

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT VAYISHLACH

9-10 DECEMBER | 16 KISLEV

Confidence vs Humility



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At the beginning of the Parasha, Yaakov (Jacob) sends messengers to his brother Esav (Esau) saying: "I have stayed with Lavan and remained until now." Why did Yaakov send this cryptic message to Esav?

Rashi (1040-1105) provides two seemingly opposite answers. Firstly, he says that Yaakov was implying that he did not become a dignitary or notable person, but stayed a mere 'stranger' with Lavan. Yaakov was telling Esav not to fear him as he was still a nobody, demonstrating that the blessings of their father had not come true and that he would not rule

over Esav.

Alternatively, Rashi offers a different understanding, namely that Yaakov was saying: "I remained with Lavan yet I kept the 613 commandments and did not learn from his evil actions". This implies that Yaakov was gloating about how great he was for not being swayed by all the negative influences around him.

These two ways of interpreting Yaakov's words seem contradictory. The first suggests that he didn't become anyone big and wasn't worthy of Esav's time, yet the second interpretation is that he was able to keep the whole Torah even under such difficult circumstances and that he therefore had God on his side.

There is a story about Rabbi Simcha Bunim (c.1765–1827), who

used to walk around with two notes, one in each of his pockets. In one pocket the note read "I am only dust and ashes." When he was feeling too proud, he would reach into this pocket and take out this paper and read it. In the other pocket the note read, "For my sake the world was created." When he was feeling disheartened and lowly, he reached into this pocket and read this note.

These two messages need to be applied correctly at different times. Sometimes we need to feel small and humble, but at other times we must feel that there is no one better than us and that we are the only person for the job. With his two answers, Rashi shows us that we need to aim to strike the balance between the two.

Parasha Wordsearch

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TORAH BLESSINGS MESSENGERS CHARAN
YAAKOV CONFIDENCE ESAV
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HUMILITY

