Tefillah of the Week

Parshas Vayishlach: When a Jew Has Emunah, He Has Everything

A tefillah by Chava Shmilovitch – "That You are my Father, that I am never alone"

Chiburim · Torah-Based Emotional Growth and Connection · Chava Shmilovitch · Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach, 18 Kislev 5787 · November 28, 2026

The Tefillah at a Glance

Yaakov Avinu lived twenty years in the house of Lavan, and now he goes out to meet Esav. Chava reads these two encounters as two inner struggles that each of us meets: **the klipah of Lavan** – the struggle over emunah, and **the klipah of Esav** – the struggle with desires and the yetzer hara. The tefillah asks to walk in Yaakov's path: to live inside the world without the world cutting us off from Hashem.

- **The klipah of Lavan:** "My strength and the might of my hand" – disconnection from hashgachah, and the attempt to uproot the emunah that is everything.
- **Arami oved avi:** Lavan wants to make us lose the feeling that Hashem is our Father.
- **The klipah of Esav:** desires and flawed deeds – and the power of kedushah, which is stronger.
- **A "ger" in this world:** a woman who feels like a stranger here is not frightened by the world's affairs.
- **The effort that is in my hands:** do everything I can – and then Hashem helps.
- **"Vayehi imadi":** one whose G-d is within her is not alone on her day of trouble.

> **How to daven this tefillah**
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> The tefillah is written in the first person. You can read it slowly, out loud, at candle lighting or on Shabbos morning – and pause at every sentence that touches you. The lines in bold are the places to come back to during the week.

The Tefillah

Help me learn from this parshah how to conduct myself in the battle with the yetzer, and learn ways to stand firm in the battle with my yetzer and come out of it with gains.

Help me learn, through reflecting on the parshah, which particular matters are the main ones in which every Jew has a struggle.

And what is the klipah of Lavan?

The klipah of Lavan is a flaw of the mind – in opinions and outlooks, denial and flaws in emunah.

Denial of hashgachah pratis, and a deep belief in "my strength and the might of my hand."

He cut himself off completely from hashgachah, and held that "the daughters are my daughters and the sons are my sons, and all that you see is mine," and attributed everything to his own strength alone.

Lavan sought to uproot everything, because for a Jew emunah is everything. A Jew's whole life, his dealings – he lives them with emunah, and it is everything to him.

The klipah of Lavan seeks to uproot from the Jew the emunah that is everything, **because as long as a Jew has emunah – even if he has stumbled in every sin, he still has a tikkun.**

So help me walk in the way of Yaakov Avinu, who, although he lived with Lavan, kept the 613 mitzvos, and the klipah of Lavan did not harm him at all. Please, help me too walk in the ways of my forefathers and not be influenced by the atmosphere and surroundings that can affect emunah for the bad; not be swayed by the tests, but let my emunah be so strong that even the winds and storms of life will not move it from its place.

> **Arami oved avi**
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> And Lavan the Aramean is "oved avi" – meaning he wants to make us lose the aspect of "my Father": **that You are my Father, that I am never alone**, both in good and bright times and in gray and low days; I will always draw strength from knowing that I have a Father in Heaven. Lavan wanted to uproot the feeling that You are my Father.

So help me persevere day by day in personal tefillah, and take into the depths of my neshamah how great Your love for me is, how great Your watching over me is, and the fact that You are my merciful, good Father who wants to be kind to me.

Save me also from the klipah of Esav, which includes all the desires and flawed deeds, by strengthening me in yiras Shamayim and in knowing the gravity of sin, in every matter where my yetzer overpowers me.

Hashem My G-d Is With Me, I Have Lacked Nothing

Above all, help me feel that Hashem my G-d is with me – and then I lack nothing. For the greatest tikkun is when I reach the awe that You, Hashem my G-d, are with me. Then I will reach wholeness of emunah and of keeping the mitzvos.

Every time I meet "Esav my brother," help me strengthen myself and believe that the power of kedushah is **stronger**, for G-d made one opposite the other, and You do not come with unfair demands on Your creations: You, Hashem, gave the Jew strengths against all the forces of the sitra achra, and against all the nations.

A "Ger" in This World

Help me win the battle with Lavan by taking to heart that in this world I am a "ger," a stranger: I have no inheritance from this world, and I will take nothing with me – as David HaMelech prayed, "I am a stranger in the land; do not hide Your mitzvos from me."

And if I feel like a stranger in this world, then the affairs of this world will not frighten me, they will not distance holy emunah from me and will not weaken me in my avodah, and all my desire and longing will be only to serve You!

So too Yaakov Avinu said that because he felt himself a stranger, he merited to keep the 613 mitzvos in the house of Lavan.

And all the animals he had mattered to him only like one ox and one donkey, which is why he said "I have an ox and a donkey..." even though he had many animals.

The Effort That Is in My Hands

And it is written that a person's yetzer (which Esav alludes to) overpowers him every day, and were it not for Hashem helping him, he could not overcome it. This means that only when a person has done everything in his power to fight the yetzer hara, and has reached the point of "were it not for Hashem's help he could not overcome it," **only then does Hashem help him overcome the yetzer.**

So help me run from my yetzer and do everything I can to overcome it and defeat it.

"Let us arise and go up to Beis El, and I will make there an altar to the G-d who answered me on the day of my distress and was with me." From here, help me take to heart that a person is left exposed to the troubles of the times only because he is separated from You, **but one whose G-d is within him – no evil will touch him!**

That is why Yaakov Avinu said "to the G-d who answered me on the day of my distress" – in the merit of "and was with me": my G-d was always with me, I was attached to Him, and so He answered me on the day of my distress and saved me.

I wish for all of us that we merit to take the deep messages of the parshah into our hearts!

"That You are my Father, that I am never alone."

The Connection to Class 1: Held

In class we learned that every woman needs an attachment figure who is "bigger, stronger, wiser and kind" – and that only Hashem fulfills all four. The Vayishlach tefillah guards this bond: Lavan tries to uproot the feeling that I have a Father, and daily personal tefillah is the way to bring it back – "vayehi imadi."

Questions for Reflection

To write in your notebook

- Where in my life does the "klipah of Lavan" whisper that everything depends on my strength alone?
- When do I feel I have a Father in Heaven – and when does that feeling disappear?
- What will help me persevere in personal tefillah every day, even on the gray days?
- What is the effort in my hands this week – and where can I leave the rest to Hashem?
- What would it feel like to be a "stranger" in the world – not frightened by its affairs?