



## VAYISHLACH

**HATERS ARE GOING TO HATE. DON'T BOTHER WITH THEM.**

*Keep Doing What You're Doing and They'll Melt Away*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Vayishlach*

Jacob returns to the Holy Land after a twenty-year stay in Charan and sends angel-emissaries to Esau in hopes of a reconciliation. But his messengers report that his brother is on the warpath with four hundred armed men. Jacob prepares for war, prays, and sends Esau a large gift (consisting of hundreds of head of livestock) to appease him.

That night, Jacob ferries his family and possessions across the Jabok River; he, however, remains behind and encounters the angel that embodies the spirit of Esau, with whom he wrestles until daybreak. Jacob suffers a dislocated hip but vanquishes the supernal

creature, who bestows on him the name Israel, which means “he who prevails over the Divine.”

Jacob and Esau meet, embrace, and kiss, but part ways. Jacob purchases a plot of land near Shechem, whose crown prince—also called Shechem—abducts and rapes Jacob’s daughter Dinah. Dinah’s brothers Simeon and Levi avenge the deed by killing all male inhabitants of the city after rendering them vulnerable by convincing them to circumcise themselves.

Jacob journeys on. Rachel dies while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin, and is buried in a roadside grave near

Bethlehem. Reuben loses the birthright because he interferes with his father’s marital life. Jacob arrives in Hebron to his father, Isaac, who later dies at age 180. (Rebecca has passed away before Jacob’s arrival.)

Our parshah concludes with a detailed account of Esau’s wives, children, and grandchildren; the family histories of the people of Se’ir, among whom Esau settled; and a list of the eight kings who ruled Edom, the land of Esau’s and Se’ir’s descendants.



## QUESTION

What's your best strategy for dealing with naysayers and haters who are against the good, positive things you do?

# TEXT 1A

*Genesis 33:1-4*

א. וַיִּשָּׂא יַעֲקֹב עֵינָיו, וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה עֹשׂוֹ בָּא וְעִמּוֹ אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ, וַיִּחַץ אֶת הַיְלָדִים עַל לֵאָה וְעַל רָחֵל וְעַל שְׁתֵּי הַשִּׁפּוֹת.

ב. וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת הַשִּׁפּוֹת וְאֶת יְלָדֵיהֶן רִאשֹׁנָה, וְאֶת לֵאָה וַיְלָדֶיהָ אַחֲרָנִים, וְאֶת רָחֵל וְאֶת יוֹסֵף אַחֲרָנִים.

ג. וְהוּא עָבַר לִפְנֵיהֶם, וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה שִׁבַּע פְּעָמִים עַד גִּשְׁתּוֹ עַד אָחִיו.

ד. וַיֵּרָץ עֹשׂוֹ לִקְרֹאתוֹ וַיִּסְבָּקֵהוּ, וַיִּפֹּל עַל צַוְאָרוֹ וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ, וַיִּבְכּוּ.

1. Jacob lifted his eyes and saw, and behold, Esau was coming, and with him were 400 men; so he divided the children with Leah and with Rachel and with the two maidservants.

2. And he placed the maidservants and their children first and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph last.

