to live? Should you live in the city? Should you live on a farm? There's no rule book. What do you follow?

So Jacob teaches us that as believers in the God of Israel, named after Jacob, God of Israel, God speaks to us, guides us, protects us, and walks with us. And He will give us a truth that only we know. From the outside, the whole world looks at Jacob and says, "man, that guy was a liar. He tricked his father, he tricked his brother, he lied to everyone." But on the inside, Jacob represented an inner truth, an inner integrity that was unshakable. Even if it meant that he had to lie on the outside, he was being true to the voice on the inside. And only in dealing in the world of mutar, in the world where there isn't specific commands, you're just allowed to. It's just the world in which we live, the most important ingredient is your inner truth. Is the inner truth that God puts on your heart.

Now everyone knows, we have this voice, we have this conscience, we have this yetzer hatov that's there, that guides us. And when we violate our inner truth, we know it. And let me tell you, if you continuously violate that inner voice that's calling you to the good, eventually reality

will snap back on you. You can only manipulate reality so long until reality comes back because reality, existence is the ultimate truth. And Jacob says to be in line with the ultimate truth, to be in line with God, you have to be in line with yourself and that inner calling of truth. And that's why Jacob represents truth for all of us.

Now the Netivot Shalom says something beautiful. He said, "What was that story where Jacob comes to this rock and pulls it off of a well and somehow brings the water out that usually took a whole community of shepherds to come to do? Why was that story import for us?" So that story was important to teach us one thing. At least. And that was, when we're dealing in the world, and we have the media telling us what truth is, we have politicians telling us what truth is, we have false doctrines telling us what truth is, we have religious traditions that are telling us what truth is. You know the only way to bring out the water, to bring out the Torah, to bring out the holiness, we have to remove the rock, you need a community. You cannot do it alone. Jacob was the only one that was able to remove the rock to reveal the water, the living waters of God.

But us that aren't exactly Jacob, look how lucky we are. We have a fellowship, we have a community of people that each one is following their own truth, even though on the outside it looks like we contradict each other. It looks like we don't come from the same place. I'm here from the mountains of Judea, but we know there's people from New Zealand, from Africa, from this religion, from that background, from this education. But all of us are following an inner truth that has somehow brought us all the way to the Land of Israel. And that is connecting us to the God of Israel.

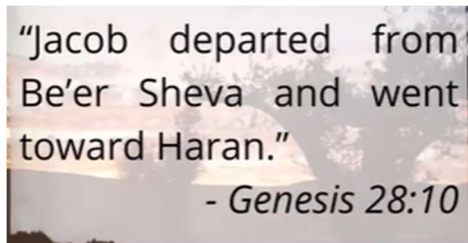
And so, we should all be blessed to follow truth and hopefully next week, we're going to delve into that just a little bit more. The final patriarch of Israel that brought the last virtue, the last attribute that is the foundation, the core of everything, to be true to others, to be true to yourself. And so, we should all be blessed to walk in the ways of Israel. Shalom.

Ari

Jeremy, that was absolutely beautiful. Jeremy actually pre-recorded that earlier and it's not what he told me he was going to share. I've never heard that before. He told me he was going to share a different Torah idea he shared with me on Shabbat, but that was really, really, chazak, that was really powerful. You know, it actually makes me think of, you know, when Jacob woke up from his dream, right, he said, "God is in this place." **וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי** Which is usually translated as, "and I didn't know." Anochi lo ya'dati, I didn't know. But it can also be read, I don't remember which of the sages of Israel said this incredible insight, but if you speak Hebrew, you see it's staring right at you...V'anochi, and I myself, lo ya'dati...I didn't know, anochi, I didn't know myself. I didn't know who I am, right? It's not that this place is holy and I didn't know, but this place is so holy and I didn't know myself. How could I have seen holiness

outside of me if I didn't know the holiness within myself? If I didn't know my own inner truth, which is what I think a part of what Jeremy is really sharing there. I really want to listen to that again after the fellowship to really, really get it. But it was beautiful and it really opens the door to a few of the things that I wanted to discuss with all of you.

