



# אור בישראל

A LIGHT FROM WITHIN ISRAEL פרשת וישלח

י"ג כסלו תשפ"ה 14.12.24

## עם סיוון רהם-נאיר

**1** This week's parsha is Parshat Vayishlach, the eighth parsha in the Book of Genesis.

Our forefather Yaakov prepares to return to Israel and for the meeting with his brother Esav. In the final moments before the meeting, he offers a prayer: "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps." He remembers well how he left Israel with only his staff, and now he returns with a family blessed with children. Yaakov teaches us to live with an awareness of humility and gratitude.



**3** The Torah does not hide the fact that Yaakov is afraid, but he transforms his fear into action: he sends gifts to Esav, prays, and also prepares for potential conflict.

Our commentators learn from this parsha how to properly confront a threat or challenge that stands before us.

Yaakov wrestles at night with a mysterious enemy who touches his leg, in the area of his thigh, and this event impacts kosher dietary laws to this day. This is a fundamental principle: to turn events that happen to us into something practical, to transform stories into principles that will guide our lives. Shabbat Shalom.



### A STORY FOR SHABBAT

#### STAY IN "LOW GEAR" WHEN ENTERING JERUSALEM

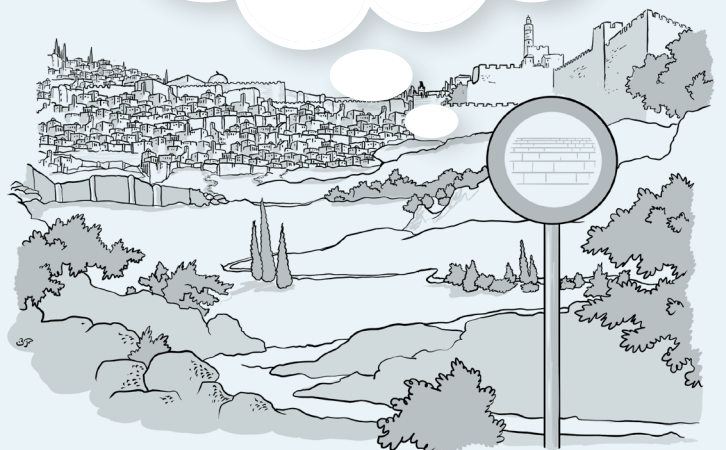
It was going to be the most exciting day of Nechama Leibowitz's life - the day she was making aliyah to Israel. She was born in Russia and had moved with her family to Germany, but she had always dreamed of living in Israel. She was only twenty-five years old and already a well-known Tanach teacher in Germany's Jewish community. At the time, she had no idea about the tremendous impact she would have in Israel. Soon Nechama would be regarded as one of the most important Tanach teachers in Israel, teaching Torah to tens of thousands of people. In the early years of the State of Israel, when so many olim (new immigrants) were arriving and new schools were being established for children coming from around the world, educators were thinking about how to teach Torah in Hebrew. Nechama was there to guide them in developing a new approach, and in this way, to provide nechama—comfort, which is the meaning of her name. Over the years, Nechama taught thousands of students and teachers. In addition, each week she would send out a sheet in the mail with questions about that week's parsha. Thousands of people would answer her questions and she would respond to each person in her own handwriting, correct their mistakes, and compliment them for interesting answers. But on that morning in 1930, she and her husband, Lipman, were both new olim traveling to Jerusalem. Their excitement grew as they got closer to the city. It was their first time riding up and down the steep hills leading to Jerusalem. As their car veered past one of the curves, they noticed a sign at the side of the road: "Stay in low gear," which was warning drivers to keep their car in the low gear setting while driving uphill or downhill. But Nechama was unfamiliar with the Hebrew used in day-to-day conversations in Israel. She had never spoken Hebrew in a store or while standing in line at a bank. The only Hebrew she knew was the ancient Hebrew of the Tanach. Now

imagine trying to read this road sign without knowledge of modern Hebrew. Nechama thought the modern Hebrew word for "gear"—הילוך- ("hiluch") meant "to go" and that the sign was instructing people how to prepare spiritually to go up to Jerusalem, the holy city. "How wonderful!" she told her husband, "In Israel there are signs to remind those going up to Jerusalem to be sure to enter the city with a sense of modesty and a humble, "lowly" spirit."

(From the "Ligdol" book series)

#### Food for Thought

Our forefather Yaakov teaches us that we need to stop and to acknowledge all the good things in our lives that we don't necessarily deserve but are gifts from God. The story about Nechama Leibowitz also reminds us not to take anything for granted, including the great blessing of living in or visiting the Holy City of Jerusalem.





## FROM THE DIARY OF A CHEMED STUDENT

### KEEPING OUR TRADITION

The Sigd is one of the holidays that the Ethiopian community in Israel celebrates. The Sigd takes place 50 days after Yom Kippur and it is an ancient holiday in



which Ethiopian Jews used to climb the highest mountain and pray together for the return to Jerusalem. It symbolizes the devotion of the Ethiopian Jews and their longing for Jerusalem and the land of Israel. Every year, Ulpanit Yeshurun puts special effort into celebrating the holiday in an enjoyable way so the students

will be able to learn about it while also enjoying the celebrations. This year the Ulpanit, along with students who volunteered to help with the planning, arranged fun activities and an exhibition in the main lobby in order to explain more about the culture and traditions of the Ethiopian Jews. In the first part of the exhibition, we introduced traditional Ethiopian food, music and clothing. In the second part of the exhibition, after everyone finished eating and dancing, students from the upper grades who had immigrated from Ethiopia to Israel shared their immigration stories and the hardships they faced on their Aliya to Israel. They also described how they celebrated the Sigd in Ethiopia. In conclusion, the holiday was very engaging and informative and many students (including me) enjoyed it and learned a lot from the different activities.

**Shega Atlai 10th grade, Ulpanit Yeshurun**

## "GOOD LEADS TO MORE GOOD": A STORY OF HOPE

**It's quite an amazing phenomenon: The situation in Israel is simply causing more and more people to donate kidneys. Leah Chester wrote to me:** "I always wanted to donate a kidney. October 7th made me understand that there's no reason to wait, and I approached the 'Matnat Chaim' organization. Why? First of all, because good leads to good. If we increase goodness in the world through small actions, we'll ultimately see great good. Also - precisely during a period of such immense grief and loss, I wanted to save lives. I wanted the kidney to go to a young parent, so there won't be more young orphans after this challenging year, and indeed I was fortunate



to donate to a young woman, a mother of children. And there's another reason - when people talked about a rift in the nation, I thought we need to step outside ourselves and connect our hearts, and even our kidneys... to show how connected we are. Thank God for this privilege. Yesterday I donated a kidney,

today I'm writing, can you share this?"

Yes, Leah. Thank you very much.

## Around the Shabbat Table

- There are "small actions" that create a great impact. What can we learn from this about the power of a single good deed, and what small "light" can you ignite in your environment?
- Think about a moment when you gave something you made with your own two hands to someone else - how did you feel? How did they feel?
- If we could light a "candle of goodness" every time someone did a good deed, how many candles would be burning in our classroom in one day?