3. And he went ahead of them and prostrated himself to the ground seven times, until he came close to his brother.

4. And Esau ran toward him and embraced him, and he fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

# TEXT 1B

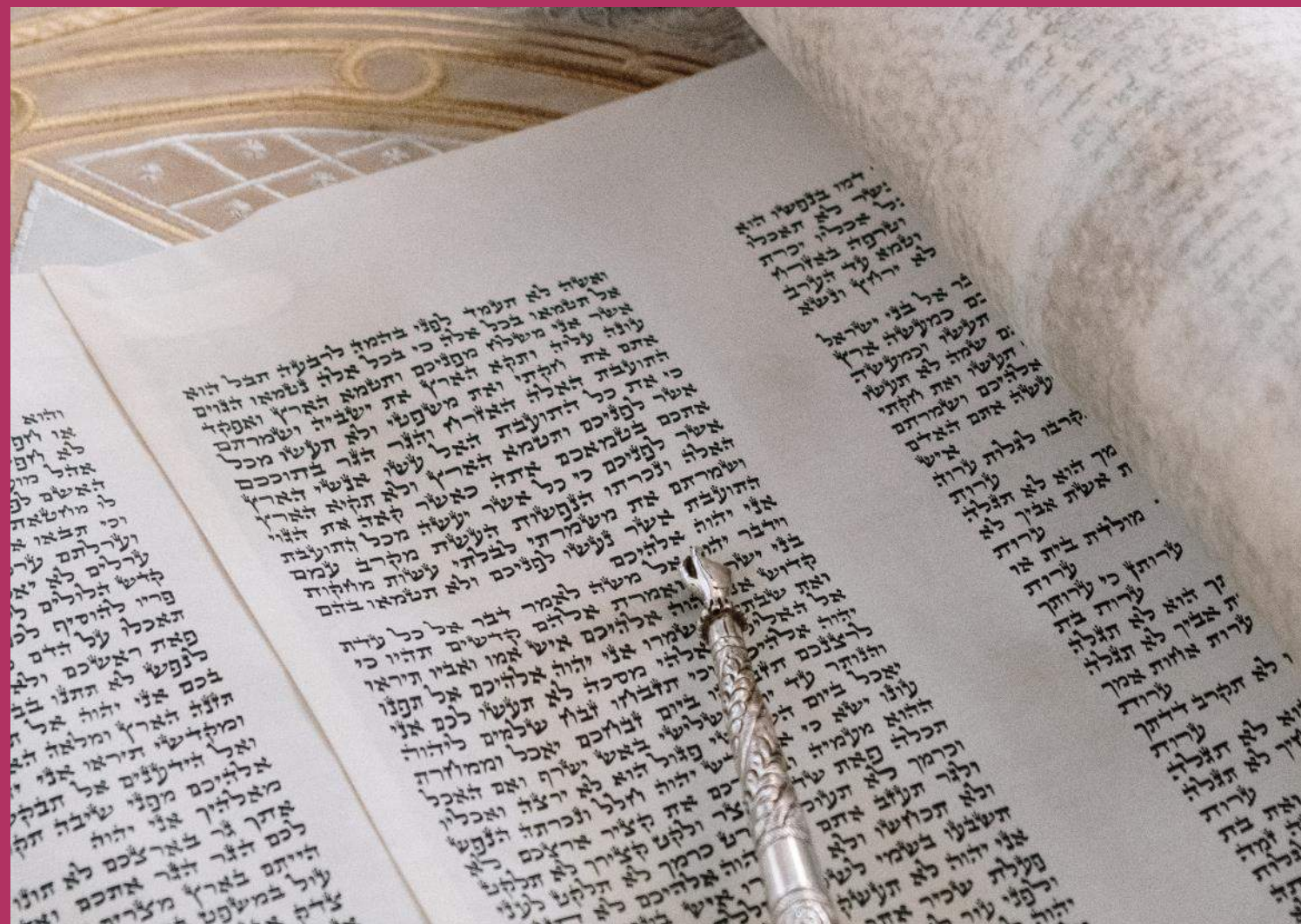
*Rashi, ad loc.*

"וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ". נִקּוּד עָלָיו; וַיֵּשׁ חוֹלְקִין בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה בְּבִרְיָתָא דְסַפְרֵי: יֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר־שׁוֹ  
נִקְּדָה זֹו אֶלֹא נִשְׁקוּ בְּכָל לִבּוֹ.

אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאִי: הִלָּכָה הִיא בִּידוּעַ אֲשֶׁעֲשׂוּ שׁוֹנֵא לִיעֶקֶב, אֶלֹא  
אֲשֶׁנִּכְמְרוּ רַחֲמָיו בְּאוֹתָהּ אֲשֶׁעָה וַיִּנְשָׁקוּ בְּכָל לִבּוֹ.

“And kissed him.” In the original Hebrew, there are dots over the word. There is controversy concerning this matter among the Talmudic sages. Some interpret the dots to mean that he did not kiss him wholeheartedly.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yocha’i said, “It is a well-known tradition that Esau hated Jacob, but his compassion was moved at that time, and he kissed him wholeheartedly.”



According to tradition, when dots appear on top of a word in the Torah, they are meant to minimize the meaning of the word.



## RASHI'S QUESTION

How did Esau all of a sudden have such a quick change of heart?

