



VAYETZE

THE SPIRITUAL TRIFECTA: JACOB'S SELF-HELP FORMULA

Lessons from the Oblique Attack of King Friedrich of Prussia

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Vayetze

Jacob leaves his hometown of Be'er Sheba and journeys to Charan. On the way, he encounters "the place" and sleeps there, dreaming of a ladder connecting Heaven and earth, with angels climbing and descending on it; G d appears and promises that the land upon which he lies will be given to his descendants. In the morning, Jacob raises the stone on which he laid his head as an altar and monument, pledging that it will be made the house of G d.

In Charan, Jacob stays with and works for his uncle Laban, tending Laban's sheep. Laban agrees to give him his younger daughter, Rachel—whom Jacob loves—in marriage, in return for seven years' labor. But on the

wedding night, Laban gives him his elder daughter, Leah, instead—a deception Jacob discovers only in the morning. Jacob marries Rachel, too, a week later, after agreeing to work another seven years for Laban.

Leah gives birth to six sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun—and a daughter, Dinah, while Rachel remains barren. Rachel gives Jacob her handmaiden, Bilhah, as a wife to bear children in her stead, and two more sons, Dan and Naftali, are born. Leah does the same with her handmaiden, Zilpah, who gives birth to Gad and Asher. Finally, Rachel's prayers are answered and she gives birth to Joseph.

Jacob has now been in Charan for fourteen years and wishes to return home. But Laban persuades him to remain, now offering him sheep in return for his labor. Jacob prospers despite Laban's repeated attempts to swindle him. After six years, Jacob leaves Charan in stealth, fearing that Laban will prevent him from leaving with the family and property for which he labored. Laban pursues Jacob but is warned by G d in a dream not to harm him. Laban and Jacob make a pact on Mount Gal-Ed, attested to by a pile of stones, and Jacob proceeds to the Holy Land, where he is met by angels.



QUESTION

What is the best way to overcome negative tendencies such as anger, arrogance, conceit, greed, etc.?

TEXT 1

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Sichot
Kodesh 5741:3, p. 478*

ווען מ'דארף אויסהיילן א חולי, זיינען דא אין דערויף צוויי אופנים:
איין אופן אז מ'גיט א תרופה פרטית פאר דעם אבר פרטי וואס אין אים
איז דא דער חולי. אדער א צווייטער אופן, אז מ'גיט א תרופה כללית
פאר דעם גאנצן גוף, און דאס היילט בדרך ממילא אויס אויך דעם
חולי אין דעם אבר פרטי.

There are two ways to heal an illness: One is to administer localized medicine to the organ in question. The other is a holistic treatment of the entire body, which automatically [strengthens the immune system and] heals the localized illness of a particular organ.

TEXT 2

*Midrash, Bereshit
Rabah 68:11*

וּמָה הָיָה אוֹמֵר? רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי אָמַר: תַּמִּישׁ
עֲשִׂירָה שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת שֶׁבְּסֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים.

What prayers did he chant? Rabbi Yehoshua, the son of Levi, said, “He chanted the fifteen Songs of Ascent from the Book of Psalms.”

The Fifteen Songs of Ascent:

In his Book of Psalms, King David recorded fifteen prayers, Psalms 120–134, in praise of G-d, one for each of the steps in the courtyard of the Holy Temple.



TEXT 3A

*Rabbi Chaim Yosef
David Azulai, Yosef
Tehilos, Tehilim 120*

ט"ו שיר המעלות אמר דוד המלך עליו השלום,
כנגד ט"ו שנים שחיו האבות ביחד.

King David sang fifteen Songs of Ascent, corresponding to the fifteen-year span during which all three patriarchs were alive.

TEXT 3B

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 20, p. 125*

אברהם אבינו האט געלעבט "מאה שנה ושבעים שנה וחמש שנים", יצחק
איז געבארן געווארן ווען אברהם איז געווען "בן מאת שנה", און יעקב איז
געבארן געווארן ווען יצחק איז געווען "בן ששים שנה".

