

תורה מציון Torah MiTzion

RELIGIOUS ZIONIST KOLLELS כוללים ציוניים בתפוצות

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Issue 119: Parshat Vayishlach

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Slowly, Slowly

Rav Gideon Weitzman, former Rosh Kollel, Kansas City

In this week's parshah we read about the confrontation between Ya'akov and Esav, which concludes with Esav suggesting "Let us travel and go and I will go with you" (BeReishit 33:12). Ya'akov refuses claiming that the children and his flocks cannot go very far. Ya'akov has an alternative suggestion "My master [Esav] shall pass before his servant and I will go slowly until I come to my master in Seir" (ibid. 14).

The Midrashim explain this final exchange between the brothers. "When Ya'akov and Esav were still in the womb Ya'akov said to Esav 'Esav my brother, we are two brothers and there are two worlds, this world and the next world. This world is for eating and drinking and getting married and having children, but the next world has none of these. If you so wish, why do you not take this world and I will take the next world'. Esav took this world and Ya'akov the next world.

When Ya'akov came from Lavan's house and Esav saw that Ya'akov had wives and children, servants, flock, silver and gold, Esav said to Ya'akov 'Ya'akov, my brother, did you not say that I will take this world and you will take the next world? How come you are using the riches of this world?'

Ya'akov replied 'This is the little possessions that God gave me for my personal use in this world.'

Esav thought to himself that if Ya'akov has no portion in this world, even so God gave him all of these, then in the next world which is his portion, how much more so.

Esav said to his brother 'Ya'akov my brother, let us make a partnership, you and me. You take half of this world and half of the next world, and I will also take half of this world and half of the next world.'" (Tanna d'Vei Eliyahu Zuta 19)

Esav suggested that he and Ya'akov go together, that they should divide their riches between them. Not only their physical wealth, but their spiritual rewards as well. Ya'akov refused knowing that he could not share his portion in the next world with Esav.

Another Midrash expands on their conversation.
"[Esav] said 'Let us be partners'.

Ya'akov replied 'Please will my master go before his servant.'
He said 'Are you not frightened of my ministers and governors and soldiers?'
'I will go slowly', I will go very slowly, as it says 'The waters of the Shiloach that flow slowly'
Rabbi Abahu said that nowhere does it say in the Torah that Ya'akov went to Esav as he promised. Rather, this refers to the future, as it says 'Redeemers will ascend the mountain of Zion to judge the mountain of Esav'" (BeReishit Raba 78:14)

Esav offers Ya'akov a partnership. This is obviously to Esav's advantage, and so Ya'akov refuses. He is not willing to forfeit any of his portion in the next world to Esav. Esav then tries to convince Ya'akov by discussing what will happen if he rejects him. Ya'akov and his descendants will be persecuted by Esav for generations. Does Ya'akov not fear the rule and power of Esav? Ya'akov really has no viable alternative to Esav's offer.

Ya'akov still refuses to make a pact with Esav. "I will go slowly" he replies. Like the waters of Shiloach that flow slowly. This is a reference to the verse in Yeshayahu. "Since this nation has rejected the waters of the Shiloach that flow slowly [I] will bring on them the waters of the great river, the king of Ashur and he will overflow his banks. He will flow through Yehudah" (Yeshayahu 8:6-8).

The waters of the Shiloach is a reference to the monarchy of David and his descendants. The prophet Yeshayahu notes that the people have a simple choice. Either they can choose David and the kings of Israel, or else they will get the rulers of Ashur, of Assyria, who will come and destroy them.

The Jewish kings are described as slowly flowing waters. The waters of Ashur are more mighty and impressive, but the slow flow will overcome the grand rivers of Assyria in the end. In our prayers we ask God "Cause the shoot of David to grow". King David is described like a small shoot that grows slowly but surely. When we plant flowers we do not always see their daily progress and can be tricked into thinking that they are not growing at all. But one day the flowers bloom and we see that they were active the entire time, but grew slowly.

This is Ya'akov's answer to Esav. My strength is in time and my tenacity. I will beat you not by power and might, but by slowly but surely growing and developing. Even if you kill some of my descendants and children, I will have more and start again. Quietly and with no fanfare, but I will determinedly grow and flourish. Then one day I will be strong and then I will judge you. One day the balance of power will be in my favor. It may be a long time in the future, but I am in no particular hurry.

