

Kehillah

#48



THE PERTINENT PARASHA

Fighting for the Good

Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer | Rav of Kehillat Ohr Chadash, Ramot, Jerusalem

The tale of Yaakov's meeting with his revenge-seeking brother, Esav, presents a seeming discrepancy. At the beginning of *Parashas Vayishlach*, the Torah tells of how Yaakov divided his family and possessions into two camps. Of course, for splitting into camps to be an effective defensive strategy, there needs to be a significant distance between them.

Yet when Yaakov and Esav finally meet, we find that Yaakov's family, in its entirety, is there to greet Esav. Clearly, they could not have closed the distance in the short space of time between the meeting and the presentation of the family to Esav. The entire family was there before the meeting took place.

What made Yaakov change his mind?

The simple answer is that the night before the meeting, Yaakov encountered and fought against a man – a character *Chazal* (*Chullin* 91) identified as the angelic minister of

Esav. Although he came out limping, Yaakov was victorious, and the angel informed him of a name change: "Your name will no longer be called Yaakov, but rather Yisrael, for you have struggled with G-d and with men and prevailed" (*Bereishis* 32:29).

The Ramban explains that angels do not have the authority to change names, which is why Hashem appears later to Yaakov and confirms the change. Rather than changing his name, the angel conveyed a message.

The name Yaakov represents "following." Yaakov was born on the heels of Esav. His internal motion vis-à-vis Esav was characterized by

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THE PERTINENT PARASHA



fragility and weakness. He had to get his way by manipulation (in procuring the birthright) and trickery (in getting the blessings). Following the same intuitions, Yaakov split his camp into two parts. If one will be struck, the other will survive.

Faced with the opportunity to fight and destroy evil, it is time for us, Jews living in Israel, to demonstrate our own conviction and determination.

The change of name in the wake of Yaakov's successful fight indicated a change of attitude. Yaakov would no longer be at the heel of Esav. Though he might be injured, he knew he would prevail. The idea of splitting into two camps, born out of fear of total annihilation, was thus abandoned. He was ready to face Esav head-on.

And so are we.

The mitzvah to refrain from eating the *gid hanasheh* recalls for all generations Yaakov's formative encounter with the angel. The battle of good against evil continues, all the

way until the crack of dawn. We must never forget it.

The injury teaches us that sometimes we need to lower our heads, as Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi did before Antoninus, referring to himself as Antoninus's servant (*Bereishis Rabba* 75:5). This is true for times of weakness. Esav, we must remember, was also blessed by Yitzchak: "It shall be that when you are aggrieved." Rashi explains this refers to times when we are distant from Hashem - "you may cast off his yoke from upon your neck" (*Bereishis* 27:40).

However, the principal message of Yaakov's encounter is that we will emerge victorious in our war against evil. The fight is worthy and we need to approach it with courage and valor. Indeed, the Midrash teaches that Yaakov was punished for referring to Esav as "my master." Having prevailed over the angel, it was time for him to demonstrate his conviction in the divine goodness he represented and confidence in his war against evil. It was time to raise his head rather than lower it.

No message can be more relevant for today. Faced with the opportunity to fight and destroy evil, it is time for us, Jews living in Israel, to demonstrate our own conviction and determination. To believe in the goodness we represent and to fight for it. To win, and to win decisively.



Hashkafically Speaking

A Little *Esavkeit*

Rabbi Yaacov Haber – Rav of Kehillas Shivtei Yeshurun, Ramat Beit Shemesh

Lately, I've been intrigued by the struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, Yaakov and Esav. The struggle between these two brothers became the prototype of the Jewish struggle, with myriads of forces and enemies that wanted to destroy us.

But before Yaakov re-met Esav he had an earlier struggle. He struggled the entire night with the "angel of Esav." This struggle, I believe, was not a prototype of the Jewish struggle with the outside world but rather a struggle that Yaakov had within himself.

In order for Yaakov to live and to accomplish, he needed a little *Esavkeit*. Esav represented ambition, aggressiveness, understanding, and use of the "field." Yaakov was the scholar who "sat in the tent." But Yaakov needed to get out there and create a nation, to mold a people that would survive arduous challenges and persecutions.

That's why Yaakov wanted Esav's birthright, that's why Yaakov wanted Esav's blessing, and that's why Yitzchak wanted to bless Esav even before he blessed Yaakov. (This interpretation is not mine. It is

common in the *Zohar*, *Ohr Hachaim*, Vilna Gaon, the introduction to the *Shev Shemateta*, and many more works.)

