

ספר מי השילוח - חלק ראשון - פרשת ויחי

**Mei Hashiloach - Vol I. Genesis - Bereishith - VaYechi**

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I have hesitated over translating this Torah, the first Mei Hashiloach of this week's Sidra, for many, many years, because it is so opaque. This is the first year that I am including it among the Izbicy texts for downloading.

Having the space to write an introduction to each Torah and describe the background processes and layers in the architecture of a piece of Mei Hashiloach allows me the freedom to expand and expound when necessary.

Here we have a Torah seemingly wrapped around a Mishna, 'Without Understanding there is no Knowledge, while without Knowledge there is no Understanding' part of a longer teaching by Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria:

'Without Torah there is no courtesy; without courtesy there is no Torah. Without wisdom, there is no conscience; without conscience, there is no wisdom. Without knowledge, there is no understanding; without understanding there is no knowledge. Without flour, there is no Torah; without Torah there is no flour.'

Jacob doesn't seem to feature much in this Torah, only appearing towards the end as a kind of addendum to an interpretation of the Mishna which itself lacks any clear definition.

Perhaps the difficulty in comprehending this Mei Hashiloach is due to our own lack of imagination. The Sidra opens with the following: 'And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were a hundred forty and seven years.' (Gen. 48:28) Perhaps we have failed to note some obvious question which the rebbe's Torah is answering?

The Zohar asks the following question, how come we read that Jacob lived in Egypt, but when his death is discussed in the very next verse, the Torah tells us 'And the days of Israel drew close to die, and he called for his son, for Joseph'; why was he called Jacob when living but named Israel when dying? (Zohar Vol I. 221b)

Additionally we might ask, since it is well known that during those seventeen years in Egypt, Jacob had a fore-taste of the World to Come, why is his lesser name used, shouldn't we assume that those seventeen years were spent in the highest way, as befits someone named Israel, rather than the lesser man named Jacob?

Or perhaps the question is even simpler. Why doesn't the verse simply tell us that Jacob was in Egypt seventeen years, etc. Why does it have to tell us he lived there; why not use the word *ויחי Vayehi* - he Was, instead of *ויצח Vayechi* - he Lived?

This Izbicy Torah then, treats the two words *ויחי יעקב Vayechi Yaakov* - 'And Jacob Lived', as a code phrase which needs to be deciphered in order for the entire Sidra to make sense.

The Izbicy rebbe's children and grandchildren spent a lot of time and ink explaining this Torah, telling us what they thought the Izbicy meant by it, describing the interplay of Rule and Detail, Understanding and Knowledge, *Binah* and *Da'at*. Among the connections they make are the following:

ישראל Israel is made of two words, *לי ראש Li Rosh* - 'I have a head'.

יעקב Jacob is also two words, *יוד עקב Yud Eikev* - 'Point of the heel'.

Israel - *Li Rosh* - 'I have a head', represents the General Rule, while Jacob - *Yud Eikev* -

‘Point of the heel’, represents the point of the smallest Detail, furthest away from the General Rule.

The name ‘Israel’ corresponds to God’s name יהוה YHV”H and represents the General Rule.

The name ‘Jacob’ corresponds to God’s name אלהים ELOHI”M and represents the Fine Detail.

While we are called Children of Abraham, and Seed of Isaac, we are all the Congregation of Jacob. All of us are part of Jacob and Israel in a connection that we don’t have with Abraham and Isaac. Because Jacob manages to transcend the barriers of time and space. Mostly because he is both the General Rule and the Fine Detail.

The moment a Jew realizes his Life is God, by which I mean to say, the moment you wake up from sleep, regain consciousness and realize that you’ve just been given another day by God to enjoy, alive. That moment is an awareness of YHV”H the source of Life. At that moment you are truly Israel. As the day progresses, and you lose that feeling of the freshly minted day, the gift of waking and the realization of God-YHV”H-given Life, you become Jacob, and God becomes ELOHI”M to you, just Nature, nothing special, nothing novel, nothing fresh each split second. In a sense, becoming used to being awake is another form of sleep. Growing used to the miracle of Life and taking it for granted is a kind of death. Failing to maintain conscious awareness of YHV”H is how we come to live in a world governed by ELOHI”M.

And this was part of Jacob’s genius, that he was able to bring the awareness of God YHV”H associated with Israel which is *Li Rosh* - ‘I have a Head’ all the way down to the God ELOHI”M of Jacob which is *Yud Eikev* - ‘Point of the Heel’, because Jacob never grew used to anything in his life. He never experienced a single moment of wakefulness that wasn’t also a startling miracle of newness. Jacob never got used to being awake, every moment was a revelation of fresh consciousness, which is why we learned in previous Sidrot, God rewarded Jacob by being with him even when he was sleeping, as we read in the narrative of the ladder-dream, ‘And behold God - YHV”H is erect over him.’ (Gen. 28:13)

The first of the Ten Commandments, ‘I am the LORD your God,’ is the General Rule, while the second of the Ten Commandments, ‘You shall have no other gods but me,’ is the Small Detail. You will never know the meaning of the First Commandment, if you are still stuck worshipping the small gods. Unless you know the Small Detail you cannot understand the General Rule. Unless you deny that your life flows from small gods, in any way, shape or form whatsoever, you can never appreciate the wholeness of your God-given Life.

When the Torah tells us *Vayechi* - And he Lived! it is telling us that Jacob lived in appreciation of the God-given Life, at any given moment Jacob could feel his life coming from God.

Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years. Seventeen represents the spiritual level of achievement known in the kabbalah as *Tifferet* of *Tifferet*, which translates as Glory of Glory. What could be more glorious than glory, what sort of level does Glory of Glory represent?