Our strength against Esav is in our ability to hold on and be patient. If we reject the slow waters of the Shiloach we will get the destructive river of Ashur. Ya'akov went slowly until he came to Shchem, "complete" (BeReishit 33:18) healed and fulfilled but separate from Esav. His alternative is simply to live and continue living and slowly to survive whatever

Esav can throw at him. But survive he will until he meets Esav again in the future when he comes to judge him and establish God as King over the entire world.

The Laws of Hannukah in a Changing Reality **Rav Moshe Speter, former Rosh Kollel, Greater Washington**

The laws of Hannukah include several details that are variable in accordance with the changing circumstances of life:

a. Where to light

"Our Sages taught: It is a mitzvah to place the Hannukah lights outside the entrance to one's house. If he lives upstairs (upper-floor apartment, etc.) - he places them at the window facing the public domain. And at a time of danger, he places them upon the table, and this suffices" (Shabbat 21b).

The beraita lists three possibilities:

1. At the entrance to his house - where one's house has a doorway that faces onto the public domain (street, etc.), he should kindle his Hannukah lights there.
2. At the window that faces onto the public domain - where there is no doorway facing the public domain.
3. Upon his table - in a situation of danger.

The most preferable place for kindling Hannukah lights is **in the public domain**. Where this is impossible, one should place the lights at a window that **faces onto the public domain**. At times of danger one need not endanger himself by publicizing the Hannukah lights; he may observe the mitzvah in the safety of his home.

Based on this beraita, the Shulhan Arukh rules as follows (Orah Haim siman 671, 5):

1. "Hannukah lights should be placed at the doorway facing the public domain, on the outside (of the doorway). If the house faces onto the public domain, he places them at the entrance; if there is a courtyard in front of the house, he places them at the entrance to the courtyard.
2. If he lives in an upper dwelling that has no doorway onto the public domain, he places them at a window that faces onto the public domain.
3. At a time of danger when he is not able to fulfill the mitzvah (as above), he places them upon his table, and this suffices."

The Ribash (a 14th century halakhic authority, Spain-Algiers) writes in his responsum no. 111 that, "Now, overpowered as we are by the gentiles, we do not perform the mitzvah in the ideal manner, but light only inside the house." This represents an elaboration on the law in the beraita concerning a "time of danger". This reason is not valid today in the State of Israel.

The Arukh ha-Shulhan (siman 671, 24) explains that it was not customary to light outside, even though there was no danger involved, because of the weather: "Even though there is no danger in our case, it is nevertheless almost impossible (to light outside) Hannukah falls in the season that is characterized throughout our region by rain, snow, and strong winds." Our Sages did not require that we place the Hannukah lights inside a glass case, or - possibly - a glass case would make the lights very similar to street lamps of earlier times, and thus it would not be clearly apparent that they were lit specifically for Hannukah.

In the case of an apartment building with a common stairwell, kindling Hannukah lights in the stairwell at the doorway to one's apartment serves to publicize the miracle only to people coming and going inside the building; not to passers-by in the street. Kindling at a window, on the other hand, publicizes the miracle in the public domain. In this situation, then, the most preferable place to kindle the lights is **not in the public domain** (the stairwell), but **rather at a window facing the public domain** (the street).

b. When to light

"The mitzvah is to be fulfilled from when the sun sets until all activity ceases in the marketplace" (beraita, Shabbat 21b). The hour referred to here is about half an hour after sunset. In the Sages' era, people did not go about in the street after this time, and hence there could be no "publicizing of the miracle" later in the night.

The Gemara lists three possible interpretations of this beraita:

1. Up until this time one is obligated to re-kindle the lights if they were extinguished;
2. if one did not kindle the lights on time (at sunset, according to the beraita), he may kindle them up until the time when "activity ceases in the marketplace", but no later than that;
3. the amount of oil that is used (or the length of the candles) must be sufficient to last throughout that half-hour period.

The halakha combines and adopts the two latter options. In his Laws of Hannukah, chapter 4, Rambam writes:

"Hannukah lights are not kindled prior to sunset but rather at sunset - no later and no earlier. If one forgot or refrained from kindling at sunset, one may still do so until such time as activity ceases in the marketplace. How long is this period (from sunset until the cessation of activity in the marketplace)? About half an hour, or a little longer. After this time one does not kindle. Sufficient oil must be prepared so that the lights will remain burning until activity ceases in the marketplace. If one kindled lights and they were extinguished, he need not kindle again. If they remain kindled after the time that activity ceases in the marketplace then he is permitted to extinguish or remove them if he so wishes."