קומט אויס אז עס זיינען געווען "ט"ו שנים שחיו האבות ביחד".

Abraham lived for 175 years. Isaac was born when
Abraham was one hundred years old. Jacob was born
when Isaac was sixty years old.

This gives us a fifteen-year span when all three
patriarchs lived simultaneously.



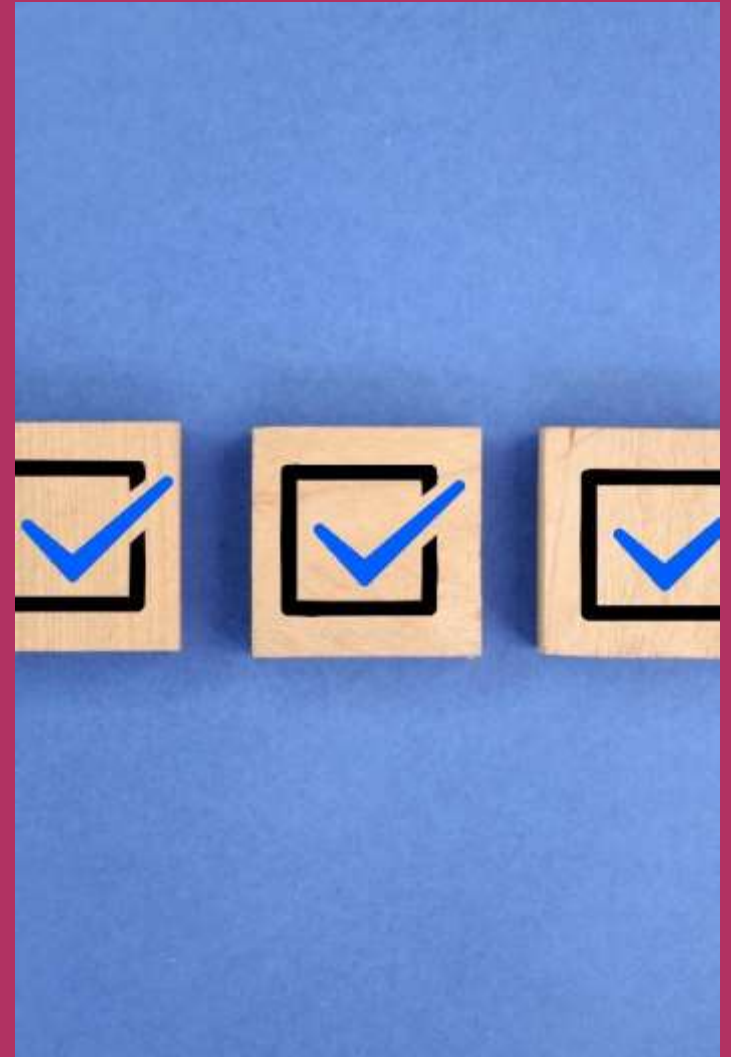
THE FIFTEEN-YEAR TIMELINE

1813 BCE	Abraham was born
1713 BCE	Isaac was born
1653 BCE	Jacob was born
1638 BCE	Abraham passed away

QUESTIONS

Yaakov marshaled three forms of energy because there were three patriarchs, but is there something significant about the number three?

Is there a reason to mount specifically a three-pronged attack against wickedness?



TEXT 4

*Rabbi Yisrael Baal
Shem Tov, Keter
Shem Tov Hashalem,
Hosafot 223*

דער בעל שם טוב נשמתו עדן האט געזאגט, אז אלץ וואס א מענטש זעט און אלץ וואס א מענטש הערט, דאס איז א אנזאג און א געוויסע הוראה מן השמים אין עבודת ה' יתברך. נאר מען באדארף פארשטיין וואס מען זעט און וואס מען הערט, און חלילה ניט האבן קיין טעות אין דעם מיין פון דעם וואס מען האט געהערט און פון דעם וואס מען האט געזען.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that everything we see and hear contains a lesson from G-d about how to serve Him better. We must seek the underlying meaning and not, G-d forbid, misunderstand the intent.