But let's start now with the very first verse of the Torah portion, right?



Now as you can imagine, right, even for a verse which seems so simple and straightforward, the sages of Israel have many different perspectives and dimensions of understanding just of that one verse. We could really honestly, truth, talk about that verse for the entire fellowship.

But, as we've done throughout this fellowship, we're starting to see that whereas on a two-dimensional plane, different perspectives on that verse may seem to conflict. But on a three-dimensional plane, not only can they all be true, but they actually complete each other. And I think many of us may be starting to experience that reality. So on one level, the mystics tell us that the story of Jacob's journey from the Land of Israel to Charan and back is the journey of every soul's descent into the physical world and eventually back to the Creator, after having hopefully accomplished a mission. So the soul leaves the spiritual bliss of being immersed in the light of its Father, right? And it descends into a world of challenges and confusion and deceit and lies and trickery with the very purpose by the way of this confusion is to cause the soul to forget why it's there to begin with. And while the world is full of threats and pain and confusion, it's there that the soul has the potential to bring light, right? To achieve its purpose and to create a quote "dwelling place for God in the world." And that's what the Lubavitcher Rebbe, that's what Chasidut says, our mission here, our mission is to make this world a place that can be a dwelling place for God in the world.

Anyways, by the way, I just want to tell you here, I can't tell you how profoundly I've been enjoying delving into the breathtakingly beautiful teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Last year it was all about Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, I read everything he had to say and shared much of it with you. But now I'm going into the words of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and I'm actually quite sure that if it wasn't for all of you and for this fellowship, I wouldn't be encountering these teachings and immersed in them like I am. Anyways, so that's one dimension, the soul descending into the world. And I hope we have time to touch on this later, although we're already running late.

But here's also a dimension, another dimension of Jacob's departure from the Land of Israel that it parallels the exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel to the 2000 years of exile and then our return back to the Land. Once you see the story through that prism and

paralleling Jacob's relationship with Lavan, to the relationships of the Jewish people with their host nations in the exile, you simply can't unsee it. You start to view the entire exile in a different way. So that dimension is true as well. But the dimension I want to discuss with you first, right now for the time being, also because of personal things that I'm going through and I think that we all are, our generation is. It's just the simplest level, right? Jacob left his father in Be'er Sheva and he went to Charan. He left his mother and father behind and he went to Charan.

Now, the sages share a teaching that is really universally accepted because it's deduced from the timeline of Jacob's life, right? The sages have mapped out all of Jewish history, year for year and just do the math that there are 14 years that transpired between his departure from his father's home to his arrival in Charan. And what happened during those years? Anyone know? I'm looking at the comments, seeing if anyone knows? Ok, he was studying in the yeshiva in the house of study of Shem and Ever. Shem and Ever, now this is a very well known institution which although it was established before the giving of the Torah right? What are they studying in yeshiva if it was before the giving of the Torah? They still studied and deeply immersed themselves into understanding and serving the God of Israel, right? There was a tremendous understanding of God before the Torah. There was Melchizedek, right? He was the priest of God, the Most High. There were Shem and Ever. They knew. Ever since, you know, ever since the beginning of our journey, Jeremy and I have always spoken about our shared dream of establishing a modern Yeshivat Shem v'Ever. Whether we would call it that or not isn't so relevant, but it would be a yeshiva not only for Israel and the Jewish people, but for all of the nations of the world that can study and strengthen themselves in their understanding and in their faith and in their service of the God of Israel, regardless of where they're coming from. It doesn't matter where you're coming from. What matters is where you're going. Where your eyes are looking, where you're gazing, where your heart's desire is. And I think this fellowship is a precursor to that or maybe this fellowship is Yeshivat Shem v'Ever, just beginning.

