

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בְּשִׁיטְיָחָ



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
VAYISHLACH

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
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BROTHERS: FRIENDS TO THE END

Returning to *Eretz Yisrael* after his harrowing encounter with Lavan, Yaakov found himself once again facing his mortality. Concerned that his brother was still angry after all these years, Yaakov sent messengers ahead, bearing a gift and a message of peace. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the messengers brought back tidings of war, to which Yaakov devised a plan, one that called for presents, prayer, and preparation.

In describing Yaakov's original message to Eisav, the Torah says, "And Yaakov sent messengers to Eisav his brother..."¹ Why does the Torah feel it necessary to define the relationship between Yaakov and Eisav, don't we already know that Eisav was the brother of Yaakov?

The *Medrash*² states that despite Eisav's status as an absolutely wicked villain, he was still Yaakov's brother. And as Yaakov's brother, he deserved to be treated as such. Thus, despite Eisav's ill will and ill intentions, Yaakov was determined to treat Eisav with brotherly love.

Though this is a very nice sentiment on Yaakov's part, there is much more to this one extra word. As Rabbi Binyomin Luban points out,³ the Torah is not simply a collection of stories, but it is written for us to learn and comprehend how to lead our lives. When our great-grandfather Yaakov does something, it is for us to take notice, and understand how to apply that to ourselves.

There may be people we know, or even people that we hear about, that do things that may bother us. We may wonder how a person can act in such a fashion, or we may be personally hurt by someone's attitude. Nevertheless, we cannot let another person's imperfections define our character. Our job is to do what is right and just, and that includes doing what we can to truly love every Jew, as we are all indeed family.

1 Bereishis 32:4

2 Yalkut Shimoni 130:18, see *Zeis Ra'anana* s.v. אפילו עשו

3 *Yesodai Yisroel*, pg. 27

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Loving a friend is hard enough, how is one supposed to love an enemy? If there is someone who has hurt me, or even just grates on my nerves, what can I do to turn my feelings of annoyance into that of friendship?

A good suggestion would be to start with something easier and smaller. The first step would be to work on engendering feelings of love within oneself. This can be accomplished by focusing on people that you don't even know!

It is easier to feel love towards people that you have not actually met, than people that you may know personally.¹ A nameless, faceless member of *Klal Yisrael* can be the recipient of your love. Doing this has the advantage of getting one accustomed to creating and focusing these feelings in a way that is not necessarily difficult or would conflict within one's emotional state.

Once this exercise is mastered, one can then move on to people one knows personally, until they finally reach those specific people who have been more difficult to deal with in the past.

1 *Kiddushin* 41a



Those who have been graced by Hashem with the intellect and ability to plumb the depths of the most complicated areas of Torah, all the more so do they need to learn Mussar, as their failings are more pronounced than others. - Pele Yoetz, Mussar

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PUTTING OUT THE FIRES

Reb Aryeh Levin, (1885–1969) was known as the *tzaddik* of Yerushalayim for good reason. He was well known for his humility, kindness, and respect for all. Whoever knew Reb Aryeh remembers most vividly his unique, affectionate handshake. He would hold the other person's hand and pat it — and it felt as though electric currents passed through the person's body, carrying the pure affection of the rabbi to every fiber of his spirit.

One Shabbos morning, as Reb Aryeh was chatting as usual with the inmates of the central prison in Yerushalayim during his regular weekly visit, one prisoner came over to him. "Rabbi," he said, "I want you to know that I have taken an oath never to smoke cigarettes again on Shabbos."

When Reb Aryeh asked for the reason, the man continued, "This morning, when you came over to me to wish me a good Shabbos, you took my hand and patted it as usual, in your own gentle affectionate way, with that heartening smile on your face. Dear rabbi, at that moment my other hand held a lit cigarette hidden behind my back, where you couldn't see it. I know well enough that our religious law forbids smoking on Shabbos, but that never meant anything to me. At that moment, though, I wanted most intensely that you should know nothing of my burning cigarette. Yet all at once I felt as if that cigarette were giving me blisters all over my body. One thought burned in my heart — is it right that while the rabbi is holding my hand and giving new life to my spirit, my other hand should hold a lit cigarette in direct violation of Shabbos? At that moment, in my heart, I took an oath never again to smoke on Shabbos."

In a similar incident, one Shabbos, an inmate was once smoking and watching a game of soccer that was going on in the courtyard. He became so engrossed in the game that he failed to hear the others calling out, "The rabbi is coming, the rabbi is coming!"

All of a sudden the young man looked up, and there was Reb Aryeh coming directly toward him to greet him. Unable to bear letting Reb Aryeh see the cigarette, he just grabbed it and swallowed it!

"Rabbi, I want you to know that I have taken an oath never to smoke cigarettes again on Shabbos."

Adapted from A Tzaddik in our Time by Simcha Raz, pg. 292

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Aharon HaKohen* was known for loving and pursuing peace. In this, he would even befriend the wicked.¹
- Not only should one not take personal pleasure when one's enemy fails, but if one were to do so, Hashem will forgive all of the sins of one's enemy.²

¹ *Avos D'Rebbi Nassan*, 12:3

² *Rabbeinu Yonah* on *Avos* 4:19, s.v. שמואל הקטן

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