TEXT 5

*Rabbi Shneur
Zalman of Liadi,
Sefer Hamaamarim
5573, p. 3*

כי סדר מערכות המלחמה תמיד שמחלקים כל אחד החיל
שלו לג' חלקים, חלק אחד באמצע ונקרא דופן האמצעי,
ושתי ידות מימין ומשמאל. וכן מסדר גם הצד שכנגדו לג'
חלקים כאלו, ונלחמים אלו מול אלו.

The traditional order of battle is that each army divides its forces into three divisions—one in the center and two flanking right and left. The opposing military arrays its troops in much the same way. [When the signal is given,] each division battles its opposite number.

TEXT 6

*“Battle of Leuthen,”
www.britishbattles
.com*

The Austrian left was commanded by the Hungarian Hussar General Nadasti. Nadasti watched with horror as the Prussian columns appeared behind Lobetinz and wheeled around his flank. He dispatched orderly after orderly to Prince Charles at the other end of the Austrian line with messages that the Prussian attack was about to fall on the left flank.

Prince Charles was unconvinced and slow to take action to remedy the situation. When no attack developed . . . on the right flank, he came to the conclusion that the Prussian army had seen the extent to which it was outnumbered and hurried away south in full retreat.

In any case, the Austrian line was so long that it took the best part of an hour to move a significant body of infantry from the right to the left. Nadasti was beyond assistance.

The Oblique Attack:

Friedrich of Prussia defeated a larger army by attacking a single division of the enemy with all three of his divisions.

He then attacked the two remaining divisions and prevailed.



TEXT 7A

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman
of Liadi, Sefer
Hamaamarim 5573, p. 3*

והצלחת פרידריך אז, על ידי שנתחכם שיסדר כל ג' מחנות שלו נגד מחנה
וחלק אחד של השונא. וזהו הנקרא אטאקירען. כיון שכל ג' מחנות שלו
מסבבים מחנה אחד של השונא, ועל ידי זה מתגבר עליה.

ואחר כך יעשה כן למחנה ב' של השונא, וכן לג', עד כלותם.

Friedrich succeeded because he brilliantly arrayed all three of his divisions against a single division of the enemy. This tactic is called *atakiren*. In this tactic, all three divisions surround and engage a single division of the enemy and overpower it.

Subsequently, they attacked the enemy's second and third divisions, respectively, in like manner, until the enemy was defeated.

How can we
apply this tactic
to our daily
spiritual war—
the internal
conflict against
the yetzer hara?



TEXT 7B

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman
of Liadi, Ibid., p. 4*

והענין הוציא מזה הרב הקדוש רבי אברהם
זכרוננו לברכה בעבודת ה', שהיא מלחמת
היצר, ד"זה לעומת זה עשה האלקים"
(קהלת ז, יד). וכמו שיש מידות בקדושה:
אהבה ויראה ורחמנות או התפארות כו', כן
יש בלעומת זה אהבה בסטרא אחרא,
תאוות רעות, וכן ביראה כו'.

והנה כדי לאכפא ולא הפכא לסטרא אחרא,
לכאורה האופן פשוט דמיניה וביה לישדי
ביה נרגא – על ידי אהבה דקדושה שיעורר
לה' יפיל ויכניע האהבות זרות. וכן על ידי
יראה דקדושה יפיל יראות רעות כו'.

והוא כמשל המלחמה שנלחם כל חלק עם
שכנגדו כו'.

The lesson that the saintly Rabbi Abraham derived from this: In service of G-d, we must battle our internal negative urges, “for G-d enables unholiness to counter holiness” (Ecclesiastes 7:14). As we have positive holy traits, such as love, reverence, compassion, and beautification, to name a few, so are we endowed with attraction to unholy pleasures, aversion to piety, etc.

One would think that the best way to restrain and even transform the unholy forces is to fight each trait with its opposite number. Arousing our love for holiness displaces and subdues our passion for inappropriate pleasures. Similarly, reverence for sanctity expels inappropriate fear, etc.

