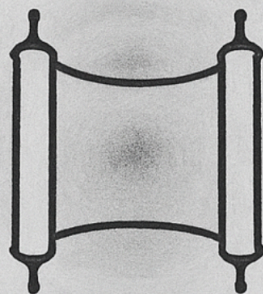


בס"ד

**Rebbe Elimelech  
of Lizhensk  
Parshas Vayishlach**



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# The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech  
Parshas Vayishlach

## Introduction

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717–1787), one of the foundational tzaddikim of early Chassidus and author of *Noam Elimelech*, illuminated the path of divine service through humility, purity of thought, and the transformative power of a tzaddik's words and prayers. In this maamar, he explains the spiritual dynamics behind Jacob's encounters with Esau, the nature of foreign thoughts, the path to holiness through submission, and the way a tzaddik elevates even the evil inclination.

**And Jacob sent angels before him etc.** It appears to explain by hint that the tzaddik, whose entire service is to be attached to the Blessed One and raise his soul beneath the Throne of Glory, remains bound to his root.

And the tzaddik who refines his body and purifies himself of all external desires, then even his purified body is attached to the Blessed One. And this is the term prayer, meaning attachment, like "the wrestlings of God" (Genesis 30:8).

For through prayers that are clear and pure with pure thoughts, one becomes attached to Him. And this is "and he sent," meaning accompaniment, like "Pharaoh commanded men and they sent him," whose Targum is "and they accompanied him."

Meaning that the tzaddik accompanies the angels sent before him, for the words leaving the mouth of the tzaddik create angels, and his purified body assists those angels to ascend upward.

"Before him to Esau his brother" means that through this he causes Esau to become his brother. "To the land of Seir, the field of Edom" means that he becomes his brother below and above, in the realm called the field of Edom.

"And he commanded them saying" means command is language of urging. The tzaddik sends forth his words with such holiness and zeal that they become strong enough that it will be said automatically that Esau is transformed into his brother.

For it is surely not appropriate to make this the focus of prayer, but through attachment in the tzaddik's other prayers and words

וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לִפְנֵי כו'. נִרְאֶה לְפָרֵשׁ עַל דְּרָךְ הַרְמָז דְּהִנֵּה הַצַּדִּיק כָּל עֲבוֹדָתוֹ הוּא לְהִיְתוֹב דְּבוּק בּוֹ יְתִבְרָךְ וַיִּתְעַלֶּה וַיִּלְדִּבֵּק נִשְׁמָתוֹ תַּחַת כִּסֵּא הַכְּבוֹד מְקוֹם שְׁרָשׁוֹ.

וְהַצַּדִּיק הַמְזֻכָּר אֶת גּוּפוֹ וּמִטְהַר עֲצָמוֹ מִכָּל הַתַּאֲוִיּוֹת הַחִיצוֹנִים אֲזִי גַם גּוּפוֹ הַטָּהוֹר דְּבוּק בּוֹ יְתִבְרָךְ. וְזֶה הוּא לְשׁוֹן תַּפְלָה דְּהֵינּוּ דְּבִקּוֹת כְּמוֹ "נִפְתּוּלֵי אֱלֹקִים (כו') (בְּרֵאשִׁית פֶּרֶק ל פסוק ח

שְׁעֵל־יָדֵי הַתַּפְלוֹת הַנּוֹכוֹת וְהַצְלוּלוֹת בְּמַחְשָׁבוֹת טָהוֹרוֹת נִתְדַבֵּק בּוֹ יְתִבְרָךְ. וְזֶהוּ "וַיִּשְׁלַח" לְשׁוֹן לְוִיָּה כְּמוֹ "וַיֵּצֵא פָרְעֹה אֲנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁלַחוּהוּ" תַּרְגוּם "וַיֵּאֻלוּהוּ".

רְצוֹנוֹ לומר שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק מְלוּוֶה אֶת הַמַּלְאָכִים הַנִּשְׁלָחִים לִפְנֵי דְּהֵינּוּ הַדְּבוּרִים הַיוֹצְאִים מִפִּי הַצַּדִּיק נִבְרָאִים מֵהֶם מַלְאָכִים וְהֵינּוּ שְׁגָם גּוּפוֹ הַטָּהוֹר סוֹעֵד לַמַּלְאָכִים שְׁלוֹ שִׁיעָלוֹ לְמַעְלָה.