## RASHI'S ANSWERS

- A. Esau's kiss was insincere, an obvious “minimization” of the plain meaning of the word.
- B. Esau's kiss was sincere, this particular instance being an exception to the usual rule that Esau hates Jacob (Rabbi Shimon bar Yocha'i).

## TEXT 2

*Talmud, Gitin 49b*

וְרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן הָיָא, דְּדָרִישׁ טַעְמָא דְקָרָא.

Rabbi Shimon expounds the reason underlying the verse as a basis for drawing Halachic conclusions.



## QUESTION

If Esau's kiss was sincere, what changed from the “well-known tradition” that Esau hates Jacob?



Who was  
Rabbi  
Shimon bar  
Yocha'i?

# TEXT 3A

*Talmud, Shabbat 33b*

יְתִיב רַבִּי יְהוּדָה וְרַבִּי יוֹסִי וְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן,  
וְיִתִּיב יְהוּדָה בֶּן גְּרִימָא גַבִּייהוּ. פָּתַח רַבִּי  
יְהוּדָה וְאָמַר: כַּמָּה נָאִים מַעֲשִׂיהֶן שָׁל  
אוּמָה זוֹ: תְּקִנּוּ שְׁוֹקִים, תְּקִנּוּ גִשְׁרִים,  
תְּקִנּוּ מְרֻחָצוֹת.

רַבִּי יוֹסִי שָׁתַק. בִּעֲנָה רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן  
יוֹחָאי וְאָמַר: כָּל מָה שֶׁתְּקִנּוּ, לֹא תְקִנּוּ  
אֶלָּא לְצוּרָה עֲצָמָן. תְּקִנּוּ שְׁוֹקִין —  
לְהוֹשִׁיב בָּהֶן זִנּוּת, מְרֻחָצוֹת — לְעֵדֶן  
בָּהֶן עֲצָמָן, גִּשְׁרִים — לִיטּוֹל מֵהֶן מָכֶס.

הֲלֹךְ יְהוּדָה בֶּן גְּרִימָא וְסִיפֵר דְּבָרֵיהֶם  
וּנְשַׁמְעוּ לַמְּלָכוֹת. אָמְרוּ: יְהוּדָה שְׁעִילָה  
— יִתְעַלָּה. יוֹסִי שְׁשַׁתַּק — יִגָּלָה  
לְצִיפּוֹרִי. שְׁמַעוֹן שְׁגִינָה — יִהָרֵג.

Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Yosei and Rabbi Shimon were sitting, and [another person named] Yehudah, son of converts, sat beside them. Rabbi Yehudah opened and said, “How pleasant are the actions of this nation, the Romans, as they established marketplaces, established bridges, and established bathhouses.”

Rabbi Yosei was silent. Rabbi Shimon ben Yocha'i responded and said, “Everything that they established, they established only for their own purposes. They established marketplaces to place prostitutes in them; bathhouses to pamper themselves; and bridges to collect taxes from all who pass over them.”

Yehudah, son of converts, went and related their statements to his household, and those statements continued to spread until they were heard by the monarchy. They ruled and said, “Yehudah, who elevated the Roman regime, shall be elevated. Yosei, who remained silent, shall be exiled to the city of Sepphoris. And Shimon, who denounced the government, shall be killed.”

# TEXT 3B

*Ibid.*

אָזל הוא ובָּרִיָּה, טָשׁוּ בִּי מִדֶּרֶשָׁא. כָּל יוֹמָא הָהּ מִתָּא לְהוּ דְּבִיתָהּוּ רִיפְתָּא וְכוּזָא דְּמִיָּא וְכָרְכִי. כִּי תִקְרִי  
גְזִירְתָּא . . . אָזְלוּ טָשׁוּ בְּמַעְרְתָּא.

אִיתְרַחֲשׁ נִיסָא: אִיבְרִי לְהוּ חֲרוּבָא וְעִינָא דְּמִיָּא, וְהוּ מִשְׁלַחֲי מְנִיָּהּוּ וְהוּ יְתָבִי עַד צֹאנְרִיָּהּוּ בְּחֻלָּא. כּוּלִי יוֹמָא  
גְּרָסִי. בְּעִידָן צִלוּיִי לְבָשִׁי, מִיכְסוּ וּמָצְלוּ, וְהִדְר מִשְׁלַחֲי מְנִיָּהּוּ כִּי הֵיכִי דָּלָא לִיבְלוּ.