As soon as Jacob heard that Joseph was alive and living in Egypt, he packed his bags and set out to join him there. That night he had a prophecy, as the Torah tells us.

‘God spoke to Israel in a nighttime vision, He said, ‘Jacob, Jacob.’ And he [Jacob] answered, ‘here I am.’ He said, ‘I am the God who is the God of your father, be not afraid of going down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there.’ (Gen. 46:2-3)

As we can see from the verse above, when Jacob is given assurances by God that all will be well, he is called Israel. When there is absolutely no danger of anything going wrong, Jacob takes on the persona of Israel, because God has taken on the persona of YHV”H. Whatever

he touches, God has promised Jacob, will turn to gold, so to speak. What could be more glorious than that?

When a person is so unimpressed with his own glory that it means nothing to him to be glorious, says the Izbicy, that's Glory of Glory. Jacob was utterly indifferent to his God-given power of be able to turn everything he touched into something good and holy, to be able to enter the grayest areas under heaven and find the straight, correct and proper path to walk through it. To know that everything he put his hand to do would be the Will of God meant nothing to Jacob. That's the meaning of the verse, 'And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years,' the *Tifferet* of *Tifferet* or Glory of Glory was that he wasn't in the least bit impressed by his own achievements or entitlements.

What that meant in practise was that the General Rule and the Small Detail took on very similar hue to Jacob's eyes. Once you're no longer overcome with the glory of your own achievements, even after God gives you the whole world to play with, you stop distinguishing between the important and the unimportant, because the distinction is spurious anyway.

It didn't matter to Jacob that he was guaranteed never to step over a boundary and do something wrong in a gray area, he never stepped over a boundary into a gray area anyway. Jacob always maintained that aspect of his character which was detail oriented, even after being invited by God to spread out and relax and think of the big picture, the General Rules. Jacob never allowed himself to take advantage of the invitation and take on the cloak of Israel; he stayed Jacob, unless it was for the sake of the Glory of Heaven.

The Zohar tells a parable.

'There was a man who lived isolated in the mountains, he'd never lived in a city. He planted wheat and harvested wheat, wheat was the whole of his diet. One day he visited the city and they offered him a loaf of the finest bread. 'What is it?' he wanted to know.

'It's bread, to eat,' they told him. He took a bite of bread and for the first time in his life his palate knew joy.

'What on earth is this made of?' he inquired.

'It's made of wheat,' they told him.

Later on someone offered him cakes kneaded with oil. He tasted them and asked what they were made of? 'Wheat,' he was told. Later they brought him royal pastries made with honey and oil. 'What are these made from?' he asked.

'They're made from wheat,' he was told.

'Oh, well,' he exclaimed. 'I must have been eating these all along, as I eat nothing else but wheat.'

And because he had that attitude, he never appreciated the delights the world had to offer him. It was all wasted on him.' (Zohar Vol. II 176a)

An example of how the Mishna treats General Rules and Small Details can be found

These are the tools an artisan may not sell during a seventh/fallow year to a man suspected of desecrating the seventh/fallow year; a plough and all its accessories, a yoke, a winnowing fan and a mattock. But these are the things he may sell, a sickle, a scythe, a cart and all its accessories. This is the General Rule: Anything which can only be used for a forbidden task may not be sold, but that which has a dual purpose, permitted and forbidden, may be sold. (Shevi'it 5:6)

The Izbicy is saying that from the General Rule alone I will not be able to make the proper deductive leap, until I have seen the Small Detail for myself. I need to see examples first, before I can trust myself to decide where to apply the rule. And after seeing only the

Detail I don't know enough to develop proper rules.

Jacob is always doing the computations, moving between rule and detail, detail and rule. Between YHV" H and ELOHI" M and vice versa. Between the expansive horizons of the mind and the petty details of the heel.

Like the vowels to the Hebrew letters, Jacob used the details of his encounters with life to develop new rules for the world. This is what is meant by the Midrash we quoted in Sidra Vayetze [1:1]:

‘But now thus says the Lord, he who created you is Jacob, and he who formed you is Israel.’ (Is. 43:1) R. Pinchas in the name of R. Reuben said. ‘[Said] the Holy Blessed One to His world, ‘O my world, my world! Shall I tell you who created you? Shall I tell you who formed you? Jacob is the one who created you, Israel the one who formed you, as it written, ‘He who created you is Jacob, who formed you is Israel. (Is. 43:1) (Levit. Rabbah 36:4)

Jacob sitting in Egypt designs a world, he combines General Rules and Fine Details, he talks to his children and grandchildren of a better world, he teaches them to dream of worshiping God and giving their heart and soul to loving God. Jacob describes a world in which every moment is lived in the Light, in the awareness of God which Adam used to have before he ate of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Jacob remakes his family and gives Joseph the role of firstborn, taking it away from Reuben. He does it by seeing the details of their situations and using them like putting vowels to the letters to give words other meanings. It gave him the power to change things all the way back to the order in which the tribes were born.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

## **[1:1] And Jacob lived.**

We read in the Mishna, ‘Without *Binah* - Understanding there is no *Da'at* - Knowledge, while without *Da'at* - Knowledge there is no *Binah* - Understanding. (Avot 3:17) *Binah* refers to the General Rules of the Torah, to the reasons for things, as we often find in the Mishna ‘This is the Rule’. Through familiarity with the rule a person can deduce many details. *Da'at* refers to the details.

ויחי יעקב, איתא במסכת אבות אם אין בינה אין דעת אם אין דעת אין בינה, [פ"ג מי"ז] בינה היינו הכללים של ד"ת היינו טעמי הדברים כמו שנמצא כמה פעמים זה הכלל וע"י הכלל יודע לאדם כמה פרטים, ודעת היינו הפרטים,

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In the Mishna above, enumerating precisely which agricultural implements one may sell to a man suspected of desecrating the seventh/fallow year, had not the Mishna wrapped it up by telling us explicitly the rule underlying the list they provided, I might have argued for ages without being able to conclude precisely what is considered saleable and what is not. What about water pipes and gutters that are not mentioned in the Mishna, and what about pliers and

saws?

