



# TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Vayishlach

November 19, 2021

## A Taste of Torah

### The True Orchestrator

by Rabbi Chaim Gross

This week's parsha most famously contains the dramatic scene depicting Eisav marching toward Yaakov and his family, accompanied by four hundred soldiers armed and ready to kill. Yaakov places his family in the most strategic position possible, and he himself goes before them to greet Eisav. What does Yaakov do at that point? The Torah describes for us how Yaakov bows seven times as he walks toward his brother in a symbol of utter submissiveness - and this display of humility is what saves him. The verse goes on to tell us that Eisav runs to Yaakov and, rather than kill, he hugs; Rashi explains, "His mercy was stirred when he saw [Yaakov] bowing all these times."

This is how the scene looked to an outsider. However, the Zohar reveals an entirely different picture - one that contains a precious pearl of wisdom and a most vital lesson for life. The Zohar wonders how it could be that Yaakov, the representation of the Jewish Nation, subjugated himself before the wicked Eisav, who was the physical embodiment of Satan himself. Answers the Zohar: At that moment, as Eisav and his army approached, Yaakov looked and saw something else before him. He saw a revelation of the *Shechina* (Divine Presence). Said Yaakov, this must be the time to subjugate myself before Hashem - and he therefore bowed seven times; not to Eisav, but to the King of the Universe.

Now, what kind of bizarre occurrence is this? Why would the *Shechina* just happen to appear before Yaakov at this crucial moment of contention? Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953), in his classic work *Michtav Me'eliyahu*, quotes this Zohar and opens its words for us

in a most incredible way. Rabbi Dessler explains that when one looks at events taking place globally, or at situations unfolding in his personal life, there are two ways to view them. He can look at them superficially, seeing only the exterior of what is taking place, or he can choose to delve deeper - to perceive what is happening internally. Yaakov chose the latter. And so, as Eisav and his army approached, Yaakov lifted his eyes and saw, not soldiers, but rather Hashem Himself, so to speak, cloaked in a threatening guise, for Hashem is the Ultimate Orchestrator of every event. Immediately, Yaakov understood that it was Hashem "coming toward him," requesting that he lower himself - not before Eisav, but rather before the One who had brought about the situation which required subjugation. It wasn't that Hashem happened to appear before Yaakov at the same moment that Eisav did. Rather, the two events were one and the same. And so, Yaakov bowed to the Divine Presence that was now revealed before him. No, Hashem had not revealed Himself to Yaakov; it was Yaakov who had revealed Hashem!

Fast-forward forty years. Yaakov is lying on his death bed and receives a visit from his son Yosef. What does Yaakov do? He exerts himself to bow before Yosef, seemingly to show respect to the ruler of Egypt. As Rashi explains, "When the fox is king, bow to him." However, in the next line, Rashi reveals to us that, once again, Yaakov was actually bowing to the *Shechina* which was present, echoing the incident of four decades prior.

Here, too, we are confused; was Yaakov bowing to the king of Egypt, as Rashi first explains, or was he bowing to

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## Stories for the Soul

### Stop Signs

On a fundraising trip to New York City, the Ponevezher Rav, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman (1886-1969) was approached by a gang of teenagers on the subway. Realizing the hoodlums meant trouble, Rabbi Kahaneman pulled out a piece of paper from his pocket and naively asked the leader of the gang if he knew which subway stop would be closest to the address on the scrap of paper. Realizing that once off the train, they would have their target isolated and an easier victim, he smiled, and signaled to the gang to wait patiently and politely until they got off at the stop.

When they arrived at the stop, the Ponevezher Rav let them go off first and lingered in the doorway. As the doors closed, he quickly moved back onto the train, leaving the stunned gang standing embarrassed on the platform, outwitted by an old man.