אִיתִיבוּ תַרְיֶסֶר שָׁנִי בְּמַעְרְתָּא. אָתָּא אֵלֵיהּוּ וְקָם אֶפִּיתְחָא דְּמַעְרְתָּא. אָמַר: מָאן לּוֹדְעִיָּה לְבָר יוֹחִי דְּמִית קִיסָר  
וּבָטִיל גְּזִירְתִּיָּה.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yocha'i and his son, Rabbi Eleazar, went and hid in the study hall. Every day Rabbi Shimon's wife would bring them bread and a jug of water and they would eat. When the decree intensified, . . . they went and hid in a cave.

A miracle occurred and a carob tree was created for them as well as a spring of water. They would remove their clothes and sit covered in sand up to their necks. They would study Torah all day in that manner. At the time of prayer, they would dress, cover themselves, and pray, and they would again remove their clothes afterward so that they would not become tattered.

They sat in the cave for twelve years. Elijah the Prophet came and stood at the entrance to the cave and said, "Who will inform Bar Yocha'i that the emperor died and his decree has been abrogated?"



# TEXT 4

*Talmud, Me'ilah 17a–b.*

אָמרוּ לוֹ תַלְמִידָיו: חָכִים לִיָּה בֶן יוֹחָאי, אָמַר לָהֶם: תַּלְמוּד עָרוּךְ בְּפִיו וְשֶׁל רַבִּי  
אֶלְעָזָר בֶּר רַבִּי יוֹסִי, וְשִׁפְעָם אַחַת גְּזֵרָה הַמְלָכוֹת גְּזֵרָה וְשֵׁלָא יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת וְשֵׁלָא  
יִמּוּלוּ אֶת בְּנֵיהֶם וְשִׁיבְעֵלוּ אֶת גְּדוֹת . . . אָמְרוּ: מִי יֵלֵךְ וַיִּבְטֵל הַגְּזֵרוֹת?

יֵלֵךְ רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי וְשֶׁהוּא מְלוּמָד בְּנִסִּים, וְאַחֲרָיו מִי יֵלֵךְ? רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּר רַבִּי  
יוֹסִי . . .

יֵצֵא לִקְרֹאתוֹ בֶּן תַּמְלִיּוֹן. רְצוֹנְכֶם אָבּוֹא עִמָּכֶם? בָּכָה רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן וְאָמַר: מַה שִּׁפְחָה  
וְשֶׁל בֵּית אָבִא נִזְדַּמֵּן לָהּ מִלֵּאדָּה וְשֶׁל שְׁפָעִים וְאַנִּי לֹא פָעַם אַחַת, יָבֹא הֵינִי מִכָּל מְקוֹם.

קָדִים הוּא, עַל בְּבִרְתִּיהָ דְקִיסָר. כִּי מָטָא הָתָם אָמַר: בֶּן תַּמְלִיּוֹן צֵא, בֶּן תַּמְלִיּוֹן צֵא.  
וְכִיּוֹן דְקָרוּ לִיָּה, נָפַק אֲזַל.

אָמַר לָהוֹן: וְשִׁאִילוּ כָּל מָה דְאִית לִכּוֹן לְמִישָׁאֵל, וְעִיִּלְיָנְהוּ לְגַגְזִיָּה לְשִׁקּוֹל כָּל דְּבָעוּ.  
אֲשָׁכְחוּ הֵהוּא אִיגְרָא, וְשִׁקְלוּהָ וּקְרָעוּהָ.

# TEXT 4

*Talmud, Me'ilah 17a–b.*

On one occasion, the gentile monarchy issued a decree that the Jewish people may not observe Shabbat, and that they may not circumcise their sons, and that they must engage in intercourse with their wives when they are menstruating. . . . The sages said, “Who will go and nullify these decrees?”

“Let Rabbi Shimon ben Yocha’i go to Rome, as he is accustomed to experiencing miracles. And who shall go with him? Rabbi Eleazar bar Rabbi Yosei. . . .”

