

## **Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim**

### **Vayishlach 5777**

#### **Shabbos: Challenge at Twilight and Receiving the Wealth of Shabbos**

##### **Introduction**

In this week's parashah the Torah relates how Yaakov encountered the angel of Esav and struggled with him. The Torah records that the angel of Esav requested from Yaakov that he let him go and Yaakov refused. It is said (Bereishis 32:27) *vayomer shalcheini ki alah hashachar vayomer lo ashaleichacho ki im beirachtani*, and he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." This declaration of Yaakov requires understanding. How is it that Yaakov was able to hold the angel hostage until he blessed him?

##### **Evil submitting to good**

We have discussed in previous weeks the idea that the evil angel is forced to submit to the blessings of the good angel. The Sefarim write that a righteous person is even greater than an angel. Thus, Yaakov was able to overwhelm the angel of Esav and force him to agree to the blessings that Yaakov had received from Yitzchak. We must wonder, however, how the angel of Esav was capable of causing injury to Yaakov. Was not Yaakov righteous enough that he should not have been harmed at all?

##### **Yaakov sets boundaries**

There is a fascinating Medrash which would seem to shed light on the struggle that occurred between Yaakov and the angel of Esav. Subsequent to Yaakov meeting Esav and battling the angel, it is said (Bereishis 33:18) *vayavo Yaakov shaleim ir Shechem asher bieretz Canaan bivoo miPadan Aram vayichan es pinei hair*, Yaakov arrived intact at the city of Shechem which is in the land of Canaan, upon his arriving from Paddan-aram, and he encamped before the city. On the last words of the verse that state that Yaakov encamped before the city, the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 79:6) comments: Yaakov arrived Erev Shabbos with the setting of the sun and he set up *techumin*, boundaries. This teaches us that Yaakov observed the Shabbos prior to the Torah being given. This Medrash is a bit puzzling. Why does the Medrash teach us specifically here that Yaakov observed Shabbos? Was there something unique about Yaakov's arrival that warranted mention of him observing Shabbos? Furthermore, why is Yaakov's Shabbos observance characterized by creating boundaries?

##### **The Shabbos connection: the twilight zone is fraught with danger**

One aspect of Shabbos that is sometimes overlooked is the idea that we are transitioning from the weekdays into

Shabbos. While many people tend to rush into Shabbos, it is worthwhile to contemplate what is occurring during the transition period. Throughout the week one is constantly facing challenges in spiritual matters. Shabbos is referred to as a day of menuchah, rest, because on Shabbos all harsh judgments depart prior to Shabbos. Thus, upon the arrival of Shabbos, one should be able to sense all the challenges of the week disappearing in an instant. In order to sense this phenomenon, however, one must prepare properly for Shabbos. Yaakov Avinu taught us with his actions that to prepare for Shabbos one needs to acknowledge that Shabbos is a true day of rest from the struggles of the week. The Maharzav on the Medrash (Ibid) writes that the word vayichan, when the letters are rearranged, spells out the word vayanach, and he rested. Thus, by properly preparing for Shabbos, Yaakov was able to truly rest on Shabbos. Although we cannot know what lack the angel of Esav found in Yaakov, it would seem that the deficiency was manifest in an area that was hidden, as the area where the angel inflicted harm on Yaakov is a discreet part of the body. Perhaps this alludes to the period in time referred to as *bein hashemashos*, between the (settings) of the suns, i.e. twilight. It is specifically with the onset of Shabbos when the Jewish People are faced with the challenge of receiving Shabbos properly. Instead of rushing into Shabbos at this time, we should already be prepared earlier in the day so

that we do not have to be ‘inflicted’ by the forces of evil, Heaven forbid.

### **Receiving the wealth of Shabbos**

There is another aspect of Shabbos that is alluded to in this verse. It is said, *vayichan es pinei hair*, and he encamped before the city. What is the Torah teaching us with the word *pinei*? In Kabbalas Shabbos we recite the words *lecho dodi likras kallah pinei Shabbos nikabelah*, come my Beloved to greet the bride – The Shabbos presence, let us welcome! What is meant by the words *pinei Shabbos*? The answer to this question can be found in a Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah). It is said (Bereishis 41:56) *viharaav hayah al kol pinei haaretz*, when the famine spread over all the face of the earth. The Medrash states that the words *pinei haaretz* refers to the wealthy people. Thus, we can suggest that when the Torah states *vayichan es pinei hair*, this means that Yaakov encamped before the wealth of the city. What is the wealth of a city? It is said (Mishlei 10:22) *bircas HaShem hi taashir*, it is the blessing of HaShem that enriches. The Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 11:1) states that this refers to Shabbos, which is the day that HaShem blessed. Thus, the Medrash is teaching us that Yaakov encamped before the wealth of the city, and the wealth of the city is Shabbos. In a similar vein, with the onset of Shabbos we go out to greet its wealth, as the poverty and struggles of the weekday disappear and we receive the blessings of Shabbos. HaShem should allow us to merit properly

