



KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS VAYISHLACH

TRUE CHESSED

Theft, robbery, trickery, and withholding of wages are all terrible crimes. A person loses his possessions or his money. He is lacking. He must now live without those things that were taken away from him. It is not easy. Worse than that is the emotional trauma. He is in shock. He feels violated. How could someone do such a thing to me? How cruel! He succeeded in stealing from me! How unfair! Where is the justice?

One who has faith and trust in Hashem knows that everything that happens to him is just. Hashem allowed the thief to come upon him. Hashem allowed the swindler to trick him out of his wages. He intellectually understands that the robbery was *min ha'shomayim* (from heaven). Yet it is long distance from the head to the heart. His mind may understand it, but his heart still hurts from the trauma and the loss. He hopes that Hashem will return his possessions to him.

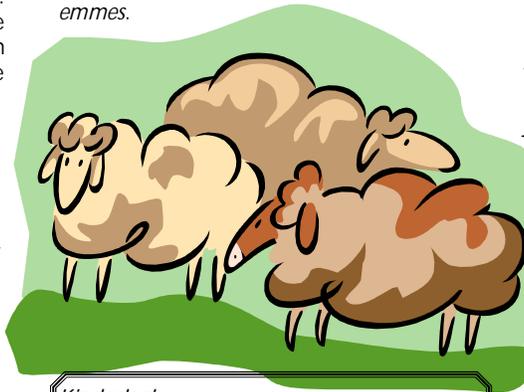
One can only imagine how Yaakov Avinu felt after being swindled by Lavan. He was first tricked into marrying Leah when he wanted Rachel. That in itself was terrible. However, Lavan did not stop there. Yaakov worked for Lavan for twenty years. He cheated him by changing his salary one hundred times! What a disappointment! What aggravation and heartache! However, Hashem had something very nice in store for Yaakov – *nechama* (comfort).

At the end of Yaakov's employment (Bereshis 30:25-43), he and Lavan arranged that his wages would be the spotted or speckled goats and the brown sheep from Lavan's flocks. Although Lavan did not initially have many of these animals, Hashem made a great miracle, and Lavan's livestock gave birth to spotted and speckled goats and brown sheep. Yaakov's flocks grew and grew, and he became exceedingly wealthy. Hashem returned all of the wages that Lavan had swindled. What a *nechama*! The stolen wages came back from the thief himself!

The verse states, "I am small compared to all of the kindness and *emmes* (truth) that You have done for Your servant" (Bereshis 32:11). The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that "kindness" was the great prosperity that Yaakov was blessed with. "*Emmes*" was the return of

Yaakov's stolen wages. Hashem guarded them in Lavan's hands until the time came to return them to their rightful owner – Yaakov. Why is this called *emmes*?

A person may never recoup the losses from a theft. On the other hand, he may get the money back in an unexpected way. Hashem has many messengers to send His special packages. He may turn a great profit in business, find a gem, or receive a gift. That is a partial *nechama*, as he now has the money that he was lacking. However, he is still pained by the fact that the *ganif* got away with stealing from him. A complete *nechama* is achieved when the *ganif* himself gives back the money. That is what Yaakov experienced. The stolen wages were returned to him by Lavan himself. That is *emmes*.



Kinderlach . . . Hashem's ways are beautiful! He blesses us with many good things. That is chessed. Sometimes He must take things away from us. That is unpleasant. We feel the loss. We wish that we could retrieve our stolen objects. If we are worthy, Hashem returns the stolen goods to us. He has many ways to do this. The ultimate nechama is to have the ganif return the object or money himself. That is emmes. Appreciate Hashem's emmes, kinderlach. It is wonderful.

TALK SMALL

Yaakov Avinu sent a message to Eisav before his meeting with him, describing his acquisitions of the past twenty two years. "I have acquired oxen and donkeys, flocks, servants, and maidservants . . ." (Bereshis 32:6). Although these words describe large numbers of animals and servants, they are all written in the singular form. Why is that? Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that this is the way that *tsadikim* speak. They minimize themselves and their possessions. Wicked people, on the other hand, will inflate themselves

and all that they own. As Eisav said, "I have plenty" (Bereshis 33:9).

Kinderlach . . . Did you ever hear someone speak about all of his wealth and accomplishments? "I have this, I have that, I did this, I did that, I have traveled to here, there, and everywhere." Besides being boring and possibly casting an evil eye upon himself, this person is lacking in humility. We are striving to be like Yaakov. He speaks about himself only when necessary, and only in the briefest, most minimal way. He knows that everything is from Hashem. Therefore, who can claim greatness themselves? All of the greatness is His.

DIFFICULT TIMES

Yaakov Avinu reveals another important obligation in his prayer to Hashem. ". . . for I crossed the Jordan (River) with just a staff . . ." (Bereshis 32:11). Rabbeinu Bechaye write that Yaakov Avinu is teaching us the importance of mentioning the difficult times amidst the plenty. We can get very comfortable when times are good. It is easy to forget about hardships. That is the first step toward forgetting about Hashem. Yaakov Avinu is warning us. Never forget the hard times. Then you will always remember the One who brings the good.

Kinderlach . . . When was the last time that you were sick? Do you remember how badly you felt? Do you remember how hard you prayed to Hashem for a refuah shelaymah (complete recovery)? He answered your prayers and brought you back to health. He wants you to remember that even now. Why? Because then you will realize that He is the One Who is guarding your health. One of the reasons that we become sick is to learn to appreciate our health. Try to skip the step of getting sick, while you are healthy, and appreciate that your health is a great gift from Hashem.

Parasha Questions:

- What is the meaning of the name Yisrael? (32:29)
- Which livestock did Yaakov give to Eisav as a gift? (32:16,17)
- Did Eisav ultimately agree that the berachos were Yaakov's? (33:9 and Rashi)
- "Yaakov arrived *shalem* (complete) to Shechem." In what ways was he *shalem*? (Rashi 33:18)

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