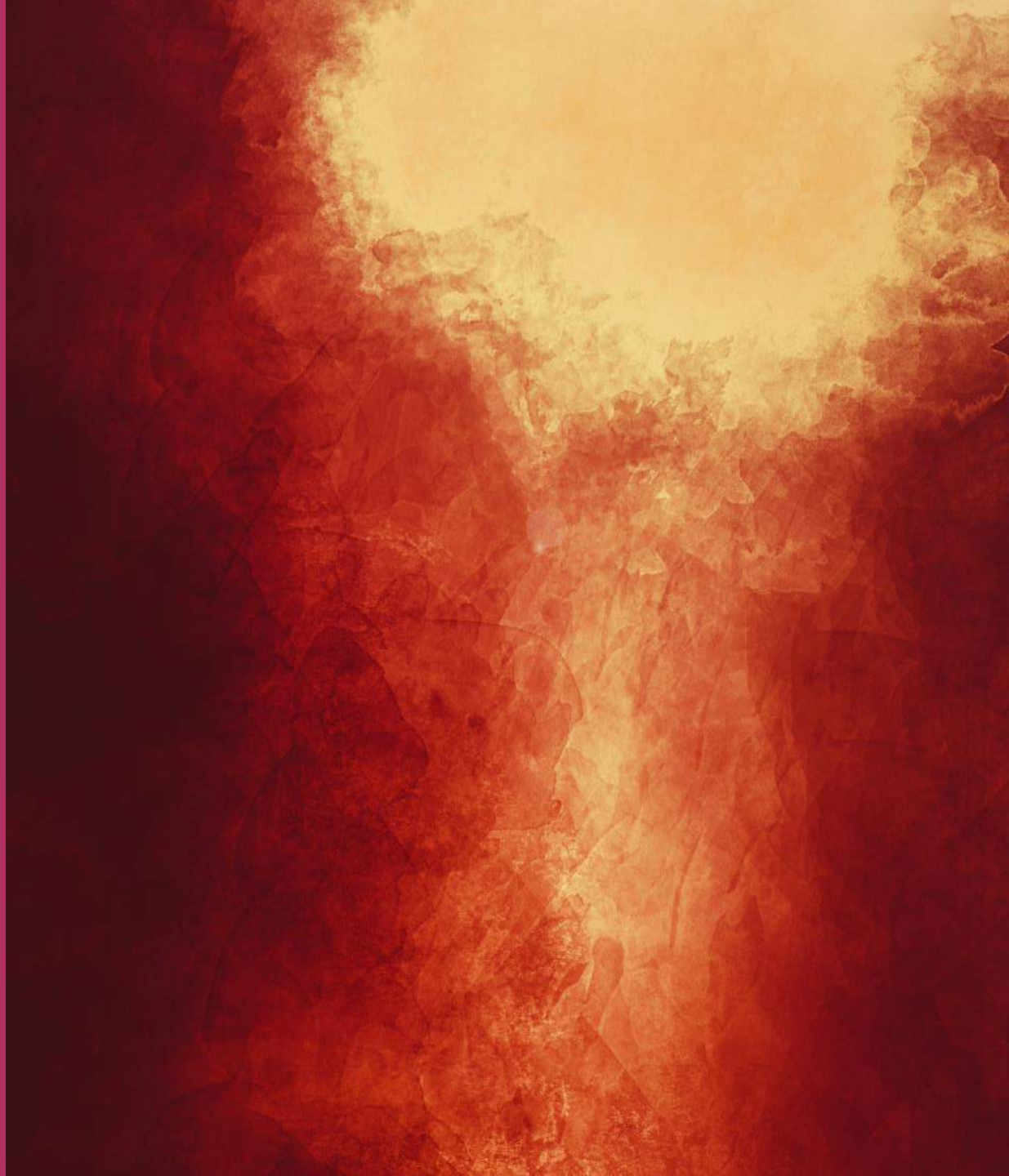
[As they were journeying, a demon named] Ben Temalyon emerged to greet them. He said to them, “Do you wish that I will join you and come with you [in order to help nullify this decree]?” Rabbi Shimon cried and said, . . . “In any case, let the miracle come [and save the Jewish people, even if only through a demon].”

