

פרשת
וישלח
Parashat Vayishlach

Bereshit / Genesis 32:3-36:43, Hosea 11:7-12:12
Obadiah 1:1-21, John 1:19-2:12

The Merit of Others?

In Parashat Vayishlach, Jacob prays to the Lord for his safety saying the following, **וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק יְהוָה**, *32:10 Then Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, ‘Return to your native land and I will deal bountifully with you’!* **קִטְנֹתִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל הַהַאֲמָת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֵת־עַבְדְּךָ כִּי בָמֹ-
: 32:11 I am unworthy of all the kindness that You have so steadfastly shown Your servant: with my staff alone I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.** Jacob declares the goodness of God in His blessing him to have a family and many children. Rashbam on Bereshit / Genesis 32:11 Part 2 states, *“הַחֲסָדִים, the loving kindness as expressed by promises. We have a parallel to this in 1 Kings 8:64. Seeing that You have performed for me both חֲסָדִים and אַמְתָּה, although I have not yet redeemed my vow to establish an altar at Beyt El and to sacrifice to You there, I am now afraid in spite of the assurances You have given me. I am aware that You do not judge man according to his good intentions but according to his carrying out such intentions, and I have been remiss in this respect.”* The point is that the Lord does not look at our intentions, but

at what we do with those intentions. The Lord shows us grace (חסדים) and truth (אמת) for the purpose of allowing us to work out those intentions in the practice of our faithfulness before Him. The example given by Rashbam was Hezekiah the king of Judah (*1 Kings 20:1*) the prophet told him he was going to die, and he prayed and the Lord granted him 15 more years to live. The extension on life was coupled with his merits, and his intentions and what he had done with those intentions for the good of the Lord and for the good of his people. What this teaches us is when we pray, we should recognize and acknowledge our own inadequacies, and proclaim the power of the One who we are praying to, the Lord God in heaven. Jacob made this point saying that he was unworthy of all the kindness (grace, חסדים) the Lord had shown him up until this day. This is also what King David did in *Tehillim / Psalms 16:2* when he said עלֵיךְ בַּל - אַתָּה טוֹבְתִי בַל -עֲלֵיךְ, “*You are my Lord, my benefactor; there is none above You.*” He was saying that his experience of the Lord’s kindness had convinced him that there is no one equal to Him as a master. When speaking on the merits of our righteous works, there are seven areas in which a person must rely upon the Lord. These are (i) in matters of one’s own body, (ii) regarding his ability to earn a living, (iii) in interpersonal relationships with family, friends, enemies, and others, (iv) regarding duties of the heart and limbs that only affect the person himself, (v) regarding duties of the limbs that affect others as well, (vi) pertaining to one’s reward in the Olam Haba (World to Come) according to what one has done in this life, (vii) regarding one’s reward in the Olam Haba that he receives strictly as a matter of God’s mercy (grace, חסדים), as per *Tehillim / Psalms 31:20*, “*How abundant is Your goodness, which You have put aside for those who fear You, that You have wrought for those who take their refuge in You, in the sight of mankind!*” A person’s own body includes not just one’s life and his health but also such necessary things as food, clothing and shelter. The proper way to rely upon God in this area is to just let go and accept the course that God has set forth for each of us. When we have this understanding that the Lord God is in control, it is then that we pursue what He desires for our lives, secure in the knowledge that the Lord will succeed in His plan that He has made. For example, the Lord God has determined the length of a person’s life, this does not presuppose a person does not need food to eat, clothes to wear and a place to sleep.

Therefore, one may not say, *“If God wants me to live, He’ll enable me to survive without food, so I’ll never need to work.”* The blessing of God comes in the context of our ability to work (see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 18*). Trusting in the Lord comes with great patience in the most trying of circumstances, considering everything as falling within the will of God. Our merits are coupled to our perseverance to walk with God in the midst of trials and tribulations, and this comes only by the help of the Lord in Heaven and His presence in our lives. This is what Jacob was expressing in His prayer to the Lord for His protection against His brother.

