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Vayishlach: Space in between the Herds

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So, he lodged there on that night, and he took from what came into his hand a gift for his brother Esau: Two hundred she goats and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty nursing camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty she donkeys and ten he donkeys. And he gave into the hands of his servants each herd individually, and he said to his servants, "Pass on ahead of me and make a space between one herd and another herd." (Bereishis 32:14-17)

Yaakov was preparing for the anticipated encounter with his estranged brother. He prayed to God for Divine assistance and protection, split the camps in preparation for war, and sent generous gifts to Esav. The gifts were meant to appease and assuage the anger and animosity of Esav. The Torah tells us the enormous number of animals gifted by Yaakov and in doing so records an interesting detail. Yaakov says to his servants, "*V'revach tasimu beyn eder l'eder*, make space between one herd and the next." On a simple level, Yaakov was trying to make the gift look as grand and generous as possible. By spacing the herd, a long line of animals would make its way to Esav and hopefully find favor in his eyes.

The great Chassidic master, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810) provides an additional level of insight. The Rebbe explains that life is filled with challenges. There are interpersonal challenges and personal challenges. There are faith challenges and family challenges. There are financial challenges and spiritual challenges. We each encounter our daily struggles. Some we can navigate and overcome and some are ongoing and lack a foreseeable resolution. The only constant in the human condition is struggle. The difficulty is that with prolonged struggle a person loses sight of his or her *berachos*. The struggles of life can be so overwhelming that all we see are the difficulties and hurdles and we forget about the things which are good and beautiful. We lose sight of our blessings and the beauty of our existence. The "*herds*" represent the challenges of life. Often it feels like the challenges and struggles do not come one at a time but are heaped upon us. The herd of difficulties bust down the door of our otherwise tranquil lives and trod upon anything and everything. One herd after another, the challenges keep pouring in and we feel as if we are falling into the abyss of despair and hopelessness. It is in this moment we hear the advice of Yaakov, "*V'revach tasimu beyn eder l'eder*, make space between one herd and the next," take a moment, step back from the current circumstances and look at the beautiful blessings you have been granted. Take a moment to recalibrate your life perspective. The sky isn't falling, the world isn't coming to an end. Things are difficult in the current moment but there is so much good in life. We have so many *berachos*, so many gifts and so many wonderful opportunities. Create a space in between the herds of challenge and adversity in which to reflect on the good in your life.

We must maintain a proper positive perspective even when the herds of struggle are stampeding. We cannot lose sight of the things in life which are beautiful and going well. Let us learn to create the space of positive introspection and reflection in between the herds of adversity.