The parable given by the Zohar of the man who was given bread cakes and pastries to taste for the first time. He is a perfect example of a man without knowledge of the details. All he understands is the Rule = Wheat is nutritious. No matter how well he understands that rule he will never taste anything delicious, baked of flour, in his life.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

This is the meaning of the dictum, ‘Without Understanding there is no Knowledge,’ because if a person doesn’t understand the Rule which is the reason underlying the thing, then he cannot extrapolate what the Details may be, because one detail will not automatically teach the other detail and vice versa.

Without Knowledge there is no Understanding, because if you try convincing yourself you can make do with a thorough understanding of the Rule without needing to learn about details, we have already learned that if there is no knowledge, meaning, if the details are not clearly laid for you to study you cannot deduce the root of things properly, to see how the thing branches out and evolves.

וזה פי' אם אין בינה אין דעת היינו אם אין האדם יודע הכלל שהוא טעם הדבר אינו יכול לדעת הפרט כי מפרט אחד לא יודע פרט השני וכן להפך, אם אין דעת אין בינה היינו אם תמצא לאמר אדע הכלל ולא אצטרך ללמוד הפרט, ע"ז אמרו אם אין דעת היינו שלא יהי' מסודרים אצלך הפרטים, לא תדע שורש הכלל לאמיתו איך יוכל להסתעף,

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Jacob, because he always maintains his awareness of the fine detail while staring at the rule, is able to rearrange to order of things. As was mentioned above, he made Joseph the Firstborn by applying the laws of inheritance in previously untried ways.

In doing so he enables God to make the statement, ‘And you shall say to Pharaoh, Thus says the LORD, “Israel is my son, my firstborn.”’ (Ex. 4:22)

Although Adam was clearly God’s firstborn and the closest to the source of Life, as is described in the first chapters of Genesis, Jacob changes all that. Jacob is capable of assembling all the details so that they shed a new and different illumination on the facts as they stand. Because Jacob represents *Ze’ir Anpin* - Small Faces of God, that aspect of God which cares for the fine detail, everything has a different face.

When we think of a king sitting on a throne, we do into imagine that same king instructing the janitors on which toilets to clean first in the morning, how to fold the towels, and which spray to use when cleaning the windows. The king commands his household and the rest is taken care of by those responsible for the details.

But God is both the king on the throne and the master of the minutest detail. When it comes to ruling the world, God is also the window cleaner.

Jacob is Israel, the figurehead of God’s people, as the prophet notes, ‘And said to me,

“You are my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” (Isa. 49:3) Jacob as Israel is *Tifferet* - God’s Glory. But Jacob as Jacob is the smallest of the small. He has the power to move the sun around the palace so it shines in another window, because he thinks it will look better that way. Joseph becomes Jacob’s firstborn and Israel becomes God’s firstborn. And all because Jacob is still in charge of his Life, he’s the one examining it, not Israel. Even though Life, the General Rule should be part of the domain ruled by Israel who governs the Rules, Jacob did not let go for one moment during those seventeen years in Egypt, so the detail ruled the rule, and Jacob Lived!

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

This is the meaning of the phrase ‘**And [Jacob] lived**’. He lived means he had access to the source of Life. The source of life is the General Rule.

**Jacob** is the *Da’at* which is the detail, because Jacob is named after *Ze’ir Anpin* - Small Faces. Which is a way of saying that God supervises every detail of every single that he, Jacob needs, even down to the minutest specific particle.

וזהו ויחי היינו שורש החיים והוא הכלל של כל דבר, ויעקב היינו דעת הוא הפרט, כי יעקב מכונה נגד זעיר אנפין היינו שהש"י משגיח על כל פרט על כל דברים הנצרכים לו, אפילו קטן שבקטנים:

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The second Izbicy Torah:

In the story of Jacob blessing Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Menasseh, we hear echoes of the controversy surrounding the blessing Isaac wanted to give Esau. When the time came for Isaac to give his blessing he chose Esau as the recipient, even though it was perfectly clear to Isaac that Esau was a bad man and a poor investment for such abundance. Isaac felt himself bound by *Gevurah* - Strictness. He was unable to move beyond the law, to circumvent it or bend it. Isaac decided, ‘As this is my act to bestow the blessing, I have to make the choice the law dictates. Esau is the firstborn, I cannot change that fact, therefore I must bestow the blessing on him. If God wants the blessing to go to a better person, then no doubt, He will arrange for Esau to become a better person, or for Esau to give birth to better descendants. None of these calculations can alter my duty to follow the laws of inheritance at this time and bless Esau who is entitled to it by law.’

The Izbicy uses a Talmudic axiom to describe Isaac’s thinking.

R. Eliezer the son of R. Yosi Haglili said: When two litigants bring their case to court and finally stand before the judges, the court cannot then demand that the litigants compromise with one another instead of asking for a clear cut judgment. Any demand for compromise or arbitrated settlement had to have been made prior to their appearance. Once they stand in court, in person, we say, ‘Let the Law hollow out the Mountain’. (Sanhedrin 6b)

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

## [1:2] Crossed over his hands.

The patriarch Isaac was the embodiment of *Gevurah* - Might, that's why he wanted to bless Esau. Because the characteristic of *Gevurah* - Might is the law of the Torah, as we learn in the Talmud, 'Thus did Moses hear it at the Mouth of *Gevurah*.' (Megilla 31b) Isaac felt the rule of 'Let the law hollow the mountain' should apply in this case. And that explains why he was incapable of doing anything contrary to the law, and was ready to give the blessing to Esau, who was entitled to it by virtue of being firstborn.