Yaakov's struggle with the "angel of Esav" was not a prototype of the Jewish struggle with the outside world but a struggle Yaakov had within himself.

How much *Esavkeit* is necessary? Where should Yaakov integrate Esav and where should he shun him? This was the struggle Yaakov had with the angel of Esav; this is the struggle we all face every day.

"And you should love the L-rd your G-d with all your hearts" (from the *Shema*) "Hearts?" asks the Talmud. Why the plural? How many hearts do we have? The answer, says the Talmud, is that sometimes we are of two hearts – a *yetzer tov* and a *yetzer hara*. Something is pulling us and driving us to the unknown. Use the power! We have to love G-d with both hearts.





Hashkafically Speaking



My Rebbe, Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, when asked for help in making a major decision, would often ask us if we were driven to one particular side of the equation. "If you are driven," he would say, "it may be coming from the *yetzer hara*, because the *yetzer hatov* really doesn't have much drive."

"But that's not bad," he would continue. "Just capture the drive and use it for good." "Who is a strong man?" asks the Mishna. "One who captures their *yetzer*."

The struggle of Yaakov with the angel of Esav should be the struggle

of every Jew. As we confront the world with its financial challenges, ethical challenges, academic challenges, and social challenges, we have to be careful not to accept Esav with two hands and not to push him away with two hands either.

"Accept with the right and push away with the left," says the Talmud, to create perfect balance in our lives.

"Which is the straight path for a man to walk? That which is a *tiferes* for himself and a *tiferes* for others" (*Pirkei Avos*).

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The Value of Commerce

Rabbi Asher Meir | Torah and Policy Researcher

We generally think of Yaakov Avinu as primarily a shepherd, but *Chazal* and the commentators find in our *parasha* many hints that Yaakov also engaged in commerce himself, and cultivated it in his environment.

Rashi explained already in last week's *parasha* (*Bereishis* 30:43) that Yaakov obtained his wealth not only from raising flocks, but also from being skilled at selling them for a good price. The Bechor Shor there adds that Yaakov was also busy selling wool and cheese from his flocks. The Netziv (*Haamek Davar, Bereishis* 31:1, 18) explains that one of the principal ways Yaakov obtained his wealth was from commerce; Lavan's sons were jealous because they didn't realize how lucrative commerce is. (Perhaps this is also hinted at in the fact that Yaakov acquired many camels – *Bereishis* 30:33, 32:16 – which were mainly used for overland trade. Or perhaps he acquired camels because he anticipated the need to flee quickly from Lavan.)

When Yaakov and his household reach Shechem, the Torah tells us (33:18) that he encamped – *vayichan*. But the same word can also mean “graced,” and *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 33b) infer that he contributed to the

development of the city. Among the contributions mentioned there are instituting coinage and establishing a marketplace.

When Chamor tries to persuade Yaakov to settle in Shechem with his family, his main proposal is *secharuha* (34:21). Onkelos translates that he proposes they engage in *sechorta*, commerce, and this is also the view of most of the commentators. The Netziv, quoting his father-in-law, Rav Itzele Volozhiner, adds that Chamor suggested this because at that time the Hebrews were already famous for being skilled traders.

Some authorities saw even spiritual value in commerce. Just as many Jews say a brief prayer *leshem yichud* any time they do a mitzvah, to help them have the proper intention in the mitzvah, Rabbi Yeshayahu Horowitz (Shelah, *Chullin Torah Ohr* 96; also *Chullin Ner Mitzvah* 60) suggests that a person should say a special *leshem yichud* prayer every day before engaging in business. Doing business earnestly and honestly effects a *yichud*, greater unity and harmony of God and His presence in this world. The note there, by the Shelah's son, discusses *Chazal's* admonition (*Shabbos* 31a) to engage in business



MEKOM AVODA



be'emuna – with faithfulness and faith. The note cites Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, who states that honest earnings belong to the world of faith and holiness, whereas money earned through deceit belongs to the *sitra achra*, the aspect of impurity and evil.

When our property is the fruit of hard and honest labor, it can be truly esteemed.

