



*Yeshivat Ma'alot*  
*Parashat Va'yishlach*  
*Rav Yehoshua Weitzman shlit"a*

ישיבת מעלות  
 פרשת וישלח  
 הרב יהושע ויצמן שליט"א

*The Eternal Nation Does Not Fear the Long Way*

In this week's parasha, before Ya'akov and Esav part ways, Esav offers that they go together. Ya'akov answers<sup>1</sup> "Let my master pass over before his servant; and I will lead on slowly, according to the pace of the cattle that goes before me and the children, until I come to my master, to Se'ir."

Chazal, in the Zohar Hakadosh, saw the difference between the attitude of Am Yisrael and the attitude of the nations of the world within this pasuk. Ya'akov did not only tell Esav to pass in front of him, but rather said that he can have control of this world. Ya'akov said that he would slowly rise to power in the end of days and have control of the world to come.

What does it mean that Esav, who represents Edom and the nations of the world, would rule before Ya'akov? What do we, as the Jewish nation, have to learn from this? Before addressing this question, it is necessary to mention what Reb Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin writes in his book Tzidkat Hatzadik. The world was created in the order that night comes before day- "ויהי ערב ויהי בקר". So too, all of the creation and all of history is characterized by darkness preceding light, absence before existence.

The same is true with regard to the physical and spiritual. The physical needs of man are awakened within him much earlier than his spiritual character. So too, this pattern is seen in the difference between man and animal. A Russian scientist by the name of Pablov conducted an experiment in order to compare the difference of the rate of development between humans and monkeys. He compared his baby son, and a baby monkey that were both born on the same day. What he observed was that in the beginning the monkey developed at a much quicker pace than the baby. When the baby was barely able to roll on its side, the monkey was already running and playing, and when the baby was learning to walk, the monkey was already tending to its offspring. Only when the baby began to talk did he surpass the monkey. The baby began to develop mentally at a much quicker pace, and ultimately it's obvious who put whom in the cage.

In an animal, there is no potential, what you see is what you get. The word for human in Hebrew, אדם, comes from the word אדמה, which means earth. The earth holds great potential for growth and production, yet the only way to bring these things to fruition is through the hard work of man. Here lies the difference between man and animal. While the animal is born "complete," man is born only at the very beginning stages of his development. He has a spiritual side, which takes time to cultivate and develop. When born, man is not aware of the presence of God, he doesn't understand that he has a soul, and that the soul needs spiritual nourishment. Rather he is only aware of his material needs, food and sleep, and only as he progresses in age, does he become aware of his spiritual surroundings. This process, unlike that of an animal, takes time.

The Gemara in Masechet Bava Metzia<sup>2</sup> states that Am Yisrael is called אדם, but the nations of the world are not called אדם. The nations of the world are characterized by the fact that they are inherently connected to the physical and material parts of the world; therefore, it does not take time for

<sup>1</sup> Bereshit 33: 14

<sup>2</sup> Bava Metzia 114b

them to gain control. They don't have a spiritual side that needs to be developed. This is why Esav took immediate control of the world; this is why today Esav still controls the world. Yet Am Yisrael is exactly the opposite. Am Yisrael is in no rush to gain control, they are not afraid of the long way ahead of them. Am Yisrael understands that at the end of this process, when they are redeemed from the exile of Esav and Edom, that they will reach their full potential and that their true Godly essence will permeate all of creation. The greater something is, the longer it takes for it to expand. This is what Ya'akov Avinu understood, and this is why he agreed that Esav should pass before him, and that he will slowly follow.

The difficulties that we see in our time are not simply roadblocks or obstacles that are holding us back from the Geulah. Rather these roadblocks, this slow and sometimes difficult development of Am Yisrael is the *only* way to Geulah. By understanding exactly the nature of Am Yisrael and how Am Yisrael will ultimately come to full fruition, we can draw strength and hope for the times that we are living in today.

### עם הנצח לא מפחד מדרך ארוכה<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This famous phrase was first thought of by Rav Weitzman. Several years ago his students put these words to a famous chasidic niggun and it spread all over the world.