שכל את ידיו. להיות כי יצחק אבינו הי' מדרגתו מדות הגבורה, ולכן רצה לברך את עשו כי מדת הגבורה מורה על ד"ת. [מגילה ל"א:] כך שמע משה מפי הגבורה ולכן אמר יקוב הדין את ההר, ולכן לא היה בכחו לעשות נגד המשפט ורצה לברך את עשו ביען כי הי' בכור.

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Isaac was *Gevurah* - Power, Withholding, Force, Law and Constraint. He couldn't allow any fear to deter him, because for Isaac, Fear was everything holy; just as Love and kindness had been everything holy in Abraham's life. The Torah is *Gevurah* because the voice of God is *Gevurah*, as we read in the Talmud, 'Thus did Moses hear from the Mouth of *Gevurah*.' (Megilla 31a) This idea was discussed at length in Sidra Toldoth 1:1.

Now, as Isaac predicted, God did indeed want the blessings to go to a better person than Esau, and so brought it about that Jacob received them.

The Izbicy quotes part of a verse from Psalms, 'You are the supporter of my portion.' to explain why God made it happen without Isaac needing to be aware that he wasn't blessing Esau. In Vol. II of the Mei Hashiloach the commentary to this Psalm, the rebbe explains at great length the idea he is only hinting to here. The essence of the teaching is this. When I make God the focus of my thoughts and intentions, then even if I get things quite wrong, God will rearrange matters to have things work out well. God is the supporter of my portion - therefore He will make sure my portion is not ruined by my mistakes. Isaac only knew how to do what the Law of God demanded of him and that's what he intended to do.

Because his intention was solely to do something for God, God arranged matters that Isaac bestowed the blessings on the right recipient. Isaac's hands became branches of his heart, and his heart intended to work for God.

The Hebrew word for 'Portion', גורל *Goral* - can also be translated 'Lottery'. Ultimately, whenever I do something, whenever I act I am taking a chance. Every chance is a lottery, so to speak, an event whose outcomes are not predictable; somewhere only God is in charge. Isaac went blindly ahead with his plan to bless Esau, leaving the results up to God, because, he said, 'God is all I have as my portion. You are the backer of my gamble.'

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

But, since God supports pure hands - because the hands are branches of

the heart and Isaac's heart was clean and purified - God brought things about so that the blessing was given to Jacob without Isaac's knowledge. Hence the verse; 'You are the supporter of my portion.' (Ps. 17:5)

אך כי הש"י סומך ידים טהורות, כי הידים הם ענפי הלב, ולבו הי' טהור ומזוכך וסיבב הדבר שיברך את יעקב בלא דעתו, וע"ז נאמר [תהילים ט"ז ה'] אתה תומך גורלי,

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Here we have Jacob rearranging the order of precedence among his grandchildren by Joseph. Menasseh is the older, but Jacob rests his right hand on Ephraim's head, taking some of Menasseh's birthright and bestowing it on Ephraim. When describing what Jacob did with his hands, the Torah uses the word *שכל* *Sikeil* which the Aramaic Targum translates as 'endowed his hands with wisdom'. The root being the Hebrew word *שכל* *Seichel* - Intelligence.

The Izbicy sees this as a very different event from the one just discussed. Isaac was acting blindly and was being acted upon by God. Jacob is anything but blind. He deliberately places his right hand on the young man standing to left, and the left hand on the young man standing to his right. Not because God is guiding him unwittingly, to the contrary, because Jacob is now the synthesis of *Binah* and *Da'at*, Understanding and Knowledge, Israel and Jacob, the General Rule and the Fine Detail, for as was said in the previous Torah *ויחי יעקב Vayechi Yaakov* - Jacob Lived! he therefore knew exactly what he wanted to happen. He made it happen.

The understanding of the General Rules that Jacob put into his own hands grew out of his intimacy with the fine details, as he told Joseph when Joseph challenged him, 'I knew all about it, son, I knew it all the way down to the last breath of Ephraim's last descendant, I knew.'

Jacob's emphasis on 'knowing' and 'knowing' again which, as was explained in the first Torah above, is a reference to the fine detail, can be explained thus. Ephraim is favored in Jacob's blessing, but Menasseh does not entirely lose his birthright. When it came to receiving a portion in the Land of Israel described in the Books of Numbers and Joshua, Menasseh received a double portion. Because the division of the Land was done by the *גורל* *Goral* - Lottery, which flows directly from God, as has just been stated, and Jacob did not interfere there. Also, one's portion in the Land of Israel is parallel to one's portion in the World to Come, and in that context it is Menasseh who is the greater of the two brothers.

Ephraim's extra blessing was manifest in his actions, not in what flowed to him naturally, from heaven, rather in those things where he invested his own efforts. Ephraim is the man of action. Joshua is the first of Israel's leaders from the Tribe of Ephraim, a man who could command the Sun to stand still for him, until he finished his business, as we read in the Book of Joshua (10:12).

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

Jacob however always looked using *Binah* - Understanding, to discern the Will of God in the moment. That's why, when Joseph pointed out the error, Jacob answered, 'I knew, my son, I knew' because there was knowing in his hands, they knew they were crossed. And he put Ephraim



before Menashe.

אבל יעקב אבינו הי' מסתכל תמיד אל הבינה ולרצון הש"י, ולכן נאמר ידעתי בני ידעתי  
שכל את ידיו, וישם את אפרים לפני מנשה.

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The third Izbicy Torah.