"לִפְנֵי אֵל עָשׂוֹ אָחִיו" רְצוֹנוֹ לומר עַל־יָדֵי זֶה גּוֹרֵם שֶׁעָשׂוֹ נַעֲשֶׂה אָחִיו. "אֲרָצָה שְׁעִיר שְׂדֵה אֲדוֹם" פְּרוּשׁ שֶׁנַּעֲשֶׂה אָחִיו לְמַטָּה לְזֶה רְמָז "אֲרָצָה שְׁעִיר" וְגַם נַעֲשֶׂה אָחִיו לְמַעְלָה דְּהֵינּוּ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ הַנִּקְרָא "שְׂדֵה אֲדוֹם" שֶׁר שֶׁל אֲדוֹם נַעֲשֶׂה גַם־כֵּן אָחִיו.

"וַיִּצְוֵם אוֹתָם לֵאמֹר" פְּרוּשׁ "צִו" הוּא לְשׁוֹן יִרְוֹז כְּדִי"תָא "אִין צו אֵלָא יִרְוֹז" דְּהֵינּוּ שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק מוֹצִיא דְּבָרָיו מִפִּי הַקְּדוּשָׁה וּבִירוֹז כָּל־כֶּף עַד שֶׁהֵם נַעֲשִׂים חֲזָקִים כָּל־כֶּף "לֵאמֹר" פְּרוּשׁ שֶׁיֵּאֱמַר מִמִּילָא הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה שִׁיתְהַפֵּף עָשׂוֹ לְאָחִיו.

כִּי בּוֹדָאִי אִין מִן הַנִּכּוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת זֶה עֶקֶר הַתַּפְלָה רַק עַל־יָדֵי הַדְּבִקּוֹת בְּשֶׁאֵר תַּפְלוּתָיו וּדְבָרָיו שֶׁל הַצַּדִּיק

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with pure and clear thoughts, the matter emerges automatically so that even his enemies make peace with him.

And this is the hint that Jeremiah the prophet commanded (Jeremiah 17:22) “and do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day.” For according to a person’s conduct during all the weekdays with pure thoughts in prayer, then on the holy Sabbath additional holiness rests upon him more and more.

And conversely, Heaven forbid, if he goes wayward after his heart with foreign and confused thoughts, then on the Sabbath all the weekday thoughts of outside and rejected matters cause the gates of prayer to be sealed, so that the prayers of Israel cannot ascend.

Meaning that they stand at the entrance of the upper gates and block the prayers of the gate of Israel. And this is what the prophet warned: “and do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day,” meaning foreign thoughts that are like a heavy burden, passing before him on the Sabbath because he thought them all week.

“And bring them into the gates of Jerusalem” meaning do not bring those prayers spoiled by foreign thoughts into the upper gates, for they stand at the entrance and block the prayer of Israel from ascending.

And how should awe not rise upon his head and great trembling in the lowly person’s heart, for how far his sin causes harm to himself and to others.

“Thus you shall say to my lord, to Esau.” The holy Torah teaches us how to conduct ourselves in this bitter exile in which we are placed under the hand of the nations, and we are compelled to accept the exile with love until God has mercy upon us and redeems us with an eternal redemption.

And while we are in this bitter exile, we are compelled to be submissive before them and to call them masters. This is “thus you shall say to my lord, to Esau,” meaning you shall call him master when speaking with him.

במחשבות טהורות וצלילות ממילא יוצא הדבר הזה לפעולתו שגם אויביו ישלים עמו.

וזהו רמז שצוה ירמיהו הנביא (ירמיהו פרק יז פסוק כב) “ולא תוציאו משא מבתיכם ביום השבת” דהנה פני הנהגתו של אדם כל ימי השבוע ימי החל במחשבות טהורות בתפלה אזי בשבת קדש נתוספת בו קדושה יתרה יותר ויותר.

וכן להיפך חס ושלום אם הולך שוכב בדרך לבו במחשבות זרות ומערפבות אזי ביום השבת כל המחשבות של ימי החל במחשבות חוץ ופגול וחס ושלום נסתמים שערי תפלות מלעלות תפלות ישראל.

דהיינו שעומדים על פתח השערים העליונים ומעכבים תפלות שער ישראל. וזהו שהזהיר אותם הנביא “ולא תוציאו משא מבתיכם ביום השבת” דהיינו המחשבות זרות שהם כמשא גדול ועוכרים לפניו ביום השבת מחמת שחשב בהם כל ימי החל.

”והבאתם אותם בשערי ירושלים” דהיינו שלא תביאו אותם התפלות המתפגלים במחשבות זרות בשערים העליונים ועומדים על פתח השער ומעכבים תפלות ישראל לעלות דרך השערים.

ואיך לא יעלה מורא על ראשו ותרדו גדולה בלב האדם השפל עד היכן גורם בעונו לו ולאחרים.