In this week’s Torah portion, we look at what it means to rely upon the merit of others. A concept which frequently occurs in the Rabbinic literature is the idea of the merits of the Fathers, which leads us to the question on the importance of the merits of others. According to the Apostolic Writings, we are told to rely upon the merits of the Messiah (Christ, *1 Corinthians 15:22*). In Parashat Vayishlach, Jacob calls upon the merit of his fathers Abraham and Isaac to protect himself from destruction by the hand of Esau. (*Bereshit / Genesis 32:10-11*) In contrast to the rabbinic view that the Patriarchs had a great amount of merit for future generations; the Patriarchs in Genesis are generally not portrayed as righteous, *i.e. Jacob is portrayed as a deceiver*. The power of these Patriarchal narratives lies within the fact that despite their shortcomings, the Lord God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The rabbinic concept of merits has influenced our understanding of salvation as being found within the covenant of God which causes us to rely upon others due to our own shortcomings. As a result, the question of *“falling away”* is of central importance, as it is related to remaining in the covenant of God. The rabbinic concept of relying upon the merits of others may be explained according to the words of the Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim 1:5*) which states, *“it is good to say the passage about the Akeida.”* He explains that the function of repeating a passage of Scripture is *“to mention and remind heaven of the merits of the patriarchs.”* He further states that this *“also inspires us to subdue our base nature, to make it subservient to the Holy One blessed be He, so that we offer our entire being to Him, as Yitzchak did.”* The concept here is that Isaac (Yitzchak) offered himself upon the altar (see *Bereshit / Genesis 22, Isaac was believed to be old enough to resist his father*)

which is the source text for the belief in the merit of the Akeida. The Holy One swore an oath to Abraham, as it is written in *Bereshit / Genesis 22:16-17, 22:16* and said, *'By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, 22:17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. (NASB)* The idea here is related to the matter of the giving of one's life to sanctify the Name of the Lord. Throughout history, rabbinic halachah has stated regarding selfless behavior, when the people of Israel went to their deaths willingly and happily in order to sanctify the Name of God, there was merit for the kingdom of heaven in the Olam Haba (world to come). This falls under the premise of a Mishnaic principle that servants who work without reward (*i.e. who work for their keep*) are preferable to those who serve for a reward. (see the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 1:3*) This is also the principle that was illustrated in the prodigal Son narrative (*Luke 15:19*), compare the older son to the younger son and the events when the younger son returns. Coupled with this idea of relying upon the merit of others is whether earning merit is something that is a viable option as a part of our faith? This is illustrated in the laborer being worthy of his wages, as opposed to being given something without laying claim to having done this thing by himself. Relying upon the merits of others leads to the conclusion that it is possible to earn a reward as a result of someone else's actions. The Scriptures provide us with examples of relying upon the merit of others and not upon our own merits. In the case of Jacob, he had faith in the Lord God Almighty, relying wholly upon the merits of Him who is mighty to save. Do you rely upon Him who is mighty to save? Let's discuss this topic in this week's study.

In this week's Torah portion, we are looking at *Bereshit / Genesis 32:1-13*:

Bereshit / Genesis 32:1-13

32:1 Now as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him. 32:2 Jacob said when he saw them, 'This is God's camp.' So he named that place Mahanaim. 32:3 Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother

Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 32:4 He also commanded them saying, ‘Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: ‘Thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now; 32:5 I have oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.’‘ 32:6 The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, ‘We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.’ 32:7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies; 32:8 for he said, ‘If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape.’ 32:9 Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,’ 32:10 I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. 32:11 ‘Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children. 32:12 ‘For You said, ‘I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.’‘ 32:13 So he spent the night there. Then he selected from what he had with him a present for his brother Esau (NASB)

א וַיִּשְׁכֶם לָבוֹן בְּבִקְרַת וַיִּגְנֹשֶׁק לְבָנָיו וּלְבָנוֹתָיו וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָהֶם
 וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיָּשָׁב לָבוֹן לְמִקְמוֹ: ב וַיַּעֲקֹב הָלֵךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ וַיִּפְגְּעוּ-בּוֹ
 מִלְּאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים: ג וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב כִּי אֲנִי רָאִים מַחְנֵה אֱלֹהִים
 זֶה וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא מַחְנֵה: פ פ פ [פֶּרֶשֶׁת
 וַיִּשְׁלַח] ד וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מִלְּאָכֵים לְפָנָיו אֶל-עֵשָׂו אָחִיו אֲרֻצָּה
 שְׁעִיר שָׂדֵה אֲדוֹם: ה וַיִּצוּ אֹתָם לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לְאֲדֹנָי