Here the Mei Hashiloach reiterates what he considers the greatness of Jacob, a genius that has been evolving and developing since his birth in Sidra Toldoth. Jacob never takes anything for granted. Even if God makes it clear to him that he wants him to act in a certain manner, Jacob always asks for fresh direction before acting a second time.

Imagine if you can, what it feels like to learn to walk for the first time. For most of us, it has been so long since we learned to walk, we cannot even imagine the struggle to control all the various muscles, of toes, legs, hips and torso which must be coordinated in order to stay upright and ambulate. Now imagine you had to do all that coordination every time you take a footstep. You'd have to assemble your thoughts and marshal all your muscles like an infantry division moving out from its base. Now this group of muscles moves so, now that.

When I only tried walking in complete consciousness, to remain aware of every muscle action as it occurred naturally in taking footsteps - now the toe, lift, now the ball, lift, now the heel, lift - I fell down in an uncoordinated heap. It was too much for me to do consciously. I need to leave it to my brain to organize my footsteps and stay out of the driving seat. And that was only when I tried observing my muscles at work, not when I tried being in conscious control of every muscle.

When I say that Jacob never took anything for granted I mean precisely that. For that is the true meaning of his name, יעקב Yaakov - י' עקב *Yud Eikev* - 'Point of the heel'. When Jacob walked, we are told, he lifted his feet, he directed each muscle, as we read, 'Jacob raised his legs and journeyed to the land of the people of the east.' (Gen. 29:1) All the translators and commentators treat the phrase 'raised his legs' as a metaphor, hinting that Jacob hurried, or flew on the wings of God's promises to him in the ladder-dream. Only the Izbicy understands the verse literally. Jacob is Master of the Fine Detail. When he walks it is Jacob raising and lowering his feet, relaxing and tightening each muscle, placing now the toe and now the ball and now the heel of his foot on the ground, etc.

But Jacob does not think himself a better man for all that. To the contrary, he belittles himself by comparison with his father and grandfather.

'My grandfather, Abraham,' Jacob thought. 'Only had to be shown God's kindness once in his life and he built a whole religion based on being kind and loving. He developed *Hesed* - Loving-Kindness to its apogee. Abraham became the paradigm, the very *Sephirah* of *Hesed*.

'My father, Isaac, only had to realize once that God is imminent, right there inside his body, and he was struck rigid in fear and dread of the Divine Presence. He spent his whole life in worship of the Awesome Most High One, never relaxing his fear of God for one instant.

'And here am I, Jacob, unable to forge one single direction, unable to extrapolate from the things God has taught and shown me, to forge a new pathway in the worship of Him. What an unoriginal, uncreative and unappreciative man I must be!'

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

**[1:3] He said, ‘God, before whom my fathers walked, the God who has always shepherded me, from my beginning up to this day.’**

Jacob considered himself much humbler than his ancestors Abraham and Isaac. He reasoned thus, ‘They had much greater *Chokhmah* - Wisdom and *Binah* - Understanding than me. Once they learned God’s will they were able to extrapolate using their own wisdom. Even when God only opened them a tiny aperture they were able to broaden it and expand upon it in order to carry out the will of their Creator.’

‘They intuited how to act even when God didn’t enlighten their path and show them explicitly what to do.’

This is the meaning of the phrase Jacob used, ‘God, before whom my fathers walked,’ because, he reasoned, they had the capacity to walk on their own.

‘But I,’ says Jacob. ‘I need “God who has always shepherded me, from my beginning up to this day,” in every detail of my my life. Before I can take any action I need God to show me the way, to open my eyes and teach me what He wants me to do.

And even where God has already shown me once what He wants me to do, when He needs me to repeat it, He has to show me what He wants me to do, all over again’

ויאמר אלקים אשר התהלכו אבותי לפניו האלקים הרועה אותי מעודי, היינו שיעקב אבינו הני מקטין עצמו נגד אבותיו אברהם ויצחק, ואמר כי להם הי' חכמה ובינה גדולה מאד עד כי הרחיבו את רצון הש"י מעצמם, ואף אם פתח להם הש"י פתח קטן, היו מרחיבים ומתפשטים אותו בחכמתם כדי לעשות רצון בוראם

והבינו אף בדבר שלא האיר להם הש"י מפורש, וזה פי' אשר התהלכו היינו שהי' הולכים בכחם, אבל אני האלקים הרועה אותי מעודי עד היום הזה היינו בכל פרט מעשה שאני עושה, אני צריך שהש"י יאיר עיני איך הוא רצונו ית',

ואף בזה המעשה שראיתי איך הוא רצונו, אם רצונו לשנותה, מ"מ צריך אני לראות גם בפעם השנית איך הוא רצונו ית',

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Most of us are so familiar with the twenty third Psalm we have long ceased wondering

what it actually means or implies.

The Lord is my shepherd. A shepherd is responsible for the sheep in his care. Sheep are unintelligent and will rarely make a decision to improve their own conditions or circumstances. They cannot find their way back once they get lost and have very few natural defenses against predators. Most shepherds have to drive their herd before them because the sheep are even too stupid to follow the shepherd to pasture.

Jacob, the shepherd, considers himself a sheep in God's care. A creature without a hint or clue about what's what in the world around him.

David's twenty third Psalm is also a prayer. 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.' David, too, sees himself as a clueless individual needing his guardians's constant supervision and guidance, but he adds the prayer, 'I shall not want.'

This the Izbicy interprets in two ways. 'Please, God, don't allow me to do anything stupid enough to cut me off from Your constant supervision. And please, God, help me always maintain my awareness; never to lose sight of the fact that You are my shepherd.'

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

Actually, this made Jacob the greatest of the Patriarchs, because it's a very high trait, to have God's constant supervision and guidance. This was David's prayer, 'God is my shepherd I shall not want.' (Ps. 23:1) That is to say, 'I pray that I not do anything to interfere with God's supervision and guidance of me, that He remain my constant pastor. And also, that I retain my constant awareness that He is my shepherd.'

