



# KINDER TORAH®

For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table  
Parshas Vayishlach



## Honoring Parents

After thirty-four years of separation, Yaakov is on his way to meet his brother Eisav. He is informed that Eisav is coming to meet him with 400 men at his side. "And Yaakov was very frightened . . ." (Bereshis 32:8). What was he afraid of? Yaakov certainly had *emunah* (faith) and *bitachon* (trust) in Hashem. He also had the *zechus* (merit) of many mitzvos to protect him. He learned Torah with Shem and Ever for fourteen years. He observed 613 mitzvos in the house of Lavan. He was scrupulously honest in all of his dealings. But what about Eisav? The Medrash (76:2) explains that Eisav also had mitzvos to his merit. "All of these years he (Eisav) honored his parents. He will come to battle me with the strength of that mitzvah on his side." For those thirty-four years, Eisav honored his parents and Yaakov did not. Think about the implications of this. Even with all of his merits, Yaakov was still afraid of Eisav because he had honored his parents. This shows the importance of honoring ones parents.

**Kinderlach . . .**  
*Honoring Abba and Imma is one of the mitzvos whose reward is mentioned directly in the Torah. "Honor your father and mother so that your days will be lengthened" (Shemos 20:12). We honor them by helping them and serving them. Standing up for them, listening and not contradicting them shows our reverence for them. By honoring our parents, we are really honoring Hashem. Let us all do our best to strengthen our observance of this very important mitzvah.*

## 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 tsaddikim 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.*

## Our Smallness, His Greatness

Yaakov Avinu prayed to Hashem before his meeting with Eisav. One part of his prayer is written in Bereshis 32:11. "I am small

(undeserving) of all of the kindness and truth that You have done for Your servant, for I crossed the Jordan (River) with just a staff, and now I have become two camps (of people and possessions)." Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that this is a model for how we should introspect during prayer. A person should consider his faults and shortcomings. If Yaakov Avinu, one of our holy forefathers, considered himself small, then what can we say about ourselves? Next, we should contemplate the majesty of Hashem's rule over the universe. Hashem constantly bestows goodness upon His creations. He is not obligated, rather He provides for us out of kindness. Only after we focus on our smallness and His majesty, can we properly appeal to Hashem.

**Kinderlach . . .**  
*Do you remember the last time that you fell down and hurt yourself? You see how fragile you are, how easy it is to get hurt. That is an example of our smallness. I am sure that you can think of other examples. Contrast this with the greatness of Hashem. Can we possibly list all of the things that He does for us? He provides us with air to breathe, food to eat, water to drink, sunshine, and shelter, just to name a few. Let us have a contest to see who can name the greatest number of examples of Chasdei Hashem (His kindness). After Shabbos, write down the list and review it before you pray. You will have a much greater appreciation of Whom you are praying to.*

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