The demon Ben Temalyon went before them and ascended into the emperor’s daughter and possessed her. When Rabbi Shimon ben Yocha’i arrived at the emperor’s palace, he said, “Ben Temalyon, emerge! Ben Temalyon, emerge!” And once Rabbi Shimon called to him, Ben Temalyon emerged and left, and she was cured.

[When the emperor saw that Rabbi Shimon had cured his daughter,] he said to them, “Ask from me any reward that you want to ask.” And he took them up to his treasury to take whatever they wanted. They found that letter [there that contained the decrees against the Jewish people, and] they took it and tore it up.

## The First Emergence:

The first time Rabbi Shimon and his son emerged from the cave, the father and son duo took divergent approaches on how to reengage with the world they had left for so long.





# TEXT 5

*Talmud, Shabbat 33b*

נִפְקוּ, חָזוּ אִינָשִׁי דְקָא כְּרַבִּי וְזָרְעִי, אָמְרִין: מְנִיחִין חַיֵּי עוֹלָם וְעוֹסְקִין בְּחַיֵּי שָׁעָה. כָּל מָקוֹם שְׁנוֹתְנִין עֵינֵיהֶן מִיַּד נִשְׂרָף.

יֵצֵתָה בֵּית קוֹל וְאָמְרָה לָהֶם: לְהַחְרִיב עוֹלָמִי יֵצְאוּתָם?! חִזְרוּ לְמַעַרְתְּכֶם! הַדּוֹר אָזוּל, אֵיתִיבוּ תְּרִיסַר יָרְחֵי שְׁתָּא.

אָמְרִי: מִשְׁפֹּט רָשָׁעִים בְּגִיהֶנָּם שָׁנִים עָשָׂר חֲדָשׁ. יֵצֵתָה בֵּית קוֹל וְאָמְרָה: צְאוּ מִמַּעַרְתְּכֶם! נִפְקוּ.

כָּל הֵיכָא דְהָוָה מָחִי רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר, הָוָה מְסִי רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן. אָמַר לוֹ: בְּנִי, דִּי לְעוֹלָם אָנִי וְאַתָּה.

They emerged from the cave, and saw people who were plowing and sowing. Rabbi Shimon bar Yocha'i said, "These people abandon eternal life of Torah study and engage in temporal life for their own sustenance." Every place that Rabbi Shimon and his son Rabbi Eleazar directed their eyes was immediately burned.

A Divine voice emerged and said to them, "Did you emerge from the cave in order to destroy My world? Return to your cave." They again went and sat there for twelve months.

They said, "The judgment of the wicked in Gehinom lasts for twelve months." Surely their sin was atoned for in that time. A Divine voice emerged and said to them, "Emerge from your cave." They emerged.

Everywhere that Rabbi Eleazar would strike, Rabbi Shimon would heal. Rabbi Shimon said to Rabbi Eleazar, "My son, you and I suffice for the entire world."

## TEXT 6

*Talmud, Sukkah 45b*

וְאָמַר חִזְקִיָּה, אָמַר רַבִּי יִרְמְיָה מִשּׁוּם רַבִּי  
שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָי: יָכוֹל אֲנִי לְפָטוֹר אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם  
כּוֹלּוֹ מִן הַדִּין.

Chizkiyah said in the name of Rabbi Yirmiyah in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yocha'i, "I can absolve the entire world from judgment for sins committed from the day I was created until now."

# TEXT 7

*Talmud, Shabbat 11a*

רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחֵי וְחֲבֵירָיו, שְׁתוּרְתָּן אוֹמְנוּתָן.

For the likes of Rabbi Shimon ben Yocha'i and his colleagues, Torah is their vocation and they never interrupt their Torah study.

## The Second Emergence:

In the year following the first emergence from the cave, Rabbi Shimon reached a level so spiritually rich that he was able to bring healing to the world as the world operates—not necessarily as the Torah says it should operate.



# TEXT 8

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 20, p. 152*

איז שייך ווען דאס איז נישט דורך צוברענגען אז כל העולם כולו טוט תשובה, נאר — ווי די וועלט שטייט אין א מעמד ומצב של דין מצד ענינים בלתי רצוים אין ער "סובל כל עוונותיהם ופותרן מן הדין".