When Yaakov stays behind after moving his family to a safer location (32:25), Rashi explains that he didn't want to leave behind even small jars, possessions of little value for someone of Yaakov's great wealth. Chazal (*Chullin* 91a) learn from this that "the possessions of the righteous are beloved to them even more than their bodies." The reason is that "they don't grab after theft." In the categorization of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, they belong to the world of holiness, as opposed to possessions obtained through deceit, which belong to the world of defilement.

We find a halachic example of the moral value of commerce in the laws of testimony. The Mishna (*Sanhedrin* 24b) rules that a habitual gambler is disqualified as a witness

in *beis din*. One reason is that "he is not involved in productive activity." Rashi comments: Since they (gamblers) are not involved in productive activity, they are not familiar with the nature of commerce and negotiation, and they don't fear sin. The Meiri explains at greater length: Since it's not a disgrace to lie in their profession (gambling), they think that it's no disgrace to lie in other matters. Furthermore, they aren't conscious of the exertion and the sorrows of other [working] people; thus they lack empathy and it doesn't pain them to cause a loss to their fellow man.

Note that the Meiri's emphasis is not on "productive activity" per se but engaging in trade and monetary dealings with other people. Someone who has a job and a trade understands the attachment a person feels to his honest earnings, and is instinctively offended by wrongdoing.

We see that the Avos had a positive attitude toward wealth and commerce. Our possessions are not the most important things in our life, but they do have their value and importance. When our property is the fruit of hard and honest labor, it can be truly esteemed. If on the contrary it is testimony to wrongdoing, or even to chance, the owner will not know how to appreciate it properly.



PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

Learning How to Say No

Rabbi Tzvi Broker – Career Coach and Director of Pilzno Work Inspired

You may be surprised to know that learning how to say no has been recognized as one of the most valuable soft skills in today's workplace. In our fast-paced multitasking world (What else are you doing as you are reading this?) it's easy to assume that more equals better. Yet research shows that people take too much onto their plate, which results in their being unfocused, inefficient, and experiencing overload. As you read this, consider how easy or hard it is for you to say no to a request. There are people who say yes to new projects, responsibilities, and opportunities simply because it's hard for them to say no. What's so difficult about turning down an offer? Is it because it's hard to accept our own limitations or is it too difficult for us to disappoint another who is hoping for our "yes"?

On the flip side, you may have encountered people who have no trouble saying no but leave you with a negative experience from the interaction. Such experiences can often reinforce why being a "yes" person is a preferred path for being a "good person" and having better relationships.

In this week's *parasha* Yaakov teaches us how to place firm boundaries and say no in the ideal

fashion. Yaakov's encounter with Esav is a climactic moment. As Yaakov succeeds in foiling Esav's initial intent to kill him, Esav counters by offering that they travel together as brothers. Yaakov turns down the offer, and we can learn the art of saying no from the way that he does so:

We have the ability to be strongly connected to Hashem wherever our jobs and lives may take us.

"Thereupon, [Esav] said, 'Travel and we will go, and I will go alongside you.' And Yaakov said to him, 'My master knows that the children are tender, and the flocks and the cattle, which are raising their young, depend upon me, and if they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die. Now, let my master go ahead before his servant, and I will move [at] my own slow pace, according to the pace of the work that is before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my master, to Seir.'"



PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

Yaakov made the decision not to travel with Esav. He knew it was not in his best interests and that he would turn down Esav's offer. Yet his method of communication is diplomatic. He replies by addressing Esav in a respectful manner ("my master") and speaks in a language Esav can understand. In essence, he communicates to Esav that turning down his offer is not something personal but it's simply not practical for him at this time. By doing so, Yaakov is able to set his own firm boundaries without insulting Esav. This ability to establish firm boundaries in a

respectful way is the trademark of Yaakov – the trait of *tiferes*, or having balance.

You can learn from Yaakov how to apply this to your own workloads and relationships. To remain productive we must know how to place firm boundaries on what we can and cannot do. Saying yes because you are afraid to say no is not a virtue. Yet knowing how to turn down an offer with masterful communication is the key to mutual understanding and avoiding unnecessary strain in your relationships.

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Taking Interest

Halachic Aspects of Resolving a *Ribbis* Issue

Rabbi Shloimy Muller

Talmid of Rav Pinchas Vind *shlita*, founder of the Beis Horaah L'Inyanei Ribbis

Last week, we talked about the Bermans, who asked their relative to take out a loan from the bank for them in his name. Obviously they committed to paying him back monthly, on time.