לַעֲשׂוֹ כֹּה אָמַר עֲבָדְךָ יַעֲקֹב עִם-לְבֹן גִּרְתִּי וְאַחַר עַד-עֲתָה: ו
 וַיְהִי-לִי שׁוֹר וְחִמּוֹר צֹאן וְעֶבֶד וְשִׁפְחָה וְאֲשֻׁלְחָה לְהַגִּיד לְאֹדְנִי
 לְמִצְאָ-חַן בְּעֵינַיִךְ: ז וַיָּשִׁבוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים אֶל-יַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר כָּאֲנוּ
 אֶל-אַחֶיךָ אֶל-עֲשׂוֹ וְגַם הִלֵּךְ לְקִרְאָתְךָ וְאַרְבַּע-מֵאוֹת אִישׁ
 עִמּוֹ: ח וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֵר לוֹ וַיַּחֲזֵן אֶת-הָעַם אֲשֶׁר-אִתּוֹ
 וְאֶת-הַצֹּאן וְאֶת-הַבָּקָר וְהַגְּמָלִים לְשָׁנֵי מַחֲנוֹת: ט וַיֹּאמֶר
 אִם-יָבוֹא עֲשׂוֹ אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה הָאֶחָת וְהִכְהוּ וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנִּשְׁאָר
 לְפָלִיטָה: י וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק
 יְהוָה הָאֵלֵךְ אֵלַי שׁוֹב לְאַרְצְךָ וְלִמּוֹלְדֹתְךָ וְאִיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ: יא
 קִטְנֹתַי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל-הָאֲמֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-עֲבָדְךָ כִּי
 בְּמִקְלֵי עֲבָרְתִּי אֶת-הִירְדֵן הִזָּה וְעַתָּה הִיִּיתִי לְשָׁנֵי מַחֲנוֹת: יב
 הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֲשׂוֹ כִּי-יֵרָא אָנֹכִי אִתּוֹ פֶּן-יָבוֹא וְהִכָּ-
 נִי אִם עַל-בָּנָיִם: יג וְאֵתָה אָמַרְתָּ הֵיטֵב אִיטִיב עִמָּךְ וְשָׁמַתִּי
 אֶת-זַרְעֲךָ כְּחוֹל הַיָּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִסָּפֵר מְרֹב:

In *Bereshit / Genesis 32*, Jacob is returning to the Promised Land, and he is worried about his brother Esau and whether Esau is still angry with him after so many years? After having spent twenty years in Laban's home, Jacob is commanded by the Lord to return to the land of his ancestors, the land of Canaan. In order to do so, Jacob has to pass through Edom, the territory of his brother, Esau. In Judaism, more emphasis is usually placed upon actions than on intentions, on the acts we perform rather than on the emotions we feel. (i.e. the Lord does not look at our intentions, but at what we do with those intentions.) Therefore, Jacob was very worried about his past actions against his brother. Here in Parashat Vayishlach, Jacob calls upon the merit of his fathers Abraham and Isaac to remind the Lord of His promises and to protect himself from destruction by the hand of Esau. *Bereshit / Genesis 32:9-11*, וַיֹּאמֶר אִם-יָבוֹא עֲשׂוֹ אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה הָאֶחָת וְהִכְהוּ וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנִּשְׁאָר לְפָלִיטָה: י וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק יְהוָה הָאֵלֵךְ אֵלַי שׁוֹב לְאַרְצְךָ וְלִמּוֹלְדֹתְךָ וְאִיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ: יא קִטְנֹתַי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל-הָאֲמֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-עֲבָדְךָ כִּי בְּמִקְלֵי עֲבָרְתִּי אֶת-הִירְדֵן הִזָּה וְעַתָּה הִיִּיתִי לְשָׁנֵי מַחֲנוֹת: *32:9 Jacob said, 'O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Return to your country*

and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,' 32:10 I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. 32:11 'Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children. (NASB) Jacob calls upon the God of his fathers, recalling the covenant promises the Lord had made with them to remind the Lord to protect him from his past actions because He is worthy of death at the hand of his brother. He asks for deliverance, favoritism, and peace with Esau.

