



Between Truth and Imagination
Parshas Vayishlach

When I began my activities and fundraising on behalf of Migdal Ohr, I was taught to present my projects in a tangible fashion. We did not have video back then, so I used slides to present Migdal Ohr's story.

While in New York I was recommended a certain shop that could help me produce my presentation.

At the shop, I met a young editor who wrote scripts for the presentations. He was moved by Migdal Ohr's story and told me that he had friends in the film industry in Hollywood.

He offered to introduce me to the head of one of the prominent production studios, who was a Jew. I agreed, thinking the He who sent me to the US will help me in Hollywood as well. In general, I have learned that you can never know the outcome of a meeting, as G-d is the one who sets me on the proper path.

I was warmly received by the film producer, who spent a long period of time with me and explained many technical aspects of the business. He took me to a dark room and showed me the complex process of developing a clip, which could then be projected on a wall.

I was astounded by the conjuncture between truth and imagination. The projected movie seemed real while the film itself seemed static. It was all a fantasy, I told my host.

He smiled. This fantasy has earned my friends and I great fortunes, he said.

After our meeting, the executive asked me to stay and meet his friends. We prayed Minchah together, possibly for the first time in history in the area.

We then sat down as a group and discussed important issues such as Judaism and Jewish identity. I shared with them my first impressions of Hollywood.

I told them of my encounter with the dark room and film, and explained that I was taught to learn a lesson from everything. The Baal Shem Tov teaches us that anything a person encounters is for a reason.

What is the lesson I have learned here? I told them that I have learned the difference between taking real action and fictitious deeds. While one proceeds and gains, the other falls back and loses. One made a real contribution, while the other only thought he was.

I told them that this experience was illuminating and contributed to my understanding of the struggle between

Yaacov and Esav's angel, which is recounted in our weekly parasha.

During the encounter, the angel tells Yaacov: "Your name shall no longer be called Yaacov, but Yisrael, because you have commanding power with an angel of God and with men, and you have prevailed."¹

The angel concedes that Yaacov had triumphed.

Yaacov then asks for the angel's name. "Now tell me your name," and the angel replied, "why is it that you ask for my name?" And he blessed him there."

The angel's seemingly arrogant reply teaches us another lesson.

Before their struggle, Yaacov sends a delegation of angels bearing gifts to his brother Esav. However, Yaacov and Esav's angels differ.

What is an angel? The holy books teach us that angels are the product of a man's actions. Yaacov tells Esav through the angels "Thus said your servant Yaacov, 'I have sojourned with Laban, and I have tarried until now'."²

Yaacov is telling Esav that his angels are the product of Torah and mitzvot, and they will accompany him through this world and to the world to come.

Esav's angels, however, are the product of wickedness, and are no more than fading fiction.

When Yaacov asks for the angel's name he is told that it is of no consequence, as he has no real essence, and therefore has no defining name.

Yaacov knew he would prevail, he knew his angels would overcome those of Esav, for his angels were real.

This I learned from a strip of film, which projected a fictitious scene on the wall. If you turn on the light, it all fades away.

About a decade after that encounter I met one of the participants of the meeting who had returned to his Jewish heritage. He told me that following my visit, the group decided to hold a weekly Torah class and to pray together.

I told him an idea and I had learned from the Maharsha. "A person is set on a path in which he desires to be on." The adage in Hebrew is in the plural tense. Why is it said in a plural tense? It is the many angels created by a man's actions that set him on the desired path. You too, who have connection to G-d, have done so in merit of the angels who have set you on the path of truth and have accompanied you, I told him.

¹ Bereshiet 32:29.

² Bereshiet 32:5.