

פסוק וישלח. The מלאכים that יעקב sent to find out what עשו was up to returned to יעקב with the famous פסוק (32:7): בָּאוּ אֵל אַחִידָאֵל עֲשׂוֹ וְגַם הָלַךְ לְקִרְאָתָהּ וְאַרְבַּע מְאוֹת אִישׁ עִמּוֹ. This was a frightening report: עשו is coming with a force of men, and his apparent intention is to do harm.

So we know in response, יעקב adopted three strategies to prepare for this encounter:

1. דורון – sending gifts to עשו as a bribe.
2. תפילה – davening to ה' for protection.
3. מלחמה – preparing for battle in case it became necessary.

יעקב was a very capable warrior, but עשו was equally formidable. The מפרשים explain that יעקב feared not only the possibility of עשו killing him and his family, but also the prospect of killing עשו himself. He wanted to avoid war if possible.

When they finally met, an extraordinary thing occurred: יעקב bowed down to עשו, and עשו responded by giving him a kiss. Surprisingly, כמעט all the מפרשים comment that עשו meant the kiss genuinely. This raises the question: how was such a transformation possible?

The answer lies in the power of תפילה, which can accomplish anything.

There are a number of stories which are brought down in storybooks, or in מעשה בחולך as they say, which illustrate this interesting concept. There are numerous stories about great personalities from the old ישוב in ארץ ישראל - giants of spirituality and character about whom we know very little. I had the זכות to meet the רב נחום דוד הרמן of אלמנה, the son of the famous “All for the Boss” הרמן יוסף. I told her I had named one of my children נחום after her late husband. She graciously showed me his library and allowed me to take any ספר I wanted. Of course, I was a young man. I didn't really fully grasp what opportunities there were. So I chapped a few ספרים and one of them turned out to be a book one called הפותח שער by אליהו כי טוב, a fascinating book about the old ישוב of ירושלים.

One story in the ספר tells of רב נחום Shadeker. There's even a street in ירושלים named after him. The story involves a מוסר - a black belt troublemaker - named Grunchi Getches. He was notorious in ירושלים, stealing from peddlers and bullying people. Today we would call him a mafioso, really not a good guy. Once, he went so far as to slap רב נחום Shadeker.

Grunchi eventually disappeared for a while, but later, as רב נחום was traveling out of town for a שמחה with one of his תלמידים, they spotted Grunchi approaching with a group of men. The תלמיד warned, “That's Grunchi Getches, and he's out to get you.” Remarkably, רב נחום remained calm, closed his eyes, and appeared deeply focused. When Grunchi reached רב נחום, he bowed down, apologized for his actions, and asked for forgiveness. It was an incredible נס.

When they returned home, the תלמידים asked רב נחום how he had managed this. He replied that he had followed the example of יעקב אבינו, citing the פסוק (27:19): כַּמֵּיִם הַפָּנִים לַפָּנִים כֵּן לֵב הָאָדָם לְאָדָם: (27:19) משלי. יעקב אבינו explained that he did exactly the same thing that יעקב אבינו did. יעקב forgave עשו with all of his heart, for all of the עשו things that he did to him. And the trick is, he meant it. He didn't just say it, he meant it. רב נחום said, “I did the same thing. I worked on myself to forgive Grunchi completely, with a full heart, believing that Grunchi's actions stemmed from difficult life circumstances. By truly forgiving him, I removed the שְׂנֵאָה from my heart, which reflexively softened Grunchi's heart.”

This teaches us the profound power of being זכות דין and finding the good in others. It's a vital tool in combating שנאת חינוך and other מידות רעות.



It's a very good thing to follow this מנהג which I saw, that every morning before starting davening, I ask Hashem to grant עליית נשמה to all the members of my family. Through the זכות of my davening, as poor as it may be, I ask that all of those נשמות in the האמת עולם should have נחת, including my dear parents, my dear brother, my dear father-in-law, my dear uncle whom I never met but am named after, נְהוֹנֵתָן בְּנִימִין, and all of my grandparents.

After that, I say: הֲרִינִי מִקַּבֵּל עַל עַצְמִי מַצּוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל וְאַהֲבַת לְרַעְדָּה כְּמוֹדֶה. This is from the אריז"ל, I heard it from Rabbi Oelbaum, and since I mentioned it in his name, משיח should come any moment now. I'll say it again, and I can even make you a copy if you want: הֲרִינִי מִקַּבֵּל עַל עַצְמִי מַצּוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל וְאַהֲבַת לְרַעְדָּה כְּמוֹדֶה.

This is a fantastic thing to do before davening. It's included in some of the very big chassidish סידורים. I made copies of it - I keep one in the car, another in my סידור. But it's not just about saying it; it's about doing it. If we truly work on this, we can see things go our way - not because we want things to go our way, but because we want things to go the right way, לשם שמים.

May our עבודה be מקובל, and in that זכות, may we see ישועות and נחמות, im yirtzeh Hashem, for all כלל ישראל.