The rabbis have much to say concerning these Scriptures and the merit of the fathers. Radak has the following two say concerning *Bereshit / Genesis 32:1-11*.

Radak on Bereshit / Genesis 32:10 Part 1

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק, “*You are the One Who has assured me when I left my father’s house that due to the merit of my fathers You would assist and protect me. (28,13). Now I turn to You in prayer relying on their merit in hoping that You will keep Your promise. Secondly, it was You Who has told me while I was in Charan to go back to the land of my fathers since their country was my country.*”

Radak states that Jacob believed, when leaving to travel to Laban in Haran, the Lord would keep His promise based upon the promises He had made with his fathers Abraham and Isaac. This was understood as being “*due to the merit of my fathers.*” Based upon these promises, he turns in prayer resting in their merits hoping the Lord will keep His promises. Radak continues saying the following:

Radak on Bereshit / Genesis 32:11 Part 1

קִטְנֵנִי, *I am not asking You G'd to help me in a manner commensurate with my merits, as I am perfectly aware that these are utterly inadequate.* כֹּל הַחֲסָדִים וְכֹל הָאֱמֶת, *Yaakov described as חֲסֵד the acts of unearned love G'd had performed for him, whereas*

he described as אמת, “truth,” i.e. deserved compensation, that G’d would keep His promise to him. (“Here, I am going to be with you, etc.” 28,15) He feels entitled to expect G’d to keep His promises when these are of a positive nature. When G’d had said to him that He would protect him wherever he would go, this had not been a conditional promise, dependent on Yaakov being worthy of such protection. He is aware that he may have sinned, but expects the promise to be kept for the sake of his father and grandfather both of whom G’d Himself had invoked in association with this promise. He feels that he deserves such protection, having heard that Esau is an unreformed sinner, still relating to him with hostility.

Note how Radak states Jacob believed, based upon his actions, that his brother was an unreformed, disobedient, and rebellious sinner. Radak continues to interpret the meaning of *32:11* to say that Jacob did not believe the Lord would help him commensurate with his own merits saying that his merits are “*utterly inadequate.*” This is a very important observation since Radak continues in his commentary to say, “*Yaakov described as חסד the acts of unearned love G’d had performed for him, whereas he described as אמת, “truth,” i.e. deserved compensation, that G’d would keep His promise to him.*” This is the same conclusions found in the Apostolic Writings, due to God’s Chesed (חסד, mercy, grace) we are given unearned love and the Lord causes His blessing to come upon us, not because of our own merits. Because Jacob understands the Lord as merciful, by reason of God’s mercy he is given a future expectation of the Lord keeping His promises. This is further interpreted as an unconditional promise, that God’s protection was not based upon Jacob’s performance. Note how Jacob “*expects the promises to be kept for the sake of his father and grandfather both of whom G’d Himself had invoked in association with this promise.*” According to the Apostolic Writings, we are said to expect the Lord to save us for the sake of the Messiah Yeshua and what He did for us upon the cross. The significance of these things is that the Lord God of Israel has provided for all men of this world a way to rely upon the merit of one man

to enter into a covenant with God and receive the gift of redemption. Note how this is consistent with Judaism placing more emphasis upon actions than on intentions, on the acts we perform rather than on the emotions we feel. Our faith is in the actions of the Messiah and what He had done for us! All that we receive from the Lord due to His mercy is for the sake of His Messiah, because of what He had done, because of His actions, He lived a perfect life without sin and laid his life down for ours. Again, this is consistent with the rabbinic halachah on selfless behavior and earning merit for entry into the Olam Haba (the world to come) also known as “*salvation*.”