ובאמת בזה הענין היה יעקב הגדול שבאבות כי זאת היא מדרגה גדולה שהש"י מנהיג את האדם תמיד, וזאת הי' תפלת דהע"ה [תהלים כג'] ה' רועי לא אחסר היינו שלא אחסיר השגחת הש"י עלי ורק שיהי' רועה אותי תמיד וגם אני אכיר תמיד שהש"י הוא רועי,

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The second facet of David's prayer, 'I shall not want,' is the most important part. For if God is in charge of everything, how come we are not intimately aware of it all the time? How is it we often feel alone and uncertain of what to do next - that we have no one we can follow and turn our lives over to?

Because, says the Izbicy, we tend to turn our faces away from the Shepherd; we don't want to wait and pray, we seek instant gratification of our needs and desires. We want what we want when we want it.

The rebbe makes reference to the 'perfect prayer' without actually explaining how to pray perfectly, but it is not a mystery. The perfect prayer is precisely that one wherein you feel that God is your shepherd, when you experience the moment of surrender and transcendence. When you face God - the question becomes the answer. It's simple.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

For though God, in His goodness, guides everything, it is people who turns their faces away, not wanting to wait upon and pray to God. The moment a

person prays the perfect prayer, the answer comes immediately. The person gets to see that God is the Shepherd. This is the meaning of the phrase, 'I shall not want,' that I not turn my own face away from Him.

כי הש"י בטובו מנהיג כל דבר אך שהאדם מחזיר פניו ואינו רוצה לצפות ולהתפלל, ובעת שהאדם יתפלל תפלה שלימה אז תיכף יענה, ויראה כי הש"י הוא הרועה וזה פי' לא אחסר היינו שלא אחזיר פני ממנו:

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The fourth Torah.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

### [1:4] Jacob called to his sons.

In the Midrash (Genesis Rabba 98:1) we learn, (Psalms 57:3) I call unto the Most High Lord, to God who finishes for me.

What this means is that when Jacob was ready to bless his children he was faced with a dilemma; should he bless them or not, as they had caused him so much pain with the sale of Joseph? He did not know whether he was allowed to simply overlook it, for we have learned, (Yoma 23a) Any scholar who isn't retaliatory and vindictive as a serpent isn't a scholar.

ויקרא יעקב אל בניו. במדרש [בראשית רבה צ"ח א] אקרא לאלקים עליון לאל גומר עלי [תהילים נ"ז ג], הענין בזה כי כאשר רצה יעקב אבינו לברך את בניו הי' מסופק אם צריך לברך אותם מחמת שצערוהו במכירת יוסף [יומא כ"ג]. וכל ת"ח שאינו נוקם ונוטר כו',

Therefore the verse says, **Jacob called**; an expression of crying out and hoping in the heart, because Jacob depended upon heaven to show him (what to do and upon) what God puts into his mouth for him to say. And this is the meaning of the verse quoted in the Midrash, because Jacob was praying that God finish everything for him.

ולכן נאמר ויקרא לשון צעקה וקוי בלב שהי' תולה עיניו ולבו למרום ואת אשר ישים ה' בפיו אותו יאמר, וזה כוונת המדרש שהזכיר זה הפסוק שבקש מה' שיגמור בעדו,

That's why Jacobs blessings don't actually begin in the usual blessing form, because he was not yet sure of what to say to them, whereas Moses began his blessing in the blessing form immediately. *V'zot Ha'Bracha* - And this is the blessing (with which Moses blessed the Children of Israel before his death). The Hebrew word, *V'zot* - And this, hints at this that every word was already assayed before he had even begun to speak.

ולא נאמר תחילה לשון ברכה כי עוד לא הי' מבורר אצלו מה יאמר להם, אבל משה רבינו ע"ה התחיל תיכף, וזאת הברכה כי מלת וזאת מורה ע"ז שהי' כל הדברים מבוררים אצלו מיד כשהתחיל לדבר,

Now, with Jacob the Torah does not use the phrase *V'zot Ha'Bracha* - And this is the blessing until all the blessing was done, because it was only after it was over that he was sure the blessings he had given them were in fact coming from God, and not before.

וביעקב לא נאמר וזאת רק אחר כל הברכות שרק אז אחר כל הדברים היו אצלו מבוררים שכל ברכותיו המה מהש"י ולא מקודם,

So, we see, to begin with God put teasing, provocative language into his mouth, to chastise the oldest three tribes (Reuben Simeon and Levi) because, as was said, Any scholar who isn't retaliatory and vindictive as a serpent isn't a scholar. But once he got to Judah, then God showed him from heaven that he should ignore his personal feelings. Because the letters of Judah's name (יהודה) contain the four letters of God's Name *YHVH* יהוה while the letter *Dalet* hints at the verse (Isaiah 66:2) 'To him I look; to the poor and to the lowly of spirit who is in fear of My Word.' meaning, to the one who understands that from his own side he is utterly powerless, as we learn in the Zohar; (Vol I. 244b) the *Dalet* gleans.

והנה תחילה נתן ה' דברים של קנטור בפיו לקנטר הג' שבטים הראשונים, כי ת"ח צריך לנקום ולנטור וכשהגיע לשבט יהודה אז הראהו ה' מן השמים להעביר על מדותיו, כי באותיות יהודה נמצא שם הוי' ית' והד' שבשמו מרמז ע"פ [ישעי' ס"ו ב'] ואל זה אביט אל עני ונכה רוח וחרד על דברי. היינו שמבין כי אין לו מצד עצמו כלום כדאיתא [זוהר בראשית רמ"ד: ד'] לקיט,

That's why there was no room left for any sort of anger or displeasure at all. And once the characteristic of Mercy was opened up at Judah's blessing, it overpowered any negativity at the other tribes and they were all included in the blessing

ע"כ לא הי' בזה מקום לחול שום כעס ורוגז כלל, וכאשר נפתח ביהודה מדות הרחמים נתגבר גם על שאר השבטים ונכללו כלן בברכה.