observing the Holy Shabbos and then we will all merit to greet pinei Moshiach Tzidkienu, the ‘face’ of Moshiach our righteous one, speedily, in our days.

## **Shabbos in the Zemiros**

### **Kel Mistater**

This mystical Zemer was composed by Avraham Maimin, whose name with the addition of chazak, is formed by the acrostic. Avraham was a student of Rabbi Moshe Kordevero, a member of the Kabbalistic school of the Arizal, and he lived from 5282-5330 (1522-1570 C.E.)

אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם זְכוֹר לְעַבְדְּךָ. חֲסִדֵי יְיָ-וֹתָהּ אֲנִי  
תְּהַלֵּל, O G-d of Avraham, recall upon Your servant – HaShem’s kindness shall I proclaim as praises of HaShem. Avraham is referred to as the עֲמוּד הַחֶסֶד, the Attribute of Kindness. In a simple sense this refers to the kindness that Avraham performed with wayfarers, inviting them in for a meal and instructing them to acknowledge HaShem as their creator. There is a deeper meaning, however, to Avraham’s aspect of kindness. Avraham was the first person who was commanded by HaShem to be circumcised. The Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim) writes that one reason for the mitzvah of circumcision is that it is a sign of brotherhood amongst Jews. Thus, when a Jew circumcises himself, he is demonstrating his kindness to his fellow Jews. Avraham was the first person who demonstrated this aspect of kindness,

and we therefore invoke Avraham’s merits when we ask for HaShem’s kindness.

## **Shabbos Stories**

### **Always enough**

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: The Rebbe, Reb Ber of Mezritch, was once approached by a chasid who had a very common problem. “Rebbe,” he pleaded. “I never seem to have enough. The more I get, the more I want. I know it is improper to think this way and I need help.” The rebbe told the man to visit Rebbe Zusia of Anipoli. “He can guide you with your difficulty.”

The man was shocked as he approached Reb Zusia’s residence. He saw a ramshackle wooden hut with boarded windows. Upon entering, the poverty was overwhelming. The man figured, “surely this is a man who is in constant need. He hardly has what he needed, and must grapple with new desires on a constant basis. He surely will be able to counsel me on my longing for the articles that I lack.”

The man discussed his problem with Reb Zusia, but Reb Zusia looked at him in amazement.

“What are you coming to me for? How can I advise you? I have absolutely everything I need!”

### **Never forget others**

In the summer of 1954, my grandmother, Itta Etil Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, left Beth Israel Hospital, for the last time, after a prolonged stay. Her condition had deteriorated, and the

doctors felt that there was nothing left for them to do. My grandfather, Reb Yaakov zt"l, went together with family members to pick her up from the hospital. My grandmother was wheeled to the waiting automobile and made as comfortable as possible. Suddenly, Reb Yaakov seemed to realize that he had forgotten something very important. He whispered something to his wife, and when she nodded her approval, he asked if it was possible for the driver to wait a few minutes. He had to go back into the hospital.

The family members were a bit surprised. Although there was another patient in the room, and items may have been confused, they remembered removing every one of my grandmother's personal belongings from the room. Accompanied by his curious son, Reb Yaakov proceeded to the elevator and pushed the button to the floor on which his wife had stayed.

"Pa," his son protested, "we have everything." The elevator stopped at the correct floor. Reb Yaakov proceeded into his wife's former room and turned to her ailing roommate. "In our rush to leave the hospital, I forgot to tell you good-bye and wish you well. May G-d send you a speedy recovery." With that, Reb Yaakov walked out of the room, nodded at the stunned nurses, whom he already had thanked on his first exit, and left toward the waiting car. ([www.Torah.org](http://www.Torah.org))

### **True Mitzvah Files**

#### **The power of kindness.**

**by Emuna Braverman**

It's popular to write true crime stories based on the original FBI or police files. I think that our true mitzvah stories are stored in a celestial filing cabinet, but I'm going to share one mitzvah story with you as it was told to me.