”פה תאמרו לאדני לעשו” הנה התורה הקדושה מלמדת אותנו איך להתנהג בגלות המר הנה אשר אנחנו נתונים תחת יד האמות ואנחנו מקרחים לקבל הגלות באהבה עד ירחם ה' עלינו ויגאלנו גאולת עולם במהרה.

ובעוד שאנחנו בגלות המר אנחנו מקרחים להיות נכנעים לפניהם ולקראם אדונים. וזהו “פה תאמרו לאדני לעשו” רצונו לומר שתקראו אותו אדון בדברכם עמו.



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And then when he increases to harm you more than is appropriate through taxes and levies, it will be considered theft in their hands, and through this God will have mercy upon us, for it is enough that we submit before him and give him respect.

"With Lavan I dwelled and tarried until now." For "Lavan" shares letters with "naval," meaning the evil inclination is called "naval." And after a person merits to serve with both inclinations, as it says "with all your heart" meaning with both inclinations, then the evil inclination is transformed into "Lavan," the supernal whiteness.

And when does a person merit this? The main thing is through submission, that he hold himself in this world as a stranger. This is "with Lavan," meaning I merited that the evil inclination turned from "naval" to "Lavan," and the cause was "garti," meaning dwelling as a stranger with great humility.

And even with this, it did not succeed for me in a few days, but rather "and I tarried until now," meaning I delayed this work day after day and year after year. And this is what I said (Mishnah Yoma 20b) "and I already said Ana Hashem, and His voice was heard," meaning that a long time is needed to cry "Ana Hashem help me that I merit to serve You in truth," and then His voice is heard, but not in a few days.

And if you will say, from where will a person's livelihood come? To this he said "and I had an ox and a donkey," meaning livelihood comes automatically if one does the will of the Omnipresent.

"And I sent to tell my lord to find favor in your eyes," meaning that this is the way of the nations: when they see the honor and wealth of Israel, then he is beloved and finds favor in their eyes even if he does not benefit them.

"And the angels returned to Jacob saying we came to your brother etc." Meaning the hint is that although the words of the tzaddik act and enter the heart of Esau to transform him into a brother, nevertheless "and he is also coming toward you," meaning he still opposes you and his deeds contradict your good deeds.

ואז כאשר יוסיף להרע לכם יותר מן הראוי במסים וארנוניות גזל יהיה בידי ועל ידי זה ירחם ה' עלינו כי די לו בזה שאנחנו נכנעים לפניו וחולקים לו כבוד.

"עם לבן גרתי ואחר עד עתה" דהנה "לבן" אותיות "נבל" דהיינו היצר הרע נקרא נבל ואחר שיזכה האדם לעבוד בשני יצרים כאמור "בכל לבבך" בשני יצרים אזי היצר הרע נהפך ללבן דהיינו לובן העליון.

ואימתי יזכה אדם לזה העקר הוא על-ידי הכנעה שיתחזק עצמו בעולם הזה כגר וזהו "עם לבן" פרוש שיתחזק שיהיה היצר הרע נהפך מנבל ללבן היתה הסבה לזה "גרתי" לשון גרות דהיינו שהתחזקתי עצמי כגר בהכנעה גדולה.

ובכל זאת לא עלתה בידי בימים מועטים כי אם "ואחר עד עתה" פרוש שאחרי פועל הזהירות הזאת יום אחר יום ושנה אחר שנה וזהו שאמרתי (משנה יומא כ ב) "ויכבד אמר אבא ה' ונשמע קולו" פרוש שזמן ארוך צריך האדם לעצוק "אבא ה' עזרני שאזכה לעבדך באמת" ואז נשמע קולו אבל לא בימים מועטים.

ואם תאמר ומהיכן תהיה פרנסתו של אדם לזה אמר "ויהי לי שור וחמור" דהיינו שהפרנסה באה ממילא אם עושים רצונו של מקום.

"ואשלחה להגיד לאדני למצא חן בעיניך" רצונו לומר כי כן דרך האמות בראותם כבוד ועשר ישראל אזי הוא חביב ונושא חן בעיניהם אף שאינו נהנה מישאל אף-על-פי-כן נושא חן בעיניהם.

"וישובו המלאכים אל יעקב לאמר באנו אל אחיך כו'" רצונו לומר הרמז הגם שהדבורים של הצדיק פועלים ונכונים בלב עשו שיתהפך לאחיו כנ"ל אף-על-פי-כן "וגם הולך לקראתך" פרוש אף-על-פי-כן הוא מתנגד והולך לקראתך ומעשיו הם מתנגדות והפך מעשיך הטובים.