Either way, really that's the reason that Ya'akov went there. Because he really to strengthen himself and fortify himself now that he was leaving this cocoon, right, of being raised on Isaac's lap, in his tent, absorbing the holiness and the light and witnessing and experiencing the righteousness and hospitality of his mother, right? Imagine that childhood, imagine that. Yes, Esau was there and he wasn't such a great guy. But it's clear that they were really living very different and most of the time very much separate lives. But now, he had to go into a very different world that as you can imagine, the yeshiva of Shem and Ever was just the perfect place for him to go. He needed to go there, why? Because Shem was the son of Noach, right? He was the head of the yeshiva. And he lived in the generation of the flood. And so, he knew evil well. And he had experienced levels of evil so intense that the world needed to be destroyed because of it. And the other head of the yeshiva was Ever, right? And who was Ever, at least visa, v'Shem? He was Shem's great grandson. And Ever lived, keep in mind, in those

days, we lived so much longer. People lived so much longer that they were able to see their children, their grandchildren, their great grandchildren, their great-great-great-grandchildren. And so, they had this yeshiva together. And Ever lived...so Ever, he lived through the building of the Tower of Babel, which the world rebelled against HaShem in their united desire for evil as well.

And so what does Rav Ya'akov Kamanetsky teach was the reason for this? Like we said, he said that Ya'akov went there to learn from these spiritual giants in order to be able to fortify himself and strengthen himself for the spiritually dangerous journey that lay ahead.

And so, by the way, this is an ongoing debate in many families within Israel. I'm sure it's happening in America on different levels. And it's happening in the Jewish people today and it's actually at the root for example, of the Chareidi, you know Chareidi means Ultra-Orthodox Jews, with their refusal to join the Israeli army. That's like one of their main political policies is that they do not have to join the Israeli army. At least that's what I believe is their reason for not wanting to join the army. What is it? It's that they are scared that there will be a wide scale spiritual devastation, where all or at least most of the many, many yeshiva students who will join the army will just take off their yamaka, take off their kippah, take off their tzitzit, and leave it all behind.

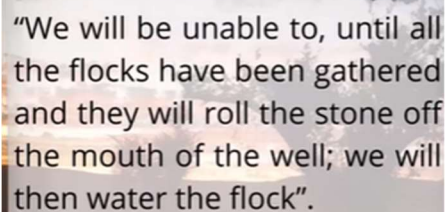
You know, it's like the famous stories that I was raised hearing about, these European Jewish immigrants throwing their tefillin, their phylacteries off of the side of the boat as they approached Ellis Island in New York. They were ready to let it all go and to blend in. And I just really respectfully disagree with my Ultra-Orthodox brothers because...well, rather than disagree, I would say that if it does happen, that there's this wide scale spiritual devastation, that they are failing. That if they are even afraid of that happening, they're the ones failing. Because if it is that easy to just pick it all up and throw it all away, it means that the faith of these students going into the army is just too weak and it's too brittle to begin with.

I'm telling you, I was in a Hesder Yeshiva unit, a unit of Yeshiva guys that weren't Ultra-Orthodox, but the amount of influence that was coming from these God-fearing Jews in the army was much greater to the secular soldiers than in the reverse. And you know, there's this debate in the whole country, it's ongoing, you see that there are some yishuvim, some settlements or cities that are religious, some are secular, and some are mixed. And now, I put parentheses around these terms because they don't really apply in Israel. I don't believe in them here. Things just aren't broken down in the same boxes as they are in other places. But I'm using them because it's good enough for the point that I'm trying to make right now. So, some people think it's good to raise your children, if you're a religious family, right, to raise religious kids in a mixed city, in a mixed village. And you know, just to give them the exposure and the opportunity to meet different stripes and different types of Jews.