וואס אין א פרט איז דאס א פיל גרעסערער אויפטו ווי דאס פועל'ן א שינוי אין וועלט, וואס דעמאלט ווערט דאך דער מטה נתעלה, ער ווערט אויס מטה, דער רע ווערט בטל ונתהפך. מה שאין כן דא זאגט רבי שמעון בר יוחאי אז אלקות קען דערגרייכן און פועל'ט אויך אין דעם מטה ווי ער איז מטה און אין דעם רע ווי ער איז במקומו.

Rabbi Shimon's approach was such that he didn't need to bring the entire world to *teshuvah*. Rather, Rabbi Shimon's approach tolerates a world still mired in a situation that warrants judgment due to inappropriate behavior, and yet, "I can absolve the entire world from judgment for sins."

In a way, this is far greater than effecting change in the world where the lower party is elevated and ceases being "low," namely the evil is cancelled and transformed. Rabbi Shimon goes a step further and says that G-dliness can reach and impact the lowest of places even in its lowly state: the evil in its own natural habitat.



Both Rabbi  
Shimon bar  
Yocha'i and  
Jacob were  
accustomed  
to miracles.



## TEXT 9

*Rashi, Genesis 32:11*

"כִּי בַמֶּקְלִי" . . . וּמִקְרָא אַחֵר, נָתַן מִקְלוֹ בַּיַּרְדֵּן  
וַנִּבְקַע הַיַּרְדֵּן.

“For with my staff” . . . The *Midrash Agadah* states, “He placed his staff into the Jordan, and the Jordan split.”



## TEXT 10

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 20, p. 152*

יעקב, וואס איז געווען א מלומד בניסים, האט גע'פועל'ט  
אויף עשו'ן (כאטש הלכה היא בידוע שעשו שונא ליעקב) אז  
נכמרו רחמיו באותה שעה ונשקו בכל לבו.

Jacob was accustomed to experiencing miracles. So, though the rule is that Esau hates Jacob, Jacob was able to influence him so much that his mercy was aroused at that moment and Esau kissed him wholeheartedly.

## ANSWER

Since Jacob possessed the same miraculous quality of overwhelming opposition, for the few moments that Esau stood in his brother's presence, he was overwhelmed with goodness and sincerely reached out with an emotional kiss.

# TEXT 11

*Rashi, Genesis 25:9*

"יִצְחָק וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל". מִכָּאן נִשְׁעָשָׂה יִשְׁמָעֵאל תְּשׁוּבָה  
וְהוֹלִיךְ אֶת יִצְחָק לְפָנָיו, וְהִיא שִׁיבָה טוֹבָה שְׁנֵאמַר  
בְּאַבְרָהָם.

“Isaac and Ishmael.” From here [we may deduce] that Ishmael repented and let Isaac go before him, and that is the meaning of “a good old age,” which is stated regarding Abraham (Genesis 15:15).

## TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 20, pp. 152–153*

די פעולה פון יעקב אויף עשו איז ניט אין דעם אז עשה עשו  
תשובה; נאר אז עשו זייענדיק אין דעם מעמד ומצב וואס  
"הלכה היא בידוע שעשו שונא ליעקב", ווערט אויך בא  
אים "נכמרו רחמיו כו' ונשקו בכל לבו".

Jacob didn't influence Esau to do *teshuvah*. Rather, he was able to impact Esau in such a way that even while in his position of "it's a well-known tradition that Esau hates Jacob," he was "aroused with compassion and kissed him sincerely."



## ANSWER

Like Jacob and Rabbi Shimon, overwhelm your opposition with intense goodness.

## KEY POINTS

1. Esau hated Jacob, yet demonstrated love and compassion when they reunited, publicly kissing him.
2. Rabbi Shimon bar Yocha'i led a miraculous life: he was persecuted by the Romans, yet he successfully lobbied them to annul a decree against the Jews.
3. This reflected his lofty spiritual status of being able to neutralize opposition by bypassing the usual *teshuvah* process of transformation.
4. Jacob, too, was accustomed to miracles, possessing the same quality of overwhelming the opposition while they were in his presence. This explains Esau's sudden turnaround.
5. We can emulate this approach by neutralizing opposition with a strong display of conviction and commitment.