This scenario isn't unusual. Often, when the bank declines to give a potential home purchaser a mortgage, he will ask a wealthier relative or friend to sign on the contract for the home. When the "purchaser" is approved for a mortgage, he passes on the money to the first person.

As we discussed last week, this entails *ribbis*, because the borrower received only the principle and is paying the legal owner's mortgage including the interest.

The same type of issue can come up with a small loan, known in Eretz Yisrael as *halvaah berega*, which allows one to immediately borrow thousands of shekels with interest. If you need more than what the bank is offering, or better terms, and therefore ask someone else to take the loan for you in his name, repaying the loan with the requisite interest payments violates *ribbis min haTorah*.

How can this be handled in a halachically permitted manner?

Ideally, the money should be transferred from the first, official borrower to the second party with a clear, written stipulation that this loan is subject to a specific, valid *heter iska*. (Obviously, for the *heter iska* to be effective, the lender must ascertain that all the conditions previously delineated are met.)

However, if one becomes aware of this issue after he has started payment on such a loan, or after the loan was entirely repaid, he must immediately take care of the ongoing *ribbis* issue. This is accomplished by turning the existing loan into an *iska*. The procedure is complex, and a rav well versed in *Choshen Mishpat* and *hilchos ribbis* should be contacted. This will allow the lender to collect the interest from then on.

However, the above solution will not work retroactively. The lender is obligated to return the money he received as interest, or to subtract it from the remaining debt. Therefore, this can end up being an extremely costly mistake. Still, it's always worthwhile to discuss the case with a knowledgeable rav; depending on the case, there may be room to salvage something. There is also a leniency which may apply specifically in Eretz Yisrael that we'll discuss next week.



BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac HaLevi Herzog

Rabbi Dov Loketch – Rabbi of Agudas Yisrael Mogen Avraham, Detroit

Last week we looked at the numerous initiatives for the Jewish people that Rav Herzog undertook both in Eretz Yisrael and abroad. This week we'll focus on his efforts to ensure the Jewish character of the fledgling state.

Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel

On November 29, the night of *Shabbos Parashas Vayeishev*, 1947, the United Nations voted to approve the Partition Plan, effectively authorizing the establishment of the first Jewish sovereign state in Eretz Yisrael since the end of the Hasmonean dynasty. The Jews of Eretz Yisrael erupted in festive singing and dancing that lasted well into the night. Rav Herzog later composed a special prayer on behalf of the thirty-three nations who voted in favor of the resolution. He also sent a telegram to US President Harry Truman expressing gratitude.

But beyond the celebration and expressions of gratitude, Rav Herzog got to work preparing for Jewish statehood. He assembled the heads of the various religious groups for a meeting to begin mobilizing for the effort to ensure the Jewish character of the state. This meeting was attended by figures such as Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, Rav Itche Meir Levin of Agudas Yisrael, Rav Yaakov Berman of the Mizrachi, and a representative from Ger. Rav Herzog

always sought to unite different ideological factions for common causes, and so he brought together this diverse group of rabbanim to prepare for the struggle for the spirit of the state that was about to be born.

Following the declaration of statehood on 5 Iyar/May 15 1948, the surrounding Arab nations launched a fierce attack, determined to crush the newly-proclaimed country. Rav Herzog lent a great deal of moral support to the Haganah, as Israel's defense forces were then called. Kfar Etzion, the largest kibbutz in the Gush Etzion bloc, fell to the Arab Legion the day before the state's declaration, and the other kibbutzim surrendered shortly thereafter. Rav Herzog was involved in negotiating for the release of the hundreds of prisoners and in ensuring a proper burial for the fallen. He delivered a stirring eulogy at the funeral.

A year after the declaration of statehood, on the first celebration of Yom HaAtzma'ut (Israel's Independence Day), Rav Herzog delivered a speech emphasizing the





BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY



theme to which he would tirelessly devote himself for the rest of his life – ensuring the Jewish character of the state.

Rav Herzog had hoped that the new state would adopt a constitution based on halacha, particularly with regard to civil law, the topics covered in the *Choshen Mishpat* section of the *Shulchan Aruch*. He wrote prolifically on the subject of applying the Torah's ancient system of law to modern-day realities, and composed a monumental work entitled *Techuka LeYisrael al pi HaTorah* (An Israeli Constitution Following the Torah). Rav Herzog struggled with difficult practical questions such as how to run a court system according to Torah law which disqualifies women, family members, and gentiles from testifying. With his mastery of halachic literature, razor-sharp mind, keen awareness of the realities of his day, and broad shoulders as a respected rabbinic leader, Rav Herzog comprehensively addressed these and numerous other difficult issues and came up with solutions.