Rashi makes a similar conclusion on his interpretation of *Bereshit / Genesis 32:11*:

Rashi on Bereshit 32:11 Part 1

קטנתי מכל החסדים *I AM TOO UNWORTHY OF ALL THE MERCIES* (This may be rendered “I am small — unworthy — because of all the kindnesses) — My merits are diminished in consequence of all the kindness and truth which You have already shown me. For this reason I am afraid: perhaps, since You made these promises to me, I have become depraved (נתקלקלתי) by sin (another version of Rashi has נתלכלכתי, I have become defiled by sin) and this may cause me to be delivered unto Esau’s power (Shabbat 32a).

Part 2

ומכל האמת [my merits are diminished in consequence] *OF ALL THE TRUTH* — of the true fulfillment (אמיתת) of Your promises — because You have already kept all the promises You made me

Part 3

כי במקלי *FOR WITH MY STAFF* — I had with me neither silver nor gold nor cattle — only this staff of mine. The Midrashic explanation is, that he had placed his staff in the Jordan and Jordan had divided for him to

pass over.

Rashi summarizes the unworthiness of Jacob and the mercies of God. In Part 1 of his commentary, he says that Jacob's merits are diminished due to the kindness and truth of the Lord. He sees how sin defiles and causes punishment to come, and the Lord blesses because of his (Jacob's) faithfulness in the Lord.

Sforno states the following on *Bereshit / Genesis 32:11*.

Sforno on Bereshit / Genesis 32:11 Part 1

קטונתי מכל החסדים, *I was not worthy of all the acts of kindness I have experienced at Your hands.*

Part 2

ומכל האמת, *the good You did for me on account of the merit of my father and grandfather. Seeing that You have already seen fit to treat me well beyond my deserts, I beg of You to continue to do so. Our regular prayers reflect this sentiment when we use the expression כגודל חסדך, "in accordance with the greatness of Your kindness."* Moses used this expression in Numbers 14:19 when praying for forgiveness of the people after the debacle with the spies.

Sforno states that Jacob believed he was not worthy of all the acts of kindness the Lord had shown him, bringing great wealth into his life in family, in children, and in cattle. Jacob held to the belief that it was the result of the promises God had made and the merit of his fathers Abraham and Isaac. Sforno states that our prayers also reflect this sentiment in the expression "*in accordance with the greatness of Your kindness,*" because the measure of kindness is greater than all our sins.

Rashbam has the following to say on *Bereshit / Genesis 32:11*.

Rashbam on Bereshit / Genesis 32:11 Part 2

החסדים, *the loving kindness as expressed by promises. We have a parallel to this in 1 Kings 8:64 Seeing that You have performed for me both חסדים and אמת, al-*

though I have not yet redeemed my vow to establish an altar at Beyt El and to sacrifice to You there, I am now afraid in spite of the assurances You have given me. I am aware that You do not judge man according to his good intentions but according to his carrying out such intentions, and I have been remiss in this respect. We find in connection with Chizkiyah, King of Yehudah in 1 Kings 20:1 that when the prophet had told him: “you will die and not live,” that the king prayed to G’d and was granted an additional 15 years of life on earth. [he was given this extension as in his prayer he had enumerated his merits, although G’d justified the extension with reference to King David, Chizkiyah’s ancestor. Ed.]

Rashbam states comments upon the חסד וֶאֱמֶת (grace and truth) of God towards Jacob. Jacob had vowed to return to the Land and build an altar to the Lord in Bethel. He was seeking to fulfill his oath with the Lord’s help to do so and asking the Lord to help him to be safe so that he can praise His name in the Sacrifice. Jacob had the intention of carrying out what he had promised. The intention is important, just as the Mishnaic principle speaks of the servant who works without reward (*i.e. a laborer being worthy of his wages*) as compared to those who serve for a reward. (*Mishnah Pirkei Avot 1:3*) Note these things are consistent with what is taught in the Apostolic Writings! (see *1 John* and *2 John* in regard to the commands of God)