And while at one point I really agreed with that and on an idealistic level it sounded beautiful to me, throughout my journey I've come to believe that it's a mistake. That one needs to harness their child's formative years in a protective cocoon-like environment in which they can be imbued with the wisdom and the truth of their heritage and not really have it challenged too much. They're kids! They're not ready to stand up to that! And then once they're built up and educated and taught, then, if you've done your job right, you can send them into the world with confidence, right? Send them into the army, send them into these spiritually hostile environments, and they will change those places. It's not those places that will change them.

And so, if the Ultra-Orthodox Chareidim would indeed flee their faith and their values, the minute they're put to the test, then I would say respectfully and lovingly that the failure is with them. I hope it's good I'm sharing this with you. I just know how much so many of you love Israel and you want to know the internal dynamics and what's happening. So, I just wanted to share that with you. And by the way, if you disagree with me, send me a message and let me know. I'm not like the end-all and be-all here. I'm just sharing my own opinion here.

Anyways, the proof of this point is that Jacob, well it's in Jacob, himself, right? His parents did teach him to be different and to think differently. So Rabbi Aron Loschak taught this idea beautifully from the incident of the rock over the well. Remember that? They were trying to water their flocks and they couldn't move the rock? So it starts like this –

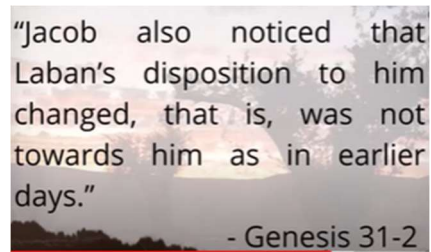


"We will be unable to, until all the flocks have been gathered and they will roll the stone off the mouth of the well; we will then water the flock".

So, you know, when the shepherds told him that it would be impossible to move the rock in order to water the sheep, did Ya'akov just adopt and embrace their constraints and their limitations? No, no! He knew he was different. He was willing to be different and to think differently and start already teaching the world at that point that the limitations that we put on ourselves aren't necessarily real. Right? That thinking differently is a good thing, not a bad thing. And I think that the world would actually stand...it would benefit in revisiting this truth today.

You know, I'm preparing for a trip abroad and just what I'm encountering from speaking to Jews abroad, it's been a challenging experience. And the truth is though that no matter how good a job we may do at raising our children and fortifying them in godly values, there really are no guarantees. We all have stories. We all know. There are no guarantees of anything in this world. As a matter of fact, Jeremy shared a new insight that I had actually never heard before. Chapter 31, it starts by saying that Laban's sons were starting to make the same accusations against Jacob that have been made against the Jewish people time and again throughout the entire exile. That Jacob was taking all of their riches and that he made all of his wealth off of them. Right? At their expense. And the fact that of course like with his arrival, Lavon became so many times wealthier by his own admission in the Torah than he did before

Jacob arrived. But that wasn't relevant to them. They were just too jealous and they didn't understand basic economics. That wealth can grow exponentially for everybody and it doesn't have to be a zero-sum game at someone else's expense. Anyways, chapter 31, verse 2 says like this:



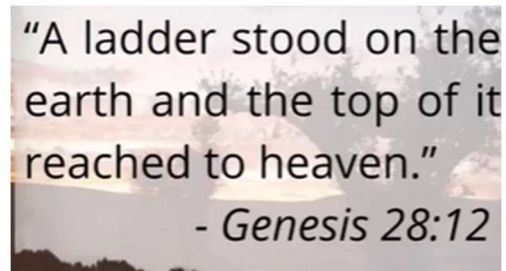
"Jacob also noticed that Laban's disposition to him changed, that is, was not towards him as in earlier days."

- Genesis 31-2

His disposition, he was looking at Ya'akov differently. Now I always read that as Lavon was starting to look at him with resentment and suspicion and he sensed that and he realized it was time to leave. And while that still can be true, Jeremy said something to me and I hope I convey it well and do justice to it, if not, it's my fault and not Jeremy's. But Jeremy said that perhaps Lavon's face always looked different and foreign and distant to Ya'akov. That Lavon was this businessman who was immersed in the world of money and wealth and worldly matters and his face felt foreign to Ya'akov because Ya'akov was always immersed in spiritually and holiness.