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“And four hundred men with him,” hinting that even though he does every evil act, nevertheless he claims he is a son of the world to come, that he has four hundred worlds of yearning. This is “with him,” for he says that with him are four hundred, hint to the four hundred worlds mentioned.

“וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ עִמּוֹ” רָמַז שְׁגָם שְׁעוֹשָׂה כָּל מַעֲשִׂים רָעִים אֶף־עַל־פִּי־כֵן אוֹמֵר שֶׁהוּא בֶן עוֹלָם הֵבִיא נְשִׁי לֹא תִּעֲלֶמֶן דְּכִסּוּפִין וְזֶהוּ “עִמּוֹ” שְׂאוֹמֵר שֶׁעִמּוֹ הֵם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת רָמַז לֹא תִּעֲלֶמֶן כִּנּוּל.

### [NOTE Summary:

Rabbi Elimelech begins by interpreting Jacob’s sending of angels to Esau as a metaphor for the tzaddik’s avodah. Every pure word of prayer spoken by a tzaddik creates angels who ascend upward, and even the tzaddik’s refined physical body assists these angels in rising. Through deep deveikus, the tzaddik transforms harshness into kinship, just as Jacob’s holiness caused Esau to be called “brother.”

He explains Jeremiah’s warning not to “carry a burden on Shabbos” as referring to weekday thoughts. Holy thoughts during the week bring increased holiness on Shabbos, but foreign thoughts block the upper gates and prevent prayers from ascending. These accumulated thoughts stand like burdens at the gates of heaven, impeding Israel’s prayers. Therefore a person must tremble at how much damage his thoughts can cause to himself and others.

The Torah then teaches how Jews must behave in exile: with humility and submissiveness to the nations among whom we dwell. “Thus you shall say to my lord, to Esau” instructs us to speak respectfully, for deference itself draws Heavenly compassion. When nations overstep and take more than is fitting, it is considered theft Above, and that injustice arouses divine mercy for Israel.

In the teaching on “with Lavan I dwelled,” Rabbi Elimelech explains that “Lavan” hints to “naval,” the evil inclination. If one serves Hashem with both inclinations, the yetzer hara itself becomes purified into supernal whiteness. How is this achieved? Only through utter humility, considering oneself a stranger in this world. Even then, it does not happen quickly. Jacob said “and I tarried until now” to show that such work takes many years and constant crying out to Hashem. One must plead “Ana Hashem help me serve You truthfully,” and only over a long time does the prayer reach its fulfillment.

If one worries about livelihood, the Torah answers: “I had an ox and a donkey,” meaning sustenance comes automatically when a person follows Hashem’s will. And when Israel’s honor is visible, the nations find favor with us even without benefit. Nevertheless, when the angels report back that Esau still comes with opposition, it teaches that although the tzaddik’s words influence a person to goodness, the person may still resist in action. “Four hundred men with him” hints to the self-deception of one who behaves wickedly yet insists he is destined for the world to come, claiming to possess spiritual realms he does not truly hold.

Taken together, Rabbi Elimelech’s teachings form a cohesive path: purity of thought, humility, deveikus, long-term effort, submission in exile, and awareness that both good and evil inclinations can be elevated. Through these, a person influences the worlds above and below, as well as the hearts of others around him.

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### Practical Takeaway:

A Jew's inner world shapes everything: his prayers, his Shabbos, his influence on others, and the way Heaven responds to him. By guarding thoughts during the week, practicing humility, striving for genuine deveikus, and serving Hashem with patience over years, a person opens the gates of heaven for himself and for all Israel. Even small acts of submission, respect, or restraint in exile draw mercy from Above. Above all, spiritual change is slow and requires constant heartfelt pleas to Hashem, but every step reshapes the soul toward purity and light.

### Chassidic Story

A well-known story about Rabbi Elimelech illustrates these teachings. A villager once complained to him that despite praying earnestly, he felt no elevation and sensed his prayers were blocked. Rabbi Elimelech gently told him to accompany him for Shacharis the next morning. As they prayed, the villager suddenly felt overwhelmed with confusion, his mind flooded with weekday worries and jumbled thoughts. Afterward, the Rebbe said, "Do you see the burden you carried with you? All week long your thoughts chased after business, anger, and vanity. On Shabbos and in prayer they stand before the gates, blocking the path. If you lighten that burden during the week, the gates will open."

The man took these words deeply to heart. He began setting aside small moments each day to clear his mind, humbling himself and asking Hashem for help. Months later, he returned to the Rebbe with tears, saying that for the first time in his life he sensed his prayers rising. Rabbi Elimelech smiled and replied, "This is the way. Not with sudden leaps, but with steady steps and a broken heart. Even the yetzer hara becomes white when carried with humility."

**END NOTE]**