It is important to understand how the rabbis are not promoting a works based salvation in the context of Jacob’s prayer and request of God. Within the idea of the merits of our fathers is the Torah principle that the deeds of a faithful parent affects his children and future generations. A faithful parent will not incur God’s wrath which would bring destruction to not only himself but to his entire family, including his children (e.g. and future generations). Also, a faithful parent will teach his children in the fear of the Lord, in faith, and to obey the mitzvot because of our love for the Lord. Note that this is always within the context of a loving relationship. Living a faithful life is how we serve and love our Father in heaven, and this will cause one’s children to be instructed in the way of God and His Messiah Yeshua, to trust in the

Lord God in heaven and to follow in the footsteps of the Messiah. In an analogous manner, the children of the unrighteous will learn the wicked ways of their parents and thus incur the wrath of God. Relying upon the merit of the fathers, Jacob expressed faith in both the word of his fathers Abraham and Isaac, as well as faith in the word of the Lord and His promises which they communicated to Jacob. As a result, Jacob believed that it was the Lord God who assisted and protected him in the land of Haran.

Based upon this study, can it be said that the single most important mitzvah of all is to trust in the merit of others? Based upon the rabbinic interpretations on *Bereshit / Genesis 32:11*, our own merits, or in other words, our own ability to keep the commands of God are *“utterly inadequate.”* This is the observation of Radak and others who describe Jacob as recognizing *“הסד the acts of unearned love G’d had performed for him, and אמא, “truth,” as deserved compensation, that G’d would keep His promise to him.”* This is the reliance upon the Lord believing in His faithfulness and His mercy, and in His keeping the promises He had made to our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is why it is taught in the Apostolic Writings that the single most important mitzvah of all is to trust in Yeshua as Lord and Savior. Christians speak of being *“free from the Law”* and argue that it is easy for some to justify themselves as pleasing to God on the basis of some litany of rules that are being kept. The claim says *“we do not want to live as truly free individuals before the Lord because this implies that we are responsible for our individual lives.”* My question is *“how do you understand freedom? Is this the freedom to sin?”* This implies that the Torah is a form of bondage contrary to *Romans 7* and *Galatians 5*. The point is that *“we are responsible for our individual lives”* otherwise we would not be guilty for our sins. Scripture states that we will be held accountable for what we have said and done before the Lord God Almighty. We are not given a license to sin because of our faith in Yeshua the Messiah! This is the point and the significance of trusting in the merits of others that has been pointed out according to the words of Jacob in Parashat Vayishlach.

*Bereshit / Genesis 32:9-11,
32:9 Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God*

*of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,' 32:10 I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. 32:11 'Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children. (NASB, וַיֹּאמֶר ט
אֵם-יְבוּא עֵשָׂו אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה הָאֶחָד וְהִכְהוּ וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנִּשְׁאָר
לְפָלִיטָה: י וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק
יְהוָה הָאֵלֵּים אֵלֵּי שׁוּב לְאֶרֶץ עֵדֶן וְלִמְוֹלָדֶיךָ וְאִיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ: יא
קָטַנְתִּי מְכַל הַחֲסִדִּים וּמְכַל-הָאֲמֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֵת-עַבְדֶּךָ כִּי
(בְּמַקְלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֵת-הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הֵייתִי לְשָׁנֵי מַחֲנוֹת:*

Jacob had faith in the Lord God Almighty, relying wholly upon the merits of Him who is mighty to save. Just as the prophet Habakkuk stated in *Habakkuk 2:4 But the righteous will live by his faith. (NASB, (הִנֵּה עֹפְלָה לֹא-יִשָּׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ וְצַדִּיק בְּאִמּוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה:* The law of God is the absolute standard of perfection. Anyone who has tried to keep the Torah realizes the absolute necessity to rely upon the merit of others due to his or her own shortcomings. This is the spirit of the law that Paul speaks of in relation to our faith in the Messiah and our Father in heaven. Our inability to keep the Torah should not be a deterring factor, we are to realize that we are not able to consistently keep the Torah at all times and thus necessitating the help of God. This is why trusting in the merit of the Messiah is so important and this why all men, both Jew and Gentile must trust in the Merits of Yeshua in order to be saved!