And now, Ya'akov felt like, whoa! His face doesn't look so different to me anymore. It doesn't. That was the difference. That his face stopped looking different to him. I must be the one changing, Ya'akov thought, and getting so immersed and lost in this world of money and materialism, it's time for me to leave, right? It's time for Ya'akov to go home. However you look at it, it was that disposition of Lavon's that made Ya'akov realize it's time to go. And according to what Jeremy was saying, even our forefather Jacob was not immune from being influenced and losing his way, right? We shouldn't be too confident either because just like everything else in the world, it is not in our hands. All that's in our hands is to see God and to be aware of God and to try with all of our hearts, but it's in HaShem's hands if we're going to have any success. And how do we do that? We need to pour out our hearts to HaShem in prayer.

And so, even Calev, even Caleb, right? When he realized the danger of the peer pressure that he was going to face from the other spies, what did he do? He stopped at Ma'arat Machpelah, the cave of the Machpelah in Hebron, to pray to HaShem for the strength and the character and the courage to stand alone. Which brings us to prayer, right? We're talking a lot about prayer right now. I want to talk about that more. The mystics tell us that the verse, Genesis 28:12:



"A ladder stood on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven."

- Genesis 28:12

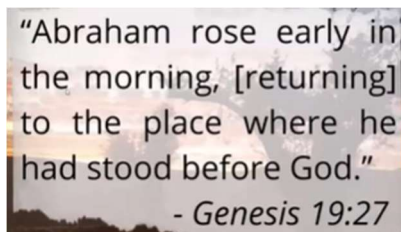
The sages say, very simply that that pasuk, that verse refers to prayer, right? The ladder stood on the earth, and the top of it reached heaven. That is a demonstration, a manifestation of our prayer.

Now our sages tell us that our forefather, Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, each established one of the three daily prayers that we continue to pray until this very day and you can actually know which prayer they innovated based on the second letter of their names. So Tabitha put the slide together.



You see the first one on the right, it says Avraham and the second letter is bet which coming down from that is boker which means morning. Avraham instituted the morning prayer. And Yitzchak, the second letter is tzadi, which comes tzoharyim. And so that is the afternoon. Isaac established the afternoon. And Jacob, the second letter is ayin, which is arvit, the evening prayer, erev.

And so, Avraham established the morning prayer which we see in the 19th chapter of Genesis, right? Here we go.

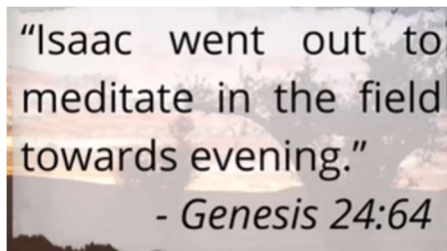


And why are sages asked, does it say that Avraham "stood?" So they say, that in the morning, as the trials and the illusions, and the temptations, and the distractions are standing before us for our whole day, that's what we have to face. We need to stand, we need to take a spiritual stand and strengthen ourselves as Avraham did. And decide really the way we see the world, to stand up. If we need to stand against the entire world, the whole world, and be on the other side, that's what we have to do. That's why Avraham established that.

You know, growing up, I think I may have shared this with you before, I'm not going to go into the details, but I never really understood this relatively unique multi-generational behavior that was really unique to my family as far as I know that was passed down on my father's side of doing absolutely crazy things publicly. It was like there was something virtuous about embarrassing yourself. And you guys wouldn't believe some of the stories I have to share about these public embarrassments. Perhaps maybe around the bonfire when you come out to the farm and we're all here together. Anyways, it was almost like the more embarrassing it was, the more virtuous it was. And only recently in my life have I come to understand really the tremendous value of the training that I got from my father putting his arm around me as he started singing Fiddler on the Roof in the middle of a shopping mall. Right? It was important to be able to be different and to stand alone. And it was, maybe then it was for silly reasons. But the character and willingness to be different was built for me all the way back then when I was a kid. And I remember that while it looked legitimately crazy from the outside, when I started doing these crazy things, in my heart, I knew I felt like I was doing it for Hashem. I was expressing my service of God however crazy these things would be.

