



Perceptions • Kislev 9, 5786 • November 29, 2025 • Issue #2124

THOUGH the Torah doesn't mention it, Ya'akov Avinu spent fourteen years learning in the yeshivah and Shem and Eiver between last week's *parsha* and this one. They say that he learned so well that he never went to sleep, only that sleep went to him. He would learn until he couldn't, and once he woke up, shortly after, he went back to learning again.

Now that's what I call "power of focus." He hasn't left *Eretz Yisroel* yet, and his brother was hot on his trail to take revenge, and Ya'akov sat and learned like he hadn't a care in the world—for fourteen years! It's amazing that he still remembered while he was leaving for the *Chutz L'Aretz* in the first place, or that he could even do it!

It's amazing how we do it. We just read these stories as matters of fact and as if everything is normal and there is nothing to question or wonder about. But there are so many things happening in these *parshios* that, if you just think about it, you'd be forced to ask something. There is just so much convolution.

Not our enemies, though. Centuries of anti-Semitism were "encouraged" by stories like Ya'akov deceiving his father and "stealing" the blessings meant for Eisav. They don't bother to

ask why Yitzchak seemed okay with everything after the dust settled, or how Eisav himself admitted that he had short-changed himself for some food. That would burst their anti-Semitism bubble and strip them of their sense of meaning in life.

After all, all other religions go to the other extreme. Their saviors can do no wrong, even though actual history testifies otherwise. And their religions have not stood the test of time either, because they have compromised on so many important values just to keep themselves going.

But the Torah doesn't seem to mind feeding their need to find fault with the Jewish People. The rabbis didn't make the situation better either when you consider how many anti-Semites have based their vitriolic remarks about the Jewish People on sections of Talmud. Their interpretations and understanding are wrong, but we fed the "poison" to the children.

Until I learned Kabbalah, I wondered a lot about all of this. Like most people, I want truth to prevail and good people around me. I want to ride off into the sunset every day, meaning that I have a good day every day, as I define good. And like so many others with a similar outlook on life, I get so upset and disappointed when things do not go this way.

It's like what they say regarding health: "Don't ask the doctor why you are sick. Ask why you're not sick more often," given the billions of things that can easily go wrong with your body. Health may be "normal," but it is also miraculous.

The same thing is true about life and history. Don't ask why things go wrong, and then blame it on Murphy. Ask why they go right as many times as they do, given how God built this world and runs history. Even science has come around and admitted that chaos rules the universe.

It's not because God is sadistic in any way. It's not a result of mismanagement. It's actually because He loves man so much, and wants him to receive the greatest good possible. If we knew what great good was, and why this is the best way to get to it, we wouldn't change anything that God has done.

We're not talking about becoming psychologically insecure and waiting for the next thing to go south. We're talking about enjoying every "good" minute we have and using every opportunity well, knowing the entire time what a gift both are, and why sometimes struggle in life is more important.

Ya'akov Avinu had decades to sit and learn in Kollel before God literally yanked him out of there and put him on a road that meant fleeing for his life and sleeping with at least one eye open while in Lavan's home. And it was a path that brought him through Shechem and all that happened there, before returning home where his own sons sold Yosef into slavery.

"Vayaitzai" doesn't just mean he left home. It also means that he left his secure and placid environment for the larger and far more deceitful world. As he later complained to Pharaoh at the end of his life, it was a hard path. But it was also a necessary path, and while we may never know why in this world, it is enough to know that God does.

Books: Twenty-Four Days, The Light of 36, and The Equation of Life, all available through Amazon and Thirtysix.org. Podcasts: "Bridging the Gap" and "Twenty-Four Days" at Shaarnun Productions.

Good Shabbos,

Pinchas Winston