When Rabbi Kahaneman told this story to a friend, he explained that the Ramban says that when dealing with the Eisavs of the world for all future generations, one would be wise to look into Parshas Vayishlach, based on the principle of *ma'aseh avos siman labanim*, the deeds of the forefathers presage what will occur to their descendants. In this case, he explained, his circumstances compared to those of Yaakov when Eisav offered to escort him. Yaakov demurred, explaining that he'd be unable to keep up with his brother's pace, and suggested to Eisav that he go ahead to his land

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## Kollel Happenings

### LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING THIS THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH

Join the Kollel for Legal Holiday Learning on Thursday, November 25th. Breakfast and Learning in West and Southeast Denver, with a class titled *A New Spin: Is There a Gambling Issue with Dreidel?* Zoom option will be available, as well. For more info and sponsorship opportunities, contact [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### DEATH THREAT: SHABBOS OBSERVANCE & LAW ENFORCEMENT AT THURSDAY, DEC. 9 T4T ON ZOOM

Join Howie Shapiro, Intelligence Analyst for the FBI, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they negotiate the ins and outs of conflict resolution on Thursday, December 9 at 7:30 pm via Zoom. Visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org) or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) for details and Zoom info.

### RABBI YOSSI EPHRATHI NOW TEACHING LEARN 2 LEARN GESHMAK

You may have limited experience learning Talmud. You may think that you don't enjoy serious Talmud study, that it's just not for you. But you haven't tried Learn 2 Learn Geshmak. A gemara program crafted to give you the satisfaction and joy of learning, Learn 2 Learn Geshmak is now being taught by Kollel Scholar Rabbi Yossi Ephrathi, and is beginning a new topic. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at [rnk@denverkollel.org](mailto:rnk@denverkollel.org) for further details.

## Halacha Riddles

**Last week's question:** What is recited as part of *Birkas Hamazon* on Yom Tov itself but not on *Chol Hamo'ed* (the intermediate days of the holiday)?

**Answer:** The extra *harachaman* added toward the end of *Birkas Hamazon* on Yom Tov, *Harachaman Hu yanchilaynu*

*yom shekulo tov*, is not recited on *Chol Hamo'ed*, since these days are not a full-fledged Yom Tov (Magen Avraham 490:1; Mishna Berura *ibid.*:5).

**This week's question:** What element of *Birkas Hamazon* is relevant to women only when men are not involved?

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XXVI

Rabbi Shapiro, not to be dissuaded, asked if, despite the refusal of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* to formally endorse his idea, he could present it

to the assembled at the *Knessia Gedola* in his own name. The Torah sages acceded to this request.

## A Taste of Torah

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Hashem, and, if he was bowing to Hashem, why was now the time to do that? Once again, we see the precious lesson of the Zohar illuminated before us, one that Yaakov retained all his life - that one must truly understand the messages being sent to us through the events around us. When Yaakov saw the ruler of Egypt enter, before whom one is obligated to bow in submissiveness, he understood that once again Hashem was asking him for subjugation - not to Yosef, but to He who brought Yosef to Yaakov's bedside.

Before reciting the *Ain KElokeinu* prayer, we say a verse which reads as follows: "There is none holy as Hashem, for there is none besides You, and there is no Rock like our G-d" (I Shmuel 2:2). The Hebrew word for "rock" is "tzur," and the Medrash as well as the Talmud (Brachos 10a) says that one can read the word not as "tzur," but "tzayar," which means "artist." The Baal Shem Tov (c. 1698-

1760) interprets this passage beautifully, explaining that just as an artist attempts to create an image so genuine that everyone is fooled into thinking it's real, so does Hashem do with the creations of His world - with one difference. Hashem is successful, and the artist is not. Hashem creates events that cause cosmic waves to ripple throughout the Universe, but He does not make it obvious Who the true Orchestrator is. Quite the opposite - He paints His "hand" to look like an earthquake, an army, a disease - and makes it look so real that almost everyone falls for it and ascribes the event to the natural event they perceive as the cause. Thus, while He is the Rock upon which the entire world is predicated and continues to exist, He is simultaneously the Artist Who paints a scene that presents a very different picture. Our job in this world is to see past the exterior, to look a little deeper, to reveal the Divine Presence that is always before us.

## Stories for the Soul

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of Se'ir, while he would proceed slowly and arrive later. Yaakov's true intent was not to arrive at all, until the coming of Mashiach, who will arrive at Se'ir to

bring Eisav to justice. Thus, concluded Rabbi Kahaneman, Yaakov's actions were a lesson on how to outwit those who wished to harm him.

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