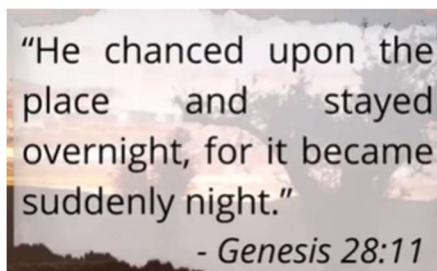
Anyways, Avraham, he established the morning service, the heart of which is called...who knows what the service, the heart of it? It's called the Amidah, which means to stand. And that's what Avraham was doing and that's why we stand first thing in the morning. We take that stand. And from where do we know that Isaac, Yitzchak established the afternoon service?

So Genesis 24:64:



Not in the evening, but towards the evening in the late afternoon. And the afternoon service is called the Mincha after the service which is actually in the Temple, the Mincha offering. And I want to talk more about it, but we're running out of time, so suffice it to say that it's right there in the middle of the day, right? When you're in the thick of it. And it's tremendously important to have this prayer, but it's also very difficult, right? To leave behind in the middle of it, all of your "this worldly affairs" and just pray to HaShem. To remember that no matter how many hours we put into our labor, it will amount to nothing if God isn't with us. And so, we have to step away and remind ourselves of that smack in the middle of the day.

And then, the evening service was established by Jacob which we see in this week's Torah portion. Genesis 28 verse 11:



The evening service, at night, in the dark, at the end of the day, it's during the evening service that a very great potential for spiritual revelation and transcendence presents itself. As we see with Ya'akov right after his prayers.

And there's a special addendum to that. I could send it to you if you want me to. It's called Kriat Shema al Hamita (<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/bedtime-shema/>), where we read the Shema on our bed at night before we go to bed. It's after the evening service and it's quite beautiful. We forgive everybody who sinned against us. And we pray for the angels of Gabrielle and Michael and Uriel to be around us. I sing it to Dvash, it's one of my most beautiful times with her every night when we're going to sleep. Shaena sings it to her, I sing it with her.

Anyway, we're running short, but I want to make sure that I get to the Haftarah, the portion of the prophet, which this week is the 12th, 13th and 14th chapters of Hoshea. And I think it's some sort of critique, it's a tough critique, or more than a critique, it's a warning of one of the great dangers that's involved in all of this. So, in the portion of Hoshea, HaShem rebukes Ephraim,

who represents the other nine northern tribes of Israel. He rebukes them for their lies and their cheating and their worshipping idols, they were cheating in business. You know, all the things which despite what they may say or claim, when you look at their actions, it shows that they don't really believe in their hearts that as Ethics of our Fathers say, right? Rav Pirkei Avot, that there is an eye that sees, that there's an ear that hears, and all your deeds are written in a book. They didn't really believe that. They were dishonest and wicked and cruel. And then in chapter 14, verse 2, Hoshea says:

Return, Oh Israel, to Hashem, your God, for you have stumbled through your iniquity. Take words with you are return to Hashem; say to him "Forgive every sin and accept goodness, and let our lips substitute for Bulls".
- Hosea 14:2-3

What was HaShem really saying here? Right? I believe HaShem was saying, "Do you think I'm some sort of pagan god that needs blood in order to be appeased? I don't want some animal's blood. I want your hearts. I want a real relationship with you." And it's so important to remember this because sometimes we forget about the fact that even during Temple times, we were able to fall. And we did, we

fell hard. Even with all the sacrifices that were being offered. The prophet is reminding us that it isn't our sacrifices that HaShem yearns for. And it isn't just prayers that HaShem is desiring from us. It's our hearts. The simple, pure, sincerity of our hearts.

