

## **Flexibility**

### **PARASHAT VAYISHLACH**

#### **RAV BARUCH SIMON**

One of the famous parts of the parasha is the struggle between Yaakov and the malach. This is why we don't eat the gid hanasheh. The Netziv has a unique interpretation to this story. The **Netziv** and Chazal say that it says the lashon of "Vayeaveik" twice by the section of the battle between Yaakov and the angel as if there were 2 battles. So the Netziv says the malach was fighting with Yaakov, but then the malach was ready to leave. So Yaakov comes back and starts to fight him again, a second round. That is why he was punished and he had his gid hanasheh hurt. Because he pursued the altercation when it was really over. Also, Yaakov has the middah of Shalom and here we don't see it, he didn't follow his regular middah. It's a big klal when a person does a good act, it becomes like something he's expected to do and when he doesn't he's punished. But why the gid hanasheh? The Netziv quotes the gemara in Taanis that "a person should always be flexible like a reed and shouldn't be hard like a cedar tree". Netziv says that Yaakov was punished because of veering from his minhag and because he was too rigid and strong minded, he was "kasheh ke'gid". A person is supposed to be flexible and not rigid. A rigid person has his set ways and will never change. But in life, sometimes a person needs to be flexible. A lesson in life is to be flexible.

The **Gemara in Taanis** gives a story that the idea of a person being flexible like a reed and not hard like a cedar tree, it says that the reed (which is flexible) a quill is made out of. The reed was zocheh that that is the utensil that is used to write a sefer torah. That middah is the middah that is so important that the Torah wants us to know that it is dafka from the reed that one writes the sefer torah.

The **Binyan Shelomo** quotes the **Zohar** that says that there are 365 gidim in a person keneged the 365 days of the year. Gid Hanasheh is keneged Tisha B'Av which is the day of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

The **Gemara in Bava Metzia** says that Yerushalayim was destroyed because they were judging with the din torah. A person could always be rigid and say they follow the exact law and they could be very strict. But the Torah wants you to be "lefnim mi'shuras hadin". That generation did not do that. They didn't have more chessed or compassion that there were supposed to have at all. They acted

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according to the law and did not go beyond the letter of the law.

The passuk tells us in **Mishlei** that a person who hardens his heart will have it bad. Flexibility can be looked at in two aspects. One has to have a willingness to change. You cannot be rigid on the account of others.

The sun rose and healed the gid of Yaakov. “Vayizrach lo Hashemesh” “Ve hu soleya al yereicho”. When the sun goes up, when know he’s getting healed. Why the repetition? The sun came out when he was already healed. (Sforno)

The **Sefer Imrei Noam** says that . “Vayizrach lo Hashemesh” “Ve hu soleya al yereicho” says the biggest refuah in life is to be able to see the problem. That itself is 95% of the refuah. A lot of people don’t even know whats wrong, they don’t realize anything that’s wrong. When the sun came up, Yaakov realized what was wrong (there was clarity) and that itself was his refuah because he saw his *pe’gam*.

The passuk says in **Malachi** that shemesh is a “tzedakah” and a “marpeh”. Because the sun brings clarity. So the yesod is that a person has to be flexible, be willing to change, be willing to be flexible (not rigid) and that’s the middah that the torah is written from, the reed is what the Torah is written from. Willing to compromise, willing to change, those are the middos we need to think about.

**R’ Yosef Engel** says that for us the shemesh will be a refuah, and for Eisav the shemesh will burn them up. Why? Because the goyim don’t go with the lunar calendar, they go with the solar. We are concerned with both. The sun represents extreme behavior. The sun and the moon balance each other. The Jewish people don’t have that extreme behavior that the goyim have. The goyim have the sun alone, they are extreme, and that is what burns them.