

Shabbat Spice

PARSHAT VAYISHLACH



It's Never Too Late to Grow

By Veronica Kordmany

In this week's Torah portion, Parsha Vayishlach, we read a story that exemplifies the many different ways that self-growth can develop. As we see with Jacob, it could happen quickly and completely within your being. As we see with the arrival of Esau, however; self-growth can occur when we ask others for help.

After 20 years of self-exile, Jacob begins to journey back to the Holy Land and extends an olive branch to his estranged brother, Esau, to begin mending their relationship. Unfortunately for him, the messengers deliver the news that Esau is preparing an army of 400 men. His first reaction is to do three things: He prays, he prepares, and he provides.

Jacob prays that the incoming encounter between him and Esau will be resolved easily, after decades of unresolved issues. His prayers are ultimately answered that night, when a group of angels descend from Heaven in the spirit of Esau, wrestling with him until the crack of dawn. When Jacob emerges victoriously from the fight, he is left with a dislocated hip and a new name: "Israel," which translates to "He who prevails over the divine." Metaphysically, Jacob's self-growth is physically ascertained by his struggles. By facing his demons and not letting them engulf him in fear and self-doubt, Jacob gains his strength back just in time to encounter what he is most afraid of.

The second thing Jacob does is prepare both himself and his family. Ahead of time, he splits his covenant into two groups. In one group is his wife Rachel, the children they share, and his cattle and other possessions; in the other group is his other wife, Leah, their children, and the remainder of his cattle and possessions.

He strategizes that if the groups got caught in the crosshairs of the brothers' feud, statistically one group would have a shot of surviving. But the preparation he does for himself is built upon his prayer. The concept of prayer is not merely to ask Hashem for what you need, but more so, it is acknowledging that we need Him to give us the strength and ability to do what we physically need. Jacob's selfless protection of his family is the proactivity that enables him to win both of his fights.

The last thing that solidifies Jacob's self-growth is providing something without expecting anything in return. When sending his peace offering to his brother, Jacob includes hundreds of livestock from his possession as an extra token of goodwill. In return, he gets the news that his brother and a massive army are heading his way. But rather than letting the news hold him back, Jacob bravely ventures on and greets Esau. In return, "Esau ran toward him and embraced him, and he fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." What this teaches us is that when we put in our maximum effort, Hashem carries us the rest of the way through a challenge. There was nothing to suggest that this would happen, but Jacob's decision to see the matter through demonstrates that he didn't need to receive anything in return. He was expecting the worst possible outcome, but still he was strong enough to see things through.

May we all merit to be like Jacob by always pushing ourselves to work on ourselves even in the midst of our most challenging chapters in life. And may we all merit to hear good news from Israel, and for this dark period in Jewish history come to a close as soon as possible. Shabbat Shalom!

CANDLE LIGHTING 4:09PM | SHABBAT ENDS 5:18PM

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Nothing Can Harm You Except Yourself

By Rachel Livian

How much energy and time do you spend worrying about something that could happen? Often times we worry and worry over something, but once it happens, it's actually not as bad as we thought it would be.

In this week's parsha, we see that Yaakov is about to confront Aisav, his brother. It says in the Torah that Yaakov is very scared. He does exactly what he is supposed to do: he prays to Hashem and sends bribes (presents) to Aisav, but he is still scared!

Yaakov faces a major battle in this week's parsha, but it wasn't even with his brother Aisav. It was with the image of Aisav. What happens? Yaakov gets physically injured! He physically injured his thigh from this emotional and spiritual battle!

Yaakov asks the image "What is your name?" (Bereishit 32:28) But that is the thing, there is never a name for this struggle.

For us, one day it could be parnassa, another day relationships, another day our children. The image is never something tangible!

When Yaakov then faces the real Aisav, nothing happens. No battle, no injuries, nothing. We have to understand that most of the battles that we face is all in our heads.

We know that during the challenging times, Hashem will give us the correct tools we need to overcome and deal with it. Nothing can harm us, except ourselves.

Just like Yaakov, that he wouldn't let the image of Aisav leave without it giving him a bracha, we must believe that the good will come out of our challenges. Even if we come out limbing and injured, we will come out as a stronger, more grounded person than we were before.

Wishing everyone a beautiful and meaningful Shabbat!

THANK YOU TO THE SHABBAT SPICE TEAM
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