In our reality today, in many places people walk about in the streets at later hours, and therefore one is permitted to kindle later. But in order to be consistent in keeping with the halakhic reasoning, we should then ensure that the lights continue to burn until the time when people are no longer generally about on the streets.

The Rema rules, based on the Tur, that "in our days, when we light inside the house and the publicizing of the miracle is directed towards the members of the household rather than people in the public domain, one may kindle so long as the household members are awake. When the members of the household are asleep and there are no people about in the public domain, one kindles the lights without reciting the blessing."

Thus, aspects of habit, weather conditions and the social situation in which we find ourselves all contribute to our lifestyle and also have their influence on the application of halakha in our lives.

Family Learning: Parshat Vayishlach Bluma Zalcman

- 1) What part of Ya'akov's body did Eisav's angel harm, and what issue do we now have on account of it?
- 2) Who kidnapped Dina? What was the condition given to them if they wanted to marry her?
- 3) What was the name given to Binyamin by his mother?
- 4) How old was Yitzchak when he died?

Answers follow below

Love of The Land: Me'ah She'arim

Meah Shearim was the fifth neighborhood to be built outside the walls of the old city. It was also the farthest and the largest. The four neighborhoods that were built before her were: Machane Yisrael, Nachalat Shiva, Mishkenot Shaananim, and Beit David. The neighborhood was built in 1874 by The Jerusalem Builders' Society. Two of the actual founders were Yoseph Rivlin and Yoel Moshe, who just a few years ago built Nachalat Shiva.

The neighborhood was founded by a group of people who had lived in the old city and wanted to expand Jerusalem. 150 families bought plots of land in what was to be Meah Shearim. Because of its location far from the main drag, Jaffa Street, the plots were relatively cheap, thus allowing people whose main income was from the Chalukah money ability to purchase a plot.

The name of the neighborhood that was chosen was "Meah Shearim", taken from the passuk: "VaYizrah Yitzchak. Meah Shearim v'Yivarchuhu Hashem." The neighborhood's planner and main architect was a German living in Jerusalem by the name of Conrad Sheek, who was responsible for many of the buildings in Israel during that time.

The structures of the neighborhood were built, for security reasons, in such a way that the outer walls create one long wall that surrounds an inner courtyard. The entrance to the courtyard was through a number of gates (shearim) which would be closed at night and reopened at sunrise. There were several water holes which supplied the water to the residents of the community. During the years the neighborhood expanded both in population and housing, with buildings being built in the middle of the courtyard.

The management of the neighborhood was put in the hands of seven people who enforced the strict regulations of the community. There were regulations on the water supply, the cleanliness and order in the community along with regulations on who a person was allowed to rent his apartment to, so as not to change the characteristics of the neighborhood.

The fast growing population was damaging the high health and life standards that the residents were so proud of and it soon turned into a dirty and crowded neighborhood. After the War of Independence, Meah Shearim was placed very close to the Jordanian border which did not in anyway help improve the situation in Meah Shearim.

Nowadays the community of Meah Shearim has opted for a closed off, ghetto-like lifestyle, imitating the Jewish closed off lifestyle of Eastern Europe. It is a haven for Neturei Karta

and is synonymous with extreme charedim. Meah Shearim is also a big tourist attraction, which on the one hand helps the city's economy but on the other causes problems when tourists do not always follow the strict regulations of the neighborhood. In the last couple years, the Jerusalem Municipality has started renovating some of the buildings of Meah Shearim.

Torah MiTzion establishes Religious Zionist Kollels (centers of Jewish learning and outreach) in Diaspora Jewish communities to strengthen the study of Torah, Jewish identity, the unity of the Jewish people, and the connection between Torah study and Israel.

The Kollels, led by a Rosh Kollel, are comprised of Israeli shlichim (emissaries) - married men and their wives, and single young men, graduates of Yeshivot Hesder in Israel - who serve in the communities for a period of one-three years.

Torah MiTzion is also proud to be a partner of the "**Jewish Learning Initiative**" program on college campuses.

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Answers, family learning:

- 1) The Gid Hanasheh, which we are now not allowed to eat from an animal.
- 2) Shechem and he had to perform a brit mila.
- 3) Ben Oni
- 4) 180.