This is like a conventional war in which each division battles the enemy's corresponding division.

TEXT 8

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman
of Liadi, Likutei Torah,
Devarim, p. 5a*

שעל פי רוב, יש כח ועוז בכל מידה דקדושה
לבטל המידה דקליפה המנגדת לה. כי יש יתרון
לצד הקדושה על הקליפה כיתרון האור
מהחושך.

As a rule, sacred traits are more potent than their opposite numbers—unholy, profane traits. As light is superior to darkness, so is holiness superior to unholiness.



When we shine the
light of truth on our
unholy urges, they lose
their power to resist.

TEXT 9A

*Rabbi Shneur
Zalman of Liadi,
Sefer Hamaamarim
5573, p. 4*

אך באמת אין זה מספיק כל כך לנצח המלחמה, כי
הקליפה מתגברת גם כן לעתים, כמו שכתוב: "ולאום
מלאום יאמץ" (בראשית כה, כג).

The truth is that this method is sometimes insufficient to win the war. At times, the unholy side rises with desperate intensity [to win a battle]. This is consistent with the passage, “One kingdom will alternately be mightier than the other” (Genesis 25:23).

TEXT 9B

*Rabbi Hillel of
Paritch, Migdal Oz,
pp. 391–392*

ויש בזה שני חסרונות:

הא', כיון שהמה נלחמים מערכה מול מערכה, ההכרח שיהרגו משני הצדדין, אף מן המנצח לבסוף.

והב', כי הנשארים מהמנוצח, אפשר שיהיו הגיבורים וראשי העם. ויש לחוש שברבות הימים יתגברו ויעמדו לו לשטן.

There are two drawbacks.

The first is that the winning side also suffers losses when armies square off face-to-face.

The second is that there might be warriors and leaders among the survivors who flee the battlefield. With time, they might raise a new army and put up new resistance.

The Drawbacks of a Face-to-Face Fight:

- In addition to the losing side, the winning side will face losses.
- Survivors among the losing side may flee the battlefield and form a resistance.

TEXT 9C

*Rabbi Hillel of
Paritch, Ibid.*

וכמו כן יש להבין ההפרש שבין הספרי מוסר והחידוש שחידשו תלמידי הבעל שם טוב - זכרנו לחיי העולם הבא, ותלמידי תלמידיו - זכר כולם לחיי העולם הבא.

כי בכל הספרים ספרי מוסר מבואר גנות המידות רעות ואיך שיש להרחיק מזה. למשל, איך שיש לגנות הכבוד והגאווה והמשגל, ויש בזה ריבוי מדרגות. וכאשר צריך למשש בכל פרטי מידותיו בכדי להרחיקה מעליו, לא ימלט משתי אלה:

א', כי מצד חשבו כמה גדול תאוות הכבוד וכדומה ידבק בידו מאומה מן החרם (ער קריגט דערינען געפילקייט) . . .

והב', כי אי אפשר ליגוף כל המדות רעות המוטבעים בו מתולדתו בגנות המידה לבד בלי הישאר מאומה. כי על כל פשעים תכסה אהבת עצמו, ואינו רואה חוב לעצמו. וכל שכן דקות המידה ומקורה ושרשה. כי כל אשר יגנה המידה, הוא בשכלו המוגבל ומוטבע בו, ואי אפשר שיגבר כל כך על המידות לגרשם כלה גרש יגרשם

The same is true of the traditional method to fight inappropriate urges versus the technique innovated by the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov.

The traditional Jewish ethics books derided the negative traits and explained why we must eschew them. For example, they described the decadence of arrogance, haughtiness, and lust in their many iterations. Examining each of these traits in detail to distance ourselves from them leads to two inevitable consequences:

The first is that contemplating our consuming and shameful need for honor and prestige, etc., inadvertently triggers haughtiness. . . .

The second is that we can't entirely eradicate our natural negative traits because self-love closes our eyes to the extent of our faults. This is certainly true of our subtle flaws. After all, we use our natural finite minds to battle our natural blemishes, and our fallible reason is incapable of fully identifying and excising its natural flaws.

