

## **Parshat Vayislach – Blessings from every challenge, December 1, 2012**

We read this week about the patriarch Jacob returning from an exile of twenty years in the land of Laban, his father in law. God tells Jacob to return to Canaan, and for that purpose he has to go through Seir, the land of his brother Esau. Then the frightening meeting came: Jacob sent messengers with gifts in a desperate attempt to calm the anger of his brother. He prayed and finally divide his possessions in two camps: " If Esav comes to the one camp and attacks it, at least the camp that is left will escape." (Gen. 32:9).

Jacob is alone that night and fights with a man until dawn. The mysterious opponent cannot defeat him and when the dawn was to raise he says to him: "Let me go, because it's daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I won't let you go unless you bless me".  
(Gen. 32:27).

During these twenty years, Jacob, the same who deceived his brother in order to receive the first-born blessing, was now deceived by others. He loved Rachel but received Leah as his wife. He worked for a salary but received less than what he deserved. He learnt firsthand about disappointment. And now, before meeting Esau, he fights with this unknown person, which is nothing more than his own history of mistakes and falls. His request is only one: "I won't let you go unless you bless me".

Jacob suffered but he could have become a resentful person, full of hatred and rancor. But suffering allows him

to grow and now he understands that he could have approached Esau in a different way and resolved their problems differently. Jacob becomes aware of the price he had to pay: His parents did not see their grandchildren grow and his mother died in his absence.

The patriarch makes a leap into maturity and from now on his name will no longer be Jacob, which comes from the Hebrew root "twisted", but Israel, which means "straight". The end of the story is very touching: Jacob and Esau, the irreconcilable brothers meet, hug and cry.

All biblical characters are shown as imperfect human beings, full of flaws as every one of us. They struggle and grow, make mistakes and correct their ways. Particularly Jacob gives to us a very important lesson: We can't let go difficulties without receiving their blessing! Jacob teaches to us that we have the mission of taking blessings from every mistake and challenge we face. We have to capitalize every experience for our good because only then we can grow and try to be better human beings.

Shabbat Shalom!