



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM
VAYEITZEI / ויצא
UFORATZTO

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UFORATZTO

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UFORATZTO

VAYETZE UFORATZTO

Have you ever heard the song "Uforatzto"? When the Rebbe introduced the idea of Jewish outreach he turned Uforatzto into a Chabad motto. Chassidim made a song out of it.

What does Uforatzto mean?

Rashi says it means strength, that G-d blessed Jacob that he should be strong. Maharsha says it means to break through, that nothing should stand in the way of our G-dly service. In Modern Hebrew Uforatzto means to spread out.

What did the Rebbe mean when he told us "Uforatzto"?

Uforatzto is the blessing Jacob received from G-d, so let's take a look at Jacob's life and see if we can get a clue as to its meaning.

The first story the Torah tells about Jacob is when he trades places with his older brother, an idea that seems inconceivable to regular people.

The story opens with Jacob cooking a lentil soup. Esau comes home exhausted and asks him for some soup. Suddenly, without warning Jacob tells his older brother Esau that he can have lentil soup only if he'd agree to hand over his position as first born son. Esau doesn't think very much of it and hands it over. Jacob is now the 'bechor', the firstborn.



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Next he sneaks away with his brother's blessings. Had Jacob asked anyone before doing it he would have been told not to, for a couple reasons. First of all it's not nice to trick your old father. Second of all what if Isaac were to realize in the middle that he was really Jacob he might get angry and even curse him. And if Esau should walk in the middle he might even kill Jacob on the spot! But Jacob didn't ask us and he did it and got away with it.

Now we arrive at our Parsha.

Jacob arrives in Charan and makes a deal with his uncle Laban that he would work for seven years after which he would marry Rachel. When the seven years are up the wedding is made and Laban slips Leah in as the bride instead of Rachel. A normal person would immediately get a divorce and never do business with Laban ever again.

Jacob does a strange, unconventional thing. He keeps Leah and agrees to work for Laban another seven years in exchange for Rachel. He has now married two sisters, which is never a good idea! But he did it and despite the trickery and lies Laban subjected him to he became quite a wealthy man with a wonderful family.

In the end Jacob runs away from Laban's house. Talk about unconventional, how does a man with four wives and twelve children "run away"? Yet Jacob did it, with all of his children, cattle, sheep, and all of his possessions.



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

VAYEITZEI / וַיֵּצֵא

UFORATZTO

Jacob kept up this unconventional behavior throughout his life. A good example is his sending Joseph to check on his brothers, something which is completely illogical since Jacob knew that they all hated Joseph. Yet he did it and in the end saved the whole East from starvation.

Another good example of Jacob's unconventional behavior is his burying Rachel in the middle of nowhere instead of taking her to *Me'arat Machpeila*, the family burial grounds. Still, in the end it was this burial place that the captive Jews were able to pray at on their way to Babylon.

Even in his last days Jacob didn't lose the element of surprise. When Joseph brings his children to get his father's blessings Jacob places his right hand on the younger brother Ephraim's head instead of on Menashe's. As it turns out Ephraim would become the more powerful tribe.

It was Jacob's constant 'non-conventionalism' that brought him success. After all was said and done Jacob ended up on top. Isaac was happy that Jacob had gotten the blessings instead of Esau. Laban admitted that it was Jacob who had brought success to his business. Jacob beat an angel in hand to hand combat and Esau, surprisingly, hugs and kisses the long lost brother he had sworn to kill.

Jacob had unnatural success with his family as well. Abraham and Isaac had two children apiece, one of which abandoned his father's faith. Jacob had thirteen children in a nomadic home with four mothers and a lot of competition yet he beat the overwhelming odds and none of his children forsook his faith.



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UFORATZTO

Of the patriarchs, Abraham gave us the attribute of kindness and love of G-d. Isaac gave us the ability to remain humble and obediently follow His commandments. Jacob gave us the ability be unconventional and not to worry what the world says or thinks. From Jacob we've learned to do what the world least expects. Uforatzto.

This is exactly what the Rebbe did when he started the mitzvah campaign. "Peddling Judaism" to those who are far from it was unheard of until then. In fact the entire Jewish world, orthodox and secular alike, laughed at the Rebbe, certain that it would never work.

On his seventieth birthday the Rebbe came up with another unconventional idea. He invented the "Mitzvah Tank", taking a word that was until that point synonymous with destruction and death and turned it into a positive thing. The plan was to hit the streets in RVs and sell Judaism, something that is completely against Jewish nature. We Jews like to keep a low profile, we don't like being seen for fear of what might happen.

Obviously there were scoffers, those who believed that Jews would never go for it. But you can't argue with success.

The same thing happened with the public menorah idea. Jews had always lit little menorahs by their windowsills at home. No one ever dreamt that there could be 30 foot menorah in the centers of the world's biggest cities. But the Rebbe, in his unconditionally unconventional wisdom, made it happen because that was his motto – Uforatzto!