Flip your
perspective:

Rather than
telling G-d how
big your
problems are, tell
you problems
how big G-d is.





ANSWER

We overcome our negative emotions by arousing our three positive urges, love, reverence and compassion for G-d.

TEXT 10

*Rabbi Shneur
Zalman of Liadi,
Tanya, Likutei
Amarim, ch. 26*

לְדַאֲגַת עֲוֹנוֹת חֲמוּרִים חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם . . . צָרִיךְ קְבִיעוֹת
עֲתִים וְשַׁעַת הַכֹּשֶׁר בְּיִשׁוּב הַדַּעַת, לְהִתְבּוֹנֵן בְּגִדְלַת ה'
אֲשֶׁר חָטָא לוֹ, כְּדִי שְׁעַל יָדֵי זֶה יִהְיֶה לְבוֹ נִשְׁכָּר בְּאַמֶּת
בְּמַרְירוֹת אֲמִתִּית.

If you worry about your grave sins, G-d forbid,
. . . set aside opportune times, when the mind
is calm, to reflect on the greatness of G d,
against Whom you have sinned.

TEXT 11

*Rabbi Shneur
Zalman of Liadi,
Sefer Hamaamarim
5573, p. 4*

אלא שיעירו כל ג' מידות דקדושה לעומת מידה אחד דקליפה, ועל ידי זה בודאי יפילו וינצחו אותה. וזה כמשל האטאקירען כו'.

וכמו כן אחר כך, יעירו ג' מידות דקדושה הנזכרים לעיל נגד מידה השנית דקליפה כו' עד כלותם.

The best way is to arouse all three positive urges to [surround and] battle a single inappropriate appetite. This will undoubtedly displace and defeat it. It is the atakiren method [of bringing three armies to bear against one and to attack from an oblique position].

Similarly, after defeating our first inappropriate urge, we array all three positive holy desires against the second inappropriate urge and attack it. Continue this way until all the cravings are defeated.

TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 20, p. 126*

און דערפאר דארף מען האבן די "ט"ו שיר המעלות" וועלכע זיינען "כנגד ט"ו שנים
שחיו האבות ביחד" אויף דורכגיין און ביישטיין דעם ענין הגלות.

די ג' אבות זיינען דאך (כנגד) די ג' מדות דקדושה, אהבה און יראה ורחמים. און בשעת
מ'האט אלע ג' אבות ביחד, דאס הייסט, מ'קלייבט צוזאמען אלע ג' מדות דקדושה ביחד
— דעמולט האט מען דעם כח ביישטיין די אלע נסיונות פון גלות און זיי מבטל זיין.

To survive our exile, we, too, require the fifteen Songs of Ascent that correspond to the fifteen years that the patriarchs were alive simultaneously.

This is because the three patriarchs represent the three cardinal sacred traits: love, reverence, and compassion. When we simultaneously tap into all three patriarchs and their sacred qualities, we can overcome and even obliterate every trial we encounter in exile.

Everything our ancestors did
is a precursor for us.



KEY POINTS

1. The traditional battle method is that armies are divided into three divisions—right, left, and center. The opposing army is similarly arrayed. When the signal is given, the two armies attack each other head-on.
2. During the Seven Years' War, Friedrich of Prussia defeated a much larger army by attacking the enemy's left flank with all his divisions. He then attacked the remaining divisions and prevailed.
3. Everything serves as a lesson to help us serve G-d.
4. When we are infatuated by something inappropriate, the traditional method is to oppose it by arousing a desire and love for G-d. The stronger, holier desire displaces the inappropriate infatuation.

KEY POINTS

5. This is a suitable method, but sometimes the other side might win. Even in defeat, it can exact a heavy price from the victor.
6. The better method is to simultaneously arouse all three traits: love of G-d, fear of sin, and compassion for our souls. This way, the inappropriate urge will be overwhelmed and fade entirely away.

