



# Tiferet

ת פ א ר ת



## TIFERET SHABBAT

### *This Week in Tiferet*

This week Tiferet journeyed down South to the Negev and Eilat. Our three-day tiyul was packed with activities. We toured the archaeological site of **Biblical Beer Sheva**, rode on camels through the desert and hiked over the majestic mountains and through the magnificent canyons of the Negev. While in Eilat, we went swimming off a boat in the stunning water, went tubing and banana-boating, and even had time to go ice-skating at night. (Yes, in Eilat!) Most importantly, we learned about the historical and religious significance of this vital part of Eretz Yisrael.

### תורת תפארת

#### **Small Vessels, Big Light**

**Rav Elie Mayer (ravmayer@gmail.com)**

**Parshat Vayishlach**

In this week's Parsha, Yaakov does something intriguing. Having left his פכים קטנים, his small vessels on the other side of the river, he returns for them despite the dangers of traveling alone at night. The obvious question is why would Yaakov endanger himself for a few worthless vessels. The Talmud (Chullin 91a) answers that tzadikim exceptionally value pachim ketanim even more than themselves. On the surface, this seems to be an outrageous statement! Why would tzaddikim value small vessels more than themselves? Does Judaism espouse that a material good, even an expensive one has greater worth than the life of a human being? Certainly not. Life is sacred and is only endangered in extreme circumstances. In fact, the Talmud prohibits placing yourself in a dangerous situation. How can this statement in Chullin be reconciled with the creed of the preeminence of life?

I'd like to suggest that the Talmud was not referring to literal pachim ketanim, rather, metaphorical small vessels. The Zohar refers to the poor as כלים שבורים, broken vessels. In this context, pachim ketanim is referring to the people who are often left behind by society - the small people. They are the individuals who we do not consider worthy of our time and are considered insignificant or not considered at all. They are the people in the background that we hardly take notice of and would certainly not put ourselves at risk for them. We are all acquainted with pachim ketanim. They are the street cleaners, the person in Shul who sits by themselves in the back row, the girl that is socially awkward, the lady at the checkout counter. They could even be a classmate or a relative. Yaakov wanted to teach us that all Jews are intrinsically valuable and that every Jew, even a pach katan, is worthy of our time, love, effort and sacrifice. Tzaddikim, such as Yaakov Aveinu, value these Jews even more than themselves.

The Torah relates that while retrieving his pachim ketanim, Yaakov fought with a man that the Midrash identifies as Saar Eisav. The Gemara in Chullin, picking up on the word ויאבק and its connection to the word אבק - dust, comments that they were fighting so much that the dust rose all the way to the כסא הכבוד.

The difference between dust and dirt is that when you plant something in dirt, it can grow into something substantial. If you plant something in dust, it remains dust. The Zohar teaches that the Sar Eisav was telling Yaakov, that all of your efforts, everything you do is just dust. Nothing will come of it. You are worthless. You are just Yaakov, a heel and not

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## תורת תפארת (המשך)

capable of achieving greatness.

Tragically, sometimes, we see ourselves as pachim ketanim and listen to the deflating and denigrating lies of Sar Eisev. We don't believe that we are capable of greatness and believe that we are worthless pots that are certainly not worth others risking their lives for us. I've met so many young men and women whose greatest impediment to spiritual growth and accomplishments are themselves. If they don't believe that they can become great then they won't. They look in the mirror and instead of seeing Yisrael, they see Yaakov. They don't see their worth and their awesome potential.

The Kabbalah teaches that the pachim ketanim are an allusion to the pach hashemen of the Chanukah. The Chashmonaim didn't see empty vessels in their search for oil. They were students of the teaching in Pirkei Avot: Don't look at the superficial vessel, rather, look what's inside. They saw what looked like an empty vessel and saw in it the potential to light the Menorah for an entire week.

The most asked question on Chanukah is why do we celebrate eight nights when the miracle was only for seven, since they had enough oil for the first night. Perhaps, we could answer that on one night, we look into ourselves and see the light that is within us. We see that we are not empty worthless jugs but holy vessels that are full of infinite light and potential. This realization is worthy of celebration. We light 36 candles on Chanukah which is connected to the 36 hidden Tzaddikim. Maybe the message of Chanukah is the message of the pachim ketanim; that we have to see the hidden light in every single Jew and search for the hidden righteousness that exists within ourselves and believe that we are capable of achieving greatness.



## Down But Definitely Not Out

Miriam Mervin (Tiferet 5768)

This week, outside of Israel, people celebrated a day of remembrance, either Remembrance Day or Veterans Day depending on what country. Either way, they commemorate fights for freedom and a "Good vs Evil" of some sort. In this week's Parsha, we have the same sort of fight between Yaakov Avinu and Eisav. During this fight, we find that Yaakov Avinu was struck in the hip region and he was injured. From this we get the mitzvah of not eating the gid hanashe, a nerve Chazal has identified as the sciatic nerve, of an animal.

The Sefer HaChinuch writes about this mitzvah that it is one of remembrance of the fight and not to give up fighting no matter how dark it may seem. With Yaakov and the Malach, the fight ended when dawn was about to break. Today, it will be the same.

For us, there are two fights we are meant to continue to pursue. The first is a national one; that of Geulah and to keep doing mitzvot, no matter how hard it may seem in the darkness of Galut, since we have the promise of "dawn", Yimot haMashiach on its way. The second fight is that of an individual against their yetzer hara. We constantly have to continue to do what is right and not give up just because we may have been "wounded".

Ultimately, the Parsha tells us that Yaakov Avinu was healed by the rays of the sun. For us, it will be the same. All of the wounds that Klal Yisroel sustained through Galus will be ultimately healed by the light of Geulah, b'mheira b'yameinu. May the promise of dawn approaching help us to continue to fight for Geulah and our return to Eretz Yisroel whole as a nation and individuals.