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### [1:5] He will wash his clothes in wine and in the blood of grapes *Sutho* - his cloak.

(Translator's note. The Hebrew word *Sutho* has no comparison in scripture according to Rashi, and there is some disagreement as to how to translate it.)

*Sutho* is derived from the Hebrew *Sut* and it means to instigate, to incite, to seduce, to persuade, to tempt and to mislead. The rebellion at the root of Judah is the insistence, that even after he has committed a sin and stumbled, he refuses to be cowed, but encourages and emboldens himself; saying. 'It's only because God wants to save me with greater glory that I have sinned.'

ובדם ענבים סותה, סותה היינו לשון הסתה כי הסתה של שורש יהודה היא אחרי החטא ומכשול שאירע לו יתעורר עוז בנפשו, אין זאת רק שהש"י ירצה להושיעני ביתר שאת,

Because grapes symbolize error and forgetfulness. Now Moses (Deut 34:14) said 'And the blood of the grape you will drink *Chaimar* - wine.'

*Chaimar* - wine represents the hidden and most secret mysteries hinted at in the verse (Isaiah 64:3) 'No eyes have seen it but Yours alone, O God.' (B'rachoth 34b R. Yochanan said, 'All the prophets only prophesied for the Coming of the Messiah, but as far as the World to Come is concerned; No eyes have seen it but Yours alone, O God.)

*Chaimar* - wine is the choice of the text, in the Aramaic, instead of *Yayin* - wine, the Hebrew word. because, as the Talmud states, Aramaic is a language the ministering angels do not comprehend.

כי ענבים היינו טעות ושכחה, ומשה רבינו אמר [דברים ל"ב, י"ד] ודם ענב תשתה חמר, חמר מורה על [ישעיה ס"ד, ג' ועיין ברכות ל"ד]: עין לא ראתה אלקים זולתך כי [שבת י"ב]: אין מלאכי השרת מכירין בלשון ארמי,

The difference being this, that Moses is on the inside (of the Sefirah of Tifferet) while Jacob is the outside (of the Sefirah of Tifferet). So Jacob refers to grapes in the plural, thinking that Judah makes more than just the one mistake, and that God will need to do *Biruruin* - sorting and testing of Judah's tribe in two aspects, i.e. regarding the desire to both sexual sins and to idolatry. And God shows through history that Judah is pure in both aspects.

רק משה מלגאו ויעקב מלבר, כי אצל יעקב נאמר ענבים היינו שני טעותים יברר הש"י על שבט יהודה היינו יצרא דעריות ויצרא דע"ז, ובירר הש"י שהוא נקי בשתייהן,

While Moses is on the inside, and sees clearly that Judah has never made the slightest error in the area of idolatry, for in this aspect he has already been assayed and shown himself to be very, very pure. As Rav is quoted in the Talmud, saying, (Sanhedrin 63b) The only reason the Jews worshipped the Golden Calf was in order to give themselves licence to enjoy public sexuality.

While in the matter of idolatry they have already proven themselves very pure. And understand.

ומשה מלגאו כי מרע"ה ראה כי אין ליהודה שום טעות ביצרא דע"ז כי בזה כבר נתברר שהוא נקי מאד, רק יצרא דעריות צריך עוד להתברר, כדאמר רב [סנהדרין ס"ג]: לא עבדו ישראל את העגל אלא להתיר להם עריות בפרהסיא אבל ביצרא דע"ז כבר הם נקיים והבין:

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### [1:6] Benjamin is the wolf that preys.

Benjamin is the one who gathers all the goodness from among the nations and assimilates it into Israel.

בנימין זאב יטרוף. כי בנימין הוא מקבץ כל הטובות מבין האומות ומכניסם לישראל

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### [1:7] Naftali is a goodly hind who gives wise counsel.

Which is to say that Naftali has the tremendous ability to see through happenstance and mundane affairs to ask immediately (Isaiah 40:26) Who created all these?

That's the meaning of the phrase, **who gives wise counsel**. Since he recognizes God in everything he gives thanks for everything. This is why the Targum of Onkelos adds the the phrase, They give thanks and blessings for it.

נפתלי אילה שלוחה הנותן אמרי שפר. היינו כי נמצא בו השגה גדולה בכל עניני עוה"ז לשאול תיכף [ישעיה מ, כ"ו] מי ברא אלה, וזה פי' הנותן אמרי שפר היינו שכיון שהי' מכיר את הש"י בכל דבר הי' נותן הודאה אליו, וזה שתרגום אונקלוס ויהי' מודין ומברכין עליהן:

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### [1:8] He gathered his feet into the bed.

We learn in the Talmud, 'Jacob did not die.' (Ta'anit 5b)

What this means is that since death requires a person to go through changes, transitioning from this world to the next world, Jacob cannot properly be said to have died. For all those seventeen years that Jacob dwelt in Egypt, God gave him a taste of the world to come, a Drop of Life. So, it would not be true to say of Jacob that he died, as death held no changes for him at all.