Just like some people today, right? Myself included, primarily myself. I'm being honest. Often we mumble words while reciting prayers. Empty, empty, you know the same things that happened in the Temple times where people would offer sacrifices, but it didn't actually penetrate their hearts. It happens with prayer with me very often. I was actually just working with Moshe Feiglin, who you have to meet at the farm. And we ate bread together and then he said the prayer afterwards. And he told me that I hope it's ok with him that I'm sharing this with you. It's a long prayer after we eat bread. It's called Birkat HaMazon. And he said that during the week at least, he only says the first paragraph of it, but he says it with his whole heart. Otherwise, he finds that he was just mumbling through the entire thing and not meaning it. And I really thought that that was brave. It's courageous sometimes to just break away from that. But the truth is, that in the Shulchan Aruch, in the code of Hebrew Law, of Jewish law, it actually says, that it's better to have fewer prayers from the heart, right? With kavanah with a focused intention, then more prayers not with kavanah, not with focused intention. For those of you who are in the...for those who are Jews here in this group, maybe that will shock you a little bit. A lot of Jews don't know that law and we're used to saying a lot of prayers and mumbling through a lot of them. And for a lot of Christians here, you may say, is that even a question? Right? I just...I know that the same liturgy doesn't apply to Christianity, and maybe I'm wrong, but either way, I had a lot more to say about this and I really want to get better timing with these fellowships, but I think if I go to the heart of the message, right? At least the message that I took from this week's Torah portion is that we need to have the courage to stand alone. We need to have the faith to stand alone. And that when we go into this world of

darkness and confusion, we could find ourselves wishing that we could just check out, right? That we could flee back to our Isaac and our Rebecca, our tent that we were raised in, whether it's our soul or actually in our childhood. And we could just be showered by the love and the blessing and the Divine light.

But that's not why we're in this world. We're not in this world to be just Jacob and to stay Jacob. We're in this world to become Israel. To actualize our potential and 100 percent, it was because of his time in Charan, as painful and difficult so many parts of it were, it's because of that time that he became Israel. He went down to Charan as someone who didn't confront challenges head on, right? He sought to avoid confrontation and often just to run away. And only when he was in Charan, did he slowly become Israel. Only in Charan did he become the man that would confront his father-in-law face to face. Right? Only in Charan did he build up his character and his strength and his courage to stand alone, to face down the terrifying prospect of Esau's own warrior guardian angel, right? When Jacob wrestled the angel, that was Esau's guardian angel. And he didn't turn and run and flee from it. But he looked it right in the eye and he fought it with all that he had. And that's when he became Israel.

And I actually remember Jackie Mason, he's a comedian, he just recently passed away. I just had to share this with you. I hope it's ok, I know we're running out of time. But he described in his eyes, this is like 40 years ago, what is the different in his mind between an exiled Jew and an Israeli Jew? I just cut it short, but I can send you the link if you want, but here it is.

Video of Jackie Mason



You know, everybody, everybody all over the world is amazed, they are literally amazed at the unbelievable might of the Israeli army because it's a direct contradiction to everything you know about the Jews as a people. Jews traditionally were never fighters. It's a historical fact that Jews were always pacifists. They always abhor violence. Jews were the first persecuted for that very reason. They always believed in non-violence. That's why there's no tough Jews any place in the world outside of Israel. You cannot find a tough Jew. Well, let's be honest, you ever see anybody afraid to walk in their Jewish neighborhood because they might get killed by an accountant? The truth is that in this country, Jews don't fight. They don't, they almost fight, they "almost" fight. Every Jew I know "almost" killed somebody. They'll always tell you, if he said one more word! (end of video)