For example, one of the numerous difficult issues that Rav Herzog grappled with involved the election of non-Jews and women to the Knesset. Rav Herzog, like other religious Zionist thinkers, maintained that the State of Israel, on some level, had the halachic status of *malchus Yisrael*, Jewish kingship, with respect to matters

such as the power to levy taxes and draft soldiers to the military. This view posed a considerable halachic dilemma, as non-Jews and women may not be appointed as kings over Am Yisrael. In a democratic state, it would be impossible to exclude these groups from the governing body, yet halacha does not allow them to serve as political leaders. This posed a problem specifically for the religious Zionist camp, which regarded the modern state as *malchus Yisrael*; the Chareidi rabbinic leaders did not accept this view of *malchus Yisrael*, and thus for them, the qualifications for serving as king had no bearing whatsoever on the election of Knesset members.

Rav Herzog resolved this problem by demonstrating that the restrictions on suitability for kingship applied only to actual monarchical rule, a position of autocratic authority. In a democratic state, decisions are made by the entire group, and thus no individual member has the status of *melech* that would be subject to the laws disqualifying non-Jews and women.

Although Rav Herzog's hopes for a Torah-based constitution never materialized, his scholarly output on these subjects marks a vitally important contribution to the efforts made, even to this day, to apply our sacred Torah principles to the modern world.



Why We Need Our Differences

Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

Relationships Coach and author of *The Moderately Anxious Everybody*

It's been over 50 days. Do you remember the feelings we had during the second phase of this war? Beyond the first stage of shock and horror, there was a feeling of tremendous *achdus* built on the guilt that we failed in our unity – which got us into this mess – laced with a concern that maybe the unity won't hold once the war is over.

Now Is the Time

Well, the war isn't over. And it isn't going anywhere fast. And that buys us the time to implement a strategy now. It's no great *chochma* to be united in the face of adversity. The

enemy unites us. (If you want to get your kids over a fight, all you need to do is punish them unfairly. You become the bad guy, and they go back to being friends.) *Achdus* is so important. We can't afford to be that nation that needs war in order to achieve it. Now is the time. So what do we do?

We are unlikely to achieve cohesion politically, religiously, or culturally. It's quite a task.

So what does unite us, apart from how we feel about Hamas?

There's language. That's one.

There's land. That's two.

There's trauma.

There's hope.

There's prayer.

But there's one obvious thing that we need to capitalize on. And that is, we need one another. We have

The more time, wealth, and health we have, the more we seem to subdivide.





fallen into habits of disapproving of each other. People in learning feeling morally higher than people working. And vice versa. People serving looking down on people learning. And vice versa. Religious Zionists, Chareidim, settlers, *chilonim*, *dati'im*, *mesorati'im*, *datlashim*, *baalei teshuva*, modern, Chassidim. We have more boxes than people, it sometimes feels.

But it's okay. We are allowed to care deeply about the things that matter to us. It's a good sign. When we were liberated from the camps, there were no boxes. Just survivors. But even in the DP camps, we started to think, to plan, to regroup. It's a luxury to be able to think, to define your *hashkafa*. The more time, wealth, and health we have, the more we seem to subdivide. Because we're thinking with our heads. And that's not how Jews are supposed to think.

We are taught to think with our heads first. That's correct. But when we think with our heads only, we become arrogant. The Jewish way is not to think with our emotions. We've seen what happens in the world when you do that. But once our heads have done the thinking,

we have to then internalize. We have to include the whole system. The heart alone doesn't see the future. But the head alone doesn't see the other.

You should know why you believe what you believe. Thinking you're right will lead to a life of conviction. But did you know that being right doesn't make everyone else wrong, less than, or stupid? Do you know that there are others who think

The one thing we're missing? We're not grateful for the role that the other person plays.

they're more right than you and that you can't both be right? And did you ever think that if everyone agreed to your *hashkafa* and became like you, you'd be in real trouble?

Imagine you're in *kollel*. And then everyone else agreed to do the





same. What would you do when you needed a doctor or a banker or a lawyer? Imagine you're making high-end money, so that you can contribute to the county that way.