ויאסוף רגליו אל המטה. איתא בגמ' [תענית ה:] יעקב אבינו לא מת, הענין בזה כי ענין מיתה הוא השתנות האדם מעוה"ז לעוה"ב, ויעקב כל אותן שנים שהיה במצרים הטעימו הש"י טיפה חיים מעין עוה"ב ע"כ נאמר עליו לא מת כי לא נשתנה במותו כלום,

That's why R. Yitzchak in the Talmud follows this pronouncement with the apparent non-sequitur; whoever says 'Rahav- Rahav' - invoking the memory of Rahav the prostitute - goes into immediate orgasm. R. Nachman scoffs at the idea, saying, 'I am not afraid to say it, it has no effect on me.' To which R. Yitzchok replies, 'It applies only to those who have known her and recognize her.'

וע"ז מסמיך תיכף הגמ' כל האומר רחב רחב מיד נקרי ומסיק שם הגמ' ביודעה ומכירה,

The connection between the two ideas is this. R. Yitzchak wanted to illustrate how lust and the physicality of this world can persist as a reality in a person's heart. So does the Drop of Life persist in the heart of Jacob from the moment God dripped it into him, remaining for ever afterwards. So it is not accurate to describe Jacob as having died. What most he resembles is a man undressing and then donning different clothing.

ולזה היא סמיכות הגמ' להראות כי כמו שנמצא בעניני עוה"ז חמדה שנשאר קבוע בלב האדם, כן הי' הטפה חיים שנקבע בלב יעקב אבינו בעת אשר נטף בו הש"י נשאר בו קבוע גם אח"כ, ע"כ לא יתכן להאמר בו לשון מיתה רק כאדם שפושט מלבושיו ולובש בגדים אחרים

This is the meaning of the verse in Isaiah (58:8) Then will your light crack open like the morning, and your good health spring swiftly forth. Your goodness will go before you and the glory of God gather you up.

The Hebrew word for crack open is *Yivoka* which has the same Hebrew letters as the name *Yakov* - Jacob, which has the same letters as the word *Kovua* - fixed permanently. Understand this.

וזה ענין הפסוק [ישעי' נ"ח ח'] אז יבקע כשחר אורך וארכתך מהרה תצמח והלך לפניך צדקך כבוד ה' יאספך, יבקע הם אותיות יעקב וגם אותיות קבוע, והבין:

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**[1:9] You planned to do bad, but God was planning to do good.**

Here God is showing us how it was possible to bring the tribes/brothers into Egyptian exile (loss of intimacy). The chief component is the separation and disconnection that sprung up between them. For while Israel is united there is nothing which can have dominion over them. What happened here was that Joseph disconnected from his brothers/tribes.

ואתם חשבתם עלי רעה אלקים חשבה לטובה, בזה הענין הראה הש"י איך הי' באפשר להביא השבטים בגלות מצרים ועיקר הי' הפירוד שהתחילו להפרד, כי בעת שישראל באחדות לא יוכל לשלוט עליהם שום דבר, והענין בזה הי' שפירש יוסף מן השבטים,

For so long as Jacob lived it was not apparent who is the greatest among the tribes, at times he would draw one of them near, at times another, whoever seemed most appropriate for that moment. But before he died, while blessing them, he said to Judah, 'To you your brothers will bow,' and so everyone recognized that Judah was the natural leader among his brothers. And that is why Joseph did not know how to act from then on.

כי בעוד שיעקב אבינו הי' קיים לא היה ניכר ממנו מי הוא הגדול שבשבטים כי לפעמים היה מקרב את זה יותר ולפעמים זה יותר, איזה שהי' ישר בעיניו באותו שעה, אך קודם לפטירתו בשעה שברכם ואמר ליהודה ישתחוו לך בני אביך אז הכירו כלם כי יהודה גבר באחיו, ולכך לא היה יוסף יודע איך להתנהג,

If he seated Judah at the head of the family it would demean his own majesty, a king may not allow his sovereignty to be demeaned. But if he took the place at the head of the family, it would only be in full awareness that he, Joseph, is not the leader, Judah is. Instead, he chose to sit by himself and not with his brothers.

באם להושיב את יהודה בראש הלא הוא מלך ואסור לזלזל במלך, ובאם שישב הוא בעצמו בראש הלא יודע בעצמו כי יהודה הוא הראש ע"כ ישב בפני עצמו ולא עם השבטים,

Now his brothers judged him negatively, saying he must have done it out of hatred for them. And so they were punished by having to go into exile, for they should have given him the benefit of the doubt.

והשבטים דנו אותו שעשה זאת מחמת שנאה ולכך נענשו להיות בגלות כי הי' להם לדונו לכף זכות,

Joseph is also considered to have sinned for having provided them with the opportunity for misunderstanding. Actually it was his duty to have behaved differently. He ought to have taken his place at the head of the family, since he was king for the time being, while in his heart he should have acknowledged that Judah is the greater.

וגם ליוסף נחשב לחטא על אשר הניח להם מקום לטעות בו, כי באמת הי' לו להתנהג שהוא ישב בראש מאחר שלע"ע הוא מלך, אך בלבבו היה צריך לידע כי יהודה גדול ממנו,

In fact, since the brothers made the mistake of thinking he would not acknowledge Judah's leadership there must have been something they saw in Joseph which confirmed their suspicion. And this is why it is so important to pray constantly that God never allow the thought to enter one's mind to judge another person guilty or negatively. And a person must always be in a state of prayer that his neighbor never judge him negatively. And this was why the tribes/brothers were punished. Because they transgressed upon their duty to give their brother the benefit of the doubt and judge him positively.

ובאמת מאחר שהשבטים טעו בו הי' נמצא בדבר שמץ מנהו לעיני אדם, וע"ז צריך האדם להתפלל תמיד לפני השם יתברך שלא יבוא בדעתו לדון את חבירו לחוב, וגם שחבירו לא ידונו לחוב וע"ז נענשו השבטים שעברו על שהיו צריכים לדונו לכף זכות:

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תם ונשלם ספר בראשית

End the Book of Genesis