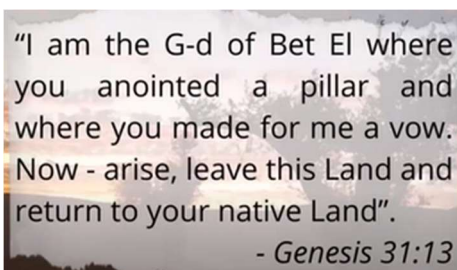
Ari

Anyways he was funny. He said things in this special that he would have been canceled 5,000 times over for what he said in the special, you should really see it. But from his eyes at that time, that was when the nation of Israel was just starting to be founded. I think that was even

before the Six Day War, possibly when he said that. I'm not sure what year it was in. But for him to see the stark difference between American Jewry and Israeli Jewry, between victims in the Israeli army that was shocking the world with victories like Entebbe.

And you know, as a nation right now, we are in the process of leaving the identity of Ya'acov, right? The Jew of the exile in which Judaism is really exclusively just like a religion, right? In which we are isolated, atomized, individuals, where our Judaism is expressed primarily in the synagogue. Maybe also in our homes, right? But where our Judaism manifests itself most often as being really submissive and passive and fitting in. And that's why so many Jews in America are Democrat and leftists. Really, I don't want to start any fights here, but there's a desire just to fit in, not to make waves. They're definitely like not warrior, scholar, shepherd, carpenters, like you've been introduced to here in this fellowship. But as we return to the Holy Land, we are becoming Israel. We're becoming a nation, we're becoming a collective, right? And that word collective is a little bit loaded, but it's a unique collective in which we're able to retain our personal individuality and our personal identity while still being part of a greater whole. Right? While being part of the national identity as well. And not only doesn't that collectivize us, right? Not only isn't our individuality inhibited or minimized, but by focusing on a shared goal, the very unique contribution we're gifted with to contribute in this world, comes up to the surface and it's actualized and it's beautifully manifested in the way that it just wouldn't outside the Land of Israel.

When we become Israel, we're willing and able to look our challenges in the eye and take them head on. Put on a uniform and an M16 and even if we're ridiculously outnumbered and out-weaponed, we're willing to live our faith and bring light and redemption to the world. So we are out of time, I had a lot more I wanted to say, but I want to end by reciting these words that HaShem said to Ya'akov when it was time for him to return home, right? Genesis chapter 31, verse 13:



And I believe that HaShem is saying these words to us right now. Maybe each of us in our own different ways. But these are words that are echoing throughout the world and the question is, are we listening? Are we willing to say, "Hineni, I am here, God."

Now you've heard me say these words, but I want you to hear them sung from the mouth of my beloved rebbe and friend, Rabbi Shlomo Katz. And if you're anything like me, you won't hear it in your head this time, but you'll hear it in your heart. But we'll end with that. The first thing, right before we end with that, I just want to take this opportunity to bless all of you as I do every week. It is my great honor with the Kohanic blessing. And as I've explained before, the blessing, this is the blessing that the High Priests blessed the nation of Israel since the times of

Aaron, the Kohen. And as you know, I'm not a Kohen, I'm not a priest, but the Torah tells us that we're a nation of priests. So in that capacity, it's my great honor to bless all of you.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May HaShem bless you and protect you. May HaShem illuminate His Face upon you. And be gracious to you. May HaShem lift His countenance upon you and may He give you peace.

Shalom my friends. Hang on for Shlomo Katz. You gotta hear him sing this. Love you so much!

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=641833813499771>



אֲנֹכִי הָאֵל בֵּית-אֵל אֲשֶׁר מָשַׁחְתָּ שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר נָדַרְתָּ לִּי
שָׁם נָדַר עֲתָה קוּם צֵא מִן-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְשׁוּב אֶל-אָרֶץ
מוֹלְדְּתְךָ:

"I am the G-d of Bet El where you anointed a pillar and where you made for me a vow. Now - arise, leave this Land and return to your native Land".
- Genesis 31:13