We need our differences. And if we could deeply internalize that so we're overflowing with gratitude, we'd be in a place of unity.

If everyone else caught on, there'd be no one for you to employ – or to deliver – your Wolt lunch. If everyone was a soldier, who would fund us? And if everyone was funding us, who would defend us?

We have something amazing going on over here. We are all playing a role. A spiritual role, a military role, an economic role, a human role. It's our differences that provide the cast for

this show. We may all believe in our *mehalach*, but we need everyone to stick to theirs, too.

What's Your Role?

The one thing we're missing? We're not grateful for the role that the other person plays. We're not united, not because we're not the same. Same would be a national disaster. We need our differences. And if we could deeply internalize that, so deeply that we find ourselves overflowing with gratitude, we'd be in a place of unity.

It takes a thank-you. A thank-you that you mean so much that you can't hold it in. Live the life you believe is right. Absolutely. With all your conviction. And then look around at your people. The people who are hurting with you and hoping with you. And then feel how important their role is, too. It may not be your role, but it's a role that needs to be played. When that gratitude makes you smile at them, you're halfway there. When that gratitude makes you thank them, we will have arrived.



Flattering a Bully

Josh and Tammy Kruger

The Story

Ari and Zevi were walking home from school. It was a nice day, and their parents had given them permission to stop along the way to visit their friend Chaim, who lived in a nearby neighborhood.

"I haven't seen Chaim since the summer, and I can't wait to catch up with him," said Ari.

"Yeah," agreed Zevi. "It's been a long time. I wonder what he's been up to."

"What are you two doing around here?" said an unfriendly voice.

The boys turned around to see a big, mean-looking kid behind them. They immediately knew who he was. Chaim had told them about a bully who lived in his neighborhood. He was five years older and had a reputation for picking fights. Sometimes he stole their belongings. He was even arrested once by the police and had to spend time in a special jail for children.

"Hi," said Ari. "We're just on our

way to visit our friend. Wow! I love your basketball shoes. They're the coolest. You must be an excellent basketball player!"

"I'm the best," boasted the bully. "You're looking at a future professional basketball player." He then crossed the street and headed off in the opposite direction.

When he was out of sight, Zevi spoke up. "Ari, you hate those shoes. I remember your mother bought you a pair in the summer, and you returned them the next day!"

"You're right," admitted Ari. "I do hate those shoes, but I felt that if we didn't find something nice to say to that kid, he would pick a fight with us."

"I understand what you were thinking," said Zevi, "but you basically told a lie. As bad as he may be, our lives were in danger. I don't think you're allowed to do what you did."

Ari wondered whether his friend was right.

Discussion

Q: What is flattery? Can you give some examples?

A: In our story, Ari compliments the bully for something that he doesn't

really like. He says something nice not because he thinks it is true but because he thinks it will help him. This is called flattery.

Q: What is the connection between our story and the *parasha*?





PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



A: In our *parasha*, Yaakov tells Esav that seeing Esav's face is like seeing a divine being, such as an angel (*Bereishis* 33:10). Obviously, Yaakov did not really think that was true. He was only saying it because he hoped that it would protect him from Esav.

Q: Is it halachically acceptable for Ari to flatter the bully?

A: In general, flattery is not permitted (see introduction to *Sefer Chofetz Chaim, Iavin, 16*), with a special emphasis on flattering the wicked – people who should be told off rather than flattered. It is thus forbidden to flatter a

person falsely in order to get some benefit from them. However, there is an important exception: Flattery is allowed when a person is in physical or financial danger (*Yere'im, mitzvah 248*). Yaakov knew there was a good chance that Esav would harm him and his family, and it was proper to flatter him. In our story, the bully was known to harm other children and even steal their money. Therefore, it was appropriate for Ari to use flattery in order to save himself and Zevi from possible harm.

"Normally, we would prefer to walk home," Ari said. "But I think this time we'll make an exception."

Back to Our Story

Ari and Zevi told Chaim all about the incident with the bully.

"I'm so sorry," Chaim said. "I heard that he was going to school out of town, and I haven't seen him for

months. If I knew he was around I would have warned you."

"That's all right, Chaim," said Ari. "Thankfully everything worked out."

"Hello, boys," said Chaim's mother. "I'm going to the butcher in your neighborhood later. Can I offer you a ride home?"

*Written in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer.
Le'ilui nishmas Frumit bat Yosef, Edith Nusbaum, a"h.*



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