



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

Controlling the World?

R' YY Jacobson related the following anecdote:

There was a Jew who was in need of a job. He saw that there was an Indian tribe that needed a chief, so he applied. He had a darker complexion, and figured he would be able to blend in. Sure enough, he was hired. There was just one problem: being an Indian chief required being capable of looking into the stars to predict the forthcoming weather during the winter, and the eager tribe asked their new chief what he saw. This Jewish boy obviously knew nothing about reading the stars, and doubtfully responded as he looked up hopelessly at the sky: "It seems like it's going to be somewhat of a cold winter this year." He figured that the ambiguity of the word "somewhat" will serve to buy him some time to determine his next move. At night, he snuck out of the town and went to access a public phone. He put in a coin, and dialed the Washington Weather Bureau. He asked them for the forecast of the coming winter, and they told him it was going to be cold. He thanked the person on the other end of the line, and made his way back to the Indian tribe. The next morning, he announced that he looked into the stars again, and he saw that it was going to be cold. The tribe was astonished. The chief went from "somewhat cold" to "cold," and they now knew that it was time to get to work and gather wood for the coming cold winter. A week later, he snuck out again and called the weather bureau, asking for an update. "It looks like it's going to be very cold," they informed him. He returned to the Indians and gave a new report about what he had seen in the stars. At this point, they were frantic. They continued gathering lumber and wood to no end, putting all their efforts into being able to warm their bones in what was sure to be a very cold winter. The next week, the chief snuck out again, and the bureau told him that the coming winter was going to be excruciatingly frigid. He reported back to the Indians of his new vision into the stars, and at that point, for 24 hours every day, all men, women, and children were doing nothing but collecting wood for the excruciating cold that was to befall them.

A week later, he called again, asking what the winter was going to look like. "They say it's going to be the coldest winter in U.S. history," came the reply. When he heard that, this poor Jewish kid almost collapsed. "You guys are driving me nuts!" he exclaimed.

"First you tell me it's going to be cold, then you tell me very cold, then you move up to excruciatingly cold, and now apparently the coldest winter in the history of the U.S.! Can't you just make your decision already??" There was a moment of silence over the phone, and finally the individual from the weather bureau said, "Listen, I don't know who you are. I don't really care who you are. But I'll be honest with you; you think we know anything about the weather? We know nothing!" The newly appointed Indian chief then piped up incredulously, "If you know nothing, then why are you making all these predictions?" The man from the bureau explained, "All we know is that this year, the Indians are collecting wood like crazy..."

This cute and ironic tale carries a profound and fundamental truth. The kid was clueless the whole time; he believed he was receiving the information from them, but in reality, he was the one shaping the entire prediction!

When a human being appreciates what he or she is from a Jewish, Torah perspective in the context of the entire creation, it becomes clear that not only do we each own a unique purpose and mission, but that we also possess the power to effect change and channel Hashem's light and glory in this world. We're not merely bystanders but actually players in the ultimate arena of life, with the ability to effect change and accomplish greatness.

At the start of this week's Parsha, Yaakov Avinu, after finally closing a long, dramatic, and stressful chapter in his life involving his difficult and crooked father-in-law, moves on only to face his bloodthirsty, revenge-hungry brother. Challenge after challenge had been thrown his way, with no opportunity to even catch a break. Yet, our patriarch – the backbone of our nation – didn't shatter under the pressure. He didn't throw his hands in the air and hopelessly give up. Instead, he continued to give it his all – he made diplomatic efforts, prepared for war, and ultimately prayed – because he knew his inherent G-d-given capabilities. Anti-Semites like to claim that Jews control the world; while it sounds absurd, it is true to some extent. הקול קול יעקב – a Jew's power rests in prayer; the rules of nature simply just don't apply to us because we know the Boss.

"Have the humility to realize it all comes from Hashem. But have the confidence to put all the responsibility on your own shoulders to get the job done." (R' Shmuel Reichman)

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida	Rahamim Ben Shifra	Nina Bat Fenya	Frida Bat Yaffa	Miriam Bat Bakol	Chana Bat Malka
Yosef Haim Ben Elana	Avigayil Bat Tehillah	Ariella Bat Hila	Yitzhak Ben Naama	Yehoshua Ben Miriam	
Adam Uriel Ben Aviva	Daniel Ben Naomi	Rivkah Bat Sarah	Paysach Yosef Ben Hinda	Uriel Ben David	
Nechama Bat Rachel Leah Shoshana	Yochai Shimon Ben Daniella Odet	Nvach Yisrael Ben Victoria Yaffa			