When my friend Chana moved about ten years ago, she wanted to bring blessing to her new home. How about a new mitzvah to correspond to her new residence? A friend suggested she try something that was hard for her to do. (The friend wasn't me; I would have suggested that she lead with her strengths.)

Chana decided to visit patients in the hospital. But not just any patients -- patients who were very ill, patients in the ICU, in comas, at death's door. She would regularly go to their rooms, sit and talk, sometimes to be rewarded by a smile, sometimes uncertain if they heard her or not.

The chaplain at the hospital, a kindly middle-aged rabbi, was her mentor. He taught her through word and deed how to help these people, and how to dig deep within for the reserves to put a smile on her face and walk briskly into yet another room. "He showed me how to perform kindness in a way I had never seen," Chana told me.

The work took its toll. The patients were not always receptive, the endings not always happy. But the chaplain remained by her side, her own personal cheerleading squad, giving her the strength and encouragement to continue.

Unfortunately the rabbi himself became ill. Not only could he no longer be a source of encouragement, but watching him suffer through his debilitating disease further drained Chana's will. She began to feel a sense of hopelessness about her activities. All her doubts came crowding back in -- "No one seems to hear me anyway, what's the point?" She wasn't sure that she could continue her volunteer work at the hospital.

But the Almighty had come to rely on Chana's acts of kindness; He stepped in to intervene. 'Fortuitously' Chana was scheduled for a physical examination with her internist and during the time Chana confided to her doctor her doubts and anxiety.

He told her an amazing story about his sister. As a young woman she had an unusual illness that resulted in her spending six months in a coma. Even though she was a complete prisoner in her body, she could actually hear everything everyone said. She just couldn't respond.

**"None of your efforts are wasted."**

Visitors, especially those with a lot to say, were her lifeline. When she finally emerged from this terrifying state, she was able to recite whole conversations verbatim. "Those words kept me alive, kept me tethered to reality, gave me something to hang on to," she always said.

"None of your efforts are wasted," the doctor advised Chana. And he told of yet another personal experience.

"My grandmother was very ill with Alzheimer's. She was in a home and didn't recognize any of us when we went to visit. My grandfather lived with us but was too frail to go, and besides, she didn't recognize him either. This situation continued for 10 long years until my grandfather passed away. We debated whether we should even bother trying to communicate this sad fact to my grandmother. Since she didn't understand anything anyway, what would we be accomplishing? In the end, we decided that she deserved to know (whatever "know" meant). My father went to the home and gently explained that her husband had died. An hour later, my grandmother's soul departed from her body. She had clearly heard my father."

These stories changed Chana's perspective. She was able to appreciate the power of her words and to look beneath the surface for the meaning of her actions. She no longer felt that her words were wasted, discouraged by her efforts. She realized the true meaning and potential of her actions. She was grateful for her experiences and what she had learned, glad that she had attempted something difficult.

This recognition buoyed her spirits. She realized that she had truly made a difference. She was energized anew by this knowledge and ready to return to the hospital. She also felt she wanted a new

challenge, to make an impact in another way. She wanted to push herself yet again and move into uncharted territory.

The Almighty stepped in once more. Not long after, Chana's oldest daughter gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, her first grandchild. After watching the labor and delivery, Chana had a revelation. Although not all births would be of her grandchildren, this is where she wanted to work – bringing life into the world!

Today Chana is still at the hospital – in a full-time capacity as a certified labor and delivery coach. She does it with joy but also with an understanding and compassion that wouldn't have otherwise been possible.

The rabbi, her mentor and friend, unfortunately succumbed to his illness, but his kindness and generosity reverberate through Chana when she coaches mothers as they usher a new generation into the world. ([www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com))

## Shabbos in Halacha

### Wringing and Laundering

#### 3. כיבוס – Laundering

#### The Prohibition

#### Summary

There are three steps to *laundering*: each by itself is forbidden.

1. *Soaking* [or wetting] a fabric; this applies only to absorbent materials.
2. *Scrubbing*, or rubbing two parts of a fabric against each other; this is prohibited with all soft materials, whether absorbent or not.
3. *Wringing*



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Prepared by Rabbi Binyomin Adler

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